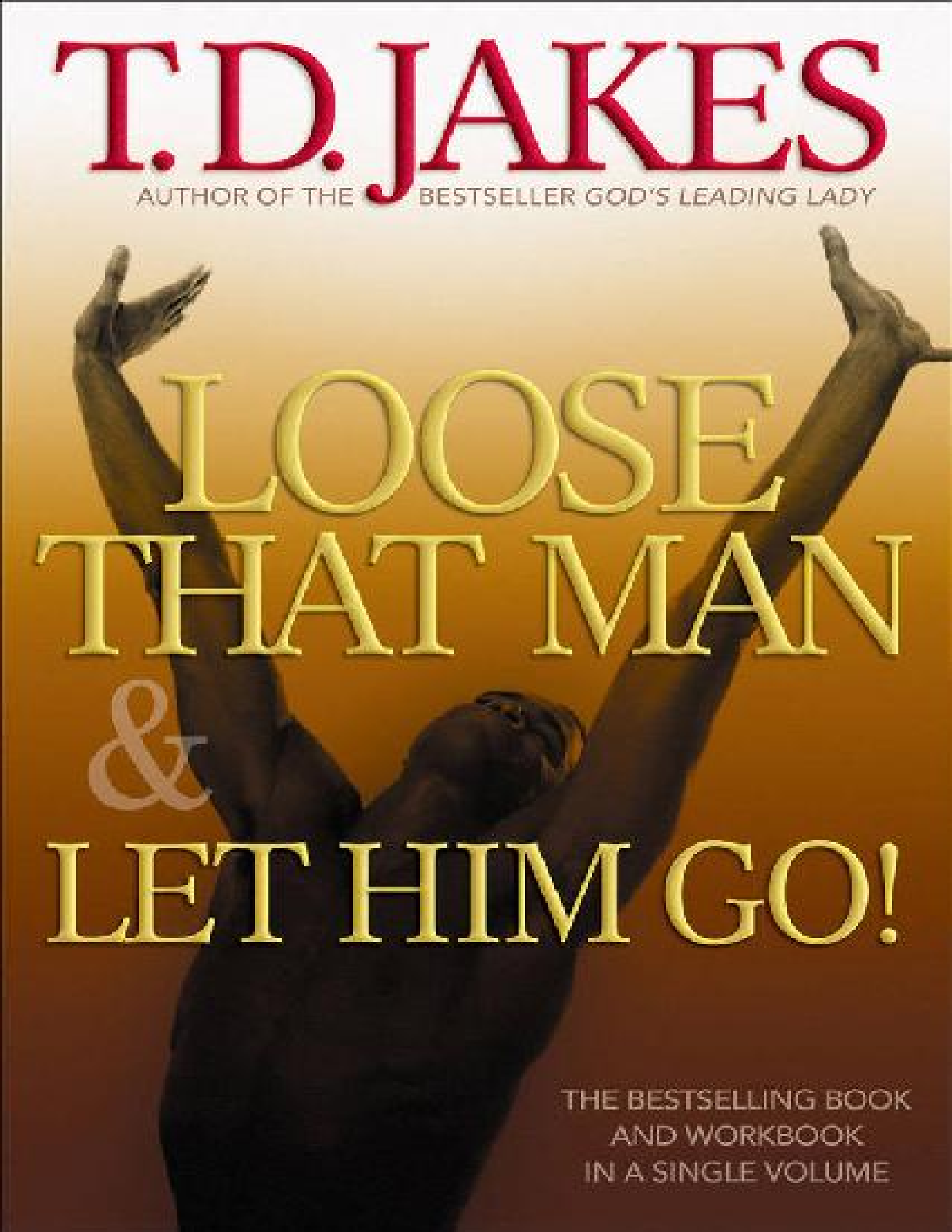


T.D. JAKES

AUTHOR OF THE #1 BESTSELLER GOD'S LEADING LADY



LOOSE THAT MAN & LET HIM GO!

THE BESTSELLING BOOK
AND WORKBOOK
IN A SINGLE VOLUME

T.D. JAKES



LOOSE
THAT MAN
&
LET HIM GO!

 BETHANYHOUSE
a division of Baker Publishing Group
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Loose That Man & Let Him Go!

Copyright © 1995

T. D. Jakes

Originally published as two books: *Loose That Man & Let Him Go!* and *Loose That Man & Let Him Go! Workbook*

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from *The King James Version* of the Bible.

Scripture quotations identified NASB are taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE,[®] Copyright © The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995. Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org)

Scripture quotations identified TLB are from *The Living Bible* © 1971 owned by assignment by Illinois Regional Bank N.A. (as trustee). Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL 60189. All rights reserved.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise—without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

Published by Bethany House Publishers

11400 Hampshire Avenue South

Bloomington, Minnesota 55438

www.bethanyhouse.com

Bethany House Publishers is a division of
Baker Publishing Group, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

www.bakerpublishinggroup.com

Ebook edition created 2012

eISBN 978-1-4412-1336-5

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is on file at the Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the memory of my father, Rev. Ernest L. Jakes Sr; to my brother Ernest L. Jr., whose presence in this world has made life richer and fuller for me; and especially to the destiny of my three sons, Jamar, Jermaine, and T.D. Jr., whose lives have been a burning blaze in my heart. I know that they are manuscripts yet to be written and songs waiting to be sung. To the world I say get ready for them; they are being printed at this very moment and soon to be published. They will be well worth reading.

Note to Reader

As you read this book, take time to answer the questions in the workbook beginning on page 209. They will help you get the most out of the material as you go along.

Some of the questions are looking for a personal response that only you can provide. There are not right or wrong answers for these questions.

Other questions pertain to something that was said by Bishop Jakes within the chapter. If you're not sure what the right answer is, you can look it up in the Answer Key found on page 275.

Table of Contents

Cover

Title Page

Copyright Page

Dedication

Note to Reader

CHAPTER ONE

When I Was a Child

CHAPTER TWO

Suffer the Little Children

CHAPTER THREE

Confronting the Child in You

CHAPTER FOUR

When I Became a Man

CHAPTER FIVE

The Party Is in Progress

CHAPTER SIX

When the Yoke Isn't Easy

CHAPTER SEVEN

Marriage: Missionaries or Men?

CHAPTER EIGHT

Mighty Men Still Need Rest

CHAPTER NINE

You Are Still My Son!

CHAPTER TEN

Surrogate Fathers

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A Man's Best Friend

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Saul Syndrome

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

When the Clothes They Make Don't Fit!

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Knocked No Lower Than My Knees!

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Living Like a Loosed Man

A FINAL WORD

A SELECTION OF PRAYERS FOR MEN


WORKBOOK

ANSWER KEY

About the Author

Other Books by Author

Notes



CHAPTER ONE

When I Was A Child

“When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”

1 CORINTHIANS 13:11

Every man, great and ordinary, famous or forgotten enters this world traumatically and begins to perceive his surroundings through the eyes of a child. It is during these tender years that he experiences the beginnings of his masculinity.

Our development as men is shaped by the things we encounter as children. Our masculinity is defined by our fathers and our relationships. Dysfunctions in our adulthood were also shaped or influenced by the presence — or absence — of the men who fathered us. What painful childhood memories haunted young Adolf Hitler? Who touched the life of Martin Luther King Jr. or of Abraham Lincoln? What childhood pains or dreams framed the thoughts of Malcolm X and Mahatma Gandhi?

Our father’s absence can form a sustained question in our minds, a haunting thought, *Maybe it was something I did or something I lacked that caused him to leave.* We learn the art of suppression early, deeply burying the painful questions and the native sensitivity that is so easily bruised. We suppress the natural creativity that springs from a probing mind as we encounter the pain of continually being told, “Shut up! I don’t have the time to listen to you.”

Our fathers are our first definition and demonstration of masculinity. Unfortunately, our fathers' model has caused many of us to equate masculinity with absence, irresponsibility, sullen silence, or violence. All the fruits of our manhood are rooted in our childhood — our self-esteem, our inner awareness of who we are, our sexuality, our preferences. They are all deeply planted in the soil of our early memories, experiences, and definitions.

God plants an infinitely curious mind within every little child and adolescent. As they grow older, many children bend to indifference and ignorance, while others surrender to scorn and punishment, and eventually most will finally succumb to a “formal education” that will quench their natural hunger for knowledge.

Young minds never stop gathering information through their senses, and they constantly process their perceptions. What do you suppose those Judean children perceived the day the young Rabbi, Jesus, rebuked the men who were pushing the small ones away from Him? What went through their minds as the children heard Him say, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not” (Mark 10:14)? How many lives and destinies were changed forever by His tender embrace and unconditional love that day?

Within every man dwells the little child who preceded him. Manhood is rooted in childhood, and many of the thoughts you and I have today come from our early experiences as children. You may read these words with sadness if you are one of the thousands who involuntarily recoil at the mere sight of the words *Father, Daddy, Papa, or Dad*. They only represent pain and loss to you.

I SPOKE AS A CHILD

My mother used to listen closely to me when I talked. Now I understand that *my mother's attention dignified my opinion*. Her actions confirmed to me that I mattered. Her careful (and patient) listening enriched my thinking process with a self-esteem that caused me to believe that my thoughts were important. Regardless of whether she agreed or didn't agree with what I said, what excited me was that she listened to me.

Jesus *spoke* when He was a child. According to Luke 2:46-47, He entered the temple and spent five days listening to and speaking with the leading

doctors of the Law while He was barely an adolescent! The Bible says these scholars “were astonished at his understanding and answers” (Luke 2:47 TLB). If you want to know who someone is, listen to what he says! “For of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh” (Luke 6:45). Jesus started perfecting the art of expression early in His life, and even the leading teachers of the day listened to Him. What a boost that must have been to His self-esteem! There is something about expressing thoughts that airs out the mind and sorts out the closets of the intellect.

My mother stimulated my creativity by listening to my expressed thoughts. Her attention gave me respect for my own opinion, a respect that still exists today. I am concerned that in the busy world of our day, *the children know we are not listening to them, and the pressure is rising.*

Sadly, many times our parents did not listen to us. Neither have we always listened to our children or to one another. Thus we have raised a generation of angry young men. They in turn have carried their inner anger into marriages in which they believe no one is listening to them. This consuming anger has surfaced as violence, introversion, perversion, or outright self-destruction! Their self-esteem and integrity have been destroyed because they have felt muzzled all their lives. They suffer like bound and gagged prisoners in a rigid shell of outrage and despair.

As parents, pastors, and leaders, we often seem extremely stretched ourselves, but *we need to listen anyway!* Men who curse and swear or even become violent are just overgrown little boys having a tantrum because they feel out of control. They are frustrated because “life isn’t listening!”

“When I was a child, I spake as a child” (1 Corinthians 13:11). We all need to be able to communicate our thoughts and express how we feel. Jesus said, “But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man” (Matthew 15:18). If there is anything worse than the rage, the frustration, and the other negative things that come out of us, it is the things that do not come out! Festering wounds are dangerous wounds. A rumbling volcano is a dangerous omen, a solemn warning of a coming eruption that could rain down destruction on everyone living in its shadow.

Many men lose their ability to communicate during childhood. As youngsters we are told what is “appropriate” to do (or is it merely *convenient?*). “Just sit over in the corner and be *quiet!*” Now, as adults, we

feel the rush of unchecked adult passions, frustrations, and anger coursing through us on the inside, and we can't speak. We can't communicate. We're ready to explode, but we don't dare cry! We're hurting too bad to laugh. The only emotion we are allowed to express is *anger!* (Why is anger the primary emotion attributed to the *male gender?*)

The raging child who takes a hammer and pounds his toy into oblivion soon becomes the grown man who runs his fist through the wall and batters his wife into an early grave. Many times this kind of rage is fueled by an inability to turn thoughts into words. It is crucial for men to be able to vent emotions and frustrations safely through appropriate channels — for when they don't, everything breaks loose. No one wins but the adversary of men's souls.

I UNDERSTOOD AS A CHILD

Our *understanding* is the “digestive” process of our minds. It is the stage in which we come to a resolve and draw conclusions. Paul said that when he was a child, he understood as a child. If as adults our understanding is still elementary and childish, we may come to immature conclusions. Childish wisdom can be the most dangerous of all — especially in the mind of a wounded adult.

So many children who have grown up in broken homes determine at some point in their lives that it is their fault their fathers and mothers separated. Many attempt to shoulder the blame and responsibility for their fractured upbringing and become terribly scarred because of their childhood conclusions and understandings. We court disaster when we carry childish perceptions into adult relationships.

Distorted childhood perceptions and conclusions are often a spawning bed for crippling thoughts of inadequacy. Such perceptions and conclusions produce a lifetime of insecurity. At this very moment you and I still carry the deep wounds that were inflicted by the cutting statements of other children who never knew that their reckless words of scorn were lethal! Even our sexuality is affected by early encounters and incidents. Many grown men are recreating scenarios from their scarred and twisted childhood in their adult fantasies. They are trapped by endless nightmares of sordid passions and insatiable lusts.

We often build protective layers of denials, lies, and illusions around our secret pains (like pearls, which are just abnormal growths of secretions layered around irritating foreign objects in the *hearts* of oysters) until something forces the issue. One day the pry bar of circumstance will force open the shell and expose the secrets for all to see.

Our needs and preferences are a composite of early childhood experiences and encounters — a glimpse of naked flesh furtively stolen from someone stepping out of a bath, a tender touch, a forbidden fondle, a feeling of fleeting pleasure. The nostalgia that shapes adult issues arises from a thirty-year-old memory of sweet-smelling cologne, the touch of warm flesh, or the gentle caress of silken hair across the face. Whether the Church wants to deal with it or not, most men are involved with little boy thoughts that have escaped their childhood and entered their adulthood like steam escaping from a shower.

If sexuality is tampered with early in life, it can greatly twist and influence a man's perception of the whole issue of sex and personality.

"I *understood* as a child." What a powerful statement! What is normal for a child can be deadly for a man who still *understands* as a child. The suit is bigger and the man is bigger. He has more hair and bigger biceps, but he is no longer a baby; he's making babies. Despite his size, his childish understanding is *dwarfing* him. "Depravation dwarfism" is a psychological concept used to describe children who have been physically dwarfed because they were not nurtured, touched, or handled. The lack of love and physical closeness literally caused their physical handicap. Millions of men are "dwarfed" in their emotions and personalities because they were deprived of love and affection as children.

Although men have "toys," many of them use them to cover their pain and shame. They have the toys as well as the contrived expressions and fanfare that go with them, but the toys are relative to culture.

Few people in our country understand that there is little difference between an executive in a business suit and tie who goes to "Joe's Place" for happy hour, then staggers home half drunk, and a derelict on the street corner in dirty blue jeans and a raggedy T-shirt sucking on a bottle in a brown paper bag. *It's the same addiction.* One addict is simply better dressed than the other. The differences are only economic, social, and cultural. One man plays on a yacht while the other plays on a basketball court. Both men

may be trying to escape through the use of toys. One pays more for his toy than the other, but in the end they both fail to escape.

Now, there is nothing wrong with adult toys, but we need to know what we use our toys for. Some of us use our toys for identification or to impress people, while others use their toys to escape reality.

There is a universal commonality of masculinity; we are not that different from each other. It doesn't matter whether we are Asian, Caucasian, Hispanic, Native American, or African American. Whether we are well educated or illiterate our basic needs are the same, and our ability to express ourselves is relative to the "amount of marbles we have in the bag." If you have more marbles, you can do more things.

The book of Proverbs warns us with the passionate writings of a wise father trying to save his son from the dangers of "too much, too soon." Many of us didn't read his words in time. There wasn't a father patient enough or wise enough to save us from the pain. We became engulfed in excess. Our heads became intoxicated with the swirling spirals of unchecked emotions ingested too much too early and never resolved the conflicts that raged within us.

You can't have manpower until you have boypower. Someone must save the children within us and the children we've fathered! They are being destroyed before our very eyes. They are dying in the courtrooms of our land and killing one another on the streets of our cities.

Our own broken childhoods have turned our little children's lives into unthinkable horror stories, spawning more crimes and murders in the bosoms of children than have ever been witnessed in history! The Apostle Paul warned us in Ephesians 6:4, "And, ye fathers, *provoke not your children to wrath*: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Have we so abused our children that now they rise in wrath to kill us?

I THOUGHT AS A CHILD

Never in history have we been so afraid of our own children! Grown men are afraid to walk through crowds of preteen and young teenage boys in the city. Young men have become so angry that adult men are intimidated by them. Grandmothers are being killed by raging grandchildren who tie them up in basements and set them on fire! The news media report increasingly

gruesome teen atrocities that sound like gothic horror fictional novels or nightmares from hell, but they're happening. We sit in our easy chairs and watch through television as thirteen-year-old boys stand trial before a judge and jury and receive a life sentence without shedding a tear. *Preoccupied by our own pain, we have created monsters in our children.* This plague transcends racial and social boundaries. From the well-to-do Menendez boys in affluent California to the "boys in the hood" of the urban ghetto, the spirit of anger transcends culture. We have become angry, frustrated men, and we have spawned a generation that is angrier than we are.

We have been given too much responsibility too fast. We have seen too much. We have heard too much. We have watched the gropings of twisted flesh on prime time television and have listened to the squeaking noises coming from our parents' rooms in the night. We have challenged childish minds with manly issues.

The mind of a child should not be stressed with harsh issues like molestation, abuse, or domestic violence. This strain produces a mental hernia that is visible in the character of the youngster for the rest of his life! Many young men have followed their fathers' footsteps into promiscuity, thinking it natural to define their masculinity by extreme sexuality. "Isn't that what Dad did?" Like so many other excesses and escapes, it is just a drug taken too often for a pain that will not go away. It only masks the symptoms without healing the source of the pain.

Nearly every problem in society becomes more inflamed by the raw anger burning out of control within our young men. Racism is on a rampage because men are angry. Violence is sweeping through our schools, our homes, and our prime time crime shows. Even the "politically correct" demands of the feminist movement have been swept aside by a new wave of raw, angry sexuality that openly exploits and degrades participants on both sides of the gender line. Whenever men are angry, they look for somebody to blame. Adam set the pattern when he blamed Eve for making him disobey God's command in the Garden of Eden. (See Genesis 3:12.) Whenever we are captured or feel trapped, we cast the blame on someone else. An entire generation has become imprisoned in a pit of anger and frustration, and somebody has to take the blame.

The people of this generation look at each other and say, "You're the reason I'm in a rut!" White men say, "Blacks are taking all the jobs and

forcing the rest of us out! Just because I'm white, I can't get a job with all this Affirmative Action business. I'm angry — we should do away with these stupid programs!" Meanwhile, angry black men are saying, "White people are the reason we can't find decent work. It's white people's fault that we can't earn a living, because we have been discriminated against all those years." Immigrants are saying, "Neither of you is right. Here is the real reason...." And so the arguing, blaming, and childish finger-pointing go on and on.

Everyone is angry. We wound one another in our jealous, childhood exchanges of bitter words. Our whole culture has become angry because we have provoked our sons to wrath. How does a child forget the scene that replays in his mind every day and night — the picture of his mother angrily wiping away her tears as his father mutters and throws his glass through the television screen? Did he make his father angry that afternoon? Was his mother upset because he couldn't please Dad enough to calm him down? Surely there was something he could have done to fix whatever was wrong....

Who can erase the burning shame and anger of the boy who dreaded the bus ride home from school? Twenty years later he can still feel the vicious blows, the curses, the blazing hatred in the eyes of his attackers — what had he done to deserve what they did to him? Whatever the reasons, this boy, now inhabiting a frame bearing nearly 280 pounds of muscle, bone, and sinew, can't control the burning rage and hatred he feels every time he sees a member of that race. He only knows that he wants to strike back again and again until his pain goes away. That's why he is in prison.

Those feelings of buried childhood pain never leave us. They stay with us all our lives, even when the roles change. We get bigger and we learn to hide them better, but inside the little boy is still intimidated. We still feel fearful. We're still bullied and overwhelmed by people at times. The child within doesn't want to deal with the secret thoughts no one else knows about. But many times, the secret thoughts force their way to the surface and press the issue.

What prompts a forty-year-old man to suddenly discover one night as he lies in bed that *he needs to be held*? All his life he's been the "holder." All of a sudden, this macho man turns to his wife and says, "Just hold me." When the pain breaks through, we are wrestled to the ground and made to face an unsettling fact: A hurting little boy still lives within. We cannot divorce ourselves from our inner need. So how do we spell relief?

Society, would you give me permission to be who I am without categorizing what you see? Must I live up to some image that you created for me to conform to? Can you accept the fact that I'm a combination of many different types of dysfunctions bound together within one house?

All that I express, speak, and understand is relative to my childhood. You will never understand the man I am on the outside until you have touched the child within me. Wife, beware. Children, beware. Pastor, beware. Boss, beware. If you never develop empathy for the little boy in me who is holding a blanket and sucking his thumb in a doorway, watching everyone leave, then you will never understand my erratic behavior as a man on the job, or in the bed, or with my own sons and daughters. "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child..." (1 Corinthians 13:11).



CHAPTER TWO

Suffer the Little Children

“Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.”

MARK 10:14-15

Many times, buried and suppressed beneath our manly facade and pretense, our fear comes from a trembling, angry, confused child whose frustrations and insecurities are covered with muscles, sweat, and hair. Often, beneath our blustery masculinity, there are issues that must be confronted.

Where can the little child in each of us go but to God? Jesus declares that the kingdom is composed of little children, not just the chronologically young, but even the little children who live in big bodies.

“Forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.” Any pastor will tell you that the kingdom is one big playground filled with dysfunctional children who have found solace only in the presence of God. That does not mean that this kingdom is simply a collection of losers who couldn’t keep up with winners — no, *all men* are losers in some way because we are

incomplete, and we will never be healed until we come to God *like little children*.

There is no room in the kingdom for macho men in a power struggle to impress one another with their collection of “toys” or “possessions.” It doesn’t matter whether these toys are cars, biceps, girlfriends, church members, or certificates of deposit. We must confront the child in us before we can enjoy the man.

WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN...

“And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan’s sake? And there was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba. And when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, Art thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant is he. And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet. And the king said unto him, Where is he? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he is in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lo-debar.

“Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lo-debar.”

2 SAMUEL 9:1-5

Mephibosheth is one of my favorite characters in the Bible. His name is a tongue-twister, but it is not nearly as twisted as his life. The Bible describes him as being lame in both of his feet. His story is tragic because *he could have been, he should have been*, king over Israel! He was the grandson of Saul, who was the first king of Israel. He should have been a strong, handsome, virile leader like Jonathan his father. Instead, when we find Mephibosheth we see a twisted, bruised, incapacitated victim whose broken ankles and twisted limbs have exiled him to a terrible place called “Lo-debar.”

Rabbinic scholars say *Lo-debar*, when literally translated from the Hebrew, means “place of no communication” (*lo* means “no,” and *debar* or *devar* means “word”).

Mephibosheth was a deposed and maimed prince from a fallen house of kings, whisked from a royal palace to live in “a place of no communication.” This wounded young man lost his birthright without uttering a single word or doing a single evil deed. He was just a frightened little five-year-old boy

when he was buried in a land of silence, separated from his father and his destiny, and left to dream of what might have been!

Have you ever been to Lo-debar?

Isn't it amazing how brokenness in one area can rob us of rightful success and imprison us in a valley of regret, a silent place where no one can hear our pain or ease our sorrow?

"I could have been...I should have been..." Mephibosheth *could have been* a king, but there was a problem in his life. He *would have been* great, but he had an area in his life that seemed beyond his control. There was nothing wrong with his mind. He could command his legs to walk, but there was a problem between the command and the function. He meant to do it, but he couldn't and didn't perform what he meant to perform. He was maimed and handicapped.

Maybe you and I can't relate to Mephibosheth's physical handicap, but every one of us has a certain degree of dysfunction. We can give a command in our head, but it just doesn't function in our lives. Our dysfunction can leave us in Lo-debar, gagged, hopeless, and alone, when we *could have been* — and *should have been* — kings sitting in a palace.

Mephibosheth was Jonathan's son and King Saul's grandson. He was the only surviving heir and male descendant of Israel's first royal family. He *should have been* groomed to be king over Israel, but instead his father was tragically killed in battle and he was left living like a broken-down recluse in Lo-debar — stripped of his crown and wounded in spirit, a long-forgotten prisoner of his own infirmity. Yet the only thing wrong with Mephibosheth was that he was lame in both of his feet.

Wretched Mephibosheth is a vivid picture of you and me, trying desperately to deal with our inward handicaps without letting anyone know "what really goes on inside." Mephibosheth is the model for every man who should have been *here*, but instead ended up *there*. The reason men end up in Lo-debar instead of the palace is because something occurred in their life that so traumatized them that it kept them from reaching the hope of their calling. Our handicaps — whatever form they may take — keep us from reaching our potential or fulfilling our dreams. We have stopped short of the goal because a hidden issue in our life seems to hold us back.

CARRIED TO THE CALLING

“Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant!

“And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father’s sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually. And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am?

“Then the king called to Ziba, Saul’s servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master’s son all that pertained to Saul and to all his house. Thou therefore, and thy sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in the fruits, that thy master’s son may have food to eat: but Mephibosheth thy master’s son shall eat bread alway at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do. As for Mephibosheth, said the king, he shall eat at my table, as one of the king’s sons. And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Micha. And all that dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants unto Mephibosheth. So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem: for he did eat continually at the king’s table; and was lame on both his feet.”

2 SAMUEL 9:6-13

Mephibosheth is no longer a five-year-old boy when he enters the scene in 2 Samuel 9. He is a grown man with a son of his own.

It all began when David called in Ziba, a former servant of King Saul, to ask if there was anyone left of the house of Saul to whom David could show kindness. This man told King David that only one descendant of his old friend, Jonathan, was still alive — Mephibosheth, the lame man. This maimed prince lived in another man’s house in *Lo-debar*, the place of no communication, the land of lost and forgotten potential. David’s answer was immediate and forceful: He sent messengers, or perhaps Ziba himself, to go “fetch” him out.

Jonathan and David were close friends and covenant brothers. The Bible clearly shows that they had the most intimate covenant relationship two men could ever have as friends. David meant to keep his oath to his deceased friend Jonathan, so his invitation to bring Mephibosheth was genuine and trustworthy.

Unfortunately, there was a problem. Although Mephibosheth was called, he couldn’t come on his own. Someone had to go get him. The real truth of the matter is that many of us have been called, but we can’t get to the place we have been called to dwell in because we are so distracted and crippled by our own brokenness. We hear the voice but we can’t get up. David sent the

servant Ziba to “fetch” Mephibosheth out of the “place of no communication.” In this scene, I feel that Ziba is a type of the Holy Spirit, Who comes to fetch us out of the valley of silent sorrows and oppression.

Remember, by the time Ziba comes to get Mephibosheth, he is a grown man.

When Mephibosheth arrives at the palace, he must be brought in by Ziba. This grown man is literally being carried like a child! This is a very powerful image in my mind. If I look at Mephibosheth’s *presence*, I want to let him walk. But when I look at his *problem*, I realize that he must be carried. I can just see Mephibosheth falling down, clutching David’s kingly robes, lying on the floor of a palace that *should have been his*, begging. This is a picture of dysfunction.

Dysfunction is desperate men clutching on to relationships, living beneath their privilege, lying on the floor of life stripped of their self-respect and integrity. They are in the right place, but they are not in the right position. They have been violated and emasculated. Some have been violently raped; others have been secretly molested. Some have been consumed by drugs, and others are lost in a sea of mind-numbing alcoholism. These would-be princes have become beggars in their own houses, lying on the floor and unable to rise to fulfill their destiny.

While Mephibosheth is lying on the floor, David says something like, “You know, I’ve prepared a table for you...” Mephibosheth says, “Oh, not me, my lord; I am a dead dog. I have no self-worth—I’m not worthy to be in this place.”

This young man was born to an aristocratic, noble, good-looking, affluent, attractive, upper-echelon family in Israel. He *should have been* tall like his grandfather, who was “a head and shoulders” above all men. (See 1 Samuel 9:2.) Mephibosheth *should have been* good-looking like Jonathan, the royal prince. Mephibosheth’s father caused everyone to gasp when he walked by because he was handsome to look upon — so why was his son groveling on the floor of the palace in which he was born? What happened to make him a trembling, shaking, frail and fragmented, tattered and torn, emasculated and wounded would-be prince? Born with so much going for him, how could Mephibosheth now be so impoverished physically, emotionally, and spiritually?

SOMEBODY DROPPED ME!

Several things came into play to determine Mephibosheth's fate. The Bible describes an event that was destined to change Mephibosheth's life forever. At the time this event took place he was only five years old.

Everything began as usual that day. Young Mephibosheth arose from his bed to scamper around the palace and play after breakfast. His nurse carefully dressed him, perhaps hoping this would be the day the young prince's father would return with King Saul to tell of their triumph in battle. According to 2 Samuel 4:4, however, something terrible was about to happen.

“...[Mephibosheth] was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel, and his nurse took him up, and fled: and it came to pass, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth.”

Prince Mephibosheth's nurse heard that his father and Saul had been killed. Then the Bible tells us that on the very same day that Mephibosheth lost his father and his grandfather, his nurse dropped him and maimed him for life! It wasn't fair! He didn't deserve it, but it happened to him nonetheless. Realize that *something happened to this man as a child* that he had never recovered from! *Somebody had dropped him.*

Has somebody dropped you? “I *would have been* more of a man than I am, but somebody dropped me. I apologize for not being everything you expect me to be, but *somebody dropped me*. I realize that for my age and my stage, I *should have* done more with my life, but before you determine the subtotal of all that I am, you have to *allow for* what I've been through, for I *have been dropped* in flight, in the middle of the process. I've been incapacitated.”

While other children went out to play, Mephibosheth could not move. While other children climbed trees, he had to stay in the house. What damage did this situation do to his self-esteem, his emotions, his self-perception, his sexuality? No one wanted to go out with Mephibosheth the teenager. Nobody saw him as attractive. What kind of weird, perverted mentality must have begun to fester like a fungus in his mind—all because the bumbling mistake of a hurrying nurse forever had deprived him of natural growth experiences!

The Bible says that against this backdrop of broken dreams, the king commanded that Mephibosheth be carried from Lo-debar, “the place of no communication,” to *Jerusalem*, the “possession of peace.” He moved into the king’s palace on the southwestern hill of Jerusalem called *Zion*, which means “fortress.” But what happened? Now that Mephibosheth had been brought out of Lo-debar, it seemed that he was “out,” but his mind wasn’t! His body was not “out.” He was still as handicapped as before. His problem was not “out.” He still didn’t know who he was; he had still missed a lifetime of normality. Within this suffering man lived a suffering child.

Mephibosheth is one of the few characters in the Bible *who never got healed*. He ached all his life. He was wounded all his life. I think we have damaged a lot of men by saying, “Come to the altar, brother, and everything will be fine! Join the church, and everything will work out. Get in the choir, you’ll be okay. Pay your tithes. You’ll see, everything will be fine.”

The truth is that some woundings stay with us all our lives. We may always be more needy, more fragile, more dependent, and more vulnerable than other people because we have experienced a serious injury. Jesus still bears the scars from the cross, and we are no different from our Master.

If I have a car wreck and crush my leg, the leg may heal and I may be able to get around, but when certain types of weather conditions occur, I will feel pain in a way you may never experience. Am I saved? Yes, I am saved. Am I healed? Yes, I am healed. But yet, I have to bear in my body a certain degree of affliction as a result of a past injury. That is something we have not been honest about, and Christianity has been disappointing in the minds of men who thought somebody could lay hands on them and wipe away their childhood injuries forever. Some things won’t go away completely. They just won’t disappear.

If there were an “executive boardroom” in the kingdom where representatives from every major group of stockholders met together before God, then Mephibosheth might represent us (he is a type of another scarred Son Who returned to His throne). He brings to the forefront a man who is sitting at that table with the King’s kids, though he is not whole, attractive, or nice-looking. He’s scarred and wounded, and he’s got a problem that has to be taken care of when nobody is looking. But the good news is: *at least Mephibosheth made it to the table!*

YOU BELONG AT THE TABLE

Even our failures are successes! They represent the miracle that you and I survived! Considering what we had to work with, though it looks like failure to us, we survived and our survival has been our success!

No matter how wounded you are, no matter how handicapped you have become, no matter how far you are from where you *could have and should have been* — you can still make it to the palace and sit at the table with the rest of the King’s kids! Yes, even though you still have a “problem” tucked under the tablecloth that other people cannot see, you still belong at the table. It is the command of the King!

When Mephibosheth was finally carried to King David’s table, he began to enjoy several blessings he had not experienced since his family’s royal house fell. First, he began to receive food that he didn’t have to labor for. There is help for the handicapped through the Holy Spirit. *God knows exactly where you are — even if you’re lost in Lo-debar!* Second, Mephibosheth looked different. If you looked at him from the top side of the table, Mephibosheth was as “princely” as Absalom, with his majestic flowing hair, or Amnon, with his princely demeanor, or even Solomon, the son with the wise countenance who would ultimately ascend to David’s throne.

Mephibosheth, the maimed and forgotten prince of a fallen house, the pitiful broken recluse from the land of silence, now looked like everybody else at the royal table. He was a prince among princes. That was his *position*, and hidden under the table was his *condition*. His return to the palace is good news: *Your position can overcome your condition!*

We need the freedom in the Church to say, “Yes, I am in this *position*, but I still have this *condition*. Yes, I am a pastor, an elder, a deacon, a choir member; but I have this *condition* called ‘being human.’ I’m sorry, but I have some hidden wounds. I have some brokenness under this table. There are some childhood scars under my clerical collar that you don’t see.”

We have never been able to say that. The Church has been hypocritical about the way it views and treats its very human leaders. Men are frustrated because we are in *positions* that do not allow us to admit that we have *conditions* with our wives, our families, and within ourselves.

We are in *positions* as husbands that do not allow us to say, “Yes, I’m married, but I’m going through a mid-life crisis, and I want my twenty-two-

year-old secretary! I know my daughter is nineteen, my wife is forty, and I'm forty-five. But I'm going through this *condition*. Help me stand. Help me go from *here* to *there*. The King is calling me to His table, but my ankles aren't working, and I'm growing weak."

Every time we have to silence our *conditions* because of our *positions*, our hidden wounds and problems begin to fester. We become angry and throw away everything we have. In desperation, we make permanent decisions about temporary circumstances —circumstances that we would eventually outgrow if we just had somebody we could confide in. "This is how I feel today, brother. I know it's wrong, and I want to do right, but I'm afraid. That's where I am. Help me *stand up*, brother! My ankles are hurting me again, but I've got to get to the King's table!"



CHAPTER THREE

Confronting the Child in You

We can no longer allow our past to destroy what God has for us in the present. We must admit the hidden issues threatening our destiny and confront them. All of us have crippling wounds and disadvantages hidden within.

No one is exempt from disadvantage.

Unattractive men think attractive men are exempt from problems, and black men think, “If I were just a white man in this country, I would have it made!” Yet white men are dysfunctional also. White men look at black men and say, “You’ve got all the benefits in this country! If I were black, I could get a job too!”

We know something is evading us. The “something” we are grasping for is out of our reach. Although we work hard to obtain it, it keeps moving back. We blame each other, but we still know that we cannot get it. The black hand has not reached it; the white hand has not reached it. The businessman and the corporate lawyer have not reached it; those men are committing suicide right along with the junkie who is strung out on crack. The only hope any of us have is in Jesus. Only Jesus can walk us through the barrier of time to

invade our past. There He can make us comfortable with our uncomfortable parts and at peace with our frailties and brokenness.

From the executive to the drug dealer, from the deacon to the dooper, we have but one God to go to, yet something is standing in our way. We're in for a battle if we're serious about breaking free from that thing.

“And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.”

GENESIS 32:24

Whether you are a preacher, a deacon — black or white — a Baptist, a Methodist, a Presbyterian, or one of the “boys in the hood,” one truth confronts you: *You can never become who you want to be until you can drop who you used to be.*

THE ENEMY WITHIN

If you want to be free, you must be willing to challenge all definitions of your masculinity. You have to be willing to confront issues that other men run from. Freedom only comes when you challenge yourself, when you open up and say things to yourself that you might not have admitted to your wife, to your friends, or to your parents. It is time to confront old issues.

These issues are enemies of your soul.

I am not overly concerned about witches, demons, sorcery, or astrology. As bad as crime is, I am not too worried about muggers, thieves, rapists, or con artists. I don't want to be their victim, but they are not my greatest dread. Nor do I suffer anxiety thinking about a figure dressed in red with a pitchfork and a pointed tail who peers in the window making evil suggestions to me. If there is anything that I constantly fight against and wrestle with, it is *the enemy in me*. That is the one I am most concerned about — the enemy “in-a-me”!

If anything takes you back, it will be the enemy within.

The book of Romans paints a frightening picture of men who fail to confront the enemy within:

“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God... And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.”

ROMANS 1:21, 28

These men once knew the Lord, but they decided not to glorify Him as God. His judgment was *to turn them over to themselves!* Some of us may have to enter a witch's house, or confront a warlock or sorcerer head on, or walk through a highcrime red light district, but the greatest danger — the greatest judgment — that could ever confront any of us is for God to turn us over to ourselves. If God ever adopts the advertising slogan that says, "Have it your way," you and I will self-destruct!

Left to our own devices, we may be surprised to discover how corrupt we really are. You and I conceal many things in us that we don't talk about. There are hidden things in us that we belittle other people for. Oh yes, we're careful to make sure no one knows what is lurking in the dark corners of our heart, but *they are there*. Under difficult circumstances, those secret weaknesses can erupt with terrible results.

You might be surprised at what you would do if you were pressed. If your hidden anger raged high enough, what would you do with that knife in the kitchen drawer? Under certain stresses, you would be shocked to learn who would rob a convenience store. Pastor, deacon, faithful husband, and provider, you keep your secret passions well hidden, but you would be dismayed to discover who you would sleep with if pressured with the wrong circumstances. How many moral and emotional land mines are buried in the depths of your soul?

If I have made you uncomfortable, I apologize, but as my brother once told me, "When you get in a fight, you may as well throw the first punch."

You would be disturbed by what is lurking in the shadows of your being. In fact, you would be shocked to know what your best friends and family members have done, but haven't told anyone.

Men can be incredibly hypocritical. We often strongly condemn others for the very things we are most guilty of ourselves.

The greatest and most lethal weapon the enemy can ever challenge you with is you.

I thank God He didn't turn me over to myself.

Thank You for contending with me, Lord. Thank You for arguing with me, convicting me, wrestling with me, warring with me, talking to me, and challenging me. I could never find a way out of my pain if You weren't there to point the way home.

God challenges us in unique and special ways to help us know who we are, despite our handicaps. Most of us are suffering from manipulation. When we have no goals, it is easy for others to impose on us their ideas of who we are and are not, and of what we should and should not be doing. Manipulation is a result of purposelessness. Anytime we don't know and understand our purpose, or who we were created to be, we become vulnerable to manipulation.

Anybody can assign his agenda to you if you don't know who you are. Unless you confront your own frailties and map your own vulnerabilities, you will never be prepared for attacks in those areas. When you are not prepared, you will find yourself saying, "But I never thought I would do that! I never believed I could get that angry and hostile! I never ever thought I would have an affair! How could I be that weak?"

Thousands of men once believed they could never cheat on their income tax or their wives, but they did. When you do not assess the potential of sin within, you will not pray against these things. It will inevitably leave you vulnerable to the attack of the enemy.

A SEAT IS RESERVED FOR YOU

Our salvation lies in the fact that God has put His hand on us. He has made such a costly and personal investment in each of us that He is not easily discouraged from what He said about us! He set a chair in the midst of the angels in eternity. Then He told them:

"I am going to bring that man to sit in this seat, and he shall be Mine when I make up My jewels. I'm going to bring him right here."

The angels protested, "But Holy One, the man was dropped. He isn't whole."

"That doesn't matter. I am going to bring him right here."

"But he's a liar!"

"That's all right. I'm telling you, this is his seat. I have inscribed his name on it."

"Oh, but he's a molester!"

"That's ugly, but that's all right. I'm going to bring him right here."

"But Ancient One, I heard he was a pervert."

“Even so, when it is all said and done, and I have completed My teaching, preaching, and ministering through My servants, that man is going to sit right here!”

You may be sitting in a seat that ten years ago nobody ever believed you would be sitting in right now. *They underestimated the power of God to change you.*

God “calletH those things which be not as though they were” (Romans 4:17). Why? He knows He has the power to make them become what He says they will be. He is not afraid to call you and me holy and blameless, even while we are still confused, in trouble, and in turmoil! We may be guilty of inflicting domestic violence or mental abuse, but God says, “When I get through with him, he’s going to be a deacon in the church. Give him that seat!” I want to thank God for reserving that seat for me. I want to thank Him for making a reservation in my name.

God is holding a seat for you. You don’t have to be jealous of anybody. God has a special, one-of-a-kind seat reserved for you, and “ain’t nobody going to sit in it but you!” God has a reserved seat for you, even though your enemies never thought you would be there. Some of your friends thought you wouldn’t be there, either. Sometimes, even you thought you wouldn’t make it to that spot at His right hand — and you wouldn’t have, except for His holy arms. Praise God, He pulled you out, even when you didn’t want to come! Sometimes you were kicking and screaming, but He pulled you out anyway. Hallelujah!

God has to get you ready. You need to get ready before you can sit in that seat He has reserved for you. When you were driving down the highway drunk, God had His angels watching over you. When you were slapping your wife around and boasting that you weren’t ever going to church, God protected you from yourself. He knew you were crazy. He knew He had to deal with your mind. He knew exactly how He was going to pull that bitterness out of you and bring you to your knees.

You are a miracle.

If God had dealt with you according to your sins, you would be dead. But God is merciful. He was determined to maneuver you to a place where He could minister to you. When you really belong to God, He will go to extreme measures to *get you away from people* — the cliques and clubs, spas and pubs, society or any kind of entanglement that would hinder you from

hearing His voice. But when you are really listening, when you are called of God, He will orchestrate things in your life so He can have you to Himself — completely.

ALONE WITH GOD

“And he [Jacob] rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two womenservants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok. And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had.

“And Jacob was left alone....”

GENESIS 32:22-24

Jacob wasn't necessarily lonely; he was alone. When God starts calling you away to Himself, you may want to surround yourself with people. Unless you realize what is going on, you will gather people around you so you won't be alone. That won't help. You can be surrounded by people and still be alone if God is after you. You can experience intimate relationships and still be alone.

Who are you really? Who are you when nobody is looking? That is the real you. Who are you when all the camouflage is off, when you don't have an ego to defend, when you have nothing to prove at the office? Who are you when you're not concerned about who is driving the nicest car, who owns the biggest house, or who makes the best business decisions? Who are you aside from all the imitations of life?

If you ever go through a real life-or-death situation or recover from a life-threatening disease, you will discover the “real you.” You will find out that most of the things people say are “important” aren't really important at all.

I'm alone anytime I am surrounded by people *who don't know who I am*. Anytime I am in a situation where I cannot fully be myself, I am alone. Anytime I have to put on a facade or camouflage who I really am, I am alone. I am isolated. I watch people through a glass because they really don't know me.

God wants you to be alone because that is when He really operates. Nobody receives guests in the operating room. I don't care how many loved ones you have around you, when you get ready to go through surgery, the doctors put them all out — even your wife and kids. God put this book in your hands because he wants to do surgery.

“And Jacob was left alone....” (Genesis 32:24). Jacob was not just alone — he was *left* alone. The word *left* implies that somebody who was there departed. Somebody he thought he could depend on moved. Someone he fellowshiped with abandoned him.

“And Jacob was left *alone*....” He was left alone, isolated, and separated by God for a divine purpose. “...and there *wrestled* a man with him until the breaking of the day” (Genesis 32:24). Are you ready? God Himself is coming down to fight with you.

GOD IS COMING TO FIGHT ME?

“But Lord, this was a low moment in Jacob’s life. He was left alone, and it seems like You should have comforted him.”

“No,” the Lord says, “I didn’t come to *comfort* Jacob — I came to *confront* him. I came to challenge him, to wrestle with him for mastery of his life — just as I have come to wrestle with you!”

“Not You too, Lord! Everybody is wrestling with me. My wife is wrestling with me; my children are wrestling with me; my boss is wrestling with me; my church is wrestling with me; my mind is wrestling with me; and now You!”

“You’re right, but I didn’t come to baby you. I didn’t come to comfort you — I came to confront you. I came to challenge you. I came to wrestle you into submission to My will and purpose for your life!”

The Bible says, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend” (Proverbs 27:6). If true friends wound you, they wound you for a good reason. In fact, many times that is the only way you can tell a really good friend from a “fair-weather friend,” one who is only along for the benefits you offer. A really good friend doesn’t agree with you all the time. No matter how rough and tough you act or how mightily you roar or how forcefully you do your macho act, a real friend will look you in the face and say, “I hear you, *but you are still wrong.*”

You won’t get any real help from so-called friends *until you find a true friend who loves you enough to stand up to you.*

God is saying, “I’ve come to stand up to you. I am going to confront you and make you uncomfortable. I’ve come to move you away from mediocrity!”

Most of us are so “normal” that it is sickening. We’re not earning F’s or A’s; we’re just getting by with C’s in the class of life. We’re just mediocre. Boredom leads to sin. When there is no excitement, we “go hunting.”

It is dangerous for you, as a “mighty man” of God, to spend too many days in mediocrity. If you do, you will find yourself creating your own challenge. Look at masculine entertainment. Man was meant to hunt.

When God created Adam, one of His commands was to be fruitful and multiply, to replenish the earth, and to subdue and exercise dominion. To *subdue* means to conquer, and to *exercise dominion* means to maintain control over what has been conquered. Embedded deeply within your masculine nature is a need to subdue. *There is a hunter in you.*

Oh yes, there is a hunter in you, whether you’re stalking a contract, a deer, or a woman. You’ve got to hunt something.

It doesn’t matter whether it’s a business deal, a broker, a CD, or an annuity — all men love to hunt. We have to capture something. We have to chase and apprehend it, even if we don’t really want it.

Many times fishermen catch a fish and just throw it back in the water. They’re more interested in catching the fish than in eating it. God says, “I’ve come to challenge you before you catch the wrong thing. I’ve come to contend with you before you spend all your strength, your youth, and your talent asserting yourself in the wrong direction. I’ve come to wrestle with you before you waste your moments on frivolous living.”

God knows that if we are not stopped, if we are not saved from ourselves, we will come to the end of our lives and regret what we have done. All our possessions and conquests will be meaningless. We will become jealous of other men who avoided our foolishness, and we will wish we had lived our lives differently. Men become cynical when they see other people who took advantage of opportunities and succeeded while they failed.

DON’T WASTE YOUR LIFE

God has given you a marvelous gift. He has given you life. What are you going to do with it? Life, energy, force, power, thought, and creativity are surging through your body right now. Adam was just a clay pot until God *breathed* on him! God has breathed on you and given you life. Yes, you’ve been through a lot of trouble, but God breathed on you, and you’re alive.

God is out to confront you before you lose your greatest commodity — life. God gave you an opportunity. Now whether you notice it or not, that gift, your opportunity, is seeping away like a slow leak in a punctured tire. Sure, you're still rolling, but you're losing pressure all the time. You're losing hair, you're losing teeth, you're losing eyesight, and...I won't list *everything* you're losing, but you're losing a lot of things.

God wrestled with Jacob, a man whose name actually means “supplanter” [1] or trickster. Every time people called Jacob's name, they were calling him a con man. “Hey Schemer, dinner is ready. Hey Trickster, come and eat! Hey Con man, hey Crook, come on in the kitchen and chow down!” Every time they called Jacob, they were calling him according to his *characteristics*. Jacob lived up to his first name until God met him on the wrestling mat!

Lord, I thank You for not giving up on me!

God will wrestle with you to show you that you are wasting your life. He will wrestle with you to make you appreciate the wife He gave you. Be thankful for the wrestling times, for if God doesn't wrestle with you, you will give up the greatest for the least.

Sometimes God has to wrestle with you to make you understand how blessed you are. He will wrestle with you to give you the ability to stick to a job, even when it feels like it is going nowhere. He will confront you and say, “Son, you quit your last three jobs. When are you going to stand? When are you going to let Me plant you so you can bloom? You have been in ten churches; when are you going to be steadfast? You opened up five churches and left all five of them! When are you going to stick it out and fight?”

God's way is to tell it like it is. He doesn't put a bandage on your infected wound — He demands that the problem be dealt with, not merely tucked out of sight. He tells you, “You are unstable and are making excuses. You look like you are here, and there, and everywhere. You need to be planted.”

God is waiting to wrestle with you because He knows that time is running out.

RUNNING OUT OF TIME

“And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.”

A lot of people will confront you, but after a while they will give up. The Bible says that God wrestled with Jacob “until the breaking of the day.” God had set His watch; He wanted to get Jacob to his reserved seat. He wanted to salvage Jacob’s destiny before he ran out of time.

God is not going to let you get by with all the little things He used to overlook; you are running out of time. He used to let you make excuses for the little things in the early hours of the fight. Now He is saying, “Excuses don’t work anymore; you’re running out of time. I must do a quick work to get you to your reserved seat. The enemy is chasing you; you are on the hit list of hell, but I am determined to get you first.”

Satan has assigned assassins to ensure your demise, but God is saying, “I’m out to get you before you lose everything I gave you. I’m out to get you before you lose your life, before you lose your wife, before you lose your name, before you lose your dignity, before you lose your son, before you lose your seed, and before you lose your future.”

We don’t have time to play games or fool around and act like little boys. We’re too old for that foolishness. “When I was a child, I thought like a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child. When I became a man...” We have to commit our way unto the Lord because we don’t have time to play games. We don’t have time to be “Pentecostal pimps” or “church playboys” who ransack churches and cruise choirs for attractive women. We don’t have time for an extramarital affair. We don’t have time for sin — we have to make it to our reserved seat on time! We have to say goodbye to distractions. We have to grow up and learn how to pray for ourselves.

Smoke crack? I don’t have time. Run around with another woman? I don’t have time; I’m going somewhere. I’m running somewhere. I’m hunting God. I have to work while it’s day. I don’t have time.

“And there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day” (Genesis 32:24). God wrestled with Jacob until the breaking of day. When God sees that the day is breaking and the man in His grasp is running out of time, *He escalates the fight*. He says, “I will do a quick work in this man — he is running out of time.”

Now God doesn’t run out of time or get old or lose strength — but we do. If you or I were Jacob wrestling with the Lord in the middle of the night, we might be saying something like this: “No, I’m not going to pray. No, I’m not ready to give it up. No, I’m not ready to surrender. I want to steal some stuff.

I want to cheat — I live pretty well by my wits. After all, my friends call me Trickster. No, I don't want to treat my wife better. No, I don't want to spend time with my kids. I'm strong enough to do it on my own. I'm holding my own with You, aren't I?"

When the Lord saw that the day was breaking and the party was over, He struck Jacob in his hip joint with a precision possessed only by the Master Physician. If that had happened to us as Jacob, the tireless wrestler, the sly con man, suddenly we would be saying, "O Lord, I can't fight You anymore. I've been hurt so bad that I need Your help just to get up from the ground! Can I lean on You? Would You hold me up? I'm hurting; I'm in trouble. If You don't help me, I'm afraid I'm going to lose everything! I've been fighting the only One Who can hold me up. I've been fighting the only One Who can help me!"

WRESTLE TILL YOU KNOW

"And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

GENESIS 32:25-30

When you are brought to the place of "aloneness," you may find yourself fighting the only One Who can heal and preserve you. When Jacob's strength was broken by the power of God, he changed from a confident, cocky wrestler to a wounded, clinging man who wanted God's blessing more than anything else in the world! Now this Jacob, this trickster, was clinging to the Lord, saying, "I'm going to keep calling on You *till you bless me.*"

When the angel asked him what his name was, he said it was Jacob, the "trickster," but the angel gave him a new name, a new identity, and a new purpose.

That's what you and I need. We need to be asking the Lord: "Why didn't I die in the car wreck? Why didn't I get shot in the club? Why didn't I go crazy? Why have You always blessed me? Why have You always kept me?"

Even when I wasn't thinking about You, You let me survive. Why? Bless my soul and tell me who I am. Tell me what You want me to do. Tell me what I will be. Tell me why You love me and why You have blessed me. Why have I survived?"

Haven't you ever wondered who you are, why you are still here? Why did you make it through everything you made it through? Do you really think it's because you were that slick, or that gifted, or that smart, or that cool? You could have been dead. You could have been a statistic in a book. You could have had a nervous breakdown. You could have died of a dread disease. Somebody could have been shot. You owe it to yourself to wrestle until you find out who you are!

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

"And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed."

GENESIS 32:27-28

Don't be surprised if God asks you the same question He asked Jacob. Whenever God asks a question, He is teaching, for He is too omniscient to need to know anything. Like the old-fashioned teachers, He asks us questions to see if we are learning anything. He said, "After all that fighting and struggling, and that last test I took you through, I want to see if you wised up any. *What is your name?*"

That is the real test that every man must face: "Who am I?"

WHO ARE YOU?

Examine your life. Look at all you've been through. *You are still here.* God brought you here and put this book in your hands to ask you a question: "What is your name?" God started a thought process in Jacob's mind. He made him stop long enough to assess his identity. He wrestled Jacob into a revelation. (There is nothing like pain to bring forth a revelation.)

What about you? God isn't asking you about your pastor; He wants to know if you know your name. He isn't asking you about your wife or your parents, He is asking about you: "What is *your* name? Who are *you*? Aside from other people, aside from your image, aside from your clothes, aside

from your car, your house, and everything else that you possess, who are you? What is your name when nobody is around, when you're all alone?"

When God asked Jacob who he was, his answer was pitiful. He said, "I'm Jacob." It's sad, for he was saying, "I am *who people say I am*. I guess I'm just Jacob — at least that's what everybody always calls me. Aren't I who they say I am?"

All his life, Jacob had defined himself according to what *somebody else* called him. He never thought to argue with their opinion. He said, "I am Jacob. I am a cheat, a liar, a thief, a con man: I can't be trusted. I'm a trickster."

God has commanded me to tell you that *you are not who others say you are!* Get it into your spirit. *You are not who others say you are.* You are more than other people's opinions. Why should others name you, determine who you are, and set the limits of your success? Why should others be allowed to forever limit your potential? Why have you allowed other people to tell you who you are?

What is your name?

You are not who others say you are. I want that fact to sink into your spirit: *You are not who others say you are.*

You may be one of the thousands of good men who just can't talk or open up to others. You can't explain the pain you feel, and you're ashamed to reveal it or to be naked with your emotions. I know what it feels like to think you have to be a "tough guy" and hold up an image. But I want to tell you something. If you can hear me somehow behind your mask and the protective shell you've built around yourself, then I want you to know this: You are more than your childhood. You are more than your past. You are more than your bank account. You are more than your circumstances. You are more than your finances.

You are not who others say you are!

A PRINCE OF GOD

God says your name is Israel. In Hebrew *Israel* means "he will rule as God"[2] and is derived from another Hebrew word meaning "have power (as a prince)."[3] You are a prince, and you don't even know it! You are part of a royal priesthood and a holy nation. (See 1 Peter 2:9.) You are an

overcomer. (See 1 John 2:13-14.) You are the head and not the tail; you are to live above and not beneath. (See Deuteronomy 28:13, 14.) You are a prince, and the devil knows it. That's why he has been trying to assassinate you.

You are a prince, and all hell is afraid of you. The enemy knows what you can be, and he wants to destroy you before you become what God said you will be. You are a child of the King, and your Daddy is King of kings and Lord of lords.

What are you doing in that mess? Your Father is the King. He is King over poverty, disease, and affliction. Do you know who you are? You're a prince! You've been through a whole lot of stuff; the devil tried to kill you, but you're still here! Get ready. God is going to raise you up and set you in a high place.

Start declaring, "I don't know about anybody else, but I'm coming out of this. I'm a prince of God, and I'm fighting mad. Give me my children. Give me back my marriage!" If you confront every weakness, God will deliver you. If you face your past because you want your future, God will open up the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing!

It is difficult to handle the pressure and stress of being everyone's hero all the time, to act like a man when you feel like a little boy inside. It is perplexing to comfort other people when you wish there were someone who would comfort you. God knows that once you've been "smitten at the hip joint," it's hard to keep going. You try to keep up the facade. "I'm hurting, but I can't stop. I'm limping, but I have to go ahead. I'm going to drag my pain with me. Everybody is counting on me. I'm a man, I can't get tired, and I'm not supposed to get my feelings hurt."

UNDERNEATH THE DISGUISE

There has to be some place we can go where there is no need to impress anyone, a place where we aren't expected to be "Superman." I'm talking about a "Clark Kent" kind of place where no supermen are allowed. This has to be a place for plain, ordinary men.

I'm serious about this. For many men, things can hardly get worse! Some of us have lost a marriage. Some have lost a ministry. Some have lost a child, and some have lost their dignity. Some have lost their self-esteem, and others have lost their masculinity. Millions of us are halt, blind, and lame, and we don't dare tell anyone that the light has gone out in our eyes!

The spring has gone out of our steps, and we're tired of our Superman suits. We're sick of the boots, we're sick of the cape, and we're especially sick of all the impressive theatrics it takes to *disguise our true identity* (and it's not Superman). We are just men. We are not God's angels; we're timid and tired of hiding behind a cape. We are just men who have felt the stroke of God. The wound of our Best Friend has pierced our souls. We're about to discover who we really are under all the trappings of the trickster.

Some of us have been abused, some have been molested, and others have been molesters. We've been wounded and mistreated; a few of us have served prison time, and many of us are adulterers. We're depressed and discouraged because our ministries are wrecked and our marriages are dying. Some of us reflect on our lives with unbearable sadness: "Once we were lovers who couldn't bear to be apart — now we're just roommates splitting the space. We share the same house and the same meals. Where has the flame gone? Will we ever live again?"

I wonder what would happen if we would pray? What would happen if black men and white men and Baptist men and Methodist men joined with Pentecostal men and Presbyterian men in prayer? If rich men and poor men, educated men and illiterate men if all would come together and pray? I wonder if the nation would be changed more by the Church house than the White House?

What would happen if we decided to help our brothers get their dignity back? It is time for men to pray. We've left the job to women for too long. It is time for us to go to war as men, as princes of God. There are hands holding this book right now that will not be here next year if someone doesn't pray for them. If we don't pray, then some of the respectable men reading this book who have served as pastors for twenty-five years will find themselves tied up in illicit affairs. Some of the young men reading this book, men whose blood is clean today, will die of AIDS if we don't pray.

I wrote this book to be used of God, to call out the mighty army of princes to wage war on the enemy. It is our job to batter him down with the weapons of our warfare until we get our dignity out of his clutches. We need to pound him through prayer until we pry our homes out of his fingers, until we get our minds, our emotions, our appetites, and our sexuality out of his grasp.

Brother, there is a demon on assignment that has come against you. He has been tailor-made for your destruction. He has assessed your childhood and your past, and he knows where you limp. He knows where to hit you to bring you down. He's after you. If you, and those who *really* know you, don't pray for you and strengthen you in your weak place, you won't be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. He already knows where you have been wounded, and he is coming after you.

It is time for God's princes to be real with Him and with one another. It is time to seize every opportunity to pray for the men the devil wants to kill. It is time to pray for our brothers and sisters, for our homes and families, for our emotions, for our sexuality. It is time to pray about the "crooked places" in our lives, the places that always want to turn in the wrong way. We need to pray until we make the crooked paths straight.

Right now you are wrestling. You wrestle to know yourself. You wrestle to know your place. You wrestle to know the power of God. The Spirit of God is waiting for you. God has a warrant for your arrest. The Spirit of God wants you. Only the wound of your Friend can deliver from sin.

Tonight, you wrestle until the break of day...



CHAPTER FOUR

When I Became a Man

“When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”

1 CORINTHIANS 13:11

When the Apostle Paul used the phrase, *When I became a man*, he seemed to consider it an event (because it was). The “when” suggests he was remembering his own *bar mitzvah*, the Jewish ceremony marking his public recognition as an adult “son of the Law.” We too must make a mark in our lives that declares our “rite of passage” into manhood and the purposes of God.

MAKING THE CROSSOVER

Jesus told His disciples, “Let us pass over unto the other side” (Mark 4:35). It is when we attempt to cross that the storms arise. The turbulence of change can be overpowering because the one thing the enemy doesn’t want us to do is change. No, he doesn’t care if we come to church. He doesn’t even care if we slip into a robe and sing in the choir. He just doesn’t want us to change.

Many of us are held captive in our miserable habits or lifestyle because we no longer make a “beeline for the hive” in times of change. We can’t seem to find a place to cross over, so we wander aimlessly, wasting our time and energy. We need to experience an unmistakable rite of passage. We need a

permanent marker of our manhood burned into our memories. In other words, we need to declare: “I am crossing over right here.”

If you do this, then expect a storm right in the middle of the passage! It is when you attempt to change that the enemy decides to rain on your parade. Just count on adversities arising to keep you in your old place outside of grace. Don't act surprised when the storm winds blow and the rains dampen your zeal. Just face the storm and watch God give you peace in the process. This kind of peace can only come through prayer. If you are going to have peace in the process of change and the stress of the storm, you must guard your heart and mind with prayer.

“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

Change isn't cheap. It will cost you a “death to the old” in order to experience a “birth to the new.”

We have not put the child in us to death. Just as Abraham offered up his young son, so we must offer up our own immaturity. Why? Like Abraham, we must do it because God has required it. We must bring our childish things to the altar and raise a knife to slay them if we are ever to pass over to the other side of a real experience with God.

Realize this: No one can do it for you! Neither a preaching pastor nor a begging wife can bring you to the altar and make you offer up your childish things. You alone can make this painful sacrifice before God. It is your personal offering, and without it, you can't cross over.

Unfortunately, many of us are stuck in the middle of the lake because a storm arose, and we failed to offer up some “childish things” when we were supposed to. We could not — or would not — give up our childish immaturity, and now we are rocking in the boat of mediocrity when we could have crossed over into inner and outer abundance. Inner abundance refers to wholeness within, and its contentment and tranquillity should be ours. However, because we fail to put away “childish things,” our lives are as tempestuous as boiling water in a steaming tea kettle.

CELEBRATE MASCULINITY

Despite the turmoil caused by our halfhearted attempts to pass into true manhood, our actions and appearances seem to prove that we don't enjoy being men. In fact, we give manhood a bad name by making it look boring.

We have never celebrated our own masculinity. Instead, we dress boring and act boring. We are so drab and emotionless (except during sports events or temper tantrums) that nobody even wants to put money into our clothes. Frankly, we look like we are having a terrible time being men. In fact, manhood looks so bad that some of our young men are leaving it and turning gay! We have made being a man a terrible “go-to-work, come-home, go-to-work” task that is uncreative and unappealing. If appearances count for anything, then we are miserable. We need to celebrate masculinity. Somehow, we need to overhaul the whole thing.

Have you ever asked yourself why women seem to have so much fun being female? Their path isn't any easier than ours. They have to deal with unbelievable social pressures, menstrual cycles, childbirth, and child rearing, and they face menopause at the end of their childbearing years — yet women *celebrate femininity!* They like being female, and they do a wonderful job of making us like their femininity also! They have cosmetic parties where they practice applying the latest makeup products with exact precision and care. They shop in packs or alone, hunting the perfect clothing and accessories at just the right price. Then they excitedly share the news of their latest find with friends (and get upset if that “find” shows up in the same room on another lady).

Women, for the most part, enjoy being women. They surround themselves with beautiful things — flowers and lacy, delicate things that help frame and enhance the beauty of their femininity.

Men are different. We fail to celebrate our masculinity. We come home to nothing because somewhere inside us, we think our needs are unimportant. Some of us excel at such “manly arts” as belching, beer guzzling, and female chasing, but no one is impressed. Dumb animals can do that — real manhood calls for much more than a big supply of hormones, alcohol, and bad manners.

At one point, I bought all the men in our organization a subscription to GQ magazine. I know some Christians might take that act as a sign that I have “lost my salvation,” but I bought those men a man's magazine for an important reason. We don't spend time finding out anything about being

men, and we act like we don't enjoy our masculinity. Just as we don't really know anything about women's bodies, so we don't really know anything about our own! When our bodies start changing with age, we are shocked! "Why is this happening to me! Who put that spare tire there?" We don't know why because we're ashamed of our "failure." We have no idea of what should be happening to us when we're thirty or fifty because we have not been educated about being men.

Years ago, on the day a girl first experienced her menstrual cycle, she would be shocked to find herself bleeding unless her mother had prepared and educated her. She would rush into her mother's arms in tears and bring the terrible news that she might die because she was bleeding. Then her mother would gently wipe away the tears and explain to her daughter that she had just entered womanhood.

Men are just as ignorant and uninformed about their bodies and physical cycles. We know almost nothing about the ways our bodies react to aging. We don't realize that our physical and sexual performance, our emotional peaks, and our whole mentality change at certain stages in life. We know nothing about it, so we are completely unprepared for it. When it hits us, we feel like we've been run over by a freight train.

Young boys don't have a dramatic rite of passage like menstruation to mark their entrance into physical maturity. Their transformation may not be as traumatic, but on the other hand, it doesn't turn the focus on the responsibilities of the gender either. When a young woman experiences her first monthly cycle, her whole being becomes focused on the fact that she is uniquely equipped and designed to bring life into the world through her body. A young man just keeps hoping his voice will finally change so his peers will stop making fun of him. The appearance of secondary sexual characteristics like body hair and the voice change come in a scattered, almost haphazard way. Unfortunately, this is the way most of us enter manhood and discover our sexuality.

Later in life, we're in for equally difficult passages. While a woman must face the difficulties of menopause, we have to face something that has been called a "mid-life crisis." I'm talking about the man in his forties who can break down a computer and put it back together again but who doesn't know enough about his own sexuality to understand why his world seems to be falling apart. I am talking about the management genius who can run a

corporate office but can't deal with the loss of an erection. In our ignorance and isolation, we cry, "Shame, oh shame, oh woe is me."

We need to celebrate our manhood from our first entrance into adulthood to the end of our "grandfather phase." We need to learn about our bodies and receive instruction about our God-given responsibilities as men. We need to celebrate who we are in God's plan.

The Jews celebrate a young man's entrance into manhood after his thirteenth birthday with careful instruction and preparation for the ceremony of *bar mitzvah*. This event marks a young man's entrance into adulthood and is considered to be a spiritual passage as well as a physical change. The Jews require candidates for *bar mitzvah* to learn and commit themselves to the biblical duties of manhood before they are recognized as adults. Many men and fathers in America seem to think all it takes to become a man is to acquire a copy of *Playboy* magazine and a six-pack of beer.

IN THE PROMISED LAND

Between the wanderings of the wilderness of "childish things" and the settled place of manhood, all men should aspire to become planted in the promised land.

For men, the promised land is the place of steadfastness. This is the place where the wanderings cease and the building begins. It was there that Israel began to build houses and throw away tents, and it is there that unstable things in us become solidified. It is the place where the irresponsible become committed. While in the desert, the Israelites owned nothing, conquered nothing, and acquired nothing! But in the promised land, the men of Israel rose up to confront enemies, subdue entire territories, and attain property by conquest.

The promised land is the place where we keep our promises to ourselves, to our wives, and to our children. It is the place where our words can be trusted. It is the place where we cease to wander in our marital commitment — whether we wandered in the secrecy of our own mind or wandered literally, creeping stealthily home in the late hours of the night. The promised land allows us to keep our promises, while God keeps His!

We need to celebrate male adulthood by learning what it means and what it takes to be real men. We need to “continue our education” through all the rites and experiences of courtship, marriage, child rearing, and even grandparenting!

Every major stage of our lives brings *change*, and most of the time, we’re unprepared for it! Many of us in our forties have families, yet we have never celebrated our manhood! If we celebrate manhood with all our strength and heart, and honor God as men who appreciate their masculinity, we will discover that the women in our lives will celebrate too! God made us to be men. It is time to take the challenge and live up to the manly destiny God has given us!

The Jordan River is the place where Israel crossed over from the wilderness into the promised land. It was cold and it was high, but God helped them to cross over. That same God helps us today to cross over our limitations and obtain our promised land. Remember, the Jordan River empties into the Dead Sea. We must count the “childish things” as dead. We must never attempt to get to the promised land without going through the Jordan River.

Your “Jordan River” may be a time of crisis that causes you to reprioritize your life. It may be a trial that leaves you in a place so low that “you have to look up to see the bottom.” It may involve having your hidden childish secrets discovered and exposed so that, embarrassed and ashamed, you are forced into the cold Jordan River. Your Jordan may simply be a matter of receiving the ministry of the Holy Spirit, whether through preaching or through reading this material. Wherever the motivation, the Jordan River is the place where you align yourself with God’s purpose. It puts to death every diversion that keeps you from the place God has designated as your dwelling place!

THE SECOND “WHEN”

“When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”

1 CORINTHIANS 13:11

You will notice there are two “whens” in this text. The first one addresses the “when” of childhood. The second addresses the “when” of manhood. To

the tormented man who fights his feelings and wrestles with his urges, the pressing question is, “Lord, when can I get to the second ‘when?’” His wife is probably asking the same question! “Lord, when?” There is no magical date on the calendar.

You may have missed the age at which you believe others crossed over, but that is nothing to be ashamed of. Many men live with tremendous remorse and regret because they feel “it’s too late.” They fear that they are doomed to be less than a man because they missed their chance to change. That simply is not true!

There may be a lot of people who don’t want to give you a chance, but God is not like people. Every morning that you open your eyes and fill your lungs with air, God gives you another chance to change. The whole message of Christianity is permeated with the possibilities of change! In the midst of this unforgiving society we have created, it is nice to know that God has given us the gift and the grace to change!

You can’t change “what” has already happened any more than you can change “how” it happened. But the rite of passage into true manhood is not a matter of changing the “whats” and the “hows” of life. This is a change of the “who” in life —*and the “who” is you!* You are the most important issue to God. When you can’t change what happened, remember that *God wants you to change!*

Most of us understand who is to change, but we wonder when the change can be accomplished! The process begins within, when we look at the face of God and are transformed.

A MAN AFTER GOD’S OWN HEART

David celebrated masculinity. He is a very good picture of what a man should be. God called him “a man after mine own heart” (Acts 13:22), and I can see why. David’s heart was so attuned to God and so free of the opinions of men that he was the Bible’s premier *worshipper* of God! He worshipped and danced with such force and freedom that he danced right out of his clothes! He laughed, he cried, and he even wrote some of the most exalted prose in human history. Yet when necessary, David was incredibly violent! He was one of the few military leaders in history who *never lost a battle!* And David celebrated his manhood better than anyone else I know of.

“I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.”

PSALM 139:14

David openly admired his body and enjoyed the deep male passions God gave him. He gave God thanks for what he had been given, and he did the most he could with what he had to work with. We need to do the same.

“Yeah, but that was King David. He had it made. Just look at my problems!”

Not true. David was the baby brother who was always left out of things. He wasn't as big as his brothers, and he didn't have any say in family matters because he was the “runt,” the last one in the litter. Despite his handicaps, David rose to the top. How? He somehow learned about responsibility in those fields while he was alone with God.

What would you do if you were a young teenager miles from help and a bear or lion came for lunch? You are armed with a guitar, a sandwich, and your favorite slingshot. I don't know about you, but I'd be thinking, “Mr. Lion, maybe you'd like some lamb chops today? You can have the sandwich too!” Not David.

“And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.”

1 SAMUEL 17:34-35

God was preparing a boy in the fields to shepherd His flock as a man in the palace. When a bear and a lion each took a lamb from David's flock, he didn't sit down in tears and make up excuses to tell his father. He didn't even think about what to do. He yielded to the Spirit of God rising up in him. Like the Great Shepherd Who would come years later, this young shepherd left the “ninety and nine” to recover the lamb that had been snatched away.

No predator has a right to steal one of our sheep!

David ruthlessly hunted down those predators with such speed that he caught them on the run, while the lambs were still alive between their teeth. He didn't stop to think about the danger or to make elaborate battle plans — he had a job to do, he had a lamb to save, and these beasts had gone too far! With the livid anger of a righteous shepherd, young David hit the bear and

the lion in the face so hard that the lambs they'd stolen dropped out of their mouths! He didn't stop there though.

Those flesh-eaters had underestimated the manhood and the authority of the secret prince who stood between them and their prey. They pounced on David, assuming he would fall like any other animal would fall. It was the last mistake either beast ever made! David didn't shoot the lion with a high-powered rifle from the safety of a Land Rover. He didn't go after the bear from a safe distance with a Winchester and a scope. The Bible says he "caught them by the beard." In other words, he grabbed the lion and the bear by the tufts of fur under their jaws and hit them right between the eyes. David didn't stop in his righteous anger until he had killed his enemies and forever ended their ability to ravage his flock. That is manhood, God's style.

OUR SOURCE OF STRENGTH

David didn't take karate classes or go through basic training in the army. His strength and training came from *knowing who God is*. What are you drawing your strength from? Even the most skilled soldiers of David's day discovered that their training couldn't help them with Goliath; he was a problem who was bigger than they were.

We are in the same situation—we're facing challenges that are a lot bigger than we are! We know we're not up to the job, and we're far from perfect. So what do we do? We do what David did. While the entire army of Israel cowered under Goliath's massive shadow, King Saul, in his royal tent, was asking a young shepherd from the country how he expected to defeat the giant.

"And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth. And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep.... Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine."

1 SAMUEL 17:33-34, 36-37

David didn't rely on his own strength, ability, or skill. He didn't claim to be a mighty warrior or a great tactician. He just claimed to serve a mighty God Who was mighty mad! David's brothers thought he was crazy, and they were embarrassed at their baby brother's outrageous claims. They thought

David had only been with the flock. They thought this little shepherd only had eyes for the sheep, but his eyes were on the Maker of the sheep, and he had been transformed into a man of war.

“And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail. And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him. And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd’s bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand.”

1 SAMUEL 17:38-40

David didn’t rely on another man’s stuff — God had planted treasure in David’s heart, and that is what he leaned on. He trusted the things he had worked out in his own heart and life with God. He used the gifts God had given him: the materials and tools of a shepherd.

Jesus delivered our entire race with the tools of a shepherd, not the tools of a soldier. A true shepherd in the hands of a mighty God can deliver any nation, church, or family. God made man to subdue and have dominion, so every true man of God is a shepherd on the inside. There is something in a man that compels him to lay down his life for the sheep God has given him — whether those “sheep” are his wife and children, his congregation, or the circle of friends God has given him to influence for the kingdom.

David didn’t know it, but he actually began to shepherd and inspire a nation the day he faced the giant. He preached his first “sermon” as a teenager under the high anointing of God:

“Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.... And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord’s, and he will give you into our hands.”

1 SAMUEL 17:45, 47

Did your spirit leap as you read this? That’s the *man in you* responding to the God in David! Real men applaud when someone dares to stand up for what is right in God’s sight! David’s bravery was contagious. When he threw down God’s enemy, the fearful army of Israel was transformed into an unstoppable military machine that destroyed the best army Philistia had to offer. The Israelites not only “bloodied their noses,” they chased the

Philistines all the way home to the gate of their city and knocked them down again!

David tapped into the true source of manhood. His strength didn't come from male hormones, macho movies, or his maledominant culture. If male hormones were the key, then David wouldn't have lasted a minute with Goliath. He was outclassed in the hormone department: Goliath was a seasoned fighting machine who stood between nine and ten feet tall! His armor alone weighed about 150 pounds. Fortunately, true manhood doesn't flow from the natural; it flows from a supernatural source. Like David, the only way you can be a real man is to be "a man after God's own heart."

David didn't come into manhood from a perfect childhood. He had disadvantages too. David's father, Jesse, actually forgot about his youngest son when Samuel the prophet came to anoint Israel's future king — but God knew where David was. Little brother was stuck on the backside of nowhere with the sheep while his brothers were sent off on a great military campaign. But none of that happened by accident — David had a divine appointment with God in those deserted fields. God separated David so He could operate on him! By the time this young shepherd finally emerged from the hills, he was a proven warrior and a king-in-waiting. This prince unawares was destined for greatness because he had discovered where God lives.

DAVID, THE MAN

After David won his battles against the bear, the lion, and the giant, he never lost a military encounter. There were times he avoided battle, and there were times he failed off the battlefield, but he was a real man who knew how to protect his own. He was strong, deadly, and tough, but his manhood went deeper than that. He was so secure in his masculinity that he was also sensitive, tender-hearted, and affectionate. He was both a poet and a warrior. David had a harp in one hand and a sword in the other. He lived a man's life in all its fullness.

David was a lover of women. In fact, he was such a lover that in the sunset of his life, his servants put a young girl in his bed as a final test to see if he was near death. When he wasn't aroused, they knew he was gone! They must have said, "Uh-oh, we need a new king. Now we *know* the king is near death." (See 1 Kings 1.)

David was also a lover of men. He showed us the right way to love true friends. He openly loved Jonathan, without any taint of homosexuality. We're so uptight that we can't even touch one another, except for a slap on the rear after a great play on the football field or the basketball court.

David loved Jonathan, and he showed it. He was comfortable with his own sexuality. He celebrated masculinity. We make being a man look so bad that our sons think, "It doesn't look like Dad is having a good time. Who wants to grow up to be like that?" When we go off to work in the morning, we aren't energetic and enthusiastic. When we drag home from work in the evening, we look sad and dejected. So when we tell Junior it's time for him to be a man, he says, "Oh, no way. I'm gonna stay a kid for life. I'd rather die a kid having fun than live like a dull adult having none." We need to model masculinity before our sons and help them celebrate their developing manhood. In this area, we can learn some things from David.

David learned how to be a man by communing with God in the hills, and then he inspired manhood everywhere he went. Every male who came under his influence seemed to become more manly. The first glimpse of this influence comes with the transformation of the Israelite army that took place when David defeated Goliath. It became even clearer when David was on the run from Saul.

"David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam: and when his brethren and all his father's house heard it, they went down thither to him. And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men."

1 SAMUEL 22:1-2

A miracle happened in the cave of Adullam. David's anointing transformed that ragtag band of rejected men into an elite army of fearless warriors. The "mighty men" of David described in 2 Samuel originally belonged to this group of "down and outers" who gathered together in the cave. A true man inspires manhood in others. David inspired manhood in an entire nation, and he continues to inspire us today through the Scriptures!

David had failures in his life too. Despite his manliness and his heart toward God, David failed to confront his secret sins and weaknesses. He didn't control his sexual passion for Bathsheba, and he failed to properly

discipline his sons. If he had confided in and leaned on other godly men, these weaknesses could have been turned into strengths. Instead, David's secret weaknesses led to his greatest failures with Bathsheba and Absalom, and they contaminated the future of his family and his nation.

We all know about David's sin with Bathsheba, but he was also too lenient and partial to Absalom, his son. Absalom's disrespect and rebellion toward his father gave birth to outright rebellion and eventually brought death in his family. All of David's sons knew how to wage war, and they were smart and well-educated, but somehow he didn't pass along to them his personal intimacy with God. Perhaps he was too busy with the "ministry" to attend to his boys. Whatever the reason for his failure, we can learn from David's personal defeats as well as from his military victories.

Manhood isn't merely some chronological age you are trying to attain, it is a stage in your development. It doesn't necessarily have to occur at a particular *age*; it needs to occur at a particular *stage*.

When you realize that you have outgrown your old thoughts and previous understandings, prepare for change. When what was once wisdom to you now sounds like foolishness, change is in the wind. When you admit that the old toys are not as enjoyable as they once were, then it is time to go through the rites of passage.

This is a celebration that requires sanctification. Paul says, "When I became a man, I *put away* childish things." Part of the celebration requires a conscious decision to put away childish things. Paul didn't say that there was no pleasure in these things anymore, he merely said he "put them away."

THE LION AND THE LAMB

Our richest model of manhood is Jesus Christ. More than any other man, Jesus demonstrated perfect balance in what I call "the duplex nature of a man," the perfect pattern of holistic masculinity.

One absolute prerequisite to the celebration of manhood is that there must be a *lion and a lamb* in every man. David was both poet and warrior, shepherd and general, priest and king. Jesus Christ was both God and man, lion and lamb. The art is to have both and to know when to be which.

There are some things that Christ did as a lion that He could not do as a lamb. There are also some things that He did as a lamb that He could not do

as a lion. If Jesus had roared on the cross as the Lion of Judah, He would have been weak. His strength in that situation was rooted in His identity as the sacrificial Lamb of God Who was to take away the sins of the world by giving Himself up to death — the Innocent taking the blame for the guilty.

Yet, when Jesus comes again, if He whimpers as a meek Lamb, He won't fulfill His destiny as the supreme King of kings and Lord of lords, Whose name is above every name! The sacrificial Lamb of God will return as the triumphant Lion of Judah!

Similarly, there must be a tightrope within every man, a dichotomy of two completely different natures. One is so lamblike, vulnerable, fragile, and meek that we are willing to lie down so others can nail us to a cross. At the same time, there is another part of us that roars like a lion, that comes alive in a fight, that is mighty in battle. True men can't be ashamed of either side of their nature. We just have to hold them in tension. The true definition of meekness is strength under control. We can only celebrate masculinity after we recognize and walk in that duplex nature within us.

Man of God, you must walk a tightrope between being a lion and a lamb, and only the Holy Ghost can give you true balance in that walk.

I have begun to understand why women get so angry with men. Sometimes we roar when we need to whimper, and we whimper at times we should be roaring! Our wives get frustrated when we insist on roaring and "swinging from trees and vines" in a hormonal rush when they need us to be loving lambs who provide them with tenderness and affection. There are also times when our children come to the lion of their lives and ask for masculine guidance and protection, but instead of roaring as protectors or correctors, we sniff in selfishness or whimper in weakness, "Ask your mama."

David was a "man after God's own heart," even though he had disadvantages just as you and I do. The difference is that he learned how to be a man in the presence of God, and he turned his nation around. Your nation, your home, your wife, and your children are crying out for *a real man in the house*. It is time for you to celebrate your *bar mitzvah* and rise up as a prince and a man of war in the house of God!



CHAPTER FIVE

The Party Is in Progress

Celebration is in order! Any time a man comes into his own, there needs to be a celebration. There is a time to sow, and a time to water; there also is a time to wait, but now is the time to celebrate! God has called us out from under our childish shadows and into the brilliant sunlight of manhood!

Past mistakes and pitiful failures have no place in the light of our divine summons. The King is calling His sons. It is time for us to “come to ourselves,” repent, and return to our rightful place with our heavenly Father. Like the prodigal son who returned home to his father, we too must hurry home to receive our robes, our rings, and our manhood.

“And he said, A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.”

LUKE 15:11-15

This young man broke allegiance with his father and “joined himself” to a citizen from a far country. “Far-out friends” are dangerous; they inevitably lead us to the hogpens of life. They have different values, and they will undermine what God has purposed in our lives. In fact, most of the time they will have us doing the very things we hate and despise the most!

Jesus told this story of the prodigal son to a Jewish audience that had been raised to carefully observe the dietary laws in the books of Leviticus and

Deuteronomy. Swine were absolutely unclean and were not to be touched for any reason — so in the eyes of a devout Jew, being forced to live in a pigpen was a fate worse than death!

Have you ever been manipulated into being something that “wasn’t you”? Have you ever found yourself in a relationship that made you feel ashamed, used, or outcast? Have you ever betrayed or belittled someone else — even while you felt his pain? All of us have spent a little time at the hogpen in one way or another.

It is time to celebrate, but you may be tangled up by the crippling memories of your failures and excesses. Have you shared parts of your life with someone you shouldn’t have? Have you shared intimate thoughts or actions with someone with whom you have no covenant? Women are always concerned about men being seduced into having affairs, but affairs don’t start in the flesh — they start in the mind. Like a brushfire in a windstorm, thoughts gradually engulf the passions and alter the judgments of their victims.

“And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!... And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.”

LUKE 15:16-17, 20-24

Influence is a powerful thing. Be careful whom you allow to influence you. The prodigal son was influenced by a citizen of a far county. We are told in Psalm 1:1, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly”! If you want to be blessed, be careful who you allow to influence you. Many men allow themselves to be manipulated by godless men or by men of God operating with ungodly motives.

One of the greatest liberties you can have is the freedom of choice. You choose. God doesn’t even save you against your will. The Almighty God of the universe spoke through Joshua, “Choose you this day whom ye will

serve” (Joshua 24:15). Wrong influences can dilute or pollute what God is doing in your life. You are not immune; you are human.

Samson was destroyed because he allowed Delilah to influence him! At first he resisted, but gradually this ungodly woman polluted his wisdom. She seduced him by playing up to his secret, unaddressed weaknesses until, against his better judgment, he shared more with her than he should have. Immediately his doom was sealed. The last thing this man of God saw with his mortal eyes was the sight of the woman he loved receiving money from his tormentors for his betrayal! (See Judges 16:16-21.)

A PARTING IN EVERY PARTY

The praise of God is strong in the mouth of any man who has recognized his own hogpen. The Spirit of God has restored us to our senses. Now we can see how narrowly we escaped. Thanks to our loving Father, the prodigal becomes powerful. It is time to feast at the Father’s table and revel in our newfound manhood and Godward masculinity. At the same time, it is important to understand the wiles of the devil. He makes sure there is a parting in every party. He plants an exception in every reception. He dilutes every salute!

“Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.”

2 CORINTHIANS 2:11

The celebration has started, but there are dark clouds hovering near our pavilion of joy. This is not a new revelation; it is an ancient device of the enemy to discourage and dismay God’s men from God’s way. If any man had a right to rejoice in God’s delivering power and sovereign purposes, it was King David. Yet Satan raised up a root of bitterness in the middle of David’s harvest of joy.

“And David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet. And as the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal Saul’s daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart....

“Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to day, who uncovered himself to day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!”

David grew up hearing all the stories of the “good old days” when the Ark of the Covenant was still in place in the tent, or the tabernacle. His battle with Goliath was a natural extension of the age-old tension between Israel and Philistia, the invaders who had killed Eli’s sons and taken the Ark to Ashdod. (See 1 Samuel 4; 5:1.) Now the Ark was in the care of the Obededom (see 2 Samuel 6) and David knew it was time for a celebration. It was time to reap a harvest of joy and return the *shekinah* glory of the Lord to Jerusalem. For a man whose life was rooted in the presence of the Lord and unprecedented worship to the Most High, there could be no greater event than this!

David’s unrestrained worship and praise to God before the people is still a model of true worship for us today! Never has there been such free and uninhibited worship to the Lord as there was that day. Yet in the midst of this pure worship without restraint, there arose a slanderous complaint!

When David returned home in triumph to share the joy of seeing the Ark of the Covenant returned to the city of David, his own wife met him with a biting accusation of lewd conduct. Even worse, her words were seasoned with the withering heat of feminine scorn for his manhood. It was a slap in the face that could level the self-esteem of even the most secure man among us—but David had already begun his celebration. He had just returned from basking in the presence of the living God. He had crossed the Jordan, and there was no turning back. He returned home to bring his wives and family into the blessings of God as well, but still they each had to make a choice.

Michal had once withstood the power and anger of her own father, the king of Israel, to save the love of her life, David. While he was a fugitive from the king, Michal had hidden her husband and lied to save his life. In return, her father had removed her from David’s house and given her to another man as his wife.

By the time David returned the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, Michal had been forcibly returned to David’s house. She had been under the influence of another man and another house, and it showed. Back home again, she had to share David with other women who had become his wives too, according to the custom of the day. Michal also faced a crossing, but she

chose to sit “in the seat of the scornful” described in Psalm 1:1. Of all the people in David’s household, Michal held the greatest power to inflict pain and sorrow on him. She was his first love, the bride of his youth. But on David’s greatest day of joy, she chose to become bitter and aloof.

NOT EVERYONE ENJOYS THE PARTY

Have you ever felt the dejection of rejection from your oldest loves and closest companions? Have you felt the piercing pain of betrayal by your most trusted confidantes and dearest family members? Not everyone will rejoice with you when you kill the fatted calf or rejoice at your crossing into the promised land. The prodigal son also experienced the bittersweet emotions of elated acceptance and belated rejection on the day he returned to his father’s house.

“Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.”

LUKE 15:25-32

While the younger son faced his sin, repented of his wrong, and threw himself into the loving arms of his father, the elder brother stood stubbornly on his own “rights and self-righteousness.” He refused to obey his father’s loving request and join in the celebration; he chose to remain in the pain of isolation. Once his choice was made, he didn’t even hear his father’s solemn assurance that “all I have is yours.”

The elder brother clung desperately to his jealousy, choosing to whine and complain about the wrongs and the pain. All the while, a party of restoration was sweeping through the house that was but part of his rightful inheritance! Faced with his father’s genuine manhood, the elder son clung to the now selfish fruits of his childhood and failed to cross his Jordan.

As you begin to celebrate your *bar mitzvah* and mark your entrance into true manhood, don't be dismayed if some of those you love and trust don't rejoice with you. There are no guarantees that everybody around you will be glad for you. As long as men and women dwell in houses of flesh, jealousy will be waiting in the wings to stifle every cause for joy or triumph. Yet, part of the crossing into manhood is the determination to follow God's lead no matter what it costs. Manhood requires leadership, and leadership requires the commitment to lead though some may never follow.

When you experience liberation and restoration by the Father's hand, what is important is to celebrate—even if no one else joins you! The prodigal son entered into his father's joy and never looked back. The father left the celebration to entreat his eldest son, but I'm positive he quickly returned to the celebration and the fun. Jesus endured the scorn of an entire planet and a necessary separation from the Father He loved "for the joy that was set before him" (Hebrews 12:2).

David, the ultimate human model of flawed holiness through the grace of God, responded to Michal's scorn with an incredible boldness and declaration that rings with the power of inspired manhood:

"Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to day, who uncovered himself to day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself! And David said unto Michal, It was before the Lord, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel: therefore will I play before the Lord. And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maidservants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour. Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death."

2 SAMUEL 6:20-23

Michal's choice to yield to wrong influence, to cling to past disappointments and present bitterness, had terrible consequences for her and her father's house. Her scornful disdain of God's anointed yielded a barren womb, a loveless marriage, and countless sorrows for the rest of her days. Even the five nephews she raised for her brother-in-law were killed by the ancient enemies of her father's house. (See 2 Samuel 21:8-9.)

STAND FAST

Many times those closest to us are unprepared for the dramatic changes that accompany our passage into the promised land. They are not ready for the passion it brings. They can't perceive the invisible hand that has taken firm control of the reins of our hearts. All they see is the "little brother" they have relegated to the benign "hills of mediocrity." They still see the man who liked to play with a boy's toys, the image of impotent potential who passed the hours away in the back room of their lives.

Manhood means change.

You may be one of the countless thousands of men who left the house to play one day and encountered the living God on a lonely hill. When you returned as a man with a plan to wage war, your first adversary arose in the eyes of your spouse! Perhaps you came home rejoicing over the return of God's presence to your life and dreams, only to be greeted with scorn and mocking glances.

Take heart, O man of God! Stand fast in your decision to possess the land, and your household will yet yield to the gentle persuasion of the Holy Spirit! Turn neither to the right nor to the left — and appropriate the ancient promise God gave another man who was destined to lead his own across the Jordan from the desert to the promise:

"Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

JOSHUA 1:9

You may be facing the cutting edge of the same unwavering jealousy faced by such men as the prodigal son, Abel, Isaac, Israel (Jacob), Joseph, Moses, Aaron, David, Solomon, Jesus Christ, and the Apostle Paul. Each of these men faced hostile emotions and sometimes fatal attacks from their own brothers, family members, wives, countrymen, or co-workers. Yet they didn't waver from their destiny of manhood in the purposes of God. Their faithfulness brought eternal life and joy to you today. Who is waiting in the generations to come to taste the fruit of your manly obedience and determination today?

Don't be dismayed by the brothers outside the door who jealously complain about your late return to the River Jordan and the Father's house. It is time to celebrate your manhood! Let nothing hold you back. Your

manhood will bring new health and blessing to your life, to your home, to your marriage, and to the generations who follow after you.

The Church and the children of tomorrow cry out for men to arise and wage war on their behalf. God has called His sons together for a victory celebration. It is time to celebrate; it is time to mark our crossing. This is the day we put away our childish things. This is the day we enter into manly praise without fear or thought of the criticism or disapproval of others. We are only concerned with the opinions of the One Who has called us, the One Who has reserved the ring of sonship and the robes of the priesthood for us.

It is time for every man of God to arise in his manhood and dance before the King with all his might! A world is waiting to be possessed and blessed by the sons of God, children made men and delivered from sin.

Man of God, be of good courage! The *bar mitzvah* party is in progress—and you are the honored guest!



CHAPTER SIX

When the Yoke Isn't Easy

There are times when men find themselves struggling to maintain a dying relationship, one in which the flame of intensity has gone out and the thrill has left. The naked truth is that it becomes difficult to rekindle the old flame if you are at the point where you would rather “hunt in the yard than in the house.”

Like many men, you may become easily discouraged when you sense rejection or apathy in your mate. You may resent having to creatively and aggressively pursue your wife's affections. The hunter and conqueror in you likely jumps at the chance to explore any aspiration you haven't yet conquered. However, your enthusiasm probably dissipates when attention and effort are required to maintain something you feel you have already captured or achieved.

You may want to believe that once you have ignited the flame of your wife's love, you can sit by that fire for years to come — but that just isn't true. The cold winds of life often asphyxiate the flames that once danced in her eyes, leaving behind only smoldering embers that scarcely resemble the exciting relationship you once shared. God knows your nature. He wants you to continually woo and win your wife's heart, just as He continually woos His Bride. It is the continual chase for the prize that fans the flames of marital love.

Our challenge as men is to overcome our reputation for being unable or unwilling to recognize problems in our relationships. Then we have to

overpower our propensity to procrastinate once we know a problem exists. It is especially painful to both persons in a marriage when a husband actually makes positive changes, but makes them too late.

Beneath our bulging biceps and bloated bellies lies a sensitivity that most women don't realize is there and very few of us men will admit exists. The simple truth is that most men get their feelings hurt when they feel they have changed but the change is not accepted by the woman in their life. I realize many women have good reasons for being skeptical, but once a woman is leery of her husband's actions or motives, it takes a supernatural move of God's Spirit to get her to change her mind.

THE CHASM OF TIME

When David sent for Michal in 2 Samuel 3:13, he still viewed her as the wife of his youth, his first love. Although more than seven years had passed, David still saw Michal framed in the rose-tinted memories of his late teens. He didn't perceive the pain she had endured when he fled from her life to avoid Saul's soldiers. He didn't know there were scars hidden beneath her smile, ugly reminders of the deep wounds she had suffered when her vengeful father the king totally rejected her and "gave her" to another man.

The first year Michal spent as an unwilling wife in a strange man's house, she probably hoped in secret that David would appear at the door with his sword in hand to deliver her and reclaim her as his own. But he didn't come. Michal couldn't know the desperation he faced as he fled for his life from Saul's armies, living in a wilderness cavern with a band of misfits, bitter rejects, and all their kin, hiding out in a hostile Philistine city. The Michal he received was different from the Michal he had left — she had changed, and so had he.

David was now at the apex of his career, and he was gaining ground. He was fully operating under the anointing of God and had finally overcome his enemies. The nurturing words that had affirmed him in the dark years and the loving arms that had encircled him in that cave were not Michal's. The once devoted newlyweds had not taken the time to reconnect and build bridges across the chasm of nearly a decade spent apart.

The boy/man that Michal had known and had once loved had died in a cave years before. A thousand brushes with death; hundreds of prayer

watches through lonely, tension-filled nights; and the deaths of thousands of enemies in bloody battles had transformed the young lover in her memory into a scarred but anointed visionary who commanded an army a quarter of a million strong!

David was now the husband of six other women besides Michal, beautiful women who each had accomplished something Michal had never done — they had borne David sons! The stage was set for confrontation between David and Michal. The crucible of change was about to illuminate and reveal the contents of their inner hearts, and the things they had sowed in secret over their years of pain were about to yield a bitter harvest.

DANCING ALONE

“And as the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal Saul’s daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart....

“Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to day, who uncovered himself to day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!”

2 SAMUEL 6:16, 20

When King David danced into Michal’s view, he danced alone. The joyful, devoted companion of his youth was now cynical, critical, and cold.

Have you ever felt like you were dancing alone? Many of us return to our homes each day, filled with excitement and exultation about a major victory or success in our careers, only to find that our wives —like Michal — are unimpressed and uninterested. Their stinging disdain of our newfound joy can rob us of every month and year of labor we invested in our victory. The flames of our joy and happiness can be instantly neutralized and consumed by a soul-quenching outpouring of bitter scorn. The greatest triumph in any man’s life can be reduced to a mere monument of the bitter rejection received through a withering remark or icy glance from a jealous wife!

Many times our relationships arrive at their demise because we fail to discern problems before they escalate to emergencies. If your wife begins to feel that your career or ministry has stolen your attention, your affection, or your time away from her, she will react like a woman rejected and a wife betrayed.

*Heav'n has no rage, like love to hatred turn'd,
Nor Hell a fury, like a woman scorn'd.*[4]

Do you honestly expect your wife to sit alone in an ivory tower and be happy while you roam the countryside in quest of private adventure? Granted, she may not enjoy tramping through the woods in search of the perfect buck or battling the corporate whiz from Company X for client of the century. Her heart may not leap at the thought of preaching the gospel on the corner of Sixth and Vine, but you should at least try to keep her involved in the most important things you do away from her. She will appreciate the leadership and anointing you display elsewhere — if you exhibit leadership and love for her at home!

You must realize that your adventure may not be her idea of success. That is why it is important for you to *find out* what success means to her. Her idea of success may be having you slow down enough to sit by the fire and listen to soft music while she shares the trials and joys of *her life* with you.

Brother, unless both of you develop some interest in compromise so you can harmonize, you may find yourself dancing alone. Your willingness to compromise and revise your behavior and perceptions provides a rich barometer of your personal value system and a precise yardstick of how highly you esteem your spouse. (Of course, there are some things that simply cannot be compromised, such as your personal devotion and obedience to the Lord.)

If you and your wife fail to tie together the fields of your toil and joy with love and common care, then you will be like a dancer in a spotlight doing the tango alone. You will look ridiculous because your partner's cheek is gone, your solitary chin is starkly lit against the empty darkness, and your muscular arm encircles only emptiness.

Separation and dislocation not only happen when you take your wife through sudden change, you also will be doomed to dance alone if you fail to grow together. If your wife is motivated by one thing and you are motivated by something else — it is time to build a bridge on the foundation of another common joy or shared interest. Without this bridge, your separate interests may drive you apart rather than together!

Be aware that your needs are different and constantly changing. What was important to you at twenty may not be important anymore at fifty! It is normal to expect your priorities and needs to change with time and

maturity, but if you fail to keep your wife abreast of the changes within you, don't be surprised or upset if she continues to give you what you used to need and wonders why it isn't working anymore. It is at this point that the two of you may seem to find pleasure in opposite places. It is at this point that the heart of a man grows heavy!

This is the heaviness that causes disenchantment with the way things are. It can give birth to the alienation and depression that can doom a marriage relationship. From this dismal dance comes a deathly cold silence, and in its grip, somewhere in the marriage, when no one is listening, the music stops.

When the music stops between two individuals who were once joined at the heart, there is a feeling of unnatural distance. A disjointed sense of loss and detachment assumes the control of their emotions and will. They find themselves staring blankly and silently across a room at someone *they are not sure they like anymore*.

IN BITTERNESS...

“Michal Saul's daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart....”

“And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to day, who uncovered himself to day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!”

2 SAMUEL 6:16, 20

The original Hebrew implies that Michal went out to aggressively encounter and confront David. Her words seem to prove the point. Michal chose to get bitter instead of better, and she was out to “put her husband in his place.” Unfortunately, she didn't realize that her husband was in the place *God intended for him to be*.

In her bitterness, Michal embraced three deadly attitudes and sins with very unpleasant results.

First, she chose to watch her husband's triumphant return standing alone and apart in *apathy*. She watched the return of Israel's greatest symbol of God's leadership to her nation from the darkness of her room, peering out at the jubilant crowds in aloof isolation. She was a joyless spectator, not a passionate participator. (Men are actually guilty of this sin more often than women!)

Michal also gave herself to a consuming and self-centered *jealousy* that had its roots in nearly every part of her personality and memory! She belittled David for his uninhibited praise of God in public. That means in order for him to have “pleased her,” he would have had to rob God of the praise and worship due Him. She wanted to possess her husband — even if it meant stealing his heart from God and robbing Jehovah of His praises! Her father, King Saul, did the same thing years before when he chose to covet the praises of men rather than the approval of God. He wanted to please men first and apologize to God later. Because she dared to covet what belonged to God alone, Michal’s empty womb was doomed to remain barren for the rest of her days!

Third, Michal was filled with *scorn*. She sat “in the seat of the scornful” described in Psalm 1:1 and ridiculed her husband publicly for three reasons.

First, she scorned him because he didn’t look and act like a king, which meant that David didn’t conduct himself like Michal’s father, Saul. David was a commoner who had worked his way to the “top” through obedience and devotion to God. The fact is that if God had wanted another king like Saul, He would have installed such a king. He didn’t because He had carefully chosen David, a man after His own heart. It didn’t make it easier that David had just replaced Michal’s brother on the throne of Israel, fulfilling God’s promise to remove Saul and his descendants from the throne in favor of David. Michal’s last blood link to the “royal life” was gone. Her only grasp on her special status was through the man she had married and now despised.

Second, Michal was especially scornful because she felt her husband had shamed himself (and her) in front of his bondservants’ female slaves. David was worshipping God under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and all inhibitions had been removed from him. He was fulfilling the great commandment when he worshipped the Lord with all his might and all his strength. (Somehow I don’t think David would be content to sit in a pew, sing lifeless hymns, and fold his hands during a dry sermon!) Michal should have known better. Her own father had become a legend throughout Israel as well, for when the Spirit of God had fallen on him, he prophesied before Samuel, stripped off all his clothing, and lay naked before God for a full day and night! (See 1 Samuel 19:24.)

Finally, Michal compared King David to a vain and worthless fellow because he dared to worship God freely! He was worshipping, leaping, and

dancing only to please God, but Michal drew from the bitter wells of her own heart and accused him of lewdly exposing himself to win the hearts and inflame the lusts of female slaves! Michal was calling good evil and evil good. She implied that to quench the Spirit of God, to restrain the joy of the Lord, to hold back the flood of praises at the triumphal return of the *shekinah* or visible glory of God to Israel would be “good.” David’s uninhibited worship and intimate relationship with God was the driving force behind everything that Michal despised.

GET TO THE HEART

Beneath the angry placing of blame and the desperate press of tearful excuses, the underlying issue is simple. It defies intellectual treatment because it is a matter of the heart. David had changed, but his driving motivation was still the same as it was the day he faced Goliath. He loved God and wanted to honor Him.

Michal had changed also, but her change involved the deepest motivations and drives of her heart. Both spouses had been hurt, but while David chose to defy the circumstances and get better, Michal had yielded to circumstances and gotten bitter. The same woman who had saved David in his distress mocked him in his triumph!

The issue is this: “I played my music and you missed your cue.” The unspoken epilogue is, “What happened to you?”

Tragedy comes to our marriages when we fail to *discuss* our discouragement rather than argue about guilt. Most of the time, we come to this point with so much emotionally charged baggage and heartache that we launch into heated argumentation, not discussion and mediation. There is a difference between discussion and argument. A discussion *airs the issues*, but an argument *alleges charges and appoints blame*.

Blame is difficult for us to deal with if there are underlying reasons for our wives’ resistance that we have failed to heed. For instance, your wife may be saying, “I missed my cue because *you changed songs* in the middle of the dance. You changed from a slow-paced romantic melody to a grotesque marching song and left me alone on the floor while you pranced around me in circles — oblivious to my embarrassed abandonment! You changed objectives and directives. When we began, our plan was to go here, but now

you're going there! Why did you leave me out? You changed without warning or communication. You failed to give me a signal, and your abrupt turn left me alone and apart!"

A visionary has to be able to communicate, but most of the time, men are the most noncommunicative species on this planet! God has always intended for us to go beyond the grunts and gestures some say we inherited from apes! We graduated from that stage around the age of two, but we seem to reenter our infancy on the day we marry! I don't know where we got this guttural, almost nonverbal communication system. I must confess that I too have often thought of directives and ideas that *should have been spoken*, then wondered why there was no response from the bride of my youth. The answer was simple. She couldn't "hear" my mind!



CHAPTER SEVEN

Marriage: Missionaries or Men?

Many times the fear of rejection has closed down the hearts of men because they are traumatized and paralyzed by its pain. Massive men we may be, but our bulging biceps, strong backs, and bass voices are only outward decorations adorning (and concealing) our fragile hearts and the trembling boys locked away beneath the sacred walls of our masculine shells! We surround ourselves with images of success to hide our secret fears.

Distrusting the luxurious and the fashionable, we insulate ourselves behind our facades and hide beneath the fig leaves of our elaborate efforts to impress. The simple truth is that most men have insecurities. “If I give myself to you, will you give also? If I let down my defenses, will you let down yours? If I fail, will you laugh? If I miss, will you walk away?” These questions haunt the halls of the hearts of men who have been taught all their lives to perform.

From football fields and corporate offices to the church pew and the bedroom, men wrestle with the demand for *performance*. Quite frankly, the stage theatrics are wearing us out. As the banks of our personhood steadily erode under the growing pressure of the swirling flood, we become more and more like actors portraying a part. The tragedy is that beneath the

props, the masks, and the stressful stage lights, we are just men. If we were stripped of all decorum and pretense, the little boy in each of us would be left trembling beside our elaborate costume, now heaped on the floor. That little boy within wonders quietly, “Am I enough?”

MARITAL MISSIONARIES

Fear spawns defense mechanisms, and most of our defense mechanisms are more dangerous and bizarre than the insecurities we avoid. The greatest problems arise in our marriages when we decide to become “marital missionaries.” A marital missionary is a man who thinks he is called to change his wife rather than to understand her! The secretly insecure man thinks of himself as some great missionary with a message, while he views his wife as a simple-minded native in need of nurture and direction!

We are so convinced that “our way is right” we fail to realize that in the marriage relationship between two individual adults, there is often neither a right way nor a wrong way — just differing perspectives.

Have you ever thought about the consequence of your confidence in “your way”? What kind of mess would you have on your hands if you actually succeeded in “evangelizing” and converting your wife to your way of doing things? What if she started thinking and acting just like you? Believe me, whatever you do, *stay out of the missionary position!*

God doesn't like it when you start changing His creations around. Besides, you are displaying plain egotistical arrogance if you always attempt to alter others without checking yourself for “childish things” that could be put away! The truth is that the little boy in you is trying to stack the blocks around you to create a “safe place” in the middle of your fears.

Playful boys and fearful men seek to control their environments. Secure men don't force those around them to conform to some artificial standard. They are strong enough to share their world with others who are different. If God had wanted bland uniformity, then He certainly wouldn't have divided the human race into the male and female genders!

Furthermore, your wife's feminine philosophy and womanly sensitivity was at one time a feature and asset rather than a blemish or liability! If she had been “just like you” when you were scouting for a companion, you probably would have quickly locked horns or become uninterested!

In short, the unique female you married was never meant or designed to be a “product” that you could arrogantly “change into your image.” There is only one image worthy enough for all of us to conform to, and that is the image of Christ Jesus.

If you haven’t noticed it lately, then wake up: your wife is a woman! (That fact alone should be enough warning to you.) She isn’t supposed to be just like you! If you can’t accept that truth, then I hope you are prepared to be miserable and encumbered with care the rest of your days. Just remember that people who insist on banging their heads against a wall have no right to complain of chronic headaches!

Sometimes we wrestle with failure because we have a distorted definition of “success.” Anytime you enter into life with a partner whom you feel you need to personally change and alter to conform to your own “superior” standards, you are guaranteed to experience failure and frustration (and you probably deserve it). Your wife is virtually guaranteed to become a frustrated woman because even if she makes the changes you request, you are almost certain to *change your requirements* with the passage of time!

Is it any wonder our spouses feel resentful? We have trapped them in a “no-win” situation. It is hard to be intimate with someone who makes you feel like you should be wearing a grass skirt and a bone in your nose!

The citizens of every nation on earth deeply resent any foreign missionary who is foolish enough to disregard or disdain the local culture and ethnicity. Yet we blindly persist in our efforts to “reform and remake” our wives into our own image, even though we know they will resent it!

Brother, you cannot predicate the success in your life upon your success in making your mate over again. The sad reality is that if her nature is so important to you, then you should have done her a favor and married a person who already had the basic personality you “needed.” Since you didn’t, then it is up to you to learn to appreciate the difference. You may be in for a surprise when God reveals the fact that He planted some things in your wife to which you desperately need to conform!

Sometimes we try to rearrange others as a way of hiding our own deep discontentment. The spirit of blame takes over, and we begin to say and believe, “You are the reason I am not happy!” Some men are miserable because they are not finding fulfillment in their relationships. Many of the men who seek multiple relationships are still unhappy; their infidelity is just

masking their emptiness and fear of loneliness with the illusion of excitement. However, when the thin veneer of excitement dissipates, the emptiness remains.

OX OR ASS?

“Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together.”

DEUTERONOMY 22:10

It is important for us to exercise maturity in the choices we make, especially in our choice of a mate. We cannot afford to be driven by lust or to choose a companion merely on the basis of some external attribute. (You would be surprised at how quickly external attributes change.)

Once the honeymoon is over, and once you have peeled away the outer wrapping, you will have to live with the human being inside. It is sad that many men are so distracted by the hormonal rush triggered by a woman's outward attractions during courtship that they never really examine the woman within. In short, they were so impressed with the package that they never noticed the contents! The tragedy is that we actually marry the contents, not the containers.

Deuteronomy 22:10 warns us that it is counterproductive to yoke an ox with an ass. Be sure that you team up with the same “species.” Opposites do attract and effectively interact, but when it comes to the deepest heart motivations and drives, there must be compatibility. The Apostle Paul warned, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14).

Don't yoke with an “ass” and try to remake her into an “ox.”

Choice is a great freedom that men don't seem to fully appreciate. Christian men seem especially prone toward hasty decisions, and I believe a great deal of it is due to the fact that many of them are trying to overcome lust with fornication. They quickly commit and then often regret their decision because they failed to be controlled by their brain!

I am always amazed at the men who bounce blindly from one broken relationship into another doomed commitment. Brother Hormone is crushed through a divorce, yet ten months after crying his eyes out and losing half of his income in child support, here he comes again with Sister

Maybelle Feelgood on his arm! He says, “Pastor, I am ready to be married!” It makes me want to commit him for psychological evaluation! I would have been running from that pain like the roadrunner in a cartoon! But here Brother Hormone stands, ready to enter the marriage relationship again without making a rational, conscious decision.

Many men fall into this dangerous pattern because they are struggling with loneliness or lust. Some men have never lived a moment in their lives without someone else to share it with and they are terrified of being alone. The questions Brother Hormone should ask himself are: “Am I in love with Maybelle Feelgood, or am I in love with the idea of being married? Do I just think I can live with her, or is it true that I can’t conceive of living the rest of my life without her?”

If you foolishly allow yourself to be yoked with an ass, and you feel in your heart you are an ox, the two of you will pull one against the other the rest of your lives. You see, the ass wants to play and have fun while the ox wants to work and make progress. There is absolutely nothing worse in this world than pulling your own load and then having to turn around and pull both your spouse’s load and your spouse! No wonder so many good men are succumbing at early ages. Good men aren’t dying from heart attacks — they are dying from bad choices!

If you are single or divorced, please pray about these issues, and be honest with your heart and your intended. Never step into the yoke with someone just for the sake of the yoke, the sex, the image, the partnership, the business, the ministry, or the money! You will be miserable! God knows the yoke will not be easy, even if you choose the right mate! Why? God uses the yoke of the marriage covenant to work things in us that probably cannot be done any other way. It is hard work to live in love, intimacy, honesty, and harmony with another human being for half a century! Frankly, marriage is perhaps God’s richest planting bed for miracles in the human heart.

By this time, I know I have left some young man feeling depressed and distraught because he feels that he has inadvertently married the wrong person! If that is the way you feel, don’t worry, you aren’t the only one. Most of us experience such doubts at one time or another in our married life.

What can the ox do if he feels he has married out of his species? *He can pray!* Yes, I know that may not be the solution you would prefer, but have you ever really begun to pray for your marriage? Oh, I don’t mean one of

those “Lord, straighten her out” prayers. I’m talking about those soul-searching, openhearted prayers that say, “God, perhaps You have allowed me to get in this situation to help me become more like You. What must I do to love my wife correctly? I confess I have not done a good job of loving her; I haven’t loved her unconditionally as You have loved me. Lord, You already know that I really didn’t have any role models in my own childhood to guide me into wholeness of marriage. But, Lord, if You will teach me, I will learn!”

LOVE LIKE JESUS

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it.”

EPHESIANS 5:25

What a challenging command for a man! God commands us to imitate His Son, the ultimate Lover. We are to build our love according to His pattern, the pattern of self-sacrifice and utter submission to the will of God.

How many of us can say that we have loved our wives as Christ has loved the Church and given Himself for it? Not many, if any.

I can almost hear you say, “You just don’t know how bad my wife is! I am miserable. That woman fights me and belittles everything I try to do. I am an ox married to an ass! I’m sorry, but I don’t want to love her — I want to leave her!”

I hear your protest and I understand your frustration, but you need a good dose of the truth: *You will be leaving your greatest opportunity to turn a test into a testimony.* Besides, O man of God, how can you leave your wife when you haven’t read the “troubleshooting” instructions in the manual (the Bible)? Or have you already read them, but unlike Jesus, you have simply failed to obey them? In either case, you are still inexcusable.

The most challenging part of Ephesians 5:25 for most men is not just the loving, it is the giving. Men are masters at giving things. We give advice, we give provision, and we give sex. But we have big problems when we’re asked to give *ourselves!* Christ gave Himself. He gave us His attention, His affection, and His assurance. These gifts are often missing from under the tree every Christmas. You may be a master at giving things, but the real truth is that your wife doesn’t need more things — she needs *you!*

Women often wonder what thoughts are locked behind the weary eyes of their men when their conversations lapse into silence. They have wondered silently and among themselves, “Where do men go when they lapse into silence and become distant?” Silence wraps itself around a man like a blanket, insulating him from the cold insults of rejection. Silence does for the quiet man within what jokes do for the comedian. It shields him from the risk of rejection and gives him a glass to stand behind and peer through while perched in a safe place of introspection.

Rumbling beneath the silence, the joking, the jesting, or whatever the camouflage boils the tempestuous kettle of friction and frustration. If we emerge from the shell and sacrifice our protection, we feel we will be either applauded or booed from the stage. So we plot a safer course and stick our hands out like turtles in a shell and give *what we can afford to lose*. We give what we can risk having dropped — we give things!

I know we do our best to bluster and pretend that we really are the macho men within that we pretend to be on the outside. But I believe most men find it hard to give themselves because they are often afraid of themselves. We are afraid of being exposed for what we really are, and we are afraid to acknowledge that we are vulnerable. God is out to strip us down to our core. No matter how valid their basis or how traumatic their appearance or how desperately we want to avoid them, we must confront our fears. If we don't fix them, let us at least face them! Our investment in marriage must go beyond “things.” It must move across the Jordan; it must move up the hill to the cross where, like Jesus, we offer *ourselves*.

Brother, it is wonderful to give objects. God gave us the sun, the moon, and the stars. He gave us day and night and the incredible seasons of the year. He even gave us cascading waterfalls and sun-drenched beaches. However, none of these *things* saved our relationship with Him! Finally, He wearied of giving us laws, ordinances, and rituals. He got tired of giving us prophets, priests, and kings. He decided to give Himself, and when He did, He saved a dying world!

No matter how much you have given to your wife and family in other areas, you must give *yourself*. Yes, you can make a difference. Just you! Your personal attention, your loving affection, and your gentle assurance can ignite the redemption of a destitute relationship! If you haven't given your wife these things, then look at your marriage from her perspective. You may

be shocked to realize that from her point of view, she is the ox and you are the ass!

NOT EASY, BUT POSSIBLE

I want to confess that it is not easy to cover all the things God has put in my heart for you. But if you believe in the sovereignty of God as I do, then you know that God can make a bad decision turn out good. He can make a miracle out of a mistake.

I also know that the yoke of marriage is not easy — or perfect. Marriage is simply the uniting of two imperfect people who are trying to build a perfect life in Christ. We are guaranteed to find ourselves stumbling and falling along the way. Yet the miracle of marriage isn't found in the stumbling; we can manage that all by ourselves. The miracle appears in the rising, in the rebirth of love, in the rekindling of the flame, in an ability to forgive that stretches from the cross of Calvary to the creased sheets of the marriage bed!

Realize that I am as human as you are. I am neither perfect nor a pattern; I am just a brother raised up in the body of Christ to help fight the plague of pain. That plague may have dulled your eyes and attacked your heart, but by God's grace and mercy, I am here to pray for you. I am praying for your fears and inhibitions. I am praying for your frustrations and limitations. I want your house to be a home. I want your wife to be your friend. When you lie down at night and wrap your weary body in the soft sheets of your marriage relationship, I want you to be at rest.

My prayer is for your pain to diminish and your confidence to increase. May God give you the grace to leave your troubles at the office at the end of the day and bring *yourself* home at night. When your head hits the pillow and your arms reach out for love and understanding, may they be as open to give as they are to receive. God has given you life, and you are alive. Share that life with the one He has given you — to love.

You don't have to be a missionary to your wife. You don't have to be a perfect performer. You don't even have to be a "ten." You just have to be a man. Your bride doesn't have to be a "convert" to your image, and she doesn't have to be a perfect performer or a "ten" either. She just has to be a woman, a genuine woman of God. Strong and weak. Wise and foolish. Right and wrong. Through it all, you are both still surviving...rest in peace!



CHAPTER EIGHT

Mighty Men Still Need Rest

We live almost as if we were on the losing side in a war zone! The young men are tired and the old men are weary. What happened to our joy and our strength —our zeal for life itself? We're too exhausted to struggle against injustice, and we're too worn out to overcome our fatigue.

What happened between our mothers' arms and life's clutches? What has produced our angry tantrums? We are part of a generation of weary men whose fatigue is exemplified in raging tempers and savage domestic violence! In our day men are desperately seeking a place — any place— of refreshing. We seek an oasis from the parched responsibilities that endlessly consume the remaining hours of our lives. We seek some place of intermission, some refuge of healing repose. The continual denial of our need for rest is driving us over the edge! We need a vacation from the stress and duress of day-to-day activity.

LEAD ME TO THE ROCK

“...when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy.”

PSALM 61:2-3

David's heart was overwhelmed when he wrote Psalm 61. Like David, our stress and strain make us cry out in pain, and we are haunted by failures and plagued by temptations. Our mistakes rob us of the very comforts life has afforded us. Regret makes us thirsty for second chances. "If I could only do it again, I would spend more time with my son...I would spend more time with my wife...how can I recapture what I have lost?"

We can never rekindle the motherly warmth of the womb that incubated our masculinity, nor recall and relive the days when our father shaped us and helped to train us. The sweet taste of childhood, once savored, dissipates forever, and we are left to be stable and responsible.

Every boy who stands up to the test and attempts to be a man quickly realizes that *the need is greater than the supply*. It is to him that we must deliver this urgent message! There is nothing wrong with weariness. Even Christ Himself grew weary.

Yet we feel like the whole world has lodged on our shoulders! Our knees are buckling beneath the unbearable weight of the expectations of those around us. What is wrong with us? The problem isn't simply that we need a break. We need to identify and define *who we really are by where we turn for relief*.

Brother, you must go beyond being a believer. Allow yourself to be trained so you will know where to safely find rest. It isn't safe to rest just anywhere with just anybody! Somewhere, this very moment, some weary man is trying to rest on the jagged rocks of a sinful relationship. He is flirting with danger and playing with death!

SAMSON'S FATAL FATIGUE

Like Samson in the Bible, most of us can withstand attack, peril, distress, and criticism. We can survive failed marriages and aged parents. We can even survive moral weakness, decadence, and conflict. It is *fatigue* that threatens to undermine us!

Do you realize that Delilah didn't kill Samson? It's true. *Samson died of weariness!* He could have handled Delilah if he hadn't been so tired. Samson's sin was not in "being tired," though. He fell into sin because he went to the wrong place for rest.

My friend, *keep your head out of Delilah's lap!*

Woe to the “Samson of today”! He has strength and might, power and potential. His career, his talent, his ministry, or his “whatever” has a taunting potential that he finds rewarding. He can move immovable gates and endure unbearable circumstances to make a profit or win confrontations. The modern Samson has incredible strength and ability to survive under pressure. If you toss him naked into the desert, in a year you will see him walk out of the sand dunes wearing a new suit and a pair of alligator shoes!

Blessed with success while cursed with ambition, the Samsons of our age are never defeated, but often deflated. These are the men who dare to build an empire with a nickel and a nail! We need them desperately, but they are almost extinct. They are a dying breed partly because they have a tendency to self-destruct and partly because they fail to mentor their precious gifts into the next generation. Either their gentleness has been destroyed by their cancerous drives or they are so busy being successful they don’t realize that “success is not successful without a successor”!

PASS IT ON!

“How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!”

2 SAMUEL 1:27

How can you die without sons? Manpower is in crisis! This country’s history is a revolving account of abused and hurting people who rose to power, only to raise sons who perpetuated their fathers’ sorrows on others!

In our trauma, we attempted to build a nation with God at the helm, but we forgot to tell our sons about it. We rooted our dream in the freedom of religion, in the free exercise of our faith in God — a God Who is now scoffed at by the children of the very forefathers who died to win that freedom!

The nation brought forth by the pioneer families who sat down at banquet tables to give thanks at the first Thanksgiving meal is now watching families disintegrate in divorce, murder, and abortion clinics. We need to return to God, but it will take a resurgence of fighting fathers whose Samson-like courage has not been destroyed by fatigue and moral failure!

TRAPPED IN DELILAH’S LAP!

Delilah the temptress is reserved for the mighty man; she is the assassin of the successful. Her tools are not her hips, lips, or fingertips. Her tools are his tiredness, numbness, and inner void. She doesn't have to do much because she knows that once Samson's head is nestled on her knees, he will begin to share his heart with her.

If he is not careful, the harlot becomes the businessman's wife. The woman he lives with becomes his roommate. But he does not come to her so much to ravish and caress as to find a place to rest and refresh! In the house of the harlot, the mighty man becomes the helpless man.

The Bible's description of Samson and Delilah in Judges 16 says almost nothing about twisted sheets and panting breaths. We see a lonely, empty man who is so vulnerable to affection that a hostile government hires a harlot to seduce him! Burdened with fatigue and loneliness, Samson didn't want to swing from vines and play Tarzan. He wanted to cuddle in the warmth of feminine arms that reminded him of his mother's warm embrace. Samson *sought rest* in Delilah's bed. Then the mighty man fell asleep as the harlot stroked him and murmured softly in his ear.

“Delilah realized that he had finally told her the truth, so she sent for the five Philistine leaders. ‘Come just this once more,’ she said, ‘for this time he has told me everything.’ So they brought the money with them. She lulled him to sleep with his head in her lap, and they brought in a barber and cut off his hair. Delilah began to hit him, but she could not see that his strength was leaving him.”

JUDGES 16:18-19 TLB

Isn't it odd! Samson *knew* Delilah was trying to kill him, yet he compromised his safety for the “rest” she provided!

Delilah had created a haven for Samson. This man had a successful career but a failed marriage. He had everything to share and no one to share it with. He had been driven, and suddenly in the middle of his life, the mighty man realized that he was tired! The man was looking for a vacation. He was looking for rest. He was looking for some place to lay his head.

“And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.”

LUKE 9:58

RUN FROM THE HARLOT'S FLAME

A tired man is a vulnerable man. When you are tired, you do the “Samson thing.” You lie down too long and you talk too much. Samson knew Delilah was working for his enemy. She had tried to kill him several times! He foolishly thought, *I can handle it!* I think Delilah was the most terrifying opponent in Samson’s entire life because *she used his own thirst against him!* He was so desperate for solitude and solace that, like a moth attracted to the flame, he flew into what he should have run away from!

Brother, are you weary? Do you feel empty and alone right now? Don’t run to what you should be running away from! Many mighty men have fallen prey to something they knew the enemy had sent because they were too proud to acknowledge their peril. Never expose yourself to the enemy’s assassin!

Your “Delilah” can be *anything that comes into your life to deplete your strength!* It can be your career, a relationship, or a habit. Delilah’s arms may be the forbidden place you go when you have had enough. “She” will provide a haven, an escape, or the vacation of your dreams, but don’t be fooled. The harlot doesn’t want to delight you — she just wants to destroy you! Get up while you can! Sometimes a good run is better than a bad stand!

Father, I pray for every Samson, for every mighty man whose force and fight have left him weary and vulnerable. I pray, dear God, that this man’s strength will be renewed by Your presence. I pray that Delilah’s plan will be aborted and that he will not fly into the blistering heat of the fire because he is distracted by the illustrious beauty of the flame! In Jesus’ name, amen!

THE SILENT CANCER

Busy men don’t “schedule” tiredness, but it slips up on them when they least expect it. Fatigue is the silent cancer of our judgment and emotions. It robs us of creativity and secretly steals our potency and discernment. When we are tired, we tend to be more vulnerable and less careful. Our nerves stand on edge, our tempers flare, and even our simple problems seem insurmountable!

Many men make permanent decisions based on the stress of temporary circumstances when fatigue robs them of their better judgment. Creative men feel guilty because they are tired, and they run from the fear that their gifts will one day dry up and they will no longer be able to *achieve*. Often,

tremendously successful men are hard to work for and hard to love. These men are not led, they are driven...to total exhaustion!

A normal night's sleep can no more cure a Samson's exhaustion than a Band-Aid can cure invasive cancer! Modern-day Samsons are walking zombies who feed on their pain like a junkie feeds on his drugs. Success is their addiction and affliction, but beneath it all, they desperately need rest. Even good things are dangerous if they get "out of balance." More importantly, what good is the blessing without the Blesser? What good is the provision if you lose the Provider? What good is the woman if you lose the wife? These are valid questions that deserve an honest answer!

There is a time and a season for all things. (See Ecclesiastes 3:1.) Even the soil becomes depleted if it tries to produce year after year without a rest. The winter chill arrests growth, but it allows time for recycling as well. We need time to renew and reassess — we need balance. Most of us who drive hard and play little are *men who have seen the wolf* of failure, of hard times, and of poverty. Some of us run from our terror of failure, forgetting that fear is the opposite of faith! Fear may feel like the fuel of faith, but its acidic nourishment only gives ulcers to the body and anger to the heart!

You and I may press wildly into the battle because of some inner need to establish our worth. The tragedy of our compulsion is that our critics will seldom change.

Never run to win the favor of critics or to silence their endless criticism. The false standards of scoffers are fueled by unlimited and effortless cynicism. It doesn't take effort, preparation, intelligence, or skill to criticize. That's why it is the favorite pastime of untrained children and unaccomplished adults.

The worst part of being "driven" is that the disease is contagious; our unspoken desperation threatens to leave behind anyone who will not keep up the pace. We seem determined to run our loved ones as well as ourselves. Will we never realize that God sends different types of people into our lives to *balance* us?

REST IN GOD'S ARMS

"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God."

HEBREWS 4:9

I want you to understand that *rest does exist*. It is more than sleep — it is peace and calmness. It is the calm breathing of an unthreatened baby, safe in the arms of the one who gave it birth. In your natural birth, you were born of your mother. In your spiritual birth, you were born of the Spirit. You need to climb back into the arms of the Spirit Who gave you birth and find rest in His presence and peace in His arms!

God's river of refreshment is designed for the stumbling, not for the starchy. The stable are sustained for a time by their own agility, but the stumbling man is desperate for His refreshment.

“He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.”

ISAIAH 40:29-31 NASB

We will always fail if we do not return to God and look only to Him for support! In the words of the hymnist, we “dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name”!

Every man needs rest. If you deny that need, it will eventually cause you to collapse into the arms of Delilah! You need rest, and the only place you can safely rest your head is *in the will of God*. No matter how rough His will may seem to be, there is a certain comfort that comes from understanding and fulfilling your purpose!

All of us tremble at the cold reality of Delilah's lap looking so inviting when we are tired. Her arms always seem to be conveniently opened wide as she calls out, “Come to me.” The good news is that our vulnerability can ignite great prayer and give birth to the first frail gropings of an honest heart seeking rest in the right place and not the wrong place. Neither alcohol nor greed, neither lust nor anything else can soothe the savage beast in our souls like one good moment in God's presence!

Oh God, don't let us become so religious that we fail to bring men into Your healing presence!

We need the kind of anointing on our worship and church services that brings mortal men (and weary Samsons) into the very presence of God. Nothing less will do. Whether we admit it to our wives, our friends, or anyone else, we know that without the continual guidance of God, any one

of us could find ourselves resting in the wrong place — no matter how anointed we may be.

Samson was anointed, but he failed to take his troubles to the Lord. *Take time out to come away and refresh yourself in the presence of the Lord!* Yours are wounds that only He can heal! Any other kind of rest will only camouflage another attack. Only God can grant you a safe place to lay your head. Do it — we need you. Your wife needs you. Your sons and daughters need you! We must have another generation of mighty men. Birth your sons, reach your stars. But then, in the quiet of the evening, wrap yourself in the warmth of God's presence. When you do, with a soft hum, a peaceful heart, and an inner sanctum of solace, He will say, "Rest in peace."

"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

PHILIPPIANS 4:7



CHAPTER NINE

You Are Still My Son!

“And he shall...turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.”

LUKE 1:17

He is filled with my blood, and he stands on my bones. His eyes are moist with my dew, and he looks like me. He is my ticket into the next generation, my spaceship into the land of the young. He is my chance to give support, strength, and solidarity to a part of my destiny. He offers me my one opportunity to be all that I wanted someone else to be to me.

Healing him is the same as healing me. To love him is to love me. The process of saving him from making my mistakes somehow gives purpose to my deepest pain. I will endure whatever it takes to help him reach a star. He is like warm clay waiting to be shaped into a man. He is my self, my friend, my comrade. He is my son!

Chosen by my heart or fathered by my loins, he is all that I invest in him today for the challenges of tomorrow. God grant me grace for fatherhood and wisdom for parenting. Without the guidance of God helping and training me, I cannot parent my son as I should.

DEAR DADDY

Fatherhood was exemplified in the thunderous voice of God as He broke through the clouds and spoke at the River Jordan. He publicly endorsed a

Son Whom many saw as controversial. He said what every son longs to hear his father say: “This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased!”

It is paternal approval that makes the smallest Little Leaguer run harder than the rest. It makes timid little boys brave the strange night noises and biting bugs of Boy Scout overnight campouts just to hear their fathers say, “Well done, son.” The smile of a pleased father is sweeter than candy and richer than diamonds to his son!

What has happened? Our heroes have changed from our fathers to an endless chain of drug-crazed actors and jaded, ungrateful athletes. When I was a child, I believed that my father was the strongest man in the world! But wholesomeness has slipped away. Times have changed, and the movies have changed. Fatherhood was pushed to the back shelf with the dusty reruns of the Brady Bunch. Has anyone noticed? The needs of our sons have *not* changed!

GRIEVING FOR FATHERHOOD

One of the greatest deceptions in our society is the notion that men are hurting over women. There are exceptions, but you will find that we are not grieving over our mothers or our wives. No, we miss our fathers. It is from them that we most often draw our strength, our weakness, our pleasure, and our unbearable pain. Somebody has stolen our heroes.

Absentee fathers and deadbeat dads have littered this nation with confused sons and angry husbands. Millions of bitter and abandoned young males are growing into men without mentors. How can we expect them to touch hurts and needs in others like real men when their own deep hurts have never been healed? This void of longing and brokenness in the men of this generation has spawned a raging flood of conflict, promiscuity, perversion, and domestic violence. Broken and hurting sons are asking their fathers for a deposit of true manhood, but their fathers are bankrupt — no one has made a real deposit in them!

It is painful to admire someone who isn't there. A one-sided love affair is never fulfilling. Empty arms do not offer a heartwarming, reassuring hug. Empty arms only reflect the emptiness of a son who took the risk to open himself up, only to be rejected and discarded on the abandoned porch of a broken home.

Our young men have grown weary of playing sports before empty bleachers. As toddlers, they carefully colored pictures and proudly brought them home, but Dad wasn't there to admire their work and reward them with a father's priceless praise. Now, at the end of their hope and childhood, they have thrown away their coloring books. They have angrily punctured their footballs and bought guns. They have grown tired of dancing to the haunting melody of manhood alone.

FILL IN THE BLANKS

Our young men are dying in anger and pain, wondering, "What did I do to drive away my daddy?" A father is an image of a young man's destiny, a living testimony of what time may bring to pass. Dad is our first definition of masculinity. His absence leaves us desperately looking for someone else to "fill in the blank." If the Church doesn't do it, the gay community will. If the Church doesn't do it, the gangs and drug lords will. If the Church doesn't do it, the pornographers will. Empty sons will always look for someone to fill in the blank left by the father who isn't there.

Well-tailored dark suits and vibrant silk ties cannot drape the gaping void of the empty blanks in the broken hearts of men. Even the most voluptuous of fast-paced and lace-clad women cannot console the anguish of masculine tears blocked and cries muffled. Broken men try to mask their hurts behind empty emblems of success, but hidden behind those frail facades are screaming hearts bound in a forced silence. They all share a common thread of desperate need, a familiar hollowness that traces their broken places and the jagged edges of nearly emasculated men!

A crimson river drips unchecked from the wounded hearts and hidden places of modern men. We hide behind our masquerades and attempt acts of chivalry, then, like little boys, we brag about sex, though we have never known true love. We long for a tender touch but are afraid of tenderness. We want to be strong enough to be leaned on yet tender enough to relate to the pain of others. Can the wounded heal the hurting?

WEEPING AND RAISING

"Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!... Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I

thank thee that thou hast heard me.... And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.”

JOHN 11:35-36, 41, 43

My idea of a hero is a man who is soft enough to cry at his friend's funeral but strong enough to call him from the grave! Jesus was tender enough to respect the vulnerabilities of the women He loved, but then He wiped away their tears and assumed the responsibility to change the circumstances that had created the pain!

I hope you haven't buried your trauma, thinking it could not be healed. Remember, your God raises the dead! If you really want to resurrect a dead situation, then stop crying. Stand up and command it to arise! Go find your son in a tomb of drugs! Raise your drunken father from the gutter of a city street! Perhaps you must approach anew the cold and impersonal pain of your father's indifferent glance. No matter what killed them or separated you, if you want your father or son back, you must raise him up!

Jesus wept! But when He finished weeping, He started raising. The tragedy with Mary was she thought it was too late. Do not make Mary's mistake. The evidence may look bad, and by now the situation may be stinking. But if you want him, raise him anyway—in spite of your disappointment. Reach beyond the breach and choose to love anyway. If you want your relationship healed with your son, your wife, your daughter, or your dad, then “roll the stone away” and get involved! (Even if it does stink, it will be worth it to see a resurrection!)

“Come to me,” said the father to the prodigal son. If we are still alive, if we still have breath, then we will disappoint each other. It is part of being human. If our love cannot overcome disappointment, then we will die lonely, bitter, and stubborn.

Fathers who are angry and disappointed with the outcome of their sons often try to train or direct their grown sons as if they were children. That day is over. Your son will never be a toddler again, so take off the training wheels and put the long lectures in the closet. They are only driving him away. If Lazarus is ever to be raised, you must call him toward you, not drive him from you. Jesus said, “Lazarus, come forth.”

MISSING IN ACTION

Angry son, beware of your critical attitude!

At the age of sixteen, I heard the slow creaking of the pulleys that eased my father's cold body into the red Mississippi clay, and I learned that dead men can't talk and can't listen. I stood there with a thousand unresolved issues on my heart. Burning tears streamed down my face as I wept for my father. I wept for the questions I could not ask him. I wept for the grandchildren he would never see. I wept for the twinkle I would never see in his aged eyes. I wept for my mother, who never married again.

In spite of my father's flaws, I wept for his attempts to provide, to love and protect us, and for his tragedies. But most of all, I wept for myself. Dad was gone like a gust of wind. He slipped through my fingers like sand. I clenched hard, but when I opened my hand, it was empty. He had slipped through the cracks, and I wondered, "How could he leave without saying good-bye?"

I suppose I am a bit envious of men my age whose fathers are still alive and able to stand by their side. I am always drawn toward father-and-son teams. I love those gray-haired men whose sweaters are too big and whose backs are starting to bend. You know the men I'm talking about — the elderly men whose teeth are a little too prominent and who are full of stories you have already heard. When I see them pull back their leathery jaws and smile until their eyes twinkle at their sons, I always try to tell those sons, "You are blessed." No matter how much your dad did or did not do, if his wrinkled ears can hear you and his glazed eyes can see you, then you can work it out!

The ultimate absentee father is the one who is dead. There are no arguments to be had and no issues to be resolved. He is gone — like a breeze that blows by your face. You feel it, you touch it, and then it is gone. No matter how badly your relationship with your father has deteriorated, if he is still alive, then find a way to reconcile! It has been twenty-two years since my father's death, and during all those years of living and loving and raising my own sons, I have never, ever seen him again. Yet I still long to see that familiar smile on his face and hear his reassuring voice.

I am grateful for the memories of my father's hand — the caressing hand that brushed my forehead and the playful hand that rubbed my belly when I was a child. I am thankful for the noises he made as he blew on my stomach until I giggled as a little boy. At least I have a memory and a moment with my father. I know there are many who have never felt their father's touch,

wrestled on the floor, or been pushed in a swing. I still wonder what it would be like to sit on a porch today and listen to my father tell me some of those ridiculous stories about people I cannot even remember. I can only imagine the beaming smile that would light up his face if he could hold one of his squirmy little grandbabies in his arms today.

Most of all, I felt the pain of my father's absence as I performed on the football fields of life. I have made touchdown after touchdown, and I have heard the roaring of great crowds, but there was always one face missing from the stands. I longed to hear one special voice above the roar of the crowd...but he was missing in action!

FILL THE EMPTINESS

“Then Jonathan said to David, To morrow is the new moon: and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty.”

1 SAMUEL 20:18

If you can fill the empty seat in your life with a body, then do it. If you have to sober up your father just to talk to him, then find him and touch him! In a flash, he will be gone. In a moment, he will fade. His wisdom may sound antiquated and his advice may be unsolicited, but just listen to his voice before it floats away.

If your father is alive, find him. If your father is deceased, then reach out to your children and be a father to them. If you cannot have one — be one. Overcome your loss or lack by becoming what you would like to have. Give your children what you lost! Overcome every obstacle to love and restore what is missing. Release the pain of your divorce, abuse, and fear to God, and open your arms to your son. Whether he is the president of a bank or dying with AIDS, he is still your son!

When the prodigal son pulled himself from the muddy troughs of the hogpen and headed for home, he was not greeted with scorn, or “I told you so,” or even a warning. His old arthritic father squinted his eyes to gaze down the road as he had done every morning since his youngest son had gone. When he saw his mud-caked son coming down the road, neither cane nor walker was needed! That old man leaped off that porch and ran down that dusty road to meet his long-lost son. The prodigal had lost all he had; he was a miserable failure and a disgrace to everyone else — *but not to his*

father! His father opened up his arms wide in unconditional love and acceptance.

It is time to open up your arms, man of God. Open your weary arms to your wife. Welcome your sons and your daughters, in spite of their failures or yours! If we are going to have families, we must let love carry us beyond the wounds that drive us apart. It is time to forgive and be forgiven.

WELCOME HOME!

“I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee.... But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.... But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.”

LUKE 15:18, 20, 22-24

The runaway whose heart is full of fear has no trophies to line his mantle. He comes with no merit or accolades. He bears only the scars, wounds, and lacerations that mark his journey from folly to failure. Does it really matter whether you are the father or the son? We have raised a generation that has lost its way. Fathers are missing, and young men are asking, “May I come home?”

What did the father of the prodigal son know that made him avoid the “I told you so” speech? I know what it was. In spite of the boy’s filthy hair and putrid smell, and in spite of his moral bankruptcy and rebellious mistakes from the past, his grateful father fell on his son’s neck and kissed him because he knew that *when he touched his son, he had touched himself!*

Your son may be disabled in his morality or twisted in his sexuality. He may be irresponsible and unstable, and he may need hours of love and reassurance before he accepts the God of his father. His only glimpse of the God you serve may come at the moment he feels your fatherly arms around him. No matter how dark the night and no matter how hot the tears, embrace your prodigal son and declare, “*You are still my son!*”

If you are a son who is lost and you have no earthly father or place to call home, then I declare to you this moment: “*You are a chosen son, a precious one. Though you were lost, today you are found! Welcome home, my son, in whom I am well pleased!*”



CHAPTER TEN

Surrogate Fathers

How can we restore what never was? What number can we dial when there are no places to call? Where can we go when there are no addresses to find? For millions of men and women, the opportunity for a genuine father-child relationship was stolen at their conception by the secret affairs and one-night stands of children playing grown folks' games. They left behind babies doomed to a future filled with rejection and a destiny cursed with confusion!

Fatherless men wander our streets in unending pain, searching the tombs of their lost heritage, crying out, "Who is my father?" Some learn the truth only to wish they had never asked the question. It only increased the pain of their loneliness. Still others, like me, were cruelly snatched from the nurturing arms of their fathers by the icy fingers of sickness, disease, and death.

What shall be done with those of us who have been left behind and left alone? Like a puzzle whose pieces were lost, we can never create the full picture of our identity. There always seems to be a part of us missing. Is there no way to recapture the missing pieces?

UNMENTIONABLE MEMORIES

Some of us have been abused, beaten, and battered. Some have even been brutally raped and molested, although the silence over male molestation is deafeningly quiet. (What man rushes to the front of a room and admits before his friends that he was molested?) How many of us evolved into dysfunctional manhood from memories as little boys trembling in a corner trying to protect Mother from a man we called Father? What confusion erupts when the alcohol-soaked protector and provider staggers home and beats his family?

How can a mere boy defend himself or stand against his father, whose hands have slapped his mother over and over again in the night? Countless black eyes, broken limbs, beaten backs, and bloody legs have left scars on the bodies and gashes on the minds of boys-become-men, men who remember much more than their mothers would ever allow to be discussed.

“Shhh, I heard a car door. Oh God, is that him?! Don’t let him be drunk tonight...please, I have to go to school! I could kill him. Why does he always act like that? Doesn’t he love us? What is wrong with us? No, what is wrong with me? What makes him hate me like he does? Why else would he ruin my life, slap my mother, and attack me? He is wonderful sometimes, and then I think I love him, except when he comes home like this...” Once again, the door slams and the cursing begins.

These memories plague legions of men. No, these are not the gentle “Ozzie and Harriet” scenarios acted out on television. These dark dramas are filled with careening ambulances, bloody kitchen floors, and fearful lies — the standard props for an endless cycle of misery in many dysfunctional homes.

Tragedy occurs when the one you admire does something you hate. How would you feel about a man who loves your mother one minute and beats her senseless the next? One moment you are in the park, and the next moment you are in the emergency room. How many times can a little boy lie and say, “I fell down the steps,” when his family’s home doesn’t have steps? All they really have is a house filled with pain.

While most men remember fishing poles and Little League games, others can only recall childhoods speckled with blood, tainted with rape, and sealed with silence. These are the secret afflictions behind their pain, the burning issues that make the drunk drink. These are the fires of torment that drive grown-up men to play perversely with innocent children. Somewhere

deep within the tormented man there is a tormented child who feels doomed to torment others!

“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

EPHESIANS 6:4

Rage has infected our manhood like a contagious disease. It has stolen our normal development because many men were never allowed to enjoy the innocence and freedom of boyhood first! Who triggered such rage in their souls and taught them to act out such anger? Who mentored them in such uncontrollable fury?

LOOSE THE MAN

I know you want answers, but the answers vary from house to house and from man to man. Behind every dysfunction you will find dishonor, disloyalty, or at least disorder. The love of Christ still draws broken men from their tombs of pain today just as it drew Lazarus centuries ago. They quickly respond to the call of hope, yet when they emerge, they are still bound, trapped, and wrapped in the odor of decay.

Will we dare to obey the command Jesus gave His shocked disciples at the grave of Lazarus? Will we risk contamination to “loose them, and let them go”? (See John 11:44.) Untying the knotty problems of real-life men will force us to get personally involved with foul-smelling issues we don’t even like to discuss, let alone unravel with our carefully manicured hands! What happened to the simple hymn-singing and harmless pew-sitting that we’ve grown to love? The praise has given birth to a resurrection, and there is a captive to set free. The pews have been pushed aside; the Master calls us up front to help Him loose the man!

When we call these men out of their dungeons of despair (and they are coming by the thousands), who will be waiting outside the crypt to loose them and let them go? If these freshly resurrected men are to be untied, then mature men will have to do it! It is a laborious process, but *we need men who will loose men*. We need selfless men who will lay their own hands on the putrid bandages of their brothers and say, “Strip by strip we are going to unravel the nightmares. We are going to unravel your attitudes, anger, and temperament. We refuse to let you go back in the grave!”

“And when He thus had spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.”

JOHN 11:43-44

Many of us are bound and tied with the paralyzing issues of the past. We have moved into the light of the God Who calls us, but we can move no farther; we are bound hand and foot with the graveclothes of our pain.

When God's called ones remain tied up, they often become cynical, angry, and tempestuous. Can you imagine what it would be like to wake up and discover you were tightly bound in a sheet, with no hope of escape? Now do you understand why we are called to rob society's graves to reach decaying personalities like Lazarus who have been trapped, wrapped, and rolled into a tomb? We are also called to help men like the Apostle Paul, who openly confessed that his success was not complete. He was still in pursuit of perfection, but he at least had been disengaged from his past.

“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

PHILIPPIANS 3:13-14

The fear of failure can paralyze the runner and immobilize his pursuit of wholeness. Some men are terrified that they will not be able to make it to the light or survive among the whole. They have dwelt in the confinement of their dungeons for so long that they are absolutely terrified! They complain about the church, the pastor, and about this and that and the other, but the real issue is that Lazarus doesn't believe he can make it.

Lazarus is right! He cannot make it unless someone is willing to come close enough to smell the decay and yet choose to stay to loose his soiled bandages. If we can find men who will unravel us, we are blessed. These men become like fathers to us. Their ties cannot be analyzed in microscopic tests because they are our fathers in spirit, not in blood. These surrogate fathers give back to us what life has taken.

FIND A SPIRITUAL FATHER

Once we escape from our tombs, we will discover that missing pieces are filled in and damaged places are repaired through our relationships with our

spiritual fathers. If we want to touch men, then we must learn how to “adopt” one another. Some men desperately need to be adopted because they need to experience a relationship they never had in their childhood. They are searching for a father and mentor.

I believe this is what caused David to be so long suffering with Saul. When David came to Saul’s palace, he was “fresh out of fathers and brothers.” When Samuel the prophet came, David’s father and brothers “forgot” to mention him as a possible candidate for the throne. He was obviously not his father’s preferred son. If Samuel hadn’t persisted, then David would never have been called by his brothers or his father. Maybe you know how it feels to be excluded from the chosen number and branded a misfit. Take heart, for God loves to anoint misfits to fulfill His divine purpose and destiny!

David was honored when King Saul asked him to join his royal household. It sounded like a great opportunity, but Saul was the wrong man. Never choose a father who is jealous of your success, for he will only molest you. Figuratively speaking, he will only touch you for his own pleasure or gain. Many of us who have never been sexually molested know how it feels to be emotionally molested by people who only touched us for their own corrupt gain. In both cases, the result is the same: We are afraid to trust. We are locked up and locked out of a chance to heal deeper issues.

Don’t allow Saul to win in your life. If you had a bad experience in your search for a godly mentor, then try again. God will supply you with a trustworthy surrogate father.

“Elijah passed by him [Elisha], and cast his mantle upon him. And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee.”

1 KINGS 19:19-20

A bond was forged between Elisha and Elijah that day. It was born out of their mutual need for covenant relationship. The best relationships are secured by mutual need — the insurance that defies betrayal. The mutual need of the vine and branch creates a relationship that can be fruitful and productive. This is the bond that God sends into the lives of men who need a father to complete their training. Most men need the approval of a father,

and for this reason, a surrogate father must be someone you respect, or his approval will mean nothing to you.

DON'T MISUSE — MENTOR!

One of the wonderful things about the Church is that it recreates a sense of family. This is especially true for men who never enjoyed the love and approval of a father in their lives. Pastors need to remember that just a touch or a smile from them will reassure even the most staunch of men. It gives men a sense of pride and affirmation rivaled only by the praise of a respected coach whose personal attention gives a football player a warm feeling of accomplishment.

As a pastor, I admit that it is easy to get busy and forget how important my personalized attention is to the performance level and well-being of those with whom I serve — particularly the men who are associated with me.

“For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.”

1 CORINTHIANS 4:15

Many men entering the doors of the Church are bleeding from deep wounds inflicted by natural fathers who beat and abused them throughout their childhood. God is outraged when His wounded sons then find a surrogate father in the Church who unfairly wields his authority and goes off on a tangent of spiritual domination, inflicting fresh abuse on men already crushed!

We need fathers who are sensitive to the fact that they are mentoring and fathering men who have been through traumas and abuses that would stagger the mind. Too many leaders simply inflict more of the very same abuses their proteges already suffered in the natural! These leaders are dictatorial, abusive, and insensitive — all in the name of Christ Jesus. There is a big difference between being “strong and definitive” and being “dictatorial and abusive”!

Many men who fill our pulpits have just as many unresolved issues as their members. No one is perfect, but if these undershepherds do not allow God to reveal, confront, and heal their own problems, they will perpetuate a

vicious cycle of generational curses. Thus the pain passes down from father to son. This pain must stop!

Today, right here and now, I rebuke the curse and the pain that has locked up the bowels of our compassion and made us cold and indifferent! Before this man ruins all who respect him, release him to love his wife and father his sons, both natural and spiritual. Release him from being cold, indifferent, and abusive. He is hurting and imprisoned by his own point of reference. In Jesus' name, I declare: "Let that man go!"

The bond between Elijah and Elisha was so powerful that Elisha walked away from his natural parents and family position to follow Elijah! Elisha burned the twelfth yoke of oxen he was driving and forever left the fields because he had found a surrogate father and a spiritual mentor. This is proof that surrogate adoption doesn't always mean a man's natural father was abusive. Elisha's surrogate relationship had more to do with his inner need to fulfill and stir up the spiritual gift and calling inside him.

POUR WATER ON HIS HANDS

If you want to climb from the mediocre into the supernatural, find someone who is doing what you want to do. People can never give you what they have not received. When you find such a person, don't allow selfishness and manipulation to dominate your life. Don't rob him or rape him with your greed or need. Pour water on his hands – that means *serve him!*

"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."

LUKE 6:38

The greatest investment you can make is an investment in people! That's what God did. He invested His Son in humanity, and He reaped the harvest of the Church. Make an investment; pay your dues. Give, and learn the art of being blessed! Truly great men serve. Truly great men wash each other's feet. You will never be whole unless you learn to serve someone other than yourself!

If you show me a Lot who survived Sodom, then I will show you an Abraham who made an investment in Lot. If you show me an Elisha who did twice as many miracles as his predecessor, then I'll show you an Elijah who stayed up late at night, educating his successor. If you show me a Timothy

who shook his generation and became a great leader, then I will show you an Apostle Paul who kept writing to his surrogate son, even while facing the sneering grin of death.

If you have achieved any level of success, then pour it into someone else! Success is not success without a successor! Paul shared his spiritual memoirs with Timothy as he stood on the banks of time and gazed through the window of death into the scenic sights of eternity. He had already taught him how to preach and how to pray. Now he was teaching Timothy how to die:

“Stand steady, and don’t be afraid of suffering for the Lord. Bring others to Christ. Leave nothing undone that you ought to do.

“I say this because I won’t be around to help you very much longer.”

2 TIMOTHY 4:5-6 TLB

CATCH THE MANTLE

Every now and then, among the press of the pompous pretenders and the prideful prestigious, someone comes along who has the ability to eternally influence your life. He enters your existence humbly, through a side door, and is only a guest for a few moments. Nevertheless, he has a unique ability to show you your own strengths. When he shines, you can better see your own abilities. With a simple smile, he can heal the scars of your childhood. With a word, he can rebuild the broken walls of your self-esteem. His fatherly attention dignifies your existence, and you blossom in his presence like roses in the sun and ripening wheat in a flourishing field.

I warn you, and I warn every member of this generation: the kind of men I am speaking of come in one door and exit through the other. They are strangers passing through the days of our lives. They are phantoms in the night, sent by God to the destitute. These men are like angels in disguise. Neither perfect nor flawless, they are nevertheless powerful and effective agents of God commissioned to leave with those they touch an imparted mantle of excellence and power.

If God grants you the opportunity to walk in the presence of a surrogate father, you will know it without asking another’s opinion. When you hang up the phone, you will be renewed by his reassuring voice and wise words. When you leave the room with him, you will discover you are “pregnant”

with expectation! Cherish the moment and savor the exchange, for in a flash he will be gone from your view.

“And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

“And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.”

2 KINGS 2:11-12

They are whisked away in a wind, taken from view in a cloud. Moved like a crutch from a healed leg, their sudden departure leaves us wobbling as we are forced to stand on our own. Whatever you would give to honor and cherish them at that moment — do it now. If they stepped in when the natural fathers stepped out, if they gave method to the madness and purpose to your pain, then speak quickly, love intensely, and thank them! Then “poof!” they are gone.

The greatest compliment you can give a father is to catch what he gave you and carry on! We cannot worship at the shrine of another man’s success; we must catch what he gives and go quickly on. In a single whirlwind event, Elisha lost his crutch, his mentor, his teacher, and his friend. This stranger who was not his father had become his surrogate father. By the time Elijah took his exit, Elisha didn’t merely long to have *what* his mentor had; he cried out in longing for the man himself — the father and the gift had become one! He realized in one gut-wrenching moment of exploding pain that God had given him a surrogate *father*, and he cried out in anguish, “My father, my father...!” In a flash, that father was gone.

If you feel you have outgrown your need of a father, then at least *be* a father! Somewhere there is a desperate young man whose natural ties are broken. He needs you to mend the breach and repair the jagged edges of his broken heart. Bind him and train him, teach him and pour into him all the things you want to say to the next generation! He is your spaceship to the future; board him quickly and stock him well. When the time of your departure is at hand, before you step from ship to shore, leave a mantle of blessing and anointing behind you. Leave something for us to catch!

I am glad that I am a father to young men, and I am glad I am a son to my precious older fathers. My sonship and my fatherhood are not always by blood, but are always by bond! We are wrapped, tied, and entangled together in the divine fulfillment of God-ordained needs. To my surrogate father, I am a filled heart and an open hand. My heart is filled with the many deposits made by others, and they have made me stand in the heat of the day. My hand is open and ready to grasp what is left behind by those who went before me. I stand ready to maintain their heritage of spiritual excellence. My hand is open and my fingers extended. I will grasp all that is dropped to me!

“And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over.”

2 KINGS 2:14

To my sons, I say, “Walk behind me and watch me close. I am a train in motion. I am a word in flight. I will not stay. I will move like my fathers and lift from your view. Hear my fading voice and touch my weakening pulse, and know that I was here. I am a bubble bursting in a glass. Catch the moment, not the man — he cannot be held. Seize the day, my sons, and catch the wisdom of my heart and the benefit of my pain. When my chariot comes and you feel the wind, catch what I leave behind for you; and for God’s sake...go on!”



CHAPTER ELEVEN

A Man's Best Friend

“These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.”

JOHN 11:11

Lazarus was beyond sleep; he was dead! Jesus called him “friend” anyway. Some people only call you “friend” as long as they can use you or benefit from your existence. Jesus considered Lazarus His friend even though he seemed to be at a point of no return. Their relationship was stronger than the predicament that threatened to divide them.

Our Savior keeps His commitment to men who have been discarded and buried by others. He has always befriended the sick, the decomposing, and the rotten. Jesus is the Friend of sinners. He comes when others have walked away, and His brilliance shines brightest when life seems darkest. He shouts a grave-shaking word of deliverance into the dismal, dank crypts of our lives. He is a God of relationship, and His creation can never escape its need for intimacy with its Creator. It is God Whom we must have. Nothing less will do.

“Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.”

LUKE 3:38

There was nothing in Adam that God hadn't touched, for he was formed by the hand of God. God didn't speak him into existence from a distance. He personally touched, caressed, and molded Adam's shape to perfection.

God's divine fingerprints are etched into every fiber of our beings, as they were with Adam. God knows us in ways more intimate than sex and more probing than surgery. He knows our inward parts. We are graphically naked and totally exposed before His eyes. Nothing is hidden from His view.

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

2 CORINTHIANS 3:18

We have an “open face” relationship with God. He sees our deepest yearnings and knows our darkest cravings. Our all-wise Creator has every right to find our weaknesses obnoxious, but instead He has chosen to love us beyond our failures and lift us beyond despair! We cannot impress Him into loving us — we are already accepted. He has already made up His mind about us, and the blood of Jesus has purchased a righteousness we could not afford.

RUNAWAY MAN

Insecurity keeps us from knowing God. We try to impress Him with our performance, but without Him it is basically a facade. It is knowing God that transforms our wretchedness into righteousness, but we cannot know Him when we are running or hiding from Him!

It began when Adam tasted the forbidden fruit of disobedience and brought death into the world. In the beginning, Adam's obedience held death at bay and locked it out of the earthly realm. Adam's sin opened the lock and allowed death to walk right in through the door of his failure, bringing with it the generational curse of sin on his offspring.

The curse murdered Abel outside the Garden of Eden; mercilessly drowned men, women, and children in the flood; raped Dinah; and plucked out Samson's eyes. It left Lot drunk and his daughters molested. It emasculated the men of Sodom and Gomorrah and burned little babies as sacrifices in the hungry arms of the demonic deities of Molech, Astarte, and Baal.

That consuming fire of sin and death burned out of control all the way to the foot of the cross of Jesus. There the flames of hell encountered One Who couldn't be consumed! He broke the curse and forever destroyed the power that disobedience had unleashed. Jesus Christ broke the curse on the splinters of the cross!

“Having cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.”

COLOSSIANS 2:14, 15 NASB

The “first Adam” was so humiliated by the atrocity of his sin that he did what most of us tend to do when we are ashamed: he hid. The great tragedy is that we have been hiding ever since!

Men are great “hidiers.” We hide our weaknesses, and we hide our proclivities and curiosities. We hide our love, and we often hide our fears. Our hiding habit is destroying our homes, robbing our wives of intimacy, alienating our children, and frustrating our relationship with God. Our “trench coat mentality” has left us with collars up and hats down, draped in pretended secrecy and cringing in false obscurity before the eyes of God.

“And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.”

GENESIS 3:10

Adam's words echo fearfully in the hearts of most of us who wrestle with our failures, foibles, and the demands of our families.

Most men avoid open confrontation. The same confident men who are so tough and brash and brawny elsewhere — these master negotiators of the workplace — find themselves nervous and anxious about facing the 110-pound woman who waits for them at home! Men are intimidated by the voice or rebuke of those they love or respect. Even abusers have anxieties about confrontation, and they sometimes overreact in their unreasoning efforts to camouflage their own inadequacies and insufficiencies.

Adam expressed this fear when he said, “I heard thy voice in the garden, and *I was afraid*” (Genesis 3:10). As you go through stress and strains, can you still hear His voice beneath the struggles?

I WAS NAKED

When the chief executive officer of the Garden of Eden fell off his throne and exposed himself through sin, *he was naked*. God's man of faith and power was *vulnerable*. That's right, I said the male curse word: Adam was *vulnerable*. Men avoid it, but women are forced to live with this feeling perpetually. They are vulnerable in the bedroom, in the boardroom, and in the labor room!

Some incidents and accidents can cause the palms of our hands to sweat because they strip us of our feeling of safety! We seek the safety of disguise and hide in the shadows to avoid vulnerability in any form — physical, emotional, or financial.

We men are uncomfortable with worship because true worship requires us to become vulnerable by expressing our need for God. We are great at saying "I want you," but the prospect of saying "I need you" drives us into the land of vulnerability. It puts us on a street called "Suppose." Have you ever been there? "Suppose others don't respond?" "Suppose I am rejected?" "Suppose someone laughs?" Many of us will avoid any route that might take us down Suppose Street.

The real danger is that some of us are so vulnerable when we are stripped that we are paralyzed with fear! We claim we are not emotional, yet we are so sensitive that a vicious word from a cruel woman can leave the most manly of us impotent! A cutting statement can undermine the strength, vigor, and vitality of even the strongest of men. Most women greatly underestimate the power of their words to magnify or crush their husbands' strength.

The angry words a mother hurls around her son can greatly damage his self-esteem and leave him wilted and insecure — even if they were aimed at his father! At the risk of shattering myths and losing our "me Tarzan, you Jane" reputation, we must teach our sons and daughters to guard the femininity of their sisters and the masculinity of their brothers. They are bleeding because they have been stabbed with loose words and angry tongues. These tools of cruelty are crucifying those who will be missed when they are gone.

Adam stood naked before God because he failed to properly handle his relationship with his wife. He failed Eve by joining her in her failure instead

of acting to save her. We men are still committing that sin, and women continue to hope we will do better. We have merely *reacted* long enough; we need to *act*. God wants strong men who lead instead of weak men who only follow. This may sound chauvinistic, but it is God's plan, not mine. (See 1 Timothy 5:8.)

Have you ever looked back at your past and said, "If only I had..."? Those words reveal a deep level of nakedness and the absence of excuse or alibi. It is the recognition of your own responsibility in your dilemma. It is frightening to stand naked before God, but He can never heal what you are afraid to reveal. [*] It is time to deal with fear.

[*]This important principle of wholeness is presented in more detail in another book I have written titled *Naked and Not Ashamed*.

Fear creates extramarital affairs when men are afraid to confront unresolved issues with their spouses. It causes them to carry weapons when, down on the inside, they are wrestling with the fear that someone will see the frightened little boy hiding behind the big gun. The man who beats his wife is also beating himself, for deep within his soul he knows his life is out of control. His wife is wrongly receiving the blows that he is really aiming at himself. Beneath all his screaming and swearing, he is a terrified little boy having a temper tantrum.

Now that we have exposed the naked truth, what do we do with it?

I WAS AFRAID

Adam confessed to God that he had heard His voice. Adam's sin had left him vulnerable for the first time in his brief existence, and he realized that his imperfection was exposed and naked. Then he had to admit the truth: "I was afraid."

Many men are wrestling with inner fear. Most of us are afraid of intimacy and feelings. Masculine emotions have become the twentieth-century version of "Pandora's box." We don't know all that is in there, but we have the feeling we had better not let it out! We avoid the unknown within and cling to the false disguises of the outer man.

We have fallen in love with the empty symbols of masculinity — the faint suggestions of manhood provided by our jobs, our cars, our guns, and our women. We use them to validate and vindicate our bruised and fragile egos.

We are offended and dismayed because the times have changed *without us!* When did we lose so much control? Where did it go? How do we regain it? Whose fault is it? Like Adam, we want to point a finger and say, “She made me do it” or “The devil made me do it.”

Let’s be honest: We are afraid of losing our jobs. We are afraid of aggressive women who are pushing us out of line for a promotion or opportunity. We mourn our dying sense of aggression and fear our growing sense of passivity. We are afraid of age and change and time, and many of us are wrestling desperately with mid-life crises. The lion of masculinity has lost much of his roar. He is angry, and he is violent. Masculinity is being redefined without our permission — and we have become like pussy cats who are afraid to face their fears in a dark room.

Most threatening of all, like our ancestor Adam before us, we are afraid of our God! Our sin is uncovered, and our guilt has driven us into the bushes to hide!

We are dangerously out of touch with our children. We have told them, “I don’t know, ask your mother!” so many times that they have given us a bill of divorcement from the “parenting game.” We have acted as though we don’t want to play, so our children have taken their marbles and gone to find more willing mentors. Our own actions have removed us from the decision-making process in our own homes!

Lazarus, wake up! The enemy is stealing your home. Are you just “the guy who comes home at night and goes out in the morning”? How important are you to your family?

“But I’m tired. I work hard.”

Listen, the enemy wants you to be so tired that you become an absentee father in your own house! Well, just say, “No, devil!” Lazarus is coming out of his sleep. His wife is tired, and his children are lonely. In the name of Jesus Christ, “Loose the man, and let him go!”

Like weary Jacob, who spent his wedding night with Leah and didn’t realize until morning that she wasn’t his beloved Rachel, we have failed to really know the women we hold through the night.

Have you touched your wife and fondled her, have you toyed with her and played with her, while failing to know her? How long has it been since you looked her in the face? In the beginning she was more than warmth in the bed and food on the stove; she was more than just another paycheck — she

was the melody in your song and the aroma in your rose! Whatever happened to that marvelous woman who was the comforting blanket that shielded you from the cold winds of discontent? Are you feeling cold again?

Man of God, *you have been robbed!* The enemy has stolen the warm, giddy feeling of excitement out of your heart! He has snatched the twinkle out of your eye! How could you let him steal the chase, the pursuit, and the trophy of your loving, nurturing — and yes, your mutually vulnerable relationship with your lover and bride?

Do you want it back? *Fight for it!* Roll up your sleeves and reclaim your creativity. Recall the soft songs, light those fragrant candles, take those long walks of longing, and once again murmur passionate words in your mate's ear. Take back what the enemy is trying to steal from you. Don't be afraid; his devices won't work. Don't believe his lies — it isn't too late. Lazarus, come forth!

God commands us to stand, and He calls us to chase down the blessings and make the miracles happen! God came out to personally confront Adam; now He is out to confront *you!* God has been calling you *through* the things you have been experiencing! Your problems are calling cards for a confrontation with the living God you fear!

Are you afraid you won't be accepted if you respond to His call? Many of us act like Adam: we have prejudged God by assuming that open confrontation with Him will be negative. The truth is that without Him we are left trembling and afraid in our lonely weakness. Our attempts at anger are just a thin camouflage for the gnawing uncertainty and fear that are consuming us.

It is tragic that most men assume God doesn't love fallen and fearful men as much as men who "have it all under control." Look a little closer at Adam! He seemed to have everything under control. He personally named all the animals, subdued every creature, and exercised dominion over the Garden of God. Why was he hiding behind his bushes in Genesis 3 like a naked gardener in the backyard? Adam did not realize that God loves the fallen man as much as He loves the forceful man. If we allow Him to touch us, His love will turn the fallen into the forceful. Unfortunately, the enemy knows that will never happen if we keep hiding in what we used to control. God is calling us out of the bushes and into the light.

I HID MYSELF

Adam was afraid to reveal himself, so he hid himself. Men who are afraid to reveal themselves like to give “things” like money, gifts, houses, or even sex instead. All these things are easier to give than *ourselves*.

Adam didn't hide his work; he hid himself behind his work. Have you hidden who you really are from those around you? Have you hidden how you are changing or aging from those around you? Have you hidden your needs and then become angry because they were not being met?

“I hid myself.” You can't have genuine friendships if you hide your true self. If you hide, then your friends will love *what you do and not who you are!*

Suppose that for some reason you can no longer “do what you do.” Does anyone love you just because you are you? Have you revealed the “real you” to anyone else? True friendship and intimacy are achieved when you feel so comfortable around others that you can be yourself. Stop hiding yourself. If you don't, you may lose your true self and become the lie you pretend to be!

Your loving God is seeking the man He has made who is hurting. God is your only hope, your last chance, and your only solution. Yet, instead of running to the embrace of God, you insist on hiding behind the ridiculously small, dying fig leaves of human achievement! Adam's little apron was falling apart even as he made it, and he didn't have the good sense to come out of hiding! You don't have any excuse either.

Are you facing situations that are falling apart? You may be tired and worried, but there is a God in the Garden Who longs to heal the hurting hearts of broken men. Have you heard His voice? He is searching through the dying twigs and crumbling leaves of your makeshift disguise because He wants to uncover the real you. No performance is necessary. You don't have to impress Him, and you can't anyway. He already knows every pain you are hiding, so step away from the bushes. Whether you are right or wrong, weak or strong, your Father is calling you.

Most of your jobs and relationships were built on your personal performance and achievement, but God's call is not like that. All He wants is you — complete with your embarrassment, failures, fear, and scraped knees. *He is your best Friend*, and He longs to wipe away your secret tears, strengthen your heart, salvage your home, and change your life! You can

relax with Him because He loves you, whether you are weak or strong, tall or short, thin or fat, right or wrong.

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

JOHN 15:13

Jesus is the only One Who was willing to die to be your Friend! His love is secure; He already knows about your hidden fears and secret sorrows. He may not agree with everything you think or do, but He is committed to help you become what you are destined to be—spotless in His love.

Loneliness is impossible once you understand that God is committed to you.

Men struggle with commitment. When I met my wife, I knew in my heart that she was the one for me. Yet the hardest thing in the world for me was trying to get my lips to part and force my tongue to cooperate in forming the words, “Let’s get m-a...m-a-r...m-a-r-r-i-e-d!” Little boys seldom talk about “what kind of woman” they want to marry. Commitment comes hard for us males because we fear regret! We are afraid to think, “Perhaps I am making a mistake.” I have never regretted my decision to marry Serita, but it was hard to make my mouth line up with my heart and say those unmentionable words, “I do!”

Many of us struggle with commitment because we seldom see it in others. We should look at God instead of men. He has committed Himself to love us, though we are a “walking crisis” at times. He is passionately faithful to a race of “living messes.”

Face it: God dares to be your Friend. If He can stand to love you, surely you can learn to love the imperfections in your wife and other people (without using their imperfections as an excuse for promiscuity!).

God teaches us to love by example.

The need for performance and achievement is gone. Once you step away from the bushes and drop your ridiculous apron of dying fig leaves, you will discover how refreshing it is to be forgiven and accepted for who you really are. When you come to God in your nakedness, He tells you to relax: “It’s just Papa.” One of the most masculine warriors in antiquity unveiled the secret of God’s rest. Read every word slowly and out loud to yourself. Let these words bring healing to your weary heart:

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”

PSALM 23:1-6

David is saying, “Relax, my friend. God’s blessing is not achieved by your efforts but by His goodness. He has done you a favor by blessing you because He is your Friend.”

As men, you and I are reflections of God. We were created in His image and His likeness. Yes, you and I were created to reflect His deity and represent His wholeness to a fallen world. Isn’t it ironic that we must be naked before Him in order to do it?

Calm yourself by remembering that God is with you. You may face struggles in your marriage and delays in your career. You may still feel driven to validate your self-worth by desperately groping for things, women, or some other unacceptable sacrifice. Whatever you face, take it to God — even the issues that you feel no one would understand. He knows you. He can heal the pain you hide behind your stern looks and rugged stance. Don’t build your success on an ulcer. If you don’t learn how to step away from the bush and communicate openly with God, then you will suffocate behind the stifling mask of false manhood and collapse on the stage of opportunity. You will reach the peak of success only to collapse on the mountain you spent our energy to climb!

Jesus told His disciples, “Our friend Lazarus is asleep; we must go and wake him up.” He is trying to wake you too. Slow down and live. God is calling.

“Hey! Wake up before you begin to deteriorate in the cold mausoleum of machismo. Neither pride nor ego is worth the destruction of your potency as a father, a husband, and a man. Wake up and take My hand!”

LOOK FOR HIS HAND

Peter tried to walk with God in a storm and in a palace. In one situation he was nearly buried beneath the turbulent waves of an angry sea and in the other by his betrayal of God’s trust. In each failure, just before he was

completely swallowed up, *he saw a holy hand reaching out to him!* It was the warm hand of God, Who was saying to him, “In spite of your failure, you are too valuable to Me to lose!”

God is extending His loving hand to every recovering man. This hand can usher a man right through the tangled maze of his boyhood pain and into the brightness of godly maturity and stability. Admit it or not, you need His hand! Times and circumstances are changing. If you don't swallow your pride, admit your sin, and accept God's outstretched hand, then you will perish! God didn't bring you this far to see you drown. Just keep your head up in the storm and look for His hand.

It is there for every dark night, for every tainted secret, and for every wounded marriage. The hand of God is warm and tender, yet firm and strong. He wipes away the hidden tears we never allowed to fall. He can raise and cleanse the dead things in us and strengthen the weak areas we have tried to hide. His hand touches the turmoil and corrects the wrongs in us.

No matter what you lack, there is one thing you have! No matter how deep the pain, no matter how scarred your trauma leaves you, you are still blessed. The hand of God has lifted you from the storm and into His presence! He has lifted you from emasculated failure to sure manhood and sonship.

Your blessing transcends commerce and merchandise. It excels all trophies and temporary human accolades. You are blessed beyond the trivial pursuits of self-aggrandizement. You have ascended to another level. You have embraced the stars and held hands with the Maker of the universe. You will attain no greater success than that which you will experience when — through gross despair and trembling peril — you stagger into the arms of God. In Jesus, you have found a Friend closer than a brother!



CHAPTER TWELVE

The Saul Syndrome

“And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.”

1 SAMUEL 18:7-9

King Saul was the star of his day, the premier potentate of his hour, the most respected man in the kingdom. He was chosen of God and was a blessing to Israel. David admired him so much that even when Saul’s sin undermined his purpose, David continued to respect him for what he had once been. Saul was the king, and young David had killed the giant for him. However, no matter how much David admired and respected Saul, nothing could alter the greater purpose of God.

Saul was not all bad; he simply could not accept change. His great tragedy is shared by millions of men in our day: It is the inability to say farewell to parting strength! Don’t allow pride to rob you of life and strength. Enjoy each stage of your life, and when God says, “Release it!” then give it all to Him!

Graying beards, balding heads, and sagging triceps denote certain realities that cannot safely be ignored. They don’t always signal a significant decline; sometimes they are messengers confirming our arrival at a stage where God wants to reassign us. (He has reassigned me many times throughout my life.)

One warning rings true for us all: We become vulnerable to the “Saul syndrome” whenever we lose elasticity and become possessive and afraid of change.

I call myself a “fairly young middle-aged man,” but I have to accept the reality of certain changes in my stamina, intensity, and endurance. (Yes, I am being kind to myself.) These changes are driven home daily by my five children, whose rapid growth is a public billboard that constantly announces my chronological “progress.”

I am a reluctant but sharp contrast to my sixteen-year-old twin sons whose masculinity is awakening like a sleeping giant. Their youthful dawn is fresh and vibrant, and their reflexes are quite keen. They wake up in the morning as if they have just worked out in the gym and had a massage! When I awake in the morning, my bones sound like a breakfast cereal I used to eat as a child — the one that goes “snap, crackle, pop.” I am somewhat consoled by the knowledge that after a series of stretches, scratches, and whatever else we all have to do but don’t need to discuss, I can generally crank my “mature” body into gear.

When my older sons challenged me to get up from the dinner table and do a series of somersaults, I smiled and wisely said, “I can do anything I have ever done. It’s just that at this stage, I need a better reason to do it than I did at your age!”

Seriously, I would be silly to compete with my exuberant young children. I am not called to *compete* with them; I am called to *cultivate* them. I can only be comfortable with that situation if I have learned to appreciate the various stages of life. I understand that this stage has different advantages and disadvantages from other stages in my life.

Few things are more pathetic than the sight of an old man shuffling his walker out of his garage to get into a new Corvette. The car is too fast for the hand that controls it. That’s how ridiculous we look when we fail to appreciate where we are and what we ought to do in that particular stage of life!

Physical and mental abilities vary from person to person, but never be afraid to redefine your priorities. Learn to appreciate the various stages of life rather than fear them. It is not a sin to want a Corvette in your old age, but it may not be the wisest desire to pursue. The greater part of wisdom

says it might be wiser to go for a *ride* in a sports car rather than to *drive* one at the age of ninety!

AGES AND STAGES

How old is old? At what age are we aged? I cannot tell you, and when I am old, I probably will not know it. My grandmother, who is quickly approaching her one-hundredth birthday, once told me, "As long as you can get out of a chair without having to plan it thirty minutes in advance, you are not old!" The chief concern in her mind is the issue of being inoperative.

Some people simply age without becoming old. They resist the temptation to become antiquated, without being ridiculous. They dress and act appropriately for their age and physical stage, but they refuse to dry up! These are not the men who chase young women only to catch them and fall asleep with the smell of deep-heating rub in the room. These are men who have found richness at every stage of their lives and have developed an appreciation for each stage they have entered.

I can do some things as a man that my sons cannot do. I enjoy independence and the ability to make my own decisions. I am too old to be a child, but I am still too young to be an old man. This intermediate stage of life allows me to sit by the fire with the elders, gleaning from their wisdom and perspectives, and then enjoy the option of playing ball with the youth, feeling the fire of their enthusiasm.

My children are enjoying their ages as well. They have provision without having to provide. For them life is a pearl, still nestled in its protective oyster. They have the excitement of the unexplored, and they are intoxicated with the erroneous feeling of being immortal! They are also drunk with plans and excited by the promises of people I am suspicious of and not interested in believing. Their idea of a good day is the one in which they somehow get their hands on my car keys. My idea of a good day is the one in which they send me the car title and say it is paid in full!

Older men enjoy certain things that I cannot enjoy now. They can dismiss the daily duties and concerns of child rearing in their home (although parental love never allows us to be completely free of parental entanglements). If they have been wise, they can afford long vacations or

retirement. They have entered into a stage of maintenance completely apart from the struggle to attain.

It is foolish to get to that senior stage and attack life rather than simply enjoy it. The men who are seasoned survivors and victors become a tribute and testimony to younger men and to the older men who will soon enter that senior stage themselves. We are not opponents; we are simply men running the same race at different stages and in different lanes. Let's stay in our lane and run on!

The bodies of the men who have gone before us have changed, but their past accomplishments and fruitfulness make them living monuments of excellence and masculine wholeness. They are time's prime collection of trophies. They stand in wisdom and look at us through wrinkled eyes with smiles that reflect pride and quiet strength. They are old lions calmly surveying the world from a secluded corner or walking through life with wisdom won through decades of right and wrong decisions. *We need them!*

Each stage of life has its own challenges and potential. Somewhere ahead of me in yet another stage is the smile of contentment that I will display if I have handled this stage correctly. It is the smile that comes from knowing I had my day and I lived it to the fullest. I have been up to bat, and I hit hard and ran fast. It is the smile that is birthed in the contentment of fulfillment.

We can't stop time. Everything is moving. The movie stars of yesterday no longer entertain us to the degree they once did. Public opinion is fickle, and as many famous and fallen have discovered to their dismay, people will change their mind about you in a flash! One moment they throng you, and the next day they rush past you to enthrone someone else. Do you want some good advice? Don't take the opinions of people too seriously.

Saul struggled with the changing whims of the people. He was addicted to their praises, but the crowd that once roared for him now cheered for another. The enemy will often use our ego against us as we pass through the portal from one stage to another. Unlike Saul, you and I need to prepare for tomorrow financially, spiritually, and emotionally. Life insurance policies, wills, retirement plans, and investment portfolios are the tools of a visionary who understands that seasons don't last. We need to be good stewards of our strength and use our "hay day" to prepare for the rainy day.

Many great men have failed to prepare for the rainy day; they have thought they would always be as they were in their prime. This is obviously

not true. The dominant Christian philosophy has been to disregard plans for the future and just “wait on the Lord’s return.” If you have that conviction, I challenge you to live holy as if He will come in the morning but prepare and build as if He will not.

“Children are not responsible to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.”

2 CORINTHIANS 12:14 NASB

We need to leave a heritage behind us for the next generation. Many of us had it hard because nothing was left for us to build upon! If each man only provides enough for his day and no more, then he sends his son all the way back to the first grade to start all over again! God wants His people to build their wealth and pass along their wisdom from generation to generation.

Father, prepare for your son. Pastor, prepare for your successor. If you dare to become involved with the next generation, then you will always be a *part* of their success rather than *intimidated* by it!

It is a tragic waste for a man to leave nothing to his credit except consumption. Be careful lest you become a better consumer than an investor. That is the mark of a self-centered man!

Many gifted people bless everyone else with their gift and then die poor because they assumed they would always be able to build back what they had spent. Their overspending caught up to them because they failed to realize they wouldn’t always have the same rate of production! Their children are angry because they were deprived of their parents’ presence in life because they were “so busy.” Now, after their death, the children are also denied their inheritance!

God wants you to be wiser than that. Leave your children a spiritual and natural heritage. Whoever comes after you — whether it is your child or your successor — he or she should have it easier than you did because blessed people always leave a blessing!

I have news for you: As you age, your money-making potential decreases drastically! What are you doing with the daylight you have left? My dear brother, when night comes, no man — no matter how gifted he is — can work! I know this doesn’t sound spiritual, but it is true. God has given us space to prepare, but He cannot delay His purposes just because we have failed to plan. I challenge you to prepare a plan for your future! It is God’s will that you not only be blessed but that you become a blessing as a man of

God. He told Abraham that all families of the earth were to be blessed because of him! (See Genesis 18:18.)

Teach your children wisdom. Show them how to make a dollar and how to invest it for maximum return. Teach them how to handle money without worshipping it!

Do you have a plan for your life, or are you asking your wife and family to follow you as you wander through the “carnival of life” choosing rides at random? You need a realistic plan that allows for the changing ages and stages of manhood. Since you know you will not always be at the stage you are in now, you need to know how you are going to capitalize on this brief moment in your history. God’s grace is giving you a chance to prepare for the next stage.

Build a foundation in the prime of your strength and productivity for your senior years to rest upon, otherwise need and bitterness may produce jealousy, anger, and frustration. If you are a young man looking for a surrogate father, be careful to choose a man who has included in his plans a provision for his maturing years. If not, he may later become jealous of you and you may both suffer in the bitter bondage of the “Saul syndrome.”

The kingdom needs safe fathers, spiritual fathers who will not financially, spiritually, or emotionally “molest” their sons. The only way to achieve lasting security is to make provision for your future needs during the time of your greatest strength. Create a plan that will allow you to be led by God and not driven by need.

Many fathers who were full of wisdom in other areas failed to prepare for the later stage in their lives. Nothing is more disturbing than to see a man in old age struggling just to maintain a subsistence income. He should be able to spend time in prayer and nurture his grandchildren. There has to be a better way!

LET’S BE MEN IN BUSINESS!

It is time for you and me to grow up and move our concerns from games and girls! It is time for us to make our strength count in the summer so we can be warm and comfortable in the winter! Saul resisted the inevitable, and he wasted his last years trying to murder the young man he admired the

most because he was jealous that God had chosen David to replace him as king.

If you feel pain every time you hear the crowd chanting for someone else, then you are not prepared for the change it signals. If you haven't learned to be proud to contribute your strength to someone else's success like a good coach does, then you are suffering from the "Saul syndrome"! In the end, Saul lost everything because he wouldn't move when God said it was time. It is a tragedy to ruin early successes by failing to understand whose turn it is on the stage!

Confess this with me: "I will transform, but I refuse to transgress the rights of others. I am strong at all ages. I am vibrant at all stages. I am a loosed man, not a man on the loose. I am neither out of control nor out of conquest."

My acceptance of change doesn't mean I am going to the farm to die; it just allows me to pursue the interest that each stage of life affords. I don't want to eat food that is too rich, drive cars that are too fast, or attack giants that are too big!

EVERYTHING MUST CHANGE

"And Ishbubenob, which was of the sons of the giant, the weight of whose spear weighed three hundred shekels of brass in weight, he being girded with a new sword, thought to have slain David. But Abishai the son of Zeruah succoured him, and smote the Philistine, and killed him. Then the men of David sware unto him, saying, Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel."

2 SAMUEL 21:16-17

David's youthful strength terrified and intimidated his enemies in the early years, but time changes things. Even David discovered that his original strength and calling had changed. He was no longer needed or equipped to fight as a warrior. He was *still needed*, but now he was to lead as a king. His weapons were wisdom and God's anointing, not a sword and shield.

Who wants to hire someone who lacks flexibility? Who needs an employee who will not retrain or adjust to changing times and needs? Who would expect a brittle-boned general to carry heavy ammunition crates in the heat of battle when he could accomplish so much more in a command post, skillfully directing the young and the strong with his white-headed wisdom?

You must be careful to love your Assigner more than your assignment. You must love God more than whatever He has asked you to do! Ultimately, the day will come when He will not ask you to serve Him in that way anymore. Don't allow your job, your marriage, or your ministry to rob you of your walk with God — because all else is subject to change.

Learn from David's mistakes. In the heat of battle, he tried to kill a giant just as he had always done in the past. He was shocked to realize that he too was beginning to suffer from the "Saul syndrome." His character and his morality were intact, but he had failed to recognize the different stage in his life, and it was almost fatal. Only the quick intervention of a younger warrior saved him.

David realized that he no longer needed to kill giants — he had been given young men who could kill them for him. *Excellent leadership always works itself out of a job!* We should always be training and teaching until one day we step from labor into reward.

Stagnancy is the enemy of progression. Keep moving. When you learn the art of release, you will begin to expect greater things. People only hold onto something when they believe nothing else will come.

"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

PSALM 1:3


Don't allow your leaf to wither just because your season is ending! Fruit-bearing and leaf-withering are two entirely different things. Saul let his leaf wither when he knew his fruitful season was over. His season had ended and David's was beginning, but Saul could have prolonged his season by obeying God's Word. (See 1 Samuel 15:22.)

When the fruit-bearing season is over, you still can keep the leaves! Withered leaves signify the presence of disease, or the impending death of the tree. Do not allow the disease of bitterness to wither your leaf and change your attitude. If you are wise you will be able to live on the harvests and prosperity of the past. Beneath your branches you should see new saplings coming up as a result of your presence. They may be new trees, but they are still your fruit. Continue to prosper and produce through the lives of your offspring.

Men may soon forget the work that you have done, but that is their loss. Any culture that fails to honor its parents will not last long, but I assure you that God has kept a record. He will pay you for every sacrifice you made and all the work you have done. The pay isn't limited to eternity after death — you can expect rewards even now. There will be blessings to wake you up in the morning and mercies to rock you to sleep at night!

Walk tall and stand firm. We need your presence! You are the light of Israel and a bright point of revelation in our nation. You are too important to have to do what you used to do. Sit at the fire of our counsels like a wise chief. If you plan the strategy, then we will fight the war armed with both the wisdom of the aged and the zealous strength of the young! Your wisdom is sharper and more effective than the arrow notched on your battle-scarred bow, and your calm encouragement is the fuel that charges us to war. A simple smile from a godly elder will exorcise the demons of our youth and stabilize the fleeting fear of failure in our hearts.

We all get to play on the stage and stand in the limelight, but ultimately we will hear the applause offered to someone else. As the crowd thins and the cheering fades, we must understand that the moving of the crowd doesn't signify the moving of God! Roles change and costumes are altered because the stage is on wheels. The world continues to turn, and focus changes from act to act, but some things always remain the same: the weaknesses of men, the power of God, and the continual changing of the stage.



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

When the Clothes They Make Don't Fit!

Lazarus could not loose himself from his bondages. There are areas in your life where you too will have to wait and rely on others to loose you. Although your struggle to survive is over, theirs has just begun. They may face a struggle just to trust you again. Their struggle may be to understand the darkest and most corrupt part of you and love you anyway. When they first see you come forth out of your pit, they may be tempted to leave you the way they found you!

“And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.”

JOHN 11:44

Lazarus was raised from the dead, but he was only halfway home to freedom. Now he had to wait for his shocked loved ones to hear the Master's call. He was at the mercy of his mourners. If you are raised from a grave of failure or weakness, you will still be tangled up with soiled bandages, tender scars, jangled emotions, and unsavory affairs that must be loosed *by other people*.

You and I would like to think that once Jesus calls a person out of a tomb by the power of His Word, it is all over. It isn't. Jesus has one more command, and it isn't directed to the grave or to the one who was in it. His

words are for the people who loved and worked with the man in the rags of his death: *“Loose him, and let him go!”*

If you have been through a radical change or moral recovery, then be patient. The very people who encouraged you are probably leery of you. They were victims too. When children have had to condition themselves to distrust a father they desperately wanted to trust, it is not easy for them to suddenly turn around and draw close to him again. They are afraid. They have been caught in the clutches of grown-people problems. Problems that confuse adults devastate children. Be fair with them. You need to communicate as never before. Your only hope for healing is honest communication filled with compassion.

If you have just come through major struggles or failures, then you face other battles with the aftereffects or fallout from your crisis. Your struggles probably challenged everyone in your family, and it may have made victims of your wife and children! Sin, compulsions, weaknesses, and pride can inflict so much pain on those who depend on you that even after you have changed, they just can't seem to trust you as they once did. Once trust has been damaged, the drive to survive makes it hard for people to again trust anyone who hurt them.

Wives who have ridden an emotional roller coaster to survive a husband's adulterous affair or an addiction to cocaine, alcohol, or gambling are usually in a state of emotional shock. They have fought the devil and won, and now they have their husbands back, but unfortunately, the struggle can leave them devastated and wary. To heal fully, these wives need time and prayer.

This interval amounts to a “probation period” that can be viewed as an insult to a man who has used all his strength to come back home to a reception that is less than what he thought it would be! He doesn't realize he is dealing with someone whose hopes have been dashed against the rocks so many times that her defense mechanism now mechanically guards her heart against any possible source of pain — especially from him. He is offended by her raw survival instinct because he feels that he deserves a little more positive support. Inevitably tempers flare, nerves get on edge, and the already strained family ties begin to fray.

Men often expect to be given understanding and patience but don't know how to give them! If you have been through an affair and your marriage is being recycled, go slowly! A lot of damage is on the inside, like a

hemorrhage. Your companion may be suffering from a blow to her self-esteem, and your children may be wrestling with the pain of embarrassment. You lasted this long; surely you can survive a while longer. Just don't look for shortcuts. This healing calls for patience and wisdom.

This "after-the-fact" tragedy is amplified because it is unexpected. You have made the hard choices and the changes to overcome a problem for the sake of your family and yourself. Surely you'll be greeted with a massive celebration when you get home! Instead, you come home to tension, and your exciting news of deliverance wins only a suspicious noncommittal response that leaves you confused.

Your original "problem" is no longer the primary one. You have come through that challenge somehow and have returned to take your place once again as a responsible male. Now you face the side effects of your original problem — can the situation possibly be worse? Take heart. The same God Who gave you the grace to survive and revive will also help you work through these residual problems. Life is filled with entanglements, complexities, problems, tests, challenges, and rewards. You are a survivor. You are destined to triumph.

Years ago, it was fashionable to teach the Church about modest dress as an outward sign of sanctification. We carefully taught our young people what they could and could not wear, but we never dealt with the desires behind the actions. We limited our emphasis to outward appearance. As long as the "patient" sat up in the bed, smiled, and maintained a positive confession, then we were satisfied. We basically weren't interested in the fact that beneath the sheets, the patient was hemorrhaging and dying before our eyes!

The Church and the world are full of "patients" who are "all dressed up but bleeding inside." Yes, they are driving nice cars and buying elaborate homes, but they are still bent over in pain and repressed rage.

Men fresh from the grave of failure are often rejected by those from whom they sought acceptance. Like disenchanted and disillusioned Vietnam veterans, they survived the jungles and caught the last copter out of Saigon, only to come back home to homelessness. They kissed the earth only to find there was no place for them to stay. Where could they go once the parade was over and the lone bugle ceased its plaintive call? The drum roll stopped, the majorette packed away her baton, and the veterans of conflagration became the victims of rejection.

Silent rage crept up in the hearts of young men who left home while still little boys with footballs in their rooms and came back too old and cold to be who they were and unable to become who they would have been. They were trapped in a vacuum, just as much casualties of war as their buddies who died in the rice paddies. It was painful for all of us. Any time men survive an incident but are never treated for the residual struggles, we all end up in pain!

Many good men have not resolved bad issues that traumatized them early in life. They have buried their pain deep inside and consider it a weakness. We watch them drink too much, get angry too quickly, or withdraw in silent bitterness, and we are quick to scold them for the *symptoms* of their secret pain. We need to heal the *cause* of the pain. A symptom announces to the body that something is wrong. The symptoms of residual sins clinging to the lives of our sons are signs that “Lazarus may be raised, but he is definitely not loosed.”

Some physicians will not give painkillers when treating certain injuries because they do not want to camouflage the symptoms that help them more accurately diagnose the source of the pain. Religion has been a painkiller ingested by the Church. It only numbs the pain while hiding the cause of the sickness! There is a distinct difference between religion and deliverance. The Church has been satisfied to camouflage problems by depressing the symptoms. Caution: This was the problem with the law; it only treated the symptoms and let the terminal affliction persist.

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.”

ROMANS 8:3

The real problem can only be treated if the symptoms are admitted. The Church seems too embarrassed by the symptoms to deal with the problem. At first, only the parishioners wrestled with divorce and remarriage. Now the problem has swept from the pews to the pulpit. The Church has failed because it has tried to legislate morality through legalism. The acts of sin are merely symptoms of a damaged or sometimes unregenerate heart!

Unfortunately, *we are not comfortable with other men's sins, just our own.* We seem to overlook the sins of the dead. We forgive men like David, but we gather like vultures to victimize such men as fallen televangelists. We have a

double standard: “It’s not what was done that matters — it’s who did it! If it was my son, I will quote one scripture, but if it was your son, then I will quote another, less forgiving text.” My brethren, these things ought not to be!

How can we condemn abortion and then shun women with illegitimate children? How can we condemn divorce and fail to teach and practice restoration for damaged marriages? How can we minister to drug addicts, homosexuals, alcoholics, and other addictive/compulsive behaviors and fail to prepare to invest the weeks, months, or years it may take to untangle the graveclothes that are holding up the divine recycling process? What good is it to get the former criminal out of jail if we won’t give him a job when he returns to society?

Let’s face it, our men are tied up and entangled in some pretty stinky stuff. When Jesus wanted to raise Lazarus, his sister protested and promptly warned Jesus, “By this time he stinketh” (John 11:39). It is simple: Anyone who gets involved with a “riser” will experience some discomfort. His problem is not fragrant; it stinks. Even after conversion, such men are often still entangled in bondages and weaknesses that challenge the local church, the family, and even the man himself. He has awakened from a situation of death only to find that he is still tied and tangled. To whom can he turn? Very often the man’s wife is afraid, his children are insecure, and his employer feels burned and uninterested. We need to untangle Lazarus and let him go!

If you find yourself in Lazarus’s position, you will have to know one thing for yourself: God would not have awakened you from your sleep if He didn’t have a plan for your life! He is the Author and Finisher of your faith. (See Hebrews 12:2.) What He starts He finishes. He is not an incomplete God. He is Alpha and Omega, First and Last, Beginning and End. (See Revelation 1:8.) He will complete what He started in you. (Philippians 1:6.) Many areas of your life will need God’s touch and care. Remember that the greater your injury, the more lengthy your recovery will be. It may take a while, but it can be done. Jesus says, “Loose that man, and let him go!”

If you are the wife of a man who has been through a highly addictive situation that traumatized you both, then I understand your pain, your fear, and your reluctance to trust again. If you really want to see the glory of God raise him up completely, then you must be courageous enough to release him. The greatest gift you can give him as well as *yourself* is the gift of

forgiveness. Take the handcuffs off him and allow God to heal — or unforgiveness will imprison both of you. If you can't trust him, then trust God. Mature trust says, "God, I believe nothing will challenge me that You and I cannot handle." That's devil-chasing faith, and if you believe it, hell is in trouble!

If you really want to loose your man, then it may mean you will have to allow him back into the part of your heart you keep under lock and key! It may mean you will have to trust him in an area that once caused you great pain. It will not be easy, but it is important for you to experience healing and forgiveness on a deeper level.

Many women have hidden so much of their heart because of pain that they have lost themselves to the problem!

The man is out of the grave, but are you? If you cannot open up what you locked up, you are still in bondage to the past. You must not only have faith for his recovery — you must also have faith in your ability to survive and God's ability to protect you and all you have established in Him!

Brother, if your mate has trusted in your deliverance enough to loose you, you have a responsibility to guard her trust with all your heart! Nothing holds people accountable like trust. Many continue in weaknesses because they feel they have been "licensed" by someone who refuses to believe they can change. Some men think unbelief gives them permission to continue as they were. Sometimes we feed on one another's weaknesses. Some wives need to feel needed, so they nag and fuss, thinking they are showing concern and care. Other wives nag because of "the mother syndrome" and scold the man as if he were a child. It all feeds into a confusion that perpetuates itself in a cause-and-effect syndrome that isn't healthy for either party.

TRAPPED BEHIND THE BANDAGES

"Where are our men?" children and wives are asking. Single ladies are asking the same thing. Even God Himself wants to know, "Adam, where art thou?"

Here is the answer: They are trapped behind the pain of unresolved issues, bitter divorces, and court decisions that no longer allow them to see their own children. They are trapped behind the "macho myth" and the empty symbols of worldly success. They are trapped behind drugs, in prison within

and without. They are trapped in dungeons of unforgiveness because someone will not release them, and they are powerless to release themselves. These are the next pastors, poets, artists, and presidential candidates. But we will never hear their message, listen to their song, or benefit from their leadership because we don't have the courage to loose them and let them go!

If we are going to hear the new ballads or admire the latest painting, we must loose them. If we are going to feel their arms around our children and hear their tenor in the choir, we had better get the scissors and cut them loose! Satan trembles at the growing sound I hear in my ears — the sound of tearing bandages. Like caterpillars loosed from their cocoons, men are coming forth all over the nation! Some are delivered from drugs, some from pain. There is a riot, a revolution; men are coming forth from Wall Street in New York to Watts in Los Angeles! They are black and white, rich and poor, educated and illiterate, for each man has his own brand of bondage to escape. These are the “Houdinis” of our generation; their magic is in their survival. They were left for dead, but they have survived. They have come forth, and they refuse to live in cocoons.

This is the day of the *hue man*, the man of many colors. I am a rainbow man — a sign and a promise from God! I am black, I am white, I am red, I am brown. I am black enough to join your clubs, live in your neighborhoods, and die with a deed in my hands. I am red enough to ride my horse off the reservation and onto the college campus. And I am brown enough to turn a “green card” into a credit card, teaching my sons to buy the orchards and not just work them. I am all men made of clay, for one clay made me and one blood fills me. One hell taunts me, and one God saved me. I am not strange or weird, peculiar or different; I am the same clay — just a different shade. I am a man just like you; I am just another hue.

“Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.”

MATTHEW 5:15

Satan hates us *hue men* because we are created in the image and the likeness of God, and our spirits are “the candle of the Lord.” We light up the dark places. Where there is impassable water, we build bridges. Where there is war, we sign treaties. Where there is tragedy, we send medicine. How can men work alone to cure ills, stop plagues, and subdue nations...and then die

behind the walls of their own bandages? It cannot be done. It must not be done. Jesus said we were not made to be hid but to be seen. It is time to loose the man and let him go!

Every time I see a prisoner's painting or read a poem written in a jail cell, every time I see a junkie paint a house or build a room for the homeless — I know I am seeing what could have been and what should have been. Even in the eyes of the most hardened racist, I have caught a glimpse of deep regret. What has happened to us? Why do we allow the bandage to survive but leave the man behind it to die? We need to wake up shouting in the morning! It is time for us men to awake out of our sleep. We are not dead — we are alive!

We may be bleeding, but we are alive. We may have to reach our children with long arms to bridge the distance between us; we may have to wipe our own tears or sing to ourselves in the morning light. No matter what it takes, let the record show that *this Lazarus is not dead*. He has problems and pains with even more struggles and tests ahead, but he is definitely not dead!

Sisters, you've been praying for us and we thank you, but we are back. We have been in hell, and we smell like smoke. We are strong but weak, right but wrong, masculine but feminine. We are dominant yet passive. We are Clark Kent and Superman; we are a touch of all things. We are many hues.

We have no image left to protect. We have already disappointed ourselves, our friends, and our families, but we are no longer ashamed. We are too grateful to be embarrassed. We were supposed to be dead, but like Lazarus, our life has been returned as a favor, a gift from God. Again, He has given the gift of life to men who were dead. We can never be who we were then! We are being transformed constantly, and we will change colors before your eyes. Many-splendored and multicolored, there is a new man in your old man. There is a divine education in the illiterate and a holy ignorance in the intelligent, for we are many hues.

I speak to my fathers, my brothers, and my friends. I speak to the *hue man* whose many hues have decorated the dark places and added variety to the mundane. There is nothing that can hold you! There is no bondage so tight, no tragedy so overwhelming, that you cannot unravel yourself and go on!

LEAP OUT!

I have always imagined Lazarus *leaping* out of the tomb. When he heard the Lord's call, he was too bound up to walk and too tenacious to stay! He made up his mind to come out, no matter what it took.

I challenge the men across this nation to make the same commitment as we near the end of a millennium: Our roles are changing, and we are constantly being challenged economically, emotionally, socially, and even maritally. If we are going to survive, we must be able to hear God when He calls and leap when we hear. Leaping is what men do who are too incapacitated to walk but too determined to stay in the tomb!

God is looking for radical men who will move suddenly when their freedom is in danger. Society cannot hold down a leaping man. Divorce, drugs, or financial crises cannot hold a leaper. Leapers just keep leaping. These men will not allow their incapacitation to restrict their response to God.

If you are not dead, then don't play dead. The enemy wants you to lie down for life and play dead. But I command you in the name of Jesus, Who splits graves open, Who causes earth tremors, and Who shall return with a shout: "*Leap out!*"

This is not the day for the sniveling, weeping, weak, limp-wristed, emasculated man. This is the day for the leaping, jumping, rejoicing, resourceful man! Leap out! God has a plan for you. *You can't meander into the move of God. When you hear Him calling you, do what Lazarus did!* "Ready or not, stinking or not, dressed or not, here I come!"

Tombs are designed for men who won't be back, and Lazarus's tomb represents an area of your life in which you have been buried by those around you who gave up on your recovery. Sometimes they place you in these tombs when they are convinced you will not be back or when they can't stand the roller coaster ride to your recovery. If you want to make a comeback, you must come out from the dead and the dead places. All who love you ride with you, whether they want to or not. The difference is that their decisions didn't create the ride, but they must ride nevertheless!

The tomb promises relief to others because it removes the pain of failed expectations and the disappointment of betrayal that comes along with failed promises. You and I can understand their pain, but it is important for you to believe in yourself. If you are going to be raised from death in your life, then your feet must do the leaping! Lazarus knew that if he was going to

rise, then it had to be right then. Even though his sisters felt that their brother would never come back, he had to believe for himself before he could act decisively.

RELEASE GRANTED! SUPPORT DENIED!

Do you realize that we don't heal at the same rate? Every person in a crisis must go through his own unique recovery process. You may be healed, but that doesn't mean your wife, your children, your employer, or your parents have been healed as well. It may be time for you to show the same patience they once showed you. As much as you want the support of others, remember that the most important thing you can do in this practical part of the process is to support and encourage yourself!

Marriages often collapse at the end of a major trial, even though the stress is over and the partners have survived the crisis. Just when things begin to look up, one of them says, "I quit!" Why? It is difficult and depleting to "hold on for someone in crisis." These "other victims" simply may not have the stamina left to enjoy the spoils!

The story of David and Bathsheba reads like a diabolical soap opera. Their relationship emerged from lust and murder. Their passion led to the murder of Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, and spawned an illegitimate pregnancy through the torrid throes of their lustful encounters. When sexual excitement was over and reality set in, David remembered his God and began the painful process of repentance to overcome the disgrace and shame of living too close to the edge.

David lay before God in sackcloth and ashes for seven days, desperately seeking cleansing for his sins and healing for the baby who had suddenly grown ill. When the child died in spite of David's prayers, he was devastated, but he accepted it as all men eventually do; it was something he could not change. He washed his face, anointed himself, and went into the house of the Lord. David overcame the tragedy well.

Bathsheba also mourned the loss of her child, but her recovery wasn't as instantaneous. David had to comfort her. If you find that others are not as resilient as you toward the sudden changes in life, remember to comfort rather than criticize. This is a subtle way to acknowledge their right to hurt and, most of the time, this is all hurting and wounded people need.

“...David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead. Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat. Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.

“And David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon: and the Lord loved him.”

2 SAMUEL 12:19-24

In spite of the challenges they faced, David and Bathsheba survived. Perhaps it would not have been possible if David had not comforted Bathsheba, but he realized that his wife didn't heal at the same rate as he.

Unfortunately, some people may never recover from your failures and may insist on holding your past against you the rest of your life. What should you do in a case like this? You must make up your mind to continue your life even if someone else opposes your right to continue and openly abhors your place on the planet!

I often tell people, “Liking me is optional, but respecting me is mandatory! If you don't like me, then you still must respect me because *I am a survivor!*” Whenever you feel trapped by the opinions of others, reserve the right to alter the graveclothes they made for you, and continue to live!

If you don't change those old death rags, they will pull you back down into the same rut you just got out of. The “trappings and equipment” of the dead issue can still cause problems in many men.

For instance, the drug addict isn't just addicted to the drugs — he is addicted to the economic and social system of his lifestyle. He has been delivered from addiction to the chemical, but his life is still entangled with his lost drug friends, his drug income, and the respect he earned among his peers. These things are not the problem; the drug addiction has been dealt with. These things are the “graveclothes” that go along with the addiction problem.

The executive didn't just leave his drinking problem — he also lost the environment in which he used to conduct business. Now he must learn how to discuss business some way other than “over a drink.” He used to celebrate

a signed contract with a drink; he entertained prospective clients with a drink. He used liquor as a tool of seduction. It dulled his inhibitions, freed him from his Ivy League demeanor, and allowed him to loosen his white button-down collar and feel human. Now he is at a loss — his entire sociological system was associated with his drinking problem.

The adulterer isn't just entangled in the affair; he is attracted to the "game." He is excited by the adventure that is sparked by the "fear of getting caught" during the stolen moments. The planning and the elaborate lying have all become a way of life. In the end, he gives up the woman, but she is not the only addiction — the adventure is gone. He is back to normalcy, and normalcy can be boring to someone whose system is used to running on the high voltage of the illicit.

Leave your graveclothes in the grave! Those clinging garments may be just as tough to overcome as the dead thing that produced them, but you must get them off so your mind can readjust to wholesomeness. That is the miracle of salvation that causes the believer to rejoice. *The changing of the heart quickens from the dead, but the renewing of the mind is the removal of the grave clothes.* Get them off your mind and out of your life. It is a tragedy when something has taken over your life to the degree that it defines excitement and self-worth for you!

GOD HAS A DRESSING ROOM

Remember, you always have the right to change if the clothes you wear are tailored to *who you were* instead of *who you are*. Seasons change, weather changes, and the wind changes both direction and velocity. Defend your right to change with all diligence. If God has given you the grace to escape the grave, then He can give you the grace to change your garments!

"Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment."


ZECHARIAH 3:3-4

It has been said that clothes make the man. I don't know if that is true, but I do know that *men do change their clothes*. They can go in the dressing room one way and come out another. Thank God for prodigal sons who

teach us that the Father will tailor new clothes for the same son who failed! It is the garment of the Father that we want, not what others want us to be or wear. We want to be clothed in the righteousness of God.

I challenge you to pray for the tremendous move of God that is waiting on the other side of the “change.” Joshua, the high priest, changed his garment while surrounded by angels. Lazarus stripped before his family. The Sadducees didn’t even believe what God had done in his life. Blind Bartimaeus left his coat on the side of the road. He knew he wouldn’t need it anymore. (See Mark 10:46-52.) Whatever you need to take off, take it off — no matter who is a witness to it. Do not allow others to determine how you see yourself. The clothes they made for you reflect where you were at the time. Thank God they don’t fit where you are now, nor where you are going.

I pray that God will give you the grace to discover the new garments He has prepared for you. All your social, economic, and psychological systems stripped away, you find yourself needing to get to know the “new you.” You’re going through an adjustment that all men face at one time or another. I pray that God will see you through it with joy. The wisest of men are those who recognize their need to change and have the courage to face the uncertainty of new beginnings with a deep commitment to succeed!



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Knocked No Lower Than My Knees!

“So I want men everywhere to pray with holy hands lifted up to God, free from sin and anger and resentment.”

1 TIMOTHY 2:8 TLB

Most Christian men pray like wimps and brag like warriors. The truth is that real spiritual warriors are men who pray. Prayer is the most neglected and underused resource in the kingdom of God. It is a secret weapon that Satan has hidden from men.

Prayer can be a special challenge to men because of their tendency toward nonverbal communication. Prayer requires us to express our need, articulate our pain, and describe our desire. We men avoid vocalizing our desire because we fear disappointment. We think that as long as we don't acknowledge a need or a desire, we can live free from disappointment. We say, “Well, I didn't want it anyway.” Prayer makes us confess desire.

When God made us in His likeness, He planted in our nature a need to be admired. We flourish when we are praised. One of the best kept secrets about us men is how much we enjoy being complimented. Our Maker loves to be praised, and He is responsive to the praiser. We men shine when we are

praised by our wives, parents, bosses, or coaches — and we gravitate to them for more. We love affirmations that suggest we are doing well.

As an employer, I was shocked to discover that many men respond better to praises than to raises or other nonverbal rewards. Every time I acknowledged a job well done with a personal comment, I was in turn rewarded with an immediate smile and eagerness to receive more praise!

On the other hand, as a minister I have noticed that nearly every man who comes to me for marital counseling brings up his wife's words: "Pastor, she nags me; she complains all the time. No matter what I do, I can't seem to please her." These complaints are so serious that many times the man is ready to end his marriage in frustration.

Prayer is a struggle for people who need public affirmation. The praisers of men are not excited about prayer warriors. They love great preachers, but they don't acknowledge great men of prayer. My friend, this should not matter. It is more important to move God than it is to move men! Great prayer only comes forth after we have been weaned from the accolades of others. Deep prayer cannot be done in public, for it concerns private issues that should not be overheard by casual ears.

"But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

1 SAMUEL 16:7

Don't avoid prayer because you think you are not articulate or expressive. God is not moved by vocabulary, enunciation, or articulation. He is only moved by the sincere longings of an open heart that "spills" the burdens of the day across the altar, baring every pain to the power of a God Who can! "Can what?" Can do whatever you have faith enough to believe Him for and whatever you have courage enough to beseech Him for!

The stumbling, bumbling words of a tear-stained heart ring out louder in the spirit realm than the finest resonating voice of an orator whose vocal risings and swellings have been rehearsed for the listening ears of men. When you pray about the real issues of life, your concern is not that others hear but that you have God's ear.

PRAY WITH PASSION

We desperately need to come to God with the vital issues that plague us! These usually aren't the things we want played on a loudspeaker. Often they are too private even for our wife or children to hear. Do you hear a grinding noise? It is the sound of rusted rudders being held on course by the fervent prayer of men who refuse to lose their way because they encounter the wind and surge of contrary waves!

Our greatest tragedy is that *we left the praying to the women and the intercessors* while we went off into "other areas of interest." Those interests later drained us, and we wonder why we feel so depleted. What did we expect? Since we have abandoned the prayer closet, everything is "going out" and nothing is "coming back." Prayer builds back what life has depleted. It is neither religious nor rehearsed. True prayers are spontaneous appeals by faith-filled men to a mighty God Who hears and answers.

My faith is not in my mouth's ability to speak; it is in God's uncanny ability to hear and understand my every prayer. He already knows what I am trying to say, even as I grope blindly through my inabilities looking for words that seem to evade me. Prayer is a spiritual act, and my communication is oiled by the fact that I know how well He understands.

The hymnist so aptly said, "In seasons of distress and grief, my soul has often found relief, and oft escaped the tempter's snare, by thy return, sweet hour of prayer." My brothers, *if we fail to learn the healing art of prayer, we will practice the hideous habit of worry!* If we don't learn to kneel in prayer, we will stand in frustration. Our angry ranting and raving is only a telltale sign of how long it has been since we have had fervent prayer! True prayer is not bossy, domineering, or manipulative. True prayer brings domineering men to a place of submission.

Prayer is a confession that we are still limited men, and with that confession comes the same relief a woman finds in the arms of a strong man. No, this isn't weakness. It is the wonderful privilege of turning our humanity over to a higher authority.

Many men who have tried to continue the farce of rebellious independence from God are about to collapse because their strength has come to the end of the line. Everyone dumps their garbage on them, and they have no place to release it.

Beneath their religious facade, most men are overwhelmed and stressed. Many are secretly depressed and disenchanting. They have become their own

god, so they must assume responsibility for the outcome of all issues. Praying men know they are not sovereign, so even as they pray, they are joyously releasing their stresses and confessing confidence in the God Who can!

Prayer is a compliment to God. It is an admission that we believe in His competence to deal with the issues.

GOD IS ABLE

On the natural plane, you never ask someone for something you don't think he has. If you do ask, it is only because you believe he is able to deliver what you need. God is flattered and blessed when you pray. The heart of your boss is in His hand. The government is in His hand. The surgery you dread is in His hand. He is well able to intervene in everything you or your family will face, but you must learn to ask!

“Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.”

HEBREWS 11:12

You can discuss everything from impotence to emptiness with God. He healed Abraham of impotence when his body was “as good as dead.” God healed him without struggle with a promise that stirred his heart and revived his loins. God's miracle in Abraham was so powerful that even after he had fathered Isaac, the aftereffects stayed with him when Sarah died! Abraham married again and fathered an entirely new family! His body had weakened, but not his faith. He was old, but he still had vision and hope.

Many men stop living as they age. They lose life and potency, and the gleam goes out of their eyes. Sometimes bitterness creeps into their hearts, or they just become bored and aloof. Nothing is really wrong medically; they just lose interest in life and living. Secretly depressed, they hide their inner death beneath work and business and other distractions. They go through the motions, but the thrill is gone. They can't remember when it left them, but they have resigned from life. The flame has gone out in their emotions, their sexual drives, and even in their spirits. Only the shells of the men remain. The hearts beat and the lungs still breathe, fooling the doctor's clinical tools.

The book of Proverbs has the accurate diagnosis: “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?” (Proverbs 18:14). This man’s enthusiasm for life itself has been beaten down by stress, emptiness, frustration, and loneliness.

If you need a revival of your passion, your excitement, and your intensity, then you need to pray for a revival. No, I’m not talking about the kind of “revival” that is just a date on a calendar or a meeting time at the church. You say, “But I can’t talk to God about that!” You can talk to God about *everything*. In the Bible, even *old men* kept living, giving, and feeling passion! They did it because they were men of prayer. Prayer increases passion. It is raw expectation that causes the heart to say each day, “Today either something is going to happen to me or I am going to make something happen!”

“And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.”

“Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah. And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah.”

GENESIS 24:67-25:2

Six more children were locked up in Abraham’s “dead loins.” God quickened him and brought him back to life. That is what God wants — fervent men. He wants men who are alive. Yes, we will feel pain and suffer the loss of strength, of youth, and of loved ones, but by God’s grace, we will not lose our life, our vitality.

If you are not dead, then live! “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16). If the prayer of an impotent man can produce a nation of descendants, then you should know that the prayer you offer in your emptiness will produce a world of abundance and joy!

The spirit of depression and emptiness feeds on fatigue. You can’t assume responsibility for the decisions of other people. The truth is that you are weary from self-enthronement. Any time you spend time worrying about things you can’t change, you will fail to enjoy the gift of life. You have to stop “playing God.” You are all worn out from your do-it-yourself godhood. Turn over your life, your family, and your future to God. Do it in prayer and give God the praise. He is able to lift that yoke from your shoulders and give you power over the enemy who binds you. It doesn’t matter what or who the

enemy is; only the answer matters. Prayer is better than counseling or therapy. Prayer is life-changing.

THE PRIEST OF YOUR HOUSE

Most of the things we seek counseling for are areas in need of prayer. We used to be people of prayer, but now we seek the voice of a counselor instead of the voice of the Counselor. We have returned to Egypt. We want counselor-priests to hear God for us because we don't think we can hear His voice ourselves. We must know Him for ourselves! We need men who will pray!

You are the New Covenant priest of your home. (I didn't say *boss*, I said *priest*.) You need to teach your children about their father's God. They will learn when they see you bow your knees to Him. Your greatest message to your son is the one he sees, not the one he hears. Noah's prayer life as a father saved his entire family when God warned him about the Great Flood.

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”

HEBREWS 11:7

Do you live close enough to God to hear His warning of pending danger? Are you close enough to your family for them to have confidence in what God has spoken to you? You can't make people believe in you. Respect is not commanded or inherited; it must be earned. You can earn respect by becoming a man of prayer. You can literally change the direction of your whole family — without argument or discussion — simply through old-fashioned prayer!

Your family needs to be sheltered under the covering of your fatherly prayer life. No wonder the disciple of Jesus cried out, “Lord, teach us to pray!” The man didn't ask the Lord to teach them “how” to pray; he wanted to learn “to” pray. The “why” of prayer and the urgency of prayer are more important than the mechanics.

“And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.”

LUKE 11:1

We are emotionally overwhelmed and spiritually depleted because we have not learned the power of prayer. Lack of prayer has left us carnal and worldly, and we blindly make decisions in business, ministry, and marriage without guidance and revelation. We can never prepare an ark in time without a warning from God. The rain is pelting us because we have not sought the direction of the Lord. Mere human weakness should never stop us from praying. In fact, it makes us pray harder when we make a manly commitment to stop running *from* God and start running *to* God!

Our epidemic lack of prayer has caused a rise in stress, hypertension, and affliction. We stubbornly insist on bearing our crosses alone! Why do angry husbands take out their wrath on their innocent families? If we will humble ourselves and pray, God has promised to heal the very things we are raging about! Anger and wrath do not heal anything or anyone. Man of God, *I dare you to kneel down and pray!* Don't ask God to fix "them"; ask Him to fix *you*, and He will heal the land.

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place. For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever: and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually."

2 CHRONICLES 7:14-16

God promised to heal the land as a result of prayer. He promised to heal the land, the situations, and the things that pertain to the man who prays. In this passage, He specifically answered Solomon's concerns about all the things that were beyond his power and authority as an earthly king. God made it clear that nothing is beyond His divine power and authority!

PURSUE GOD IN PRAYER

"And as for thee, if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded thee, and shalt observe my statutes and my judgments; then will I stablish the throne of thy kingdom, according as I have covenanted with David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel."

2 CHRONICLES 7:17-18

God taught Solomon about the value of being a man of prayer at the same time He spoke to him about morality and character.

Would God like to speak to you about the way you live? Is it possible that God wants to release another level of blessing to you, but He cannot because of your prayerless walk with Him? You may struggle more with procrastination and “busyness” than with rank sin. Are you so overwhelmed in pursuing things that you fail to pursue God? Perhaps you are so problem-conscious and self-conscious that you fail to be God-conscious. Have you allowed the reality of God’s ever-present glory to manifest in your life? Do you live as though He doesn’t exist? God forbid!

Character is one of the greatest assets a man can have to “accessorize” his prayer life. His godly holiness creates a barrier that hell cannot hurdle. A man’s holiness honors his commitment to God. It is a form of worship and an expression of preference. It is a lifestyle that openly demonstrates a “living sacrifice” to God. (See Romans 12:1.) Anything less amounts to empty words and miserable failure.

Do you remember the prophet Samuel’s solemn warning to the disobedient and deceptive King Saul? Saul failed to destroy what God said to destroy. Instead he told Samuel that he was “saving” the sheep and oxen so he could offer them to God as a sacrifice. Samuel, being a wise man of prayer, told Saul, “To obey is better than sacrifice” (1 Samuel 15:22).

My friend, *obedience* is the highest form of praise to God! You can dance and shout, sing and raise your hands all day every day, but you have no real offering for God until you learn to conquer your flesh and obey Him! The greatest offering you can bring God as a praying man is your muffled passions that have been burned on the altar of sacrifice. God honors the man who esteems Him more important than his own selfish human need!

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

ROMANS 12:1

It feels good to live above reproach. When I fail, I feel miserable and ashamed. How about you? I have failed miserably many times. But along the way I learned how to make holiness my objective. Some men have ceased to aim for holiness. They have obtained “written permission slips” for themselves; excuses to be weak, visas to fail, and a whole list of “reasons” to justify disappointing themselves and their God. The truth is that many have

become weary in the fight for righteousness. It is a long, ongoing fight, but it can be won!

“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”

JAMES 5:16

I confess to you that I am made of clay that has been hardened, misshapen, and so flawed it should have been thrown away. But God, Who is rich in mercy, recycled what everyone else would have discarded! God will teach you and me how to live above our past, our fears, and our incapacities if we will confess our faults and pray for one another!

Has your masculinity been scarred and your confidence wounded by the divorce you just came through? Are you still feeling pain? Have you confessed your faults, or are you still confessing your wife's? Whether she was at fault or not, *you can never be healed confessing the faults of others!* Confess *your* faults, and God will heal *you*. The enemy knows that the most effective prayers come from the man who is fervent and honest!

One of the first things we men need to recover from the devil's thieving grip is our positions in our homes. God wants us to step back into position in our families to perform three important biblical functions. Only prayer can help us develop true strength in these areas:

1. We are to guide.
2. We are to cover or gird.
3. We are to guard.

WE ARE TO GUIDE

We should be men of vision who have a God-ordained agenda! Women often take the dominant role in marriages because their husbands do not present the family with a God-ordained agenda. Men have been “in neutral” for so long that women have filled the leadership void. Now they run the whole house. Tragically, this has made men even more insecure and women even more stressed, depressed, and embittered. We will all be happier if the men of God will pay attention to Habakkuk the prophet:

“Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.”

HABAKKUK 2:2

True masculine guidance under God's authority always respects the often keen insight of feminine perception. To be the "head of the house" does not mean to be domineering and authoritarian. It simply means that men are responsible for setting progressive agendas and being firm enough to hold their families to the track. First, godly men must be prayerful enough to hear from God. Then they must clearly communicate the vision. Write the vision and make it plain!

Once you know you have heard from God, then you must be strong enough to stand by the plan. Abraham experienced struggle, but he continued toward the vision. He and Sarah made mistakes, but they didn't deviate from the goal. Sarah is recognized for giving birth to Isaac, but Abraham is remembered for moving the family away from the known toward an unknown land of promise by faith.

You and I need to move our families forward. I can't allow stagnancy because I have been conditioned to expect progress. I believe that because I am in the house, the house should be affected. God is progressive, and He is always moving, so you and I should expect perpetual progression in our lives and homes.

"Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.'"

GENESIS 2:18 NASB

Helpers are only supplied to productive people. What can a helper do if the one being helped has no plan or activity? Women have literally helped build churches, run offices, manage businesses, and much more. They are anointed to help. They have been abused because it is their nature to assist. Tragedies occur when the men that women were designed to assist haven't fulfilled their function as guides and visionaries in the homes.

Guidance includes setting standards for children and enforcing those guidelines. My wife may help, but I must set the standards. Guidance also includes being a counselor and a friend. I am the shoulder they cry on when things are tough. I am my wife's resting post and my children's compass. If I do not affect my family in a positive way, then my presence in the home is a disgrace to God!

We all want to be appreciated, but some men who read this are married to thankless spouses and rebellious children. You may need massive renovation

and repair, but you won't help the problem in your home by getting out of place in bitterness. Get on your knees if you want to see change in your home and feel joy in your heart.

WE ARE TO COVER OR GIRD

When Ruth came to the bed of Boaz, he covered her with the skirts of his robe as a sign that he *assumed responsibility for her well-being*. It was the act of a guardian. He was promising Ruth provision and redemption. When Boaz covered Ruth, she must have felt warm and safe. She knew that he was a hard-working, compassionate, and successful man who was well able to cover her and care for her. (See Ruth 3.)

Why would you come into a pastor's office with an intended bride and not be able to cover her? It will be your responsibility to clothe her and provide for her and any children you may have together. She may "help" you, but it is still *your* responsibility to provide. Be sure you have a job before you set a date for the wedding! Even if the job you find is substandard, it is important that you fight with all your might to maintain your role as the "girder" or provider in the family.

It is a tribute to me when my wife looks good and my children are dressed well. It announces to everyone, "This woman is covered. She lacks nothing. There is someone in her life who loves her, cares for her, and girds her!" I want to set a standard of excellence that is so high I won't be afraid for my daughters to marry "someone like their father." No matter what condition that woman is in when you meet her, if she is yours, *you should make it better*. Your presence should affect her for good.

"Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine. Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. I clothed thee also with brodered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and brodered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God."

If you want to know how to treat your wife, then take a lesson from God's Book. God describes how He treated His "wife," Israel. It is not wrong but right to be good to your wife. Other men have polluted us. They have made us think we were wrong to love our wives. Giving is a statement about the giver of the gift.

"Girding" goes far beyond the provision of clothing. We should "gird" our families with wills, life insurance, and health policies. Girding means covering their needs, whatever those needs may be. It means we must cover our family's future needs as well as the needs of the present. I know it is a huge job, but don't run from it. Do it to the best of your ability. Aspire to accomplish it through God!

Many of our children never completed their childhood because they were rushed to adulthood prematurely. They didn't have the "safe feeling" that comes only from a father's secure covering. They developed a hardshell approach to life just to survive. The power of a praying father can protect his children and family from facing the chilling and destructive winds of life without protection and provision.

It is a challenge to attempt to be everyone's hero. Turn the work over to God and make yourself available to Him! He is your unlimited Source for impossible tasks. Your extremity is God's opportunity. But God won't begin to work for you until you have exhausted your own resources. Get started. God will give you miracle after miracle if you are a praying man with a goal, an agenda, and faith in His name!

You and I are called to be *effectual*. We may not be able to change everything, but we should certainly affect it. I wouldn't want to be on a job I didn't affect. I wouldn't want to belong to a church that couldn't sense a change after I joined it. I am powerful enough to affect anything I am a part of. Aren't you? Of course you are. When you join a local church, both its income and its influence should be affected!

WE ARE TO GUARD

As a father, you are the defender who must personally stop every predator who tries to attack your home. Whether the attacker is spirit, man, or beast, to gain entrance it must face the awesome power and authority of the man of

God at the gate. There are no guarantees that an adversary will not come. Sometimes, despite all that we do, challenging situations still arise, but it is foolish not to take every precaution to make it as difficult as possible for a thief to break in.

Many men are ready to defend their family from physical assailants, but few men are prepared to defend their family against spiritual attacks. Although they have fought off thieves and criminals, they are still plagued by inner guilt, private perversion, and moral problems. They are poorly equipped to build defenses against depression, suicide, child abuse, or other spirits that may target their home. We can't kill these things with guns, but we can stop them cold with prayer!

The devil hates to see prayer break out among men because he knows we guard our homes through intercession. We stand in the position of impregnable authority in our home when we cover our wives and children with prayer!

Man of God, you and I are not helpless! Even when we war against spiritual forces in high places, we come to the battle with unstoppable force and unbeatable weapons.

Stand guard over your loved ones with prayer. Let your children see you ministering through prayer. Prayer is a mighty tool to protect those you love. When you pray, God often gives direction and instruction to help you safeguard your family from attack. He did it for Noah and for Joseph and Mary, and He will do it for you.

There is a difference between a good idea and a "God idea." The "God idea" is conceived and nurtured in the womb of prayer. It is not a venture or an attempt. Its birth comes by simply acting out the plan God gives you through prayer.

Once you know you have a "God idea," refuse to allow anyone to intimidate you with earthly wisdom. When you have received God's counsel on an issue, that settles it. Don't let the plans of the Lord be contaminated by well-wishers who may not have the mind of the Lord for that particular situation. Don't be confused by the manipulation of others. Some men are so indecisive that they are difficult to follow. Men who never make definite decisions allow the enemy to shift God's agenda right out of their lives!

“If you want to know what God wants you to do, ask him, and he will gladly tell you, for he is always ready to give a bountiful supply of wisdom to all who ask him; he will not resent it. But when you ask him, be sure that you really expect him to tell you, for a doubtful mind will be as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind; and every decision you then make will be uncertain, as you turn first this way and then that. If you don’t ask with faith, don’t expect the Lord to give you any solid answer.”

JAMES 1:5-7 TLB

A godly man guards his plans, his wisdom, and his family from spiritual attack. He also guards the Word of God and the godly traditions he has passed down to his family. Train your children early to understand how to walk with your God. Teach them that you serve God, not some force of energy. You don’t merely “believe in some higher power” because your perception may be off-centered. Stand guard over spiritual truth. Teach your children the importance of faith. “Faith in faith” is a cheap disguise for humanism, which is man worshiping his own will. Your faith is not “disconnected energy looking for some object to attach itself to and alter.” Your faith is in God, and He has a name! He is reality!

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”

JUDE 3

A man of God tends to have strong powers of persuasion — even a shy, stammering man like Moses. People will sometimes follow what you teach simply because *you* teach it.

Make sure your message is solid and right. Many have neutralized their witness for God by saying, “Whatever you want to believe, it doesn’t matter.” *How ridiculous!* Give every man and woman, every boy and girl, a clear understanding of truth. You cannot make them believe, but you can make sure you clearly understand the faith yourself and that you clearly communicate it to others.

A praying man collects a rich heritage. It is the accumulation of all the things he has learned about God. The special things a praying father does for his family ought to be passed through the curtain into the next generation as part of a godly inheritance! This kind of wisdom puts God in the very roots of a child’s being. He will not be easily shaken.

Do you have a spiritual heritage? Are there any miracles in your life? Are there any things you know God did for you? Guard this heritage of God's faithfulness and preserve it by passing it on to your sons. It may save them from needless mistakes and sorrow. They will know what you know without having to suffer what you suffered!

“And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over: that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the Lord your God for ever.”

JOSHUA 4:21-24

Finally, my brother, *guard your heart*. The enemy wants to embitter and corrupt you. Guard your heart against contamination by lust and loneliness, bigotry and arrogance, and everything in between. Your enemies may even hide in good deeds done for evil motives. Only you can mount this guard because no other man can discern your motives and intentions.

If Samson had guarded his heart, Delilah wouldn't have weakened him. Had Samson guarded his heart with the breastplate of righteousness that Paul talked about, he would have continued to be productive in Israel. But in the heat of his passion and the weariness of his life, Samson “told her all his heart” (Judges 16:17). What a tragedy! Samson's weakness caused him to pollute his heart with lust and loneliness, and he gave it to someone other than God.

There are some things you give to no one but God.

Many men have given their hearts to people, to careers, and to ideals (not a God idea). They were shocked when these persons or things betrayed their heartfelt investment. Always reserve the deepest and innermost portion of your heart and trust for God. To go beyond borders on idolatry and will produce a pagan's reward of failure.

God wants your heart for Himself. It was the basis of your original union with Him. God didn't appeal to your intellect; He asked for faith. The enemy despises your heart because it is with your heart that you believe unto righteousness.

“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

ROMANS 10:10

Divine peace is one of the greatest security systems you can use to guard your heart. This peace is born out of prayer. It causes you to trust what you cannot trace. It leads you to rely on the character of God. A character cannot be proven; it must be believed. Nothing you read (including this book) will replace the personal experience that evolves from prayer and praise and from time spent learning to know the God your heart has believed. There is a realm of faith that supersedes believing, and that is the realm of knowing.

“For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

2 TIMOTHY 1:12

You believe with your heart, and the process begins. Finally, your faith graduates through life's experience into a confidence called knowing. Satan wants to stop the process because he knows that the people who know their God will be strong and do exploits! Guard your heart because there may be a Samson in you that the enemy wants to destroy!

When you lose your peace and become anxious and worried, you may make radical decisions that open up the door for demonic attack and turmoil! This allows the enemy to suggest threats of impending danger and leave you terrified and shaken, causing you to lose the guard that would preserve you in a storm. Don't give up the peace of God! Peace empowers you to go through a test without the test going through you! You may lose things, but if you keep your peace, you can regain them again. If you are going to be a praying man, don't give up the peace.

“Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

The word *keep* is better translated as “guard.” God's peace will guard your heart and mind. It will cause you to pick out what thoughts you will entertain. Samson entertained Delilah, and she infiltrated his heart and took his secrets. Avoid entertaining thoughts that will destroy your peace.

Whenever I catch myself rehearsing problems over and over, I know I am entertaining those problems. They will “cut my hair of anointing” if I don’t abort them! How can a thought be “aborted”?

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”

PHILIPPIANS 4:8-9

If life has dealt you some tough cards, don’t give up. You may be down, but bless God, you are not out. Strengthen the things that remain and go on. You will never survive the challenges of life if you make decisions without consultation. God wants to teach you the significance and power of daily communion with Him.

You are in the ring with a formidable opponent who wants to take you out right now! Your enemy knows that God has predestined you for greatness. He would love to destroy you with a single blow. But he doesn’t have the power to take out a man who really prays.

Make a commitment to stand in God’s strength, regardless of the challenges or questions life brings and regardless of how hard you are hit. You may feel the sting of the devil’s blows, and you may even wince in pain, but give him a clear message with fire in your eyes. There will be no towel-throwing in this fight.

That snake isn’t fighting a limp-wristed, emasculated coward of a man who has no stamina. You’ve been to hell’s door and back again for yourself, for your family, and maybe even for lost souls! You have been created and trained in the likeness and image of his worst nightmare! You are a resurrected man! You have been renewed in your faith, and you are firm in your conviction. Tell the enemy, “I am a man of prayer. I will be knocked no lower than my knees!”



CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Living Like a Loosed Man

“Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him.”

JOHN 12:1-2 NASB

When you pass from a death or a dark valley through the birth canal of enlightenment, God releases you from old ties to live in new peace and power. *You are a survivor!* God opened your grave of failure to prove that He wants you to have abundant life! Part of the abundant life includes knowing who you are and where you are going.

Lazarus, the resurrected second-timer, set a pattern for every scarred survivor who came after him. He is an ambassador of hope for every man who ever needed or dreamed of a second chance! His flame of life was reignited by the breath of the Savior and he experienced rebirth after death. He is “proof positive” that God can produce a “comeback” for every mishap.

What would you do if you were Lazarus? Your life has been snatched from the cold grip of an icy grave and rekindled in a leaping contortion of

supernatural domination! How do you live once you have tasted death, then been revived to tell about it?

We may never know exactly how Lazarus felt physically, but many of us believe we have experienced his death and miraculous return in the spirit! We too were buried in a tomb and abandoned for so long that our decaying lives began to stink. Then we arose to the sweet voice of a loving Savior Whose living Word chased death from our bodies.

Jesus didn't have to speak to bring deliverance; He could have delivered Lazarus with a simple thought. But Jesus chose to speak Lazarus's name to the wings of the wind and so confound the scoffers, the doubters, and even the tearful mourners. Immediately, Lazarus's blood waxed warm in His presence!

Jesus has also called each of us from our twilight to brilliant renewed faith. If you have never needed or experienced the resurrection power of His voice, then you cannot understand these words. No treasure you possess and no degree you display can compare to hearing Him call you back from the deadness of human frivolity! If Lazarus knew nothing else, *he knew that he was alive!* Are you alive? I mean, *really alive?*

You have an appointment with God. That is why this book is in your hands, and that is why you have stuck with it paragraph by paragraph, page by page, and chapter by chapter. God is out to awaken new life in you! Quickly, I want to share some crucial lessons from Lazarus's experience that will help you to live a "loosed life"!

1. ONLY SHOW UP FOR JESUS!

Whenever Jesus came to town, Lazarus made it a point to be there. Once you hear Him speak, you want to hear Him again! That voice that speaks life to the deadness in you is so powerful that the things that used to move you no longer have an effect anymore! Lazarus no longer cared to run here and there to places that had once been fulfilling. His priorities had changed. One thing was certain: If Jesus was around, then you knew where Lazarus was!

Many modern men would use a "Lazarus miracle" to launch a ministry or start a sideshow. They would parade around in public as self-proclaimed "wonders" of some sort. Lazarus wouldn't have been interested. He had been through too much to toy with the vanities of selfish aggrandizement. He was

too busy enjoying his second lease on life with the Author of life to prostitute what God had done for him!

If you were literally resurrected from the dead, could you resist the invitations to the late-night talk shows and turn away the magazine photographers? *Lazarus was too much in love with the Solution to glamorize the problem!*

I believe Lazarus spent more time looking at the blueness of the sky and rippling waters of the lake after his resurrection. I imagine he swirled cool water around in his mouth on a hot day more than he had before. Even the simplest things are pleasures to a once dead man!

Hezekiah was a different sort of man. He was saved from death, too, but after his reprieve, Hezekiah destroyed the good he had done by trying to impress some heathen kings! (See 2 Kings 20:1-19.) He failed to savor the moments God gave him. When judgment was pronounced upon his kingdom, he basically said, “Whew, I’m sure glad that bad stuff is going to happen to my sons instead of me!”

Learn from Lazarus and Hezekiah. Unlike Hezekiah, Lazarus invested his renewed life in the favor and presence of God, not in the favor of men.

“The great multitude therefore of the Jews learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead.”

JOHN 12:9 NASB

The Jews knew that if they wanted to see “the man who was raised from the dead,” they had to go where Jesus was. Why? *Lazarus only showed up for Jesus.*

Among many Native American tribes, if a man saved your life, you were indebted to him all the rest of your days. Where would you be if Jesus had not stopped the mourning and rescued your decaying corpse from the tomb of failure and degradation? Honor Him with your life.

I am concerned for the many men who have received a second chance. My concern is based on the fact that they can’t afford to go back to the same environment that perpetuated the problem.

If you are going to be blessed, you must avoid the associations that helped the enemy to attack you! Even at the risk of being lonely and isolated or appearing introverted, do like Lazarus. Only show up for Jesus. If it’s not for

His glory, don't involve yourself! This is the dedication that accompanies a man on his second chance! It is an attitude of gratitude.

Gratitude creates a natural desire to support ministry. No one knew the value of supernatural ministry like Lazarus and his grateful sisters! Giving becomes worship when it reflects an awareness of God's blessing! Giving is an opportunity to share the fruits of your undeserved blessing with a deserving God Who has been gracious to you!

God is my favorite "charity." I will always support His work because I know firsthand that His Word is real. The media can show me a thousand failed men in their squalor, but my faith will never be swayed. I already know that God is the Lord of failed men! I support Him and His work because I cried out to Him in my despair and He answered! How can I walk away with a carnal, selfish attitude after miraculously surviving my crises? Generosity abounds where God's grace is found!

We have a God-given desire and need to exchange tangible blessings for intangible blessings. Ministry does things in our lives that simply cannot be priced or appraised.

"For it is written in the Law of Moses, 'You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.' God is not concerned about oxen, is He? Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops. If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we should reap material things from you?"

1 CORINTHIANS 9:9-11 NASB

This is a commitment that boldly declares, "I am a living, giving part of this ministry because I know it works!" If people want to see me, they have to be prepared to hear about Jesus! I don't want to go anyplace where He is not welcome. He is my friend, my brother, and my bodyguard. I only feel safe when I am in His will — and I am not the only one. This attitude is shared by everyone who has felt His reassuring hand grip them when their own nerves failed them!

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

COLOSSIANS 3:1

Only show up for Jesus!

2. RECLINE IN HIS PRESENCE.

“So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him.”

JOHN 12:2 NASB

Once you have survived a real attack as Lazarus did, you are no longer free to be some cold and indifferent Christian who is satisfied to toy with warm thoughts about some “higher power.” Your faith reaches deeper than any abstract concept of a “nonspecific force” hiding somewhere in the galaxy. Your thoughts aren’t fixed on some “big guy in the sky” or some “man upstairs.” Jesus pulled you out of the muck and mire of life and you know it! No one else can satisfy!

Wherever the Jews saw Jesus after the miracle in Bethany, Lazarus was there too. He was committed to the Lord Who had brought him through. Most men don’t continue that long. They hang around for a while until they are out of immediate danger. Then they seem to “find other things to do.” Lazarus was too smart to stop “taking treatments” just because his condition had improved. Jesus was his life, so he stayed with Him.

Lazarus didn’t stink anymore. His flesh was as sound as yours or mine, but he still remembered what it was like staring out at the weeping and astonished crowd through his soiled and rotting bandages! Even then he only had eyes for One. His memory of his life of decay was enough to keep him committed to the program! He was there for Jesus.

Have you been there for the Lord Who was there for you? Someone else is teetering on the edge of a grave, and his rags stink so badly that no one is willing to touch him. How about you? You know what it was like, and you know the power of your Master’s will. Will you be there to continue His work of deliverance?

Lazarus lived at his Master’s side. He was so relaxed that he reclined in the presence of the Lord! He felt comfortable in His presence because he was once again resting in the power that had released him! Most men have never reclined in the presence of God. Some even think it is blasphemy to speak this way. The truth is that once we have been through traumas, new faith and hunger rise in our hearts and cause us to recklessly pursue Him at any cost.

His presence also tends to preserve our resurrection! We cannot afford to cool off; we must stay by His fire. We need worship like drug addicts need dope! We are not drawn to Him merely by the high we receive in His presence — it is the pain we feel apart from Him! We only feel normal when we are with Him. What else can compare with that? We are marked and changed. Now we can relax only in His presence.

This shouldn't seem strange. Man was created to dwell in God's presence like fish live in water! Birds were created to soar on the winds, and plants prosper in rich soil. Loosed men need God's presence. Our hunger and thirst for Him lead us to give up our cherished machismo and worship Him openly in front of total strangers. We feel after Him like blind men groping in the dark. We push toward Him like searching, thirsty roots penetrate dry ground, for we want to quench our eternal thirst with the everlasting joy that is only found in His presence!

“And [God] hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.”

ACTS 17:26-28

Pastor, if we are going to rehabilitate the hurting men around us, we must teach them to worship. We must help them find the secret place in the presence of God and recline there. Worship isn't effeminate. Neither is it for wimps. It is for giant-killers like David! It is for men of war like Samson! Give men His presence, and they can withstand Delilah. Give them His presence before they lose their battles with lust.

The presence of God is a healing balm for businessmen whose stress cannot be resolved in a bottle of Scotch. His presence brings hope to ex-junkies who desperately need to fill their lives with God and overcome the addictive habits embedded in their souls, lest the enemy come back and find the old house cleaned but empty!

Pastor, men are emulating you. If you are cold and aloof, they will be cold and aloof. You are a surrogate father to many of them! Help them build a bond with their God that cannot be broken. Teach every young man in your care to press into God's loving presence until His impression is etched upon

his character. Well-worn and completely used, we all need to recline in God's presence!

Cast all your cares, anxieties, and frustrations on Him. He didn't resurrect you to rebury you under the old worries and stresses. No one can appreciate new beginnings as well as a person who really needs one! Smell the freshness of the morning and rejoice that you somehow survived. It is time to move beyond the dismal tomb in your past! Watch the sunrise on the mountainside, and rejoice with the tender blades of grass dancing in the wind.

This is your day. There were some who never expected you to make it. But you are here. If no one bakes you a cake, throw your own party! Celebrate what God has done for you! *Recline in the presence of the Lord* in the cool of the evening, when the birds softly sing and the day closes like a curtain. He will not fail you. He can hold all your weight, so lie back on Him. He is waiting for you.

Learn from Lazarus. Rest in God's presence. There is little stress when you are living free like a *loosed man!*

3. LIVE BEYOND INTIMIDATION.

"Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.

"But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus."

JOHN 12:9-11

Nothing threatens a dead man. People only fear what they have not faced, and those like Lazarus have already faced the ultimate challenges of life.

They are seldom intimidated.

Men of less experience would have stayed in hiding. Powerful enemies were not glad he had survived, but Lazarus wasn't moved. He didn't budge. Fear no longer worked with him because he had looked death and failure in the face and walked away into new life. He knew the cold terror of lying with other rotting corpses in the tombs. He was familiar with the stench and decay of the decomposed and the sneering grimace of skeletal remains.

Now what were these men threatening him with? Death? What planet did they come from? Lazarus had discovered a Savior Who could call him back from the grave in a split second! Threats were a waste of breath. Lazarus had

been through too many challenges to take his marbles and go home just because someone didn't like him!

You are a *loosed man!* You have already passed your survival course, and you have been through boot camp. You are a combathardened career man complete with battle scars, memorials, and trophies of your personal survival. When you face opposition from the enemy, you don't panic anymore. You don't even think about breaking rank or running away. Things have changed this side of the grave. This time, your enemy can feel his scaly knees knocking together. There is something very familiar about the glint in your eye and the cool, underlying strength he can perceive in your heart. It is ironic that the most frightening enemy you had to face was the enemy within. Now it has become the trophy you hang high in your heart!

Once you develop the tenacity to survive, you are ready to do great things for God. You become unstoppable when you learn how to buffet your body and deny your desires. Resurrection changes the way you react to fear and death. It doesn't mean you will never fear again; it simply means you will forever react to fear differently. Survival breeds confidence.

Once the blaring scream of fear has pierced your consciousness, you will know things that others do not know. When you taste the salty tears of bitter frustration and everything within you says, "I give up; I can't go on!" you will know things that others do not. When your heart has pounded its way through numbness and continued to pump blood although it seemed to be broken by the aching pain, you will know things that others do not know.

You have survived the terror of feeling unseen weights on your chest and have fought the night armies of inner torment and wars within. I know you understand. You have stumbled and staggered from bad news to worse news without breaking pace. *You are a voice from the grave of failure sent back to speak to your generation!* You have been freed from your graveclothes and given as a living gift from God to this generation.

You and I are "proof positive" of answered prayer simply because we are alive!

No one can threaten me with death. I have already been dead. I was pulled like a cold corpse from a rushing river and resuscitated on the banks until I lived again by the breath of the one who rescued me. I will not run and hide simply because my critics are embarrassed by my progress or upset

by those who surround me! Like an ex-convict, I declare that I have served my time! Release me quickly and let me go — I am loosed!

Warning: *If you love a loosed man*, then pack lightly and be prepared to move quickly! He is not likely to be afraid of many things. He may appear to be rather impulsive, and he will live radically. He has seized life with the second grip of someone who knows he nearly lost it the first time! Don't even hope to hold this man down with a threat or a scowl. He has already met his greatest nightmare face-to-face and whipped it before he ever reached you!

The loosed man you love knows himself better than other men. He has been purified on the fire like liquefied gold. He knows what is inside him. He helplessly watched all his embarrassing impurities come floating to the top for everyone to see. Yet something more than the run-of-the-mill weakness, sin, and fear bubbled to the top. The heat of the fire brought his true strengths to the top. Heat reveals faith. He saw his fervency and commitment come up through the brew like a Rambo with a sweat band tied around his head! He has kicked into survival mode — a mode most men don't even know they have!

You will only understand what I mean by “survival mode” after you have been crushed, locked in a prison, left to die, or forsaken by others. Once you have survived that, you know that if necessary you could “dig your way out of east hell with a plastic spoon” as long as God was with you!

This tenacity is what I call “living loosed.” Like a rock loosed from a sling, we will go against Goliath without fear. We were buried beneath the currents of life until the Warrior chose us and revived us. Now we loudly and boisterously shout, “Let it rip! We are *loosed men*. We are going somewhere, scars and all! Some of our bandages may still be clinging to us, but they no longer bind us. We are loosed men!”

We are coming out of the tombs to be with Jesus! If the grave couldn't hold us, why do you think petty politics or unfavorable public opinion could hold us back? The only threat we fear is the possibility that we will waste this opportunity and not maximize this moment. This is raw power, uncensored and uncut! This is pure and unabashed manhood, though it may be packaged in a small-framed man with wire-rimmed glasses, or hidden in a soft-spoken accountant behind a work-strewn desk.

You may encounter a loosed man disguised as a roly-poly bear of a man with a generous girth and an overweight stance! Don't be fooled by externals. Look into his eyes. If you see fire, he is one of us! We are alive, we are revived, and we are loosed!

The loosed man's strength is not in his frame; it flows from the holy fire in his belly. He is a survivor and a strange mixture of grateful tears and cherished memories. He is almost fragile. He is more sensitive than others who have not brushed the face of death. He does everything with passion — from the bedroom to the boardroom, he wants it all. He is kind and gentle like someone who was a patient before he became a doctor. If you underestimate his kindness or mistake it for weakness, you will be shocked to find that he is a holy stone in motion, a high-flying arrow!

4. STRENGTHEN YOUR BROTHERS.

“The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record. For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.

“And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.”

JOHN 12:17-21

The enemies of Lazarus hated him so much that they plotted to destroy him. He was a kingpin. The devil knocked him down, but Jesus raised him up again, and as a result large numbers of people were being transformed by his testimony of the authority of Jesus! Lazarus faced many abrasive attacks because his life was a catalyst that caused many men to seek Jesus!

As far as I know, Lazarus never preached a message. He was better than a sermon in words — his life was a sermon in action! He was a “walking sermon” who created turmoil all over the region. People are generally amazed to see someone they have buried walk into their yard! The naysayers were so sure they had the last word that when they saw a higher power reverse the decision and pull life out of death, they were astonished.

My brother Lazarus, the enemy did not want to surrender you without a fight because he knew that when you were delivered from death, it would be a sign to every generation that they had *another option*. Christianity is the

ultimate “alternate lifestyle.” When we look at Lazarus, we are reassured that serving God makes a difference.

Great pain sometimes helps us understand what the fight is all about. If you are dangling over the fire doing your best to survive the crisis in your life, you may know *what* you are going through. However, it is only in retrospect that you will understand *why* you are going through it!

Show me a man who has greatly affected his generation, and I will show you a man who has felt the pain and confinement of shackles and tribulation. The devil knew that if that man ever got loosed, he would do serious damage to the plans of hell. He was right!

It encourages me to know that I am under serious attack because I am greatly feared. When I was a little boy, I used to get into fights with other boys once in a while. In those days, if an opponent was afraid, he would bring a lot of weapons with him to the “appointed place” after school. (Where I grew up, a weapon was a stick or a slingshot; how things have changed!) Your opponent’s preparation indicates how tough he thinks you are. If you are a real wimp, he will hardly prepare for the fight because he figures you will be no problem. If Satan has sent his heavy artillery after you, take heart! You’re going against a scared devil! He is deathly afraid of a *loosed man!*

Your enemy wants to have you and all that you represent, but he probably wishes he had tried to take you sooner, before you caused such a ruckus! Now some of the most unlikely men will seek Jesus because of you. Even some of your old drinking buddies and partners in crime will come around and say, “Sir, we would see Jesus!” You are the seed and they are your harvest! Don’t stop until you reproduce after your own kind!

“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”

LUKE 22:31-32

Satan wanted you. He wasn’t fooling around. He wanted to “take you out” and sift you in the wind. It is frightening to think how close he came to doing it! *But God*, Who is rich in mercy, saved you.

Other men had buried you under a judgment of failure. Your closest friends had given up; it was over. Then Jesus prayed and called you out of

your tomb so you could sit at His table! He was so confident in His prayer that He didn't say, "If thou art converted," He said, "When thou art converted." God never says "if" when He talks about your destiny.

Even during the darkest moments in your life, whether you faced suicide, bankruptcy, depression, or scandal, God simply looked at you with love in His eyes and said, "when." The only questions left about you lurk in the limited minds of men. God has settled it in heaven. He said, "When."

Brother Lazarus, you have been through hell, but you made it! You faced a crushing challenge, but you survived. You were stinking, but God stopped the decay so you could see another day. By His grace, you are a living epistle. Every time anyone sees you, your life shouts out, "God is real!" Because you were dead and are now fully alive in body, soul, and spirit, you will see massive revival in your generation! The enemy wanted to terminate your joy, peace, and prosperity, but he has failed. Now he is in despair, for you are a loosed man with nothing to fear!

Your mission is clear: Go back into the enemy's camp! Infiltrate the office, the golf course, the country club, the basketball court, and the drunken family reunion to bring other men to the light. They saw you in your frustration, now let them see your resurrection! Let them know you made it. Tell them Who woke you out of your sleep and unraveled your problems.

Jesus told Simon, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." A loosed man always reaches back for others. He reaches back for his father, his wife, his family, and his friends. Deliverance without evangelism is just plain selfishness. Loosed men expect big harvests. You endured extreme attacks to pay the price for the harvest — it is time to reap the rewards!

There is a sharp edge of anointing on your testimony, and the fields are white with the harvest! Fear no man, fear no devil! Boldly tell the truth! Preach the gospel to the poor, heal the brokenhearted, deliver the captives, and enlighten the blind! You have nothing to lose and everything to gain — what are you waiting for? I see another Lazarus leaping into the morning light!



A Final Word

As I finished writing the last page of this book, I wanted to add something even more personal, a special word from my heart to yours — man to man. I pray that it will bless you and equip you to go on, grow strong, and achieve excellence!

Dear Brother,

I admire you — even though I see you clearly. I see your strengths and your weaknesses. It doesn't matter which is which, because I admire you for accepting the challenge of life and rising to your feet in the morning light! You heard the blaring of the trumpet and you arose. You knew the night was over, and sleeping is for men who have nowhere to go.

I am writing to you about the day you face. Wake up singing. Rejoice that you are alive. Before you complain about your environment, listen closely to what you hear as you stand, stretch, and boldly enter into the brightness of the day.

Can you hear the thumping of life beating firmly in your chest? Beneath the rumbling drumbeat of your relentless heart are miles of arterial highways routing blood through every vein and filling every cell with life. Oxygen is racing beneath your skin, feeding the feverish demand of a strong body. You are the first computer, filled with a “soft” hard drive and invisible software, fueled without electricity, fully self-contained and compact, absorbing and sorting billions of megabytes of data. You are awesome and fearfully made.

You have trained in the fields of life and have been educated through hard knocks. You are an ardent lover giving tender care to the broken and fragmented. You touch the heart and caress the soul. Your arms were made to reach around the sorrows and hug the fainting. Like jumper cables hooked to a battery, you give new life and energy to those you touch.

You are a preacher proclaiming a strong work and making mighty statements. Even when your lips are closed, we hear you speak. We are convicted and instructed by the gleam of your eye. We are exhorted and uplifted by the iridescent flame that refuses to be extinguished. Man, I love to hear you!

You are an artist who doesn't need a brush. You have captured great moments without cameras and timeless thoughts without a pen. You discern with great judgment. You protect and preserve your own like a lion on the prowl. You are full of fire that cannot be extinguished.

Live long, my brother. Grow great! Do all that is in your heart. This is your moment! Please don't miss it complaining about problems. Don't be distracted by the trivial pursuits of this world. Notice the beating of your own heart and the heaving of your lungs in your chest. When in doubt, check it out: You are alive!

No matter what constrained you, no matter what tried to restrain you and keep you in the grave — death cannot hold you. Like Jesus, you have risen and you are back. So say to your soul, "Boast in the Lord!"

Why not be proud to be alive? You could have been a dead man. You could have been a drunk man. You could have been a weak man, but not you. You are too tough for that.

I admire you because when I see you raise your hands in worship, and when I see you smiling through watery eyes, I know... Although I may never know you personally or get to hear your story, I can see it by your praise. I can hear it in your voice. There is no doubt about it: You are a loosed man!

You are already in motion. You are already in flight. Straighten your shoulders, hold up your head, flex your arms, and with all your might and all your strength, go for it!

The world is waiting for a man. The woman is waiting for a man. Even the children are waiting for a man. They won't settle for just any man, they are waiting for a loosed man. The world is waiting for you!

I believe in you,
Bishop J.

P.S. Now God Himself has asked a hard question that has taken us a long time to answer. He asked the first man, "Where art thou?" He couldn't answer, and we couldn't either. It was embarrassing, but in retrospect, we have realized the truth. We have mumbled and bumbled for thousands of years, avoiding an answer that would be shockingly revealing. We wanted to answer, but were ashamed to respond because we were in such a mess. Now, after all that has happened, we are finally ready.

Thank You, Lord, for Your patience. Now we can answer what You asked us then: "Where art thou?" Our answer comes leaping up fresh from the grave! We have to stand up tall to say it, Lord. Our answer is clear in the light of our new day: "We are here!"

A SELECTION OF PRAYERS FOR MEN

“Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.”

Luke 18:1

PRAYER FOR PURITY

Father,

I have discovered my own wretchedness. I realize that there are areas in me that need to be corrected. I refuse to lay the blame on others, and I repent and turn from these things as a committed act of my will.

Lord, give me grace to overcome every lustful addiction that would enslave me. I need Your touch to cleanse me. I want You to wash my thoughts, my deeds, and even my memories so that I can serve You with purity and holiness.

I know You died to deliver me from every bondage, and it is my desire to be free. Thank You for Your Word, which cleanses me from all unrighteousness. I set my heart to renew my mind and hide Your Word in my heart so that I can serve You without guilt, in the freedom and power of Your Holy Spirit.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

PRAYER FOR SALVATION

Dear Lord,

Have mercy on me, a sinner. I confess my sins. I am not proud of them, but I acknowledge them. I thank You for dying to reclaim men who have fallen and are in need of forgiveness. I am a man in need of forgiveness, and I ask You to forgive me and cleanse me of my unrighteousness. Make me the man You want me to be, the man You have purposed me to be from the beginning of time.

Lord Jesus, I accept You as my personal Savior. Thank You for saving every personal area of struggle in my life. I rejoice that Your blood cleanses my sins even while I am praying this prayer, and I am filled with the strength of your Holy Spirit. I dedicate my life to You and vow to live every day according to Your Word.

Thank You for giving me a second chance. As Your Spirit and Word reign in my life, I rise up above my past, I rise up above my dilemmas, and I rise up to serve You the rest of my life, in Jesus' mighty name! Amen.

PRAYER FOR RESTORATION IN MY MARRIAGE

Dear Lord,

I come to You this day because I know You are a God of restoration and are able to put back into place everything the enemy has tried to destroy. I thank You, Lord, for my marriage and for giving my relationship with my wife a new beginning.

Forgive me, Lord, for my failure to be what You have always meant me to be, and take my life—every part of me—and begin the restoration there. Restore me to the level that I need to be in order to fulfill my role as a biblical husband. Restore my confidence, and heal everything inside me that says, “I can’t do it.”

Thank You, Lord, for giving me the strength and courage to make a total commitment to You right now to keep my marriage vows and be the faithful and loving husband my wife needs. I know that with Your help I can be the husband You want me to be and have the marriage You want me to have.

Right now, Father, I forgive my wife for the times she has hurt me, and I ask You to heal any wounds from those times. I release any bitterness and hurt to You and make a commitment never to take them back. I also pray for my wife, that she might forgive me for any hurt I have caused her, and that her wounds would be healed as well.

Thank You, Father, for a complete restoration of our marriage, a fresh awakening of our love for one another, and for giving us a powerful plan and purpose for our life together! In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

PRAYER FOR A PRISONER

My gracious and loving Father,

I come to You right now in prayer. I thank You, God, that even though I have made many mistakes in my life, You are a God of forgiveness. Today I ask You to forgive me and I make a commitment to dedicate my life to You, to do Your will and follow Your plan and purpose for me.

Father, I know You have forgiven me of all my wrongdoing, but I am having trouble forgiving myself. Help me, God, to understand that I can't change what has already happened but I can change what will happen in my future.

At this moment, I surrender all my bitterness, loneliness, and my low self-esteem to You, Father. I forgive all those who have hurt me and forgive myself for my mistakes and sins of the past.

By Your grace, Lord, I will use this time of imprisonment as a time of study, prayer, and personal commitment to You. Instead of allowing this time of my life to be the crushing blow of defeat, I will use it as a stepping-stone to higher accomplishments. I also ask You to prepare me to face society and assume responsibility when I am released, as one who has learned his lesson and benefited from his mistakes.

Most of all, thank You, God, for loving me and looking beyond my faults to see my need. In Jesus' name, Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE BUSINESSMAN

Dear Lord,

Today I ask You to please give me wisdom in all my decisions, knowledge in all my transactions, and understanding in all my dealings as they pertain to my business. Keep me, God, from being deceived into illegal transactions, and I set my heart to walk in integrity, no matter what monetary potential is available. I know the only way I can be a prosperous businessman is to remain pure in my motives and conduct my business according to Your Word. I commit myself to do that now, Lord.

Help me to turn away from all temptations to climb the ladder of success by stepping on others as I go up. I pray that I never become so engulfed with my work that I forget my primary purpose in You—to minister to those around me. I thank You for Your supernatural strength working in me that overcomes all stress and anxiety.

Finally, I thank You, God, for blessing my business. I know that as I put You first in every area of my life, as well as my profession, You and I stand in a covenant relationship together. Because You and I are partners, I expect the windows of opportunity to open up to my business and Your great blessings to break forth in my life. Then I can and will bless others and give toward the preaching and teaching of the Gospel.

Thank You for helping me see this great truth! In Jesus' name, Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE BACKSLIDER

Dear Lord,

I come to You today thanking You for Your loving-kindness. I thank You that, even though I have made some wrong decisions in my life which have led me away from You and caused me to be unfaithful, Your faith still abides in me and You still love me.

Though my fellowship has been broken with You, Jesus is still my Lord and Savior. I am sorry for all of my sins. I am tired of living in remorse for what I have done, and I repent of my sins and ask your forgiveness. I thank You that Your forgiveness and mercy do not depend on my good works, but are available to me simply through Your grace. I am so glad Your mercy endures forever and is new every morning!

Thank You, God, for forgiving me and receiving me back into fellowship with You. I make a wholehearted commitment to You and to Your Word this day. Thank You for giving me Your Spirit, Who gives me the divine strength and grace to stay away from those things in my life that caused me to fall before.

Help me to take one day at a time, trusting Your grace and mercy to see me through every moment, every temptation, and every trial. Thank You for restoring the fullness of Your joy to my heart and soul. As I walk in fellowship with You, I know every weak area that I feel insecure and unfulfilled in will be made strong by Your courage and wisdom.

Thank You, God, for restoration of our fellowship and for giving me back my joy as Your child. In Jesus' name, Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE SINGLE MAN

Most gracious and loving Heavenly Father,

I come into Your presence today thanking You that I am “somebody” in Your eyes. I thank You that I am happy and prosperous as a single man because of Your favor and blessing on my life.

I ask You, Lord, to totally saturate my life with Your presence, to give me direction, and to help me find my purpose in You. I feel a destiny and a future deep inside me that is just waiting to manifest itself in my life, and I am completely secure and confident in who I am in You.

I thank You, Father, for Your Holy Spirit, Who lives inside me and gives me the supernatural strength to abstain from any type of premarital sexual relationship, which would only destroy the intimacy and fellowship I enjoy with You and hinder my future relationship with my wife.

Help me always to be open-minded concerning all relationships and to find Your will and do what is right in them, particularly in the marriage relationship. I pray that if the day should come for me to marry, You would bring me the wife You want me to have, just as You brought Eve to Adam.

Until that day, Father, I thank You that whenever I get lonely I can talk to You in prayer and read Your Word. Thank You, God, for being my friend! In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.



LOOSE
THAT MAN
&
LET HIM GO!

W O R K B O O K



How to Use This Workbook

This study guide has been uniquely prepared for the adult learner's use in personal or small group settings. Its content has been developed to go hand-in-hand with T. D. Jakes' book *Loose That Man & Let Him Go*. If used in a group setting, you will want to allow time for group discussion and application to assist the group's spiritual growth.

WORKBOOK GUIDELINES

1. You will need your Bible and a pen or pencil.
2. Read each chapter, looking up any Scriptures not written out in the book. Also use a concordance to check other Scriptures that relate to the ones being studied. Doing this will increase your depth of knowledge and understanding.
3. Answer the questions as provided in the workbook to the best of your ability. Answer key begins on page 275. Personal answers can be shared with others at your discretion. Sharing with and listening to others will also increase your understanding as you learn to celebrate your manhood in accordance with the concepts in this book and in God's Word.

We hope and pray that you will greatly benefit from the learning process and that you will use the knowledge you gain for the kingdom of God.

*May God give you the grace to face each day
renewed in your mind by the Word of God,*

*which promises that we can do all things
through Christ Who strengthens us.*



CHAPTER ONE

When I Was a Child

Questions:

1. Our development as men is shaped by the things we encounter as _____.
2. Our fathers are our first _____ and _____ of masculinity.
3. A poor role model can cause a child to equate masculinity with _____, _____, _____, or _____.
4. List four things that listening to a child does for him.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
5. List four things that can result from not listening to a child.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
6. Was there someone in your childhood who would really take time to listen to you? _____ If so, who? _____ How did it affect you?

7. True or False. Many men lose their ability to communicate in childhood. _____
8. The only emotion many men allow themselves to express is _____.
9. Many times a man's rage is fueled by an inability to turn _____ into _____.
10. It is crucial for men to be able to vent _____ and _____ safely through appropriate channels.
11. Distorted childhood perceptions and conclusions often result in crippling thoughts of _____ and produce a lifetime of _____.
12. What is normal for a child can be deadly for a man who still understands as a child. Despite his size, his childish understanding is _____ him.
13. True or False. Many of our adult needs and preferences are shaped by little-boy thoughts that have escaped our childhood and entered our adult fantasies. _____
14. When the mind of a child is stressed with harsh issues like molestation, abuse, or domestic violence, it permanently scars his _____.
15. Many young men have followed their father's footsteps into promiscuity, thinking it natural to define their masculinity by _____.
16. Feelings of buried childhood pain never leave us. We get bigger and we learn to _____ our _____ better, but inside the little boy is still intimidated.
17. To fully understand a man's sometime erratic behavior, what must wives, children, pastors, bosses, and those around him learn to do?

FURTHER CHALLENGE: What characteristics of your own father have helped you in your development as a godly man?

Are there any characteristics that may have hindered you?



CHAPTER TWO

Suffer the Little Children

Questions:

1. Jesus said, “Whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.” What did He mean by this statement? (circle the letter of your response):
 - a. Only children can be saved.
 - b. Inside each of us is a little child who must come to God to be healed.
 - c. The kingdom of God is a collection of immature losers.
2.
 - a. Who is Mephibosheth?
 - b. What position should he have held?
 - c. What happened to prevent him from achieving this position?
3.
 - a. What does “Lo-debar” mean?
 - b. What is meant by the statement “Tragedy and brokenness can leave us in Lo-debar”?
4. The fact that Mephibosheth couldn’t come to King David’s table on his own so Ziba was sent to “fetch” him illustrates the truth that we are sometimes so _____ and _____ by our brokenness that we hear the voice but can’t get up. Someone must come to _____ us.
5. Ziba is a type of _____.

6. Something happened to Mephibosheth as a child that he never recovered from. Someone dropped him. Do you ever feel as though “somebody dropped you” and that through no fault of your own, your life has been forever changed? What happened?
7. The fact that Mephibosheth never got healed illustrates the truth that . . . (circle the letter of your response):
 - a. Some woundings will stay with us all our lives.
 - b. Mephibosheth was unworthy to sit at David’s table.
 - c. Divine healing never occurred in the Old Testament.
8. We have damaged a lot of men by saying, “Come to the altar, brother, and everything will be fine!” implying that somebody could lay hands on them and wipe away their childhood injuries forever. Have you been disappointed with Christianity for this reason?
9. The good news about Mephibosheth is at least he _____ it to the _____.
10. This illustrates that even though we may still have a _____, we still belong at the table with the rest of the King’s kids.
11. The church has been _____ about the way it views and treats its very human leaders.
12. Men are _____ because we are in positions that do not allow us to admit that we have conditions with our wives, our families, and within ourselves.
13. We need the freedom in the Church to say, “Yes, I am in this _____, but I still have this _____.”
14. Because of their positions, many men attempt to hide their _____, their _____, and _____.
15. Often men make permanent decisions about temporary circumstances, because their condition is so desperate. A better course of action is to confide in a _____, ask him for help, and give yourself time to _____ your _____.

FURTHER CHALLENGE: Do you have a brother in the Lord you feel you can trust? Have you ever confided in him or let him help you sort things out? Has he ever come to you when he needed help?



CHAPTER THREE

Confronting the Child in You

Questions:

1. Is anyone exempt from disadvantage? _____ Explain.

2. _____ is the only person Who can walk us through the barrier of time and help us to be comfortable with our uncomfortable parts.
3. You can never become who you want to be until you can drop who you _____.
4. True or False. Your greatest enemy is the enemy within. _____
5. What judgment did God pronounce in Romans 1:21, 28 on those who did not glorify Him as God?
6. Left to our own devices, we may be surprised to discover how _____ we really are.
7. Under difficult circumstances, our _____ can erupt with terrible results.
8. We become vulnerable to manipulation when we don't know and understand our _____ and _____.
9. Unless you confront your own _____ and map your own _____, you will never be prepared for attacks in those areas.
10. True or False. God has made such a costly and personal investment in each of us that He is not easily discouraged from what He said about us in His Word. _____

11. Why is God not afraid to “call those things which be not as though they were”?
12. Have you ever been aware of God orchestrating things in your life, perhaps to get you to a place where He could minister to you or free you from entanglements that would distract you? _____ If so, what happened?
13. I am alone any time I must put on a facade or _____ who I really am.
14. God wants you to experience being alone with Him so He can _____
.
15. What is the meaning of the following verse: “Faithful are the wounds of a friend”?
16. God is out to confront you before you lose your greatest commodity—your _____.
17. List four realizations that can result from “wrestling with God.”
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
18. True or False. When God sees that His man is running out of time, He escalates the fight. _____
19. Have you ever wondered why your life has been preserved, why you made it through everything you made it through?
20. True or False. When it comes down to it, you are what others say you are. _____
21. In God’s eyes, you are a _____, a child of the King.
22. If you confront every weakness, God will _____ you. If you face your _____ because you want your future, God will open up the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing.

23. What would happen if men began to pray for each other?

What will happen if we don't?

FURTHER CHALLENGE: Ask a trusted brother if you can pray for him concerning an issue he is wrestling with. Then PRAY for him and strengthen him in his weak area.



CHAPTER FOUR

When I Became a Man

Questions:

1. Each man must make a mark in his life that declares his “rite of passage” into _____ and the _____ of _____.
2. Just as Abraham offered up his young son, so we must offer up our own _____.
3. Who alone can offer up your childish things to God?
4. Why do some men never “make the crossover” into manhood?
5. Our actions and appearances seem to prove that we don’t _____ being men. In fact, we give manhood a bad name by making it look _____.
6. True or False. Most men are quite knowledgeable about how aging affects their bodies, so they are completely prepared when changes occur in their physical and sexual performance. _____
7. True or False. While a young woman’s passage into adulthood is clear and dramatic, a young man’s physical changes come in a scattered, almost haphazard way. _____
8. Jews require candidates for Bar Mitzvah to learn and commit themselves to the _____ of _____ before they are recognized as adults.
9. We need to _____ male adulthood by learning what it means and what it takes to be real men.
10. We need to _____ our _____ through all the rites and experiences of courtship, marriage, child-rearing, and even grandparenting!

11. If we celebrate manhood with all our strength and heart, and honor God as men who appreciate their masculinity, we will discover that the _____ in our lives will celebrate too!
12. Many men live with tremendous remorse and regret because they feel “it’s too late.” They mistakenly fear that they are doomed to be less than a man because they missed their _____ to _____.
13. The rite of passage into true manhood is not a matter of changing the “_____” and the “_____” of life, but a change of the “_____” in life.
14. The process begins within, when we look at the _____ of _____ and are transformed.
15. An example of a man who celebrated his manhood is _____.
16. List some of the things about David that made him a good picture of what a man should be. _____
17. When a bear and a lion each took a lamb from David’s flock, he didn’t even think about what to do. He _____ to the Spirit of God rising up in him.
18. True or False. David didn’t stop in his righteous anger until he had killed his enemies and forever ended their ability to ravage his flock.

19. David’s strength and training came from _____.
20. A _____ in the hands of a mighty God can deliver any nation, church, or family.
21. True or False. Every true man of God is a shepherd on the inside.

22. Like David, the only way you can be a real man is to be a man _____ God’s _____.
23. David learned how to be a man by communing with God in the hills. Then he _____ everywhere he went.
24. Manhood doesn’t have to occur at a particular age; it needs to occur at a particular _____.
25. List three indicators that you are ready to become a man:
 - a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

26. There must be a lion and a lamb in every man. The art is to have both and to know _____ to be _____.

27. More than any other man, Jesus demonstrated perfect _____ in the duplex nature of man.

28. True men can't be ashamed of either side of their _____.

29. The true definition of meekness is _____.

30. You must walk a tightrope between being a lion and a lamb, and only the _____ can give you true balance in that walk.

FURTHER CHALLENGE: Perhaps you are one of the many men who find yourself rocking in the boat of mediocrity when you could have crossed over into abundance, contentment, and tranquillity. Are you aware of some "childish things" the Lord has been asking you to offer up to Him? Are you ready to take action now?

If so, list them and give them to God in prayer.



CHAPTER FIVE

The Party Is in Progress

Questions:

1. In the story of the prodigal son, the young man broke allegiance with his father and “joined himself” to a citizen from a far country. What resulted from this association?
2. Ungodly friends will undermine what God has purposed in our lives and often have us doing the very things we _____ and _____ the most.
3. Psalm 1:1 tells us, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the _____ of the ungodly.”
4. Most affairs start ... (circle the letter of your response):
 - a. When an opportunity presents itself and a man is taken off guard by a loose woman.
 - b. By thoughts that gradually engulf the passions and alter the judgments of their victims.
5. If you want to be blessed, watch out for manipulation by _____ men or by men of God operating with _____.
6. Once we repent, and the Spirit of God restores us to our senses, the praise of God is strong in our mouth because we can see how _____ we escaped.
7. When the prodigal returns, it is time to feast at the Father’s table and revel in our _____ and _____ masculinity.
8. True or False. In the midst of your rejoicing, it is unusual for the enemy to discourage you. _____

9. When David returned home in triumph with the Ark of the Covenant, he rejoiced greatly. Who did the devil use to try to inflict pain and sorrow on him?

10. Do all of our companions and friends rejoice when we choose to return to our rightful place as a child of God?
11. When the prodigal son faced his sin, repented of his wrong, and threw himself into the loving arms of his father, the elder brother stood stubbornly on his own _____ and _____.
12. _____ will sometimes keep those you love and trust from rejoicing with you.
13. Manhood requires leadership, and leadership requires the _____ to _____ even though some may never follow.
14. When you experience liberation and restoration by the Father's hand, it is important to _____ —even if no one else joins you! Enter into the Father's _____ and never look back!
15. The Bible records many other men of God who faced hostile emotions and sometimes fatal attacks from their own brothers, family members, wives, countrymen, or co-workers. Name a few of these:

16. The Bible tells us that “for the joy that was set before him” Jesus endured the Cross. What have been the results for mankind because the men you listed above did not waver from their destiny of manhood in the purpose of God?

17. Your manhood will bring new health and blessing to your life, to your home, to your marriage, and to the _____ who follow after you.

FURTHER CHALLENGE: Have you ever felt the scorn and rejection of your closest loves and companions? Are you determined to follow God's lead no matter what it costs? How will the “joy that is set before you” help you keep your determination?



CHAPTER SIX

When the Yoke Isn't Easy

Questions:

1. Many men become easily discouraged when they sense _____ or _____ in their mates.
2. Most men would rather explore fields they have not conquered than _____ something they feel they have already captured or achieved.
3. True or False. Once a man has truly ignited the flame of his wife's love, he can sit by that fire for years to come. _____
4. God wants you to continually woo and win your wife's heart, just as He continually woos _____.
5. Our challenge as men is to overcome our reputation for being unable or unwilling to _____ in our relationships before they escalate to emergencies.
6. Once we know a problem exists, we have to overpower our tendency to _____ in solving it.
7. Most men get their _____ when they feel they have changed but the change is not accepted by the woman in their life.
8. Once a woman is leery of her husband's actions or motives, it takes a _____ of God's Spirit to get her to change her mind.
9. The joy of a major victory or success in a man's career can be quickly neutralized by a scornful remark from a jealous or bitter _____.
10. If your wife begins to feel that your career or ministry has stolen your _____, your _____, or your _____ away from her, she will react like a woman rejected and a wife betrayed.

11. Every man should try to keep his wife _____ in the most important things he does away from her.
12. True or False. Your wife will appreciate the leadership and anointing you display elsewhere—if you exhibit leadership and love for her at home. _____
13. Since men and women often have different ideas about what success is, it is important that you _____ what success means to your wife.
14. A man's willingness to _____ and revise his _____ and _____ displays his personal value system and shows how highly he esteems his spouse.
15. If your wife is motivated by one thing and you are motivated by something else, it is time to build a bridge on the foundation of a _____.
16. List three areas of common joy or interest you could develop that would bring you and your wife closer together:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
17. If you don't keep your wife abreast of the _____ within you, she may continue to give you what you used to need and wonder why it isn't working anymore.
18. When David's wife Michal confronted her husband to "put him in his place," what didn't she realize?
19. When Michal chose to get bitter instead of better, she embraced three deadly attitudes and sins. What were they?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
20. Tragedy comes to our marriages when we fail to discuss our _____ rather than argue about _____.
21. What is the difference between a discussion and an argument?

22. “I played my music and you missed your cue” is another way of saying _____

23. A simple step a man can take to improve communication with his wife is to go beyond _____ and _____.

24. True or False. Your wife can “hear” your mind. _____

FURTHER CHALLENGE: Often there are underlying reasons for our wives’ resistance that we have failed to heed. These defy intellectual treatment, because they are matters of the heart. Prayerfully examine your marital conflicts, write them down, and ask the Lord to reveal your wife’s deepest motivations and needs. Meditate on what He tells you.



CHAPTER SEVEN

Marriage: Missionaries or Men?

Questions:

1. Many men secretly fear being _____ —they are traumatized and paralyzed by its pain.
2. Performance pressure results from our elaborate efforts to _____ others.
3. Beneath all our manly facades, each of us has a little boy within who wonders, “_____?”
4. What is a “marital missionary”?
5. In a marriage relationship there is often neither a right way nor a wrong way—just _____.
6. As fearful men, we seek to control our environments by trying to “stack the blocks” around us to create a _____ in the middle of our fears.
7. Secure men are strong enough to share their world with others who are _____.
8. True or False. God wanted bland uniformity, so He divided the race into the male and female genders. _____
9. If we continually try to change our wives into our own image, we will be _____ and _____ with care the rest of our days.
10. If you feel you need to personally change your wife to conform to your own “superior” standards, you are guaranteed to experience _____ and _____.

11. When you continually try to _____ your wife, she will become frustrated and resentful.
12. True or False. God planted some things in your wife that you desperately need to have operating in your life. _____
13. As men, we all have great confidence in doing things “our way.” Looking back, can you see times where God has intervened and used your wife to keep you from the harmful consequences of doing things your way?
14. Opposites do attract and effectively interact, but when it comes to the deepest heart motivations and drives, there must be _____.
15. Why do men fall into the trap of hastily choosing a mate?
16. God uses the yoke of the _____ to work things in us that probably cannot be done any other way.
17. What can you do if you feel you have inadvertently married the wrong person?
18. The pattern Jesus gives us to love our wives includes _____ - _____ and utter _____ to the will of God.
19. You may be a master at giving things, but your wife doesn't need more things—she needs _____.
20. Your personal attention, your loving affection, and your gentle assurance can ignite the _____ of a destitute relationship.
21. True or False. Because God is sovereign, He can make a miracle out of a mistake. _____
22. Where does the miracle of marriage appear?

FURTHER CHALLENGE: What changes could you make in order to give yourself to your wife? List ten ways you could begin to share your life with the one God has given you to love. (Include barriers that you need to knock down.)

1. _____

2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

List some specific activities you could do to develop your common interests.
(Check them off, one by one, as you do them!)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____



CHAPTER EIGHT

Mighty Men Still Need Rest

Questions:

1. Modern man's exhaustion and fatigue are driving him to seek a place of _____.
2. We're too exhausted to struggle against _____, and we're too worn out to overcome our fatigue.
3. We need a vacation from the _____ of day-to-day activity and responsibility.
4. The continual _____ of our need for rest is driving us over the edge, as exemplified in raging tempers and savage domestic violence.
5. Where did David look when his heart was overwhelmed?
6. Every boy who stands up to the test and attempts to be a man quickly realizes that the _____ is greater than the _____.
7. True or False. A real man can take whatever comes and never feel weary. _____
8. Every believer needs to allow himself to be _____ so he will know where to _____ find rest.
9. Samson fell into sin because he went to the _____ for rest.
10. Give two reasons why the Samsons of our age are almost extinct:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
11. Success is not successful without a _____.
12. For our nation to return to God, we must have a resurgence of fighting _____ whose Samson-like courage has not been destroyed by _____

- _____ and _____.
13. Delilah the temptress assassinates the successful through their own tiredness, numbness, and _____.
 14. A tired man is a _____ man—who talks too much.
 15. Many mighty men have fallen prey to the enemy's assassin because they thought, " _____ " and were too _____ to acknowledge their peril.
 16. Your "Delilah" can be anything that comes into your life to deplete your _____. It can be a relationship, your _____, or a _____.
 17. Your "Delilah" promises you an escape, a haven, and lasting delight, but she just wants to _____ you.
 18. What effect does fatigue have on our judgments, emotions, and creativity?
 19. Even good things like hard work and success are dangerous if they get " _____."
 20. Some of us run from our terror of failure, forgetting that _____ is the opposite of faith.
 21. Many who drive hard and play little do so because of some inner need to establish their worth in the eyes of their critics. Tell why this is such a fruitless effort:
 22. God sends different types of people into our lives to _____ us.
 23. True or False. There is a safe place of rest for God's man today.

 24. How do we find that rest?
 25. No matter how rough His will may seem to be, there is a certain comfort that comes from _____ and _____ your purpose.

FURTHER CHALLENGE: Where we turn for relief identifies and defines who we really are. What do you do when you are overstressed? Do you automatically turn to food, drink, drugs, or sex to make you feel better?

What can you do to break this pattern and train yourself to turn to God for refreshment?



CHAPTER NINE

You Are Still My Son!

Questions:

1. God has given me one opportunity to be all that I wanted someone else to be to me. What is this opportunity?
2. Without the guidance of God helping and training me, I cannot _____ my son as I should.
3. What does every son long to hear his father say?
4. True or False. More men in our society are hurting over their mothers or their wives than grieving and missing their fathers. _____
5. A father is an _____ of a young man's _____, a living testimony of what time may bring to pass.
6. What forces in our society stand ready to "fill the blank" left by absentee fathers and deadbeat dads?
7. Jesus is a true example of a hero: soft enough to _____ at His friend's funeral, but _____ enough to call him from the grave!
8. Jesus felt compassion for the women He loved, but then He wiped away their tears and _____ the _____ to change the circumstances that had created their pain.
9. If we are still alive, then we will _____ each other. It is part of being human.
10. If our love cannot overcome disappointment, then we will die _____, _____, and _____.

11. True or False. If your loved one is still alive, it is not too late to restore the relationship. _____
12. To restore your relationship with your grown son, you must put away the _____. Call him _____ you, don't drive him from you.
13. If we are going to have families, we must let _____ carry us beyond the _____ that drive us apart.
14. What did the father of the prodigal son know that made him avoid the "I told you so" speech?

15. True or False. Your prodigal son's only glimpse of the God you serve may come at the moment he feels your fatherly arms around him.

FURTHER CHALLENGE: Is your relationship with your father or with your son causing you grief? If they are still alive, what step can you take to begin a restoration?

If they are deceased, what steps can you take to overcome your loss and restore what is missing?



CHAPTER TEN

Surrogate Fathers

Questions:

1. What happens to a child when someone he admires does something he hates?
2. Somewhere deep within the tormented man there is a tormented child who feels _____ to _____ others.
3. True or False. The love of Christ draws men from their tomb of pain, yet when they emerge, they are often still bound, trapped, and wrapped in the odor of decay. _____
4. If these freshly resurrected men are to be united, who will have to do it?
5. Fear of _____ can keep God's called ones from moving forward to complete wholeness.
6. Some men desperately need to be _____ by a surrogate father because they need to experience a relationship they never had in their childhood.
7. The bond between Elisha and Elijah was born out of their _____ need for _____ relationship.
8. A surrogate father must be someone you respect, or his _____ will mean nothing to you.
9. A pastor's touch or smile can give men reassurance, a sense of pride, and _____.
10. A pastor's personalized attention is important to the _____ level and _____ - _____ of the men in his flock.

11. If you want to climb from the mediocre into the supernatural, find someone who is doing what you want to do and _____ him.
12. True or False. You will never be whole unless you learn to serve someone other than yourself. _____
13. If you have achieved any level of success, then _____ it into someone else!
14. Five things that the attention of a surrogate father can do for you are: show you your own _____ and abilities; heal the _____ of your childhood; rebuild your _____ - _____; _____ your existence; and leave you with an imparted _____ of excellence and power.
15. True or False. For a surrogate father to make a real difference in a man's life requires a long-term commitment and years of attention.

16. True or False. To be an effective surrogate father, a man must be flawless. _____
17. The greatest compliment you can give a father is to _____ what he gave you and carry on.
18. When you sense a man is sent by God to impart something to you, what should you do? (circle the letter of your response):
 - a. Speak quickly, love intensely, and thank him.
 - b. Cling to him with every ounce of strength you have.
 - c. Both of the above.
19. Has someone ever been "like a father" to you? If so, what was his name, and how did he help you?

FURTHER CHALLENGE: Is there someone in your life now with whom you desire to develop a "father" relationship? If so, write down what you could do to encourage such a bond.

Begin today to cultivate this relationship.



CHAPTER ELEVEN

A Man's Best Friend

Questions:

1. Knowing God transforms our wretchedness into _____, but we cannot know Him when we are running or _____ from Him!
2. Adam's sin opened the lock and allowed death to enter the earthly realm, bringing with it the generational _____ of _____ on his offspring.
3. The consuming fire of sin and death burned out of control all the way to the foot of the _____ of _____.
4. Jesus broke the curse and forever destroyed the power that _____ had unleashed.
5. What did Adam do after he sinned?
6. List four losses that result from man's habit of hiding weaknesses, love, and fear.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
7. True or False. Even confident men are intimidated by the voice or rebuke of those they love or respect. _____
8. Men seek the safety of disguise and hide in shadows to avoid _____ in any form — physical, emotional, or financial.
9. Why are many men uncomfortable with worship?

10. Adam did not properly handle his relationship with his wife: he joined her in her failure instead of acting to _____ her.
11. God wants strong men who will _____ instead of weak men who only _____.
12. It is frightening to stand naked before God, but He can never _____ what you are afraid to _____.
13. True or False. The man who beats his wife is also beating himself, for deep within his soul he knows his life is out of control. _____
14. Give some examples of inner fears that men face today:

15. Our own actions, taken as a result of our _____, have removed us from the _____-making process in our own homes.
16. God wants to _____ you, and He is calling you through the problems you have been experiencing.
17. True or False. God doesn't love fallen and fearful men as much as men who "have it all under control." _____
18. God is your only _____, your last _____, and your only _____.
19. God wants to uncover the _____ you.
20. Most of your jobs and relationships were built on your personal performance and achievement, but all God wants is _____—complete with your embarrassment, failures, fear, and scraped knees.
21. God is your best friend and you can _____ with Him.
22. Once you step out of hiding you will discover how _____ it is to be forgiven and accepted for who you really are.
23. God's blessing is not achieved by our _____ but by His _____.

FURTHER CHALLENGE: Have you become an absentee father in your own house? Are you ready to say, "No, devil"? What specific steps can you take today to change your level of involvement with your wife?

With your children?

Remember, it isn't too late!



CHAPTER TWELVE

The Saul Syndrome

Questions:

1. The secret to enjoying each stage of your life is that when God says, "Release it!" you need to _____ it _____ to Him!
2. We become vulnerable to the "Saul syndrome" whenever we lose elasticity and become _____ and afraid of _____.
3. We are not called to _____ with our young sons; we are called to _____ them.
4. True or False. Each stage in life has different advantages and disadvantages from other stages. _____
5. Learn to _____ the various stages of life rather than _____ them.
6. List two things we can enjoy about being middle-aged:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
7. List two things older men can enjoy:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
8. Awaiting us in yet another stage is the smile of _____ that we will display if we have handled this stage correctly.
9. Good advice for Christians who are in the prime of life is, "Live holy as if Jesus will come in the morning, but _____ and build as if He will not."

10. God wants His people to build their _____ and pass along their _____ from generation to generation.
11. If you dare to become involved with the next generation, then you will always be a _____ of their success rather than _____ by it.
12. The mark of a self-centered man is that he is a better _____ than an investor.
13. True or False. Whoever comes after you should have it easier than you did, because blessed people always leave a blessing. _____
14. You must be careful to love your Assigner more than your _____.
15. True or False. Excellent leadership never works itself out of a job.

16. We should always be training and teaching until one day we step from labor into _____.
17. What is the enemy of progression?
18. People only hold on to something when they believe _____ will come.
19. Explain the statement, “Fruit-bearing and leaf-withering are two entirely different things”: _____
20. If we allow our older men to plan the strategy, then we will fight our battles armed with both the _____ of the aged and the zealous _____ of the young.

FURTHER CHALLENGE: Do you have a realistic plan that allows for the changing ages and stages of your manhood? Seek God for wisdom and grace to build a foundation in the prime of your strength and productivity for your senior years to rest upon. Write down five key ideas that will help you to create a plan that will allow you to be led by God—not driven by need.



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

When the Clothes They Make Don't Fit!

Questions:

1. Even after you are raised from a grave of failure or weakness, you will still be tangled up with soiled bandages, tender scars, jangled emotions, and unsavory affairs that must be loosed by _____.
2. What did Jesus tell the people who loved Lazarus to do?
3. If you have been through a radical change or moral recovery, then you need to be _____ with your family.
4. Once trust has been damaged, the drive to survive makes it hard for people to again _____ anyone who hurt them.
5. To heal fully, a wife needs _____ and _____.
6. The “probation period” can be viewed as an _____ to a man who has used all his strength to overcome a problem and come back home.
7. The same God Who gave you the _____ to survive and revive will also help you work through the _____ effects of your original problem.
8. The symptoms of residual sins clinging to our lives are signs that “Lazarus may be _____, but he is definitely not _____.”
9. If you find yourself in Lazarus’s position, it is good to know God would not have _____ you from your sleep if He didn’t have a _____ for your life.
10. Like Lazarus, if we are going to survive, we must be able to _____ God when He calls and _____ when we hear.

11. True or False. God is looking for radical men who will move suddenly when their freedom is in danger. _____
12. Lazarus's tomb represents an area of your life in which you have been _____ by those around you who gave up on your _____.
13. True or False. Those who love you must ride the roller coaster to your recovery, whether they want to or not. The difference is their decisions didn't create the ride. _____
14. True or False. You can never recover if others do not believe in you. _____
15. True or False. You must believe in yourself, because if you are going to be raised from death in your life, then your feet must do the leaping. _____
16. As much as you want the support of others, remember that the most important thing you can do in this practical part of the process is to _____ and _____ yourself.
17. Marriages often collapse just when things begin to look up—one of the partners simply says, "I quit." Why do you think this happens?
18. If you find that others are not as resilient as you toward the sudden changes in life, remember to _____ rather than _____.
19. True or False. Most of the time all hurting and wounded people need is an acknowledgment of their right to hurt. _____
20. Whenever you feel trapped by the opinions of others, reserve the right to _____ the graveclothes they made for you and _____ to live!
21. Give an example of how "graveclothes" can pull a changed man back down into the same rut he just got out of: _____
22. The changing of the heart quickens from the dead, but the _____ of the mind is the removal of the graveclothes.
23. True or False. If God gives you the grace to escape the grave, then He can give you the grace to change your garments. _____

FURTHER CHALLENGE: If you have been delivered from a sinful or addictive habit, have you examined your graveclothes? Is there any part of your former lifestyle that is still clinging to you? If so, write it down. What

must you do to be free from these influences so your mind can readjust to wholesomeness?



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Knocked No Lower Than My Knees

Questions:

1. True or False. Prayer is the most neglected and underused resource in the kingdom of God. _____
2. Prayer can be a special challenge to men because of our tendency toward _____.
3. What three things does prayer require us to do?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
4. We men avoid vocalizing our desire because we fear _____.
5. Prayer is a struggle for people who need public _____; great prayer only comes after we have been weaned from the _____ of others.
6. True or False. Deep prayer can be done in public if you are articulate or expressive enough. _____
7. True or False. God can do whatever you have faith enough to believe Him for and whatever you have courage enough to beseech Him for. _____
8. Prayer builds back what life has _____.
9. True prayers are _____ appeals by faith-filled men to a mighty God Who _____ and _____.

10. If we fail to learn the healing art of _____, we will practice the hideous habit of _____.
11. Frustration, along with angry ranting and raving, are tell-tale signs of _____.
12. Prayer is not weakness; it is the wonderful privilege of turning our _____ over to a higher _____.
13. True or False. Prayer is a compliment to God. He is flattered and blessed when you pray. _____
14. When a man has a wounded spirit, his _____ for life is gone, beaten down by stress, emptiness, frustration, and loneliness.
15. If you need a renewal of your passion, excitement, and intensity, then you need to pray for a _____.
16. When you assume responsibility for the decisions of other people, you become weary because you are _____ God.
17. True or False. Prayer is life-changing and better than counseling or therapy. _____
18. We must live close enough to God to hear His _____ of pending danger and close enough to our families that they have _____ in what He has spoken to us.
19. You can earn the _____ of your wife and children by becoming a man of prayer.
20. You can literally change the direction of your whole family—without _____ or _____—simply through old-fashioned prayer!
21. When we kneel down to pray, we should . . . (circle the letter of your response):
 - a. Ask God to fix “them.”
 - b. Ask God to fix us.
22. Rank sin is one obstacle to a lifestyle of prayer. Name several other factors that keep a man prayerless: _____
23. True or False. Prayer is the highest form of praise to God. _____
24. True or False. You can never be healed confessing the faults of others. _____

25. One of the first things we men need to recover from the devil's thieving grip is our _____ in our _____.
26. Only prayer can help us develop true strength in three important biblical functions. What are they?
- a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
27. Women often take the dominant role in marriages because their husbands do not present the family with a _____ - _____ _____.
28. Men have been "in neutral" for so long that women have filled the _____ void and now run the house.
29. This has made men even more _____ and women even more _____, _____, and _____.
30. True or False. To be the "head of the house," a man must be domineering and authoritarian. _____
31. Men are responsible for setting _____ agendas and being _____ enough to hold their families to the track.
32. What two steps must men take to guide their families?
- a. _____
 - b. _____
33. God is progressive, and He is always moving, so you and I should expect _____ in our lives and homes.
34. If I do not affect my family in a positive way, then my presence in the home is a _____ to God!
35. What is meant by the statement, "Men are to cover or gird their families"?
36. When the challenge of providing and caring for your family seems overwhelming, what should you do?
37. Many men are ready to defend their family from _____ assailants, but few men are prepared to defend their family against _____

- attacks.
38. Men plagued by guilt and moral problems are poorly equipped to build _____ against depression, suicide, child abuse, or other spirits that may target their home.
 39. The devil hates to see prayer break out among men because he knows we guard our homes through _____.
 40. What is the difference between a good idea and a “God idea”?
 41. Once you know you have a “God idea,” you must refuse to allow anyone to intimidate you with _____.
 42. Two things you can do to pass your faith on to your children is to _____ the faith yourself and clearly _____ it to others.
 43. A godly heritage passed from his father puts God in the very _____ of a child’s being, and he will not be easily shaken.
 44. What heritage can you pass on to your children? Are there any miracles in your life? Are there any things you know God did for you? Write at least two down:
 45. “Guard your heart” means to always reserve the deepest and innermost portion of your _____ and _____ for God.
 46. True or False. Divine peace is one of the greatest security systems you can use to guard your heart. _____
 47. Nothing will replace the personal experience that evolves from _____ and praise and from time spent learning to _____ the God your heart has believed.

FURTHER CHALLENGE: How can you fit a time of prayer into your life? Be willing to sacrifice to find this time and to make it a habit. The reward is well worth the effort. Consider and write down a time currently filled with other activities. Start with fifteen minutes.



CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Living Like a Loosed Man

Questions:

1. Lazarus is “proof positive” that God can produce a “_____” for every mishap.
2. Whenever _____ came to town, Lazarus made it a point to be there.
3. If you have been given a second chance, you cannot afford to go back to the same _____ that perpetuated the problem.
4. You must avoid the _____ that helped the enemy to attack you.
5. “Only show up for Jesus” means, “If it’s not for His _____, don’t involve yourself.”
6. Giving is an opportunity to share the fruits of your _____ blessing with a _____ God Who has been gracious to you!
7. “I only feel safe when I am in His _____” is an attitude shared by everyone who has felt His _____ hand grip them when their own nerves failed them.
8. True or False. You can “find other things to do” and stop “taking treatments” once your condition has improved. _____
9. The presence of Jesus tends to preserve our _____.
10. A loosed man needs _____ like a drug addict needs dope.
11. We are not drawn to Jesus merely by the _____ we receive in His presence but also by the _____ we feel apart from Him.
12. True or False. If we are going to rehabilitate the hurting men around us, we must teach them to worship. _____

13. Worship allows you to press into God's loving presence until His _____ is etched upon your _____.
14. "To recline in His presence" means to rest on Jesus, casting all your _____, anxieties, and _____ on Him.
15. A loosed man is a _____-hardened career man complete with battle scars, memorials, and _____ of his personal survival.
16. Once you develop the _____ to _____, you are ready to do great things for God.
17. True or False. Resurrection changes the way you react to fear and death: a loosed man will never fear again. _____
18. A loosed man is a voice from the grave of _____ sent back to speak to his _____.
19. True or False. The loosed man knows himself better than other men. _____
20. The loosed man's strength is not in his _____; it flows from the _____ in his belly.
21. True or False. Lazarus faced many abrasive attacks because his preaching was a catalyst that caused many men to seek Jesus. _____
22. Why did the devil not want to surrender Lazarus without a fight?
23. If you are doing your best to survive the crisis in your life, you may know _____ you are going through. However it is only in retrospect that you will understand _____ you are going through it!
24. Show me a man who has greatly affected his generation, and I will show you a man who has felt the _____ and _____ of shackles and tribulation.
25. When God talks about your destiny, He never says " _____," He always says " _____."
26. Your mission is now to go and bring other men to the light. They saw you in your _____, now let them see your _____.
27. True or False. A loosed man always reaches back for others. _____
28. Deliverance without evangelism is just plain _____.
29. You endured the extreme attacks to pay the price for the harvest—it is time to _____ the _____.

FURTHER CHALLENGE: Have you been there for the Lord Who was there for you? Have you been willing to touch that one who is teetering on the edge of a grave? You know what it was like, and you know the power of your Master's will. Is there someone you feel the Lord is asking you to "reach back" for? What first step could you take to obey this call? Write down the person's name and what you could initially do: _____

Answer Key

CHAPTER ONE

1. Children.
2. Definition; demonstration.
3. Absence, irresponsibility, sullen silence, or violence.
4. a. Shows him he matters and that his opinions are important.
b. Enriches his thinking process.
c. Builds his self-esteem.
d. Stimulates his creativity.
5. a. Violence.
b. Introversion.
c. Perversion.
d. Outright self-destruction.
6. Personal response.
7. True.
8. Anger.
9. Thoughts; words.
10. Emotions; frustrations.
11. Inadequacy; insecurity.
12. Dwarfing.
13. True.
14. Character.
15. Extreme sexuality.
16. Hide; feelings.
17. Develop empathy for the little boy inside him.

CHAPTER TWO

1. b.

2. a. The grandson of Saul, the first King of Israel.
b. He should have been King of Israel.
c. Saul and Jonathan were killed in battle and Mephibosheth was injured,
becoming lame in both feet.
3. a. "Place of no communication."
b. Tragedy can keep us from reaching our potential and imprison us in
a
silent place where no one can hear our pain or ease our sorrow
4. Distracted; crippled; fetch.
5. The Holy Spirit.
6. Personal response.
7. a.
8. Personal response.
9. Made; table.
10. Problem.
11. Hypocritical.
12. Frustrated.
13. Position; condition.
14. Conditions; childhood scars; brokenness.
15. Trusted brother; outgrow; circumstances.

CHAPTER THREE

1. No. Reader's discussion.
2. Jesus Christ.
3. Used to be.
4. True.
5. He turned them over to a reprobate mind, or He turned them over to themselves.
6. Corrupt.
7. Secret weaknesses.
8. Goals; purpose.
9. Frailties; vulnerabilities.
10. True.

11. Because He knows He has the power to make them become what He says they will become.
12. Personal response.
13. Camouflage.
14. Operate or do surgery.
15. A true friend loves you enough to stand up to you. He confronts you.
16. Life.
17.
 - a. To cause you to realize you are wasting your life.
 - b. To make you appreciate the wife He gave you.
 - c. To make you understand how blessed you are.
 - d. To give you the ability to stick to a job, even when it feels like it is going nowhere.
18. True.
19. Personal response.
20. False.
21. Prince.
22. Deliver; past.
23. Personal response.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. Manhood; purposes; God.
2. Immaturity.
3. You.
4. Reader's discussion.
5. Enjoy; boring.
6. False.
7. True.
8. Biblical duties; manhood.
9. Celebrate.
10. Continue; education.
11. Women.
12. Chance; change.
13. Whats; hows; who.
14. Face; God.

15. David.
16. Reader's discussion.
17. Yielded.
18. True.
19. Knowing who God is.
20. True shepherd.
21. True.
22. After; own heart.
23. Inspired manhood.
24. Stage.
25. a. When you have outgrown your old thoughts and previous understandings.
b. When what was once wisdom to you now sounds like foolishness.
c. When old toys are not as enjoyable as they once were.
26. When; which.
27. Balance.
28. Nature.
29. Strength under control.
30. Holy Ghost.

CHAPTER FIVE

1. Reader's discussion.
2. Hate; despise.
3. Counsel.
4. b.
5. Ungodly; ungodly motives.
6. Narrowly.
7. Manhood; Godward.
8. False.
9. His wife Michal.
10. No.
11. Rights; self-righteousness.
12. Jealousy.

13. Commitment; lead.
14. Celebrate; joy.
15. Abel, Isaac, Israel, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, David, Solomon, Jesus Christ, and the Apostle Paul.
16. Reader's discussion.
17. Generations.

CHAPTER SIX

1. Rejection; apathy.
2. Maintain.
3. False.
4. His Bride.
5. Recognize problems.
6. Procrastinate.
7. Feelings hurt.
8. Supernatural move.
9. Wife.
10. Attention; affection; time.
11. Involved.
12. True.
13. Find out.
14. Compromise; behavior; perceptions.
15. Common joy or interest.
16. Personal response.
17. Changes.
18. That her husband was in the place God intended for him to be.
19. a. Apathy.
b. Jealousy.
c. Scorn.
20. Discouragement; guilt.
21. A discussion airs the issues, but an argument alleges charges and appoints blame.
22. Reader's discussion.

23. Grunts; gestures.

24. False.

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. Rejected.

2. Impress.

3. "Am I enough?"

4. A man who thinks he is called to change his wife rather than to understand her.

5. Differing perspectives.

6. Safe place.

7. Different.

8. False.

9. Miserable; encumbered.

10. Failure; frustration.

11. Change.

12. True.

13. Personal response.

14. Compatibility.

15. They are struggling with loneliness or lust; they are terrified of being alone.

16. Marriage covenant.

17. Pray for your marriage, ask Jesus to teach you to love her unconditionally.

18. Self-sacrifice; submission.

19. You.

20. Redemption.

21. True.

22. In the rebirth of love, the rekindling of the flame, in an ability to forgive.

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. Rest.

2. Injustice.

3. Stress.
4. Denial.
5. To God, or to “the Rock that is higher than I.”
6. Need; supply.
7. False.
8. Trained; safely.
9. Wrong place.
10. They have a tendency to self-destruct, plus they have failed to pass their gifts on to the next generation.
11. Successor.
12. Fathers; fatigue; moral failure.
13. Inner void.
14. Vulnerable.
15. I can handle it; proud.
16. Strength; career; habit.
17. Destroy.
18. Reader’s discussion.
19. Out of balance.
20. Fear.
21. Reader’s discussion.
22. Balance.
23. True.
24. In the arms of the Spirit of God, in His presence, in His will.
25. Understanding; fulfilling.

CHAPTER NINE

1. Being a father.
2. Parent.
3. Reader’s discussion.
4. False.
5. Image; destiny.
6. The gay community, gangs and drug lords, pornographers.
7. Cry; strong.

8. Assumed; responsibility.
9. Disappoint.
10. Lonely; bitter; stubborn.
11. True.
12. Lectures; toward.
13. Love; wounds.
14. Reader's discussion.
15. True.

CHAPTER TEN

1. Reader's discussion.
2. Doomed; torment.
3. True.
4. Reader's discussion.
5. Failure.
6. Adopted.
7. Mutual; covenant.
8. Approval.
9. Affirmation.
10. Performance; well-being.
11. Serve.
12. True.
13. Pour.
14. Strengths; scars; self-esteem; dignify, mantle.
15. False.
16. False.
17. Catch.
18. a.
19. Personal response.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

1. Righteousness; hiding.
2. Curse; sin.

3. Cross; Jesus.
4. Disobedience.
5. He hid from God.
6. a. Destroys our homes.
b. Robs our wives of intimacy.
c. Alienates our children.
d. Frustrates our relationship with God.
7. True.
8. Vulnerability.
9. True worship requires us to become vulnerable by expressing our need for God.
10. Save.
11. Lead; follow.
12. Heal; reveal.
13. True.
14. Reader's discussion.
15. Fears; decision.
16. Confront.
17. False.
18. Hope; chance; solution.
19. Real.
20. You.
21. Relax.
22. Refreshing.
23. Efforts; goodness.

CHAPTER TWELVE

1. Give; all.
2. Possessive; change.
3. Compete; cultivate.
4. True.
5. Appreciate; fear.
6. Independence, ability to make own decisions.

7. Dismiss daily duties and concerns of child rearing in their home, no longer need to struggle to maintain.
8. Contentment.
9. Prepare.
10. Wealth; wisdom.
11. Part; intimidated.
12. Consumer.
13. True.
14. Assignment.
15. False.
16. Reward.
17. Stagnation.
18. Nothing else.
19. Reader's discussion.
20. Wisdom; strength.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

1. Other people.
2. "Loose him and let him go!"
3. Patient.
4. Trust.
5. Time; prayer.
6. Insult.
7. Grace; side.
8. Raised; loosed.
9. Awakened; plan.
10. Hear; leap.
11. True.
12. Buried; recovery.
13. True.
14. False.
15. True.
16. Support; encourage.

17. Reader's discussion.
18. Comfort; criticize.
19. True.
20. Alter; continue.
21. Reader's discussion.
22. Renewal.
23. True.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

1. True.
2. Nonverbal communication.
3. Express our need, articulate our pain, and describe our desire.
4. Disappointment.
5. Affirmation; praise.
6. False.
7. True.
8. Depleted.
9. Spontaneous; hears; answers.
10. Prayer; worry.
11. How long it has been since we have had fervent prayer.
12. Humanity; authority.
13. True.
14. Enthusiasm.
15. Revival.
16. Playing.
17. True.
18. Warning; confidence.
19. Respect.
20. Argument; discussion.
21. b.
22. Procrastination, busyness, overwhelmed in pursuing things, problem-consciousness, self-consciousness.
23. False. (Obedience is.)

24. True.
25. Positions; homes.
26. a. To guide.
b. To cover or gird.
c. To guard.
27. God-ordained agenda.
28. Leadership.
29. Insecure; stressed; depressed; embittered.
30. False.
31. Progressive; firm.
32. Be prayerful enough to hear from God; clearly communicate the vision.
33. Perpetual progression.
34. Disgrace.
35. Reader's discussion.
36. Personal response.
37. Physical; spiritual.
38. Defenses.
39. Intercession.
40. Reader's discussion.
41. Earthly wisdom.
42. Understand; communicate.
43. Roots.
44. Personal response.
45. Heart; trust.
46. True.
47. Prayer; know.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

1. Comeback.
2. Jesus.
3. Environment.
4. Associations.
5. Glory.

6. Undeserved; deserving.
7. Will; reassuring.
8. False.
9. Resurrection.
10. Worship.
11. High; pain.
12. True.
13. Impression; character.
14. Cares; frustrations.
15. Combat; trophies.
16. Tenacity; survive.
17. False.
18. Failure; generation.
19. True.
20. Frame; holy fire.
21. False.
22. Reader's discussion.
23. What; why.
24. Pain; confinement.
25. If; when.
26. Frustration; resurrection.
27. True.
28. Selfishness.
29. Reap; rewards.

T. D. JAKES, founder and senior pastor of The Potter's House church in Dallas, Texas, is a celebrated speaker and author with many bestselling books to his credit. His weekly television broadcast is viewed in millions of homes nationwide. Featured on the cover of *Time* magazine, he is known around the world for his message of freedom to be found in Christ.

Books by T. D. Jakes

Loose That Man & Let Him Go! (with workbook)

So You Call Yourself a Man?

T. D. Jakes Speaks to Men!

T. D. Jakes Speaks to Women!

Woman, Thou Art Loosed!

T. D. Jakes Speaks to Men (3 in 1)

T. D. & Serita Jakes Speak to Women (3 in 1)

SIX PILLARS FOR THE BELIEVER

Celebrating Marriage

Experiencing Jesus

Intimacy With God

Life Overflowing

Loved by God

Overcoming the Enemy

Life Overflowing (6 in 1)

Devotionals

Woman, Thou Art Loosed! Devotional

www.tdjakes.org

Notes

[1] James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1890), "Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary," p. 51, entry # 3290.

[2] Strong, p. 53, entry # 3478.

[3] Strong, p. 121, entry # 8280.

[4] William Congreve, "*The Mourning Bride*"