



ACT LIKE A MAN

WRITTEN BY MARK DRISCOLL

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9 WAYS TO PUNCH LIFE IN THE MOUTH

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my pops, who broke his back to feed his family, and to my sons, son-in-law, and now grandsons who are future men in training.



P R E F A C E :

Train Men

“Be alert, stand firm in the faith, act like a man, be strong. Your every action must be done with love.”

—1 Corinthians 16:13-14 (HCSB)

Thank you for the honor of helping you become the man that God has destined you to be. I am a very unlikely candidate to write a book for Christian men. My journey with Jesus started with reading the Bible that my high school girlfriend, a pastor's daughter I was sleeping with, gave to me as a gift. If there's hope for me, there's hope for you. If there's grace for me, there's grace for you.

I grew up as a non-Christian with Catholic parents in a rough neighborhood near the Seattle/Tacoma airport. My dad was a very hard worker, a union drywaller, until he quite literally broke his back laboring to provide for our family. Growing up, I had the only dad in the neighborhood so he coached our baseball team, and friends would come to our house to hang out since my mom was often the only parent around while the single moms were at work. Though we may have gone to church on occasion, we had a giant Bible that was opened so rarely, I could've written “HELL” with my finger in the dust on the enormous book the size of the coffee table it sat on.

I was what you'd call a “happy pagan.” I didn't do anything too bad, didn't drink, didn't do drugs, and only fought guys who “deserved it.” I just didn't really care about God or religion. Funny enough, in high school, I met a beautiful pastor's daughter named Grace. She was not walking closely with the Lord, even though she was a Christian, and I was not saved but believed in some sort of “God” and tried to be a good person. Somehow, she knew it because she gave me a Bible and told me to read it. I wasn't fooling anyone.

I had no interest in that Bible until, one night, I was in my dorm room after moving across the state to go to college. I was getting a communications degree before the internet...just think about that. In fact, I rode my dinosaur to class every day. Anyways, I was sitting in my

dorm room after turning down frat party invitations – and there the Bible was. Then, I did an even crazier thing and started reading it.

There, in that dorm room, in the fall of 1989, everything changed when I read Romans 1:6 (NIV84): “And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.” When I read that verse, it was like a switch in my soul was flipped from “off” to “on.” It was supernatural, and I now knew I belonged to Jesus and wanted to read my Bible and go to church. Soon after that, some other Christian students at my school invited me to their church and Bible study. Everything changed as I studied the Bible, learned to talk to God, and got to know other believers.

At my first men’s retreat, I went out on a prayer hike along the river to talk to God, as the pastor asked us to. To this day, I still do this weekly, taking my Bronco up to the Arizona mountains, and it’s one of the most essential parts of my week. I couldn’t function without it. On this prayer walk, God spoke to me audibly. I didn’t even know He did that. He told me to do four things: 1) marry Grace, 2) preach the Bible, 3) train men, and 4) plant churches. My pastor confirmed this was the word of the Lord to me, and these have been the focus of my life and ministry ever since. I married Grace while we were still in college, and we planted a church in our mid-20s and then again in our mid-40s alongside our five kids. Since the beginning, I’ve preached verse-by-verse and, at the time of writing this book, have had the honor of teaching through 37 books of the Bible. By God’s grace, I’ll get through the entire Bible before I’m done.

Other than preaching through books of the Bible, the foremost priority of my ministry has been to train men. In today’s world, there is a complete lack of godly examples of fatherhood and manhood. More men than ever before are staying home from work, living with their girlfriends, lacking accountability for their actions, playing video games, and watching porn instead of pursuing their God-

given roles as husbands and fathers. When God called me to “train men” at the age of 19, like most young men, I was headed in a bad direction, and God saved me from myself and gave me a burden to help other men.

Before I was saved, I didn’t really have a need for God but, growing up, I did see a hard-working husband and father in my dad. In my roughly three decades as a senior pastor, bringing those two together – to train men to be both godly and hard-working husbands and fathers – has been one of the primary goals of the ministry God has called me to. And that’s the goal of this book, which is based on a sermon series from our Real Men ministry. (To find the full sermon series, scan the QR code below.) As an aside, I am self-publishing this book because no publisher would likely endure the ensuing war to cancel me. All proceeds are going to RealFaith Ministries to help me stay on offense and fight the good fight to get courageous Bible teaching out to the world.

As a husband, father to five kids, and grandfather to a growing parade of little blessings led by two grandsons who are future men, I pray that, as you read this book, you will be encouraged in ways you’re doing well and convicted in ways God would like to build you up to bless your wife and kids. Or, as we say at Real Men, “We build men up to bless women and children.” I pray that you’ll share this book with your dad, son, grandson, spiritual sons, brother, or any other men in your life and that God will use it to change lives and legacies.



Before we jump in to the following chapters, for fun and clarity, I have put together a little male/female test. This test will help you figure out where you're starting from. Ready?

1. Who has up to 13 times more testosterone, male or female? *Male.*
2. Who has more voice box cartilage and testosterone, causing a deeper voice, male or female? *Male.*
3. Who has hairier bodies from androgen sex hormones? *Male.*
4. Who has curvier bodies, hips, breasts, and buttocks? *Female.* (If you're a man and that's you, I'm sorry. Someone needs to lay hands on you and pray for you. You need healing, brother. You should pray about doing a sit-up.)
5. Who has wider hips for birthing a child? *Female.*
6. Who can nurse a child with nourishment? *Female.* (Our culture is so stupid that we talk about birthing people. Don't go on the internet.)
7. Who is stronger for hunting to provide for and fighting to protect the less strong? *Male.*
8. Who has thicker skin and denser, stronger bones, tendons, and ligaments? *Male.*
9. Who needs more iron because of menstrual blood loss? One, two, three, not it. *That's female.*
10. Who needs more food because they're bigger, stronger, and burn more calories? *Male.*

Ok, time to score this quiz. Give yourself one point for each right answer.

If you got zero to two right, you've been brainwashed and probably support transgender sports. You are the problem with our planet. There's hope, but you're not starting in a great place, and you probably went to a government school. If you got three to five, you lack discernment and/or are drunk (and you should sober up then take the test again to see if you can score higher). If

you got six to seven, you're morally blind in one eye. With eight or nine right, you still have something wrong with you. If you got all 10 correct, you're the last hope for the planet and deserve a steak. In the first chapter, we will start with what it means to be a man, which one of my favorite preachers, Charles Spurgeon, writes about in his book *A Good Start*:

When I say that a man in Christ is a man, I mean that, if he is truly in Christ, he is therefore manly. There has got abroad a notion, somehow, that if you become a Christian, you must sink your manliness and turn milksop...Young men, to you I would honestly say that I would be ashamed to speak of a religion that would make you soft, cowardly, effeminate, spiritless, so that you would be mere simpletons in business, having no souls of your own, the prey of every designing knave. Young men, I have tried the faith of Jesus Christ, and I have found it give me "pluck" — that is an old Saxon word, but it is exactly what I mean. It puts soul into a man, firmness, resolution, courage.¹

Chapter 1



M A N :
Own Your Identity

Growing up, I loved playing baseball and spent a lot of time in the crouch position as a catcher. As I was raising our children, whenever I needed to correct them, I would crouch back down in the catcher's position to look them in the eye so they could see I loved them. Since Jesus Christ, who has authority over us, came down to earth to look us in the eye, it seemed sensible not to be towering over my sons when taking teachable moments to discuss things they needed to learn from, repent of, and grow in.

Most every time I got down in a catcher crouch for a discussion with a son, I would start with a few questions.

"Who am I?"

"You're my dad," they would reply.

"Who are you?"

"I am your son," they would answer.

"How do I feel about you?" was usually the next question, followed by some version of the answer, "You love me."

Next, I'd ask, "Of all the people on earth who know you, who is the first person in line who is here to help you become a godly man?" Looking me in the eye, they would then say something like, "You are for me, dad, before anyone else."

If any of these answers were ever askew, I would first focus on making sure they understood their identity and our relationship before getting to the issue at hand. My assumption: *I needed to connect before I correct.*

As the Father's son, I know that I live and work *from* His love and not *for* His love. I know that our relationship, and His commitment to me, is at the starting line of our walk through this life together. I know that His relationship with me begins with grace, and that gives me courage, hope, and freedom to live a passionate life with the Father's blessing and help.

Because many, if not most, men do not have a healthy relationship with an earthly father, they do not understand their identity in relation to their Heavenly Father. We live in a world that is broken, confused, and flawed. As a man,

nearly everyone and everything has lied to, discouraged, and confused you.

My hope is that this book serves and blesses you because *you* matter. *Your life* matters. *Your marriage* matters. *Your kids* matter. *Your grandkids* matter.

You have been told that a strong man of God is a problem. That is a lie from the Father of Lies to discourage our Father's sons. You are part of His solution. When God decided to change the world, He became a man because men matter, and men of God are part of the solution for our fallen, broken, cursed, deceived, dark, and foolish world.

What is a man? Why did God make you a man? And what does God have for you as a man? There was a documentary that was produced by Matt Walsh of Daily Wire called *What is a Woman?*²², which is a great question. I wish they would do a follow-up called *What is a Man?* That's the question we're going to answer in this chapter and throughout this book.

A pastor friend recently told me that, right after the first day of their kids' school year, several men from his church came to him, and they were very angry. These dads

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love Jesus and their kids and take their responsibility as dads very seriously. When we were in school, what was at the head of our desks? The

students' name tags. Now, at the head of their kids' desks were not name tags but a rainbow with a sliding scale for the mythical gender spectrum. Each day, according to the school policy, each kid gets to decide what their gender is for the day. Then, the other children are supposed to appropriately speak to one another according to their ever-changing gender pronouns.

The point is this: we're no longer even identifying people by their name or by their God-given gender.

Instead, we're allowing children to make life-altering decisions about their gender and identity. Let me just say this: if much of your diet still includes crayons and glue, you're not ready to make major life decisions. At some point, numerous kids wanted to be a pony when they grew up, and thankfully, a sane adult chose not to take them in for a horseshoe fitting. While this sounds insane, a recent article says:

A California hospital executive and professor claimed children can identify as a mythology-inspired creature and claimed that this category of children love mermaids...Diane Ehrensaft, a self-identified "feminist" who supports a "gender revolution," is the director of mental health and chief psychologist at the UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital gender development center. She is also a professor at UCSF School of Medicine. The developmental and clinical psychologist specializes in pediatric "gender-affirmative care for transgender and gender-expansive patients."

She goes on to say that a child can identify as a Minotaur, a Greek mythological creature with a human body and a bull's head, if that's what they feel like they are, saying:

"I totally agree we are in the midst of a gender revolution and the children are leading it. And it's a wonderful thing to see. And it's also humbling to know [children] know more than we do about this topic of being gender expansive,"[...] during a 2018 talk at the San Francisco Public Library. Ehrensaft believes the transgender revolution is the next phase of the 60s feminist movement, which featured challenging stereotypes about gender.³

Kids today *are* dealing with this craziness, and parents are dealing with it too. Another friend pastors a church

in a more rural area. One of the girls in the high school identifies as a cat. Rather than getting her the mental health treatment she needs, they instead placed a cat's litter box in the girls' bathroom. This poor troubled teen actually uses the litter box. When mental health becomes a right, the crazies have officially taken over the asylum.

Making matters worse, parents are being told by lying professionals that if they do not support the gender confusion of their child, their child will kill themselves, and the parents will be responsible. This is an impossible dilemma to put a parent in – you can have a child who is mentally unwell or dead, and those are your only options. However:

[T]he Society for Evidence Based Gender Medicine (SEGM)...has published an important new research summary on this topic...that affirming someone's gender confusion or providing medical intervention via drugs or removing healthy body parts has had no substantial effect on reducing suicide rates...one finding remains remarkably consistent across multiple studies: despite the wide availability of "gender-affirming" care and especially in recent years, individuals who identify as transgender continue to struggle with a significant burden of psychiatric symptoms and remain at significantly elevated risk of morbidity and mortality...including deaths by suicide.⁴

If you are a young man, you need to be thinking biblically about your sex and gender to avoid the powerful and pervasive lies that are destroying generations of young men. If you are a father or grandfather, you need to safeguard and protect your own children or grandchildren from damaging brainwashing on matters of sex, gender, and sexuality.

Powerful demonic forces in our culture are taking children with healthy bodies and confused minds and

mutilating them.

The new study from British pediatrician Dr. Hilary Cass confirms what we've always known: Children presenting with sudden onset gender dysphoria are actually suffering from other mental health diagnoses—not true gender dysphoria. Her research debunks the gender ideologues' frequent talking point: that the imposition of medical "gender-affirming care" on mentally ill children is not only necessary, but life-saving. Cass' research instead reveals that children who think they are transgender disproportionately have mental health issues stemming from a difficult family situation or domestic abuse. They are also more likely to be neurodiverse and have a co-morbid autism spectrum disorder. Cass reveals that "gender affirming" medical interventions would not remedy any of these psychological issues. Effectively using such interventions would mean turning a blind eye to the real underlying psychological distress with which gender-confused children often struggle.⁵

If you are an actual normal man, the world calls your masculinity "toxic." The problem in our day is not toxic masculinity; it's the complete lack of masculinity from the White House to the outhouse. From top to bottom, our world is lacking strong, healthy, godly, vibrant, capable, confident, courageous male leadership. Those kinds of

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men set a good example for boys to aspire to, lovingly provide a safe environment for girls to grow up and become wives, and protect

gullible children, whose tendency is to trust adults, from evildoers with malicious theories from the Father of Lies.

MASCULINITY IS UNDER ATTACK

The world has a lot of problems, and the solution starts with men. So, it's an honor that you're reading this book. Let me talk first about sex, gender, and sexuality and the way we got into this total cultural disaster, this sociological experiment that is failing miserably.

If you're under 25 and went to college, your mind is about to melt and ooze out of your ears. How many categories are there for your sex? Two: male and female. It's crazy, I know. Sex is male and female, and this is your biological status. This is chosen by God, not you. If you've attended a public university or watched mainstream media lately, you might be very confused right now. You say, "How do I know which one I am?" If you have a mirror. That's how you know. We know someone is male or female based on their sex chromosomes, reproductive organs, and external genitalia, all true statements that have gotten me canceled on social media.

You may have heard the argument, "What about the babies born where their sex is unclear?" The percentage is small, with only .1-.2% of babies born with ambiguous external genitalia and another 1-2% have less ambiguous but somewhat confusing biological sex at birth. So, that's not really a good argument to erase long-established gender categories. It is tragic that some people are born with biological anomalies. However, the fact remains that, on average, what is natural and normal is males and females.

Sex and gender go together by God's divine design. Gender is supposed to flow from sex. We used to know this before we got educated beyond our intelligence. When babies were born, we used to say it's either a boy or a girl. We used to wrap them in either a blue or pink blanket. Now, we say the child will determine their gender around third grade, and we wrap the baby in a rainbow blanket. That's where we find ourselves – total confusion.

Our world has lost its mind about sex and gender.

We now have USA Boxing sanctioning biological men to fight women, which was previously called abuse, but now men punching women is apparently what equality looks like.⁶ We also have the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) posting breastfeeding guidelines for men. As a man who does not hit women or breastfeed children, I would humbly suggest that this is possibly, at least, a waste of taxpayer dollars.⁷ In reality, gender flows from God-determined sex then sexuality is attraction toward the opposite sex. But that's not the world we live in.

THE WORD VS. THE WORLD

This battle of sex, gender, and sexuality is a classic example of the Word versus the world. The battle is always between what the world says and what the Word says. There is nothing holding back the complete deceptive and demonic destruction of Western culture other than the Word of God.

The Church of Jesus Christ is supposed to live under the culture of the Kingdom of God. Jesus taught us to pray this very thing in Matthew 6:10: "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Paul says in Colossians 3:2, "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth." Jesus' half-brother says of the world in James 3:15, "This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic." He contrasts this a couple verses later in 3:17, saying "...the wisdom from above is...pure..." The culture of the Kingdom comes down to God's people, the Church, throughout the Bible in such ways as the falling of the Holy Spirit and the descent of Jesus to save sinners. To live Kingdom down is to live by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The world lives over the culture of Hell and pulls the demonic values of Hell up into the cultures of the world. Examples of worldliness include lying, stealing, bitterness,

sexual sin, murder, chaos, pride, and counterfeit spirituality. People in the world live by the power of the flesh.

Between the Church and the world is supposed to be the Word of God. The Word of God is the literal dividing line between the Church and the world. In our day, there is a growing pressure to move the line of God's Word on sex and gender. This is the sin of syncretism – polluting the Church with the world. This leads to apostasy – people who profess to be Christians denying repentance of sin in favor of tolerance or even celebration of sin. Those “churches” flying rainbow flags, officiating same-sex marriages, and honoring unbiblical gender pronouns are obvious examples. When the line of God's Word is moved, eventually, the Word of God is removed altogether, and the Church collapses into the world so there is no difference between the two. This is spiritual warfare as Satan and demons seek to rule the Church along with the world, just like they tried to overtake Heaven.

Kingdom of God
Church
Word of God

World
Hell

The only thing left that provides some sanity, some sense of order and law for human life and flourishing, is the Word of God. No longer is a grown man in a princess dress wearing lipstick a minority weirdo. If you want to truly be a radical minority today, read your Bible and believe the crazy parts like God is your Father, Jesus is the Son of God, and you too are a son of God. That will make you a complete weirdo in our day when the weirdos are now the majority.

There has always been, and will always be, constant conflict between the world and the Word. There was a

day when Western culture was rather positive toward Christianity; we displayed the 10 Commandments in public places, expected our politicians to believe in God, and had our weddings and funerals in churches. The

THE ONLY THING LEFT THAT PROVIDES SOME SANITY, SOME SENSE OF ORDER AND LAW FOR HUMAN LIFE AND FLOURISHING, IS THE WORD OF GOD.

world then shifted to neutral in relation to the Church – people did not really care whether you went to church and, if you were a nice person, whatever you believed was seen as good for you. More recently, however,

the world has become increasingly negative toward Christianity and the Bible.⁸

Today, the culture sees the Bible, and the God it reveals, as evil, bigoted, patriarchal, oppressive, and unjust. This includes social justice and demonic groups like Black Lives Matter, whose original mission statement on their own website said the following (until it was taken down and curiously removed from the internet):

We make space for transgender brothers and sisters to participate and lead. We...do the work required to dismantle cisgender privilege and uplift Black trans folk, especially Black trans women[.]...We build a space that...is free from sexism, misogyny, and environments in which men are centered[.]...We dismantle the patriarchal practice that requires mothers to work “double shifts” so that they can mother in the private even as they participate in public justice work. We disrupt the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure[.]...We foster a queer-affirming network. When we gather, we do so with the intent of freeing ourselves from the tight grip of heteronormative thinking, or rather, the belief that all in the world are heterosexual (unless s/he or they disclose otherwise).

The growing movement of cultural Marxism in the

name of social justice and groups like Black Lives Matter (attacking fathers, faith, and family) are, in large part, seeking to slander Bible-believing Christianity as evil and stop its growth altogether. Among young Brits, for example, nearly one quarter are open to banning the Bible as hate speech.⁹

I have only known the negative world having preached in large, secular cities. The kind of courage and clarity required in the negative world seems unloving, harsh, and too intense for Christians who wrongly believe we are in a positive or neutral world. There is a war for our kids and grandkids, and any pastor who does not believe that is part of the problem.

The *Intolerista* is having great success brainwashing emerging generations. The latest Gallup survey data shows that every younger generation is twice as likely to be something other than sexually straight, which means we may be a generation or two away from the end of Western civilization because you can only be fruitful and multiply if you understand male and female.^{10 11}

People educated beyond their intelligence are writing journal articles for the Devil with award-winning titles like “Theorizing White heteropatriarchal supremacy, marriage fundamentalism, and the mechanisms that maintain family inequality.”¹² Since you probably do not have a thesaurus handy, let me summarize this for you: White families with a mother and father raising a child are inherently racist, sexist, and homophobic. The author identifies as “she/her/hers,” which I find hilarious because I identify as a “white/heteropatriarchal/marriage fundamentalist” with five kids and a growing dance party of cute grandkids. As this gender cult/demonic deception possesses emerging generations through social media and education, research shows that younger generations have the worst mental health on record because they have been told that their genitalia and not their God is the center of the universe. Even the CDC admits that today’s youth have unprecedented mental health struggles.¹³

In the Word, sex is fixed. It's binary: male and female. Gender is fixed and is binary: masculine and feminine. Sexuality is fixed: one man and one woman in the covenant context of consummated marriage. This is God's divine design. God got it right the first time, and any changes we make are wrong.

In the world, sex is fluid on an intersex spectrum. Today, you might feel differently than you do tomorrow. Sex is not determined by God; it's determined by you. It's not fixed or binary; it's on a spectrum. Gender is also fluid and ever-changing. One day you feel masculine, the next day you feel feminine, and the next day you're somewhere in the middle. Sexuality is also fluid on an unfixed spectrum. Today, I'm attracted to a male. Tomorrow, I'm attracted to a female. My sexual identity, my gender proclivity, and my sexual reality are completely and continually moving targets. There's no consistency. This chaos creates mental health issues.

There's now a whole secular cult called *wokeism*. It's a non-religious but highly spiritual pagan cult that has overtaken Western culture. Everything God creates, Satan counterfeits. Woke is the opposite of being born again. In Christianity, you're born again; in wokeism, you're awakened to see how you're a "victim," not a villain. In wokeism, you're a good person, not a bad person. Nothing in you needs to change, but everyone else needs to change how they respond to you. In Christianity, when you get saved and are born again, you get baptized. The counterfeit of that in woke culture is coming out of the closet. That's their way of taking their private beliefs public and no longer being ashamed of their shameful behavior. Everything I'm saying here is highly offensive to the world, but it is fact.

There is great pressure, especially on pastors who are supposed to deliver a pure Word from God each week, to tolerate the demonic forces behind the pervasive perversion. In my book *New Days, Old Demons*, I explain how people live and die, but the demons remain the same.

In the Old Testament, Baal was considered the senior, mainly male, demon, the archenemy of God, worshiped for wealth, power, success, and status, and is mentioned over one hundred times as this demon was a constant problem. In the ancient world, his mainly female partner in crime, Asherah (also known as Venus), was worshiped with prostitution, pornography, and pleasure.^a To worship Baal and Asherah, sex cults arose that erased any of the God-given sexual boundaries in Scripture and promoted gender confusion, sexual sin of every sort, and tolerance and pride of these things in the greater culture. These powerful sexual demons were a problem throughout the Old Testament and especially prominent in the days of Judges when, as the closing line of the book reports after surveying 300 years of apostasy that sounds just like liberal mainline Protestant denominations that are abominations, “Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”^b

These same demons are powerfully at work in our culture, seducing God’s people into evil and sin, just as they always have. The rise in everything from worship of the environment as our sacred goddess Mother; greed that worships the demon Mammon in everything from crime to skyrocketing debt; murder of the innocents starting with the unborn; and the mainstream acceptance of pornography, polygamy, fornication, adultery, homosexuality, transgenderism, and every other sexual deviancy is all the work of Baal and Asherah waging spiritual warfare that manifests in our physical world.

These powerful demonic forces are referred to as a “god” or the “gods” throughout books of the Bible such as Judges.^c Like any business, government agency, or military fighting unit with human beings, demonic divine beings in the unseen realm also have a chain of command. At the top is the demon “Baal,” and working under them are the

^a Judges 2:13, 3:7, 6:25-30, 10:6 ^b Judges 21:25 ^c Judges 2:3, 2:12, 2:17, 2:19, 3:6, 5:8, 6:10, 6:31, 8:33, 9:9, 9:27, 10:6, 10:13-14, 10:16, 11:24, 16:23-24, 17:5, 18:14, 18:17-18, 18:20, 18:24

various demon “Baals.” Throughout the Bible, including Judges, when you see Baal followed by another name, it is often a location over which that demon has dominion. For example, Judges mentions “Mount Baal-hermon”^a, “Baal-berith”^b, and “Baal-tamar”^c. Today, there are demons who have dominion over geographic areas and, if reported in the Bible today, we would read of places like Baal-Seattle, Baal-San Francisco, Baal-New York, Baal-Washington D.C., Baal-London, Baal-Tokyo, or Baal-Amsterdam. Powerful demonic spirits rule over regions, which explains why various places have the same evils no matter who is in leadership – because the demons are running the show.

Throughout the Old Testament, in books like Judges, Baal is also often mentioned as working with Ashtaroh, or Asherah.^d This demon appeared as a female goddess of fertility and sex. The worship of Baal and Ashtaroh included sex without any limits, pleasure and indulgence of every kind, and even child sacrifice. Ancient artwork devoted to her was incredibly pornographic, as she is the demon goddess of the modern-day porn industry.

Demons are not engendered because they do not have a physical body. Demons, however, can appear as male or female. Throughout the Bible, while we never see angels involved in human sexuality, we often see demons involved in human sexuality, particularly with Baal and Asherah. Since demons do not have a physical body, they are transgender. Because they can appear as male or female, they operate on an ever-sliding gender spectrum. While God made us male and female in His image, demons want to remake us in their image and likeness – transgender, living on a gender spectrum, and having perverted sex lives.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is about the repentance of sin. Matthew 4:17 says: “Jesus began to preach, saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’” The

^a Judges 3:3 ^b Judges 8:33, 9:4 ^c Judges 20:33 ^d Judges 2:13, 3:7, 6:25-30, 10:6

counterfeit message of demonism is tolerance, which remains the primary message being preached by the world today. Behind the message of tolerance are the same demons working for the Jezebel Spirit. In Revelation 2:20, Jesus says to a progressive and tolerant church, who were perhaps flying a rainbow flag approved by a transgender bishop, “But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality...”

This is all driven by the porn industry. The more porn you watch, the more confused you get about sex, gender, and sexuality. The entire goal of pornography is to literally re-hardwire the neural pathways in your brain so you don’t understand sex, gender, and sexuality according to the Word. Instead, you’re corrupted according to the world. To be delivered, Jesus Christ must be the Lord over your loins.

The Jezebel Spirit is always at work in the Church, politics, and culture, seeking to hold positions of power to put forth false teaching and encouraging gender confusion and sexual sin, as was the case in the days of Elijah and later in the church at Thyatira.^a The Church needs leaders like Elijah who will stand up against the Jezebel Spirit to preserve the purity of God’s people by calling them to be repenting of what they had previously been tolerating.

WHILE GOD MADE US MALE AND FEMALE IN HIS IMAGE, DEMONS WANT TO REMAKE US IN THEIR IMAGE AND LIKENESS - TRANSGENDER, LIVING ON A GENDER SPECTRUM, AND HAVING PERVERTED SEX LIVES.

Jezebel is always looking for passive Ahabs who will tolerate so they can dominate. In a church, Jezebels always look for positions of authority, usually alongside a senior leader, so they can teach false doctrine, bring a

spirit of seduction, and cause gender confusion and sexual

^a Revelation 2:20-21

rebellion, just as in the church at Thyatira. An Ahab pastor, board member, or person on staff or in leadership is the entry point for the demonic. Nice, passive, cowardly, tolerant, fearful, weak, Ahabian men always have a problem with Elijahs – real men of God filled with the Spirit who stand up to real evil and have the head-on collision with the Jezebels who want you to tolerate them so they can dominate you. When an Elijah stands up to a Jezebel, you should expect the Jezebel to speak about how they were spiritually abused, not loved, and felt the leader was domineering. This is what counselors call projection: accusing someone who is not guilty of exactly what you are guilty of. Today, entire anti-ministries online are led by Jezebels, who are false prophets attacking Elijahs to generate false profits.

If you're a man, God made you a man. He didn't make a mistake by making you a man. The answer is not to be less of a man but to be more of a man like Jesus. The whole reason our culture does not understand what a man is supposed to look like is because they do not look to Jesus Christ.

IT ALL STARTED IN THE GARDEN

Here's what the Bible says in Genesis 1:27: "God created man..." That's mankind, and this is before sin entered the world. In the original Hebrew, "Adam" is mankind. The whole human race is named after our father, Adam. When God wanted to start humanity, He started with a man. When He wanted to save humanity, He came as a man. If we have problems, we need the men to be the beginning of the solution. This verse says, "God created man in his own image..." and right after that, it lists these crazy, binary sex categories saying, "...male and female he created them." The question is, "Are we still male and female after sin enters the picture?" Genesis 5:2 echoes it again: "Male and female he created them..."

Some people are going to come along, especially the

woke joke folk and the rainbow-wearing conga line to Hell, and say, “Not Jesus; Jesus was a hippie. He wore a dress. He was a vegetarian. He’s a pacifist. He’s on our team. He probably smoked weed. He had long hair.” They think Jesus would never say anything that was so offensive as male and female. But Jesus does. Jesus quotes Genesis. He says, “...he who created them from the beginning made them male and female...”^a Jesus says, “Hey, we’re still sticking with plan A.” There was no confusion. There was no sex or gender confusion until sin entered the world. God doesn’t depart from His original plan because God got it right the first time. All the pressure to conform to the corrupt world instead of Christ’s words is spiritual warfare.

Today, we see an attack on masculinity and femininity, and there’s a heavier war on men. You see this anytime you turn on the TV. The butt of every joke is the husband and father. You turn on a movie with your kids, and the dad is the dumbest person in the storyline. You turn on a sitcom, and the fool is always the husband and father. You go to work and, God forbid, you choose the wrong pronoun, because you’re going to get crucified by the perverted Pharisees in the Human Resources department. You send your kids to government schools, they brainwash them, and if you say something, you’re the problem. So, they seize your kids and make them property of the state to mutilate their genitalia and pump them full of drugs for the rest of their lives. This is the world we live in. It’s a suburb of Hell.

SATAN HAS A MARKETING FIRM

There is a gulf the distance of the Grand Canyon between being smart and wise. You can have an IQ that would make Albert Einstein blush, have more degrees than Fahrenheit, and be a useless idiot. Jesus says, in effect,

^a Matthew 19:4

“Don’t say something is stupid unless it’s stupid,”^a and this is stupid – transgender sports.

We used to have male and female sports, but now there’s no such thing as male and female, and we have males competing in sports against females. The first thing my dad told me was, “We don’t hit girls.” I still think that’s a good idea. There’s a dude who was born a man, goes into cage fighting, and then feels like he’s a woman, so he starts fighting women. He cracks a woman’s skull, and I talked about it online, and then people criticized me. I would fight back, but I don’t fight girls, and apparently he’s a girl. If you eliminate these God-given categories, you’re no longer able to deal with reality. Women are being beat up by men in the name of equality. It’s bizarre.

This includes the eradication of gender and absolute assault on our children. If you look at the LGBTQIA, the alphabet soup people, there’s a group that’s trying to add in an “M” for “minor-attracted persons.” We used to call them pedophiles. Apparently, Satan got a marketing firm and rebranded this idea. Minor-attracted persons are adults who are attracted to children. To paraphrase, Jesus said these people should get free millstone jewelry and a one-way boat trip to the middle of an ocean.^b

The world is telling our children, “God didn’t make you a boy. God didn’t make you a girl. And if He did, maybe God made a mistake and He sinned against you. So, we need to undo the error God has done, and you need to go explore your gender. To atone for God’s sin, we are going to cut your body and shed your blood to remake you and fix God’s sin of making you the wrong gender.” As Christians, we need to say three things. One, “No!” Two, “No!” Three, “Hell no!” God tells us who we are. God made us in two categories: male and female. Jesus atoned for our sin against Him by shedding His blood; we do not atone for His sin against us by shedding our blood.

^a Matthew 5:22 ^b Matthew 18:6

Whenever I talk about men, triggered fools say, “You hate women.” I actually married one, and I have two daughters, and at the time of writing this, I have a granddaughter on the way. I actually find women more enjoyable than men, to be totally honest with you. They smell better, they’re pleasant, and they tend to be more relational. So, I’m not anti-woman. Just because I’m *for* men doesn’t mean I’m *against* women. As we say at Real Men, “We build men up to bless women and children.” Since half of abortions are taking the lives of females, young women are getting sexually assaulted in record numbers, and we are encouraging men to shower in women’s locker rooms after crushing them in sports, I would strenuously argue that our woke world is not warm toward women.

But you need to know that this war on sex and gender is for your children, and it’s for the next generation. The world is taking children and saying, “You don’t have a sex, and you’re not actually male or female. You don’t have a gender; you can be very confused.” The world is setting them up for a lot of sexual experimentation as a child. In what universe does an eight-year-old kid

**JUST BECAUSE I'M FOR
MEN DOESN'T MEAN I'M
AGAINST WOMEN.**

have a sexual identity? If a kid is eight and sexual, somebody has committed a crime. That’s not education;

that’s indoctrination. Encouraging kids to explore their genitalia, along with their friends’ genitalia, is not helping; it’s grooming.

CHEMICAL CASTRATION OF MINORS

The *Associated Press* came out with a story from the World Professional Association for Transgender Health.¹⁴ The initials are WTH, which should stand for “What the Heck?” This professional association of people certified to care for children said sex-change hormones could be started for children as early as age 14. *14 years of age.* If

you feel like you were born the wrong sex, we're now going to give you medication to assault your perfectly healthy, God-given body that hasn't even finished puberty and isn't fully grown. Some of these prescriptions we're giving to children as young as 14 include the same chemicals that we give pedophiles for chemical castration. The article said this was two years earlier than the group's previous advice; the world keeps dropping the age to mutilate children. The Bible does not encourage us to *mutilate* a child in the way they should go but rather to *train* a child in the way they should go.

This article even said some surgeries are done at the age of 15. Did you make any dumb decisions at 15 years old? At 15, we don't yet trust kids with a car, but they can determine to mutilate their genitalia. This is complete insanity, and we keep lowering the age, and eventually we will also be lowering the age of consent so that adults can have sex with confused kids. The goal of moving the lines is always to end up with no lines. If you don't believe in sex, gender, and sexuality, then people obviously get confused. If you've been exposed to pornography, brainwashing, bad education, or sexual abuse, that's terrifying and traumatizing, and I'm sorry. But to not help someone through that, especially a child, and allow them to continue in that, is not loving.

This is especially true since some studies have shown that *most children actually outgrow their gender confusion*.¹⁵ This is actually a medical diagnosis called gender dysphoria, meaning your body and brain don't agree. So, your body is male, but your mind says you're female, or vice versa. We have two options: we can heal the brain, or we can mutilate the body. We, as a culture, have decided that we're going to choose mutilation and, in some states, it's not even legal to counsel someone to maybe reconsider that, if their mind is incongruent with their body, their mind needs to change.¹⁶ In our culture, the last thing we would ever tell someone is, "Just practice self-control. Maybe don't be sexually active for a while and see how you

are doing.” The best life lived in the history of the planet was Jesus Christ, and He left the planet a virgin.

We now have a culture that’s driven by sexuality and perversion, so we reinvent gender, mutilate the body, and attack God-given biological sex. I had the opportunity to interview Dr. Michael Miller, the former head of plastic surgery at The Ohio State University.¹⁷ On his first day on the job, the first surgery he was assigned was a transgender reassignment surgery. He couldn’t perform it because he’s a Christian. If the Great Physician made you a man, a human physician has no right to come in and mutilate your manhood. Dr. Miller ultimately had to leave his job because he wouldn’t perform these kinds of surgeries. He says you can’t change someone’s sex; it’s physically, anatomically impossible. But you can fake it. You can try to create genitalia that are of the opposite sex, but it’s not the same. There’s not the same pleasure; there’s not the reproductive possibility; there’s not the natural function of creation. You can pump a body full of testosterone or estrogen, but it’s still a male or female body that is now under attack from foreign substances for the rest of the person’s life. We are not fully aware of what the emotional, mental, spiritual, or medical toll may be long-term. What we are seeing is a trend of mass shooters who are transgender females on male hormones, but the media is trying to keep this fact quiet, including the mass shooting at a large church in Houston.¹⁸

We have now created an experiment on a whole generation of young people. Especially young men. They’re confused, they’re pressured, they’re culturally bullied, and they’re in harm’s way. The result is, for kids who walk this path, it gets darker and darker. The CDC, by no means a bastion of right-wing conservatism, has documented that emerging generations have record levels of mental health problems, depression, and suicidal ideation. It’s like we are having kids drink anti-freeze, are shocked when they aren’t healthy, and then decide we need the government to step in and make more anti-freeze for them to drink.¹⁹

The more we encourage this kind of gender confusion, the worse things get. Our “helping” is actually hurting. Kids don’t need to just be loved; they also need to be led. There is incredible cultural pressure to cave to this gender cult. Each year, there is an entire month – Pride month – devoted to these gender-confusing demons. Curiously, pride is the root sin that caused Satan’s Fall,^a and our Lord Jesus is repeatedly said to be humble, which is the opposite of pride.^b I’m Irish, and we have St. Patrick’s Day, so we get one day where you drink green beer, pat a leprechaun, and that’s about it. But Pride and Tolerance demons get a whole month. If a Christian accidentally goes to Target that month, they will see every aisle just preaching conversion to something other than God-given sex, gender, and sexuality.

At the end of the day, it may just be that people are hurting themselves, and if you really love them, you tell them that they’re hurting themselves and that other people are lying to them. When you’re working in your God-given sex, gender, and sexuality, you’re working according to God’s divine design, and you’re not fighting gravity and trying to row upstream against your Creator. Instead, you’re working with gravity and flowing in God’s grace. Repentance is like turning your canoe around and rowing downstream with God instead of upstream against Him.

ACT LIKE A MAN

You are a man. We have officially established that, if God made you a man, you’re a man. If you’re a man, what does God want you to act like? A man. Deuteronomy 22:5 says: “A woman shall not wear a man’s garment, nor shall a man put on a woman’s cloak, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God.”

God looks down and sees two groups of people: male and female. He wants men to look and act like men and

^a Ezekiel 28:17; 1 Timothy 3:6 ^b Matthew 11:29; Mark 10:45; Philippians 2:5-11

for women to look and act like women. I'm glad my wife, Grace, doesn't look like me. I'm not complaining at all. If I woke up and looked at myself as the object of my desire for the rest of my days, I'd throw up and go back to bed. I'd think, "My life is over. There's no reason to continue."

God's people do things differently. Even all the way back in Deuteronomy, Moses dealt with drag queens, large men wearing clear heels, and petite women who desperately wanted to grow a beard and could never figure out how to get an Adam's apple, much to their frustration. Paul says that knowledge puffs up, and people with degrees can be arrogant, wrongly thinking they are progressively trending into new cultural territory not yet explored. God had been dealing with naughty, confused people who don't understand which bathroom to use since the bad old days. The first time a bearded transgender guy wearing a dress and heels walked into a church I was the senior pastor of was in the mid-1990's. Anyone who has lived in a bright blue urban dot has seen the future, and it makes every day look like Halloween meets *The Purge* at an Elton John concert.

Ultimately, God is saying, "Everybody else does things, but my people are going to do things differently." The word *holy* means different. As God's men, we're going to do things different. We're going to do sex different, marriage different, parenting different, money different, gender different, everything different than the world that does not know our God. If you're a Christian, you're a weirdo, a minority, an outlier, a freak. Wear it proudly; everyone else does. Today, the true rebel is a heterosexual guy who drives a truck to work so he can feed his family and tithe to his church. That's the only rebellion left, because no one is doing that.

As an homage to the old guys reading this book, here's another verse, and this one is in the King James Version. It says, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit

the kingdom of God?”^a So, who’s not going to make it into Heaven? It continues, “Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind...” Effeminate men will not inherit the Kingdom of God. God made you a man. He made you to act like a man.

MEN SHOULD BE CHRISTLIKE, NOT CHAUVINISTIC

In our culture, men tend to be pushed too far to the left in confusion, which can cause them to overreact on the right with chauvinism. These are the guys who think that bullying, domineering, and intimidating women and children is a manly thing to do. That’s not a terrific man; that’s a terrible man.

One example is the “Red Pill” community, which takes its name from the movie *The Matrix*, where Keanu Reeves’ character pops a red pill to free his mind from a simulated world and instead enjoy genuine reality. Their general view of the world is that female oppression is a silly myth, and men are the ones getting raked over the coals. Because of

**EFFEMINATE MEN
WILL NOT INHERIT
THE KINGDOM OF GOD.**

evolution, men and women are different, and men are basically superior. Women should serve men and children, and men should have sex with a lot of women and not be expected to emotionally care for them. This is an overreaction to feminism and what happens when people do not know the Bible and God’s divine design for men and women.

Chauvinistic men will brag about how many women they have slept with and their “body count.” Chauvinistic men will date and sleep with multiple women at a time, bully women, and brag on social media about their sexual exploits for fellow bro-hos to admire. Christian men should not be chauvinistic men.

A good, godly man filled with and led by the Holy

^a 1 Corinthians 6:9

Spirit blesses women and children, is not confused about himself, and isn't overbearing and domineering. He's loving and present, his wife feels secure, and his kids love him. This kind of man will stand up for his family and kneel down for his Lord.

1 Corinthians 16:13-14 [HCSB] says, "Be alert, stand firm in the faith, act like a man, be strong. Your every action must be done with love." A man is to be both lion and lamb, and Jesus shows us as men how to be both. Women feel safe around Jesus, and children flock to Jesus because He's loving. The book of Revelation also describes Jesus as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah"^a as well as "the Lamb who was slain."^b To be a man like Jesus is to be a lion *for* women and children and a lamb *with* women and children. If you're always a lion, you're going to harm women and children because you're unsafe. If you're only a lamb, you'll be a weak coward and let someone else harm women and children as you avoid conflict and hardship. The goal is to stop bad guys but not to be a bad guy.

For most of my ministry, I have seen women with traumatic father wounds initially triggered by my voice and presence. Over and over, as they stay in our church, listen to my preaching, and understand my fatherly heart for them, they begin to heal from abusive and dangerous fathers and father figures from their past. For example, there was a young woman who had a very abusive and dangerous father that she cut off from her life. The first time she was in a crowded room filled with people, she sensed my presence and heard my voice, and her anxiety caused her to flee the house. Today, she smiles and visits with me at church, knowing I am a lamb *with* her but will always be a lion *for* her. As men, it's important for us to understand the damage done by men, especially husbands, fathers, and grandfathers, who are a lion *with* women and children. By being a lamb *with* them and a lion *for* them, God can use us to start to heal and deliver them.

^a Revelation 5:5 ^b Revelation 5:12, 13:8

The key to Christian masculinity is to study the life of Jesus and learn what it means to act like a man. In a book I wrote called *Spirit-Filled Jesus*, I write that Jesus' emotions are mentioned some 60 times in the four gospels. The Bible says Jesus had humor, marveled, grieved, loved, rejoiced, and was sorrowful, troubled, distressed, sad, angry, and glad. Jesus had the full range of emotions, and He demonstrates them in a masculine way. Most unhealthy men think there are feminine and masculine emotions. This would mean women say they're sorry, not men; women cry, not men; women are affectionate, men are not. This isn't true. Men and women both bear the image and likeness of God and have the same emotions; they're just expressed in masculine and feminine ways.

Jesus is perfect, and He experienced the full range of emotions. The shortest verse in the whole Bible is "Jesus wept."^a I have two daughters. My daughters know me as a lamb. They've seen me cry more than anyone. If you have a daughter, you know the cute face of your princess is like kryptonite. Her face melts your heart. I love being a girl dad with all my heart.

A couple of years ago, we dropped our youngest daughter off at college and got her moved in. When it was time to go, I went to pray for her. Guess what happened? I sprung a leak. I looked like I had just won Miss America. I couldn't stop crying. It was a hot mess, minus the hot. Then my daughter saw me, and she started crying and said, "I knew you were going to cry, and then you'd make me cry." My daughters make me cry all the time. My heart is open to my daughters, and I love them dearly. Every time either of my daughters is in the room, I kiss her on top of her head and tell her I love her.

I have been faithful to my wife since our first date on March 12, 1988. I have never raised a hand against any woman. On one of our first dates, an ex-boyfriend, who was stalking her, came barreling at us out of the dark

^a John 11:35

on a motorcycle, and I jumped in front of her ensuring that, if one of us was going to get run over, it would be me. I wasn't a Christian at the time, but I was a man, so I did what men should do – get between bad guys and vulnerable women.

To act like a man as God intends is not to act like a man as you would see the world – very confused, passive, and either feminine or chauvinistic. Men should be like Jesus. If you drink whiskey and eat meat, I'm fine with that. In fact, I'll come to your house so we can do those things together. But at the end of the day, I could get an orangutan to drink whiskey and eat meat; to be a man must require more than that.

So, when the Bible says, “Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love,”^a women and children should feel like a lamb is with them but, if needed, a lion will be there to protect them.

REAL MEN, NOT PERFECT MEN

Part of the brokenness in our country stems from the fact that, according to our Father and His Word, we don't just raise children – we raise sons and daughters. There are some commonalities in raising sons and daughters but, biologically, chemically, and hormonally, they are male and female. If you, like me, have raised both sons and daughters, you fully understand that boys and girls are different. At some point, everyone who has raised a son thinks, “Now I believe in evolution. This kid is a few steps back on the evolutionary chart.” Until a boy has a full testosterone bath and gets to a point of maturity, he is at risk of complete self-destruction all the time. But then, his sister gets her period and becomes a young woman with increased emotional sensitivity, and the dad is like, “Whoa! Help! Wife, please, now!”

^a 1 Corinthians 16:13-14

Here's the language of the Bible: it speaks of "men" or a "man" 4,000 times, a "husband" over a hundred times, a "wife" over 400 times, a "woman" or "women" 600 times, "sons" 4,000 times, and "daughters" 700 times. Just reading those words triggers some people, but God does not care because His Word is a very unsafe space for unrepentant sinners. Part of the world's problem is that they don't know what a man is or does, so they don't know how to take a little boy and grow him into a man. Men are far more important, vital, and necessary than our world thinks. Arguably every single cultural problem, pain, and peril is because men have failed to do what God created them to do. The only solution is not more government but better men. The bestselling t-shirt at our church was a quip from one of my sermons, "More Fathers. Less Government."

If you commit to reading this book, you don't need to be good, you don't need to be tough, you don't need to be right; you just need to be honest to get started on your path to manhood. That's why we call our men's ministry "Real Men." If we called it "Perfect Men," Jesus would come, and He'd be alone. We wanted to have a better turnout, so we called it "Real Men."

Wherever you're at, just start there. Do you have a wife and kids? Great. Do you have a girlfriend who's pregnant? Not great. You did the fire, aim, ready process, but it's not too late to turn things around. You don't need to pretend you have it all figured out. Just be honest and

**THE ONLY SOLUTION IS
NOT MORE GOVERNMENT
BUT BETTER MEN.**

repentant, and God can turn around your life and legacy. There aren't a lot of places or people in this world that are here to help men. There's a group called the National Organization for Women but no National Organization for Men. You can get a degree in Women's Studies, but the hairy pitted, non-binary, pronoun police professors do not also offer a degree in Men's Studies. There's no class on how to be a man. The strip club will take your money and

put your hepatitis shot to work. The sports bar will feed you wings, pour you a beer, and let you yell but doesn't have a lot of wisdom to offer. Most churches are run by men who might die if shot with a Nerf gun. But who is there to help? That's the goal of this book.

If you're reading this book and you're a man, you matter. I don't care where you start; things can get better. Don't worry about your starting line; stay focused on His finish line. Keep running the race set before you as a man of God. If a man surrenders himself to his Heavenly Father and wants to be a good son, the Father is very gracious to pour out blessing and help that man. How do I know?

I grew up down the street from a few strip clubs near where Ted Bundy and the Green River Killer were serial killers. I did not know Jesus. When I was 17, I met a pastor's daughter and started sleeping with said pastor's daughter. You get cuts in the line to Hell for that. That's where I started. But now, she's my wife, and she's teaching women, and I'm teaching men what not to do, because that's what we did. I started with a cranial-rectal insertion so deep I could not see daylight. God has a funny sense of humor using me to train men.

If there's hope for me, there's hope for you. We all start in a bad place in one way or another. If you got it wrong, God can help you make it right. All you have to do is just start by saying, "You're the Father, I'm the son. Father, help me become like your Son, Jesus." The "want to" precedes the "how to," and I pray this book gives you some practical steps to become a man more like Jesus. We will start in the next chapter with worshiping your Father, because we become like who or what we worship.

Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion

1. Do you agree that the Bible should be the dividing line between the Church and the world? If not, why?
2. What is most concerning and/or frustrating about what culture is teaching emerging generations about

men and masculinity?

3. What is the difference between a strong Christ-like man and a chauvinistic man?
4. What did the Holy Spirit highlight in this chapter for you? Why do you think He emphasized that issue for you?

Chapter 2



SON:
Worship Your Father

Have you ever heard the saying, “Like father, like son?” Sometimes, what’s true in the physical is also true in the spiritual. Not only are sons like their physical fathers, but spiritual sons can be like their spiritual fathers. I’ll give you an example.

I oftentimes wear boots because no one needs to see my hairy toes. I’ve been wearing boots since I was a little boy, and someone recently asked me, “Why do you wear boots?” They add an inch, which is helpful because, at this point, my sons are all looking down on me, so I’ll take what I can get. The Bible says the last will be first. Hopefully, my resurrected body will be like eight feet tall, and I can dunk over my sons, but until then, I’ll wear boots.

The other day, I was thinking about the real reason why I wear boots, and I remembered my dad wore steel-toed boots to work every day as a construction worker, a drywaller. I remember when my mom took me to the store and said, “Marky, here are your tennis shoes,” and I loved and looked up to my dad, so I said, “No, I want boots because I want to be like my dad.” I even got a little lunchbox, toolbox, and hard hat just like him, and when he’d let me, I’d jump in his truck and go to work with him because I wanted to be just like my dad.

The same was true for my grandpa George. He was a diesel mechanic, and he wore the same thing – boots and jeans – although he eventually switched to overalls because he gave up on anything with a waistline. When it came to dessert, he seemed to sing the old worship line, “I surrender all.” I loved my grandpa with all my heart, so I also wanted to be like my grandpa.

Men understand wanting to be like their dads and granddads, but most men don’t like or understand worship. Most men come to church for the sermon and leave when the singing begins. So, in this chapter, I want to look at worship from a masculine perspective.

Let’s go back to the beginning of the chapter and the phrase “Like father, like son.” God and Satan are both

fathers with sons, so you better make sure you have the right father. Which father you worship determines whose son you become.

GOD IS A FATHER JUST LIKE WE ARE

1 John 3:10 says, “By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil...” Here’s the big idea: There are two fathers, and they have sons. Satan is a father, and he has sons. God is a father, and He has sons. So, it’s really important for you to determine who your father is and whose son you are.

When it comes to God as Father, Jesus transforms our understanding of God. In the Old Testament, it mentions God as Father around 15 times. Almost every time, it’s corporate and not individual. So, God is *our* Father, but

**GOD AND SATAN
ARE BOTH FATHERS
WITH SONS, SO
YOU BETTER MAKE
SURE YOU HAVE
THE RIGHT FATHER.**

He’s not *my* Father. The language isn’t as warm and personal as what I would say toward my sons. For instance, my sons would say, “You’re my dad,” and I’d say, “You’re my son.” It’s very personal and intimate. But their

understanding was more national than personal.

Jesus then comes and is called the Son of God – like Father, like Son. Jesus Christ comes as the Son of God, and He starts calling God “Father.” He is the first and only major religious leader in the history of the world with any significant influence who refers to God as Father in a very personal way. About 65 times in the first three Gospels – Matthew, Mark, and Luke – He calls God “Father.” In John’s Gospel, Jesus calls God “Father” an astonishing roughly 100 times. His favorite name for God is Father.

God is a Father, and Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Then, the disciples come to Jesus and ask, in effect, “Teach us how to pray because we don’t know how to do that.” The first thing Jesus says is to pray to “Our Father.”

The key is this: if you want to learn how to pray, get to know God as Father. If you want to learn how to worship, which is praying in song, get to know God as Father. Once you know who your Father is, you can become a son who's like your Father. That's the essence of prayer and worship. A loved son who has a present father naturally speaks to him, listens to him, and becomes like him.

Research has proven that "young men learn a lot about how to be a man from their dads. This is an intuitive finding, but we had little empirical evidence of it until now. Confirming that dads 'pass on' their masculinity beliefs to their sons has far-reaching implications."²⁰ What is true of physical fathering is also true of spiritual fathering. Men in a church become like the pastor or father of the church family. Men who worship God as Father become sons increasingly like their big brother Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God.

Jesus changes and radically alters literally all of world history. The word He uses for Father in the original language is "Abba." Sometimes it's mistranslated as daddy, but it's not daddy; it's father. Daddy would be the kind of word a little kid would use for their dad. For instance, right now, I have three sons who are young men, and their voices are as deep as mine. They don't call me daddy; they call me father or dad. I call my dad pops, father, or dad. I don't call him daddy because I'm not weird, and my dad would hate that.

Sometimes, people pray nonsense like "Dear Daddy God," and my gag reflex triggers the thought, "If you're four years old with a binky, then you can call God 'Daddy.' Otherwise, just call him 'Father,' okay?" That's the language Jesus uses.

Here's what Jesus says in John 8:44: "You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires." Jesus says to evil men, "You want to do what your dad does." True or false, if you have a dad and you're the son, odds are you're going to want to do what your dad does. The verse continues: "He was a murderer from the

beginning, and does not stand on the truth...he is a liar and the father of lies.”

Jesus shows up, looks at religious guys, and says, “Your father is the devil. You want to do what he does. You say the lies he says. If you can hurt someone or destroy something, cancel something or crucify someone, you’re going to do it because you’re a murderer just like your old man.” Not exactly what you’d want to hear Jesus say to you. Rather than repenting of their sin, the religious leaders only proved Jesus’ point by murdering Him, since their old man was a murderer. Make no mistake, the Devil’s sons are often very religious and very unrighteous.

**EVERY MAN
LEAVES A
LEGACY, AND
THE OPTIONS
ARE CURSING OR
BLESSING.**

GENERATIONAL CURSES AND GENERATIONAL BLESSINGS

Have you ever seen a family line, generation after generation, where each person is just demonic and evil? That is a generational curse. This explains why God commands that some people groups be wiped out – because they are demonic to the core and only increase their evil deeds from generation to generation. The converse of that is if you have a father who loves the Lord and loves you, you grow up to love your father and love the Lord, so it’s a generational blessing. It’s movement towards life, not death, generation after generation. Every man leaves a legacy, and the options are cursing or blessing.

No man is completely independent and autonomous. Many men like to say, “I stand on my own two feet.” That’s a lie, and the Father of Lies told you that. Every man has a father not just on earth but beyond the seen realm, and that’s either God the Father or Satan. Who your divine father is determines what kind of life you live, what kind of legacy you leave, and what kind of man you are. In the context of worship, it’s this big cosmic understanding

of “Like father, like son.”

So, what is worship? Worship is not just a genre of music. It includes music, but it’s much bigger than that. Worship is not something that starts and stops. In Hebrews 13:15, it says we continually offer it up. It’s not something that begins and ends; it’s a lifestyle. In addition, worship isn’t something that just happens in the Church. It happens in church to be sure; it happens when we sing together for sure. But it’s bigger and much broader than that.

The world is not divided into people who worship and people who don’t. The world is divided into people who worship God and people who worship someone or something else. Everyone worships. Everyone is always worshipping someone or something. What I want you to see is your life from the perspective of worship. Who do you worship? What do you worship? How do you worship? Worship is internal and external. It’s a love for God as Father internally and a lifestyle externally. It’s saying, “I do love my Father, so I want to live like my Father.” If you love God as Father and you are a son of God, you want to follow your Father’s example. You also want your Father to say, at the end of your life, “Well done.” That’s what every son wants to hear from a good father: “I’m proud of you, I’m grateful for you, I love you, and I reward you.”

Worship is both public and private. We worship when we’re in church; that’s public. Worship is also what we do at work, how we treat others, and the decisions we make; that’s also public. Worship is private in that it’s also what happens when you go home and the door shuts. Worship is what happens when you go to the liquor cabinet, click onto the internet, make everyday decisions, and spend money. It’s public, where everyone sees it, and it’s also private, and only the Father sees that. He sees all.

Hebrews 13:15–16 says, “Through him [Jesus Christ] then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have,

for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.” The offering up of the sacrifice of praise, that’s singing, and the doing good, that’s living. If you’re a guy who loves others and serves others, the goal is to have a lifestyle of service and sacrifice, which is your worship. The worst thing is if a guy has the singing but not the living. That’s what we call a hypocrite. In church, he shouts, “Praise Jesus! Yes and amen, brother!” and then he goes home, he’s mean to his wife, abusive to his kids, he never repents, and he’s a hypocrite that Jesus calls “...twice as much a son of hell...”^a – he’s varsity demonic and probably in leadership at a church, like Judas. The person he is in private is not the person he is in public. The real you is who you are in the dark.

A real man worships in private when only God sees and in public when everyone else sees, and they’re the same person. A person who is truly a man who worships God sings in church but also lives a life of worship the rest of the week. Practically, God’s sons also worship in their car, at their house, at their job, at the grocery store, at their kid’s sporting event, and in their bedroom. You’re always worshiping someone or something wherever you are.

MEN ARE MADE FOR DOMINION

Everyone everywhere is always worshiping. Genesis 1:26 says, “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion...’”

Let’s just pause here for a second. If you’re a man, you need to know you were made for dominion. That’s *why* you were made. But in our culture, we discourage this out of men at a very young age. “Don’t be ambitious. Don’t be aggressive, driven, or competitive. Don’t seek to lead something or change something or rule somewhere. That’s toxic masculinity.” To that, I would say, “If the person

^a Matthew 23:15, NASB

who told you that is waving a rainbow flag or wearing a medical mask, just feel free to ignore them, because they have the same discernment level as an oak coffee table.” They don’t know what they’re talking about. Men are made for dominion, rule, and authority and, if God’s men don’t rule, then Satan’s men will. It’s very simple. Either God’s sons exercise dominion or Satan’s sons exercise dominion.

If you’ve raised a son, you know they’re always trying to find their dominion. I’ve seen this with our three sons and am beginning to see it in our grandsons. At the earliest possible age, boys climb to the highest place in the house so they can survey their dominion. My boys also liked to sword fight (with a plastic weapon, of course, since they were not raised on the set of *Game of Thrones*) and test their strength from a very young age. When they hit a certain age, their mom had a harder time parenting them. She’d report to me, “They’re not listening like they did when they were little.” It’s because they were made for dominion, but they’re not yet ready for it. If you’ve seen a young man around the teen years, he wants dominion, but he’s still not ready for it. He’s like a dog chasing a fire truck; if he catches it, he doesn’t know what to do with it.

At the end of the day, what we need to do with young men is not discourage their desire for dominion but direct it. You want to rule something? That’s great. How about starting with this: *Rule yourself*. Before you tell the world what to do, get a belt, keep it on, don’t mess around with girls – you know, baby steps – and have dominion over your drawers. You want to rule? Rule your finances. You want to rule? Rule your diet. Rule your intake of alcohol. Rule yourself. First things first, have dominion over yourself. Then, get married to a woman and expand your dominion with her as your princess at your side helping you expand the kingdom. Start a company, buy a house, get some land, have some kids, do ministry. It’s all about dominion.

But over the past few years, especially during COVID and lockdowns and ridiculous, nonsensical government

foolishness, our culture told young men, “Just stay home, have no plans, no ambition, no goals. Don’t have dominion over yourself, and don’t seek to lead anyone or build anything.” As a consequence, we have a generational epidemic of guys who have mental health issues because they chose to go backwards instead of forwards, and no one ever won a battle by mastering the art of retreating. They’re depressed, they’re addicted, they have no fathers. I was recently talking to one of my sons about it, and guys his age are going on YouTube to figure out how to talk to girls and how to leave the house. It’s just horrifying.

If you’re a young man, here’s my encouragement for you: Have dominion over yourself and then seek to rule in the spheres of authority God would give you beyond that. If you don’t know how to do that, find an older guy

**IF GOD'S MEN DON'T
SEEK INFLUENCE,
LEADERSHIP, AND
DOMINION, SATAN'S
MEN WILL.**

at your church to mentor you and be like a spiritual father to you. Spend time in the Word of God, and learn from the countless positive and negative examples from men on every page. Put down

your phone, pick up your Bible. Stop getting advice from your friends, and go find a father. You are a man; you are not a little boy. It’s your job to figure out your life, and it’s not the job of any man to come find you and hold your hand like when you were three years old. God is a Father who will honor your seeking of wise counsel from godly older men.

If God’s men don’t seek influence, leadership, and dominion, Satan’s men will. One way to view world history is as a spiritual conflict and battle between the Father and His sons and Satan, the Father of Lies, and his sons. One of the lies Satan tells in order to neutralize God’s men is, “You’re not needed. You’re not important. You’re a problem, not a solution. A true man is passive and not active.” That all comes from the Father of Lies, who is setting up the cultural and political landscape so that his sons can conquer, exercising demonic dominion.

Let's go back to Genesis 1:26-28:

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion...'"

That's His word to us. The language here is that we are made in the image and likeness of God. It literally means we are made to mirror Him. The sole job, goal, or objective of a mirror is to accurately reflect whoever or whatever is in front of it. If you look in a mirror, for better or for worse, you see your reflection. God made you, and He made you as His mirror. You are to reflect Him. That's what it means to image. It means to mirror or reflect. God is our Father, and we are His sons. And what were we made to do? We reflect our Father. Like Father, like son.

This is precisely how men worship, by reflecting their Father. Why do you forgive others? Because your Father forgives. Why are you generous to others? Because your Father is generous. Why do you tell people they're wrong and need to repent? Because that's what you heard from your Father. Like Father, like son. We're all made to worship someone or something. If we do not worship our Heavenly Father, we are vulnerable to the Father of Lies.

A BIG, AWE-INSPIRING HOLE IN THE DIRT

Have you ever been to the Grand Canyon? My family and I live in the Grand Canyon State. Why do people go there? To feel small. To be in awe. To point out the obvious, it's just a big hole in the dirt, but people travel from all around the world because it's a really big hole in the dirt. It's amazing, and it shows you that people were

made to be in awe and to feel small. We were made to be in the presence of something far greater and grander than ourselves. Ultimately, that longing is fulfilled by getting to know God as your Father. People want to live for a movement, experience, or purpose bigger than themselves.

The first two commandments in the Bible are these: First, there's one God and, second, you worship Him alone. The rest of the commandments flow from this.^a

Don't "bear false witness," meaning don't lie. If there's a God and all you do is worship Him, can you worship God and be a liar? No, because our God tells the truth. The Father tells the truth, the Son is the truth, and the sons of God need to tell the truth. You can't worship your Father and be a liar.

Don't "commit adultery." If there's one God and you worship Him alone, is it possible to worship sex instead of God and make sex more important than God? No. Just as Jesus is faithful to His bride, the Church, the Father's sons are to be faithful to their wives.

Don't "covet your neighbor's house." If the Father gives you something, you need to be content with it. If you are not content with what the Father has given you, you will sin by coveting what He has given someone else. This one lesson alone, if learned, would give men permission to stop worshipping their job and income to get a bigger house and nicer car to impress people they do not know and, instead, come home to kiss their wives, have a tea party with their daughter, and wrestle with their sons.

If you get the first two commandments right, the Father will help you get all the other commandments right. This allows you to both enjoy your life and rejoice when others are blessed.

Everyone is always worshipping; the difference is who, how, where, and what we worship. When we worship someone or something other than God, the thing we're worshipping may not be bad, but it becomes bad when it

^a Exodus 20:1-17

takes God's rightful place of worship.

If there's one God and you worship Him alone, you can have sex with your wife, and I would highly encourage it. If there's one God and you worship Him alone, you can drink alcohol without being an alcoholic if your

MEN WORSHIP THEIR WAY INTO TROUBLE AND WORSHIP THEIR WAY OUT OF TROUBLE.

conscience does not constrain you otherwise. If there's one God and you worship Him alone,

you can make money without being dishonest to cut corners and increase wealth. Simply stated, if you get the worship issue right, you can generally get all the other issues right. Rather than figuring out how to fix all the pains, problems, and perils in your life, the simple focus on worshipping your Father will work. It has in every generation without exception.

WORSHIP YOUR WAY IN AND OUT OF TROUBLE

Men worship their way into trouble and worship their way out of trouble. For the alcoholic, he worships alcohol. The way out is to worship God because you can't worship God and alcohol. The sex addict worships sex and pleasure. You cannot be a pervert while worshipping God. Theologian Thomas Chalmers (1780–1847) wrote about “The Expulsive Power of a New Affection.” His big idea was that, if you get into trouble because you enjoy a pleasure, the way to defeat that sin is to replace it with a deeper, richer, fuller affection – namely the worship of God our Father.

Oftentimes for men, sex, gambling, anger, rage, alcohol, and drugs are just a dopamine hit on the front of the brain. In that moment, like Esau, we trade our birthright for a bowl of soup.^a We forget the long range and just think of the short term. We trade our legacy for what is temporary. Satan will give you pleasure today to

^a Genesis 25:29-34

cause you pain tomorrow.

When it comes to worship, ask yourself these questions.

1. Who or what weighs most heavily in your life?
2. Who or what do you make sacrifices for?
3. What is your greatest hope or dream?
4. What is your greatest fear?
5. Who or what motivates you to get up every day and live your life?

Examine your schedule, budget, social media scrolling and posting, text threads, conversations, emotions, and what makes you happy or angry. The word heavy or weighty indicates priority, and the biblical word is “glory.” When the Bible uses the word glory and it says to “glorify your Father”^a or “whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God,”^b that’s a weightiness or heaviness. Simply stated, this is saying to yourself, “Well yeah, I like sex, but I enjoy God more, so He is heavier. I like comfort, but I enjoy God more, so I’m willing to be uncomfortable. I like money, but I enjoy God more, so I’m not going to steal to get money.” God should be heavier than the temptations because the temptations are for idolatry, which is to allow someone or something to become heavier than God.

**SATAN WILL GIVE YOU
PLEASURE TODAY
TO CAUSE YOU PAIN
TOMORROW.**

In Hebrews 13:15-16, the Bible talks about making sacrifices. One of the worship words in the Bible is “glory” and another is “sacrifice.” We make sacrifices for the person or thing we hold in the position of glory.

You only have so much time, energy, or money, so you spend these things on what you find important.

Some guys stop smoking, but then they start eating and trade bad lungs for a big gut. Another guy used to be angry, upset, and in control, but now he has isolated himself in an attempt not to get angry at others, trading

^a Matthew 5:14-16, NIV ^b 1 Corinthians 10:31

bad relationships for no relationships. If you worship anything other than God, you get yourself into trouble. If you start worshiping God, you'll stop worshiping people and things that are not God and get yourself out of trouble.

I'll give you an example. A few years ago, I was talking with an international ministry leader. He's been married for over 50 years, is a world-class leader, loves deeply from the heart with a big smile, and if every man were like him, the world would be healed. At the time, I was a young man before my bangs went to be with the Lord. I asked him, "How do you stay out of trouble? How do you stay on the right path? How do you walk with God? How do you not get off course? How do you overcome sin?" He just looked at me dumbfounded, and after a long, awkward silence, said, "I don't know." I was very discouraged – if this man did not know the secret to being a man of God, my future was hopeless. He looked at me and continued, "I don't know. I just spend a lot of time with God, and then, I guess, I just don't get in trouble."

That was simple but profound advice. I've never met a guy who thought, "I was walking with God. Next thing you know, I'm in Vegas in a viral video wearing my underwear as outerwear because I spent the night dressed like Elvis, pounding shots and chasing gals in clear heels, and I don't remember how it ended." There's nobody who walks with God into sin. So, the goal is not to avoid sin but to stick close to your Father. Are you looking at porn? Are you angry? Are you spending your money foolishly? Are you drinking too much alcohol? Are you on the couch so much that you could be convicted of being a cushion? Then you're not imaging, or mirroring, your Father.

When my kids were little, we'd go to a fair, or we'd be traveling internationally in a big airport somewhere with crowds. I didn't tell them all the places they shouldn't go; I just told them to stick close to dad. I told them, "I love you. You're my child. You don't need to worry about everything. You don't need to be afraid of anything. You

don't need to understand everything. You don't need to remember everything. You just need to stick close to dad, and you'll be ok." Worship is sticking close to your Heavenly Father.

It doesn't matter how old you are; you're still His son. At 53 years of age at the time of writing this book, I'm still His son. I may be a father to my sons and a grandfather to my grandsons, but I'm still a son of my Father. Worship is sticking close to your Father because like Father, like son. That's what worship is for a man.

Let's look at one more Scripture. How do Christians worship? We worship by the Spirit through the Son to the Father. It's profoundly Trinitarian, which means it's emotional, spiritual, and relational. Here's what Jesus says in John 4:23: "...true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him." The Father has more sons than He does worshipers. Not all His sons are also His worshipers. He's seeking sons who will worship Him.

A SON AND A WORSHIPER

Do you know a guy who's a son but not a worshiper? The Father adopted him, but he's not really like his Father, and he's not trying to become like his Father. Don't feel bad if that's you. We all have ways and days that we're not like our Father. We call that sin. You may be a son, but the problem is you're not a worshiper. The Father is seeking not just sons but worshipers. John 4:23 says we worship in the Spirit. So, God the Holy Spirit is in you if you belong to Jesus Christ.

Here's the good news for a man: Worship is easy for us to understand because Jesus is our Big Brother. The Father sent the Son to live without any sin, die for our sin, forgive us, raise from the dead, give us newness of life, and put the power of the Holy Spirit in us so we can worship. The Holy Spirit is worshiping the Son and Father all the time, and He lives in us to teach us how to worship

through the Son to the Father. We are sons of God filled with the Spirit of God. So, what does it look like to be a son who worships the Father? Like Jesus.

God has made this really easy for men. You may be thinking, “What do I do? What should I look like? What’s the end product?” Jesus. God became a man. As a man, I appreciate the shortcut we have as men in understanding God. So, what does it look like to live as a worshiper of the Father? Jesus.

This is where Jesus, we’re told in 2 Corinthians 4:4, is the “image of God.” He’s mirroring God. In Colossians 1:15, Jesus is said to be “the image of the invisible God.” If you want to know what the Father looks like, look at the Son. Philip, one of Jesus’ disciples, once asked Him, “Lord, show us the Father...”^a to which Jesus replied, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.”^b

You may love Jesus because He’s the Big Brother, but you struggle with God the Father because you have a father wound. Maybe your father was absent, abusive, domineering, overbearing, ungodly, unhelpful, or unwise. But Jesus says, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.” He’s the perfect mirror that reflects the character, love, grace, forgiveness, courage, and strength of the Father. If you belong to Jesus, you’re going to become like the person or thing that you worship, and I want you to worship the Father by following the example of the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit – the same Spirit that empowered the life of Jesus. God is calling you not to just be a son but to be a son of God who worships his Father. Sometimes, this requires tearing down the strongholds that, growing up, your earthly father allowed into your life, as someone or something other than God was worshiped.

^a John 14:8 ^b John 14:9

WORSHIP AND STRONGHOLDS

If you served in the military, you are very familiar with the word “stronghold.” A stronghold is a secure base of operations. From it, you plan, strategize, and attack your enemies. Then, after you attack, you return to your safe, fortified compound so you can plan your next attack. What happens if an enemy combatant or an invading military force does not have a stronghold? They’re vulnerable. They’re doomed. So, the difference between winning and failing in a war is whether you have a stronghold.

The Bible says that our war is not just against flesh and blood, but powers, principalities and spirits.^a What we see in Judges 6:25-26 is spiritual warfare and worship as Gideon breaks a generational stronghold in his family to instead worship the Lord as it says,

That night the LORD said to him, “Take your father’s bull, and the second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it and build an altar to the LORD your God on the top of the stronghold here, with stones laid in due order. Then take the second bull and offer it as a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah that you shall cut down.”

Gideon’s father allowed a demonic stronghold in his house. This means that Satan now has a base of operations in the family. He can make plans and come out to attack members of the family. Then, once he does damage, he and his demon minions retreat back to their secure fortress or stronghold, where they plot to do more damage and harm.

Both Satan and God want to set up a stronghold – a base of operations – in your house. Here is a question for the men: Who decides whether God or Satan sets up the

^a Ephesians 6:12

stronghold in your house? As the head of household, you do. It's your decision whether Satan sets up a stronghold in your house or our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, sets up a stronghold in your house.

There are two ways that men allow or cause strongholds in their household. Some men work with Satan to build that stronghold in their house; other men are more passive and allow other people to decide what stronghold gets established in their house.

You must remember this: If you tolerate evil, evil will dominate you. Evil never stops itself. That's why God made men - to stop evil. You need to think of your home as a place of war and battle. Think of competing forces wanting to set up a stronghold. It's either God and the angels or Satan and the demons. If they are living in your house, they have a stronghold. From there, they are planning to either bless or curse, help or harm your family. For example, did you grow up where the liquor cabinet was the demonic stronghold in your home? Or was your father's demonic stronghold a stash of porn magazines?

Perhaps the most insidious stronghold in a home is a phone. Through the phone, lies, porn, interruptions, fear, anxiety, and disruption come into a home. As head of your home, you need to set an example by turning your phone off, or leaving it in your car, so that it is not a stronghold that allows the demonic entrance into your domain.

It's not enough to simply recognize a stronghold. We must acknowledge it, destroy it, and replace it with worship in the Holy Spirit. Paul gives us a blueprint in 2 Corinthians 10:4 for how to do this, as he's talking about how our battles tend to be more spiritual than physical: "For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds." We need to destroy them before they destroy us. That language of "taking captive" is military, battle language. Let's say you take someone from opposing forces as a prisoner of war. In the ancient world, you would put a spear under their throat, walk them up to your commanding general, and

threaten to destroy them if they didn't tell the truth.

So, Paul is saying that when you hear something, see something, or believe something, you need to put a proverbial spear to its throat. You need to bring it to Jesus Christ, our great King and Judge. You need to make sure that whatever is being said or believed is the truth and not a lie. If it's a lie, you need to slit its throat and tear it down.

Every man needs a stronghold. Every marriage needs a stronghold. Every family needs a stronghold. God would happily set up a stronghold at your house. God would love to be the stronghold for your marriage, children, grandchildren, and life. God would love to move into your house and set up a secure base of operations. Then He and those angelic forces that are working with Him will be making plans to bless, help, love, protect, and serve everybody in your family. Psalm 37:39 says, "The salvation of the righteous is from the LORD; he is their stronghold..."

The past is not the future. You are not your father or mother. There is hope for you. There is a future for you. There is deliverance for you. There is new life for you. There is forgiveness for you. There is the Father's heart for you. You don't need to be ashamed of where you've been. You just need to move on, tear down whatever has been holding you back, surrender, and submit the stronghold to the Lord. Then, invite the Holy Spirit in, take a deep breath, go to bed, wake up tomorrow, and start a brand-new life. You'll see God start to heal your marriage. He'll start to heal your children and your grandchildren. He will start to heal you!

CHICKEN WINGS AND CHURCH WORSHIP

Why do men not worship in church? I recently had a single mom in our church tell me, "It looks like you pastor a sports bar." I said, "Well, if you have any chicken wings, I'll pray about it, you know." I asked her, "What do

you mean?” She said, “This church is filled with a lot of dudes. And they’re like...real dudes. Trucks, guns, beards, Bibles, and smiling wives watching them play with their children.” I asked, “How does that make you feel?” She said, “Amazing. Safe. I’m a single mom, and I want my boys around these guys.” Exactly correct.

When you go to church, oftentimes, you don’t see a lot of men. Statistically, 60% of churchgoers are women, and the least likely person to go to church is a young single man. Who needs church the most? A young single man. So why aren’t they in church?

Historically, what has happened in our nation has also affected the Church. In many generations, like during World War II, young men left the country to go to war. There were almost 13 million active-duty military, which was around nine percent of the whole population going to war. War took the young men out of the country and placed them under strong male leadership with brotherhood who had a battle.

Meanwhile, back at home, who’s left in the Church? Women and children. We love women and children, and

STATISTICALLY, 60% OF CHURCHGOERS ARE WOMEN AND THE LEAST LIKELY PERSON TO GO TO CHURCH IS A YOUNG SINGLE MAN.

they also need to be in church, but the church no longer had strong young men. So then, the women in the church decide

they’re going to run the church. All of a sudden, church starts to look like women decorated it. (As an aside, whoever decided mauve was the official color of Christian décor, we forgive you, but it’s hard.) Since there are few men in church during war, all the programming is for the women and children. So, they hire an older guy who isn’t off at war to be the pastor. He’s retired, and he’s kind of like a really kindhearted grandpa who’s going to love women and children.

Next, they need to find a guy who will lead worship. This is where things get offensive. All the strong men are off at war, so they find a really nice guy who can lead

worship. The least masculine guy is leading worship. I'm not criticizing; I'm just observing. In the Old Testament, the worship leader is a guy named David, a shepherd, which, in those days, was actually more like a cowboy with a gun than your typical mental picture of a docile man in a tunic. This guy isn't like David.

So, we have a nice older pastor who's a grandpa and his confused grandson leading worship, and they emotionally connect with women and children. Then, the men return from war, and they show up in church. They think, "I'm not going to listen to that old man; I can't relate to him. And I can't sing like that guy. I can't get in that octave unless I have an injury. I would need to not wear a cup to hockey night, and then I could sing like that guy." The men walk into what feels like a feminine environment; it sounds like a feminine environment, and it seems like it's for women and children. The men of the Church left and never came back.

True or false: Can women feel comfortable in a masculine environment if it's not angry or aggressive? True. Can you take your girlfriend to a sports bar? Yes. Do comfortable, healthy, heterosexual, normal men feel comfortable in a profoundly feminine environment? No. I've never seen a healthy guy ask his gal, "Can I go to the nail salon with you?" If you're that guy, you need to know, with the full love of Jesus, you are a weirdo. Women will go to a nail salon, but men won't go. Women *will* go to a sports bar with men. But what the Church did was create an environment that works for women and children but repels men. This explains why boys making the move into young men leave the church as well. Churches need to be places where men feel welcome and women and children feel safe and blessed. Otherwise, we will continue to have thriving ministries for women and children but not men. This is one of the greatest urgent crises in the church today.

God is a Father; Jesus Christ is the Son of God. To be a true man like Jesus is to be tough and tender, lion

and lamb, worshiping the Father with daily decisions, sacrifices, and service, as well as singing songs. In the next chapter, we will learn how God is a Father who likes to instruct His sons in wisdom for all of life.

Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion

1. Who or what did your dad and mom worship?
2. What generational curses and blessings have you seen in your life and family?
3. What 1-2 areas do you need to grow in as a worshiper of the Father?
4. Where has God given you dominion? (e.g. home, work, school, church) How are you doing at exercising that dominion? What could be improved?

Chapter 3



S A G E :
Learn Your Lessons

As kids, we've all watched cartoons where a bottle shows up and out of the bottle comes a genie. The genie would say, "Give me your wish, and I'll grant it." In the Old Testament, the genie in a bottle story is 1 Kings 3. God shows up to Solomon and says, "You get one request." Think about that for a minute. What would you ask for? He thought about money, which would be nice. He thought about fame, which would be great. He thought about power, which would be incredible. Do you know what he settled on?

Wisdom. He was likely thinking, "If I could ask for one thing, I'm going to ask for wisdom because, if I have wisdom, I could probably make some money, get some power, and have some influence." He decided that the most important thing to ask for was wisdom. God was so pleased with his answer that He gave him not only wisdom but wealth, power, and influence. He gave him everything. The truth is, once you get wisdom, God can provide the rest. Wisdom is the one thing that unlocks everything.

As a man, wisdom is one thing our Father asks us to ask Him for.^a More than anything, to grow as a man requires wisdom. Our foolish culture, however, does not know the difference between being educated and being wise.

EDUCATED STUPID PEOPLE

Do we have more educated people than at any time in the history of the world? Do we have access to more information than any other generation in the history of the world? Are people still stupid? If you answered yes to all these questions, you're paying attention.

Going to school and having information doesn't make you wise. You can be filled with information and still make a series of stupid, cataclysmic decisions. As men, the question that determines your worth from the world's

^a James 1:5

perspective is, “What was your GPA?” or “What’s your IQ?” or “What degree do you have?” or “How much money do you make?” We are asking the wrong questions. “Are you wise or foolish?” That’s the issue. The truth is, we have a lot of people who have an education, or a lot of information, but they have no wisdom. This is the crisis in our culture.

I’ll give you an example. Political leaders have decided we’re just going to forgive college loans. People bought classes they didn’t have money for. Now, they can’t afford to pay off what they went into debt for because they couldn’t afford it in the first place. So, the answer is, “Let’s just give them money, and that’ll fix their problems.” Who will pay for all of this? People who did not go into debt, are working a job, and paying their taxes. Here’s the logic: People who are bad with their money cannot pay off their debt, so we will punish people who are better with their money, steal their money in the form of taxes, and then be applauded for how generous our thievery is by people who got a degree but not wisdom.

A better plan would be for our government to train people in how to manage money with classes in school on financial stewardship and require anyone taking out a college loan to first pass a test on financial wisdom. Instead, we elect stupid people who make stupid decisions to bail out other stupid people. When the money runs out, our government goes into debt. The US federal government now owes \$100,000 for every man, woman, and child. If you break that down, the debt is actually over \$200,000 for every taxpayer, because 40% of Americans pay no taxes. Folly. That is the best word for this plan that shows no sign of slowing down. Even if people don’t believe in Jesus, they should still believe in math.

God’s divine design for human flourishing is a man and woman marrying, the man taking the primary responsibility to be the economic provider, and the wife being the primary emotional caregiver. If they stay married, he works hard to generate revenue, and they

make sacrifices to benefit their children, the result is a flourishing civilization. As a result, marriage is one of the strongest contributors to economic success.

An article reports:

In a 2017 study, scholars from the Urban Institute, Cornell University, Brigham Young University, and the University of Virginia found that, all other things being held equal, states with higher-than-average marriage rates among their working-aged adults had higher-than-average economic performance. They also found that if marriage rates for households with children were the same today as they were back in 1980, median income in the average state would be nearly 11% higher and child poverty would be about 25% lower.²¹

The world we live in is explained in Romans 1:22: “Claiming to be wise, they became fools...” Our culture

WE HAVE A GENERATION THAT CAN TAKE A SELFIE AT THE UNEMPLOYMENT OFFICE BUT DOES NOT KNOW HOW TO CHANGE A TIRE, MAKE A MEAL, OR DO A LOAD OF LAUNDRY.

and cultural leaders know nothing about sex, money, gender, family, government, leadership, God, or life. Our nation has higher literacy rates, more education, and access

to more information than ever, and people are stupid. We have knowledge, but we do not have wisdom. The Bible mentions wisdom over 400 times. The Bible has an entire genre of books called the Wisdom Literature – Proverbs, Song of Songs, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, Job, and James.

There is a massive difference between knowledge and wisdom. How many people have gone to college and received a degree but not gained wisdom? How many have graduated and didn’t know what to do with their career, pots and pans, genitals, credit card, schedule, and chose an accountability group of Jose Cuervo, Jim Beam, and Johnny Walker? We have a generation that can take a selfie

at the unemployment office but does not know how to change a tire, make a meal, or do a load of laundry.

Knowledge tells you what to believe; wisdom tells you how to behave. Knowledge gives you facts to learn; wisdom gives you faith to live. Knowledge will challenge your mind; wisdom will change your life. Knowledge is about information; wisdom is about transformation. Knowledge comes from school; wisdom comes from the Spirit. Knowledge helps you get good grades; wisdom helps you live good lives. Knowledge is loved by the haughty; wisdom is loved by the humble. Knowledge is theoretical; wisdom is practical.

You can get a master's degree and not know what to do with your money, schedule, or diet. You can get a master's degree and have no idea how to pursue or marry a woman or be a husband and father. Education is not bad, and knowledge is not evil but, without wisdom, it just leads to a parade of smart people who are educated beyond their intelligence who think they're wise when they're, in fact, foolish. That's the world we live in. Most of what guys have been told about being a man is stupid. It's not wise; it's foolishness. Thankfully, the Bible has a lot of wisdom to help God's men mature.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:11, "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways." Is it a sin to be a child or childish? Not if you're a child. You can't look at a four-month-old and demand, "Stop acting like a baby." They are a baby, and that's how they act. It's not a sin to be childish unless you're a man. When you're a man and you're acting like a child, that's a problem.

FAILURE TO LAUNCH

Human beings go through life stages. We will examine them in succession.

1. **Baby.** A baby makes no decisions and generates no income. When you're a baby, all the decisions

and provisions are made for you.

2. **Child.** This is around school age. You're not independent, but you begin to have a little freedom and autonomy. In school, a child decides whether to obey their teacher, be friends with a certain person at recess, and do their homework. They start to make some decisions but not all decisions. They haven't yet made provisions for themselves, but they start to take more responsibility as they have chores at home, which can earn an allowance, so they start to earn a bit of income.
3. **Adolescent.** At this stage of development, around the teen years, the child begins to differentiate from their parents, siblings, and peers. They start to get more independence by getting a driver's license and being away from home more than in prior seasons of life. They get a phone and begin working to make their own money. They are not ready to launch, still needing help from mom and dad, but are on the sliding scale from dependence to independence.
4. **Young Adult.** This is around college age and, ideally at this stage, the child has crossed the line from dependent to independent. Not fully launched, they should be moving in the direction of paying all their own bills, living in their own residence, and making their own life decisions. At this stage, the child should have moved from the passenger seat of their life into the driver's seat, with the parents now in the passenger seat to help and coach. At this stage, the child has to pick their own path with God. Will they walk with Him or walk away from Him? Will they get connected to a church? If so, will it be the same church as their parents', or another church?
5. **Adult.** At this point, you should not be living with or getting money from your parents (unless it's a unique gift like an inheritance or help with the

down payment on the purchase of a home) but should be making your own decisions and provisions. This is the time that your father is overjoyed because you are not driving his car, spending his money, eating his food, or using his cell phone. Your dad can now finally walk around his house in his underwear. The child is now a fully launched adult, ready to marry, have children, and then repeat the cycle of bringing up the next generation.

The Western world has men stuck in stages 3 or 4 and not making it to stage 5. During COVID, a demonic spirit of fear ruled the planet, encouraging young men to drop out of school, quit their jobs, move in with their mom, sit on the couch, wear a mask, order food delivery, and wait for the government to send them money. This was a return to breastfeeding for boys who can shave. The Pew Research Center has reported the historic number of young men living with their mother:

A variety of factors contribute to the long-run increase in the share of young adults living with their parents. The first is the postponement of, if not retreat from, marriage. The median age of first marriage has risen steadily for decades. In addition, a growing share of young adults may be eschewing marriage altogether... as many as one-in-four of today's young adults may never marry.²²

The lack of a father in many homes leads to the ongoing presence of an adult son being over-mothered. Because a woman is a caretaker by nature, if a father is not present to push the son out of the nest to become a man, the mother will continue to treat him like she did when he was a little boy – paying his bills, cooking his meals, and washing his clothes. These are not men moving forward; they're boys moving backward. We took a whole

generation of young men who should've been moving toward independence, and guess what we did? We moved them backward toward dependence – on their mothers and on the government. Now, they are struggling with mental illness. The CDC research has proven that the pattern of over-mothering, under-fathering, and expanding government has only caused record levels of mental health issues that show no signs of slowing down.²³

A CBS news story says of youth depression: “The U.S. surgeon general has called it an ‘urgent public health crisis’ – a devastating decline in the mental health of kids across the country...the rates of suicide, self harm, anxiety and depression are up among adolescents - a trend that began before the [COVID] pandemic...”²⁴

Young men are not launching into independence, marriage, and fatherhood, and they're depressed – as they should be – because they were made to be a man, not a child. They've lost their purpose; they've lost their way. Some have lost their confidence. Because they don't have wisdom, they don't know how to get a job, get married, buy a house, or raise a kid. Unlike the fool's parade to debt and Hell, God's sons need to push through stage 5 and get to stage 6.

6. **Mature Adult.** When you are a child, people take responsibility for you. When you are an adult, you take responsibility for yourself. When you are a mature adult, you take responsibility for yourself, and others - your wife, your kids, and your grandkids. You can no longer be selfish; you must start memorizing all those Bible verses about being humble and serving others like Jesus. Because you have people depending on you as the family head, you cannot be lazy, disorganized, or unintentional with everything from your days to your dollars. This is the season I am in as a husband, father, and grandfather. This is the season I am in at church as senior pastor and spiritual

father. I cannot implode my life because I have too many people depending on me. Generations of my family, and the families of those I lead, need me to keep the faith and finish my race, as Paul says. I cannot quit the race, and I must not trip over my own feet.

I will now tell you a secret: Being a man of God is not hard; it's impossible. An entire generation of young men is living with their mother rather than moving out or moving in with their girlfriend, who makes more money, rather than getting a career job to buy her a house and make her a wife, because they see that being a man is a lot of hard work.

One statistic would be funny if it were not true. In Italy, 72.6% of men ages 18-34 live with their parents.

**YOU CAN HAVE HIS
ANOINTING OR YOUR
COMFORT, BUT YOU
CANNOT HAVE BOTH.**

A 75-year-old woman had to get an attorney to evict her sons, ages 40 and 42, who refused to pay for anything, do any chores, or get a job. This is such a widespread problem that a category of men is referred to as “bamboccioni” (big babies).²⁵

It's easier to play video games, watch porn, eat ice cream for breakfast, masturbate, and take a nap than to be a man. This is easier, but not better. The Holy Spirit will never show up to help you do any of those things because they are stupid and wrong. However, if you lean into the impossible task of pushing through these life stages with the goal of getting to and remaining in stage 6 until you stand before your Maker to get your life's performance review, the Holy Spirit will show up every day to help you. God does not anoint boys who can shave. God only anoints sons determined to be men of God. You can have His anointing or your comfort, but you cannot have both.

Proverbs 13:22 says, “A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children...” No matter what life stage you are in, this should be your goal. Get up

every day thinking about both your life and your legacy. What legacy will you leave financially, emotionally, relationally, and spiritually? Who will be standing on your shoulders to build upon what you have given them? Will your sons and grandsons be better, godlier, healthier men than you? This is what I think about every day and pray you do the same. You are a son of God, and you are here with a purpose. Generations are depending on you. Women and children, many of whom are not yet even born, need you to be the man God has created and called you to be. No one can replace you. If this is what you commit to, the Father will help you, Jesus will lead you, and the Spirit will anoint you with the power you need to live your life and leave your legacy!

CULTURAL CRISES

In our culture, we have two simultaneous crises: young men are not moving through the stages of maturity, and older men are imploding instead of fathering.

First, young men are delaying their responsibilities and maturity as long as possible, often made possible by over-mothering and under-fathering. This is a generation of fools making videos for social media bragging about their immaturity as if they were wise. We have extended adolescence into an indefinite life stage. We now have men in their 30s with the maturity of boys in their early teens from previous generations. The average man is over 30 when he marries for the first time. That means for 30-plus years, he's been single and selfish. It's not a sin to get married later, but it is a sin if it's because you're irresponsible and you don't want to grow up and take on masculine responsibility. This is why men who are godly and wise are probably going to get married younger than the cohabitating cowards who think that the Trinity refers to dating, relating, and fornicating. They're not going to just live with their girlfriend. They're not just looking for a good time. They want to have a good marriage, raise a

good family, and leave a good legacy. They want to father, not just sire.

If you're a younger man, let me give you a fatherly word of advice I give my own sons and all the young men I know. The sooner you start taking on responsibility, the further ahead you are. Think of it like a NASCAR race. Right now, nearly every guy is drunk in the pit with a trophy girl. If you get your car out of the pit and start driving laps, you are 10 years ahead of the average guy. In addition, you're not wasting those 10 years. You're investing them. You're not wasting them on five broken, traumatized dating relationships. You're investing them in one marriage. You're not risking having a bunch of children out of wedlock. You're investing your life preparing to be a father. You're not wasting your money on alcohol, recreation, leisure, and stupid bro buffoonery. You're investing in wisdom and home equity for the future. The absolute collapse of our culture is an incredible opportunity for sons of God to exercise dominion, be fruitful, and multiply.

Research proves that, despite most people cohabitating before marriage and not marrying until they are 30 years or older, God's way is still the best way. The sociological facts confirm the path that my wife and I, along with our three married children, have discovered.²⁶

To have the lowest rates of divorce, a young man should do the following four things:

1. Be a Christian in a Bible-based church with a community of support and accountability.
2. Do not cohabitate prior to marriage.
3. Get married at an earlier age than your peers (e.g., your early to mid-20s).
4. Prepare for being parents and providing a loving home for your child(ren).

The research proves that this plan works. Why? Because this is God's plan for His people. While it's not a sin to marry over age 30, many people fornicate and cohabitate in relationships that are not secure, like

marriage. Therefore, if you are a young man and want to enjoy your life and not divorce your wife, the best thing to do is believe what the Bible says and not the lies the world tells.

It takes a man to raise a man. If you have a godly father who invests in you, you are a living miracle. Thank your dad, honor him, and praise the Father for your father. If you are a young man who does not have this kind of father, you need to actively find godly older men who have the Father heart of God and want to invest in young men. These are spiritual fathers. When Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4:15 (HCSB), “you can have 10,000 instructors...but you can’t have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel,” he means there are 10,000 more social media influencers than spiritual fathers. One spiritual father is more valuable, helpful, and meaningful than 10,000 online content creators. Paul serves as an example of a spiritual father. He calls Timothy, Titus, and Onesimus his “sons.” He also tells the very immature and ungodly Corinthian church that God sent him to father them and help them pass through the stages of maturity.

The best way to figure out how to walk with God for 50 years is to find a guy who has walked with God for 50 years. The best way to figure out how to have a great marriage is to find a guy whose wife smiles a lot because her husband is her blessing. The best way to figure out how to make and steward money is to find a guy who believes in Jesus, working, and math. The best way to figure out how to have a great family is to find a great family and see if you can hang out with them at their house and observe them in their natural habitat.

This is where I started. I met Grace at 17 and met Jesus at 19. I had college friends who loved Jesus, but what I really wanted was to get to know some godly older men. So, Grace and I found a wonderful church led by a Bible-teaching man of God. There, I met a guy with 12 kids and one wife. It seemed like they got along pretty well based

on the outcome of their time together. He carried a big Bible, was joyful and kind, and liked praying for people and sharing the gospel. He also liked to recommend Bible study tools and good books for young men to read. He invited Grace and me to dinner at his home to meet his family. I wanted to marry Grace, have a big family, and serve Jesus and was very excited to see what this looked like. We hung out with his family and ate dinner at their table. Before the meal, they all held hands and prayed and, if I remember right, sang a bit of worship. The family was very normal, joyful, creative, and fun. After dinner, the family played games and hung out, and the television was not turned on because there wasn't one in the living room. Bible stories were read before bedtime, the kids did their chores and got prayed over by their dad, and there was a sense of calm and joy because of the presence of God in the home. We volunteered to babysit their kids every Friday night so they could get a date night, and we learned about family by serving their family.

Some years later, I met one of the wisest and godliest men I have ever known. I really wanted to learn from him, knew he was busy, and did not want to waste his time. So, I prayed a lot that if God wanted him to be a man I looked to for wise counsel, he would agree to meet with me. I asked, and he said he was willing to meet once. I asked how to prepare, and he told me to get a notebook, prayerfully journal out specifically what I wanted to discuss, show up on time, bring the notebook, take notes, and then agree to put into practice what he taught me. The hour I spent with him was one of the most insightful times of my life to that point. I prepared and showed up early. We opened in prayer, and I said very little and wrote down a lot. We closed in prayer, and he said he could not meet regularly, but when I needed him, he would make time for me. That was a few decades ago, and I have an entire folder of notes on my laptop from times with him. He is a fatherly sage, and he has made incredible deposits in my life. We don't talk often, but every time we do, he unlocks

areas where I am stuck and blesses me tremendously. He's a spiritual father. Men like that are more precious than gold. Find those men, and God will use them to change your life.

Before you buy a house, talk to a mortgage broker and a realtor. Before you get married, get wise counsel from a godly married couple. Before you choose your kids' school, meet with multiple godly families to survey your options. In life, there is always a dumb tax to be paid. You can either pay your dumb tax by making mistakes or let someone else pay your dumb tax by learning from their mistakes. That's what wise men do.

All of this brings me to our second cultural crisis. Older men are failing instead of fathering. This epidemic is known as a "midlife crisis." It is also called "grey divorce," as so many older couples are divorcing that a new category has been added to our cultural vernacular.²⁷

This is when a foolish older man trades in his 54-year-old wife for three 18-year-old girlfriends. Rather than spending his time and money to help his sons and sons-in-

YOU CAN EITHER PAY YOUR DUMB TAX BY MAKING MISTAKES OR LET SOMEONE ELSE PAY YOUR DUMB TAX BY LEARNING FROM THEIR MISTAKES.

law launch, he travels a lot, picks up expensive hobbies, and decides that selfishness is what he's earned after years of working hard. In these instances, a man who is supposed to be a mature

adult reverts to the adolescent or young adult stage of life. He sets a pile of money on fire for divorce attorneys, splits whatever is left with his broken wife, and ignores his kids because he has traumatized them. He finds a young gal who is hot like Hell and has a father wound, and he pretends to be like a dad to her in exchange for sex with him. The entire scenario is grotesque. The thought of a dad dropping off his daughter at kindergarten then later dating one of her school friends should make you throw up in your mouth.

These are, arguably, our biggest two cultural crises.

Younger men are not moving forward, and older men are going backward. Until that problem is fixed, we're a doomed culture in decline, certain to die unless we get better men. The lid of any culture is the men. You cannot have a better culture unless you get better men.

WISDOM ABOVE FOOLISHNESS

Getting an education is easy; getting wisdom is hard. Throughout Proverbs, the son is continually exhorted to go on a treasure hunt for the priceless wisdom that is often hidden in this foolish world. Wisdom comes from God the Holy Spirit, and He only bestows wisdom on those who are seeking to honor and obey the Father. The reason most men, young and old, are foolish is simple: They do not have the Holy Spirit. However, if you are the Father's son, you have the Holy Spirit, which means you have the unique opportunity to grow in wisdom.

Ephesians 1:16-17 says, "...remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom..." The Holy Spirit brings wisdom. You don't need to be smart or educated to be wise. You need to be humble enough to study, learn, repent, ask questions, and change your mind when you are wrong. This explains why sometimes the smartest people are not the wisest people – they lack humility and the Spirit.

James 1:5 says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him." I have prayed this promise more than any other Scripture in my life, applying it to countless decisions and situations. Let me make this as clear as I can. Imagine that you are a father, and you have a son you love. You tell your son to do something good for him and to not do something bad for him. Imagine your son then looks at you and says, "Dad, I love you and I trust you. I want to obey you. I am not sure what steps to take next. Would you be willing to help me learn how to obey you?"

What would your answer be? “Of course!”

God is your Father, and you are His beloved son. James is saying that you have a Father who wants to help you grow in wisdom and obedience. If you ask Him for help, your Father always answers with a joyful “Yes!” You should pray something like, “Father, help me get prepared for marriage; send the Holy Spirit to make me into the kind of man who can love a woman faithfully for 50 years.” You could also pray, “Father, I want to be a great dad who is a lion for and a lamb with my kids. Please send the Holy Spirit to empower me with wisdom to be pastor dad to my kids.”

Pray frequently, pray expectantly, and pray specifically. Don’t just ask for a job; ask for a job that will provide for your family and not rob every minute of your life. Don’t just ask for a house; ask for the details your family would benefit from most in a house. Don’t just pray by yourself; if you have a wife, pray with her, and if you have kids, include them. Keep modeling humility and dependence upon the Lord, and when God answers prayers and provides wisdom and provision, celebrate and let your family see that your Father is a perfect Father.

You’re a son, and God is your Father. If you pray, “Father, I need wisdom” for anything, He’ll never look at you and say no. Here’s the big idea. Whatever season of life you’re in, you’ve never been there before, so you might not know what to do. You can nail high school or college and be lost in the workforce. You can crush it at work and get crushed at home. You can do great on the job and really struggle when they move you into management. You were a great dad with your first kid, but the second one is completely different, and parenting them is a mystery. In every season of life, a man who is moving through the life stages must overcome his fears, grow in courage and wisdom, and keep learning and growing. No matter how old you get, you are always a son and will always need your Father. Also, as the leader, you need to keep growing and maturing so you don’t put a lid on the maturity of

other family members.

Proverbs 13:20 says, “Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.” Show me your friends, and I’ll show you your future. If the guys you know are really good at drinking, gambling, and carousing, you’re not going to end up more like Jesus hanging out with those guys. They may be your ministry, but they’re not your brothers. Your goal is to help them but not let them hurt you. Find guys who are ahead of you who are walking in wisdom, and walk behind them. Find guys who are in your same life stage and are acting in wisdom, and walk alongside them. Find guys who are behind you, and invite them to draft behind you.

Where do you get wisdom? It comes from God the Holy Spirit and Scripture. Time in the Bible and good Christian books written by people with the Spirit of God are always a good idea. Prayer and worship are opportunities to listen to the Holy Spirit and transfer your burdens to your God.

Listening to your conscience is also part of growing in wisdom. Do not violate your conscience, or you might break it. God has placed a conscience in you as a means

NO MATTER HOW OLD YOU GET, YOU ARE ALWAYS A SON AND WILL ALWAYS NEED YOUR FATHER.

of growing you in wisdom. There are a lot of things that are not sinful but are harmful. These sorts of things are not in the Bible,

but they are in your conscience. For example, it’s not a sin to ride a bike as a young man without a helmet, it’s not a sin to drive a car without a seatbelt as a young man, and it’s not a sin to eat a bag of chips every night as a grandpa, but none of these things will improve your life and eventually will cause a lot of pain and harm.

Wisdom also comes through submission to rightful authority established by God. The reason we have a stupid culture of foolishness is because there is zero respect for authority. At home, you have a father. At church, you have a pastor. At school, you have a teacher. At work, you have

a boss. In sports, you have a coach. Admittedly, the leaders in authority over us are imperfect sinners. However, even Jesus, who was perfect, was wise enough to honor authority as a young man, which helped Him mature.

It was prophesied in Isaiah 11:2, 700 years before Jesus was born: “The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom...” When Jesus was about 12, Luke 2:40 says, “[Jesus] grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.” Luke 2:46-47 then says, “...they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.” He’s finding relationships with guys who are older than Him and asking questions, because He is wise enough from a young age to seek older men to glean more wisdom from.

A few verses later, there’s a mind-melting line. Luke 2:52 says, “And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.” This is wild. Jesus is fully God and fully man. God became a man. That’s what Immanuel means – God with us. When God became a man in Jesus Christ, He did not lose His divinity, but rather He added to it His humanity. Furthermore, Jesus willingly set aside the continual use of His divine attributes so He could humbly live like us. When the Bible says He was tempted, He was tempted as we are. When He was hungry, He was hungry like we are. When He was thirsty, He was thirsty like we are. When he grew in wisdom, stature, and favor with men and God, He was learning and growing as our example.

Does God need to learn anything? No. Jesus set aside the continual use of His divine attributes. He didn’t lose them; He just didn’t use them and chose to live like we do and grow up like we do. To look at the stages in Jesus’ life, He started as a baby, became a child, then an adolescent, young adult, and finally, an adult. Then, He atoned for the sin of the world, which makes Him a very mature adult. He takes care of every predestined sinner as their

Savior. The question, then, is, “How can we be like Jesus?” The answer is by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit wants to make you mature and wise at whatever life stage you’re in, since Jesus was mature and wise in every life stage during His time on earth.

Here’s an analogy. A few years ago, I was at a makeshift gun range in the mountains. A guy, who is a good shot, wanted to see how good he was shooting blindfolded. So, I got far away, because I wasn’t sure how this was going to end up. When shooting blindfolded, is he actually blind? No, he has sight. He’s just choosing not to use it. Jesus knows everything and can do anything but, while He was on the earth, He chose to live as we should: humbly and simply.

Jesus grew in wisdom, stature, and favor with men and God, which means He was perfectly mature for every life stage. He was perfect, but when He was three, He didn’t act like a 13-year-old. When he was 13, he was mature for a 13-year-old. The problem comes when you’re 33 and you act like a 13-year-old. You’ve got to evaluate yourself. How old am I? How mature am I? How wise am I for my age and for my life stage? You also need to evaluate your sons and the men you are mentoring through this same lens. Don’t push your 13-year-old son to act like he’s 33, and don’t coddle your 33-year-old son so he acts like he’s 13. Jesus grew, so you’re going to need to grow. Jesus learned, so you’re going to need to learn. Jesus matured, so you’re going to need to mature.

If you’re a young man, don’t compare yourself to the other guys in your generation. Try to figure out what Jesus looked like at about your age. For the guys in your life stage and age, are they more or less mature than they should be? Probably less. So, ask yourself, “What would it look like for me to be mature at my age?” Matthew 3:11 says the Father will “...baptize you with the Holy Spirit...” Luke 11:13 says the Father will “...give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

God is a Father. Jesus is the prototype for what a

mature son looks like at any life stage. God the Father sends God the Son to save us from our sins and set the pattern, precedent, and prototype of what a mature man is: filled with the Holy Spirit, growing in wisdom, and always learning, repenting, and maturing. The Holy Spirit is the one who comes into you to make you like Jesus, the Son of God. So, what does wisdom look like? It looks like the Holy Spirit making you like Jesus. That's exactly what it means.

A REVOLUTIONARY AND CONTROVERSIAL PARENTING LESSON

If you're a father, let me say something that will revolutionize your parenting. If you grew up in a performance-based home where you were pushed for perfection and punished for imperfection, let this next word heal and deliver you from the oppression you have lived under. If Jesus grew in wisdom, stature, and favor with men and God, did He learn and mature through a process? Yes. Did Jesus ever commit a sin? Never. Did He learn through trial and error like every human does? Yes.

Do you think when Jesus was a seven-year-old boy

**JESUS IS THE PROTOTYPE
FOR WHAT A MATURE SON
LOOKS LIKE AT ANY LIFE
STAGE.**

and Joseph gave Him His first bike, He immediately jumped on the bike and just went off with no training wheels, flipped, jumped,

and was ready for the X Games? No. He likely had to learn how to ride a bike like we all do. He never sinned, but He had to grow and mature.

When Jesus learned to read and write, do you think they just handed Him Plato at the age of six and He read it, understood it, then taught it to others in the original language? Or do you think He had to learn His alphabet and how to read and write, add and subtract, just like the rest of us? He did.

We tend to think of Jesus as perfect, and He is, but

we don't see His process. That's where you may have discouraged your son (or daughter) if you don't allow them to be human. Human beings do sin, but it's not a sin to be human. You can be filled with the Holy Spirit, not even in sin, and figuring out life through a process.

You may have grown up in a religious home where you had to do everything perfectly, but there's a difference between being a human being and sinning. I raised my three sons this way. I would tell them all the time, "That's not a sin; that's just a mistake. You're a human being; we make mistakes, and that's how we learn – by making mistakes." Mistakes are not just acceptable; they are necessary. An entire generation of young men is paralyzed because they are afraid of failing. Failing is how you learn, and the worst failure is not trying because you are afraid of failing.

The first time I saw a curveball, I didn't hit it with the bat, but I did hit myself. I went over to my dad and said, "Dad, what was that?" He replied, "That's a curveball." I said, "I don't know what to do with a curveball." He responded, "Son, you've got to learn." All of life is just figuring out things you've never done before. Does that mean you're a sinner or you're a human being? It's not a sin to be human.

As a human being, do you know what you need? Grace. The Holy Spirit. Trial and error. Figuring it out. A good coach in the process is always a help. I want you to know that if you're not where you should be, there are men who can help you get to where you should be. They'll be there to build you up, not to beat you down. They won't say, "You should be here, and you're here." They'll say, "We're glad you're here to learn and mature. We're going to help you get there." As men, we don't want harsh accountability, we don't want legalism, we don't want judgment, we don't want chest-beating, and we don't want fakery. The "I've got it all together" smug religious guy is just another arrogant fool. Just be honest with yourself and say, "You know what? I'm mature in this area."

I think I could help some guys. I have some wisdom. I'm not mature in this area. I need some guys to give me some wisdom." Wherever you are, start there. To the young guys sitting on the couch: get up, brush your teeth, put some pants on, and go try. If you do, the Father will go with you.

God the Father is so gracious. At our Real Men ministry, there are guys who were drug addicts two years ago, and now they're ministry leaders. There are guys who were living with their girlfriends three years ago, and now they both got saved and baptized. There are guys who were potheads seven months ago, and now they're working jobs and moving out of their mother's house. There are guys who never wanted to be fathers who are now enjoying daddy dates with their daughters. There are guys whose wives did not respect them, and now they hold hands and worship together in church while she burrows into his chest. There are guys who blew up their first marriage, got saved, and now have a beautiful family. The Father is so gracious, and the Spirit is so powerful, that if the sons will just look at the Father and say, "You know what? I need some help here," He'll send the Holy Spirit to allow you to move, pivot, and change. If you're in sin, He'll forgive you and overcome it. If you're not in sin, He'll be patient with you in the process through your humanity. The result will include doing your job, which we will study next.

Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion

1. What life stage are you in? Is that where you should be, or are you behind? If you're behind, how can you make progress?
2. In what area(s) of your life do you have wisdom to help other guys?
3. In what area(s) of your life do you need wisdom from other guys? Who could help meet this need?
4. What is the greatest wisdom, and greatest foolishness, that has been said to you regarding men and manhood?

Chapter 4



WORKER :
Do Your Job

When I got my very first job, I lied about my age and falsified my birth certificate. Like I told you earlier in the book, I wasn't yet a Christian, so I wasn't acting like one. At age 15, I got a job at a convenience store a stone's throw from a strip club selling lottery tickets, cigarettes, and alcohol. Facial hair and a low voice helped keep me from getting caught for working illegally. I used my money to buy my first car – a 1956 Chevy – that I drove to work before I had a driver's license. I have always worked and wanted to take on responsibility. Over the years, I have had some weird jobs. I worked as a longshoreman for a while. I joined a laborers' union and lied about my age again when I was in high school. I've worked at a hotel. And now, I'm preaching full-time and, if it doesn't work out, I might be going back to the convenience store.

Most guys work at least 40 hours a week. For the average guy, let's say he works 40 hours a week for 40 years of his life. He's spending roughly 80,000 hours of his life at work. This isn't even including guys who work overtime, including remotely in the evenings or on the weekends.

We've talked about worshiping God at church and in our everyday lives, but how do you worship God through your work? The way you view work really depends on the way you view God. Once you understand God, it helps frame the rest of your life, including your work.

In the New Testament days, the prominent culture was Greek, which was dualistic. You had physical, which they'd say was bad, and spiritual, which they'd say was good. Life's goal was to avoid getting your hands dirty. Manual labor and hard work were for poor people, peasants, and slaves. Their goal was to devote your life to art, study, music, philosophy, and contemplation in the world of ideas. This became the foundation for Western education and, as a result, many people who go to college don't know how to work or do practical things. College today is largely about studying philosophy, sociology, and other ideologies, but graduates don't know how to get their hands dirty and do anything. As I write this book, college

students have taken over numerous university campuses to protest in support of demonic Hamas terrorists and are demanding that the universities bring them meals because they forgot to bring a sack lunch to their lawless anarchy. This is a hilarious example of the failure of modern education.

A powerful cultural force for the demonic in the West today is atheistic Marxism. Karl Marx was an atheist, and evils such as socialism and communism emerged from his depraved mind. What's the difference between socialism and communism? Socialism is a half-step to communism, and it often ends up in the full step. Marx basically said there is no God, we're not here on an assignment from God to give glory to God, and we're not going to give an account to God when we die. This life is all we have. He said that, as good and improving people, we could create Heaven on earth without God, a utopian society. Any failure to achieve Heaven on earth is the result of systemic oppression, whereby those in power victimize those with less power. We are not sinners, the world is not fallen and cursed, and justice entails not Jesus being crucified for our sin but us crucifying others for their perceived sin against us in what has come to be called "cancel culture." All of this is a counterfeit of the storyline of the Bible.

If anything is hard or difficult, or if we are poor and not succeeding, it's because we're oppressed victims. As a result, we need the government to reallocate wealth, taking from people who are succeeding and giving it to people who are struggling. This is the primary ideology of young, emerging generations. If they don't have as much as they think they should have, they believe they're victims and the government needs to redistribute wealth. This is called "social justice" and DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion) politics. If you disagree with this ideology, you are called a bigot and publicly bullied as a racist, chauvinist, sexist, or homophobe.

Karl Marx himself saw his own children starve to death and his wife lose her mind because he did not

work for 14 years. They never tell you that in college, because it's obvious he is not an example of a responsible man who should be the architect of finance and family, as is currently the case at every progressive university. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says,

From 1850 to 1864 Marx lived in material misery and spiritual pain. His funds were gone, and except on one occasion he could not bring himself to seek paid employment. In March 1850 he and his wife and four small children were evicted and their belongings seized. Several of his children died—including a son Guido, “a sacrifice to bourgeois misery,” and a daughter Franziska, for whom his wife rushed about frantically trying to borrow money for a coffin. For six years the family lived in two small rooms in Soho, often subsisting on bread and potatoes. The children learned to lie to the creditors: “Mr. Marx ain’t upstairs.” Once he had to escape them by fleeing to Manchester. His wife suffered breakdowns.²⁸

Marx fathered an illegitimate son through adultery, did not raise, financially support, or even meet that son, and hid his shameful secret sin. His daughters eventually killed themselves by ingesting cyanide.²⁹ During the time that his children were starving to death, and his wife was having nervous breakdowns, Marx was writing his first book on economic theory, *Zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie (A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy)*.³⁰

The Father of Lies found a good son in Karl Marx. If you're a young guy who went to a government school, you've had Marxist brainwashing from birth, as he is one of the most influential minds in modern secular education. The goal of government is to make you dependent on it, which is the opposite of God your Father who wants you to live dependent upon Him, which is true freedom. The battle in the Bible is often between God and government.

Over and over in Scripture and history, the government seeks to remove God and replace Him with government as the highest authority. If you think like Marx, you will suffer in this life and join him in Hell in the next.

THE PROTESTANT WORK ETHIC

Some single men of God in the Bible died rather young (e.g., Paul), which explains why they remained unmarried and without children. For most men, the divine design of Genesis 1-2 encourages them to work, marry, father, and grandfather. Along with other men following the blueprint of Genesis 1-2, we find it nearly impossible to look up to and follow any man who doesn't own anything, earn anything, or get up in the morning and put his boots on to go provide for and protect his wife, kids, and grandkids.

A French sociologist named Alexis de Tocqueville examined the greatness of America. Why was America prosperous and wildly successful? His massive 1800s sociological study culminated in the landmark book *Democracy in America*. He wrote that American capitalistic success was because of religious commitment. He also wrote that Bible-believing Protestant men who believed work is good, debt is bad, God's resources should be stewarded beginning with tithing, and men are responsible for the wellbeing of their families created the success of Western capitalism.³¹

He also gave a bit of a prophetic word about "a most dangerous passage in the history of a democratic people. When the taste for physical gratifications among them has grown more rapidly than their education and their experience of free institutions, the time will come when men are carried away and lose all self-restraint at the sight of the new possessions they are about to obtain." He warned that Americans would become so prosperous and so addicted to comfort and pleasure that we would lose all self-restraint. We would no longer work hard or reign in

our debt and, as a result, we would undermine both our democracy and economy.

That is precisely where we find ourselves today. Our greatest threat as a society is not an attack from the outside but self-destruction from the inside: obesity, addictions, debt, alcoholism, mental health issues, depression, and the drug crisis are obvious examples. Today, fewer and fewer people are hardworking, and they end up self-destructing because they're so prosperous that they can be in debt until they die and vote for ignorant politicians who enlarge government to care for them from womb to tomb. This is particularly true for emerging generations of young men who are sitting on their mom's couch and consuming entertainment, food, porn, video games, and alcohol while spending money sent by the government to fund all this nonsense.

Seventy-five years after Tocqueville, there was a German sociologist named Max Weber who wrote *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. He came up with the phrase "the Protestant work ethic."³² He looked at the success of the most prosperous, powerful, and prominent nation in the world and said American success is because of the Protestant work ethic. He said the country was built on men who knew how to work, didn't go into debt, and took responsibility for themselves and their families. He concluded that if you build your life upon the Bible, work hard for six days, take your day of Sabbath rest, and invest in your church, wife, and children as your first responsibilities, that's how you get a flourishing society. Simply stated, if men obey the Bible, the world gets better and better.

GOD MADE MAN TO WORK

Guess what God our Father does? He works six days and rests the seventh. "In the beginning, God created..."^a

^a Genesis 1:1

That's where the Bible starts. The word for created is "work." God works and sets up the world for His sons to work. As an aside, atheistic countries have tried everything other than a seven-day work week, and guess what? It doesn't work because God built a natural rhythm into history.

There was a debate in America: Do we take the Jewish Sabbath of Saturday or the Christian Sabbath of Sunday? We ended up getting both, which means the average American actually works less than God tells us to. God told us to work six days then take our day off. As a man, you're made by God to work.

Genesis 1:28 says, "And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth, subdue it, and have dominion...'" This is the job description God gives us to work. Dominion is the area of responsibility and authority that God has given to you. If you have a house, that's your domain, and you have dominion there. If you own a company, that's your domain and your dominion. Things don't naturally come together. To have a family and flourishing society, men need to exercise dominion and subdue things. At home, you need to maintain your home, secure it from evildoers, and oversee the people and entertainment, along with their spirits, by exercising your dominion. At work, if someone is stealing from the company or not doing their job, you fire them, which is exercising your dominion. The one thing we learn from Genesis 3 is that if a man is passive, like Adam, Satan will gladly take that man's dominion. Do not let that happen.

Genesis 2:15 then says, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work..." You're not acting like a man if you don't work. God made men to work. God didn't make men to vote for other men to tax men who do work so they don't have to work. God made men to work. This plan is perfect – it's before sin enters the world and before the curse. As early as possible, you should teach your kids how to work. By giving a kid

chores, you're giving them responsibility, teaching them the value of work, and preparing them to work.

In addition, work is now cursed. In Genesis 3, after sin enters the world, God came to Adam and said, "...cursed is the ground because of you..."^a The man is not cursed, but the ground is. Verses 17-19 continue, "...in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth...By the sweat of your face you shall eat..."

WORK IS HARD AND SOFT MEN DON'T LIKE TO WORK

God works, God made us to work and, because Adam sinned, our work is now cursed. Just as we rebel against God, everything we're now supposed to have dominion over is rebelling against us. Work is harder than it was before the curse. Everything you do is going to constantly be in a state of trying to undo what you're trying to do. Everything is going to take longer because something will go wrong. Whatever the financial projection was for your work, it will cost more because it is cursed. As men, we need to accept that, every day, your work is treating you like you treat your God. This should humble you and cause you to thank your Father for constantly working on you as you work against Him.

People who don't believe the Bible don't believe that they are sinners, the Fall happened, or work is cursed. As a result, they naively believe that work and success should be a lot easier than they are. This explains why weak and woke men in the workforce keep trying to find a shortcut to prosperity and success when there isn't one. This also explains why younger generations of men quit the workforce or rant online about how evil their boss is – because they are soft, and life is hard. As a man, accept this fact: There is no easy job and no easy career path. Life

^a Genesis 3:17

is hard, and you will need to stop being soft if you want to be a man of God.

Jesus was not soft; He worked. As men, we are blessed that our God became a man as our example. Growing up, Jesus worked as a carpenter with His dad. Jesus was a young man with callouses on His hands who did not vape or vote for government handouts. John 5:17 says, “Jesus answered them, ‘My Father is working until now, and I am working.’” God the Father and God the Son work and, as one of God’s sons, they expect you to do the same.

One of the best things you can do is teach your sons how to work and sometimes take them to work with you. My dad took me to the jobsite when he was hanging drywall and, when I was growing up, I got to see my dad work. My grandpa was a diesel mechanic. I got to see him turn wrenches. I saw the men in my family work. My sons work, and I help them get launched, but I will not give them a financial piggyback ride for the rest of their lives.

BE LIKE JESUS AND GET A JOB

Jesus worked His whole life. When He was a little boy, He had chores, and He worked. He grew up in a peasant, rural family, and He grew up working with His dad, who was a carpenter. Jesus spent 90% of His life working a job and the last three years preaching, teaching, and healing. He was just going to work with His dad for, roughly, the previous 30 years. He was obedient both as a carpenter and as a minister. Our God, who was being worshiped by angels in Heaven, came down to earth and got a job. So, if you think, “I want to be like Jesus,” then get a job.

More and more men are working less and less. A *Business Insider* article reports, “In the early 1950s, as many as 96% of prime working-age American men, who were between the ages of 25 and 54, were working full or part-time, per the Bureau of Labor Statistics. As of March, about 86% of working-age men were employed, and this cohort’s employment rate has lagged behind many

developed countries in recent years[.]...As such, many men are struggling to support themselves financially. And mental-health experts say the longer people are out of the workforce, the higher the chances they'll experience mental-health challenges."³³

Things have gotten so bad in regard to healthy men choosing not to work that they are now referred to as NILFs (Not In Labor Force). The sluggard epidemic, as reported in the *New York Post*, "first became evident among men in the prime of life, between 25 and 54. Today

IF YOU'RE A CHRISTIAN MAN, YOU SHOULD WORK HARDER THAN OTHER MEN BECAUSE YOUR WORK IS YOUR WORSHIP.

over 7 million of these men of 'prime working age' are neither working nor looking for work[.]...Yes: Prime-age American men have a Depression-scale work problem

today. But unlike in the Depression, the postwar collapse of work for men has little to do with unemployment per se. Rather, it has been driven by an exodus from the labor force[.]...[For] every unemployed prime-age American man looking for a job, there are over four neither working nor looking for work (NILFs: 'not in labor force')."³⁴

For guys who sit at home all day and spiritualize their softness saying, "I want to read my Bible and sing and pray all day and pontificate as if life was never-ending Bible college where soft men sit in comfy chairs reading about dead men who did things while not doing anything," that's the pagan Greek life, not the Protestant work ethic, and that's not the example of Jesus. If you don't work, you're a problem. God hasn't created you to sit around all day and pontificate, theologize, and speculate, but to get some things done. Jesus is your example. He knew the Bible, studied, prayed, and sang, but He went to work six days a week and wiped sweat from His brow. For you to be a man of God, you must work and work for Jesus.

Colossians 3:23-24 says, "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your

reward.” Whatever your job is – plumber, electrician, mechanic, accountant, lawyer, engineer, doctor, pilot, roofer, teacher – “work heartily.” If you’re a Christian man, you should work harder than other men because your work is your worship.

When you go to work, above your boss is your God. If you have a bad boss, your work ethic does not change because you still have a good God over your bad boss. You don’t steal from your boss because you’re ultimately stealing from the Lord. You don’t bill people for hours you don’t work because you’re ultimately working for your Lord. Since every Christian man ultimately works for Jesus as Lord over all of his life, you should show up early, do your best, be honest, act with integrity, and be living for the final performance review at the end of this life hoping to hear from Jesus, “Well done.” In the meantime, we trust that the sovereignty of God extends over our work and that, if we are committed to work as worship, our God will help us pay our bills and feed our families.

GO TO HEAVEN AND GO TO WORK

One thing Christians tell people is “give your life to Jesus, and you go to Heaven when you die.” That’s true, but between receiving Jesus and going to Heaven, you have to go to work. God has work for you to do. Your life is meaningful, valuable, and purposeful. You matter, your job matters, your company matters, your ministry matters, and your family matters. There are some things God could do without you, but He wants to do them through you, and He wants to do them with you.

I’ll give you an example. When I was a little boy, my dad was a union drywaller, hanging sheetrock to feed his family until he literally broke his back after many years of hard labor. He married my mom, and they had me when they were very young. My dad would sometimes sleep at the jobsite in his truck, or he’d sleep on the sheetrock stack and send the money home to our family during the

lean times.

I'll never forget that my dad would work five days a week then would get side jobs on weekends. He would take me to work during some of the side jobs, and I got to see my dad work. I came to really appreciate how hard my dad worked. It made me not want to waste money and to be grateful. It made me want to help around the house and do my part. Did my dad need me on the jobsite? Do you think a five-year-old kid is really a big help on a construction site? No.

Why did my dad take me to work? So that he and I could build a relationship where he would let me see him work, and I would grow up to be like my dad. God is a Father; He has work for you to do, and sometimes that work is literally going to work. He could do a lot of things without you, but He wants to do them with you in the same way my father wanted to take me to work with him to build relationship and teach me to work. Ultimately, working for Jesus makes everything meaningful, valuable, and purposeful.

THE VERSE THAT GETS ME CANCELED ON TIKTOK

We live in a day where we have men trying to remain in a childhood state of dependency on their mother and/or the government, and it's ungodly. Ultimately, the kind of government we have doesn't redistribute wealth; it redistributes poverty, and it disincentivizes people from working. There's an entitlement mentality that leads to complete devolution of men and destruction of society. The Bible tells us to not feed guys who won't work.^a Proverbs talks about the sluggard, a man who literally is like a slug – squishy, slow, and unproductive. Proverbs 16:26 (NIV) also says, "The appetite of laborers works for them; their hunger drives them on."

^a 2 Thessalonians 3:6-10

I'll be honest. When I see guys panhandling, sitting on the street corner asking for money, I think, "You're standing in front of 27 businesses that are all hiring because nobody goes to work." This seems obvious, but maybe they can put the sign down and go get a job.

Here's a punch in the mouth verse. 1 Timothy 5:8 says, "if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." A Christian man who doesn't work is worse than a non-Christian. This is about as strong of a word as can be. We live in a world where men are not feeding their wives and children, and you cannot create a government big enough to make up

**A CHRISTIAN MAN WHO
DOESN'T WORK IS WORSE
THAN A NON-CHRISTIAN.**

for those miserable men. Simply reading this Scripture without comment got me kicked off TikTok and was

viewed hundreds of thousands of times, likely by young men who were triggered by the thought of working while using the Wi-Fi in their mom's basement where they live.

Men who do not marry, father, and get up every day to feed their family are the eventual cause of a complete collapse of a civilization. The Institute for Family Studies (IFS) confirms that "the state of our unions in the United States is not strong. The marriage rate has fallen more than 60% since 1970. Fertility rates reached a record low in 2020, well below the replacement rate. The falling fortunes of marriage and family life have hit the working class especially hard. No group has seen the share of its kids living in married homes fall as much as the American working class. In the last 50 years, the share of working-class children living in married-parent families fell a staggering 30 percentage points, from about 85% in 1970 to approximately 55% in 2020."³⁵

Our culture is in crisis, and the only solution is better men. God made men to glorify Him by marrying a woman, having children, and providing for the needs of his family

in every way – spiritually, emotionally, physically, and mentally. This responsibility is a heavy load to carry, but that’s why God made men strong.

When I was 45, I resigned my job in obedience to God, and our family moved to Arizona in faith. I felt God was calling us into a new season, and I didn’t know what was going to happen. We had kids in elementary school, middle school, high school, and college, and a tree fell on our house, which housed all our possessions and held our money in the form of equity, right after we moved. A giant tree literally sheared our master bedroom off the house, splitting our bed down the middle on a Saturday

**I’LL TELL YOU WHAT
GOOD WOMEN FIND
REALLY SEXY: NOT
YOUR ABS OR YOUR
SUBS BUT A BIBLE
AND A JOB.**

morning. If we had been home, my wife and I would be dead. It was a crisis situation. Recently, Grace and I were going for a walk, and I said, “Honey, during that time when I had no job, were you stressed?” She said, “No, why? It’s

your responsibility.” I’m a Bible teacher, I taught her that, and it put a lot of pressure on me. She said, “It’s your job to feed this family, not mine. So, I don’t worry about it; that’s your job.” I really was very grateful and appreciative, and I thanked her. I asked her, “Did you ever think, ‘Hey, I should go get a job?’” She said, “No, I have five kids; you need to work and figure it out. That’s your job; I don’t worry about it.” It’s not a sin for a woman to work or generate income, but if she has a lazy husband who isn’t willing to work, they have a role reversal where she treats him like one of the kids and takes care of the family, leaving him at home with a chore chart and to drink beer out of a sippy cup.

If you’re a single guy, stop looking for a gal with a good job and low discernment who will let you move into her place and eat her food. Instead, get a job before you get a gal. I’ll tell you what good women find really sexy: not your abs or your subs but a Bible and a job.

GOD CONTINUES HIS ORIGINAL PLAN

Some men, like me, actually love their work. For us, the thought of fully retiring, or dying to sit on a cloud wearing a diaper as a chubby angelic baby plinking a harp, sounds like Hell and not like Heaven. The good news for men who work is that your work will continue in the Kingdom.

Revelation 5:10 says, “you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.” When God created us in Genesis 1-2, He gave us a garden as a prototype. He gave us an uncultivated planet. God told us to be fruitful and multiply, have lots of kids, and exercise our God-given dominion to subdue and create culture, make cities, start businesses, chase dreams, go on adventures, and get things done. That’s why He made us. Then, sin entered the world.

God does not deviate from His original plan because His plan was perfect. Just as Jesus rose from the dead, we’ll rise from the dead, get our body back, and go back to Genesis 1-2, back to the original plan. What that means is that we’ll work for eternity. We’re going to explore, build companies, build cities, and create culture. We’ll probably travel to all ends of creation. We’ll never die, can accrue knowledge, and will keep building and building. The curse will not be against us. There will be work, but everything won’t be in a constant deterioration or breaking process. Satan and demons will be no more, and we will work. We’ll work creating, making, and multiplying forever.

I need you to get a vision of Heaven that’s not stopping your work. Heaven is where work gets really interesting. The work we do today is to prepare us for the work that continues forever. Today, your job is an internship for your eternal career.

FAKE REALITY AND DUMB DOMINION

Let’s end this chapter with a few final words on work

to the young guys and their dads.

First, the educational system is broken, and we are preparing victims and voters, not workers and worshipers. For too many people, the whole goal of getting an education is to figure out who to blame that life is hard then vote for someone to make your life easier so you don't have to work so hard. As men of God, we're not here to raise up victims and voters but workers and worshipers. There's nothing wrong with work; it's actually really good for a man, starting young.

Second, young men are wasting their energy on fake reality and dumb dominion. Video games and virtual reality are dumb dominion. Who cares if you are the king of a fake universe? No one but you.

Third, don't settle for a joke job. Joke jobs are what guys do to pretend like they're working. There's a whole generation of guys doing this. It's not a sin to work a joke

**IF YOU JUST STAY SOBER,
SHOW UP, AND TRY, YOU'RE
10 YEARS AHEAD OF THE
CONGA LINE TO HELL THAT
IS YOUR PEERS.**

job if you're trying to find your career path, but if you are thinking, "I'm just going to deliver food to overweight people who need to leave the house

and go for a walk. I'm just going to work a couple of hours a day so I can screw around for the rest of the day. I'm not going to build a career, build a portfolio, get a wife, have kids, develop anything, or produce anything. I'm going to work as little as I can so I have time for recreation, leisure, and screwing around," then you are a joke with a joke job.

Let me tell you what I tell my sons. I will repeat this over and over. If you just get your head on straight, get out of bed in the morning, go to work, and work hard, you're getting a 10-year head start on the fools' parade that is your generation. You don't even have to be smart or skilled. If you just stay sober, show up, and try, you're 10 years ahead of the conga line to Hell that is your peers. Then, if you'll be humble and ask your boss, "What do I

need to do? I want to move up in this company, take on more responsibility, lift burdens for others, and make more money. How do I do that?” then stay quiet and obedient, you are a miracle. The lunacy in our day is an amazing opportunity for God’s men to lead, generate revenue, produce results, and get things done.

Fourth, young men are like trucks, and they drive straighter with a load. I’ve said this for decades. If you’ve driven a two-wheel drive rig in the snow or rain, the rear wheels are all over the road. It’s hard to keep it straight. Young men are like trucks; they have a lot of energy, but unless you load them up with responsibility, they’re going to end up in the ditch. Young men need more responsibility, not less. Men drive straighter with a load.

A guy with a family to feed and a hard job to work does not have time to waste trying to determine what his gender is from 1-2 PM on Tuesdays. That same guy does not have time to sit around all day worrying about his

YOUNG MEN ARE LIKE TRUCKS, AND THEY DRIVE STRAIGHTER WITH A LOAD.

emotional health because his kid needs braces, and his wife needs a dishwasher. He has to grind it out at work, which makes him happy because he feels like

a man for carrying the weight of responsibility for his family. Research concludes,

A very large body of research demonstrates that when men are engaged in helping rear their biological children, they are more likely to behave in prosocial ways. They are less likely to commit crimes, less likely to be violent, less likely to drink alcohol or consume drugs. Fatherhood seems to channel male energy and aggression toward constructive and prosocial ends. Indeed, across cultures, becoming a father has been observed to lead men to become less selfish and more socially responsible[.]...Becoming a father can generate a powerful motivation for a man to provide for his children and behave in prosocial ways.³⁶

On the day I was writing this chapter, it smelled like we had a gas leak at our home. So, the gas company was called to come and inspect for safety reasons. A large Hispanic technician showed up in a work truck and wearing a tool belt. He did not know I was a pastor, but when I started asking about his family, he began smiling and telling me stories. He said the only reason he gets up at 3:30 every morning to go to work was because his wife and three children were depending on him as the only income earner for their family. He said that every day, his highlight was returning home after work to have his wife and daughter run up to hug and kiss him and thank him for working hard for their family. He takes his boots off, and his little girl sits on her dad's lap while the other children gather around to visit with dad while mom cooks so they can eat dinner together around the table as a family. Men like this are heroes and legends, and they should get an entire month dedicated to honoring them instead of our current stupid Pride month.

You are a man, not a baby. If you're a man of God and you have the Holy Spirit in you, you want to be a man, not just a boy who can shave. You want people to be able to count on you and not be constantly dependent on other people to rescue you. You want your wife and kids to be blessed because of your work. There is something deeply satisfying at the soul level when you come home to your wife and kids who are living indoors because of you, wearing clothes because of you, and sitting down to eat dinner together because of you. Those are your kids and, if they have you, they should not need the government to do your job. That is your wife and, if she has you, she can feel secure that her man is a good man and good at being a man.

Men who provide for their families in this way need to encourage and honor one another. If you're one of these men, I want to honor, appreciate, and salute you. In the next chapter, we will learn about how to be creative like your Creator.

Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion

1. What jobs have you previously held? Which were your most and least favorite?
2. What is the current work God has given you? How is it going?
3. Who is depending on you to get your work done?
4. What was most helpful in this chapter to you personally? Why?

ACT LIKE A MAN

Chapter 5



ARTIST:
Create Culture

God made men to make things. For men, the creative process is an adventure that awakens our curiosity and ingenuity. This began with our first father, Adam, who God put in a finished garden as an example of what he was supposed to do with the rest of the planet – create and cultivate.

You can see in little boys this God-given calling to create. They stack blocks, build forts, shovel dirt, and make art. All of this is preparing them to be engineers, remodel houses, landscape their yard, and figure out what furnishings will best complete the home they will one day build for their own family.

The opposite of a creator is a consumer. Since God made men to create, if we create more than we consume, we become healthy and helpful men. Good men give more than we take, and we spend our lives increasing instead of decreasing the resources around us. However, if a man consumes more than he creates, that man becomes self-indulgent, selfish, and unhealthy. This explains why a generation of men who eat too much and work too little is among the softest and saddest generation in history.

The first thing we learn about God is that He's Creator and He's creative. "In the beginning, God created..."^a This is the first line in the Bible. God created the heavens and the earth. Heavens means everything up there. Earth means everything down here. God created everyone and everything, and all the materials that we use to create were created by God for us to be creative.

What this means is that God is also beautiful; one of His most overlooked attributes is beauty. The sunsets in Arizona, where my family and I live and do ministry, are beautiful. God gave us sunrises and sunsets. I love hiking up in the mountains with trees at about a 6,000-foot elevation. God could've put in large industrial filtration systems to keep air clean and instead, He made trees. How many of you have looked at your wife or daughter

^a Genesis 1:1

or granddaughter and said, “She’s really beautiful!” God makes things beautiful. What this tells us is that God is not only a Creator and creative, but He has a particular devotion to beauty. He made us in His image and likeness; to create and to be creators and creatives is to pursue that which is beautiful.

In the same way that a painting tells us about the painter and a song tells us about the songwriter, creation tells us about the Creator. He wants us to live in an environment that is beautiful, functional, and enjoyable. Human beings were made to live in that kind of environment created by God.

In Genesis 1:26-28, God said,

“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

God created the world, and He created us. He originally put mankind in a finished, beautiful garden called Eden. He told the first son, Adam, our father, to have kids, expand, and exercise dominion over all of planet earth. He was to subdue it, meaning using his God-given authority, strength, ingenuity, intellect, and capacity to take materials God has provided and utilize them to create culture and make beauty so there are environments for human life and flourishing.

BUILD, CREATE, FIX, INNOVATE

That's our job as men. As men, we like to build, create, fix, and innovate. Theologians call this the "cultural mandate." God says, "Okay, son, enjoy the garden. See what a finished product looks like. Now go harness every opportunity on planet earth." From the cultural mandate, God intends for us to explore the planet. He intends for us to take all the resources and utilize them to build cities, companies, civilizations, schools, families, churches, and ministries. God wants this world to be filled with creativity by men who are created by Him to create.

The result is what we call "culture." Culture doesn't exist in a vacuum. It's created by people, starting with the men. If it's created by good men, it allows life and flourishing. If it's created by bad men, it brings death and destruction.

To give you an idea of what we're talking about when it comes to culture, Christian missionary Lesslie Newbigin says, "By the word culture, we have to understand the sum total ways of living by a group of human beings handed down from generation to generation. Central to culture is language."³⁷ He goes on to say:

The language of a people provides the means by which they express their way of perceiving things and coping with them. Around that center one would have to group their visual and musical arts, their technologies, their law, and their social and political organization. And one must also include in culture, and as fundamental to any culture, a set of beliefs, experiences, and practices that seek to grasp and express the ultimate nature of things, that which gives shape and meaning to life, that which claims final loyalty. I am speaking, obviously, about religion. Religion – including the Christian religion – is thus part of culture.

THE WHITE HOUSE VS. OUR HOUSE

When we're talking about culture, we're talking about the environment that human beings live in. As fish live in water, people live in culture. If the water is polluted, the fish get sick. If it's clean, they're healthy. If the culture gets polluted, people are infected and affected. If it's clean, they can have life and flourishing and joy.

Right now, the problem is our culture is filthy. The culture you're trying to raise your children in is even worse. Our culture has decided to get our drinking water from a septic tank. This is the spiritual and moral equivalent of western culture. People are sick because they are drinking out of an unflushed toilet.

As men, wherever we have dominion, we're responsible for that culture. I can't decide what happens at the White House, but I can decide what happens at my house. As

**OUR CULTURE HAS
DECIDED TO GET OUR
DRINKING WATER
FROM A SEPTIC TANK.**

men, rather than being angry at all the people who are making culture that is death, destruction, and devastation, we need to use our energies to

discern where we have dominion and how we can create a life-giving, godly culture. We need to take care of our wives, kids, grandkids, and those who do ministry or life with us, so they have life and flourishing and are blessed. We can't control what happens out there, but you and I have a lot of control over what happens at our house and at God's house.

When we're talking about culture, we're talking about the mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional environment in which people live. As men, you can't just allow people under your dominion to choose the culture. The worst thing you can do is hand your kid a screen and hope they figure it out. The last thing you should ever do is look at your wife and tell her that she gets to independently decide what kind of culture you'll have in your home. The two of you, husband and wife, need to decide what

the environment and culture of your home is. Is it life-giving? Is it encouraging? Is it hopeful? Is it joyful? Is there anxiety or peace in the Spirit? Do we experience the fruit of the Spirit in the lives of our family members, or are there things in the culture of our home that need to change? Just because they are related to us does not mean we have to tolerate their dysfunction, addiction, entitlement, busybodying, or brokenness. You are a man. Take dominion where you have authority. Subdue what is coming against a life-giving environment for the people you are responsible for. As a man, God has given this role and responsibility to you.

TWO WAYS TO VIEW CULTURE

There are two basic ways to view culture.

Backward vs. Forward. The way most people view culture is traditional (going back to the past) versus progressive (going forward to the future). Cultural traditionalists pine for the “good old days.” The Bible discourages this in Ecclesiastes 7:10 (NLT) saying, “Don’t long for ‘the good old days.’ This is not wise.” The old days had some good and some bad things. All of culture is affected and infected by sin. From Genesis 3 onward, there was never an idyllic season in which everything was good. Some things in the past were good (e.g., respect for God, honoring of church, male and female gender roles, discouraging of premarital sex, and honoring of marriage). Some things in the past were bad (e.g., chauvinism, bigoted attitudes toward other races, legalism in some Christian churches, and cultural Christianity where people went to church for years before they went to Hell).

Cultural progressives are more evolutionary in their thinking (i.e., that history is improving, and new ideas are better than old ideas). Progressives think the past had a lot of oppression, suppression, and repression, and we need to disregard outdated past ideas, including those from the Scriptures. Examples would include the redefining

of marriage to no longer solely be one man and one woman, a rampant war on binary male/female genders, and widespread celebration of sexual sin and perversion. The Bible negatively calls this thinking “the world.”

Romans 12:1-2,9 (NLT) says, “This is truly the way to worship him. Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect[.]...Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good.”

Up vs. Down. For Christians, the better way to view culture is not forward versus backward but instead up (Heaven) versus down (Hell). Jesus says in Matthew 6:10, “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” Jesus’ most famous prayer is that the culture of Heaven would come down and live with us on earth.

Christians believe that when all is said and done, eternity will have two cultures: Heaven and Hell. Today, we live in the middle, and the decisions we make every day either invite Heaven down or pull Hell up into our lives, families, churches, businesses, and communities. This is especially true of the men who are the leaders and

OUR GOAL SHOULD NOT JUST BE TO GO TO HEAVEN WHEN WE DIE BUT HAVE HEAVEN COME TO US BEFORE WE DIE.

heads. Lying pulls Hell up; truth-telling invites Heaven down. Cursing others pulls Hell up; blessing others invites Heaven down. Disobeying Scripture pulls Hell up; obeying Scripture invites Heaven down. Although a Christian man is not going to Hell, he can painfully pull Hell into his life and family for generations. Our goal should not just be to go to Heaven when we die but have Heaven come to us before we die.

As Christians, we have to ask, “Am I inviting Heaven down or am I pulling Hell up?” The result of thinking and living Heaven down instead of Hell up will be a culture that you, as a man with dominion, establish and cultivate

in your spheres of influence – e.g., your home, your work, your church.

WHAT YOU TEACH AND WHAT YOU TOLERATE

Culture consists of two things: what you teach and what you tolerate. As a man, this is where you need to exercise your God-given dominion and authority. There will always be people in your life who try to bring Hell up for you, your family, company, and church. Your job as a man who has dominion is to protect the environment and culture where you have authority given to you by God. The resulting conflict is spiritual warfare, much like the holy angels who fought and defeated the demons in Heaven, casting them out in defense of the culture of Heaven.^a

For example, if you do not allow people in your house to get drunk, make crude jokes, yell, curse, or gossip, except on holidays when you tolerate your unhealthy relatives, you are compromising the culture of your home and confusing your children. Anytime you're going into a holiday season, you may be getting a nervous eye twitch thinking about so much time with relatives because you may see a little Hell on the horizon. When you're in

CULTURE CONSISTS OF TWO THINGS: WHAT YOU TEACH AND WHAT YOU TOLERATE.

someone else's Hell up culture (e.g., a relative's home), or someone is bringing their Hell up culture into your home, it causes anxiety. This explains why holidays are often so stressful: The culture you and your family will be in may not be Heaven down. As the time together nears, anxiety rises. As a man, you have to decide at what point the compromise is too great, and either they will no longer be around you, or things will need to change to remain together as families.

Men sadly do one of two things when it comes to ungodly family: you suddenly erupt or you silently endure.

^a Revelation 12:7-10

If you erupt, you've lost your authority because, most likely, you've become angry and ungodly in your response. If you silently endure it, you're going to be miserable and witness how painful it is for all the people under your authority to be suffering because of your passivity. You'll witness your wife's eroding joy and your children's diminishing health and happiness. Then, God forbid, once your grandchildren are born, you'll start to see it as a generational curse now infecting and affecting generations of your family who have been trained by your example to tolerate dysfunction. As a man, you cannot silently suffer and must not angrily respond. Wisely, figure out what it looks like for your family to live Heaven down, not Hell up. Look at what you're tolerating that's contradicting what you're teaching. Be firm in the decisions and conversations you need to have, remaining loving under the Spirit's control, but use your God-given dominion and authority to love and lead your family. (As an aside, I have an entire sermon series and workbook at RealFaith.com called *Leave and Cleave* to help you in this process.)

GOD CREATES, SATAN COUNTERFEITS

God creates, Satan counterfeits. God builds, Satan breaks. Everything cultural is profoundly and deeply spiritual. That's why you see certain cultural leaders in the Bible literally used of Satan – Pharaoh in the Old Testament, Herod in the New Testament, and Judas Iscariot in the betrayal of Jesus. Things in culture are good or evil, bringing light or darkness. Nearly all of culture is either filled with the Spirit of Christ or antichrist.

Take this beyond your personal culture and personal dominion. Look at your work, home, or ministry and look a little more broadly at the world in which we live and direction (down and to the left) it is headed. Culture is created upstream, and it's consumed downstream. Culture is made by cultural elites in everything from politics and government to technology, entertainment, business,

education, fashion, and health. Just as some people have more financial capital than others, so, too, do some people have more cultural capital than others. In the days of the Old and New Testaments, people lived in walled cities with gates. The gatekeepers determined who would come in and out of the city. They were literally determining the culture in which everyone else lived.

Today, there are spiritual and cultural gatekeepers. For example, the authorities that determine what sex and gender education look like in schools are cultural gatekeepers for Heaven or Hell. Whoever determines the algorithm that promotes or suppresses various content available through an online platform is a gatekeeper, often deciding to push mental health issues onto children and banning fathers who speak out against this evil.

Would you say you've looked at the current culture of the Western world and you're very frustrated and anxious but not encouraged? The question is, "How does culture get changed?" Culture has wrongly been thought to change by getting the majority of people to agree on something. We now find it's not the number of people but the placement of people that infects and affects culture for good or evil. People with more financial or cultural capital have a larger impact. Therefore, the goal as a man of God is to create and defend the culture that is under your dominion (e.g., your home) and also seek to become a cultural gatekeeper where you can as a leader in your community, church, or business.

ARE YOU UPSTREAM OR DOWNSTREAM IN CULTURE?

Sociologist James Davidson Hunter has done some great research on how culture is made and changed. He concluded that, sometimes, a very small percentage of the population can have very big effects on culture. I'll give you an example.

Homosexuals and the transgender community have

historically been a small percentage of the population, but they have a big impact. Today, they get an entire month. There are more left-handed people than gay people historically, and they don't get a whole month or even a day to honor them. In these situations, there are certain groups that aren't large in number but have a large cultural impact.

For those of us who feel like that Hell up culture continually gets shoved down our throats, forced into our kids' curriculum, and sent to harass us online, the collapse of culture feels like an avalanche. It feels like an avalanche because it is an avalanche.

Several years ago, I was in East India, and I'll never forget it. There was a manufacturing plant dumping sewage into a river that flowed downstream. As we drove along the river, it was perhaps the worst thing I've ever smelled in my life, reminding me of Satan's breath. Downstream, I saw women going to the river, taking the water out, and trying to filter and boil it so they could use it for their family. You ultimately couldn't do anything downstream to fix this problem. The problem was upstream. Until you changed the point of pollution that was invading the water source, everyone was going to have dirty water downstream because a few people upstream decided that's how the water would be. So, you had literally hundreds or thousands of people living downstream on the river and a few business owners at the head of the river deciding what the water quality would be. Culture is like that. It's consumed downstream but created upstream.

Universities are upstream, and what they are teaching today will become the culture tomorrow. Lawyers being educated (or brainwashed) in law schools today will set the laws that determine the freedoms future generations will or will not have. Since most people live in cities, those upstream areas will continually decide who wins elections and what taxes are passed, as entire states are ruled by geographically small areas with large numbers of people who tend to be more liberal, unmarried, childless,

and progressive. Online, a small number of devoted hateful protestors can get a leader or influencer canceled altogether, burying and leaving them for dead, even though the majority of their followers probably don't feel the same.

There are three things that a man of God can do regarding culture.

One, you can seek to get into positions of cultural influence as a gatekeeper. This looks like a man or his wife running for political office, serving on a school board, or helping raise awareness for God's people to oppose ungodly bills and votes that come to their community.

Two, you can decide that your family will not drink from a hellish, polluted stream. As a man, God has tasked you to lovingly lead as head of your household. You have to decide what culture comes to your family and into your sphere of dominion. Government schools are increasingly anti-Christ, and you do not have to send your child to one. Research has proven that the more time a child spends online, the more mental health problems they have. As a parent, you do not have to hand them a phone or hand them over to a school run by people who do not have the Holy Spirit. The news is constantly driven by fear and anger, so you do not have to have a television always on at all times, setting the culture of your home. You and your wife get to decide who your friends are and which families you invite into your life, and you have every right to make and maintain firm boundaries with unhealthy and unholy people.

Research reveals the following:

After a decade of surging adolescent mental health problems and suicide, the nation's leading public health authorities have declared an emergency.

Unfortunately, the solutions proposed by organizations like the CDC (Center for Disease Control) and the American Academy of Pediatrics – such as increased funding for diagnostic and psychiatric services – do

not meet the challenge and ignore what are likely to be the most important causes. Adolescent biology hasn't changed. My colleagues and I at Gallup launched a study this summer to understand the causes[,]...The findings are clear. The most important factor in the mental health of adolescent children is the quality of the relationship with their caregivers. This, in turn, is strongly related to parenting practices – with the best results coming from warm, responsive, and rule-bound, disciplined parenting. The data also reveal the characteristics of parents who engage in best-practices and enjoy the highest quality relationships. When it comes to the quality of parenting practices and the quality of child-parent relationships, there is no variation by socioeconomic status. The results may be shocking to many highly educated Americans who were taught to believe that socioeconomic status dictates everything good in life. Income doesn't buy better parenting, and more highly educated parents do not score better, either. Parenting style and relationship quality also do not meaningfully vary by race and ethnicity within our U.S. sample.³⁸

Three, you can raise your kids to be wise but not naïve. A naïve child stays out of trouble until they leave the dominion of their father's home and enter the world. Then, they often get into a lot of trouble because they are naïve, gullible, and vulnerable. As a dad, to raise a child is to raise a missionary that you will be sending out into a lost, broken, godless world even if they don't move far from home. Over and over, while talking to his kids, the father in Proverbs points out people who have wrecked their lives with things like a lazy work ethic, sexual promiscuity, and bad financial stewardship. His children are not naïve, but they are wise. They see and know people who are choosing folly and evil, and their father is helping them see the destruction in those decisions. Growing up, I did not drink alcohol or do drugs because I saw

widespread addiction in our neighborhood, and it scared me. Even though I did not yet know God, I did know about cause and effect. When our kids were growing up, I would stop when we were watching a television show or movie, hit pause, and have a long discussion with them to help them discern what message was being sent. Without oversharing, we informed them about people they knew who were divorcing because of adultery, had gone apostate and shipwrecked their faith, or had gotten someone pregnant out of wedlock. We wanted them to see reality, have discernment, and think about the consequences of their decisions. This is the only way to survive in our Hell up world.

Every culture has flaws and failures because we're sinners. There are constantly going to be problems in culture. However, arguably the worst culture, stereotypically, is youth culture. Isaiah 3:12 (NIV) says, "Youths oppress my people, women rule over them. My people, your guides lead you astray; they turn you from the path." Isaiah speaks prophetically against a guaranteed recipe for a Hell up culture.

First, the kids are in charge. Today, culture is dominated by youth culture. The youngest people who know the least influence the most, from music to social media platforms, fashion trends, and the entertainment industry. This explains why we are seeing grandmas showing off their midriffs and a booming industry helping old people try to look young.

Second, the men are passive, and the women are controlling. We call this feminism, and God calls this oppression. The world of gender confusion, unhealthy domineering godless women, and sexual seduction used to castrate and control men is officially the bedrock of our culture in crisis.

Third, blind guides in the pulpit lead people astray. Why? Because they are following culture, not Christ. They are trying to increase their followers instead of His worshipers. They want to be loved by the world, which is

how you hate God. This explains old liberal weirdo pastors in mainline Protestant churches who try to be cutting edge while in an old church filled with old people who sing old songs, and young liberal weirdo pastors who live online as social media influencers trying to make Christianity cool. People don't need coolness; they need Christ. I don't care if my surgeon or pilot is cool; I just want them to be competent. The same should be true of the preacher.

TRADITIONAL VS. CRITICAL THEORY

All culture is marred by sin, and youth culture is arguably the worst. Some young gal who has not read a book with footnotes, thinks underwear is good outerwear, does not work a job or have a husband, and calls her cat her "fur baby" is the worst possible person to lead others, no matter how many people find her nails cute. I will warn you, for the next few paragraphs, as we trace the history of the toilet called Western culture that we have made, we will use big words, so please hang in there as I need to take a moment and serve the handful of nerds who are reading this book.

Today, there are two forces at work regarding culture: a culture that builds up (construction) and a culture that breaks down (deconstruction). Traditional theory is about how to build a culture, family, church, government, economy, marriage, or legacy. Conversely, critical theory is about breaking, tearing down, and deconstruction. How do we break government, marriage, gender, family, wealth, and legacy because they are inherently evil and oppressive? When all else fails, just start calling everyone who disagrees with you a racist, bigot, homophobe, or some other adult version of bully playground slander. If you want to learn more, I wrote a book called *Christian Theology vs. Critical Theory*.³⁹

Today, a lot of people are trying to build things culturally, and a lot of others are trying to attack and destroy what's being built. The result is a culture war.

The problem with critical theory is that it points out everything that's wrong but doesn't know how to make it right. It criticizes other people's work but doesn't get any work done.

Culture making and breaking is dominated by the far left; they've gotten themselves way upstream. This started with something called *existentialism*. A philosophy that began mainly in France, the plan was that, if they could control the stories, plays, music, and culture making, they could shape and inform a whole generation. People are not swayed by facts as much as by emotionally compelling stories. This has been part of the progressive Left's playbook from the beginning. Rather than making logical arguments for things, progressives weaponize social media to take one story, skew it for their agenda, and create outrage and sympathy that demands we reinvent culture to deal with one person's experience. Reason be damned, one good story (even if untrue) can get the fool's parade ready to march in the streets. The goal is to tear down everyone and everything that led to the one (possibly untrue) sad story. We call that social justice, which only multiplies injustice.

For example, one criminal gets roughed up by the cops, but we don't see the whole story that perhaps the criminal was beating on the cop before he got shot. People get angry, decide we should have as few cops as possible, and assume cops cannot do much of anything right anymore. Crime (including murder) surges in the name of justice, and the stories of a new victim, who died because we defunded the police, are never told because they do not fit the agenda narrative of the Left. Entire cities are now literally Hell up, on fire, and run by anarchists and drug dealers who think that the best blueprint for a city is a haunted house. You cannot improve culture by tearing something down unless you replace it with something better. This is Jesus' principle of the seven demons. If you cast a demon out of someone but don't replace it with the

Holy Spirit, you get seven more demons, which is different but not better.^a This is our world – we deconstruct things (e.g., gender, marriage, family, education, law enforcement) with no plan to rebuild something better, and the demons take over.

For a man of God, while everyone else is tearing down, this is an amazing opportunity for you to figure out what God has created you to build. You can build yourself, your wife, kids, grandkids, company, church, or ministry. As a man, God created you to create environments in which Heaven comes down, people are blessed, and there is an ark for others to climb into to escape the rising flood waters of judgment all around us. For starters, you need to be filled with the Spirit of God your Creator, then you can start creating.

SPIRIT-FILLED MEN BUILD AND CREATE

Since the creatives making culture tend to be unbelievers, it's important for God's sons to be like a man named Bezalel (you can read about him in Exodus 31-40). Exodus 31:1-3 says, "The Lord said to Moses, 'See I have called by name Bezalel...and I have filled him with the Spirit of God...'" He's the first man in the Bible that is called "Spirit-filled." God fills him with the Spirit to be a creator and a creative to start building something.

If you're a young man, you need the Spirit of God before you go build something. If you're a young, aggressive man ready to get off the couch and get active, the first thing you need to do is be filled with the Spirit of God. Repent of your sin, receive (or return to) Jesus Christ, and pray to God for an anointing in faith. Only then are you ready to go build something – a marriage, family, business, or ministry.

The story of Bezalel and his fellow workers continues in Exodus 31:3-11, "...with ability and intelligence, with

^a Matthew 12:43-45

knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft.” This is a great example of a heterosexual male creative filled with the Spirit. The exact dude our world desperately needs. This section of Scripture continues,

I have appointed with him Oholiab[.]...I have given to all able men ability, that they may make all that I have commanded you: the tent of meeting, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that is on it, and all the furnishings of the tent, the table and its utensils, and the pure lampstand with its utensils, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the basin and its stand, and the finely worked garments, the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of his sons, for their service as priests, and the anointing oil and the fragrant incense for the Holy Place. According to all that I have commanded you, they shall do.

Spirit-filled men working together to build for God is what the world always needs. It’s the only way for anything to be Heaven down. Everything else is Hell up. This is why we go to church or a men’s group and gather with other godly, like-minded men. You aren’t just there to encourage each other but also for the Spirit to fill you and give you a vision of what God has for you to build. For some, God has a company for you to build; for others, it’s a marriage, a legacy, a family, a ministry. For all men, you’re going to need to find your brothers for your battles. You want to be filled with the Spirit of God and, with our gifts and abilities, build some things together.

This dark, dreary, damned world needs more Spirit-filled men building families, businesses, churches, and ministries. Exodus 31 is about building a worship house for God. The guys who are involved – woodworkers, metalsmiths, architects, designers, builders, artists,

craftsmen – are all using their different skills and abilities. We see here that culture making and creating does not need to be dominated by the progressive Left. It can also be dominated by men of God who are filled with the Spirit of God. Art is not just gluing jewels on floats for Pride parades; it's also what men of God do when they build a home, remodel a classic car, tune a carburetor, custom build cabinetry in their woodshop, or write a song about God as Father that His sons can actually sing without feeling like Jesus invited them to the prom. God has always had His men doing creative, artistic things, and our culture tends to not see those as the arts. A guy who restores a classic step-side truck with a teakwood bed, does woodworking or metalsmithing to customize his hunting cabin, or turns wrenches on a motorcycle is a creative, heterosexual, male artist. You need to see yourself as a creative made by your Creator and start creating, making, building, or improving things in your dominion. Your home should always be maintained and improved, along with your vehicle and your physical health. You are God's sons creating cultural spaces for His people to live Heaven down, starting with your family and church family.

IS THE CHURCH A MONASTERY OR A MISSION?

As God's people, should we be a monastery or a mission in our collective life as a church family? I'm not going to stand before God and give an account for Western culture of the United States, but I will stand before God and give an account for me, my wife, my kids, and our church family.

There's a tension historically: Should the Church be a monastery where God's people get together, are safe and protected, can educate their kids, fall in love, worship God, and get a break from all the craziness? Or should people of the Church be missionaries, reaching out to lost people who need Jesus with God's people actively involved in their communities?

In John 17, Jesus prays the “High Priestly Prayer” where He says in verse 15 (NIV), “My prayer is not that

CHURCHES MUST BE BUILT FOR THE HEALTHIEST MEN, NOT THE UNHEALTHIEST MEN. THE PRESSURE SHOULD NOT BE ON HEALTHY MEN TO TOLERATE UNHEALTHY MEN BUT FOR UNHEALTHY MEN TO REPENT AND GET HEALTHY OR LEAVE.

you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.” He’s praying that the Church would be both a monastery and a mission. A local church should function a bit like a monastery

where the Bible is taught, God is worshiped, and God’s people are built up and blessed in a secured environment. The Church must be a countercultural subculture where men are masculine, women are feminine, Jesus is Lord, the whole Bible is true, children are a blessing, and marriage is sacred. In the Church, our focus should be on God and then the men. If you get the men first, they will create a new culture. Churches trying to feel welcoming to confused men who think they are women are making the Church feel like the world, and if ill men feel at home, healthy men feel ill being there. Churches must be built for the healthiest men, not the unhealthiest men. The pressure should not be on healthy men to tolerate unhealthy men but for unhealthy men to repent and get healthy or leave. God’s people, starting with His sons, feel homeless everywhere they go, so the Church must be that home for the Father’s family, starting with His sons.

Because we live in the world – shopping at the store, working at a job, living in a neighborhood, voting along with other constituents – God’s people also need to live and think as missionaries. As we build relationships with people and see the brokenness that only a transforming relationship with God and His people can heal, we must not lose heart to help others learn about the blessings in our lives such as forgiveness of sin through faith in Jesus Christ, wisdom from the Word of God, direction through prayer, power from the Spirit, encouragement through

worship, and friendships with God's people in the Church. Our home and church home should be countercultural and open to non-believers. Like people who have lived in a dark cave their entire lives, lost people will squint for a while when they begin to see Jesus, the Light of the World.

**SOMETHING VERY GOOD
HAPPENS IN CHRISTIAN
MEN ACTIVATED TO SERVE.**

While the peace of God's presence in a home and the sight of strong, bold, safe, loving, humble men playing

with kids at a church may be new experiences for most people, that Kingdom culture environment will awaken in many people a longing for life under the rule of King Jesus lived Heaven down.

Since most men build their relationships by working together with other guys, the best way for you to find brothers for life's battles is to find a place in your church to start serving. As you serve, you will meet like-minded men who can encourage you in your walk with God. Something very good happens in Christian men activated to serve.

RECEIVE, REJECT, OR REDEEM

The first disciples we have as men, and first missionaries we train with our wife's help, are our children. Many of the arguments that fathers and mothers have surround culture – e.g., what the kids should and should not see on a screen and in what holiday traditions should they participate and not participate. For example, my wife really hates Halloween and always has. I don't mind kids dressing up for fun and, as a general rule, I'm pro-candy. I agree with her that witches, ghosts, scaring kids, and the other dark aspects of Halloween are demonic.

As a man leading your kids and grandkids, it's helpful to remember the three categories of how to approach culture:

1. Receive – Some things in culture are good and acceptable for God's people. For example, do you

celebrate birthdays? There are only two guys in the Bible – Pharaoh and Herod – who celebrate their birthday. If you’re new to Christianity, let me just tell you these are really bad guys. So, is it a sin to celebrate birthdays? No, we can receive it. The Bible doesn’t say it’s a sin to celebrate a birthday, and it doesn’t say, “Thou shalt celebrate birthdays” in the hidden Old Testament books of 1st and 2nd Birthdays. It doesn’t say anything about birthdays, so we can receive them. If you have a kid or grandkid, throw them a good birthday party.

2. Reject – Some things in culture are evil and unacceptable for God’s people. For example, God’s people cannot take their kids to drag queen story hour at the local library, allow their young children to be subject to the increasingly debased government school curriculum that sexualizes children and encourages gender confusion, allow their preteen daughters to post half-naked videos on social media, or support the holocaust of abortion.
3. Redeem – Some things in culture are neutral and can be used for good or evil; therefore, God’s people are free to redeem these things if they choose to. For example, Christmas was originally a pagan holiday called Saturnalia, and many of our customs – e.g., greenery and wreaths in the home, feasting, holiday songs – come from it. Since people already had the day off work and it was a holiday, God’s people decided they would use that day to celebrate Jesus’ birthday. No one knows when Jesus was born, so Christians decided to take a pagan holiday and redeem it for Jesus. However, there was a group of Christians, the Puritans, that didn’t redeem Christmas. They actually worked on Christmas in protest and rejected it altogether, which I would disagree with, especially now that

I'm a grandfather.

These kinds of cultural issues require conversations – first, with your wife if you're married, and second, with your kids. When it comes to raising your kids, they, at some point, need to learn how to discern what's going on in culture. You have to help them think in these categories. Give the Holy Spirit an opportunity to awaken them. For dads, class is always in session, and you are the primary teacher.

With our kids, when they wanted to watch a show, I'd watch it with them, and we'd hit pause a lot to talk about it. "Hey, what just happened? What did you think of that?" I didn't want them to be just consumers of culture; I wanted them to be critics of culture. I wanted them to think biblically and categorically, and I wanted to teach them to do that before they left my house. A lot of Christian parents' first instinct is, "Don't let them watch that." Here's what I would say: Don't let them watch it

**FOR DADS, CLASS IS
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alone, but sit down and teach them why it's not the best way of life and why that isn't our culture or the culture of Heaven.

Let them be discerning critics and not just undiscerning consumers. This is the story of Daniel. He was raised in a godly environment and then taken captive to live in Babylon. He had the Holy Spirit and some godly friends and continually made good decisions about what to receive, reject, and redeem in Babylonian culture. Your kids and grandkids are growing up in Babylon, and your job as a father and grandfather is to help them be a Daniel.

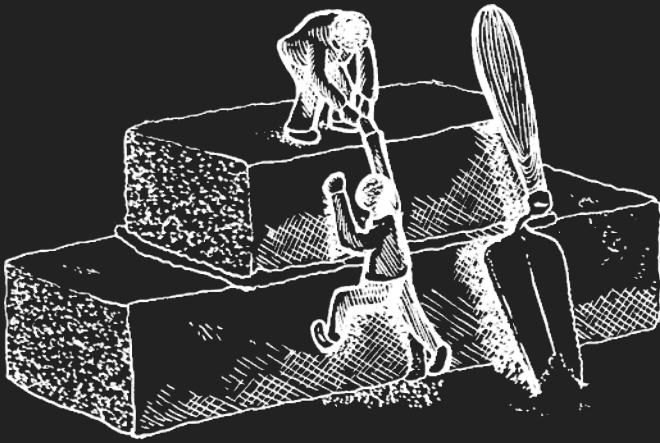
I will conclude this chapter with an example. When our kids were little, we were watching a movie that portrayed the kids as very smart, the parents as very dumb, the father as the dumbest of all, and the family pet as the most helpful family member for the child. This is, sadly, a common storyline in a lot of children's entertainment. One

of our kids shouted, “Hit pause!” so I did. They wanted to talk about the storyline, and so we took a few minutes to do so as a family. They pointed out that the movie made the dad look like an idiot and encouraged kids not to trust their dad. I asked the other kids what they thought about that observation, and they all agreed. I then took turns laying a hand over each of the kids, thanking them for being my blessing, and telling them that I loved them and would always do my best to be most helpful to them. I then handed them licorice and popcorn as we snuggled on the couch to finish the movie. We redeemed family movie night, and I would encourage you to do the same when it comes to leading your family in this dark, depraved culture we live in. This maximization of every opportunity is called stewardship, which we will examine next.

Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion

1. What is God asking you to build, create, fix, or innovate? (e.g., a family, company, ministry, etc.)
2. What most concerns you about where Western culture is trending? Why?
3. Are there any areas of your life that you need to evaluate with the receive/reject/redeem exercise?
4. Do you have a good church home? If yes, are you giving and serving? If not, what should you be praying and looking for in a church home?

Chapter 6



STEWARD:
Build His Kingdom

When my wife and I were first married, we were very broke. We were both still in college full-time, working jobs to scrape together a very small budget and simple life. I was a new Christian, and Grace had grown up as a pastor's daughter. She had seen God provide over and over throughout her life, so she had far more faith than I did in God taking care of our finances. If I'm honest, for most of our marriage, our finances gave me anxiety as we graduated to plant a broke church for college students and started having what would eventually be five children while living off of one income in a very expensive city.

My Father, however, was gracious to teach me about stewardship. In the early years of our marriage, we avoided credit cards and paid cash for everything to ensure we did not overspend. I will never forget the day we were sitting in church together, the bucket came by to collect the offering, and Grace dropped a \$100 bill in the bucket.

I was shocked. Our rent was \$150 a month, so that was a TON of money for us. For date night, we would go to a 99-cent theater since it was all we could afford. I chopped wood to heat our small basement rental unit because we could not afford to turn on the heater in the snowy winters.

I figured we were so poor that it would have been a better idea for us to put our hand in the bucket and take out a handful of money to bring home. I looked at my wife, asking her what she was doing as the bucket, and our \$100 bill, moved farther and farther away. She told me it was our tithe, it belonged to the Lord, and we were not going to have any of the Lord's money in our pocket.

Since there was no use arguing in church, I waited until later that day to bring up the subject again, and she was kindly immovable on this issue. I was certain we were going to be homeless and starve to death thanks to my wife. That week, at a Bible study taught by our pastor, he told me that the Lord had spoken to him and told him that I needed to learn to trust God with money, and he

handed me a \$100 bill because the Lord told him to. I was in shock! I rushed home to tell Grace that God obviously did not want us to tithe and returned the \$100 mistake she had given to the church. She laughed and told me that God was instead teaching us to trust Him with money and to keep tithing. I thought my lovely wife had lost her mind. Surely we were to believe in both Jesus and math, and this was a plan for bankruptcy.

The next month, we were sitting in church, and my wife did it again! She took out a \$100 bill that I did not even know we had and dropped it in the bucket. We had a bit of a terse disagreement later in the day. My wife remained immovable in her crazy plan to thrust us into destitute poverty. That same week, I awoke one morning to find that some anonymous person had slipped a \$100 bill under the front door of our basement apartment that was around the rear of a home, completely hidden!

At that moment, I understood that I needed to not only give my sin to God but also our wealth. That day, we started making plans to live within our means, starting with tithing to the Lord first, what the Bible calls “firstfruits.” Since then, we have had good times and bad, but God has somehow always sustained us, and I have grown to love generosity and helping people because of my wife. Thankfully, that value has also been passed down to our kids.

Proverbs 22:3 (NIV) says, “The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty.” We call that our modern world. That’s where we find ourselves right now. Are you ever looking down the road, into the future, looking at our economy, and realizing it’s not looking great?

There *is* hope, and that’s where God’s men have to learn to be good stewards. You have to look at reality and what’s coming for you and your family financially. In the four years leading up to my writing of this book, young men like my sons who marry, have children, and want to buy a home have seen that aspiration become increasingly

difficult as “the income needed to afford a typical home has increased by a staggering 80% [from \$59,000 to \$106,400]...highlighting just how much current home prices and mortgage rates are straining buyers’ budgets.”⁴⁰

Some young men are not working full-time. Some young men are not launching and moving out of their mother’s home to take on adult responsibilities and prepare for marriage and family. For those young men who are working hard, being responsible, and seeking to become responsible husbands and fathers, economic variables make things very difficult. This explains why young adults are reaching financial independence later than ever, and godly young men will need help from their fathers and grace from God along with a good plan for generating wealth to get launched.⁴¹

What we as God’s men need to understand is that we can’t control interest rates or all that’s happening in the global supply chain, but we can control our finances, family, wealth, and responsibility and try to steward it as best as we possibly can. Every man feels the squeeze of trying to take care of his family and business.

THE OWNER VS. THE MANAGER

What is a steward? This is the Christian’s view of life, possessions, and wealth. It’s two things: Number one, God is the owner. Number two, I am the manager.

In Haggai 2:8, God says, “The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the Lord of hosts,” meaning everything belongs to God. He made the heavens and the earth, mankind, everyone, and everything. Ultimately, as Creator, God is also the owner. That makes mankind the manager.

1 Peter 4:10 says, “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace...” Here, Peter is saying to use whatever gift – that could be financial, spiritual, talent, ability, inheritance, estate, portfolio, resources – you have received to serve

others as faithful stewards. A steward says, “Everything is owned by God and managed by me. Whatever I have is a gift.”

If you receive an inheritance or have a job, land, or have some capital assets and stocks, all of it is from God.

He’s the owner; you’re the manager. You need to start with, “What does the owner want me to do with His

AS A CHRISTIAN, WE HAVE TO START WITH THE ASSUMPTION THAT EVERYTHING BELONGS TO GOD AND IS ENTRUSTED TO US.

resources and assets?” If you’re an investment broker or portfolio manager, someone else is the owner, and you’re the manager. If you’re the manager of the portfolio for the owner, the most important thing to figure out is what does the owner want done with their assets? If you don’t, you go to jail and find yourself dealing with the consequences of making decisions against the will of the owner. So, you have to manage the owner’s assets and wealth according to the owner’s desires.

As Christians, we have to start with the assumption that everything belongs to God and is entrusted to us. We need to ask Him what He wants us to do with His wealth. The goal is to invest in His Kingdom. Most men think they’re the owner *and* the manager and try to build their own kingdom rather than God’s Kingdom. This is a fatal flaw for men. My hope, prayer, and goal is for you to see God as owner and yourself as manager. We’re asking the owner how He wants us to manage His resources to better invest in His Kingdom, not just build our little kingdom that’s in competition with His.

YOUR HOME AND LIFE NEED AN ARCHITECT

Stewardship begins by establishing priorities. Imagine if a country had no founding governance documents and no basic framework from which to make decisions and legal verdicts. For us as Christians, our priorities are kind of like a constitution; it’s our basic framework. If God

is the owner and we are the manager, we should steward our time, talent, treasure, resources, and relationships according to our God-given priorities.

This may be a very simple revision or may be brand new. It may come naturally to you, or you may have never learned this. It's crazy that you can graduate from high school and learn nothing about accounting, time management, planning, or budgeting. Kids have 12-13 years at a desk and learn nothing about how to balance cash flow. Among the first things many college freshmen receive are a credit card and a school loan, but there's no class on compounded debt and interest. You can grow up in a family where your parents make and spend money, but if they never really talk about it, you don't really learn about it.

Stewardship starts with our God-given priorities. Hopefully, it helps you recognize and prioritize yours if I share mine. This is something that came out of my living room. We were in one of the most difficult, arduous, and contentious seasons of our entire lives, and we called a family meeting to reset everything. A wise friend flew in and joined us for family dinner and a family meeting after. His question was, "What do you want?" I got a big piece of paper and wrote these five priorities on it in my living room:

1. Healthy Christian – If I'm connected to the Lord, I'll get all the resources I need to be connected to other people. If I know God's forgiveness, I can forgive others. If I know God's love, I can love others. If I'm filled with the Holy Spirit, the presence of God can flow through me to bless others.
2. Healthy Spouse – I'll let you in on a little secret: I really like my wife. I've been married to her for 30-plus years and she's my favorite person. I totally adore her, and I want to have a good marriage. I want to spend time with her and hear her laugh.
3. Healthy Parent/Grandparent – I have five kids.

Some have started having their own kids, so I want to have a healthy, loving relationship with all my kids and grandkids.

4. Healthy Worker – I want to do good work to the glory of God.
5. Healthy Church Member – I want to be connected to God's people.

The reason I put “healthy” first is because you can be a Christian, husband, father, worker, and church member and still be unhealthy. You can be angry, bitter, jaded, broken, burned out, and frustrated, or you can actually enjoy your relationship with the Lord, your wife, your kids, and grandkids and enjoy your work and church.

When I made this list, I wasn't healthy. I was overworked and burned out. I had not stewarded my time and energy well. I had twice blown out my adrenal glands and twice had intestinal ulcers. I had just spent all the energy in my body until there was nothing left. For a season, I was that guy who drank a lot of coffee and energy drinks then would have a late afternoon crash. I'd eat carbs and have a sugar rush then couldn't go to sleep at night. I'd wake up after I went to sleep, and my mind would be racing. I just wasn't healthy, but I wanted to be. So, our family made a pledge to each other and a vow to the Lord and decided we would architect our entire lives so we could steward our time, talent, and treasure to follow our priorities. It caused us to move to Arizona and resulted in planting a church and starting RealFaith Ministries – and we are all serving Jesus together. A lot of change happened, and it's led to the best season of our entire lives.

I realized that we lived in a home that had an architect, builder, and building inspector, and I would've never moved my family into a home that didn't have those three things. But I had moved my family into a life that wasn't well-architected or well-built, and it was time to inspect it. I wouldn't let my family live in a home that

was unsafe, so why was I allowing us to live in a life that was unplanned? Since then, I've seen that if you want to do the right thing, God is eager to help, and He has been exceedingly gracious and generous to my family and me.

Almost 10 years ago was the worst, most anxious season of our lives, and now we're in the happiest, most joyful season of our lives. I'm happier than I've ever been. I love my wife and have a relationship I enjoy with all five of our kids and our ever-growing number of grandkids. I love my job; I love our church and the people in our church. In that awful season, I was in a place where I couldn't continue, or I wasn't going to make it. I was going to run out of energy, joy, time, and money. Now, I'm happier and more grateful than I've ever been.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE FAMILY?

There are a couple of different places where men tend to mess up their priorities by combining things that should be kept separate.

1. We take our wife and kids and call it "family." Your wife and kids should be two separate categories, not one. You had a wife, if you did it right, before you had kids. Once your kids leave, you should still have a wife. If you put it all together as "family," you work a lot and need "family" time, but you're not investing in your marriage. Once the kids grow up, get driver's licenses, and aren't home all the time, your marriage breaks if the kids were the glue holding it together. Your marriage is your first priority after God and then your kids.
2. We wrongly think our relationship with God and our service at church are the same thing. Your relationship with God is most important, then your ministry service begins with your wife and kids. If your ministry or your involvement at church is overtaking your care of your wife and kids, you have inverted priorities because church and God are

two different things. You love and have a relationship with God, and you also serve at church. The best way to do that is starting with serving your wife and kids then also serving your church family as a family. Ministry starts at your house, then God's house.

What are your priorities like? When your feet hit the ground, is your first priority prayer and meeting with the Lord, turning on your phone, or going to work? When you get home, do your wife or kids get your first and best energy? Do you have anything left for God and church? Church should function like extended spiritual family where you and your wife and kids serve God together and make relationships with God's people.

Architect your life according to your priorities. Everyone and everything in life is important but not equally important. Your priorities need to determine where

WHEN YOUR FEET HIT THE GROUND, IS YOUR FIRST PRIORITY PRAYER AND MEETING WITH THE LORD, TURNING ON YOUR PHONE, OR GOING TO WORK?

you place your energy, time, and money. If you make more money, what will it do to your relationship with God, your wife, and your kids? If you make money more important than those things, you're

making it your highest priority. You need to make money but, as Jesus says, you can't serve God and money.^a

MISORDERED PRIORITIES TRIGGER JEALOUSY

Our values are what we care about, but our priorities are what we do. You may have a value for something, but your schedule and budget reveal your priorities. When our priorities are out of order, it triggers jealousy. When your wife has a baby, have you ever been a little jealous of the kid because they're getting all your wife's time? I love my

^a Matthew 6:24

kids and, for a season when they were little and had all the needs, they cut in line in my wife's priority list. At some point, jealousy happens when someone's in my place.

The Bible says God is a jealous God; in fact, one of His divine names is "Jealous."^a God is saying, "I'm supposed to be *here*, and you have me *here*. You've displaced me or you've replaced me, and that causes jealousy." You know your priorities are out of order when you start hearing from God, your wife, or your kids, "I miss you. I don't feel like I'm a priority. You're not present. I don't feel like I matter." When you start hearing those things, somehow jealousy has gotten triggered. Don't get defensive; just listen and consider if your priorities are out of order.

I love Grace and our five kids with all my heart, but there were times in our marriage when I told her, "Honey, I love the kids. You're a great mom, but I'm still your husband. We need to have a relationship, and we can't wait 18 years and then hope to pick up there. We need to be building that relationship now."

Sometimes our priorities get out of order, and if you don't establish your priorities, the least healthy people in your life will. Have you noticed this? If you don't control your budget, some really unhealthy friends and family will help you get rid of your money. If you don't architect your holidays, the craziest people with your last name will put them together for you. If you don't decide what to do with your schedule, some really unhealthy people will crash into your life and determine what your week looks like. If you don't design, architect, and sequence your life, someone else will, and it's usually the least healthy person that starts to make the decisions.

Many men then get frustrated, and it triggers in them anger, jealousy, and frustration. They think, "I'm working so hard, but my wife isn't there for me," or "My kids aren't responding to me," or "No one thanks me." Once you start

^a Exodus 34:14

feeling frustrated or angry, it's a warning that the law of jealousy has been triggered. Don't respond out of anger; use it as an opportunity to ask, "Are we living according

**AS A MAN AND AS
A STEWARD, YOU
HAVE TO PRAY,
PLAN, AND PIVOT.**

to our God-given priorities?" as well as "Do we agree on what our priorities are?" You should love your mother-in-law, but she doesn't get to be first in line because she's

the loudest. Just because someone at work is causing crisis and drama doesn't mean they get to be calling, texting, and emailing at dinner time and on your day off. Ultimately, you have to be in charge of your own life.

PRAY, PLAN, PIVOT

As a man and as a steward, you have to pray, plan, and pivot. A couple of years ago, I taught through the book of Nehemiah. Nehemiah is a classic case of a world-class leader. Does he pray? He keeps praying, including nine times throughout the book. Does he plan? He's got legal plans, financial plans, security plans, building plans, HR plans, church plans, and plans for plans. He prays a lot and plans a lot. But does he ever pivot? Yes.

There are two kinds of leaders: process leaders and pivot leaders. For process leaders, once the plan is made, they don't deviate because change is hard. Pivot leaders know that, occasionally, even if you pray and plan, things will happen, and you'll have to pivot.

Nehemiah was building a wall, and enemies show up threatening murder. Now, he had to pivot and get security. Next, they wrongly accuse him of committing treason, so he had to pivot and fire up a public relations department to refute the lie.

As a man, one most important thing is to take time to hear from God. You can't tell others what they're supposed to do until God has told you what you're supposed to do. Pray and make your plan, budget, and schedule, then pivot as things come up. Process leaders often get frustrated and

have difficulty pivoting; pivot leaders need not use their flexibility as an excuse to not have any plans. You need both. This is particularly true in your budget.

THE GOVERNMENT TAKES YOUR FIRSTFRUITS

Your budget and your schedule go hand-in-hand with your priorities. Let me give you the quickest budget summary of all time since they don't teach you this in high school or college. If you want to know more, find a guy named Dave Ramsey or something called Crown Financial Ministries.

First and foremost, you give to God and government. In Matthew 22:21, Jesus says, "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." You're supposed to give to God first, but the government didn't get that memo. The government takes a chunk first, but your tithe is giving to the Lord. Proverbs 3:9 says, "Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce..." Your first priority is giving to God; that sets all your other priorities in order. You're telling God He's the owner and you're just the manager. If you do a good job with what's entrusted to you, God will help you to multiply it.

One of my favorite Bible stories is about the little boy with the fishes and loaves.^a He thinks, "I'll give it to the Lord and see what HE does." Jesus does something supernatural; He multiplies it. If you make God first in your schedule, priorities, and budget, it'll force you to consider what God wants for all your other spending and open an opportunity for God to multiply.

Then, you have taxes. I'll be honest; I'm more excited about the tithe than taxes. I like people meeting Jesus. I'm not super happy about giving to the government. Romans 13:7 (NIV) says, "Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if

^a John 6:1-14

respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.” Jesus came to earth and paid His taxes. Even though we’re not super excited about it, that means we also need to pay our taxes. You have to pay your tithe and your taxes. God and government are the first budget items.

Proverbs 22:7 says, “The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is slave of the lender.” This means, if you don’t set your budget right, you’ll start paying expenses with debt. This is a cultural crisis. If our government would just believe this one verse, a lot of things would change. It’s simple: Don’t spend more than you have. If you’re under 25, your brain probably just exploded. We now have record credit card debt, college debt, and automotive debt, and interest rates and inflation are rising. That means if you put something on credit two years ago, you’re now paying for it multiple times.

This verse tells you to figure out exactly what you need and live on less knowing that, in a fallen world, some things will happen and you’re going to be short. Your housing is usually your biggest expense at 25% of your income, and your car is generally second. Don’t make yourself house poor or vehicle poor. Instead, live in a place you can afford, and buy a vehicle for cash or from family and friends, so you at least know the vehicle history. The third category most of our money goes to is food, especially for guys, because most men can’t cook. Guys get delivery, debt, and diabetes in that order.

For most people, after the house, car, and food, the fourth category most money goes towards is debt elimination. If you’re in debt, don’t assume you’ll die and your grandchildren will take care of it. Who would you guess is the number one category of person with high credit card debt? A young woman in her 20s. She’s buying shoes, getting her hair done, and hoping to find a man with a job. At historic levels, we’re seeing young people go into record debt and have nothing to show for it.

If you’re a guy with a lot of debt and marry a gal with a lot of debt, who’s in charge? The lender is now head of

your household. If you want to start a family and have kids, you can't. If you want to buy a house, you can't. If you want mom to stay home with the kids, you can't. If you don't want to take a higher paying job because it keeps you away from home more, you can't turn it down. If you get the debt decision wrong, you'll be forced to make other decisions wrong. When you're single, men are often not thinking about a wife and kids, but if they're on the horizon, you need to consider them before they arrive.

The Bible talks a lot about savings. Proverbs 30:25 (NIV) says, "Ants are creatures of little strength, yet they store up their food in the summer..." What the COVID craziness and a whole generation of young people sitting home just waiting for government money revealed is that no one had any savings. Once the money was distributed, what did many people do with the money? Luxury goods and spending. Not saving, investing, or debt reduction. As we're looking at the future, you need cash reserves because problems are coming. In a fallen world, you'll always come up short, something will break, or an unexpected expense will arise. Savings is the margin between you and being able to survive.

There are also investments. Proverbs 13:22 is a verse I wish more men would believe: "A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children..." So, what does a bad man leave to his children's children? Debt. The inheritance we leave our children is financial as well as spiritual. It's hard to give wealth to multiple generations because the government wants to get in the waterfall and keep taking. So, if you're going to generate generational wealth, you have to think ahead. For the younger men, the earlier you can start accumulating savings, real estate assets, stocks, an investment portfolio, a family trust, or a college fund, the better.

When my kids were growing up, I told them when they turned 16, if they loved God and were a dependable, responsible kid, I'd help them get their first car. When they went to college, I told them not to go into college

debt but to find a cheaper college or scholarships and I would help them. Here's a crazy idea: They can work their way through college. If you avoid car debt and college debt, you probably also avoid credit card debt. If you look at interest rates, it's like dealing with the Mafia. You may as well be borrowing from a cartel. Then, as much as possible, use first-time home buyer benefits for loans

MOST OF OUR CULTURAL PROBLEMS ARE REALLY PROBLEMS WITH MEN WHO HAVE A FAILURE SEQUENCE INSTEAD OF A SUCCESS SEQUENCE.

and get into a reasonable townhome or condo so you can have that tax benefit and start building equity. If you have to pay a mortgage, it might as well be your own.

If you'll avoid debt, invest, and think strategically long-term, you'll be years ahead of people your age.

THE SUCCESS SEQUENCE

If you could get access to a magic list of things to do in order to live a successful life and avoid poverty, would you want it? I'll let you in on a little secret. It's called the Success Sequence.⁴² Bradford Wilcox, the leading sociologist on men and marriage, faith and family, says, "Almost no millennials who follow the success sequence are in poverty."

Number one, graduate from high school. Number two, get a *full-time* job. Number three, be on track, meaning you get married or are planning ahead to get married. Here's the big idea: If you graduate from high school, get a job, and wait to have a kid until you have a wife, your odds of poverty are just 3%. Most of our cultural problems are really problems with men who have a failure sequence instead of a success sequence. Most of our poverty, crime, gangs, and addictions would go away if young men were to graduate from high school, get a job, and wait to have a child until they have a wife.

If you do these three things in order, you're operating

within the divine design by which God created the universe. They don't tell you this in high school and they don't tell you this in college because they want you to be dependent on the government and credit card companies. They don't want you to be free to enjoy your life and lead your family.

Throughout life, after your honeymoon, keeping your God-given priorities also protects a man from working too much and burning out. One study indicated that men who marry are less likely to burn out at work because they find greater meaning in their work by providing for their family, and they have the benefit of going home to enjoy their family after a long day at work.⁴³ A man who works hard for his family blesses them and, in return, his family is a blessing that makes his work meaningful, valuable, and purposeful as God intends.

FREEDOM VS. LIFESTYLE

As men, there's a balance between freedom and lifestyle. If you want more freedom, you're probably going to make less money. That's why the homeless guy doesn't have a full calendar. But, if you make as much revenue as possible, you probably sacrifice your freedom. It's a precarious balance for every man between income and lifestyle, freedom and health. You have to find what's sustainable.

I was reading a leadership book that said that winning at life is about five things: doing what you love, with the people you love, making a difference, being adequately compensated, and having time and energy to enjoy the rest of your life. That's the balance: make enough money that you can live but have enough margin that you can enjoy your life. I would just encourage you to be honest about where you're at and, by God's grace, move toward a healthy, wise lifestyle to enjoy and bless your wife and kids more, which we will examine in the following chapters.

Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion

1. What is your list of priorities that guide your decision making? Are there any changes that need to be made after reading this chapter?
2. Where are you a strong steward? (e.g., time, money, wisdom, abilities, relationships, etc.)
3. Where are you a weak steward? (e.g., time, money, wisdom, abilities, relationships, etc.)
4. Was there any part of the Success Sequence that you have not followed or currently are not following? What are the consequences?

ACT LIKE A MAN

Chapter 7



HUSBAND:
Love Your Princess

This chapter is about marriage but, for you single guys, don't check out. 93% of you will marry at some point. This will be helpful whether you're aspiring to be married, are a newly married guy, a crafty seasoned veteran, or have friends, sons or grandsons who are getting married.

Let's start with the end zone in mind. I recently received a wonderful note card from a woman in our church who was in the back during one of our services. She wrote, "I witnessed something Sunday I wanted to share with you. As they were taking communion, I watched the men wrap their arms around their wives, covering

**IF YOU WANT TO TOUCH
YOUR WIFE'S BODY, YOU
NEED TO FIRST TOUCH
HER SOUL.**

their heads, kissing them, and praying over them. It was so touching to witness." It's amazing that you can go your whole life, and the only time

a man lays hands on a woman is to harm or have sex with her but not to pray over or bless her.

If you want to touch your wife's body, you need to first touch her soul. That's why praying with your wife is the most intimate thing you can do. A lot of men will sleep with a woman but won't pray with her because it's too intimate. The deepest level is at the level of the soul, praying and worshiping together, which opens the rest of the relationship.

Before we talk about marriage, we should clarify that God's divine design for marriage is one man and one woman in a covenant that's consummated. No gay marriage, polygamy, cohabitation, friends with benefits, or living together. The world is drunk and confused when it comes to marriage.

We now have a record number of 40-year-olds who have never been married.⁴⁴ We have a record number of cohabitating couples, and those relationships have repeatedly proven to cause higher rates of divorce than couples who do not cohabit before marriage.⁴⁵

As a man, marriage is good for you, which is contrary to the nonsense on social media calling marriage a "death

sentence” for men. In an article summarizing the book *The Case for Marriage*, it is said that married men:

- Live nearly 10 years longer than their unmarried peers.
- Are about 50% less likely to die – at any age – than unmarried men.
- Are less likely than singles to suffer from long-term chronic illnesses or disabilities.
- Are about 30% more likely to rate their health as “excellent or very good” than unmarried men.
- Drink about half as much as their unmarried peers of the same age.
- Are less likely to smoke, drink and drive, drive too fast, get into fights, or take risks that increase the chance of accidents and injuries.
- Make significantly more money than bachelors.
- Experience faster wage growth than unmarried men.
- Produce more on average than single men at the same job.
- Are less likely to show up for work hungover or exhausted.
- Make more responsible financial decisions than single men.
- Report less depression, less anxiety and lower levels of other psychological distress than singles.
- Are about three times less likely to commit suicide than the unmarried.
- Are half as likely as singles and cohabitators to say they are unhappy with their lives.⁴⁶

THE FOUR LAWS OF LOVE

To find God’s original intent for men in marriage, let’s go back to Genesis and the beginning of marriage. I’ll briefly summarize Pastor Jimmy Evans’ book *The Four Laws of Love*.

Genesis 2:24-25 says, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they

shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.” This Scripture is our source for the four laws. We know this verse is written for us because Adam had no earthly father; it’s God’s prototype for marriage.

MANY MEN THINK MARRIAGE IS THE FINISH LINE, BUT IT'S JUST THE STARTING LINE.

When there’s a debate in the New Testament about marriage, Jesus, Paul, and others go back to this section of Scripture written for us but spoken to our first father, Adam.

1. Law of Priority

First, you need to leave your mom and dad. If you have a son in his 20s, he needs to move, get off your payroll, get his own income, and make his own decisions. Once he leaves, the Bible says he takes a wife, which means taking the initiative and the risk, and he pursues her. One study said 45% of men aged 18-25 have never romantically approached a woman in person, which is shocking cowardice.⁴⁷ They’re afraid of rejection. Welcome to being a man. You’re going to need to get used to being rejected – you won’t get a job, you’ll get a job and get fired, you’ll have friends betray you, and people will abandon you. If you want to succeed, you need to endure rejection.

We tend to either over-parent or under-parent our sons. When we under-parent him, we basically abandon him once he’s 18. Have you ever met an 18-year-old? They’re not fully cooked. They’ve never been married, had a career job, bought a house, managed cash flow, or raised children. They still need coaching. If we under-parent, we think they magically become mature adults at 18, but they don’t. If we over-parent, when they’re 18, 20, 25, 30, or 45, we’re still meddling, controlling, and rescuing. If you’re raising a son and he still doesn’t have a wife, it could be because his mom has taken her place. If she over-mothers, she’s thwarting his launching. We should instead

move to the role of a coach on the sidelines who's there to help them make good decisions. They ultimately make and are responsible for their decisions, but we can coach and help them along.

2. Law of Pursuit

Genesis 2 says to “hold fast” (some older Bible translations will say “cleave”). Have you ever seen a sports team nearing a scoring opportunity? They're focused on the goal, and that's how a guy should be when he's pursuing a woman. You know a guy has met his potential wife when he suddenly gets very focused. He finds his girl, and he wants to marry her, so he starts making and saving more money than ever and putting his life together to invite her into it. This is passionate pursuit and vigorous intentionality.

The problem becomes when men sometimes have that vigorous enthusiasm until the honeymoon is over. All of a sudden, they're pursuing their career, hobbies, or the kids, and all the enthusiasm of pursuing their wife wanes. This

WHEN A MAN AND A WOMAN MARRY, THEY'RE NOT JOINING EACH OTHER'S FAMILIES; THEY'RE STARTING A NEW FAMILY.

can even cause real danger through “work spouses,” emotional affairs, and even physical affairs. You need to date your wife before someone else does. You dated her to marry her, so

keep dating her to stay married to her. Many men think marriage is the finish line, but it's just the starting line.

I say this all the time and have a *Leave and Cleave* sermon series and workbook on it: When a man and a woman marry, they're not joining each other's families; they're starting a new family. When the holidays come, my married kids and their families are always invited, but it's up to them to decide what to do with *their* family. If they want an opinion, I've certainly got it, and I've turned it into a career. But if they don't want my opinion, I'll just tuck it away and pray for their decisions. The big problem

comes when we don't allow the next generation to have healthy families because we don't let them be their own family.

3. Law of Partnership

When a man and woman marry, they become one, using the same Hebrew word *echad*, found in Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one." Like the Father, Son, and Spirit are one, the husband and wife become one. It doesn't mean one spouse is domineering; you pray about and work everything out together because unity is your highest goal. Practically, like Grace and I, that means you have one bed, church, God, calendar, bank account, schedule, vacation, and last name.

If you try to lead separate lives with separate friends, vacations, churches, and money, those separate tracks will ultimately completely separate, and you'll be devastated. As long as you're two, you have division ("two visions"). Jesus says a house that has division falls down.^a The only way marriage works is one vision where you're united and agree on what you're doing. Is it a problem if one (or both) of you has a strong personality? No, strength is never a problem, but independence is always a problem. This is where I go from teaching to meddling. If you just let your wife do what she wants because you don't want to take the energy to make it better, it's a violation of the Laws of Priority, Pursuit, and Partnership because you've let independence allow a "two-ness" where God intended a "one-ness."

4. Law of Purity

Adam and Eve were "naked without shame." Most guys will be like, "Can we just skip the first three and double down on point four?" But you'll notice that if you get the first three right, you'll probably have a better sex life. For

^a Mark 3:25

most women, their highest need is security, and if you don't pursue, prioritize, and have partnership with your wife, she doesn't feel safe being intimate with you.

God created sex so, in marriage, there's nothing to be ashamed of. It's not like God was in Heaven, made man and woman, got them naked and married, went out to get a snack and came back in shock yelling, "What the heck? One of you angels get a wing in there!" Many legalistic churches have bad teaching on sex, teaching that "sex is dirty, nasty, vile, and wrong, so save it for the one you love." Then, you get married and still think it's dirty. Christians shouldn't be anti-sex; they should be pro-marriage.

Adam did not have a standard of beauty; he had a wife. Eve didn't have a standard of beauty; she had a husband. The same goes for you. That means if you get married at 20 and stay married for 60 years, your standard

SATAN DIDN'T EVEN SHOW UP UNTIL ADAM AND EVE WERE MARRIED, SO THE FRONT LINES OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE ARE ALWAYS STARTING WITH OUR MARRIAGE.

of beauty is your wife at 80, not 20. For the record, gravity is undefeated. Nobody looks better at 80 than 20. But, ultimately, you want

to do what Proverbs says and that is to delight in the wife of your youth whether she's young or old.^a

Our broken world has completely corrupted all of this. We've separated sex from marriage, fathers from children, and grown men from adult responsibilities. But I want good for you. Your life, marriage, kids, and grandkids matter. If you follow God's divine design for marriage, God will help you succeed. He's for you, not against you. But, if you want to do evil – have sex without marriage and have a good time instead of a good legacy – Satan will happily help you devastate your entire life and legacy. Satan didn't even show up until Adam and Eve were

^a Proverbs 5:18

married, so the front lines of spiritual warfare are always starting with our marriage. After the wedding comes the war.

YOUR WIFE IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

Some men and/or their wives are mentally, emotionally, and/or spiritually unwell. If this is you, you need professional Christian help. If this is your wife, you need to get her professional Christian help. You've tried to cover for her and protect your kids or others, but you know you can't. Ephesians 5:25-28 says:

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

If your wife is unwell, I'm truly sorry, but you have to deal with it, because the goal of a husband is to lovingly lead his wife as Christ lovingly leads the Church. She may have an addiction, have had trauma in her past, or have toxic, unhealthy relationships with others. Part of your trouble is that you've tolerated this for so long that you wonder if it's too late to get her help. Some of you may be waiting for the day your kids grow up so you can just move on. Others of you may have tried to carve out completely parallel lives just to get a break from her because she wears you out. This is where we get hobbies, overworking, and man caves. It's not that you like solitude that much and you're getting time with the Lord; you need a break from her, and you are not running to the Lord as much as you are running from her.

Here's what I know about Jesus: He loves me so much that He takes me exactly as I am, but He loves me too much to let me stay exactly as I am. You may love your wife and feel loyal and devoted to her, and I hope you do. But love doesn't tolerate; it transforms. God's love doesn't tolerate us; it transforms us. If you really love your wife, you need to help her get the help she needs whether it's addiction, trauma, or she's causing a lot of pain for others around her.

You may be exhausted, frustrated, and want a new marriage. But you can get a new marriage with the same spouse. I want you and your wife to be happy and healthy and a source of joy and not pain to others. Some men come to church to get a break and, while I'd like you to enjoy God's house, I'd also like you to enjoy your house. The same advice regarding your wife also applies to you. If you are unwell, getting godly professional help should be a high priority.

MY LOVER AND MY FRIEND

Song of Solomon 5:16 is one of Grace and my favorite lines in the Bible on marriage: "...my lover, my friend." That's the first Hebrew friends with benefits right there – lover and friend.

There are three kinds of marriages: shoulder-to-shoulder, back-to-back, and face-to-face.

1. Shoulder-to-Shoulder – This is the type of relationships most men have. Men have friends they did and do things with: served in the military, played sports with, watch the game with, worked with, etc. For Grace and me, this is our default. We're really good at getting stuff done together. We worked together before we were married and have planted churches together, raised kids together, done ministry tours together, written books together, and remodeled multiple homes together. But, if marriage is shoulder-to-shoulder too long, it

eventually turns back-to-back.

2. Back-to-Back – This is where he has his work, she has her work, he's got his friends, she's got her friends, and they're turning their backs on one another. This is where you're not warm, loving, or close, and maybe are even adversarial. Every marriage, at some point, gets back-to-back, but the question is, how long will you stay there? The longer you're there, the more opportunity you allow for bitterness, demonic footholds, and destruction in your marriage. The distance between you and your wife is a perfect spot for Satan to set up a stronghold.
3. Face-to-Face – These are the best marriages and is Biblical language for our eternal face-to-face relationship with Jesus^a and how Moses met with God.^b The key to your marriage is getting face-to-face time meaning you turn off your phone or TV and look one another in the eye. When you're dating, you get quite a bit of face-to-face time and then get you married and are too busy with kids, a mortgage, the yard, in-laws, outlaws, taxes, elections, and soccer. Eventually, you're back-to-back, so the key is to get as much face-to-face time as you can to build your friendship with your wife.

If you're married, where are you at with your wife right now? Take some time every week to look your wife in the eye, pray with her, pray over her, talk to her, and even listen to her. They find that sexy, so just try. Every man I've ever met gets it wrong and needs to humble himself and invite God to help him get it right. I've never met a guy who got marriage right the first time. If you've messed some things up, guess what? We all have.

Grace and I started dating when she was a Christian and I wasn't, we were not virgins, and then I got saved

^a 1 Corinthians 13:12 ^b Exodus 33:11

and we had to stop sleeping together. Then, 10 years into marriage, we realized she was a trauma victim and needed to get help. We've made a number of mistakes, but here's what I know about God: He forgives, heals, and helps. My goal is not to put condemnation on you but to encourage you not to settle for anything less than a marriage that glorifies God and is enjoyable for you and your spouse. Once your marriage is solid, you have the right foundation for raising children, which we will study next.

Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion

1. If you had to pick one word to describe your parents' relationship, what would it be? Why?
2. What are some of the best marriages you have seen? What made those marriages uniquely great?
3. If you are married, or hope to be married, what can you do immediately to be better prepared to love and lead well?
4. What things did the Holy Spirit highlight for you as you read this chapter? Are there any action steps you need to now take? What are those, specifically?

ACT LIKE A MAN

Chapter 8



FATHER:
Leave Your Legacy

It takes more faith to raise a son than a daughter. When a girl is little, watching her comfort and nurture a doll while having a tea party makes it rather easy to envision her one day as an adult mother with emotional health and relational warmth. When she looks at you with kind eyes saying, “I love you, Daddy,” you can imagine the wonderful wife she will become as you feel your heart melt in your chest.

However, when her brother walks in the room to flip the tea party table upside down, grabs the doll to bang it on the floor while pretending to shoot it with a gun, and rips their shirt off to yell for no reason before running outside to pee in the yard, the anxiety level is quite different. Deep down, you wonder if you are raising a terrorist and fear one day your family name will be alongside the Bin Ladens in the history books. It’s hard to see a boy as a future man, husband, and father. Often, the difference between a boy and a terrorist is simply size.

To be a good father who raises godly kids to have a fruitful legacy takes both faith and focus. As men, we must focus on the people in front of us and the things we have dominion and responsibility over. Sometimes things in life distract and divert us – politics, culture, work, or something in the news – and we look right over the people who are right in front of us. As a husband, you want to make sure you’re not overlooking your wife. As a father, you don’t want to overlook your children. You may not be able to decide what happens in your country, but you can decide what happens in your family. You can be active, present, a blessing, and used by God to minister to your family.

As Christian men, we have a unique perspective on fatherhood because God is our Father. In certain religions, their god is an impersonal force, a pantheon of gods and deities, or there’s a goddess. In Christianity, Jesus Christ comes to earth, and He’s the Son of God. As we established previously, Jesus’ favorite and most frequent name for God is Father.

When the disciples asked Jesus how to pray, He even started it out with “Our Father.” He teaches and trains us to call God “Father.” As Christians, we’re the sons of God, adopted into God’s family, with God as our active, present, discipling, loving, providing Father. He sets the example for us of what healthy fathering looks like.

In the Bible, the word “father” appears around 1,600 times, and there are about 1,200 names of men in the Bible. Most of those are just naming the fathers. There are whole lists in the Old Testament that are just fathers. What this means is, out of roughly 31,000 Scriptures, almost 10% of them use the word “father” or give the name of a father. That tells you that men are primary in the Word of God, and men are necessary for healthy life and flourishing.

Then, even more amazingly, God shares His name with us. This struck me as a new dad in my mid-to-late 20s. I was tucking my oldest daughter in bed one night, and we were in the middle of our bedtime routine where we’d pray together, read Scripture, and sing together, even though I had a terrible singing voice. She’d say, “Wrap me up like a burrito,” so I’d take the covers and tuck them in all around her. I’ll never forget her big, beautiful eyes looking up at me when she said, “Wow. I have two daddies.” At first, I thought, “I’ll have to sort this out with your mom, because one of us has to die.” She continued, “I have a daddy in Heaven and a daddy on earth.” It dawned on me that God is a Father, and I’m a father. He lets me share His title and designation. How I treat her is probably going to say a lot to her about what He’s like. I’m the little picture of a big Father.

THE FINAL WORDS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

After the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, God didn’t give another book of the Bible or send forth another prophet for 400 years. The last thing you said for 400 years must be important. So, what does the Holy

Spirit focus on through Malachi? Husbands and fathers. Because if you get the men right, they'll get everything else right. If you get everything else right and don't get the men right, they'll make everything wrong.

Malachi 2:10 says, "Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?" God's our Father and, just like we bring our kids into the world, God brought us into this world. Malachi 2:13-15 continues:

And this second thing you do. You cover the Lord's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. But you say, "Why does he not?" Because the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth.

He's saying they were weeping and crying because God has removed His hand of blessing from His sons. Why? Because they had been faithless to the gals they married when they were young. It's incredible that God values marriage, children, family, and godly generational legacy so much that He spends the final words of the Old Testament on the topic.

YOU ARE THE HEAD OF YOUR COVENANT FAMILY, NOT YOUR KID

The key to understanding family is covenant. Outside of Scripture, people don't understand covenant. That's why marriage and family are failing and not thriving, because we don't think biblically or covenantally. It's mentioned

hundreds of times in the Bible with words including covenant love, lovingkindness, steadfast love, loyal love, devotion, commitment, loyalty, patience, and reliability. My favorite is *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, the one we'd read to our kids when they were really little, where it says a covenant relationship with God is a "never stopping, never giving up, unbreaking, always and forever love."

Salvation, our relationship with God, is a covenant. It's a special, unique, designated relationship. The key

**THE BEST THING YOU
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WITH GOD AND A
LOVING RELATIONSHIP
WITH THEIR MOTHER.**

to every covenant in the Bible is a covenant head who is responsible to see that the terms of the covenant are kept and the people in the covenant are cared for. So, in our new covenant salvation with God, Jesus Christ is our head

because of His death, burial, and Resurrection.

If you're a Christian, you have a covenant relationship with God. If you're married, you're supposed to have a covenant relationship with your wife. We just read in Malachi 2 that He refers to marriage as a covenant in which you are responsible to love your wife and together raise godly offspring. True or false, if you don't love your wife, does it affect your kids? We often think of marriage and parenting as two separate things, but they're actually two sides of the same coin. The best thing you can do for your kids is have a loving relationship with God and a loving relationship with their mother. If you don't love their mother, you're going to do damage to your legacy. It'll be less likely that you will have godly offspring.

The key is for you, as the man and family head, to follow God and help your wife and kids do the same. "Did you know that if a child is the first person in a household to become a Christian, there is a 3.5 percent probability everyone else in the household will follow? If the mother is the first to become a Christian, there is a 17 percent probability everyone else in the household will follow.

But if the father is first, there is a 93 percent probability everyone else in the household will follow.”⁴⁸

In a covenant family, who is the head? The husband and father.^a What that means is the child is not the head. Have you ever seen a family where the child is actually in the driver’s seat? The family makes decisions based on the child because the child is the strongest personality, is selfish, and makes the parents feel guilty. The parents have handed headship over to the child, but the child should not be head of the covenant. Other guys defer headship of the household to their wives because she’s the stronger personality. You won’t get godly offspring, and you won’t have a happy marriage because no one at your house will respect you. You won’t look forward to going home because you’ll feel like it’s your second shift of work and you have another boss and performance review.

The question is not are you the head, but are you a good head or bad head? Are you doing your job or not doing your job?

SINGULAR HEADSHIP, PLURAL LEADERSHIP

To be the covenant head of your family doesn’t mean you should be domineering or overbearing. It doesn’t mean you’re the lord and everyone else has to obey you as you sit on your throne, also known as dad’s recliner. Some men sit on their throne and give orders to their family, but that’s not the way to do it.

Jesus Christ is the perfect example of a covenant head. He serves humbly, loves faithfully, pursues continually, and gives generously. Since Jesus is the head, we as men have such a great gift because He entered into human history. If we wonder what it looks like to be a healthy head as a man, we only need to look to Jesus.

In your family system, there should be singular headship and plural leadership. In a covenant family,

^a Ephesians 5:23

you're the human head as the husband and father, but you and your wife are plural leaders. In our family, I would never make a big decision without Grace. We make all our decisions together as leaders because the Bible says it's not good to be alone.^a She's my helper, which means I need her help. Grace and I are different, and those differences make us stronger and better.

Recently, Grace popped into my office and had a question about one of the kids. She made a suggestion about how to handle it, and I said I would check in with them, love on them, invest in them, father them, and get back to her on how to move forward. She said, "That's a great idea." We agreed together, but I took first responsibility. I don't boss my wife around. She's a strong personality, so it wouldn't work anyway. After 30-plus years of marriage, I've learned that I need to honor, cherish, and consider her. She has wisdom and, as long as we agree, we're probably in God's will. When we make a unified decision, especially about our kids, they can't divide and conquer by turning mom and dad against each other. Then, as the head of the family, I take first responsibility for the implementation and execution of the decision because God holds me firstly responsible.

Going back to the original head, Adam, Romans 5:12-21 says that we're all born in Adam, and Christians are born again in Jesus. We go from Adam being our head in death to Jesus being our head in life. When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, who technically sinned first? Eve did. She partook of the fruit and gave it to her passive husband, who had abdicated his role as head of household. The interesting thing is, as soon as he abdicated his role, who showed up to replace him? Satan. If you're not head of your household, Satan will be. Then, God shows up to hold them accountable, but who does He call out to first? Adam. He says, "Where are you?"^b Eve sinned first, but God goes to Adam because he's firstly responsible. Eve is

^a Genesis 2:18 ^b Genesis 3:9

responsible, but Adam has an additional responsibility. He wasn't only supposed to avoid sin; he was supposed to love and protect his wife, and he didn't. He was passive when he should've been active. As head, the man takes responsibility even when it's not his fault.

I'll give you an example. My kids volunteer in what our church calls "The Backyard," where all the kiddos have fun and learn about Jesus every week. One little boy was being difficult to manage, causing trouble, and wearing out the volunteers. The dad was told and said, "Well, that's my son, and he's my responsibility. I'll take care of it." He took the boy home, talked to him, trained him, and brought him back. Next time they walked in, the dad said, "Ok, go ahead," and the son said, "I'm sorry, I apologize for acting bad." The kid owned it, repented, and was heartfelt. The dad said, "Son, I told you how to behave. I'm going to check in with the teacher, and if you're not doing what I told you to do, you'll have to deal with me because I'm your dad." Guess what? The kid changed his behavior quickly because his dad took responsibility.

Even if it's not your fault, as a father, your kid is still your responsibility. This is where fathering can get overwhelming and exhausting. When your kids are little, they'll physically wear you out. That's why God gave children to young people. When they get older, they're more emotionally exhausting – relationships, processing, healing up, talking to them, and coaching them. Being a father is a one-way relationship. The Father is not in Heaven saying, "If you serve me, I'll serve you. If you give to me, I'll give to you." Grace is literally one-way love. The Father gives us grace and, as fathers, we're giving grace, which means we're always pouring out.

Let's look at the example of Jesus. He died on the cross in our place for our sins. Were our sins His fault? No. Did He make us sin? No. Did He make our sin His responsibility? Yes. That's what it means to be the head. Even if it's not your fault, it's your responsibility to raise your kids to grow up and have their own family and take

responsibility for themselves. If you have the Father's heart toward your children, the Father will help you and give you grace. He will father you so you can father them.

COVENANT VS. CONTRACT

There's a big difference between a covenant relationship and a contract relationship. A contract is between two people; a covenant is between three people, including the Lord. In a marriage covenant, God is the third person. In a contract, I seek my will; in a covenant, we seek God's will. In a contract, performance is recorded; in a covenant, we serve each other. This is why some men who excel at business, sports, and the military struggle with personal relationships. In a contract, failure is punished; in a covenant, no record of wrongs is kept. A contract is usually a win-lose relationship; a covenant is generally a win-win relationship. A contract leads to a professional relationship; a covenant leads to a personal relationship.

Relationships are either contract (professional) or covenant (personal). Of the two, which are men generally the strongest at? Usually, the professional. As they're growing up, they do their homework to earn a GPA. Then, they play sports and try to be a starter rather than ride the bench. If they go into the military or the workforce, they have to do their job and have a performance review. Have you ever seen the guy who wins at work and loses at home by taking the professional and contractual and bringing it home to his family? Have you ever tried to run your family like a military unit, sports team, or business?

Let me tell you maybe the stupidest thing I've ever said to my wife, and there are a lot of contenders. We were arguing one time, and I looked at her and said, "If you worked for me, I would've fired you a long time ago." That was not a foreplay moment in our relationship. It was a cold night at the Driscoll house. She looked at me and said, "That's the problem. I'm your wife, not your

employee.” In my heart, I was thinking contractually and professionally, that if I do something for her, she should do something for me. I was being selfish and not a servant.

Conversely, do you know a guy who’s highly relational, warm, loving, and trusting, so he wins at home but loses at work? He loves everyone, cares, forgives, and is kind and generous. But he doesn’t know how to professionally button things up like a contract, so he gets gutted.

Here’s the big idea: Contracts are for professional relationships with your coworkers. Covenants are for personal relationships with your wife and kids. In most cases, you can’t bring home the way you win at work because you’ll lose at home, and you can’t bring to work the way you win at home because you’ll lose at work. You literally have to change your mind when you walk in the door after your workday. Before I’d go home, I used to stop in the neighborhood and, before walking in the door, pray for the Lord to change my mindset to personal from professional and to covenant from contract. I go home not to win but to serve. It’s a different mindset. If you have a covenant marriage and covenant family, the end result will be covenant fathering.

FATHERLESSNESS IS A CULTURAL CRISIS

Going back to Malachi, right before God says nothing scripturally for 400 years, here are the last words of the Old Testament^a: “Look, I am sending you the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the Lord arrives. His preaching will turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the hearts of children to their fathers. Otherwise I will come and strike the land with a curse.” This means God the Father has a heart for you and wants you to have a heart for your child. He wants that child’s heart to love you like you love Him. If men don’t love the Father and don’t have the Father’s heart, the whole

^a Malachi 4:5-6, NLT

generation of the whole nation is cursed.

Do men have a heart for sex? I've only seen two kinds of men who don't like sex – dead men and liars. All men like sex; some men love a woman; few men love children. Several recent elections have shown our country really loves to kill babies. A whole bunch of people have decided we like sex; we might like the person we have sex with, but we really don't like kids. We have a whole nation where men don't have the Father heart of God or a heart for children. Fatherlessness is a cultural crisis. We are cursed.

The census tells us there are 18.5 million children growing up right now without a father in my nation. Our country has the highest percentage of fatherlessness of any major nation on planet earth. In addition, 25% of children go to bed with no father in the home. The majority of children born to women 30 and younger are born out of wedlock, and the majority of them never have a father living in the home. 85% of teens with a behavioral disorder do not have a father. 70% of adolescents in drug

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and alcohol treatment do not have a father. 90% of homeless and runaway children do not have a father. If a child doesn't have a father in the home,

they are five times more likely to live in poverty and nine times more likely to drop out of school. Boys raised in a single-parent household are more than twice as likely to be incarcerated than boys raised in an intact, married home, even after controlling for differences in parental income, education, race, and ethnicity, according to research by Princeton's Sara McLanahan.⁴⁹

A summary of the latest research on fatherlessness states, "Single-mother families are about five times as likely to experience poverty as married-parent families. In 2015, 7.5 percent of married-couple families were in poverty, compared to 36.5 percent of single-mother families, and 22.0 percent of single-father."⁵⁰

The presence of a father makes all the difference in

the world. What would your life be like if God the Father wasn't in it? Just like you need a good Father in your life, kids need a good father in their lives. Even a good dad is a bad mom, and even a good mom is a bad dad. My sons would not have made it with just a mother. They would've dishonored, disrespected, or disregarded her, or they would've been over-mothered, under-fathered, and very soft. That's what we're seeing culturally. The current generation has record mental health issues, therapy dependence, prescription drugs, depression, and anxiety. That's what happens when you don't have a father around; you have no security. Your confidence is borrowed from your father until you get your own, and your father helps to strengthen you.

The correlation between worse men and worse mental health is clear if you look through the lens of Scripture and God's divine design for healthy families and generations. Without godly husbands and fathers to protect and provide, Gallup research has shown that depression rates are at an all-time high, increasing annually, especially among the younger generations.⁵¹

MORE FATHERS, LESS GOVERNMENT

A whole generation of feminism says, "We don't need the men." Yeah, you do. God, in His divine wisdom, brings children into the world through a man and a woman, and they're supposed to raise that child together because the child needs a mother and father who are husband and wife.

For the single guys, you really need to think through the second most important decision you're ever going to make – i.e., who will be your wife? The most important

**EVEN A GOOD
DAD IS A BAD
MOM, AND EVEN
A GOOD MOM IS
A BAD DAD.**

decision is who's your God. You need Jesus, but then you need a wife. When you're picking a wife, don't just think about a good time, think about a good legacy. Don't just ask if she's good in bed. Ask if she'll be

good raising your children and loving your grandchildren. And don't overlook godly single mothers who are widows, have had a bad man walk out, or have made some mistakes but have come to Jesus and repentance and could be a wonderful and loyal wife and mother.

Finding a woman who loves God and children is getting increasingly more difficult. A research survey discovered that "...over half (57%) of young men without children say they want children one day, while a smaller share of young women without kids (45%) said the same."⁵² One poll found that one in four young adults has decided that they will never have any children.⁵³

WHEN YOU'RE PICKING A WIFE, DON'T JUST THINK ABOUT A GOOD TIME, THINK ABOUT A GOOD LEGACY.

In the Bible, barrenness was a devastating grief, as was the case with people like Abraham and Sarah, Samson's parents, and John the Baptizer's parents, Elizabeth and Zechariah. Luke 1:25 (NLT) says of Elizabeth, "'How kind the Lord is!' she exclaimed. 'He has taken away my disgrace of having no children.'" Today, there is a disdain for childhood that runs so deep that the leading cause of death is abortion.

In Malachi, God rebukes men who do not want to love their wives and raise their kids. He says, in effect, "You know what? You married her and got her pregnant, but you don't care about her, and you don't care about your kids. You married a gal who drives you crazy, and she doesn't love the Lord, so now your kids don't love the Lord. You just punched your own legacy in the face."

If you're a husband, father, or grandfather, your investment and involvement in your family is an economic, academic, social, spiritual, and moral blessing for generations. There's no such thing as a perfect earthly father, but the presence of a father who is trying is a miracle. Your Heavenly Father will honor and bless that effort. When someone gets married, we should celebrate that. When a child is born, we should rejoice in that.

When fathers are activated and take responsibility, that's a blessing to women and children for generations.

I've said it before and made a shirt saying, "More Fathers. Less Government." Our culture has replaced fathers with government. Your father should feed, raise, discipline, and disciple you. Your father should know you, love you, and protect you. Your father should coach you and help you as you get older. For men who have the Spirit of God, they have the Father heart of God. God changes our desires, so we want to be fathers like our Heavenly Father.

Sociological research has repeatedly confirmed that people who follow God's plan for marriage and family are actually the happiest of all:

The gold-standard in social science research, the 50-plus-year-old General Social Survey (GSS), tells us that it's married women and men who are mothers and fathers who report the highest levels of being "very happy."...a combination of marriage and parenthood is linked to the biggest happiness dividends for women. Among married women with children between the ages of 18 and 55, 40% reported they are "very happy," compared to 25% of married childless women, and just 22% of unmarried childless women[.]...It is unmarried mothers who report being least likely to be "very happy" with only 17% of them reporting this..." In earlier surveys, we found that women who were married with children were generally the happiest and the least lonely"...What does the research data look like for men? It reveals married fathers, with all other life-factors being equal, are more than twice as likely to report being "very happy" compared to their childless and unmarried peers...By contrast unmarried childless men, and especially unmarried fathers are the least happy—with less than 15% of these men saying they are "very happy."⁵⁴

Most people believe the myth that more money will make someone happier. However, “What study after study has found is that a good marriage and family are *the greatest* boosters of happiness – far more than a pay raise. And it’s not even close.”^{55 56}

If you are a husband and father with kids living under your roof, these are the good old days. Fatherhood is a hard and exhausting job. Economically, it doesn’t make sense to have a lot of kids. I have five kids, and I love them with all my heart. When the kids were little, I loved it. When they were in their teen years, I actually loved it. Now that they’re all launching or about to launch, I still love it. I really love being a dad. Now that our kids are growing, launching their own families, and adding grandkids to the best season of our lives, I could not fathom a deeper joy. I have had the privilege of traveling the world to preach in dozens of nations, have seen God show up over and over in supernatural ways, and nothing is more joyful and wonderful than sitting at our dinner table and praying together before a meal to then laugh throughout it. If your kids know you love them and you’re trying, that’s 90% of the battle. Don’t be discouraged, and don’t be dissuaded. I do not know anyone more blessed than me, and God’s way is still the best way.

To enjoy your kids and grandkids, they need you to help raise them. There was a non-Christian named Dr. Spock who dominated parental theory for an entire generation. He said people are basically good, and he didn’t believe in original sin and the Fall. He said children simply need high self-esteem to achieve their full potential. They don’t need discipline, correction, or parenting. They’re good, we just need them to think good about themselves, and they’ll grow up and do good. How did that work? All those kids are entitled, self-righteous social justice warriors right now. That’s exactly what happened. They have a very high self-esteem, and they feel really good about their rioting. Today, this nonsense is called “gentle parenting,” which doesn’t work.

Children don't raise themselves; they need to be raised, instructed, corrected, and directed. Mainstream media, education, and culture have lied to us. In almost every single movie, dad is the idiot, mom is carrying the load, and the pet saves the day with the child. In sitcoms, the husband and father are the buffoon and the butt of the jokes. He's the problem, not the solution. We're told in college that men are the problem, not the solution. Culturally, there's been a pervasive, demonic lie that Christian men are no different than other men. That's not true. Fatherlessness is a cultural crisis and godly men are the solution. If there were more godly fathers, there would be less crime and poverty.

CHRISTIAN MEN ARE, STATISTICALLY, THE BEST FATHERS

Earlier in the book, we talked about Dr. Bradford Wilcox, a sociologist at the University of Virginia and the leading sociologist on marriage, fathers, faith, and family. Every year, when Father's Day comes around, he's the guy they have write the special report for news outlets like *The Wall Street Journal*. He's got an entire organization dedicated to researching fatherhood. His work culminated in a book called *Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands*.

We've been told that Christian men divorce at the same rate as non-Christian men. No, we don't. We've been told Christian men are no better fathers than non-Christian men. Yeah, we are. We're actually the best husbands and fathers. We know we're not perfect because we have the Bible and the Holy Spirit, but if we really cared about women and children, we'd want all men to read the Bible and be filled with the Spirit because those men bless women and children.

After the largest data survey of its kind, Dr. Wilcox found that conservative Protestant men with children are consistently more active and expressive with their

children.⁵⁷ He says:

What about fatherhood? We see, once again, a... pattern where [church] attending fathers and attending Evangelical Protestant dads, in particular, are more involved; they're more affectionate, and they're stricter with their kids. We can see, for instance, in youth-related activities that active Evangelical dads spend about 3.5 hours more per week compared to unaffiliated dads and that active mainline Protestant dads spend about two hours more per week in such activities. With affection, described as hugging and praising kids very often, we see that it's [church] attendance that's the driving force rather than tradition, where both active mainline (43 percent) and Evangelical (44 percent) dads are very affectionate with their kids and more so than unaffiliated dads (32 percent)...When I measure monitoring of children, we see once again this kind of distinct active Evangelical effect: 95 percent of active Evangelical dads know where their adolescents are in the afternoon and evenings, as do 89 percent of active mainline dads and 86 percent of unaffiliated dads...Wives of active Evangelical Protestant family men report the highest levels of happiness with the affection and the understanding that they receive from husbands, and they are followed fairly closely by wives of active mainline Protestant family men. Wives of unaffiliated family men report the lower levels of happiness...the wives of active Evangelical Protestant family men report the lowest levels of violence (2.8 percent), followed by the wives of unaffiliated men (3.2 percent) and the wives of active mainline men (5.4 percent). In this case, there's at least some evidence that the active Evangelical Protestant men are the least violent...We see a similar pattern when you turn to divorce, where both active Evangelical and mainline Protestant men are 35

percent less likely to divorce compared to unaffiliated family men, but the nominal Evangelical Protestant family men are 20 percent more likely to divorce...The bottom line is that religion appears to domesticate men when it comes to marriage...⁵⁸

What's curious is that Wilcox is not a Protestant; he's Catholic, but he's doing the research and says, "Oh, those Jesus-loving Bible guys are the best husbands and fathers." More hugs, more kisses. Your hands are not for violence; they're for blessing. You're holding your daughter's hand, you're wrestling with your son, and you're playing catch in the front yard. You love your wife and have a more joyful home life with markedly lower odds of abuse or divorce. The progressive media will never tell you these facts because the Father of Lies wants to discourage the Father's sons from being fathers.

YOU HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY

The lack of good fathers is perhaps the biggest cultural crisis and causing most every other cultural crisis.⁵⁹ Nearly a quarter – 23% – of American children grow up in a single parent home, and 80% of single parent homes have only a mother. The cycle of fatherlessness and criminality continues as a generational curse with more than 800,000 of America's two million prisoners being parents – of whom 92% are fathers.⁶⁰ The consequences create crises for generations, as this summary reveals.

Poverty

- "Fatherless families are 4 times more likely to raise children in poverty."

Mental illness/suicide

- "Children from single-parent families are twice as likely to suffer from mental health and behavioral problems as those living with married parents."
- "63% of youth suicides are from fatherless homes."

- “In one study, 70% of youth in state-operated facilities were from single-parent homes.”
- “85% of children who exhibit behavioral disorders are from fatherless homes.”
- “Children in single-parent homes have nearly five times greater chance of developing mood disorders than those in dual parent households.”

Drug use and behavioral problems

- “Children without fathers are also 10 times more likely to abuse chemical substances, and 71% of all children who abuse substances come from fatherless homes.”
- “75% of patients in substance abuse centers are from fatherless homes.”

Educational problems

- “71% of high-school dropouts are from fatherless homes.”
- “Children with an actively engaged father perform much better in school. Some data shows that they are 33% less likely to repeat a class and 43% more likely to get A’s in school.”
- “In a study of 56 school shootings, only 10 of the shooters (18%) were raised in a stable home with both biological parents. 82% grew up in either an unstable family environment or grew up without both biological parents together.”
- “In a study of 75 juvenile delinquents, 66% experienced fatherlessness, 20% had never lived with their father, and 25% had an alcoholic father.”⁶¹

If you’re a single man, don’t just be looking for a wife. Look for a wife who will be a good mother because God is seeking godly offspring. If you’re an exhausted young father, I want to honor, celebrate, and thank you. Thank you for being active. Thank you for being present. Thank you for being involved. Thank you for caring. Thank you for trying. You’re making a difference. For those of us who are older fathers, we now have an opportunity to coach up

our sons to become fathers. We also have an opportunity to encourage the younger fathers and to be spiritual fathers.

Even if you don't have biological children, you can have spiritual influence. Paul was never a physical father, as far as we can tell, but he calls Timothy,^a Titus,^b and Onesimus^c "my sons." He says to the church at Corinth, "Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel."^d Even if you don't have physical children, you still have a chance to leave a legacy and portray the Father heart of God to the younger generations. To be a good father, you will need to learn to slay the dragon, which is our next and final chapter.

Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion

1. If you had to pick one word to describe your earthly father, what would it be? Why?
2. Who are some of the best fathers you have known? What made them great dads?
3. Who has served as a spiritual father to you? How were they a blessing to you?
4. Who is God asking you to father or spiritually father?

^a 1 Timothy 1:2 ^b Titus 1:4 ^c Philemon 1:10 ^d 1 Corinthians 4:15, NIV

Chapter 9



WARRIOR :
Slay The Dragon

When our children were little, our sons liked to dress up like warriors and have plastic sword battles. At times, they would take their plastic swords to the store with us, putting them down the back of their shirt into their pants as a sort of toddler concealed carry. Since we lived in a very liberal city, the pacifists who opposed all weapons and conflicts would invariably give us the stink eye at the grocery story. On a few occasions, we were told by gay couples that they disapproved of our allowing sons to manifest violence, which registered a zero on the Richter scale of our caring about their opinion.

We taught the boys to not fight girls and only fight bad guys. They could also practice fighting on their friends and other good guys. This included, of course, a lot of wrestling with dad when he got home from work.

One day, my wife Grace and another woman were visiting in one room of our home while the kids played together in the other room. The kids were making a lot of noise, as kids do, and then we all heard one of the kids let out a bloodcurdling scream. I was working upstairs, and upon hearing the child's scream, the three of us parents converged on the playroom where the

TESTOSTERONE LEVELS FOR MEN HAVE FALLEN ONE PERCENT EVERY YEAR SINCE 1980. THAT MEANS WE'RE LIKE 15-20 YEARS FROM MEN DEVOLVING INTO CARE BEARS.

kids had been playing. A boy who was visiting was sitting on the floor screaming, and the adults tried to figure out what happened. The boy was first to tell his side of the story, accusing my son of "attacking him." The boy's mother immediately assumed this version of the story was right and glared at me asking, "What are you going to do with your son?"

I told her that, before I rushed to any conclusions, I would ask my son what happened, as he'd never done what he was accused of. Looking at him, he was visibly upset and told us, "He kept hurting and shoving my little sister. I kept telling him to stop. My little sister kept crying, so

I told him if he did not stop, I was going to shove him to the ground and make him stop hurting her. He did not stop, so I shoved him to the ground and stood between him and my little sister to protect her.”

I then looked at my son and told him I was proud of him for sticking up for a little girl. I told the mother, “You asked me what I am going to do with my son. I am going to go get him ice cream as a reward.” I then got him a bowl of ice cream, and he sat down to eat it while the woman and her son left, disagreeing with my parenting.

If you believe the storyline of the Bible, all of human history is a battle between good and evil and between God and Satan. Everything really fell apart when a dragon showed up, and our first father, Adam, wasn’t ready to fight. I would submit to you that, in United States history and in Western culture, men are in a weaker position than ever.

Let’s start with some statistics. Testosterone levels for men have fallen one percent every year since 1980.⁶² That means we’re like 15-20 years from men devolving into Care Bears. In addition, the *Journal of Hand Therapy* talks about grip strength.⁶³ Do you ever shake a guy’s hand wondering if you can break him? One of us has to be the alpha. They tested it and said, today, sons have weaker grip strength than their fathers, and men in their 20s have weaker grip strength than their grandmothers. What that means is if you went back in time and wrestled your grandma, she’d whoop you. What we’re seeing is literally the biological, emotional, psychological, and spiritual deterioration of masculinity.

Here’s another concerning statistic.⁶⁴ More than a quarter – 27% – of young men who would qualify by age for the military would not pass the physical. Worse, 75% of young adults today would not pass the requirements for the military because of psychological, emotional, or physical deficiencies. Can you imagine if America was invaded? We’d have drag queens throwing sprinkled cupcakes at invaders hoping for victory. We’re not in a

position of strength. If you're offended, I can't believe it's taken this long, and you must've picked up the wrong book. In addition, the average sperm count for men is down 50% in 40 years. Our culture has literally reduced and diminished masculinity and virility. Unless something changes, there won't be any men left.

In addition, Gen Z is mentally getting weaker.⁶⁵ 20% have a regular therapist, 39% are in therapy weekly, 42% have a diagnosed mental health issue, and 57% are taking medication for some sort of emotional complication. The big issues are anxiety and depression. To state the obvious, if young men are not running into the future, Western civilization has no future.

We live in an increasingly woke world that creates increasingly weak men. But evil doesn't stop itself, so we good men need to stop it. Sin and death don't stop themselves, so evil men will continue unless God's men do something different. For the younger men, this desire for masculinity and longing for strength plays out in fake battles in video games. Virtual reality is where boys pretend to be men. Pornography is where boys pretend

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to be men. So much of the digital world appeals to the masculine desires within men – to conquer, love, and have conflict or pleasure – but instead of having to be a man and enter the real world with struggle and pain to get a prize, we have a lot of counterfeits leading to a cultural crisis and a decline of real dudes.

JESUS IS A GOOD MAN AND THE GOD-MAN

Let's look, once again, at Jesus, the greatest man in the history of the world. What does and should a man look like? Jesus. We worship Jesus, follow Jesus, and sing to Jesus, our allegiance is to Jesus, our hope is in the Resurrection of Jesus, and our eyes are fixed on the Second

Coming of Jesus. The good news for us is that God became a man, so now we know what men are supposed to look like: good men look like the God man.

Jesus is the most significant man in the history of the world. More songs have been sung to Him, more paintings painted regarding Him, more lives devoted to Him, and more books written about Him than anyone who has lived in the history of the world. No one is in the same category as Jesus Christ. Christianity is the biggest movement of any sort or kind in the history of the world. Billions today claim to be followers of Jesus Christ. The reason you're reading this book is because you want to be a man like Jesus Christ, or someone gave you this book in hopes that you'll activate and live more like Jesus Christ.

We even measure time by His life: B.C. is "Before Christ," and A.D. is *Anno Domini*, or "The Year of Our Lord." There's no one as big as Jesus. There's no one as marvelous as Jesus.

Even the greatest leaders in world history have echoed this truth. Napoleon said, "I know men and I tell you that Jesus Christ is no mere man. Between Him and every other person in the world there is no possible term of comparison. Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and I have founded empires. But on what did we rest the creation of our genius? Upon force. Jesus Christ founded His empire upon love; and at this hour millions of men would die for Him."⁶⁶ What Napoleon said is right – there's Jesus and there's everyone else. There's one man, and then there's every other man. That's why *Time* named Jesus not just *Man of the Year* but *Man of the Millennium*.⁶⁷

**WE LIVE IN AN
INCREASINGLY
WOKE WORLD
THAT CREATES
INCREASINGLY
WEAK MEN.**

JESUS IS A LION AND A LAMB

As we near the end of this book, I want to revisit something we touched on previously. What does it look like for you to be more like Jesus? Jesus is both a tough

lion and a tender lamb. Revelation 5:5-6 says, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered[.]...And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain...” Here’s the big idea: Jesus is both simultaneously, perfectly, and continually both lion and lamb. A lion is tough, and a lamb is tender. The God-man is both, and a good man must learn to be both.

We’ll start with the tough lions. Do you feel more like a lion? Lions like hardship, adversity, conflict, and war. A lion is the king of the jungle. What does the lion eat? Whatever he wants. To the lion, the planet is just a buffet. He eats whatever he wants – buffalo, wild hogs, and even elephants. Nothing can stop a lion. Some guys are more lion-hearted. Built for battle, they’re tough, resilient, enduring, and overcoming. If they hear gunshots, they’re running straight at them while everyone else wets themselves and runs away.

When, in the life of Jesus, was He a lion?

One example is when He flipped the tables in the Temple.^a He goes to the Temple and the religious guys are ripping people off. He gets angry, flips over a table, and the Gospel accounts say He makes a whip. You know you’re really angry if you’re like, “I’m going to whip you, but first I have to make the whip.” Jesus is a whip maker, and then He goes around whipping religious people. He’s angry. He’s a lion.

Another example is when He’s crucified.^b How much strength does it take to die a horrifying death when you could just call down an angelic legion of angels to eviscerate your enemies? Instead, you just harness all your strength, not to do harm toward anyone but to bring salvation for anyone. Jesus demonstrates power under control for the benefit of someone else. In this scenario, He’s a meek lion – but a lion nonetheless.

^a Matthew 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-18 ^b Matthew 27:45-50; Mark 15:21-41; Luke 23:39-50; John 19:28-37

A final example of Jesus as a lion is when He's tempted by Satan.^a Jesus has fasted for 40 days, and Satan shows up for a fight. You might be thinking, "I've fasted for 40 minutes." He's gone 40 days without food! He's in the wilderness alone. Satan shows up to tempt Him, shows Him all the kingdoms and pleasures of the world and says, "All these I will give you, if you fall down and worship me."^b Jesus held His ground as a lion. This was warfare – spiritual, mental, physical, emotional. After 40 days of fasting alone in the desert, He is exhausted and overwhelmed, but He still fights the good fight. Ultimately, in that battle, it was not Jesus but Satan who surrendered and departed. He knew he was defeated.

As you look at the life of Jesus, you'll see some moments of strength, profound courage, and masculinity. Some of the words used to describe His emotional life include "indignant,"^c "angry,"^d "zealous,"^e and "passionate."^f

Are you a lion? Here's a little test for you: Your favorite advice is, "Suck it up, get over it, rub some dirt on it." You're low empathy. Is the majority of the protein in your diet killed by you? That's a lion. Your Trinity is Clint Eastwood, John Wayne, and Sylvester Stallone. You've accepted Chuck Norris into your heart. If that's you, you're a lion.

Jesus was also a lamb. When Jesus arrived, John the Baptizer saw Him on the horizon and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"^g Do lambs run to or run from a fight? Run from; they're pacifists. Do lambs live indoors or outdoors? Outdoors. They're homeless. Do they eat meat or grass? Grass. They're vegetarians. So, lambs are hippies; they're homeless, pacifist vegetarians. That's a lamb. Lambs are so soothing that when you have a kid and you want them to sleep at night, you tell them to count sheep. You don't tell

^a Matthew 4:1-11 ^b Matthew 4:9 ^c Mark 10:14, NIV ^d Mark 3:5, ESV, NKJV, HCSB, NLT ^e John 2:17, ESV, HCSB, NIV ^f John 2:17, NLT ^g John 1:29

them to count lions unless you're a horrible father with a traumatized child. "Just count bloodthirsty lions, and I'm sure you'll go to sleep in 17 years." We tell kids to count sheep because there's nothing safer and more reassuring

**YOU'RE NOT EMOTIONALLY
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than sheep. Did you ever go to Sunday School as a kid, and they're like, "Hey, let's make a lamb. Take a cotton ball, glue it on. That's like

Jesus. So sweet."

Where in Jesus' life was He a tender lamb?

One example is when He wept. This is the shortest verse in the Bible. His buddy Lazarus dies, and John 11:35 says, "Jesus wept." He was emotional in a healthy way. Let me just tell you, you're not emotionally healthy if your only two emotions are angry and asleep. Jesus had a full range of emotions. There are about 60 Scriptures in the New Testament gospels that mention Jesus' emotions, and what's the number one emotion mentioned? Compassion. That's a lamb. Jesus is like, "I've been there. I know what you're going through. I'm so sorry. I've been there myself. Let me walk with you. I've been down this road."

Jesus is also a lamb with kids. Children ran to Jesus.^a They must have found Him to be very safe. He's a single guy, a construction worker, He's got calluses on His hands, He walks long miles in the desert terrain, He's sleeping outside, He's a dude. But when children saw Him, they're like, "That's the safest person I know. And He's fun, so we want to be near Him." When it says children ran to Jesus and sat on His lap like Santa at the mall, you can't get any more lamb than that.

Jesus is also a lamb when people are sinful and come to Him, and He forgives them and blesses them. There's a woman at the well who's been through a parade of husbands.^b She has a very bad reputation. Jesus sits down with her. She was at the well in the middle of the day

^a Mark 10:13-16 ^b John 4:1-26

because no one wanted to be with her. The other women would come in the morning when it was cool, and Jesus came at midday to meet her, comfort her, forgive her, save her, and love her. He was the first man who ministered to her soul and didn't take advantage of her body. He was that guy.

When we think of Jesus as lamb, His emotions in the Bible include the words "pity,"^a "grieved,"^b "loved,"^c and "his heart went out."^d He was burdened and had compassion.

My youngest daughter's favorite Bible story growing up was the raising of Jairus' daughter.^e If you're not familiar with it, there was a little girl dying. Her dad loved her, of course, so he went to get Jesus, and Jesus healed her. For like a year of my life, every night, I would tuck my daughter in, read the Bible, and I'd say, "Ok, goodnight." We'd pray and sing. Then she'd say, "Ok, now read me the story about Jairus' daughter." I'd say, "You know how it ends." We'd read it every night for a year. Every night as she fell asleep, my little girl wanted to read about Jesus going to the bedside of a little girl to bless her. It comforted her to see Jesus as a lamb.

Are you a lamb? You love driving your minivan but don't have children. That's the qualifier. There is a fine print exception clause if you have children. Maybe you watch Lifetime movies...by yourself. Now, there is a girlfriend exception. Here's another one: maybe when you're flying, you have to check a bag for toiletries. That's a lot of product for a dude. If you're really offended, we know who blowdries their hair. Do you need a hug anytime someone yells? Now you're really triggered and offended.

Was your dad a lion? Was your dad a lamb? Are you a lion or a lamb? Here's what tends to happen when it comes to being a man. We think you need to be a lion *or* a lamb. Tough *or* tender. I told you about Jesus. He is lion *and*

^a Mark 1:41, ESV ^b Mark 3:5, ESV, NKJV ^c Mark 10:21, ESV ^d Luke 7:13, NIV ^e Mark 5:35-43

lamb, tough *and* tender.

If you're only tough and only a lion, you're domineering, overbearing, high control, intimidating, and bullying. You may think that works for you, but it doesn't work for the people you're supposed to love and care for, starting with your wife and kids.

So, ask yourself: Are you a lion or a lamb? Aim to be both.

I started as a lion and had to learn to be a lamb. One of the things that did it for me was having daughters. Were you a lion, and then you had a daughter, and all of a sudden it's like, "Oh, I've got a lot to learn"? I'll never forget one time, I didn't yell at or raise my voice to my little girl, I just said her name in a way that was a little displeasing. She threw up. My sons never did that. I thought to myself, "Oh my gosh, I've got this superpower I didn't know I had. I have so much authority that her hearing me displeased completely wrecked her. I have to dial down the lion. I have to figure out how to dial up the lamb with this little girl."

For those who are only lions, you could be pushy, scary, and angry, and you will justify your strength, toughness, and courage as defense and protection. Though you may not let bad men hurt your wife or kids, you're going to be the one to hurt your wife and kids. You're their greatest threat to safety and security. If you're tough *for* them, you'll protect them, but if you're tough *with* them, you will hurt them – mentally, physically, spiritually, emotionally. Men who are only tough excel in the military and at sports and who generate revenue in business often can't figure out why their wife and kids don't feel close to them. They win outside the home but lose at home. They're really good at professional relationships and really bad at personal relationships.

Let me give you another example. As a little boy, I grew up in a poor, rough neighborhood. This kid invited me over to his house, so I went to his house, and his dad was drunk and passed out on the couch with a bunch of

empty beer cans around. I was really little and thought, “This is weird.” We went outside to play. Later on, we were thirsty, so we went inside to get some water. I walked inside, and the dad had woken up in kind of a stupor. The boy’s little sister walked by, and the dad was getting off the couch, and his hand moved near the little girl. I’ll never forget, even as a little boy, as soon as she saw her dad’s hand get near her, she was terrified and started shaking. Even then, I remember thinking, “Oh my gosh, that father’s hand is the most dangerous place on earth for that little girl.” The sight of his hand traumatized her. I remember thinking, “My daughter’s not going to be scared when she sees my hand.”

So, when my youngest daughter was little, she was (and still is) very affectionate and sweet. I always kiss my girls on the head, and I’m the affectionate, emotional dad. I cry all the time with my daughters. When she was little, she walked up to me and took my hand and rolled it out and put it on her face. She smiled at me and said, “Hi, Daddy.” This started a habit in our relationship. I would come home, she’d be walking toward me, and I’d just put my hand out, and she’d come across the room and lay her head on my hand. I’d kiss her on the head and tell her I loved her.

If you’re only a lion, your hand is the most dangerous place for women and children. You need to be a man who’s tough *for* your family and tender *with* your family. You have to defend them from harm and make sure you’re not the one to harm them. Be a lion *for* your family, and be a lamb *with* your family.

For those of you whose proclivity is to be a lion, you’re going to be too tough. You’ll be too tough on your sons; you’re going to push them into sports and work. You’re going to be too tough on your wife, you’re going to be too tough on your daughters, you’re going to be too tough on others, and you’re going to be too tough on yourself. You’re going to break some people that God has sent you to build up.

If you're mostly or always a lamb, you're too tender and not tough enough. With men who are only lambs but not lions, do they hurt other people, weaker men, children, or women? No. But when someone comes to hurt their family, do they stop them? No. With a man who's only a lamb, he loves, encourages, and is emotionally present, sympathetic, and compassionate with women and children. When the bad lions come, he doesn't put up a fight. He allows the worst men to date his daughter. He allows the worst men to gut his company. He allows the worst men access to his wife. If you're only a lamb, your tendency is to be too passive, not active, to avoid conflict rather than having necessary and healthy conflict. What happens to a lamb that doesn't turn into a lion and put up a fight with a lion? They and the rest of the herd get eaten. The lion will just keep eating until they've eaten the entire herd.

Some years ago, I had a meeting with a dad who was a lamb – a sweet, kind, loving, nice, generous, patient, merciful, big-hearted guy. Is that good or bad? It's good. He had a daughter, and he loved his daughter. Then, his daughter hit a certain age where the boys started to be interested in her. One of the boys who became most interested in her started pursuing her. She rejected him, so he basically started bullying, domineering, threatening, and intimidating her. Eventually, he got alone with her and raped her. Many times. She told her dad, "I'm really scared of that guy. I need you to do something." One time, the lion and the lamb – the lamb father and the lion young man – met and the dad was a little scared. He was a little uncomfortable and didn't like conflict. So he said, "Don't ever do that again," and walked away. Do you think anything changed? Not with a lion. The dad basically said, "Pretty please, stop raping my daughter." The young man kept stalking, abusing, and assaulting the daughter. The daughter went to the dad and said, "Dad, he's still hurting me." The dad said, "Well, I don't know what to do. I told him to stop." He never met with him again. He didn't do

anything else, including calling the police.

Years later, this young woman got married and, in her marriage, she was really struggling with intimacy because she had been abused and traumatized, and it was affecting her marriage with her husband who really loved her. So she said, “I need to meet with my dad. I’m just so frustrated and angry that he didn’t fight for me or defend me. He didn’t protect me.” She said, “I know he loved me, and I know he cared about me, but he didn’t fight for me.” He was only a lamb and never a lion. So, the daughter and the dad met with me for counseling, and she was just weeping bitterly, and she’s telling her dad exactly what happened in pretty horrifying detail. She’s a lamb, and her dad’s a lamb. Dad didn’t deal with the lion; the lion attacked his daughter, a lamb. The dad looked at me, and I’ll never forget the look on his face. He’s like, “I don’t know why she’s angry with me. I didn’t do anything.” And I said, “That’s the problem!”

If you believe Satan, demons, and evil are real, and if you believe there are bad, evil, damnable, demonic men who want to do the most despicable and horrendous things to weak men, women, and children, you have to have some fight in you. You don’t have to be angry, you don’t have to be mean-spirited, and you don’t need to be a bully or a thug. You just need to get in the way because evil doesn’t stop itself. It has to be stopped.

I’m a lion. I’m not angry, but I am very passionate. Something in me is hardwired by God as a defender and protector. When I see harm coming to women and children, it profoundly bothers me because I know the world we live in is not a safe place for a lamb. It’s not a safe place for a woman. It’s not a safe place for a daughter. It’s not a safe place for a child. We’re officially at a point, as a culture, where Christian men are the last line of defense. We’ve gutted the power of the police. We’ve rebelled against the authority of law. We’ve decided evil is now legal. All we have is just a parade of victims and constant trauma and pain.

MEN NEED BROTHERS FOR THE BATTLE

I'll close with this – I want you to be a lion *for* your family and a lamb *with* your family. It's not lion *or* lamb. This is where men and male fraternity are so important. The lions need to hang out with the lambs. The lions can ask the lambs, "Hey, your wife smiles. How do you do that? Your kids hug you. Tell me the magic." For the guys who are lambs, you need to hang out with the lions like, "Ok, how do I push back and have a hard conversation? How do I hold my ground? How do I say no? How do I defend my family, business, and ministry?"

Education wants to androgenize you. Media wants to deceive you. Culture literally wants to castrate you, starting as a boy. Advertising wants to addict you. Government wants to tax you. Feminists want to neutralize you. Woke Christianity wants to soften you. But God is a Father who wants to make you like His son, Jesus Christ – tough as a lion and tender as a lamb, a dude with dominion. Thank you for giving me the honor of helping your journey as a man. I am praying for you and am certain that our Father has great plans to build you up to bless women and children!

The next section of this book is a homework assignment to get you started on acting like a man in the next season of your life. Please do not skip this section; it is incredibly important for you. Our Father will bless you and help you if you are doing what He is asking! I love you! I'm excited for you! I'm praying for you! I'm proud of you! You matter to your Father, and you matter to me! Thank you for the honor of being invited into your life!

Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion

1. Prior to this chapter, did you see Jesus more as lion or lamb? Why?
2. Has your view of Jesus shifted at all in this chapter? How?
3. Was your dad more of a lion or lamb? Was that good

or bad?

4. Are you more of a lion or lamb? Is that good or bad?
5. After finishing this book, what are the changes God is asking you to make in your life going forward?

ACT LIKE A MAN

Act Like a Man
Plan

The difference between information and transformation is action. The following is a homework exercise for you to meet with God and get clear direction on your next steps in your walk with God.

James 2:20 [TLB] is a verse we like a lot at RealFaith Ministries: “Faith that does not result in good deeds is not real faith.” You need to do the following to prepare for this sacred meeting with God:

1. Get a time set aside on your calendar to meet with God.
2. Ask a few friends or family members to pray for your meeting with God.
3. When the day comes for your meeting with God, turn your phone off, find a quiet place, and plan on spending a few hours praying and listening. Feel free to revisit areas of this book that the Holy Spirit highlighted for your attention in the days leading up to your meeting with God.
4. Write out what you believe God is asking you to do to become the man of God He is calling you to be. I would encourage you to sit down in prayer, ask the Holy Spirit to help you get a list of action steps you need to take, number them in order of priority, and get to work! I’d suggest four items per section, but you are welcome to add more.
5. Take your time and prayerfully complete the following assignment. The pattern we will be using is the “put off” and “put on” of Ephesians 4:22-24. At the end of your meeting with God, covenant in prayer that you will put your plan into practice and be obedient in walking out the steps God has given you.

Put Off

1. What are the top lies, or foolish beliefs, you have not replaced with the truth of God’s Word? (e.g., God doesn’t love you, you will never change, you are a bother to God, you need to punish yourself

- for the bad things you have done, etc.)
2. What are the top bad habits, sins, or unhealthy patterns in your life that need to change? (e.g., drinking too much alcohol, staying up too late, spending too much time online, watching porn, gambling, arguing with people on social media, leaving the news on all day blasting anxiety into your life, etc.)
 3. Who do you need to stop being in relationship with or create healthy new boundaries with? (e.g., stop dating a non-Christian girl, creating distance with toxic family members, not falling back into past sin patterns with old friends, staying out of workplace drama, etc.)

Put On

1. What are your top priorities in order, and is your life reflecting those priorities? (e.g., Christian, husband, father, grandfather, church member, employee, son, brother, friend, etc.)
2. What are the top good habits you need to be consistently practicing? (e.g., reading your Bible, praying with your wife and kids, being actively involved in a good church, exercising, eating healthy, scheduling a regular date night, making sure family dinner is happening together, taking a weekly Sabbath day off, turning your phone off, etc.)
3. What practical things should you do as soon as possible to improve your walk with God and act like the man God has called you to be? (e.g., find a good job, get a dependable but reasonably priced car, pay off debt, buy a house, find a godly wife, find a spiritual father to mentor you, get regular time with each of your children, forgive someone and move on from bitterness, start tithing, etc.)
4. Who are the people, in order, in your life today and coming into your life in the future, depending

upon you to act like a man? (e.g., wife, kids, grandkids, coworkers, Christian friends, extended family, etc.)

As a side note, if you're married, I would encourage you to run your plan by your wife and, depending on their age and maturity level, your kids, as they'll be a great barometer for you. Be willing to humbly receive their feedback and repent of areas you've been blind to. If you're not married, pray for your future wife and kids as part of this assignment.

Your next step is to prayerfully pick the top 2-3 things that are most important for you to tackle first, and go complete those missions. Once you have done so, come back to this list and pick another 2-3 things that are most important for you to tackle next, and then also go complete those missions. Continue doing this until the list is done, and then redo the exercise and start all over. Make it your aim, as the Father's son, to be seeking to become a better and better version of yourself in every season of life so you can glorify Him by blessing other men, along with women and children.

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ABOUT REALFAITH

*Faith that does not result in good deeds is not real faith.
- James 2:20, TLB*

With Pastor Mark, it's all about Jesus! He is a spiritual leader, prolific author, and compelling speaker, but at his core, he's a family man. Mark and his wife, Grace, have been married and doing vocational ministry together since 1993 and, along with their five kids, planted Trinity Church in Scottsdale, Arizona as a family ministry.

Pastor Mark, Grace, and their oldest daughter, Ashley, also started RealFaith Ministries, which contains a mountain of Bible teaching for men, women, couples, parents, pastors, leaders, Spanish speakers, and more! You can access it all by visiting RealFaith.com or downloading the RealFaith app.



For the entirety of Pastor Mark's ministry, God has called him to "train men" so they can work hard, worship their Father, and enjoy their wives and kids, or as it's said at Real Men - build men up to bless women and children. With three kids now married and a continued parade of

cute grandkids arriving, including two grandsons at the time of writing this book, it's one of his greatest honors to see his sons and son-in-law following Jesus, leading their families, and raising their sons to know and love Jesus.

With a master's degree in exegetical theology from Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon, he has spent the better part of his life teaching verse-by-verse through books of the Bible, contextualizing its timeless truths, and never shying away from challenging, convicting passages that speak to the heart of current cultural dilemmas.

Together, Mark and Grace have co-authored *Win Your War*, *Real Marriage*, and *Real Romance: Sex in the Song of Songs*,” and he co-authored a father-daughter project with his daughter, Ashley. Pastor Mark has also written numerous other books including *Spirit-Filled Jesus*, *Who Do You Think You Are?*, *Vintage Jesus*, and *Doctrine*. If you have any prayer requests for us, questions for future Ask Pastor Mark or Dear Grace videos, or a testimony regarding how God has used this and other resources to help you learn God's Word, we would love to hear from you at hello@realfaith.com.

MORE RESOURCES



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9 WAYS TO PUNCH LIFE IN THE MOUTH

There aren't many places or people in this world that are here to help men.

There's a group called the National Organization for Women but no National Organization for Men. You can get a degree in Women's Studies, but the hairy pitted, non-binary, pronoun police professors do not also offer a degree in Men's Studies. There's no class on how to be a man.

The strip club will take your money and put your hepatitis shot to work. The sports bar will feed you wings, pour you a beer, and let you yell but doesn't have a lot of wisdom to offer. Most churches are run by men who might die if shot with a Nerf gun.

But who is there to help? That's the goal of this book.

"I HATE THIS BOOK"

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