

# Enrichment

Enriching and equipping Spirit-filled ministers

SUMMER 2014

## The M A N Issue

**Friendship:  
the bond  
of brothers**

78

**Why men hate  
going to church**

86

**Becoming men  
of influence and  
understanding**

104



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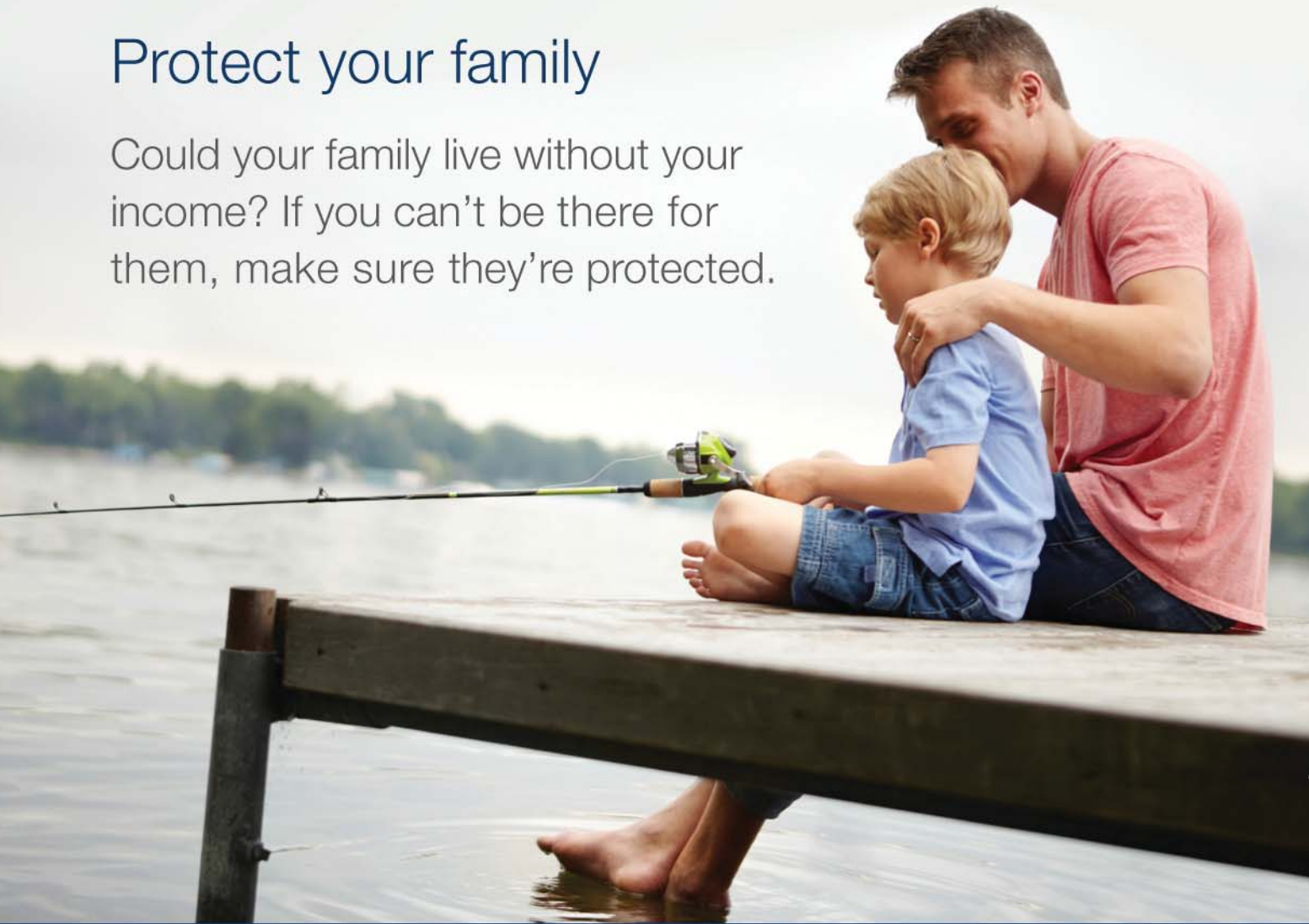
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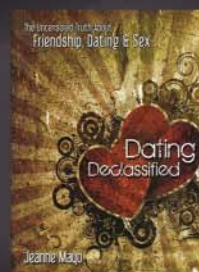
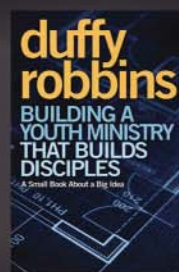
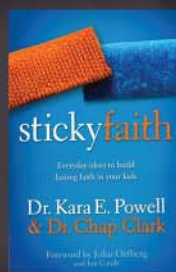
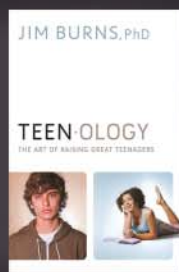


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**16** MANAGING THE MAYHEM OF MINISTRY

**Have You Become the Resentful Giver?**

By CAL LeMON

Clergy often say the same thing: “Why does everyone need something from me?”

**18** ON PREACHING

**Wanna Be Starting Somethin’?**

By DOUG GREEN

A good introduction sets the table for a good sermon. It matters.

**20** THE KINGDOM NET: NETWORKING FOR PASTORS

**Networking as a Pastoral Priority**

By JOSEPH CASTLEBERRY

The work of fishers mending their nets provides a powerful metaphor for church maintenance.

**22** IN CONTEXT

**John the Baptist**

By MARC TURNAGE

John’s message bears a strong resemblance to Jesus’ central commandments of “Love God” and “Love your neighbor.”

**25** DEALING WITH DOUBTERS

**Is Ethics Just Doing What I Want? An Assessment of Egoism**

By PAUL COPAN

God has designed us to live self-giving lives that are much more attractive than the empty existence of the “ethical” egoist.

**30** MINISTRY & MEDICAL ETHICS

**Experimental Medicine: A Question of Timing**

By CHRISTINA M.H. POWELL

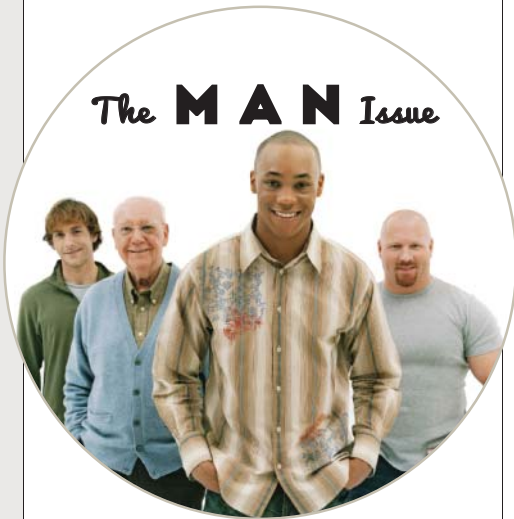
For some patients, alternative treatments and experimental medicines may become the last sources of hope.

**32** Q&A FOR MINISTRY WIVES

**Moving — Again!**

By GABRIELE RIENAS

It can be difficult to release the sufficient present to grab hold of the unknown future.



**46** *Introduction*

By RICK KNOTH

“Is there a future for men in your church?” is one of the more important and relevant queries of our day as men’s ministry leaders and pastors fight an uphill battle for the hearts and souls of men.

**48** **What Jesus Teaches Men About Money, Sex, and Power**

By GEORGE PAUL WOOD

What, for Jesus, was the primary marker of manhood? And based on that marker, what does Jesus teach Christian men about money, sex, and power?

**54** **Love Your Wife As Christ Loves the Church: What Paul Teaches Husbands About Marriage**

By FRED STOEKER

Sacrificial love produces radiant wives, thriving in oneness and intimacy with their husbands. Here’s how men can help their wives to be radiant.

(continued on page 6) ▶

**Features:**

**34** **Decisive Leadership: A Biblical Matrix for Finding Wisdom**

By ROBERT C. CROSBY

How are we to know the way of wisdom? When the Bible does not provide a clear answer, how can we be clear? Here are seven characteristics of a wise decision.

**40** **Beyond the Stairs: Being a Disability Friendly Church**

By CHARLIE CHIVERS

Welcoming the disabled is not a choice; it’s a biblical mandate. It’s the very heart of God.

8 eShorts

14 EJ Online

117 ClergyCraft

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The **M A N** Issue (continued from page 5)

**64** **Calling Dads Back to the Basics**

Interview with **ROGER GIBSON, CAREY CASEY, and GLENN STANTON**

A tragic number of men are missing in action where their families are concerned. How can dads reclaim their positions of godly influence?

**70** **A Father's Blessing: What Scripture Teaches Dads About Raising Children**

By **MARK ENTZMINGER** with **SCOTT HARRUP**

Fathers can speak life-giving blessing into their children's lives and observe outcomes with eternal significance by following these biblical principles.

**78** **Friendship: The Bond of Brothers**

By **WES YODER**

Here are practical ways you can develop lifelong friendships and help other brothers discover the life-giving presence of Jesus and His friends.

**86** **Why Men Hate Going to Church**

By **DAVID MURROW**

How did a faith founded by a man and His twelve male disciples become anathema to men? Here is how to restore the balance between the feminine and the masculine in our churches.

**92** **Fishers of Men: Best Practices for Effective Ministry to Men and Boys**

By **KENNY LUCK**

How well are we investing in men? Are they being transformed from a weekend audience to a Kingdom army fulfilling a Kingdom vision?

**100** **Mandestination**

By **RICK ALLEN**

In a world of loud voices and competing messages, how do pastors lead men to their *mandestination* and connect them to the heart of God?



page  
**64**

**104** **Sons of Issachar: Becoming Men of Understanding and Influence in the Community**

By **SAMUEL RODRIGUEZ**

As 21st century "Sons of Issachar," men carry the power to exert catalytic influence in their respective communities.

**110** **What Pentecostal Women Want From Pentecostal Men**

By **JOY QUALLS**

How do we break down the stained-glass ceiling that prevents women from their full participation in the Christian life?

**128** **A Final Word A Mandate for Men**

By **NEIL KENNEDY**

There has never been a more perfect time to reach men. They're ready for a cause — one with eternal significance.



page  
**86**

**120 News&Trends** | **122 Books** | **125 With Christ** | **126 News&Resources** | **127 Ad Index**

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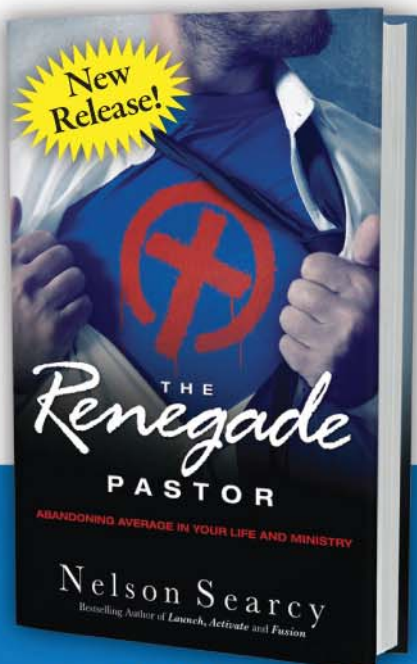
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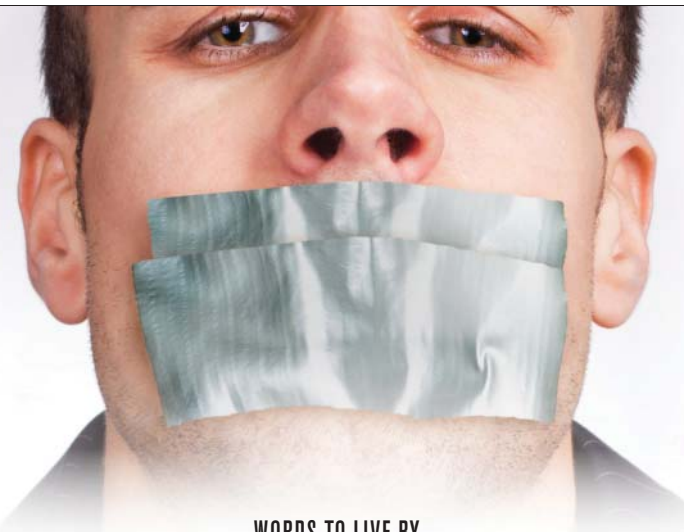
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WORDS TO LIVE BY

# HOLY SPIRIT DUCT TAPE

**T**ake control of what I say, O Lord, and guard my lips” (Psalm 141:3, NLT<sup>1</sup>)

Get too far out of line aboard an international flight and you could be restrained in your seat with duct tape. That appears to be what happened to a disruptive male passenger aboard a flight from Iceland to New York. The man was hitting, screaming, and yelling profanities. Passengers took matters into their own hands, duct taping the man to his seat.

Most of us will not encounter moments like these. But what about those times when others come to us with disparaging, critical, condemning, unnecessary words? It happened to me. It was only a few flippant words. But somehow those words not only hurt, they jerked me from joyful to full-throttle irritated in about 60 seconds. I was an eye-blink away from a comeback when God’s Word from Proverbs 11:11,12, restrained me. Paraphrased, it simply says, “Just keep quiet.” Like a strip of holy duct tape slapped across my mouth, the truth of God’s Word through the Holy Spirit prevented me from saying something that would have opened a floodgate of harsh retorts.

When I read God’s Word about the words that can come out of my mouth, I hear the Holy Spirit whispering, “Stay vigilant.” We can choose to engage in a snarky comeback, or we can allow the Word of God to dwell in us richly (Colossians 3:16) and produce fruit like self-control in the middle of what could be a very ugly moment. This is the beauty of God’s Word. That’s the power of Holy Spirit intervention.

— PATTI ANN THOMPSON, Kansas City, Missouri

**Note**

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THE MARRIAGE MATRIX

## MARRIAGE AND MINISTRY

want all of you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, but the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided” (1 Corinthians 7:32,33, ESV<sup>1</sup>).

God greatly used three prominent unmarried prophets in the Old Testament.

**Jeremiah** was commanded not to marry. “The word of the Lord came to me: You shall not take a wife” (Jeremiah 16:1, ESV). Jeremiah was a great, influential prophet who was single.

**Ezekiel’s** marital status — widowed because the Lord took his wife from him — was not important for his ministry. God did not even allow him to weep or mourn. He was to continue in the ministry God had assigned him (Ezekiel 24:15,18).

**Hosea**, although divorced, still continued a recognized ministry. God told Hosea to marry a whore (Gomer), whom He knew would later leave him for other men, illustrating the one-sided love God had for Israel (Hosea 1–3).

All three examples show marital status was not an issue for effective ministry. God was interested in these prophets’ integrity, obedience, and ability to proclaim His message.

Many pastors may not consider quality unmarried adults for leadership positions because of their singleness. They may think married adults are more mature, spiritual, or complete, and have more to offer. God’s position is more balanced. Marital status does not matter.

**What do you think**

1. Does marriage make a person more spiritual or mature?
2. Do you look for married adults first to fill leadership positions Why?
3. Do you affirm the apostle Paul when he says those who are single have more flexibility for ministry involvement?
4. Does the percentage of single adults in your church equal the percentage of single adults in leadership?

— DENNIS FRANCK, director, Single Adult and Single-Parent Ministries

**Note**

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## IN THE RED ZONE

## Preparing to Share Your Faith

**Legendary coach John Wooden** said, “The time to prepare is in advance. When the opportunity comes it’s too late.” Good coaches know that deliberate preparation achieves goals. And when pastors empower believers to give a confident explanation of the gospel, the results can lead individuals into life-changing eternal victories.

To make strategic plays easier to remember, football teams often give them distinctive names. Attending a Red Zone Evangelism (RZE) training taught Russell a similar strategy, and he could not wait to share it with his deaf sister, Lindsey.

Using sign language and a simple Bridge diagram, Russell explained how much God loved her. When Lindsey said she wanted a relationship with Jesus, the acronym PHL reminded Russell how to explain the process. “To receive Christ, you simply **pray**, asking God to forgive your sins and come into your life. You talk straight from your **heart** to God’s heart.” Then, he asked if she would like him to lead her in a prayer.

Lindsey appreciated her brother’s help. Using sign language, Russell guided her phrase by phrase. Another memory handle, NFC, helped him remember what to include. “Lord Jesus, I **need** you in my life. Please **forgive** all my sins. **Come** into my life and begin to lead me. Amen.”

It was that simple. Because RZE training had prepared him, Russell led his younger sister to the Lord. And, that is a victory they will both celebrate forever.

To find out more about the Complete Kit for Red Zone Evangelism, see <http://redzoneevangelism.com/>.

— **KENT TUCKER** and **PATTI TOWNLEY-COVERT**, cowriters, *In the Red Zone: A Game Plan for How to Share Your Faith*. See <http://www.howtoshareyourfaith.com/>.



### LEADERSHIP LESSON FROM OLYMPIANS

## BE HIGHLY DETERMINED AND DISCIPLINED

**Author Roy L. Smith observed:** “Discipline is the refining fire by which talent becomes ability.” For Olympians there are no short cuts to success. They are not easily discouraged. When Clara Hughes was 15, the 1988 Olympic games held in Calgary inspired her.

She turned to her mother declaring: “I want to go to the Olympics for speed skating.”

At 16 she took up the sport, eventually earning a berth on the Canadian team. At the 2006 Winter Olympics in Torino, Italy, she earned a gold and a silver medal. Behind those moments

of success was a long period of disciplined training.

Hughes spent seven weeks of twice daily training so intense that she had to sleep between sessions just to get through the second one. Included were drills where she had to bend so low in the skating position that it brought tears to her eyes and numbness from her toes to her nose. Of the training regimen, Hughes said: “I think I can handle a lot of pain, but that doesn’t help me when it’s going to happen again where I feel like my heart’s going to explode and my lungs are burning and my legs can’t even support my own weight. To actually go beyond that and to go harder in the last third of the race is something I don’t even like talking about because it’s so hard. But that’s what I need to train for and that’s my goal, to get to that point, and be able to just viciously attack as if I am fighting for my life. That’s it. That’s all I want.” Clara Hughes is one of the few Olympians to win medals in both the Winter and Summer Olympics where she competed in road race cycling.

— **VICTOR M. PARACHIN**, Tulsa, Oklahoma

SOCIAL FACTS

**WAIT LISTED FOR ADULTHOOD**

**T**he *Wall Street Journal* recently featured an article that asked: “Where have all the good men gone?”

The accompanying research concluded that too many men in their 20s live in a kind of extended adolescence. This limbo state — a hybrid of semi-hormonal adolescence and shaky self-reliance — is no longer a mere source of jokes, but a major demographic event.

This growing reality is an expression of our cultural uncertainty about the social role of men. Today’s pre-adult male is like an actor in a drama who only knows what he shouldn’t say. He has to compete in a fierce job market and can’t act too bossy or self-confident. He should be sensitive, but not paternalistic, smart but not cocky.

In addition, the increasingly pervasive knowledge economy gives young men the exclusive possibility to expect their careers to shape their identity. This yields a class-based world, reserved for the relatively well-to-do and educated male, in which “what you do” is increasingly synonymous with “who you are.” The gap between the “haves” and “have-nots” is widening.

— **BYRON KLAUS, D.Min.**, president, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri.



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UTHTRAX

**WHAT DO YOU EXPECT?**

**H**e’s just sowing his oats.”  
 “He’s trying to figure life out.” “He’s making his way.”  
 These are lines I have used, lines I have heard to describe the path of wandering so many students choose to take.

But why? *Why, as those who spend our lives investing in students, have we come to expect this season of walking away or doubt?* I wonder this, not as someone who stands to judge what I see, but as a person who wants to change the new norm.

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PRINCIPLES OF SUCCESS

**FOUR ABILITIES OF SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE<sup>1</sup>**

**M**any people think degrees, awards, and titles are essential for success, but the most important qualities of successful people don’t fit neatly in a wall frame. Here are four abilities that lead to success in the ministry.

**1. Teachability**  
 Having a skill is not the most valuable asset you can offer. Being teachable is.

Look to those who are doing what you want to do, and learn from them. The most successful people know there is nothing more powerful than teachability.

**2. Flexibility**  
 Life is full of unexpected turns. To navigate the journey successfully, be flexible. Flexibility allows you to seize good opportunities when they come, and survive when tragedy strikes. Successful people have plans, but they are not derailed when those plans change.

**3. Sustainability**  
 What are you doing now to make sure you won’t burn out? Are you healthy? Do you rest? Do you invest in your future? Successful people view life not as a sprint but as a marathon. Pace yourself.

Physically, we expect natural transitions: toddler, tween, teen. If the toddler is not progressing, we do not wait until he is a teen to look into the cause. We seek help if he even misses one maturing point in his body. Medically, we determine the cause for the failed growth and prescribe a treatment.

Yet we often overlook this same maturing process when it comes to our students. We excuse behavior that they should have left in childhood, choosing not to push or challenge. Becoming part of the problem, we have allowed them to prolong adolescence. The line of adulthood is in some far distant place.

Ephesians 4 challenges us to become mature, no longer infants tossed back and forth. We are to grow up in Him, becoming part of the whole body of Christ. It is time for us to not just apply this truth to ourselves. It is time to object to the ordinary and begin again to expect spiritual growth and maturity in our students as well.

— LYNN COWELL, Charlotte, North Carolina

#### 4. Likability

Successful people exemplify the qualities of likable people. They celebrate and mourn with others. They are generous. They help others. Successful people don't become successful by themselves. Others help them by opening doors for them. People want to help them succeed because they're likable.

You don't need to go to a particular school, know certain people, or have access to specific resources to develop these abilities. All you need to do is start practicing. What's stopping you?

— JUSTIN LATHROP, director of Strategic Relations for the Assemblies of God National Leadership and Resource Center, Springfield, Missouri.

#### Note

1. From [www.justinlathrop.com](http://www.justinlathrop.com)

## WHAT IN THE WORLD

# Never Too Old to Stop Growing

**W**e generally recognize the saguaro cactus that grows in the Southwest part of the United States by the arms that grow from the prickly tubular trunk. But saguaros do not start out with appendages. Up until the time a saguaro produces a limb, it looks like a gigantic cucumber with quills growing vertically. But what is truly amazing is the length of time it takes for the cactus' signature "branches" to appear. According to officials at the Saguaro National Park the average saguaro does not grow arms until it is between 50-70 years old. In areas of lower precipitation, it may take up to 100 years before arms appear.

When a saguaro reaches 35 years of age, it begins to produce flowers. Though normally found at the terminal end of the main trunk and arms, flowers may also occur down the sides of the plant. A saguaro will continue to produce flowers throughout its lifetime. An adult saguaro is generally considered to be

**The average saguaro cactus does not grow arms until it is between 50-70 years old.**

about 125 years old. It may weigh 6 tons or more and be as tall as 50 feet. The average life span of a saguaro is probably 150–175 years. Biologists believe, however, that some plants may live over 200 years.

Moses was 80 years old before God deemed him ready to lead the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage. Moses invested the first 40 years of his life in being trained in leadership in the courts of Pharaoh. The second 40 years provided him knowledge of working with livestock in the Sinai wilderness where God called him to shepherd God's people. By the time he turned 80 he was ready for a new assignment.

Nature gives us a picture of the fact there are opportunities to grow regardless of our age. More pointedly, there are certain skills we cannot accomplish until we are older. Church leaders would do well to empower senior adults with opportunities for which they are uniquely prepared.

— GREG ASIMAKOPOULOS, Mercer Island, Washington

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LEADER LIFE

**THE GRACE INVASION**

**I**t was a lesson I learned early in my ministry as a senior pastor: Most church members walk through the doors on Sunday needing a grace invasion.

What I mean by this is simple. They are working hard throughout the week, laboring in often difficult conditions. They go home to complicated family situations. They probably don't have enough money for all the bills they will face at month's end. And I'm talking about the good, faithful members on a normal week.

Ministers often live and breathe in a spiritually idealized environment, a sort of hyperbaric chamber of Christian cliques. We're a few steps removed from the grit of real life as a Christian in a fallen world. This is why, regardless of the text we preach on Sunday, we must remember to infuse our people with God's liberating message of grace.

I was often tempted to gravitate toward one of two extremes. I would only tell them what grace did: rescuing a dead and depraved sinner and infusing him with the regenerating power of the Spirit. Or I

would only tell them what grace does: restoring you to your original purpose of glorifying God by your good works. It was a temptation because these two parts seem the most compelling aspects of the gospel narrative. We can't stop talking about Christ's life, death, and resurrection. And we want to challenge our people to see how this radically affects the way they should live from now on.

But what people most need is to hear what grace is doing presently. Our people need to know that in the midst of their not-so-good, really bad week, God is at work, sanctifying them. Even though they may have yielded to temptation or endured suffering, the Spirit of God is at work, using all the horrible messiness of their present lives to shape them into the image of Jesus.

Our people come to church with vision veiled by the Fall. Because things may be so dark around them, we must point out the pinpricks of light bursting through. We must give them a glimpse of the Kingdom to come, so they might leave us fueled by gospel hope.

This doesn't mean we adopt a Pollyanna outlook that diminishes the edges of suffering. It doesn't mean we refuse to challenge and rebuke as leaders. It simply means that everything we preach is saturated in Resurrection hope.

— DANIEL DARLING is vice president for communications for the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention (ERLC). Visit <http://www.danieldarling.com>

MINISTRY RESOURCES

**A NEW STORY**



**For half a century, Ron Hutchcraft** has followed his evangelistic calling and mission.

An accomplished preacher and teacher, Hutchcraft has an amazing gift for finding a powerful sermon illustration in just about every observation, occasion, and occurrence. And although he has put on a few years, his ministry has stayed in tune with the times. His latest outreach is [www.anevnewstory.com](http://www.anevnewstory.com).



This website is jammed with resources and inspiration for both leader and layperson. Colorful and inviting, the first page presents visitors with three options to explore: blog, videos, and "Why Am I Here?"

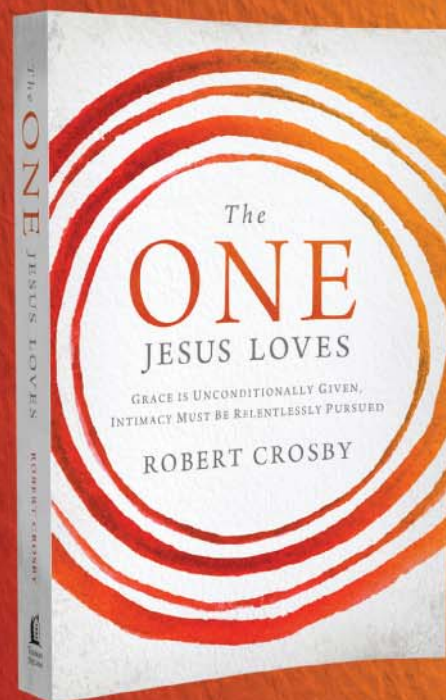
The blog features Ron's musings and challenges on life and Scripture, using news events as a starting point. Titles include everything from "Amanda Berry and the Cleveland Rescue" to "Man of Steel: Where Is Superman?" and "Surviving the Floods." Each blog ends with a challenge and links to a related video.

The website features a collection of high-quality video teachings on life-related topics, such as self-worth, marriage, healing, parenting, stress, and loneliness. "Why Am I Here?" is an engaging presentation of the plan of salvation.

With Bible teaching, practical devotions, and preaching and teaching illustrations, Hutchcraft's website is a valuable resource for believers, leaders, and seekers.

— DAVE VEERMAN, Naperville, Illinois

ARE YOU  
on  
THE PATH  
to  
JOIN GOD'S  
INNER  
CIRCLE?



**DR. ROBERT C. CROSBY**

is a conference speaker, writer, and pastoral leader. He is the professor of practical theology at Southeastern University in Lakeland, Florida. He writes for *Christianity Today*, *Patheos.com*, *Leadership Journal* and the *Huffington Post*. He and his wife, Pamela, are the founders of Teaming Church Conferences and Resources.





## Our Greatest Work

**“[Y]ou will receive power** when the Holy Spirit comes on you,” Jesus promised the disciples, “and you will be my witnesses ...” (Acts 1:8).

Jesus kept His promise on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), and the number of the saved has increased every day since.

The founders of the Assemblies of God, like other early Pentecostals, grasped this missional logic, both intellectually and in practice. That is why delegates to the 2nd General Council in Chicago, Ill., in November 1914 pledged themselves to do “the greatest work of evangelism the world has ever seen.” Like the Church on the Day of Pentecost, they received the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit filled their mouths with the gospel of Jesus Christ for the salvation of the nations.

This August, the Assemblies of God celebrates its Centennial. Delegates from across the United States and around the globe will gather in Springfield, Mo., to rejoice in our first 100 years and plan for the next 100 years.

Rather than engage in historical reverie or get nostalgic for the past — however storied it may be, the fall 2014 issue of *Enrichment* journal takes a prospective look at contemporary challenges to and necessary strategies for accomplishing “the greatest work of evangelism.” Now is the time to bring Pentecost’s missional logic to the forefront of our attention and challenge our entire Movement to remember our commitment to doing the “greatest work.”

The fall 2014 Centennial issue of *Enrichment* is an aid to accomplishing your Spirit-powered, Jesus-focused work of proclaiming God’s good news to all humanity. The harvest is plentiful. Let not the workers be few!



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### Managing Conflict With Christlike Compassion and Wisdom

By **Anthony J. Fagan**



**If you live in the world** and have relationships with people, you will experience conflict at some point. For pastors seeking to minimize conflict in their congregations, the strategies recommended in this article are worth considering.



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### Emotional Discipleship

By **Tim McGraw**



**Does the process of “lifting the manhole cover over your heart** to see what may be lurking underneath” sound scary? Maybe it explains why pastors hesitate to go there. If your congregation is to become emotionally healthy, you must lead the way. This article shows you how.



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### Life-Giving Friendship

By **William E. Richardson**



**While staying true** to our call to serve, we must pursue balance. Like Paul, Barnabas, and others, we should be life-giving friends and have life-giving friends. When we keep those vital relationships active, we’re equipped to keep ministering to the varied needs God sends our way.



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### The Jesus Call: What Is a Person to Do With Sin?

By **Nick Fox**



**Are the things we call “sin”** sinful because a group of people decided they were wrong? Or is something deeper, more insidious going on with sin? When we see God recklessly loving and fighting against anything that would distort or destroy us, it helps us rightly understand sin and the issue at hand.



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### The Significance of the Coaching Conversation

By **Blanche Wallace**



**Jesus used His encounter with Bartimaeus** as a coaching moment for the disciples. He modeled the three disciplines of coaching: intuitive listening, probing questions, and assigning client responsibility. Coaches can seize the moments and maximize coaching opportunities by modeling Jesus’ example.





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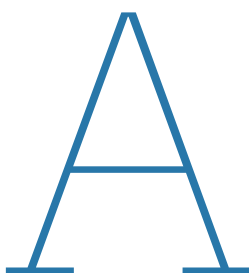
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# Have You Become the Resentful Giver?

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BY CAL LEMON



**long time ago you made a commitment, set in the concrete of time,** to make Christ the Lord of your life. This was not a glib confession of faith.

Over the years, you made repeated trips to a quiet altar where your knees ached, but your heart gave a standing ovation when the Creator of the universe arrived with a gift of grace, with your name on it.

You were ecstatic when, in surrendering to God's still small voice, you received a loving acceptance as an ambassador for Christ. You joined the biblical A-list that includes Elijah, David, the apostle Paul, and Mary Magdalene. You marched joyfully to the beat of a different drummer. God Almighty became the "Giver" and you, happily and gratefully, became the "taker." Then the Lord invited you to switch roles.

Behind an imposing pulpit, at the bedside of a child writhing with a raging fever, or standing adjacent to a freshly dug grave, you stumbled into the wonderful privilege of giving like Jesus of Nazareth. You related to the Peace Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi: "In giving of ourselves ... we receive. And in dying ... we are born to eternal life."



With the office door closed and the wireless microphone turned off, clergy often say the same thing: "Why does everyone need something from me?"

## THE GRIND OF GIVING

In their book, *The Givers and the Takers*, Chris Evatt and Bruce Feld make a strong case that the health of any long-term relationship depends on an acknowledged giver and taker. The premise of the book is that each person in a union must become comfortable with his or her role but, when circumstances demand, must also be willing to switch places.

This relationship principle could impact your ministry. Specifically, if you are only permitted to be the giver and seldom, if ever, have the option of swapping roles to become the taker, you may grow to resent the tedium and cost. When your only choice is to smile, comfort, remain calm, formulate pithy prayers and say "yes" to every request, resentment can build.

With the office door closed and the wireless microphone turned off, clergy often say the same thing: "Why does everyone need something from me? I am so exhausted from giving all the time, there isn't much left on the inside to hand out."

When I work with a wounded healer, the two of us take a trip back in time to resurrect tear-stained memories of a quiet altar where the presence of God's Spirit brought hope and humility. As the session ends, I encourage the person to say this prayer: "I receive now the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is already strengthening and healing me."

## THE SKILLS TO BECOME A TAKER ... WITHOUT APOLOGY

Over the past 10 years of coaching and caring for spiritual caregivers, I have identified six disciplines ministers must practice to shield themselves from occupational burnout and resentful giving.

**First, make a list of all the words you want to hear from the recipients of your ministry.** These comments could include, "Thank you for the hard work you put into regularly communicating God's Word to us," "You let me know I am important to both God and you," or, "You consistently mirror the love of God."

Instead of waiting to receive these word gifts, liberally give them away. When you begin to speak words that heal and offer hope you will be amazed what you take in return. The faces that light up and the hope that rises will help reignite your passion for ministry.

**Second, become comfortable with “I” statements.** In all interpersonal communication there are “I” statements and “we” statements. The “we” statements normally spread out responsibility. (“We need to do a better job communicating.”) “I” statements, on the other hand, represent what the speaker is thinking and feeling. (“I am disappointed with our congregational communication.”)

To create emotional stability in a spiritual community, clergy often use “we” as the pronoun of choice. Sometimes, just sometimes, there is no “we” in your ministry. If you are organizationally responsible for a group of individuals, it is appropriate to say, without apology, “I am expecting the final plan for improving our communication by Wednesday.” The language is clear, respectful, and you get to take your rightful place of assertive leadership.

**Third, establish boundaries.** Can everyone in your congregation or ministry personally call you on the telephone or show up at the door of your home 24-7? Can adherents make derogatory comments about you in public settings? Does your staff have the right, in your regular weekly meeting, to air their frustrations with your leadership? You have the right to establish boundaries with the people who share your ministry and then hold them accountable.

**Fourth, space out your pain.** Because of our humanity, we experience physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual exhaustion. There is no value in burning out for Jesus. Burnout is not symptomatic of what it means to make Jesus the Lord of your life.

It is time to be the taker. When you regularly experience exhaustion, close your office door, turn off your cell phone, and assign another competent staff person or a spiritually mature parishioner the responsibility to care for the flock. This may be especially difficult for spiritual leaders who feel they must always be in control.

**Fifth, your most important ministry is to your family.** Even though they do not give you standing ovations at the dinner table or sign your Christmas bonus check, biblically, they are your first spiritual responsibility.

When your family is emotionally unhealthy, resentful of the amount of time you spend helping everyone but them, and not consulted when making significant family decisions, the bottom will fall out of your ministry. How can

How can any of us, with a clear conscience, parade our broken and dysfunctional families across the platform of our public ministry and expect kudos from the pews?

any of us, with a clear conscience, parade our broken and dysfunctional families across the platform of our public ministry and expect kudos from the pews? When you need to be a taker, take the responsibility to protect the sanctity of your family.

**Finally, go to a quiet place by yourself and ask the person in your mirror, “Is this the way I want to spend my life?”** If the answer is an unqualified “yes,” gather friends and family around you in an impromptu party and joyously proclaim, “I am so blessed that God would call me to my ministry and to all of you. I live an amazing, abundant life!”

If the haunting answer, languishing in the shadows of your heart, is “no,” take a trip back to that altar until the Giver, your Lord and Savior, reminds you that taking from Him at the foot of the cross has always been His plan for you and those you serve. 📖



**CAL LeMON, D.Min.**, president, Executive Enrichment, Inc., Springfield, Missouri, a corporate education and consulting firm.

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**“Don’t let Elder Harshly bother you, Pastor. I’m sure he’s every bit as scared of you as you are of him.”**

# Wanna Be *STARTING* Somethin'?

START



BY DOUG GREEN

**W**hy is it that grass grows on my driveway, but not on my lawn?"  
*What?*

It was an unusual question, but the preacher captured the congregation's curiosity. The audience was engaged, interested in where the sermon was going. A marvel happened: They looked up from their phones and grocery lists. They were listening.

A good introduction sets the table for a good sermon. It matters. Preparing a good introduction is worth the extra time — your time, their time — for during the introduction, listeners decide whether they will continue to listen. It's a great opportunity to capture the ears of the congregation — who come to church from a week of struggles — bringing them into a biblical text, helping them live life to the full.

A good introduction is composed of three parts.

## PART 1: AN OPENING HOOK

The opening remarks should command attention and engage the ears. Consider the first words that come out of your mouth. Choose them well. Make them matter. Capture the curiosity of the wandering mind.

Don't waste the moment by saying what is obvious or predictable. Get after it, for you have the imperative assignment of casting



A good introduction sets the table for a good sermon. It matters.

light on the truths of God's Word. Whatever you say, engage their ears and make them want to hear more.

**Effective:** "If you wanted to destroy this church without a bomb, how would you do it?"

**Not-so-effective:** "Today I would like to talk about something that all of us feel deeply about .... "

**Effective:** "I've always wondered how wise those guys from the east really were."

**Not-so-effective:** "Last week, we talked about chapter 6, and this week I want to talk to you about chapter 7 .... "

## PART 2: DEVELOPING THOUGHT

This segment exposes needs and speaks to hearts. After capturing their attention, use some time to address the needs of the listeners.

Show how this sermon will speak to their hearts. Give them evidence you are about to address their temporal needs with God's timeless truths. Show them why they should care to continue listening. Speak to their hearts, and they'll listen.

## PART 3: TRANSITION TO THE BODY

The transition serves as the link, helping listeners follow where you're leading. Connect the dots so your introduction flows effortlessly into the body of your sermon. Achieve a smooth segue. Connect the human need of the developing thought to the main points of the sermon by introducing the key idea.

Do not be jarringly abrupt. Build a short bridge from the introduction to the main body. Graciously help every listener cross safely.

## COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

**Don't go too long.** The introduction is a free-way on-ramp, not a long stretch of highway. Get folks from their situations in life to a place where they are ready to hear from God. Brevity can be powerful. Err on the side of conciseness.

**Don't write your introduction first; write it last.** Write your sermon's main body first. Then write the introduction and conclusion. Why? Because the introduction serves the main body, not the other way around. Also, you must know where you're going (the main points of the sermon) to know how to get there (an attention-grabbing introduction).

**Don't open with an apology.** Do not start with: "I am sorry I am not prepared today."

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(They will figure that out themselves soon enough.) Do not begin with excuses, justifications, or any other form of insecure speech. Just get up in the pulpit and proclaim the truth as best you can. Trust the Holy Spirit to be strong in your weaknesses.

**Don't promise what you cannot deliver.** Be sober in your introduction, and only guarantee what you have time to address. Prepare words that frame where you are going, not where you hope to go. Only write a check you can cash.

**Don't always jump out from the same bush.** A healthy dose of creative variety keeps the listener guessing. Some techniques are only good once a decade. Some are good the first time, but are not the fourth and fifth times. Create anticipation by finding new methods, not overusing the same one.

**Be careful to not peak in the first few minutes of your sermon,** causing an emotional exit for the listener before you get to the part of the sermon that truly matters. Like a good story teller, build anticipation as your message unfolds.

**Consider how much Scripture you should introduce outside the sermon text.** There is usually more than enough in one biblical passage to occupy the full time of your sermon. Overwhelming the audience with a large number of verses from multiple books, especially in the introduction, can make the message hard to follow.

**Steer clear of rabbit trails.** Stay focused. Be a ramp for the listener by avoiding all and any speedbumps, detours, side trips, and obstacles. Stay on the short ramp and get the audience on the freeway of the sermon's main body sooner rather than later.

### EXAMPLE INTRODUCTION

Check out this example of how to introduce a sermon on Romans 7:7-25, divided into three parts:

**Opening hook:** Why is it that grass grows on my driveway, but not on my lawn?

**Developing thought:** I've diligently fought the grass in the cracks of my driveway. I've applied Roundup and taken a hoe to it. I've labored over the cracks in my driveway. A few feet away over on my spacious lawn — a lawn I've fertilized, watered, and, quite frankly, deeply loved — I have patches where grass will not grow! Now, what's up with that?

Ever wonder why what you want to happen is not what happens? Why is it I intend to do

Stay on the short ramp and get the audience on the freeway of the sermon's main body sooner rather than later.

all these good things, but I end up doing all those things I don't want to do? I want my grass to grow on my lawn. I don't want my grass to grow on my driveway. Why do I do what I don't want to do? How can I ever hope to overcome sin? Am I the only one? Anybody here know what I'm talking about?

**Transition to body:** I see that hand. It's the hand of the apostle Paul, for he knows what I'm talking about. Good news: We are not the only ones! Paul documents his struggle quite candidly in the 7th chapter of the Book of Romans. He asks, "How can I ever hope to overcome sin?"

He answers us with our only confidence: "By submitting to the lordship of Jesus Christ." Check it out as we read Romans 7 together ....

### START SMART

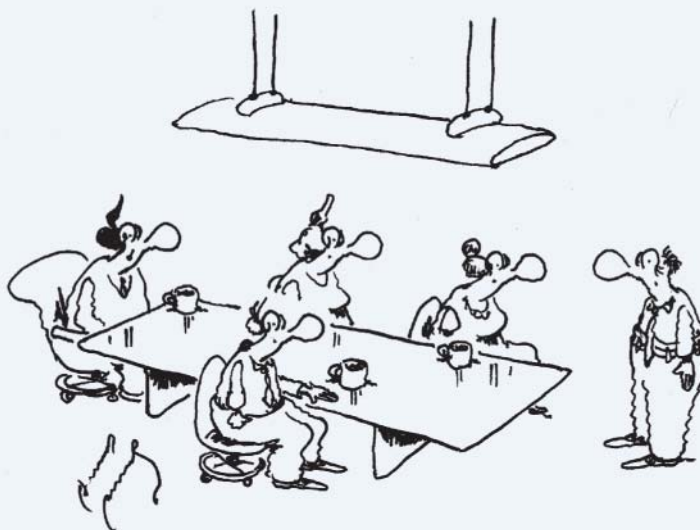
Chuck Swindoll once said, "When I begin my sermons I dare the person not to listen to me. Not that I'm that great, it's just that I've got something to say that's too important to ignore."

Introductions matter. If you start smart in the pulpit, they'll probably listen well in the pew. ■



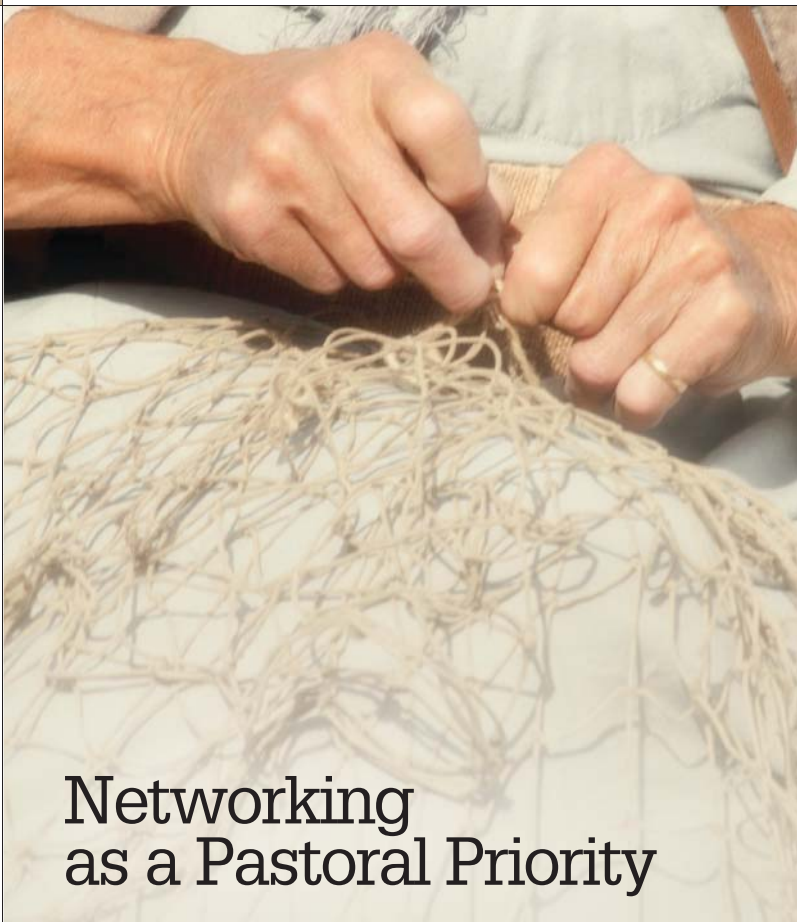
**DOUG GREEN, D.Min.**, founding pastor, North Hills Church, Brea, California

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"We've noticed that your belt has reached retirement height, Pastor."



## Networking as a Pastoral Priority

BY JOSEPH CASTLEBERRY

**I**f you need anything during the day, call the parsonage and leave a message with my wife. When I get home from fishing, I'll return your call."

So announced a pastor who apparently thought his ministry should take second place to his fishing hobby. As a young ministerial student visiting the church, I decided his priorities needed amending.

After more than 30 years of church ministry, I now believe the work of the pastor *does* involve fishing, though not the kind that requires a boat, bait, rod, and reel. As I explain in *The Kingdom Net: Learning to Network Like Jesus*, I see the church as the net (or network) God deploys to carry on Jesus' mission of fishing for people. From that perspective, we should understand the pastoral ministry in terms of networking.

Networking often brings surprises and new opportunities for learning. At the 2013



The work of fishers mending their nets provides a powerful metaphor for church maintenance.

General Council of the Assemblies of God, I attended an alumni meeting for Evangel University. Just as I entered, Danny Duvall — one of my era's football heroes and a first-rate student — stepped up and greeted me. Danny, who currently pastors The Assembly in Cabot, Ark., has had a great career as an evangelist and pastor, and I felt pleased that he remembered me and had kept up with my ministry. As classmates, we ran in different circles and only had a few conversations, but after 30 years, we immediately reconnected as friends.

After teasing me about setting the curve on too many Greek exams as a student, Danny asked if I had discussed Paul's use of the word *katartizo* in my book. He referenced Ephesians 4:12, which says God has given the church apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, and evangelists "to equip his people for works of service." Danny explained that *katartizo* refers to the mending of nets, and that Matthew 4:21 uses it to describe James and John mending their fishing nets. I had to confess that this little pearl from the Greek had escaped my attention. (Danny must have noticed that he had aced the real-life Greek test I had just flunked!)

The English translation suffices nicely to convey the meaning of Ephesians 4:12, but by not looking at the fishy connotation of the Greek original, I had lost the "net" work connection. Paul meant to imply that God gave pastors to serve as outfitters and menders of God's fishing net. Our work keeps this spiritual net ready for use — ready for a catch.

The work of fishers mending their nets provides a powerful metaphor for church maintenance. Citing Pastor Jack Hayford, Danny pointed out that the main tasks of net maintenance after a day's fishing include cleaning, mending, and folding. Those disciplines apply to managing church operations just as much as to fishing nets.

While the pastor's networking role includes outreach into the world, pastoral networking begins inside the church. Good internal networking means pastors know the people in the congregation, including their skills and relationships outside the church. Leaders must recognize whose talents are compatible with those of others and who should participate on what teams.

As the church deploys its skills and relationships, network maintenance keeps the

ministry going. This requires church leaders to exercise the same fishing net disciplines that Peter, James, and John applied to their nets.

### **CLEANING THE NET**

Cleaning removes weeds, sticks, bones, rocks and other detritus from nets. The smooth operation of churches requires regular cleaning just like fishing nets do. This discipline includes things like closing down ineffective programs. If people in the church labor at tasks that do not achieve much or attend services or meetings that have lost their edge, they not only grow discouraged, but they waste time that could be spent on bringing in new people or building strong relationships among members.

Most churches are good at starting new activities, but many do a poor job of shutting them down. We would not dream of allowing the entryway of our churches to get cluttered up with boxes, outdated literature, and props from last year's Christmas program. Likewise, we should keep the calendar of church activities tidied up and clutter-free. Just as a wise chef cleans the kitchen and its equipment throughout the cooking process, pastors and church leaders should constantly clean up programs (and facilities) to make and keep them ready for use.

### **MENDING THE NET**

Mending nets repairs the torn places to keep fish from slipping away. Similarly, leaders must address strained and broken relationships in the church before precious souls are lost.

In Philippians 4:2, Paul pleads with Euodia and Syntyche to settle their disagreement. He calls on his pastoral colleague to help the quarreling women patch up their ruptured relationship.

Paul understood that when church workers fight, people get hurt. Young believers and seekers get disillusioned and leave, and unbelievers stand off with their suspicions confirmed.

The best approach to avoid broken relationships in the church focuses on the establishment of solid relationships and communication. If church duties are the only interaction workers share, their relationships remain shallow and easily breakable. But even in the most tightly woven communities, relationships can suffer tears (in both

Wise leaders recognize that effective teams require more than just skill training. Our relationships must go beyond the work itself, making truly personal connections.

pronunciations of that word).

Wise leaders recognize that effective teams require more than just skill training. Our relationships must go beyond the work itself, making truly personal connections. Giving team members opportunities to bond through playing, sharing, and praying in small groups, as well as traveling together, goes a long way toward creating opportunities to repair small tears and reconcile hurts before they grow into irreparable rifts.

Sometimes relational breakdowns require a meeting with a pastor to achieve reconciliation. Wisdom counsels that certain people should never even start working together because their personalities and gifts do not mesh. In such cases, the best relationships maintain enough distance to keep mutual admiration alive.

### **FOLDING THE NET**

The final step in maintaining fishing nets is folding (i.e., preparing the nets for easy deployment on the next fishing session). Churches also require "folding," or in more familiar terms, planning for future ministry. Just as nets are folded after a day's fishing, pastors should meet with teams regularly after events or during the course of ministry to assess the performance of their ministry and plan for more effectiveness in the future.

Unfortunately, churches often do not know how to go about evaluating their work. Leaders starting new programs should plan not only the activities these ministries will pursue, but also procedures for determining how well they work. Assessing our performance improves our practice and keeps morale high as we celebrate good practices and quickly change poor ones.

As pastors maintain the Kingdom net — cleaning, mending, and folding it for service — they keep God's people ready for the work of the ministry, enhancing their performance as people-fishers for the Kingdom. ■



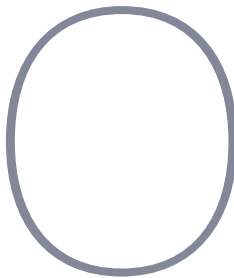
**JOSEPH CASTLEBERRY** is president of Northwest University in Kirkland, Washington. He is the author of *Your Deepest Dream: Discovering God's Vision for Your Life* and *The Kingdom Net: Learning to Network Like Jesus*. Follow him on Twitter at @DrCastleberry and at [www.facebook.com/Joseph.Castleberry](http://www.facebook.com/Joseph.Castleberry).

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# John the Baptist

BY MARC TURNAGE



ne of the most fascinating personalities to emerge from the land of Israel in the first century was John the Baptist. John appears in all four of the

Gospels, as well as in the writings of the first century Jewish historian Josephus, who has more to say about John than Jesus.

A son of elderly parents from a priestly line, the Gospels portray this wilderness prophet as the leader of a movement and a forerunner to the appearance and ministry of Jesus. Executed by Herod Antipas for the threat and opposition John's popular voice posed to Antipas' actions and government (Matthew 14:5; Josephus, *Antiquities* 18:116-119), John's movement did not disappear with his death. Paul encountered disciples of John in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-7).

John called listeners to repentance (Luke 3:3) and the symbolic act of immersion in water (Luke 3:7,21). His preaching elicited redemptive hopes and expectations (Luke 3:15), which threatened to disrupt the status quo of the current rule of Herod Antipas.

Matthew makes clear that Antipas wanted to execute John prior to the fateful banquet



John's message bears a strong resemblance to Jesus' two central commandments of "Love God" and "Love your neighbor."

recorded in the Gospels but could not because he feared the people (14:5). This fits perfectly with Josephus' account of John's demise. The Gospels (particularly Matthew and Luke) and Josephus assume that John's message had a subversive quality to it. Jesus picked up, in part, John's critic of Antipas (cf. Luke 16:18), which is why when Antipas heard about Jesus he thought Jesus was John raised from the dead (Luke 9:7,9).<sup>1</sup> John, thus, was a threat (a) because of his popularity with the people and (b) because his message was subversive and threatened to upset the status quo.

Two questions arise from the ancient sources. First, why, in a community that routinely ritually immersed (i.e., baptized), did John acquire the surname "the Baptist" or "the Baptist"? Second, what was the connection between John's preaching "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Luke 3:3) and the act of ritual immersion?

It seems to the average reader of the New Testament that John's preaching of "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" suggests that the act of baptism for John was efficacious. Fortunately, the testimony of Josephus regarding John fills in the picture we find in the Gospels.

Concerning John, Josephus wrote: "But to some of the Jews the destruction of Herod's [Antipas'] army seemed to be divine vengeance, and certainly a just vengeance, for



his treatment of John, surnamed the Baptist.<sup>2</sup> For Herod had put him to death, though he was a good man and had exhorted the Jews to lead righteous lives, to practice justice towards their fellows and piety towards God, and so doing to join in baptism. In his view this was a necessary preliminary if baptism was to be acceptable to God. They must not employ it to gain pardon for whatever sins they committed, but as a consecration of the body implying that the soul was already thoroughly cleansed by right behavior. When others too joined the crowds about him, because they were aroused to the highest degree by his sermons, Herod became alarmed. Eloquence that had so great an effect on mankind might lead to some form of sedition, for it looked as if they would be guided by John in everything that they did. Herod decided therefore that it would be much better to strike first and be rid of him before his work led to an uprising, than to wait for an upheaval, get involved in a difficult situation and see his mistake. Though John, because of Herod's suspicions, was brought in chains to Machaerus, the stronghold that we have previously mentioned, and there put to death, yet the verdict of the Jews was that the destruction visited upon Herod's army was a vindication of John, since God saw fit to inflict such a blow on Herod" (*Antiquities* 18:116–119).

Josephus' account provides an important window into how John viewed the act of immersion and the core of his preaching. From Josephus, we learn that John did not view the act of baptism as efficacious, but rather as an outward symbol of an inward repentance that centered on practicing "justice towards" others and "piety towards God." Josephus' description parallels John's words in Luke's Gospel: "Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same" (Luke 3:11).

Likewise, John encouraged the crowds, "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance" (Luke 3:8).

John's message, according to both Scripture and the historian, bears a strong resemblance to Jesus' two central commandments of, "Love God" and "Love your neighbor" (Mark 12:30,31).

John, then, did not view the act of immersion as forgiving sins, but as an outward

John's preaching did not passively call people to repent; rather, he actively sought to bring about the period of redemption through the repentance of the people — characterized by the act of ritual immersion.

expression of a commitment to repentance.

Jewish people of the first century ritually immersed as part of the important concern of ritual purity. A person could become ritually impure due to a myriad of activities, such as a woman having her menstrual period or giving birth, a married couple having marital relations, or someone coming in contact with a corpse. Ritual purity had nothing to do with sin, as none of these actions are sinful. Rather, ritual purity pertained to one's ability to enter holy or sacred precincts. People, therefore, immersed to purify the outside of their bodies from ritual impurity.

Among the Dead Sea Scrolls, however, we find a community that assumed that in the same manner a corpse could defile the outside of the person, sin defiled a person inwardly. Therefore, a person entering into the waters of ritual immersion must first repent inwardly in order for the immersion to be effective.

"He should not go into the waters to share in the pure food of the men of holiness, for one is not cleansed unless one turns away from one's wickedness, for he is unclean among all the transgressors of His word" (1QS 5:13,14).

For the members of the Dead Sea Sect, if the person entering into the waters repented, God would send His Holy Spirit to cleanse the person inwardly just as the water cleansed him outwardly. If, however, he did not repent, he could not "be purified by the cleansing waters, nor shall he be made holy by seas or rivers, nor shall he be purified by all the water of ablution" (1QS 3:4,5).

John, it seems, had a very similar view regarding the connection between repentance and immersion.

"They must not employ it [baptism] to gain pardon for whatever sins they committed, but as a consecration of the body implying that the soul was already thoroughly cleansed by right behavior" (*Antiquities* 18:116).

Yet, for John, the act of immersion went beyond merely a symbolic practice attesting to one's repentance through right behavior. For John, it carried redemptive implications.

The Gospels make clear that those who heard John connected his message to Jewish hopes of redemption (Luke 3:15–18), but to the modern reader, John's preaching of "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" does not immediately illicit such a connection.

The key lies within the Greek word *φεσις* (translated “remission”). Although New Testament authors wrote in Greek, the figures of the Gospels, like Jesus and John, primarily communicated in Hebrew and Aramaic. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, the word *φεισις* frequently translates three Hebrew words: *רוּד* (liberty), *לבוּי* (jubilee), and *הטמח* (release).<sup>3</sup> While these terms in the Old Testament referred to the “year of release” (Deuteronomy 15:1–3), the “jubilee” (Leviticus 25:10–12), or the idea of “liberty,” by the first century the words came to be associated with Jewish hopes of redemption.

A document found among the Dead Sea Scrolls describes the final redemption using the language of the “year of release” and the “jubilee” (11Q13). According to the author of this document, redemption will occur in the tenth jubilee, in which, “liberty will be proclaimed for them [i.e., the captives] to free them from the debt of all their iniquities.” In this document, the “year of release” and the “jubilee” have formed the calendrical framework for redemption, and the debts are not physical debts, but the debts of iniquities. (See also Isaiah 61:1.)

John’s preaching, then, sought, through the repentance of the people whose act of immersion publically proclaimed their repentance, to bring about the jubilee year of redemption. Jews believed God brings redemption because of the repentance of the people: “Great is repentance, for it brings redemption near, as it is said, ‘And a redeemer will come to Zion,’ because of ‘them that turn from transgression in Jacob’ ” (b. Yoma 86b).

In other words, the repentance of the people acted as the catalyst for bringing about God’s redemption. John’s preaching did not passively call people to repent; rather, he actively sought to bring about the period of redemption through the repentance of the people — characterized by the act of ritual immersion. This explains John’s particular view of baptism, which led to his surname “the Baptizer.” Moreover, it explains the enigmatic statement in the Gospels of John’s preaching “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins,” which in light of contemporary redemptive hopes meant “a baptism of repentance that brings about the jubilee year of redemption.”

Understanding John’s preaching enables

Understanding John’s preaching enables us to understand John’s relationship with Jesus and the tensions that existed between these two figures.

us to understand John’s relationship with Jesus and the tensions that existed between these two figures (Matthew 11:1–18). In light of the meaning of “a baptism of repentance for the remission (Jubilee year of redemption) of sins,” it seems hardly coincidental that the earliest followers of Jesus picked up this refrain in seeking to bring about the return of the Lord (Acts 2:38). ■

**Notes**

1. It is also, from Antipas’ standpoint, why he looked forward to seeing Jesus when Pilate sent Jesus to him before Jesus’ crucifixion (Luke 23:7).
2. According to the Gospels (Luke 3:19–20), Antipas imprisoned John due to his outspokenness against his adulterous affair with Herodias, the wife of Antipas’ brother. Herodias and Antipas sought to cover up the affair by divorcing their respective spouses in order to marry each other (cf. Luke 16:18). John openly criticized this act saying it was still sin. Josephus knows of the role this even plays in the death of John because he placed his comments concerning John within his discussion of Antipas’ divorce from his wife, the daughter of Aretas IV, king of the Nabateans.
3. Cf. Exodus 23:11; Leviticus 25:10–12, 28, 30–31, 33, 40, 50, 52, 54; 27:17–18, 21, 23–24; Numbers 36:4; Deuteronomy 15:1–3, 9–10; Isaiah 61:1; Jeremiah 34:8, 15, 17; and Ezekiel 46:17.



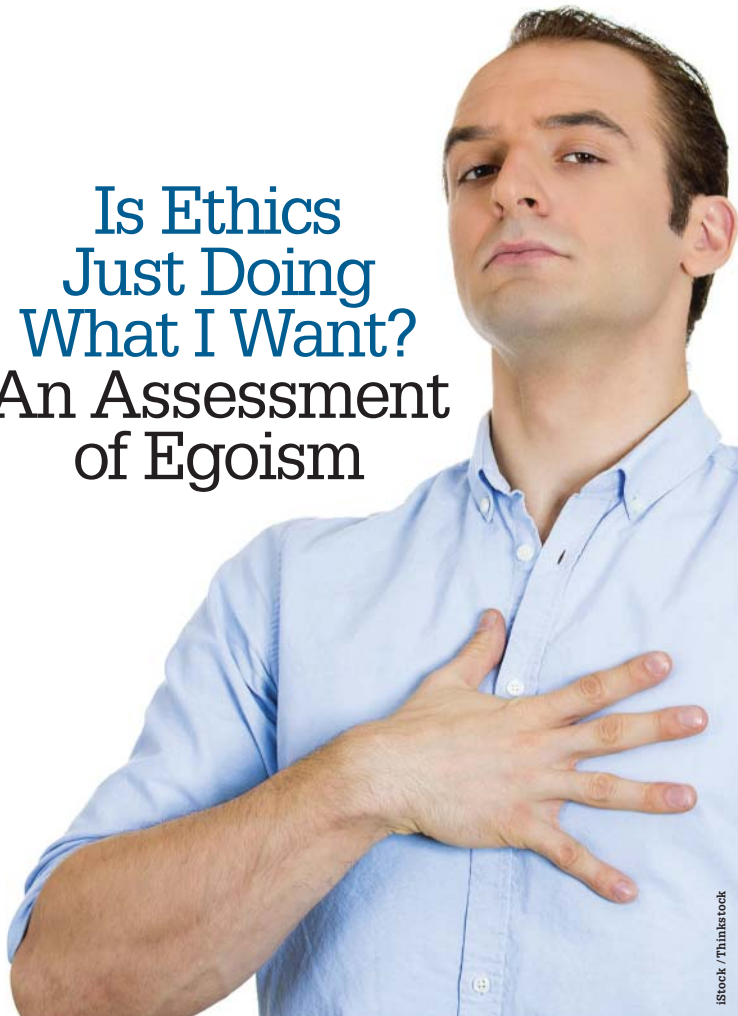
**MARC TURNAGE**, director, Center for Holy Lands Studies for The General Council of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri

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# Is Ethics Just Doing What I Want? An Assessment of Egoism



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BY PAUL COPAN

**H**rank Sinatra sang, “I did it my way.” A familiar expression tells us: “Look out for Number One.” In the abortion debate we hear, “I can do what I want with my body.” Welcome to the world of the egoist!

The Russian-born philosopher Ayn Rand (1905–1982) was the author of such best-selling novels as “Atlas Shrugged” and “Fountainhead.” She popularized the philosophy of egoism, which comes from the Latin word *ego*, meaning “I.”<sup>1</sup> The basic approach to morality is self-interest, Rand said. She argued self-interest should guide each person’s decision-making.<sup>2</sup>



God has designed us to live self-giving lives.

We’re familiar with Jesus’ “Golden Rule,” which says we should do to others what we would have them do to us (Matthew 7:12). This is another way of phrasing the second great commandment, “Love your neighbor as [you already love] yourself” (Mark 12:31). Ethical egoism takes the view that we can do to others in the hopes that they will give back to us. If I scratch someone’s back, eventually someone will scratch mine. Or perhaps it can work in a slightly different way. Consider the philosopher Thomas Hobbes, who confessed that he would give to the poor not so much to help them as to relieve him of any nagging guilt he might otherwise feel.

Egoism claims that each person has a moral duty to pursue his or her own self-interest exclusively. According to the egoist, I am the one who best knows what I need. So self-interest comes before the interests of others. This is what the good life is all about — pursuing what I want.

We previously reviewed and evaluated certain ethical perspectives, such as relativism (“what’s right for you may not be right for me”) and utilitarianism (“seek the greatest good/happiness for the greatest number of people”), and found them wanting. Even so, these viewpoints capture important ethical insights. Relativism reminds us that moral acts have a context to consider, while utilitarianism reminds us that moral actions should not ignore consequences. However, these approaches fail to capture the complete moral picture. As we’ll see, the same is true of ethical egoism. It offers the insight that we should properly care for ourselves by eating or washing our bodies (an appropriate kind of self-love). However, pure egoism is ultimately a hollow moral viewpoint that excludes God and eclipses others in its moral framework.

## UNDERSTANDING AND EVALUATING ETHICAL EGOISM

Ethical egoism sounds a lot like the “true for you but not for me” of relativism we’re familiar with these days. Relativists aren’t interested in finding truth but in preserving their own autonomy. So the pursuit of relativism has less to do with good reasons or persuasive arguments for embracing it than the desire for self-rule. Trying to point out logical flaws in the thinking of the relativist does not deter him. He can simply shrug his shoulders and say, “Whatever!”

But what are the problems and challenges facing ethical egoism? Let's explore some of them.

**1. It's helpful to distinguish between self-interest and selfishness.** In the Disney movie "Ice Age," two female sloths are discussing Sid the Sloth, who is a really nice guy. One sloth says, "He's not much to look at, but it's so hard to find a family man these days."

The other replies, "Tell me about it. All the sensitive ones get eaten."<sup>3</sup>

The implication is if you want to survive, look out for yourself, not others. Ayn Rand's view suggests that if I am deeply concerned about others, I am less likely to preserve my own life. Of course, it doesn't help that Rand was an atheist. It generally follows from an atheistic, death-ends-it-all view that the desire for self-preservation will be much stronger, since there is presumably nothing beyond this earthly existence. For the Christian, laying down one's life for another makes sense. After all, life continues with God beyond this brief journey.

Self-sacrifice and self-preservation are not necessarily opposed to each other. Taking care of oneself isn't the same as selfishness. The Scriptures assume we already love ourselves when they command, "Love your neighbor as yourself." A normal, healthy self-love means that we'll feed and take care of our bodies. Paul writes, "No one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body" (Ephesians 5:29).

Remember that self-love isn't a goal to pursue; after all, Scripture condemns those who are "lovers of themselves" (2 Timothy 3:2). Rather, self-love is a fact to acknowledge.<sup>4</sup> The fact that we love ourselves is to guide us in our love for others. Our knowledge of how we want to be treated should serve as a model for how we treat others (Matthew 7:12).

**2. This view commits the naturalistic fallacy, illegitimately moving from *is* to *ought*.** We all recognize that we can easily cater to our self-centered tendencies and wants. We are often inclined to look out for our own well-being at the expense of others, which is contrary to Scripture (Philippians 2:3,4).

How does it follow that we have a duty to pursue self-centered living?



The problem with Rand's view is that it makes an illegitimate jump from the way we are (self-centered) to the way we ought to be ("I have a duty to be self-centered"). This illogical move from what *is* to what *ought to be* — from description to prescription — is a naturalistic fallacy.

How does it follow that we have a duty to pursue self-centered living? Of course, Rand has no conception of a fallen human condition. Even so, why should anyone accept Rand's untenable conclusion? Why not resist our self-centeredness rather than give in to it?

**3. When we speak about how we *ought* to live, we are speaking of impartial, universally applicable ideals that fly in the face of egoism.** The egoist's argument that selfishness is a virtue worthy of pursuit is ironic. If we're talking about ethics, then we have in mind an impartial view. That is, our ethical view does not favor one person, group, gender, or skin color over another. Also, ethics is concerned about universal relevance — a stance all persons everywhere should embrace. But this stance works at cross-purposes for the egoist.

Presumably, Ed the Egoist wants others to embrace the view he follows since it is intellectually superior to other viewpoints. And presumably Ed would want them to act on this. The problem here is that Ed would be recommending that others cater to themselves rather than to Ed! So as egoism becomes universalized and practiced, it actually undermines itself. It tells others to live for themselves rather than to live for me. This suggests that egoism is a deficient view. Why would egoists want their ethical view universalized? Instead of publicizing their perspective, they should keep quiet about it!

**4. Why would we ever trust an ethical egoist?** The ethical egoist can't be relied upon when offering moral advice to others since following it will ultimately be to his own advantage — not another's. The advocate of egoism only creates a climate of suspicion around himself. This, of course, renders egoism suspect. It turns out to be a very counterintuitive notion, undermining

marriage, friendship, and a host of other relationships.

**5. The egoist's desire to get what he wants turns out to be an empty or trivial concept — or worse.** The egoist says that what he (or anyone else) “wants” is the primary drive to all that he does. People usually don't betray their friends — even if doing so under severe pressure or possibly torture would give them considerable relief. They want to be loyal. If some cave in to pressure, it's because they want relief more strongly than loyalty. And, assuming there can be just wars, a person may not desire to go to war, but he still feels duty-bound to protect his family and country from invaders.

There are at least four problems with the egoist's notion of *want* or *desire*:

**a. The term “want” becomes unhelpful.** When anyone acts, the egoist tells us that this action was in response to the strongest desire someone had — that is, what the person really wanted to do. But the term “want” then comes to mean nothing more than whatever supports egoism. No matter what potential counter-example one gives, the egoist appeals to some stronger “want” lurking in the background, and there is nothing that could falsify this. That, however, leads to another problem.

**b. What I decide to do is nothing I have control over since all my choices and actions are necessarily determined by my strongest desire.** But why should I assume that I have no control over my choices? In fact, wouldn't the choice to believe in egoism over another viewpoint be determined by one's own deepest desires rather than freely or rationally choosing it? Again, this approach simply assumes that egoism is right rather than offering any good arguments for it.<sup>5</sup>

**c. People may want all kinds of things that are self-destructive.** Alcoholics want more alcohol; drug addicts want to continue their habit; pedophiles want to engage



Since the egoist's moral rules are really ones of convenience or expediency, the “duty” to self-interest will only exist as long as it is convenient.

in illicit sex. But surely simply wanting something is not justification for egoism.

**d. What if people want to live lives of self-sacrifice and devotion to others?** Persons like Mother Teresa and the abolitionist William Wilberforce are examples of those wanting to help others. Why should the egoist dispute such other-centered dedication as wrong-headed? Why insist that Mother Teresa was doing something wrong in dedicated service to others? That seems quite odd.

**6. Even if egoists lay claim to self-interest rather than selfishness, the problem of arbitrariness remains.** Why only this virtue and no others? Some philosophers make the distinction between being selfish and being an egoist. To be selfish means we show no concern for others. An egoist, on the other hand, may show concern for others, but his actions arise from his own feelings of pity, not the condition of the poor or unfortunate, as we saw with the philosopher Thomas Hobbes.

Yet it seems that self-interest is only part of the moral picture. Even if pursuit of self could be considered virtuous, why think that this is the only moral virtue? While a person may legitimately consider his or her own concerns as an object to pursue, this need not be the only one.

The ethical egoist reminds us of the truth that we already love ourselves, and that there can be a healthy, non-idolatrous self-love. We are right to set boundaries for ourselves so we can get, say, necessary rest and exercise. This will better enable us to serve and get along with other people. Getting sleep and exercise benefits us as well as those around us. There is more to the moral world than our own self-interest.

**7. The pursuit of power or self-interest isn't an end in itself but a means to something else.** But how is that goal to be determined? Perhaps the best example of egoism in the field of philosophy is Friedrich Nietzsche's emphasis on “the will to power.” Nietzsche despised Christianity, which he claimed sprang from a kind of doormat theology. For

Nietzsche, the pursuit of power mattered. However, we're left wondering why this is the supreme value. And isn't pursuing power a means to something else rather than an end in itself? Power is just an arbitrary value, like wealth or status.

**8. Even if I end up getting some benefit from a charitable act (for example, someone recognizes my service), it doesn't follow that this was my motive for acting charitably.** The egoist says that we all inescapably act from self-centered motives. He will even charge the Christian with acting from self-centeredness. It's true that we are often selfish and thus need to examine our own motives and actions so that we are increasingly living by God's kingdom priorities. But is it self-centered to desire the reward of eternal life with God? Was the apparently self-sacrificing Mother Teresa simply seeking to escape God's judgment and receive a reward in the afterlife?

This is an unfair accusation. When human creatures show love for God and others, this doesn't mean such actions are motivated by nothing more than punishment-avoidance and reward-mindedness. Indeed, the sheer enjoyment of the ultimate relationship — of God's presence in the midst of His redeemed people — is the very greatest human good possible, and it is the final and appropriate goal of our deepest longings (Revelation 21:3).

C.S. Lewis offers this wise insight: "Money is not the natural reward of love; that is why we call a man mercenary if he marries a woman for the sake of her money. But marriage is the proper reward for a real lover, and he is not mercenary for desiring it.... Those who have attained everlasting life in the vision of God know very well that it is no mere bribe, but the very consummation of their earthly discipleship."<sup>6</sup>

We could add that the very selfless Jesus himself would take a break from the crowds to rest and be refreshed in prayer. Jesus cared for himself for the purpose of other-centered service to His Father and others. Jesus taught that those who seek their life will lose it, but



The call to an other-centered life is rooted in our other-oriented triune God, who is self-giving.

those who lose their life for Christ's sake will find it (Luke 9:24; 17:33). The egoist begins with the assumption that God does not exist and that his own agenda is the ultimate pursuit. By contrast, Jesus reminds us that God's perspective and agenda are ultimate. As we realize this and submit to it, we find that life as it is meant to be lived comes to us as a by-product (Matthew 6:33).

**9. What happens when there is a conflict of interests (or egos)?** How do we adjudicate or decide between conflicting personal agendas? Or what happens when an ethical egoist becomes a powerful dictator? At this point, the egoist doesn't want to have his or her viewpoint embraced by another (despotic) egoist. Egoism cannot properly address this conflict.

**10. Humans may be ignorant of what is in their best interests.** Egoism assumes that individual humans aren't ignorant of what their real or best interests are. Of course, think of a child who is always grabbing another's toys or insisting on his own way. He doesn't have the insight to realize that what he wants is often wildly out of touch with what is best for him.

**11. Any "obligation" to self-interest is merely a matter of convenience for the egoist.** Since the egoist's moral rules are really ones of convenience or expediency, the "duty" to self-interest will only exist as long as it is convenient. When it isn't, such as an egoistic dictator with power at his disposal, the oppressed egoist can't appeal to higher moral principles without inconsistency.

## CONCLUSION

These then are some problems with the mindset of "looking out for Number One." The call to an other-centered life is rooted in our other-oriented triune God, who is self-giving. Rather than waiting for humans to seek Him, He takes the initiative to rescue and redeem and to share His eternal life with us. And God has designed us to live self-giving lives that are much more attractive than the empty existence of the "ethical" egoist. We were made to relate to God and to one another, and we ultimately flourish when living this way. God's design and commands

have our best interests in mind. They are for our good (Deuteronomy 10:13; 8:16; 30:9). We only harm ourselves when we fly in the face of God's design and try to carve out our own hollow, egoistical reality. ❏

**Notes**

1. This essay adapted from Paul Copan, *When God Goes to Starbucks: A Guide to Everyday Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008).
2. Ayn Rand, *The Virtue of Selfishness* (New York: New American Library, 1961).
3. *Ice Age*, 20th Century Fox (2002), directed by Chris Wedge and Carlos Saldanha.
4. John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1985), chapter 11.
5. Gordon Graham, *Eight Theories of Ethics* (London: Routledge, 2004), 23–24.
6. C.S. Lewis, "The Weight of Glory" in *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 4–5.

We were made to relate to God and to one another.



**PAUL COPAN, Ph.D.**, West Palm Beach, Florida, is professor and Pledger Family Chair of Philosophy and Ethics at Palm Beach Atlantic University. He is author and editor of books including *When God Goes to Starbucks*; *True for You, But Not for Me*; *Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense of the Old Testament God*; and *The Paul Copan Apologetics Collection*. He is also president of the Evangelical Philosophical Society. His series in *Enrichment* journal, "Dealing With Doubters," received a first place award from the Evangelical Press Association.

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"Brother, your egotism is getting very offensive — in fact, you seem to think you could actually rise to my level of excellence!"



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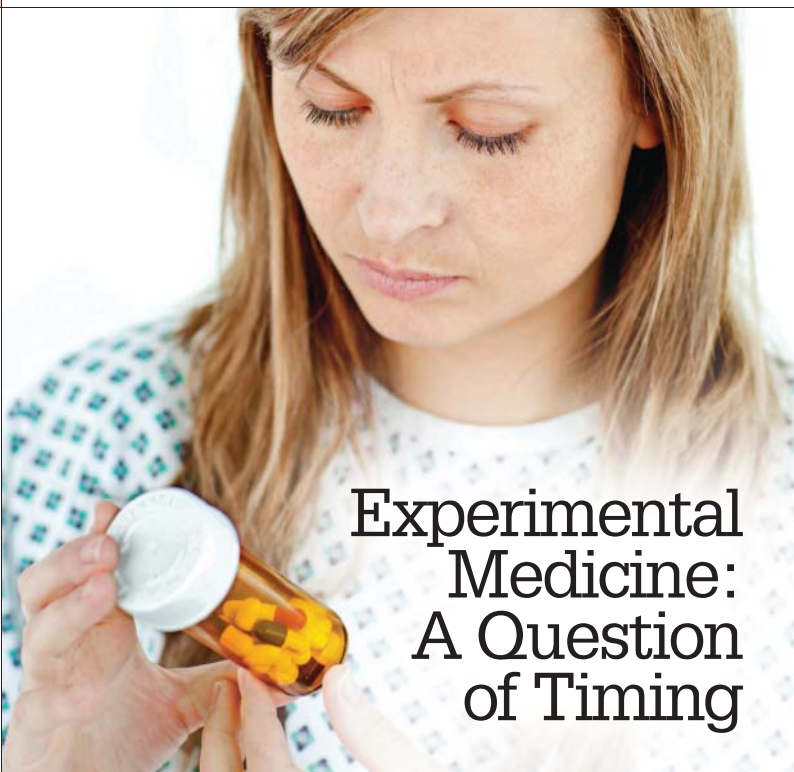
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## Experimental Medicine: A Question of Timing

BY CHRISTINA M.H. POWELL

**J**im had been through surgery, radiation, and a few rounds of chemotherapy. In his mid-50s, he had a teenage son and daughter he hoped to send to college. In spite of his treatments, his cancer returned. Now his doctor thought a new experimental drug might pro-

long Jim's life, but he wasn't sure Jim would qualify for participation in the clinical trials using the drug. Without the drug, the doctor predicted Jim had only a few months to live.

Should patients like Jim be granted access to experimental medicines if they do not qualify for clinical trials? Terminally ill patients push for access, but regulatory agencies and many medical doctors worry the vast majority of experimental drugs may have no benefit to a patient and can be harmful. Unfortunately, by the time a beneficial drug receives regulatory approval, it may be too late. The selection process for clinical trials can feel frustrating and confusing to patients and their loved ones. How can you minister to people alternating between hope and disappointment at the news of possible life-saving treatments?



For patients who have exhausted conventional treatment methods, alternative treatments and experimental medicines may become the last sources of hope.

### SEEKING HOPE

Hope is a precious commodity for terminally ill patients and their families. Any treatment that promises a cure or prolonged life seems worth exploring. For patients who have exhausted conventional treatment methods, alternative treatments and experimental medicines may become the last sources of hope. Many times friends and extended family members comb Internet sites looking for news of treatments emerging in clinical trials. When they find something promising, they naturally want to pursue it.

In many cases, the treatment is available only through certain clinical trials. Treatments shown to work in other countries may not be available in the United States if they have not yet received Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval, a process that takes years. Most terminally ill patients seeking new treatments have a timetable of months or weeks. The prospect of a bureaucratic roadblock thwarts hope.

In 1999, a 19-year-old named Abigail Burroughs was dying from head and neck cancer. Her oncologist thought an experimental drug called Erbitux would shrink the tumors. But since the drug had not yet received FDA approval, the treatment was denied. Abigail died in 2001, three years before Erbitux gained approval. The Abigail Alliance, an advocacy group for terminally ill patients, sued to change the FDA policy. The group achieved a temporary victory that was overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court in early 2008.<sup>1</sup>

### AVOIDING FALSE HOPE

The FDA exists to protect patients from harmful and ineffective drugs, while speeding access to useful medicines. Once a medicine proves promising through laboratory and animal studies, teams of doctors design a series of clinical trials. The initial goals of these trials are to identify harmful side effects and determine the correct dosage.

To obtain useful information about the medicine, doctors carefully screen participants. Patients and their disease progression must fit within specific parameters. For instance, the presence of a secondary disease could disqualify a patient. This selectivity is in the best interest of both present and future patients. However, for a dying patient excluded from a study, failing to fit certain criteria means



dashed hope. The process may not seem fair to a patient who is willing to take on more risks than doctors will allow.

Patients and their family members may struggle to understand the reasoning behind these decisions. However, experimental medicines are unproven. Instead of prolonging a patient's life or providing a cure, the medicine may prove fatal or create more medical problems than it solves. Doctors protect patients from false hope when they withhold medicines with unknown effects. Access to experimental medicines is not a right. Furthermore, doctors must consider the needs of future patients who benefit from a well-designed clinical trial that uncovers potential side effects and defines risks.

Of course, ethical tension exists between ensuring safety and approving a medicine in a timely manner. The goal is to minimize unnecessary delays while gathering scientifically meaningful results. Good study design excludes patients only for medically relevant reasons. Unfortunately, scientific standards sometimes disqualify patients who might benefit from access to a medication. Unexpected study results may delay the approval process. Yet understanding the basis of those results protects patients.

### MINISTERING HOPE

Pastors and chaplains ministering to terminally ill patients and their families can provide wisdom along with hope. While you may not have a deep knowledge of the regulatory approval process for a new drug or treatment, you can encourage patients to trust God and accept that processes in the medical establishment exist for good reasons. Your presence can provide comfort in the midst of turmoil.

King David spoke of trusting in God in times of fear (Psalm 56:3,4), and Solomon warned against leaning on your own understanding (Proverbs 3:5). James said Christians should ask God for wisdom in difficult circumstances (James 1:5). Paul taught the Colossians, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts ..." (Colossians 3:15, NIV). These biblical principles can help patients and their loved ones weather the emotional rollercoaster of sorting through potential treatment options. When frustrations mount, you can reassure them that God's plans for their lives will prevail.

Ultimately, you have a hope to offer that surpasses anything medicine can promise. The

For the believer, hope rests in the promise of spending eternity with Christ. This hope can bring peace regardless of the medical outcome.

spiritual hope of eternal life is "an anchor for the soul, firm and secure" (Hebrews 6:19, NIV). John explained the essence of the Christian belief, "And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the son has life ..." (1 John 5:11,12, NIV).

The patient's reality may be that his or her earthly life is drawing to a close, with no miracle treatment on the horizon. For the believer, however, hope rests in the promise of spending eternity with Christ. This hope can bring peace regardless of the medical outcome. ■

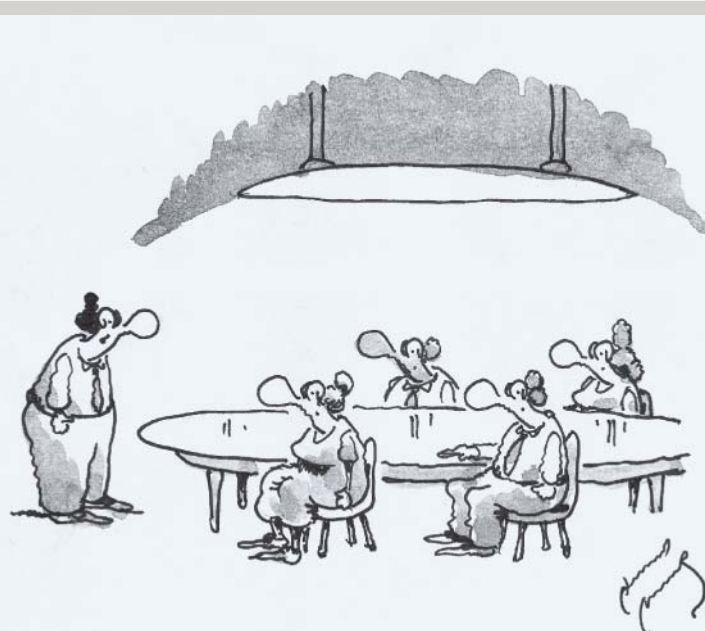
#### Notes

1. Rae, SB., *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan, 2009), 235.
2. Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House.



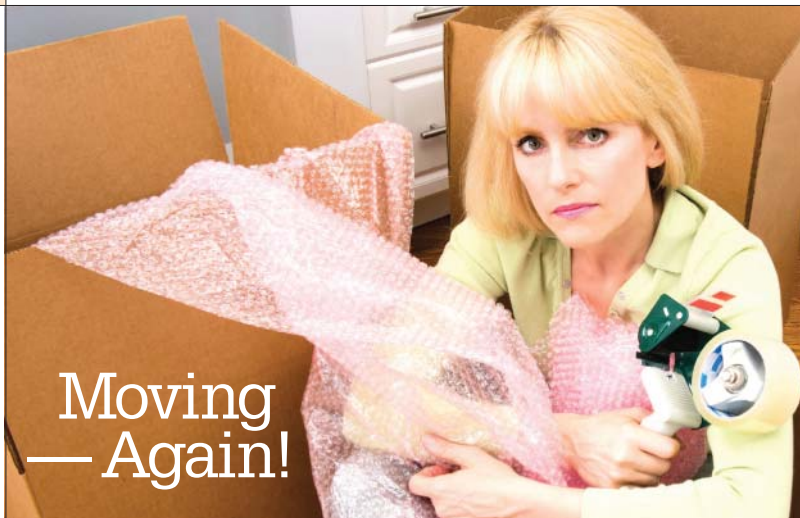
**CHRISTINA M.H. POWELL, Ph.D.**, an ordained minister, author, medical writer, and research scientist trained at Harvard Medical School and Harvard University, and the author of *Questioning Your Doubts: A Harvard Ph.D. Explores Challenges to Faith* (InterVarsity Press, 2014). She speaks in churches and conferences nationwide and addresses faith and science issues at [www.questioningyourdoubts.com](http://www.questioningyourdoubts.com).

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"I wouldn't ask for a raise, but my children are starting to figure out that the pet department at Kmart isn't really the zoo."



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## Moving — Again!

BY GABRIELE RIENAS

**Q** Pastoral ministry has meant several moves for our family over the last 20 years. Normally, I feel ready for the transition and even look forward to a new opportunity for ministry. Now a ministry opportunity has arisen in another state, and I agree with my husband that it is God's direction for our lives. However, this time I am devastated by the thought of moving again. I don't want to leave our community, home, and present ministry. To make things harder, our two daughters are well connected and thriving in high school. After we move, our older daughter will start her senior year in a school where she knows no one except her younger sister. I feel so sad for her and worry about how this will affect her.

**A** I strongly identify with your struggle. In this case, your concern is not only about your personal desire to stay put (which is enough in itself) but also your children's well-being.



It can be difficult to release the sufficient present to grab hold of the unknown future.

This is one of those poignant moments in which the desire to obey God's call to ministry interrupts the ability to control the course of your life.

After 20 years of ministry, you recognize the value of a positive pastoral setting. It is a blessing to live in surroundings that work for you and your family. As you move from the comfortable *known* to the *unknown*, there is room for disharmony and discomfort. The unknown can bring fear as your heart rehearses all the negative possibilities.

In addition, your daughters will face challenges. Senior year is a much-anticipated cultural rite of passage. It will be vastly different for your older daughter than previously envisioned.

Yes, this move will be difficult, but take courage. It does not have to be devastating. Do not let fear rob you of the new thing God is doing in your lives. This is an opportunity to strengthen your trust in God's sovereign and loving plan for you and your family. This does not mean you should not feel any negative emotions. Because you are human, you and your family can expect to face a wide range of emotions. It is normal to deal with grief, a sense of vulnerability, and tension.

It can be difficult to release the sufficient present to grab hold of the unknown future. However, sometimes God asks us to let go of one thing to experience another. This is one of those times. Great courage and trust are needed in the moment between letting go and grabbing hold of the new. Trust that there is something to hold onto and that the new is part of God's plan.

Then be proactive about making the transition as smooth as possible. Help the family understand that encouraging one another and pulling together will make it easier for everyone. Together you can find creative ways to explore the positive side of your new community and ministry opportunity. Find things that will help you look forward to the new experience. When it comes to your daughters, be flexible on things that are negotiable.

Acknowledge your eldest daughter's feelings about how the move will affect her senior year. Listen to what she has to say, and help her find solutions. Beware of the extremes of either joining with her in a drama-filled protest or minimizing her experience and invalidating her feelings.

Recognize and overcome feelings of parental guilt and fear. Resist the urge to overcompensate for your daughter's loss. Realistically, she will *not* be irreparably damaged by transition during her senior year. While difficult, the experience can actually make her a stronger, wiser person.

Be the adult in the mix. This means being a compassionate motivator. Be a good listener while gently encouraging your children to overcome their challenges. Validate their feelings, but reinforce your belief in their ability to deal with change. At the same time, expect them to cooperate and be respectful. Set firm boundaries when necessary.

Finally, help your eldest daughter reframe her vision for her senior year. It is not what she expected, and she will certainly grieve that loss. Help her form expectations that realistically align with the new opportunity. The year will look different, but it also holds possibilities for impact and fulfillment.

Few things in life are more important or

When your family's story is written, this move will be one brief moment in a multitude of moments.

compelling than the bond and love of family. Keep reminding your family of that bond and the power that comes from moving through difficult times together. Redirect their attention to the bigger picture. When your family's story is written, this move will be one brief moment in a multitude of moments. There are many more experiences to be had, joys to be shared, and adventures to be explored. There is much to anticipate.

Above all, have courage and remember whom you serve. Let Joshua 1:9 encourage you: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." 📖



**GABRIELE RIENAS**, a pastor's wife for 33 years and a professional counselor, lives in Beaverton, Oregon. She speaks at retreats, conferences, and events worldwide. Contact her at 503-705-9230. Visit her website: [www.gabriererienas.com](http://www.gabriererienas.com).

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DECISIVE LEADERSHIP:  
A BIBLICAL MATRIX FOR FINDING  
**WISDOM**

| By ROBERT C. CROSBY |

AS PASTORS AND  
CHRIST-FOLLOWERS,  
HOW ARE WE TO  
KNOW THE WAY OF  
WISDOM? WHEN THE  
BIBLE DOES NOT  
PROVIDE A CLEAR  
ANSWER, HOW CAN  
WE BE CLEAR?  
HERE ARE SEVEN  
CHARACTERISTICS OF  
A WISE DECISION.

**“Make** a three-point turn right here,”  
the road test official insisted.

Before attempting the much-rehearsed maneuver, I checked the rearview mirror of my Chevy Impala and saw a problem. A car was right behind me on the two-lane country road. For the life of me, I could not remember anything in the driver’s manual about what to do in that situation.

“What about the car behind me?” I reluctantly asked, perspiration beading on my brow. “What should I do?”

The official turned toward me and peered knowingly over his wire-framed half-glasses.

“Young man, you just do whatever you think is right.”

The knot already in my stomach tightened more. I was 15 and, in my mind at least, this was more than just a driver’s test. It was a rite of passage.

My manhood was on the line. Besides, just a month earlier I had failed the road test. This was my second try.

Ahead of me the road was clear. Next to me, the judge was watching. Behind me, a fellow driver was waiting for me to make up my mind. I saw two choices: I could execute the three-point turn while the driver behind waited, or I could motion for him to pass and then start the turn. My brain did a rapid search of every sentence in the driver's manual I could possibly recall, but I found myself in a situation the book had not specifically addressed. How would I decide on something about which the manual was unclear?

Have you noticed that life and pastoral ministry are full of situations and conflicts the Bible specifically addresses and others that it simply does not? After all, where is the passage that tells me which grade of carpet we need to put in the church foyer and how much to spend on it? What verse will instruct my wife and me on whether we should take our next vacation alone as a couple or together with some friends? Which passage reveals how much time each week I should devote to study and prayer and how much to rest and recreation?

In ancient Israel, as people faced moral decisions and dilemmas on which the Torah (or Old Testament) was not specific, religious leaders added to the Law by writing exhaustive requirements in the Talmud (a long list of extra-biblical, extraneous rules). These became incredibly burdensome loads.

Jesus accused the leaders of being “blind guides” who “strain out a gnat but swallow a camel” (Matthew 23:24). These religious leaders majored on life's minors. In doing so, Jesus said they had neglected “the more important matters of the law — justice, mercy and faithfulness” (verse 23). While turning their personal convictions into sweeping codes of expectation for others, these leaders missed the importance of values-driven decision making — and the way of wisdom.

### BETTER THAN RULES

God-honoring leadership calls for something more than an exhaustive collection of rules. The best leadership decisions are also the wisest ones. Ultimately, we have rules because we so often do not have wisdom.

Think about it. From where do God's principles and guidelines

proceed? They flow from His character. In other words, God does not need rules to function because He has something better. He has perfect character and, therefore, perfect wisdom. His decisions flow from who He is. Since He bears the intrinsic quality of pure wisdom, He does not require the extrinsic motivations of rules and consequences.

But, as pastors and Christ-followers, how are we to know the way of wisdom — especially in those split-second, three-point-turn decisions of life and ministry? When the Bible does not provide a clear answer, how can we be clear?

### TWO KINDS OF WISDOM

When James wrote his New Testament letter, he wanted to help readers understand how to steer their lives with godly wisdom amid the morally slippery Roman roads of culture.

He wrote in James 1:5, “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.”

The good news is we have an instructor right next to us on life's road tests, and He won't hesitate to answer our requests for wisdom.

James goes on to warn that there is more than one type of wisdom. There is earthly wisdom and heavenly wisdom — wisdom “from below” and “from above.”

“But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness” (James 3:17,18, NLT<sup>1</sup>).

In his characteristically practical form, James holds up contrasting X-rays of two different hearts — two contrasting kinds of wisdom. He reveals that godly wisdom is more than a set of road rules to guide the choices we make; it is the kind of heart God wants to grow within us.

As we look at these two hearts held up against the light of God's truth, some key themes emerge about the nature of wisdom. These characteristics form checkpoints through which we can run our decisions if we genuinely want to make sure our leadership decisions are wise. You could say James gives us a decision matrix for wisdom.

As you read through these checkpoints, consider a particularly challenging decision you are currently facing or one you have recently faced. Hold it up to the scrutiny of Scripture.

### WISDOM'S SEVEN

**1. A wise decision is pure.** Samson was one Old Testament leader who bypassed the pure checkpoint in the decision-making process. Although he started out with so much — a godly family, God's favor, incredible strength, and acclaim — he made a series of decisions



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that guaranteed moral failure. Consider a few. First, he chose to be a loner, separating himself from godly counsel (Proverbs 11:14). Then he dangerously and unadvisedly entered enemy territory (Judges 14:3). He tragically ignored, or undervalued, God's call on his life, preferring instead to pursue personal pleasures. And failing to learn from past mistakes, he jumped from one relationship folly to another (Judges 16:1-4).

At no point in the biblical record do we see this leader ask, "Is this pure? Is this consistent with God's moral code? Can I pursue this with a clean conscience?"

Ultimately, Samson's failure to make decisions with purity in mind was his undoing.

**2. A wise decision is peace-loving.** Several years ago I found myself upset with a parishioner. He had made some comments to visiting guests that were unkind and quite hurtful. Having arranged to meet with him one afternoon to discuss the escalating situation,

I intentionally arrived an hour early. Somehow I knew that having this conversation with him was right, perhaps even wise, but I also knew that how I was feeling about it was wrong.

For years I had watched Christians abuse the biblical admonition of "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15) by simply offering some preemptive comment such as, "I love you, brother, but ..." and then firing with both barrels verbally. I feared I might do the same.

As I prayed, I sensed the Lord encouraging me simply to do what the verse says — to actually speak the truth in love. I needed to be completely truthful with this brother, but in a loving way. Being loud and angry would help no one (James 1:20), but being truthful and kind might just do a world of good.

Much to my surprise, it worked. With God's help, I calmly told this man how hurtful his words and actions had been. He apologized. We prayed together, and then we moved on. This action emotionally disarmed the conflict. That day I experienced the truth that if a decision is truly wise, it is also peace-loving.

**3. A wise decision is considerate.** Paul instructed us to put the interests of others before our own (Philippians 2:4). As leaders who live in a world where every man looks to his own interests, and not to the interests of others, the quality of being considerate sparkles. It is a rare gem but also a vital checkpoint in determining the wisdom, or lack thereof, in our decisions. Wise decisions consider the other people involved, including their perspectives, their stake in the matter, and their feelings.

**4. A wise decision is submissive.** We make wise decisions with a sense of humility. Wise decisions keep in mind our roles as leaders and the authority figures our decisions impact. James reminds us to "keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (James 2:8). While New Testament scholar Scot McKnight calls this following the "Jesus Creed," James simply calls it wisdom. Is your decision truly submissive to others?

**5. A wise decision is full of mercy and good fruit.** I faced a challenging decision in the middle of a Communion service. Gathering with a group of fellow church leaders, the retreat director instructed us to pick a person with whom to share Communion. As I thought about it, I knew immediately the person God wanted me to ask. It was not a close friend or someone standing nearby. It was a leader with whom I'd had a sharp disagreement years previously. Although we had made some efforts to resolve the conflict, a bitter root remained.

In my mind there was a long list of reasons why I did not want to take this step. After all, he had been the angry one, not me. Shouldn't he take the first step? With him being older, shouldn't he take the initiative? But in my heart, the Holy Spirit was making His own list.

One of the hardest journeys I have ever taken was the brief path I walked across the room that day. But it was clear this was

## WISDOM'S CHECKPOINTS: SEVEN BIBLICAL QUESTIONS TO DETERMINE WHETHER YOUR LEADERSHIP CHOICE IS A WISE ONE

(Based on James 3:13-18)

- 1. Is it pure?** If I do this, will I be compromising my integrity or character in any way? Can I do it with a clear conscience?
- 2. Is it peace-loving?** Will this decision strengthen my relationships or weaken them?
- 3. Is it considerate?** Am I thinking of others or just myself in this choice?
- 4. Is it submissive?** Would the godly leaders in my life approve of this decision?
- 5. Is it full of mercy and good fruit?** Does this decision reflect Christ and His grace to others?
- 6. Is it impartial?** Am I really being fair with the people this decision will affect?
- 7. Is it sincere?** Am I being true to God and to my convictions? Have I sought out the truth and built my decision upon it? Is this an integrity move?

Adapted from *Decisions, Decisions* by Robert C. Crosby. Originally published in *Discipleship Journal*.

the right decision, the wise one. Any other decision would not have been full of mercy and good fruit.

As this brother and I shared Communion around the sobering symbols of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, God was powerfully present. The tensions we had felt melted, grace emerged, and we built a bridge. Mercy led the way in making my decision that day a wise one.

**6. A wise decision is impartial.** In some ways this checkpoint may closely resemble the earlier one of being considerate. Yet while seeing through the lens of the people involved in your decisions is important, this particular checkpoint of wisdom is something more. James' admonition to impartiality in decision making adds a sense of fairness to our considerate acts.

Let's face it. One great temptation pastors and leaders face is that of showing favoritism. It is often easy to lend unfair advantages to people in our circles, to those who curry favor, to families and networks — not based on their merit and character, but rather on things such as nepotism and cronyism. While these decisions may add to our sense of comfort as leaders, they likely make the people we serve quite uncomfortable. Wise decisions are impartial ones.

**7. A wise decision is sincere (without hypocrisy).** The best decisions we make do not flow from mere strategic advantage; they come from our values and convictions. Wise decisions flow from a deep place within our souls — from God, His Word, and His kingdom values. We do not quickly “put on” wise choices for immediacy or for our own advantage. Rather, we draw them out of a constancy of communion with God and the insights that result from this communion. They come from a true place within us. Wise decisions are honest-to-God ones.

**MORE ROAD TESTS**

As my road test ended that day, I pulled the car over and awaited the official's verdict.

“I am sorry to tell you, young man, but you failed. Instead of motioning for the car behind you to pass you on the three-point turn, you went ahead and did it while he waited and watched. What should have been most important to you in that situation was the safety of each of the passengers involved. Better luck next time.”

The instructor had, firmly fixed in his mind, the answer I could not find in the driver's manual. While I had focused solely on trying to remember the written-down rules, the instructor was even more concerned about the intrinsic values that drove my decision.

One month later, and wiser, I finally passed the third driver's test. In the final analysis, the wisdom I needed that day was not found in the driver's manual. It was somewhere else. In this case, it was not in a word but in a value.

James warns us that life and leadership will include many road tests. “Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors” (James 1:2,3, *The Message*<sup>2</sup>).

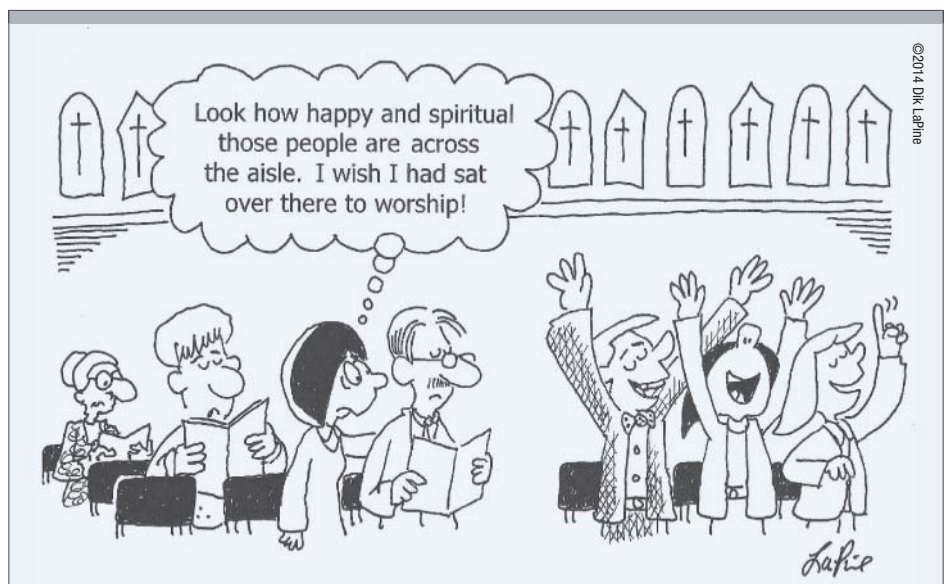
Get ready. There's another test just around the corner. But this time you know something far better than the rules; you know the characteristics of a wise decision. ■



**ROBERT C. CROSBY** is an author, conference speaker, and professor of practical theology at Southeastern University in Lakeland, Florida. He served over 25 years as a pastor. His books include *The One Jesus Loves* (Thomas Nelson), *The Teaming Church: Ministry in the Age of Collaboration*, and *Conversation Starters*.

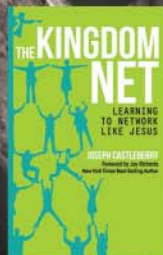
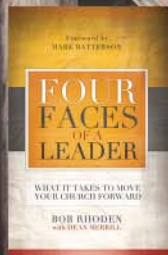
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
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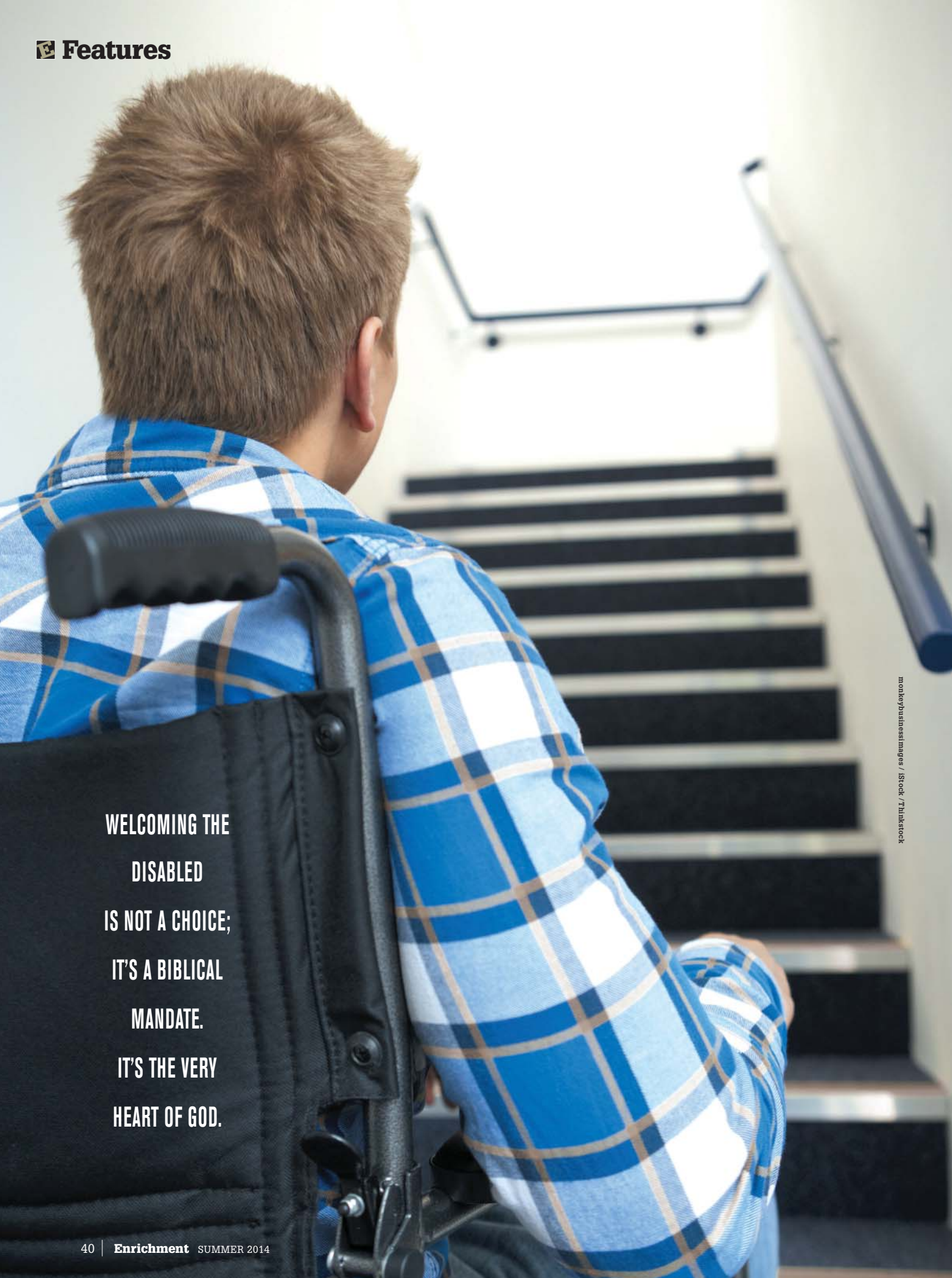
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IS NOT A CHOICE;  
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MANDATE.  
IT'S THE VERY  
HEART OF GOD.

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# BEYOND THE STAIRS: BEING A DISABILITY FRIENDLY CHURCH

| By CHARLIE CHIVERS |

IS YOUR  
CHURCH  
DISABILITY-  
FRIENDLY?  
IF NOT,  
IT CAN BE,  
AND HERE  
IS HOW.

**Monday** morning brought the first phone call of the week. The woman identified herself and her location. After an awkward silence, came her quivering, tearful voice.

“Reverend Chivers,” she said, “would you know of a disability-friendly Assemblies of God church near my town you could recommend my family attend? We have two intellectually disabled teenage sons in wheelchairs. I’m heartbroken today. Yesterday we were asked to leave our third Assemblies of God church.”

I couldn’t believe what I heard. Assemblies of God churches? Really? Listening to her sobs, my heart broke with hers as I asked sympathetically, “Can you tell me the story?”

“Well, one Sunday, after attending our first church in several months, the leadership said they were getting too many complaints from the congregation about our boys,” the woman explained. “It seems their disabilities were making people uncomfortable. They asked if we wouldn’t mind finding a different church that could handle us. We were hurt, but we didn’t want to make anybody uncomfortable, so we left.”

“Our second church seemed friendly – at first. They were proud of their beautiful, accessible sanctuary, suggesting it was made just for people like us. However, we learned the Sunday School class for our boys was upstairs. My husband and I carried our boys, in their wheelchairs, up and down every Sunday. It was exhausting. What made it worse is everyone would just watch and sometimes gasp in fear that they might roll backwards, but no one ever offered help.”

“Realizing this was neither safe nor practical, I politely asked if they could swap our boys’ classroom with the adult class on the ground floor, since the adults could climb stairs. The answer was, ‘Disrupt everyone else just for your two boys? We can’t do that! It might be easier if you found another church that could accommodate your special needs.’”

“We have since been driving around looking for the right church. Last week we thought we found it: another Assemblies of God church in a beautiful ground floor building. They even had disability parking stalls right in front! So yesterday morning, we pulled our van into one of those stalls, unloaded our boys, and began to roll them to the front door. As we approached, three nicely dressed men came out and introduced themselves as part of the leadership team. We thought, ‘How nice. They’ve come to greet us and

assist with our boys!' Our joy was short-lived, however, as they said, 'We're sorry, folks, but our church isn't equipped to meet your needs. We thought we'd save you the struggle and suggest you find another church that can!' Reverend Chivers, we don't know of another church. What do we do?"

### THE WORST REJECTION OF ALL

The question is significant. What *do* they do? Should they stop trying and stay home? Unfortunately, that's what happens in many cases.

James 1:27 says, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress ...."

Families dealing with disabilities have some things in common with orphans and widows. Demanding, overwhelming needs suck the personal life, energy, and dreams from the overburdened caregivers. They are widowed by a culture that is often dead to them in terms of offering compassion and support, accommodating them only when legislated to do so. To make matters worse, some face abandonment by a church that is unwilling to share the burden.

Dealing with pseudo-compassion of societal patronization is one thing, but to be marginalized and disenfranchised by the church — the one place it should never happen — is the worst rejection of all.

Do we need disability-friendly churches? The answer is apparent when we know God is not willing that any should perish (Matthew 18:14). The argument for every church to be disability friendly is obvious. Who is meeting the spiritual needs of the disability community in your town? Is your church leaving it up to other churches to care for them? Does your congregation pass off the responsibility to others that are "more equipped" to meet their needs? Why can't your church welcome them?

I received another phone call, this time from a church secretary.

"We have a father attending our church with his autistic son. The mother doesn't want anything to do with church because of feeling rejected by other churches. The young man occasionally acts out in the morning worship service. It's not always at inappropriate times, but he makes our pastor and others in the congregation very uncomfortable. My pastor asked me to call to see if you know of a disability-friendly church in our area where we could send them."

I said, "Absolutely! I know of a wonderful church to recommend to you!"

The secretary said, "That's great! What church?"

I answered, "Your church. Why can't your church be that church?"

That's my question to every pastor today. Why can't your church be that church? People with disabilities don't necessarily care whether you know how to meet their needs. But they care deeply about whether you're willing to learn.

### THE GULF BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Every church can create an atmosphere of love and acceptance of the disability community. It begins by recognizing the gulf between the church world and the world of people with disabilities. The Great Commission demands that the local church be proactive in bridging that gulf, not the other way around. Mark 16:15 is a mandate to every church: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." Jesus' instructions are clear. Churches must enter the world of the disabled.

We need to understand the church world from others' perspectives. It has certain inherent characteristics. By design, a church is



## CERTIFY YOUR CHURCH AS DISABILITY FRIENDLY

**Becoming certified as a disability-friendly church** requires more than an accessible building. You may not have architectural barriers, but have you removed attitudinal barriers by teaching your congregation the spirit of accommodation? This happens through consistent disability awareness education that keeps the congregation informed about the world of disability.

Certified churches are encouraged to consider special outreaches, such as education programs for people with intellectual disabilities; respite care for weary caregivers; and in-home support assisting with light maintenance and other tasks.



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## PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ARE CLEARLY THE LARGEST UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUP IN THE WORLD.

a family unit that focuses on celebrating Jesus, worshiping God, and fellowshipping with the saints. Sunday services often showcase the church at its best.

Though these things are good, when viewed from the perspective of people with disabilities, they can become problematic. Therefore, it's important to understand the world of people with disabilities. Their reality is often at odds with the church. People with disabilities may feel betrayed by God or isolated from Him. Therefore, they are sometimes hesitant to worship. They may wrestle with the question, "If God is so loving and powerful, why did He allow this terrible thing to happen to me?" In a group of able-bodied people, those with disabilities often feel isolated and ignored rather than part of the family.

Some with disabilities are continually confronted with the dispiriting side of life. They may feel uncomfortable and uneasy about their appearance and behaviors. They know they may seem bizarre or revolting to others.

A quick comparison and analysis of these characteristics illuminate the problems. If people with disabilities feel punished or

rejected by God and think they are an accident or a mistake, why should they want to go to God's house and celebrate Him? Going to church can feel like attending someone else's family reunion. It's a closed circle. The smiles and hugs are for those who are known and loved. Only those in the family know the inside jokes. Strangers are treated with cool politeness. Why should a person with a disability confront the logistical hassles of going to church and being lonely when they can be lonely at home?

### IS THERE A "KEEP OUT" SIGN ON YOUR FRONT DOOR?

The next issue you must face can be very difficult. Is the church, your church, ready for the stark ugliness that sometimes accompanies disability? Can you handle drool on your upholstery or seizures on your floor? Are you ready to help empty a leg bag that needs immediate attention? As a pastor, are you prepared for those who may interact with your sermon by answering rhetorical questions out loud, interject irrelevancies, or fall obviously and noisily asleep? Are you prepared to deal with people who may not look, smell, or act pretty? Many people with disabilities don't think so, and that is why the

Registering your church on the National Disability Friendly Church Certification site will inform you of the best practices and put you on a path to healthy planning. You will answer 60 simple "yes" or "no" questions and immediately begin to learn what people with disabilities need from your church.

Get certified by visiting the U.S. Missions Compassionate Ministries Resource and Research Center at [www.agusmresources.org](http://www.agusmresources.org) and click CMC (Compassionate Missionary Council) on the navigation bar, scroll to the author's name, Charlie Chivers, and click. Or go directly to [www.specialtouch.org](http://www.specialtouch.org). Either way, you'll find a "Disability Friendly Certified" graphic. When your survey is complete, click "Get Results" to instantly discover the disability-friendly level at which your

church is operating: bronze, silver, gold, or platinum.

There are four categories of questions: Building and Grounds, Program, Supports, and Spirit of Accommodation (the "body language" of your congregation). The final category is the most critical because true disability friendliness rises and falls on the general attitude of congregants. Based on your answers, you will be assessed a one, two, three, or four Dove rating in each category. Your accumulated Dove rating will determine your overall disability-friendly certification level, and you will be added to an elite national database of disability-friendly churches. No matter what level you achieve, you are a winner because you offer something people with disabilities are looking for!

With a user name and password, you'll be

able to keep your profile page and contact information current; upload logos and pictures; communicate your mission, vision, and message to people with disabilities; and list your calendar events.

As people do a Zip code search, looking for a disability-friendly church in your area, your listing will appear. Clicking on your church name will take them to your profile page to see your Dove rating and disability-friendly certification level. They will also see the information you've entered and any disability ministry amenities you offer, complete with a map to your front door.

Special Touch Ministry offers consulting services to take your church to the highest disability-friendly level possible.

**BRAD MATTRISCH, U.S. Missions missionary  
associate with Special Touch Ministry**

statistics say they are staying away from church in droves.

The worldly culture is highly intolerant of physical and mental imperfection. Churches must be careful to avoid such attitudes. The average Sunday service unwittingly celebrates appearance and ability. As a result, people with disabilities envision a “KEEP OUT!” sign on the front door of the accessible, multimillion dollar facility.

Contrary to what some think, an accessible building is not all it takes to be disability friendly. It’s not even a program, a project, or an unaffordable expense. Though these things eventually play a role, welcoming the disabled is not a choice; it’s a biblical mandate. It’s the very heart of God.

In Matthew 25:40 Jesus declares, “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” Consider also the words of Jesus to His banquet host in Luke 14:12-14, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Later in the same chapter, Jesus told a parable about a master who prepared a feast, instructing his servant to invite everyone. However, many excused themselves, claiming they were too busy. So the master told the servant to “go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame” (Luke 14:21). There was still room at the feast, so the master gave the order: “Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in ...” (Luke 14:23). In other words, “Shake the bushes so that my house will be full.”

The master no longer accepted excuses when he said, “Compel them to come in.” Neither can we.

### **ONE BILLION: THE LARGEST UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUP IN THE WORLD**

People with disabilities are clearly the largest unreached people group in the world, existing as a subculture within every culture. They are part of every race, religion, tribe, ethnicity, and socio-economic group in the world. There are nearly 1 billion disabled individuals in the world and 58 million in America, and most are unchurched. Every church must be disability friendly because



### **PROFILE**

## **HORSE-RIDING MINISTRY HELPS KIDS REACH FOR THE STARS**

**When you think of typical church ministries**, horse riding therapy probably doesn’t spring to mind. But for Pastor Gerry Stoltzfoos of Freedom Valley Church in Gettysburg, Pa., putting priority on that ministry has grown the church more than any other outreach.

Brandy Crago, director of Shining Stars Therapeutic Ministries, is a world champion trick rider. She wanted to get off the road as her daughter became a teenager. So she approached the pastor with the idea of starting a ministry for handicapped kids.



**STOLTZFOOS**

Crago borrowed some land from the church and put up a corral. This served the ministry for the first seven years. But it was only a seasonal outreach, as weather permitted.

“As the demand increased, we wanted to just put a roof over the corral so we could keep it open all year long, but it got much more complicated,” Stoltzfoos says.

every town has people with disabilities who are longing to belong. Your church can win them for Christ.

Brad Mattrisch knows the value of disability-friendly churches. Born with cerebral palsy, he grew up in a welcoming congregation. As a child, he became involved with Special Touch Ministry, an outreach to people with disabilities. Today Mattrisch is an ordained Assemblies of God minister serving Special Touch as a U.S. Missions missionary associate. He holds degrees in computer business systems from the University of Wisconsin in Whitewater and Bible and theology from Southeastern University in Lakeland, Fla.

Mattrisch recently developed a computer program and database for the Disability Friendly Church Certification tool.

"I'm excited about this Disability Friendly Church Certification tool," Mattrisch says. "It will save thousands of families deep pain and heartache associated with isolation and rejection by the church. Members of disability-friendly churches see the individual rather than the disability. They believe in each other despite any challenge. It may be a youth pastor encouraging a teen with cerebral palsy to pursue driving with adaptive equipment. It may be a men's group encouraging a man with a disability that landing a dream job and

buying a house isn't too difficult for God to bring about. Members of a disability-friendly church provide help for every disabled person who needs it. My church family was there for me, and I want others impacted by disability across the Assemblies of God to belong to a church family who cares for them. This is why I was driven to help develop the Disability Friendly Church Certification tool with Special Touch. It's long overdue!"

Assemblies of God and other Pentecostal pastors should help lead the way. Certify your church "Disability Friendly" with Special Touch Ministry today. Visit [www.specialtouch.org](http://www.specialtouch.org) and look for the "Certify Now" graphic. Thousands like Brad are waiting to find their place. Why can't that place be your church? 📍



**CHARLIE CHIVERS**, founder and executive director, Special Touch Ministry, Inc., a nationwide ministry serving the physical and spiritual concerns of America's 58 million people with disabilities. Charlie and his wife, Debbie, are appointed missionaries with the Assemblies of God U.S. Missions Intercultural Ministries Department, Springfield, Missouri.

To promote the enclosed corral project, the church put a sign out front that said, "Please pray for us. We need a building for our handicapped ministry."



Money not only came in from the church, but from the community. One person was driving by, saw the sign, and wrote a check for \$100,000.

The congregation dedicated the 15,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility last September. Now there are 160 volunteers from 20 different churches serving more than 100 severely handicapped children.

As the ministry grew over the years, so did church attendance and church planting. Since launching Shining Stars, the church

has planted 36 churches. The church also trains other congregations to start their own horse therapy programs.

At the beginning of the season, a small team meets with families to discuss goals for their children. Stoltzfoos says parents are often

moved by the concern and compassion they encounter. Medical teams help determine each child's needs and abilities. The group then prays for the families and the goals they set.

"We had a 14-year-old — there was no big goal except just to take a few steps, just to be able to sit up," Stoltzfoos says. "It took some years for her to develop the strength to sit up, and some years to learn to be able to recognize family and talk.

Some of these kids come, and they ride on

the horse facedown, spread eagle at first. There are four to five volunteers per horse, depending on the child. But it's a tremendous team."

Stoltzfoos says horse therapy is an effective tool in helping children with special needs, though no one can explain with certainty why it works.

"It might be the interaction with the adults," Stoltzfoos says. "It might be that someone's expressing tremendous joy at having this child show up. But we know that these children are leaping in their personal development. It's just an incredible thing to be part of. We feel like it's everyday miracles happening all around us."

For more information, visit [shiningstarstherapeuticriding.org](http://shiningstarstherapeuticriding.org).

**AMBER WEIGAND-BUCKLEY**, freelance writer, Springfield, Missouri



# The MAN Issue

INTRODUCTION

By **Rick Knoth**



*Is there a future  
for the men in your  
church?*

*What a strange question*

*to ask, you may be thinking. However, if you move past the perception that just because men dominate American pulpits, men should dominate the pews, then the question is not strange at all. The fact is, men are absent in ever-increasing numbers from America's churches. In the Assemblies of God, the percent of women to men "adherents" (the Assemblies of God does not collect gender data on attendance) is 55 to 45 percent, respectively.*

If data were available, the percent variance of women to men "attendees" in Assemblies of God churches would most likely be marginally wider.

Conversely, women in the Assemblies of God are visibly absent from our pulpits, yet they are more present than men in our pews. We will give our attention to this subject in the spring 2015 issue.

The question, then, "Is there a future for men in your church?" is one of the more important and relevant queries of our day as men's ministry leaders and pastors fight an uphill battle for the hearts and souls of men. In this issue of *Enrichment*, I invite you to ponder this question and the future of men in your church.

Tom Schumaker / Hemera / Thinkstock



Statistically, the outlook for men and the church looks somewhat grim. Consider the following:

- The typical U.S. congregation draws an adult crowd that is 61 percent female, 39 percent male.
- On any given Sunday, 13 million more adult women than men attend America's churches.
- This Sunday, almost 25 percent of married, churchgoing women will worship without their husbands.
- Over 70 percent of boys growing up in church will abandon it during their teens and 20s. Many of these boys will never return.
- More than 90 percent of American men believe in God, and five out of six call themselves Christians. But only one out of six attend church on a given Sunday.
- The average man accepts the reality of Jesus Christ but fails to see any value in going to church.
- Fewer than 10 percent of U.S. churches establish or maintain a vibrant men's ministry.<sup>1</sup>

What if these statistics were reversed? What if churchgoing women were dropping out of church to the same or greater degree as men? Would it matter? You bet it would! It would be a major-league crisis for the church! We would be asking two very important questions: "Why is it happening?" and, "What can the Church do about it?"

Fortunately, the declining attendance of women in church is not yet at crisis level. However, with the readily available data on the declining attendance of men in church, it seems reasonable to conclude that the crisis is real, and it should matter to pastors and church leaders everywhere. And when you further consider that more and more men are giving up on fatherhood, leaving their wives, and leading self-absorbed lives consumed with sports, video games, and pornography, the questions, "Why is it happening?" and, "What can the Church do about it?" take on even greater importance for the local church.

So let me ask you again: Is there a future for men in your church? Does your vision for your church embrace a hopeful future for men — both the church and unchurched?

You don't have to grow dismayed, discouraged, and downcast by the poignant crisis

of men in America. Instead, allow the Lord to challenge and encourage you! A renewal of faith within America's men and youth is possible if the Church will offer a compelling vision that includes a hopeful future for men. When the Church gets it right, everyone benefits — the Church, the home, and society.

I believe the starting place for such a vision is to revisit the tripartite model Jesus used 2,000 years ago. It is a model that has all but disappeared in most churches. Think of it this way: We have the opportunity to engage in the same life-changing ministry Jesus used. In Jesus' discipleship model, He first called men (and women) to follow Him. Then He modeled the transformative life by training and empowering men (and women) to live out their faith. Finally, Jesus sent men (and women) out to transform the world.

The opportunity we have to participate in the life-changing ministry Jesus engaged in should motivate us to meet men at the crossroads of their lives, wherever that may be. It should motivate us to point men to Jesus, direct them to godly mentors who can wake up

their God-given potential, and then lead them on a life-transforming mission to change the world — one man at a time.

How you decide to unpack Jesus' discipleship model in your ministry environment is, of course, entirely up to you as the pastor. With that in mind, we designed this issue of *Enrichment* not only to reignite a passion in you to reach men for Jesus and disciple them to be the champion believers for whom Christ died, but to offer you creative and empowering ideas to accomplish the task. We trust you will earnestly consider the contents of this issue as you continue working to create a church-wide strategy to reach men, young and old, for Christ. 📖

**YOU DON'T  
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CRISIS  
OF MEN  
IN AMERICA.**



**RICK KNOTH**, managing editor, *Enrichment* journal, Springfield, Missouri.

**Note**

1. <http://churchformen.com/men-and-church/where-are-the-men>

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# WHAT JESUS TEACHES MEN ABOUT MONEY, SEX, AND POWER

By **GEORGE PAUL WOOD**

**WHAT, FOR JESUS, WAS THE PRIMARY MARKER OF MANHOOD?  
AND BASED ON THAT MARKER, WHAT DOES JESUS TEACH  
CHRISTIAN MEN ABOUT MONEY, SEX, AND POWER?**



*A*sk a man how he defines success in life, and chances are his answer will include variations on three themes: money, sex, and power. If a man has a job, a woman, and a skill that makes him stand out from the crowd, people consider him successful.

Oh sure, he may go for a short time without one of these things — or two, or all three — but this lack will not affect his self-esteem. If he goes without them for a lengthy period of time, however, he will begin to question his manhood. It is not enough to be a man; one must be manly. It is not enough to be male; one must be masculine.

The money-sex-power markers of manhood hold true for Christian men too, with qualifications. The job must be honest, the sex must be marital, and the skill must be used to God's glory. For the Christian man, moreover, money, sex, and power are secondary measures of success.

## WHAT JESUS TEACHES MEN ABOUT MONEY, SEX, AND POWER

(continued from page 49)

The true measure of success is a man's relationship with Jesus Christ.

But here Christian men face a conundrum: Jesus was poor (Matthew 8:20), unmarried (Matthew 19:12), and a servant (Matthew 20:28). If money, sex, and power are markers of manhood, even in a secondary sense, we must conclude that Jesus failed to be masculine in important ways.

Such a conclusion is untenable, obviously. Jesus Christ is the Word made flesh, the Son of God, the Second Adam, the Lord of heaven and earth. If our markers of manhood find Jesus to be less than masculine, then our standard of measurement is wrong, not His.

So what, for Jesus, was the primary marker of manhood? And based on that marker, what does Jesus teach Christian men about money, sex, and power?

### A NECESSARY CLARIFICATION

By focusing on what Jesus teaches Christian men about manhood, I do not mean to imply that Jesus' teaching applies only to men. Jesus' invitation, "Follow me," is given to all people, regardless of gender (Mark 8:34; cf. Luke 8:1-3; 23:49).

Nor do I mean to imply that Jesus doesn't have something to teach Christian women about womanhood. He does (e.g., Luke 10:38-42). For the purposes of this article, I am simply looking at what Jesus' masculinity teaches Christian men about theirs when it comes to the topic of money, sex, and power.

### THE PRIMARY MARKER

With that necessary clarification in mind, I return to the first question: What, for Jesus, was the primary marker of manhood?

At the outset of His ministry, Jesus proclaimed, "The time has come .... The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15). I would suggest that, in Jesus' eyes, the measure of success in life is whether a person — male or female — accepts God's dominion over his or her life. True success depends on faith in Christ, who embodies the Kingdom in His person and works (Matthew 7:21-23).

From that perspective, a man who has money, sex, and power,

**WE CAN USE  
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AND SOCIETIES  
THAT EXTEND  
THOSE ADVANTAGES  
TO ALL.**

but not the Kingdom, has failed to be the kind of man God wants men to be. His masculinity is worldly, not godly, and thus of no eternal significance. By the same token, a man who has the Kingdom, but not money, sex, or power, has succeeded in being God's man, because his life has eternal significance.

As Jesus said, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel" — remember, the gospel is the proclamation of the kingdom of God — "will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?" (Mark 8:34-37).

If the primary marker of true manhood is acceptance of the Kingdom, how does a Kingdom man use money, sex, and power? To answer this question, consider the following episodes from the Gospels.

### THE PARABLE OF THE RICH FOOL (LUKE 12:13-21)

The first episode begins when a man tried to leverage Jesus' influence for financial gain: "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."

Jesus' first response denied that He had any human-appointed legal authority to do so: "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?"

Jesus' second response made a larger point about the out-sized influence of money on our thinking: "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions." (Both responses demonstrate the human tendency to misuse religion to justify greed.)

Jesus illustrated this second response with a parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest." (Notice how Jesus attributed the harvest to the ground, not to the man's skill. This is a humbling reminder to men that success in any endeavor often depends on forces outside our control.)

Because the harvest exceeded the storage capacity of his barns, the man tore down the old ones and built newer, bigger ones. Then he said to himself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."

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God's perspective on the matter was quite different than the man's: "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?"

Jesus concluded the parable by stating its moral: "This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."

In Jesus' way of thinking — the Kingdom-man perspective — being rich toward God meant being generous to the poor. He portrayed generosity to the poor as a donation to heaven's treasury, an investment that will pay dividends in the life to come.

"Sell your possessions and give to the poor," Jesus said. "Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys" (Luke 12:33).

To be a man when it comes to money, then — at least as Jesus sees it — has less to do with how much money one gets than with how much money one gives, less to do with upward mobility than with downward generosity. A Christian man may earn as much money as his God-given skills and opportunities allow, but he must use this money for the benefit of others — his family first, and then the poor (1 Timothy 5:8; 6:17–19). The generous use of money, then, not the mere possession of it, is the marker of true manhood.

### TEACHING REGARDING DIVORCE (Matthew 19:3–12)

The second episode begins when some Pharisees "test" Jesus by asking Him about divorce: "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"

## PROFILE

# Ankle Tape and Tenderness



Wilson

When people meet Ken Wilson, "tender" probably isn't the first word that comes to mind. Weighing in at 300 pounds, Wilson is a Greco-Roman national wrestling champion, Navy veteran, former football player, and all-around tough guy. But when it comes to reaching people with the love of Christ, Wilson is a big softie.

"I cry all the time," says Wilson, the men's pastor at Christian Faith Center in Nampa, Idaho. "I've got a big heart because Jesus has a big heart. As a man, you've got to be able to stand up and have a little backbone, but when you're ministering or being a dad and husband, it's OK to be tender. I want to be so tender that when I talk to other people I tenderize them."

As a lifelong athlete, Wilson makes ample use of sports terminology in his minis try to men. Small group leaders, called head coaches, choose key members in an annual draft. They fill out their small group rosters by inviting guys who might not otherwise come to church.

"We offer a place where the men can come when they get beat up by the world — a place where they can get their ankles taped up so they can get back in the game," Wilson says.

The head coaches build one-on-one relationships with men by investing time in them, whether by having them over for a cookout, watching a football game together, or praying for a need over the phone.

The church provides season tickets to college sports events so coaches and team members can attend together.

"We want to get guys outside of the church environment to let them know it's OK to walk out of church and still be a church man," Wilson says. "As guys model Christianity out in the community and in their homes, other men can see these people are real. They have lives, families, and wives. They don't just come to church. They live for Jesus every day."

Once a year the church plans a date night for the men and their wives. The evening includes dinner, a family-friendly movie, and a rose for each woman. Wilson says such activities allow men to see and practice healthy marriage building.

"Of course, none of us are perfect by any means," Wilson says. "But a lot of times it's showing our imperfections that perfect us. It's good to know a bunch of guys who are going through some of the same struggles — people you can call on for prayer and encouragement. Every man needs to know he's not running this race alone, and he doesn't have to be perfect."

CHRISTINA QUICK, freelance writer, Springfield, Missouri



## WHAT JESUS TEACHES MEN ABOUT MONEY, SEX, AND POWER

(continued from page 51)

To understand Jesus' answer, we need to remember the two schools of thought about divorce that prevailed among Jews in His day. The school of Hillel argued for a liberal understanding of divorce. It interpreted the Hebrew grammar of Deuteronomy 24:1 as allowing a man two grounds for divorce: "[anything] displeasing" and "something indecent." By contrast, the school of Shammai argued for a conservative understanding. It interpreted Deuteronomy 24:1 as allowing a man one ground: "[anything] displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her."

Rather than grounding His answer in the vagaries of Hebrew grammar, Jesus grounded His answer in the creation stories of Genesis 1 and 2. "'Haven't you read,' he replied, 'that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female' [Genesis 1:27] and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh' [Genesis 2:24]? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.'"

Jesus' argument from creation positioned Him on the same side of the divorce question as Shammai: "I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."

This reply astonished His own disciples: "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry."

Too often we fail to notice how male-centered and self-absorbed a view of marriage and divorce Jesus' disciples held. They were saying, in effect, "If a man can't divorce his wife for any and every reason, it is better not to marry."

They treated wives as possessions they could discard at will. By contrast, Jesus extended dignity and respect to women as God's image-bearers. And He expected His disciples to treat women as He did: "Not everyone can accept this word, but

only those to whom it has been given."

As Jesus' disciples, we receive this Word and treat women accordingly.

The equal dignity Jesus accorded to women as God's image-bearers explains the remarkable freedom Jesus exercised in relationship to women, especially women with questionable sexual reputations (e.g., Matthew 21:31,32; Luke 7:36-50; John 4:1-42; 7:53-8:11). When a man does not view women as means to self-centered ends, as objects to fulfill his sexual desires, he is able to treat them as equals, as friends and co-laborers. That is how Jesus treated women. For example, on the one hand, He disabused Martha of the notion that, as a woman, she was stuck in the kitchen while the men talked about God. On the other hand, He disciplined Mary as a woman among men, affirming that she had "chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:41).

With regard to sex, then, Jesus wants His male disciples to see and to treat women as He did. Jesus did not expect all His disciples to be celibate as He was (cf. Mark 1:30; 1 Corinthians 9:5). He did expect His married disciples to be faithful to their spouses, however. And He expected all His disciples to avoid sexual immorality, whether married or not. But more than that, He expected His disciples — male and female — to cultivate a purity of heart that makes sexual immorality (and other sins) increasingly unlikely (Mark 7:20-23).

This purity of heart in relationship to the opposite sex is the mark of true manhood.

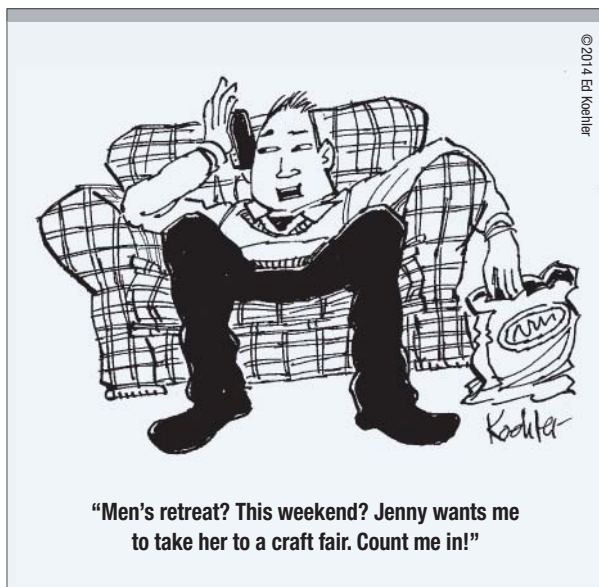
### THE WOMAN WHO HAD BEEN SUBJECT TO BLEEDING (Mark 5:21-43)

The third episode begins when a synagogue ruler named Jairus asked Jesus to come to his house and heal his daughter.

"[A] woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, 'If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.' Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

"At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, 'Who touched my clothes?' "There are two remarkable features to this story. First is the reversal of this woman's fortunes. According to Leviticus 15:25-33, this woman was ritually unclean as well as physically ill. This ritual uncleanness rendered her unfit for participation in temple worship, as well as literally untouchable, lest those who touched her — especially men — also be rendered ritually unclean. Her ill fortune was thus physical, spiritual, and social in nature. Jesus' healing touch restored her in body, spirit, and relationship.

The second remarkable feature is the closing of the power distance between a powerful Jesus and the powerless woman.



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"Men's retreat? This weekend? Jenny wants me to take her to a craft fair. Count me in!"

Normally, power distances the powerful from the powerless. Jesus' power, on the other hand, drew Him closer to the bleeding woman. Though touched on every side by the pressing crowd, Jesus felt His power go out only to her.

Drawing on this story, I would suggest that a mark of true manhood is the use of power to reverse fortunes and close power distances. In every society, men are powerful, especially vis-à-vis women and children. Sociologists refer to this as "male privilege" — the unearned advantages men have because of their gender. We can use our power to carve our male privilege in stone, or we can use it to build homes, churches, and societies that extend those advantages to all. The former is the way of the world, the latter that of the Son of Man, who "did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

The use of power in service to others is the mark of true manhood.

### CONCLUSION

Ask a Christian man how he defines success in life, and he should say, "By repentance and faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the kingdom of God."

As a Kingdom man, he will spend money generously, cultivate purity of heart sexually, and use his power in service to others. The great need of the present hour — in which we see so many men abusing money, sex, and power — is for Christian men to be Kingdom men and show the world a better way.

And thus we sing,  
"Rise up, O men of God!  
Have done with lesser things.  
Give heart and mind and soul and strength  
To serve the King of kings." ❏



**GEORGE PAUL WOOD**, director of Ministerial Resourcing for the Assemblies of God and executive editor of *Enrichment* journal, Springfield, Missouri

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LOVE YOUR

Wife

AS CHRIST  
LOVES THE  
CHURCH:

*What Paul Teaches Husbands  
About Marriage*

By FRED STOEKER

***SACRIFICIAL LOVE PRODUCES RADIANT WIVES,  
THRIVING IN ONENESS AND INTIMACY WITH THEIR HUSBANDS.  
HERE'S HOW MEN CAN HELP THEIR WIVES TO BE RADIANT.***







*As Pentecostal men, we understand that women are quite different* from us, but we do not believe these sexual differences preclude women from positions of leadership in the church. As Pentecostal husbands, however,

our unique egalitarian stance too rarely makes its way home from the pew, and a not-so-unique male dominance takes its place — barring our wives from filling their natural leadership positions at home, and preventing us from loving our wives as Christ loves His bride.

This is a grave, costly error on our part as husbands. After all, every wife has life-giving gifts that her husband simply doesn't have, gifts that are critical to the success of his call in marriage. If we allow our wives the freedom to lead through the insight and strengths of these gifts, we bless our homes, and our wives are radiant with joy. If we don't, we dim that radiance and rob ourselves of the rich blessings God intends for us to have as couples.

Let me paint a clearer picture of our error as husbands by using my wife, Brenda, as an example. When single, she was free to blossom in Christ. Whenever God touched her heart to do anything, she simply did it. When God asked her to give money for a missionary in need, she obeyed. She honored the Spirit's convictions without interference. She could rest when she needed to do so and pray when she desired. Before marriage, Brenda freely ministered to God without interference, using her gifts for His pleasure. She was free to avoid sin and to live purely, and when I met her, she was absolutely radiant in her life with Christ.

Yet I myself stole this freedom from her through my own arrogant leadership and male dominance. As so many husbands do, I destroyed the very radiance that drew me to her in the first place. Said simply, I sinned against Brenda by making far less room for her Christian gifts in our marriage than she had when single. Worse still, I forced her to sin, something no one could do before my "love" entered her life. Let me explain.

Brenda has the gift of discernment with families, a strong gift

that I do not have. When it comes to family relationships, she knows the good from the bad (Christianity stretches back at least four generations into every branch of her family tree), and what she saw in our in-law relationships with my family made her very uncomfortable. For example, after each visit with my father, I inevitably left his home angry or depressed because he constantly cut me down in Brenda's presence. Sometimes it took two weeks for my emotions to stabilize.

My dad was taking a toll in many ways on my young family. Before long, even Brenda began riding the same emotional roller

coaster after our visits. She was frightened.

"If I can be sucked into this emotional whirlpool," she said, "it will likely happen to the kids!"

The same thing was happening when we visited my mother and sisters. Alarms were blasting off in every corner of her spirit, and for good reason.

Brenda's strong gift of discernment was meant to bless and protect our marriage and to help me lead well as a husband and father. She knew she had to fight the emotional abuse coming from Dad and to stop the emotional chaos arising in the rest of my family. But I had lived with it so long I was blind to the danger. So I coldly shut off her gift and shut down her voice.

"A family doesn't have to be perfect like yours to be acceptable," I declared. "If you'd been raised in a regular home, you wouldn't be so weak in facing all this."

I chided her when she'd get emotional or depressed over these issues, slamming her heart with cutting words like, "You are such a spoiled brat. Adults have conflicts, and they need to be able to deal with them. You need to grow up."

In truth, she wasn't spoiled, and she wasn't weak at all. She was standing up for the convictions in her heart. To Brenda, subjecting her young family to my father's unfettered criticism and the emotional tirades of my mom and sisters were clearly sin to her, which should have made it a sin for me. Instead of making room for her gift of discernment, I blindly ridiculed her gift and loudly demanded that she do whatever I wanted her to do in regard to my family. In short, I was commanding her to sin. No wonder our oneness and intimacy died, and no wonder her radiance disappeared completely in this disturbing fog called "my leadership."

Brenda's ministry was raising godly children. It was her life's call, and in light of her gift and her obvious call, it should have been easy for me to honor her leadership at home, regardless of

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my “theology” on male leadership. After all, it only made sense. Again, she was born of four generations of Christian families. I was spawned from a string of dysfunctional ones. She knew what a godly, Christian home looked like. I didn’t. She had a clear, direct call from God to build one. While I wanted that, too, it was clear that we would get there only if I freed her to lead us in that area. Still, letting her lead in the areas of her gifts wasn’t easy and didn’t come naturally for me.

Why is that so hard for us as men? It’s not that the Bible is unclear. For instance, I’m commanded by Scripture to love Brenda as Christ loved the Church. How did Christ love the Church? In perfect kindness: “A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out” (Matthew 12:20). Christ doesn’t trample our emotions and gifts. But I trampled Brenda’s.

The Bible exhorts, “Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them” (Colossians 3:19). This command is no less important to God than, “You shall not murder.” Yet I always seemed to gloss over that sentence of Scripture.

I’m also commanded by Scripture to love Brenda sacrificially, to give up my life in costly ways to ensure her heart and gifts have room to blossom and thrive in our marriage (see Ephesians 5:25–27).

### SACRIFICIAL IN APPROACH

So the Bible is clear to us. To live out my egalitarian theology at home and establish radiance in Brenda’s life, I needed to learn to submit easily to my wife’s leadership in the arenas of her strengths and to sacrifice my own life at times for the sake of her gifts.

Many of us need to learn this, as radiant wives are rare. Statistics show that 84 percent of women feel they don’t have intimacy or oneness in their marriages, and a large majority of female divorcees say their married years were the loneliest years of their lives. Radiance is in short supply, and since the divorce rates are pretty similar inside and outside the church, we know that we Christian husbands are being no more loving or sacrificial than our secular counterparts, in spite of God’s promise.

What has happened? Are men just naturally this

heartless — even us Christian men? I don’t think so. I think Christian husbands are simply hung up on another portion of Scripture just two verses earlier, in Ephesians 5:23,24: “For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.”

That passage doesn’t sound very egalitarian at all, does it? It seems to say that the wife is to be subservient to an almighty, all-wise, male oracle of insight who has been given unassailable leadership rights. No wonder husbands are confused in marriage! In one passage we seem to be told that we have the one-up position in all our dealings with our wives and that our gifts and insights should be preeminent, and in the next passage we are told to give away our very lives for the sake of her gifts and insights, that we might produce radiant wives.

That passage has confused God-fearing Christian husbands into dropping their egalitarian stance on their wedding day for years, and that error is easily traced to a poor cultural translation of the word “head” in our current day. Let’s take a look at it.

Male dominance in marriage is as old as time, and it was especially evident throughout the Greco-Roman culture of Paul’s day. In that culture things were pretty straightforward. Wives were simply expected to obey their husbands, and couples adhered to defined, recorded household codes that instructed husbands on how to rule or govern their wives. Everyone did it that way.

God hated that and wanted to change it. The Lord’s principle of mutual submission, as expressed in Ephesians 5:21, was a stunning new paradigm for everyone on Earth, and it’s central to our egalitarian position as Christians: “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

These words were intended to upset traditional male dominance in our homes and bring the marriage relationship back to where God intended it to be from the beginning. In short, God challenged husbands to relate to their wives from a position of love, like His Son Jesus

**AS PENTECOSTAL HUSBANDS,  
OUR UNIQUE EGALITARIAN  
STANCE TOO RARELY MAKES  
ITS WAY HOME FROM THE PEW,  
AND A NOT-SO-UNIQUE MALE  
DOMINANCE  
TAKES ITS PLACE.**



Heather Cherie Photography

(continued from page 57)

did in relation to His bride, rather than from a position of power and domination.

So Paul wasn't writing to confirm the status quo of the day, but to tip it on its ear. However, most of us miss that message by a mile these days because of a simple translation issue between our two cultures. Consider this. When we read "the husband is head of the wife" in our world today, it appears to us that Paul is actually confirming the status quo of male dominance in marriage because of the way we currently define the word "head."



**ONCE A HUSBAND  
SEES HIMSELF AS THE  
SOURCE OF LIFE  
RATHER THAN THE GOVERNING  
CENTER, EVERYTHING CHANGES  
IN HIS MARRIAGE.**

Heather Cherie Photography

Because of our modern understanding of biology, we think of the head as the governing center of the body. After all, that is where all human decisions are made. We use the word in titles like "head coach" and "head of state" because these leaders cast the visions and mobilize their people to implement those visions. They are the governing centers of their organizations, the ones with the final say in everything. So when Paul declares the husband to be the head of the home, we naturally assume that husbands are to be the overarching governing centers of the home.

But that was not at all how the Ephesians read Paul's words. To them, the head didn't refer to the governing center. The head was considered the body's source of life, and for a very simple reason: Cut off the head, and the body dies. When Paul wrote that the husband was to be the head of the wife, the Ephesians understood instantly that Paul just blasted their marital status quo into shambles. The Christian husband was no longer to rule over his wife from a position of dominance, but rather love her as her source of life and as a sacrificial servant ensuring her gifts had the room to grow and blossom in their home.

#### **THE HUSBAND AS SOURCE OF LIFE**

Obviously, this phrase "source of life" makes all the difference when it comes to eliminating the confusion in our leadership roles as husbands. Let's insert the Greek definition of the word "head" into Ephesians 5:23–27 and look at

it again: "For the husband is the [source of life] of the wife as Christ is the [source of life] of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy ... to present her to himself as a radiant church ...."

This passage takes on a completely different tone now, doesn't it? The original sense of conflict between the concepts of "headship" and "sacrifice" now disappear. In this context, giving oneself up for a wife is simply a natural and necessary extension of being her source of life, something any Christlike leader should do to make room for his wife to grow and blossom in her marital relationship and in her relationship with God.

Once a husband sees himself as the source of life rather than the governing center, everything changes in his marriage. To give up my own rights and position for Brenda's sake suddenly made perfect sense to me as a leader. Our marriage soared, and Brenda's heart for me blossomed. As I honored her thoughts and convictions, she felt oneness with me, and I'd never felt stronger or more secure in my leadership. I was clearly still leading. I was just leading differently now — and more biblically. I could now easily yield my rights as leader for the sake of our relationship and for the sake of God's work and purposes in Brenda's life.

#### **GETTING IT RIGHT**

Sacrifice, especially in the sense Paul spoke of where I must yield my rights to honor Brenda's convictions and gifts, looked a lot easier on paper! I soon discovered that making room for Brenda's gift of family discernment meant far more than me simply sacrificing some time to hear her opinion on the matter without fighting and chiding her. It was one thing to admit that Brenda's gift of discernment in relationships was stronger than mine. It was quite another to give her gift real sway in my day-to-day decisions. It meant genuine sacrifice, and it cost me deeply in my family relationships to allow her insights to lead us to the kind of home we both wanted to have, to God's glory.

I found quickly that there are more important things than exerting my authority in my marriage relationship. You either sacrifice for her gifts as you do your own, or you don't. If you do, you get a radiant wife. If you don't, her light dims. This is true in the big and the small things.

As a lighter example, Sunday mornings became an argumentative mess during our child-raising years. To arrive at church on time, we had to leave the house by 9:45 a.m. I'd work my tail off, bathing, feeding, and dressing everything in sight. Invariably, I'd have us ready to go at the appointed time.

Brenda, however, was not a morning person — especially on Sundays, which she viewed as her one day of the week to take her time getting out of bed. No matter how early we set the alarm, we'd come to 9:45 with Brenda just getting around to curling Laura's hair. I'd stand in the kitchen with my arms crossed and foot tapping, glancing at my watch and glaring at

Brenda as she curled and twirled. I was so angry!

I knew I'd reached a fork in the road: I could either assert my authority and yell like crazy — or learn to curl hair. Finding the necessary patience would be a stretch for me, even with God's help. So I went with the irons.

With big hands and clunky knuckles, I knew I was in over

## When Sexual Sin Isn't Sexual

**A** handshake was never enough for Justin, as he'd just grab your hand and pull you in for a big hug. Warm and engaging, Justin wasn't a mere Christ-follower. He was a passionate lover of Christ.

That's why his phone call took me by surprise.

"I'm having some issues. Can you meet me at Starbucks next Tuesday?"

Since *Every Man's Battle* came out, "having some issues" usually meant "struggling with sexual sin."

Justin had been porn-free for years. His wife was crazy in love with him, both inside and outside the bedroom. What could be the problem?

"I don't believe it!" he began at Starbucks that day. "I'm trapped again! I step into my office at work most nights to catch up on paperwork, but now I'm slipping over to the porn sites, too. I haven't been watching trashy stuff. Nothing's changed. Yet here it is again. I feel like such a loser."

"How's your spiritual life?" I inquired.

"I'm not spending as much time in one-on-one worship with the

Lord, but I love God like crazy," he offered, perplexed.

Since that wasn't it, I asked the only other logical question left.

"Tell me, how is your business going?"

Justin later told me this question made him furious. *I've just poured out my heart in tears about my sin, and he's casually asking me about business?*

I knew what I was doing. I found he was practically bankrupt, as the business had taken an unexpected turn outside his control, and he only had two weeks left of cash reserve to feed his kids. Terrified, his sense of manhood was gone.

"Justin, I don't think you have a sexual sin issue," I said. "I think you have a financial trust issue."

He looked like I'd just dropped a coconut on his head.

I explained that a guy's natural language for intimacy with women is sexual. The foreplay of porn and masturbation provides a very real sense of intimacy and connection, and the orgasm brings a sense of manhood, dominance, and control, even though it is fleeting.

"That is a pretty strong draw to a frightened man who feels like a loser,"

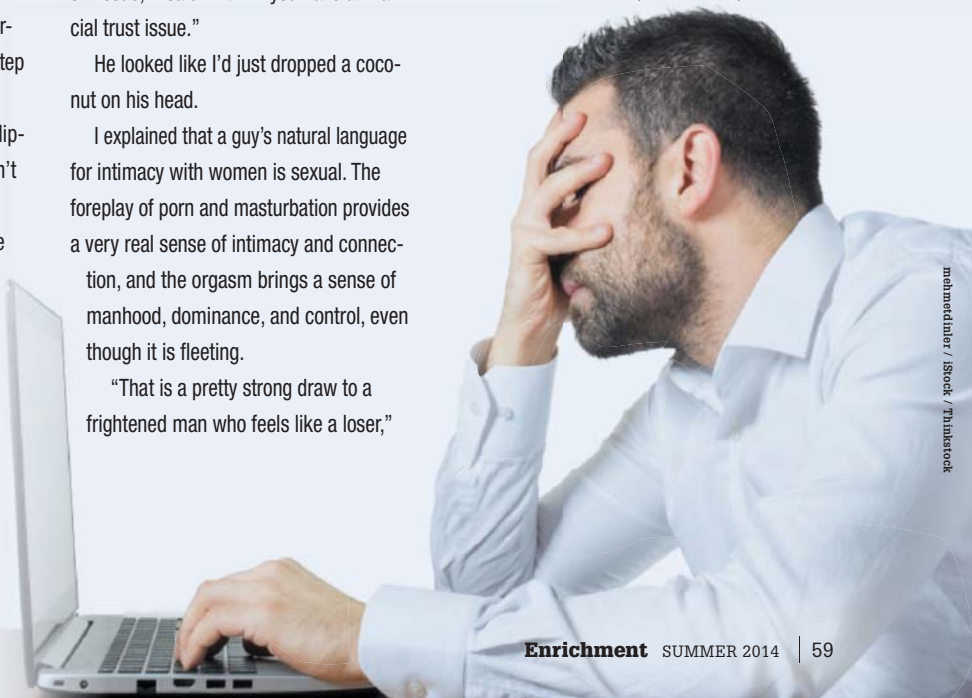
I said. "You thought this sexual sin came out of nowhere. It didn't. It came from your lack of trust, and you are salving your fear with porn."

The confusion was clearing.

"I've always given God my full trust in spiritual things, but because of my background, I've never trusted anyone with my finances but me. I've always shouldered the full responsibility alone."

I suggested he ignore the porn symptoms, and instead focus on that lack of trust in God. I told him to turn to God in prayer and one-on-one worship whenever that fear arose, rather than click to another computer screen. Within weeks, the sexual sin was gone. That's no surprise, because his sexual sin wasn't sexual in the first place. Justin was simply using his sexual apparatus to medicate the pain, rather than turning to God for healing.

**FRED STOEKER, Des Moines, Iowa**





## PROFILE

# Calling Men to Adventure

**C**rawling through mud in a cold, dark cavern. Dangling from a climbing rope high above the ground. Splashing through icy slush on a wilderness bike trail. Sharing a pre-dawn pot of coffee around a crackling campfire.

Such scenarios aren't typically associated with church, but they are part of a high-octane men's outreach at South Hills Assembly of God in Bethel Park, Pa.

AdventureMen ministers to guys through outdoor activities, such as cycling, mountain biking, fishing, hiking, camping, caving, rappelling, and ropes courses.

"There's nothing like experiencing Jesus when you're 60 or 70 feet up on ropes — or while getting the endorphins going cycling to the top of a hill," says Greg Nass, men's ministries leader at the church. "Just getting guys out there and being brothers to them is a great way to build friendships and start conversations."

Nass, a credentialed Assemblies of God minister, founded AdventureMen in 2009. An avid cyclist and outdoorsman, he says nature provides an ideal backdrop for breaking down barriers, forming bonds, and

discussing spiritual issues.

"We've found that when we get guys in these settings, the conversation just naturally goes to Christ," Nass says. "Outside the church, guys tend to be more real. They open up. It's all about sharing the good news of Jesus."

AdventureMen offers activities throughout the year that appeal to a wide range of male interests, from fly-tying seminars and golfing to hot rod building and motorcycle riding. The outings include prayer and Bible discussions. The group, along with several other churches in the region, also hosts an annual lakeside gathering

called AdventureFest. This event includes a chili cook-off, praise and worship, a church service, and water baptisms in the lake.

"It's like other men's retreats, except we do it outside," Nass says. "We usually sit around until after midnight, talking and sharing. A lot of these men go to church, but they're not conference-type guys. They like to be outdoors, so they'll come to something like this. It's also an easy way for a guy from church to invite his unsaved friend from his neighborhood or workplace to come out and be exposed to the gospel."

Other churches in the region and throughout the state are taking notice of the successful men's outreach at South Hills Assembly. More than a dozen congregations now operate their own AdventureMen groups. Nass says he hopes other churches around the country, both inside and outside the Fellowship, will follow suit.

"Ministry shouldn't be limited to the activities inside the church. We're called to be outside the church, fulfilling the Great Commission."

Nass says he ultimately wants men to discover that living for Christ is the greatest adventure of all.

"A lot of guys who love the outdoors are used to going there with a case of beer and some drugs," Nass says. "We're trying to create an environment where guys can pursue outdoor activities in the context of ministry and discipleship."

For more information, visit [adventuremen.org](http://adventuremen.org).

**CHRISTINA QUICK**, freelance writer,  
Springfield, Missouri



Nass

## LOVE YOUR WIFE AS CHRIST LOVES THE CHURCH: WHAT PAUL TEACHES HUSBANDS ABOUT MARRIAGE

(continued from page 59)

my head from day one. Laura liked the new arrangement even less, since I twisted her hair in unsightly ways and burned her ears. Ouch! Whenever I rounded the corner with a curling iron in my hand, she'd scream, "I want Mommy to do it! I want Mommy to do it!"

I challenged myself. "If every 14-year-old girl in America can curl her own hair and make it look great, then there's no reason why a 30-year-old man can't do the same."

Thankfully, practice makes perfect. In a few weeks under Brenda's close supervision, I upped my skill level to the point where I could actually meet her standards. I knew I'd finally arrived one fine Sunday when we ran into a friend in the church foyer, who exclaimed, "Laura, your hair looks so good! Your Mommy must have spent hours on it this morning."

Most importantly, I sacrificed for Brenda's sake and led from a position of love, rather than a position of dominance and anger. Church days were now a breeze, and Brenda's heart wasn't battered every Sunday morning on the way to the service.

As another example, Brenda has a strong gift of hospitality, but when our kids began to grow, they were demanding, busy, and constantly hungry. This cramped Brenda's style, often tightening her preparation time for guests. When she finally

got around to the house, it was at the last minute. There were carpets to vacuum and rugs to shake — things she said she couldn't get to because of the kids. I would arrive home from work to find her in a panic. Many of the chores fell on my shoulders during our last-gasp efforts to have everything "just so" when the guests arrived.

So I put my foot down. "Why do you do all this?" I demanded. "It's ridiculous! No one really cares about your little touches, and no one cares if the house is perfect. They're our friends, for heaven's sakes! If they can't take a little mess, let them eat elsewhere. Better yet, let them find new friends!"

Following one of my countless sermonettes, Brenda told me through tears, "I just can't invite people over anymore until the kids get older. If I can't do it the right way, I don't want to do it at all."

This was crazier yet. I didn't mean we shouldn't have friends over. I liked having company. "Brenda, are you telling me you'll deprive us or the kids of having their friends over simply because you can't do everything just right? Isn't that a bit extreme?"

"Fred, can't you see?" she said, with pleading eyes. "I don't expect you to care about this like I do, but having it all just

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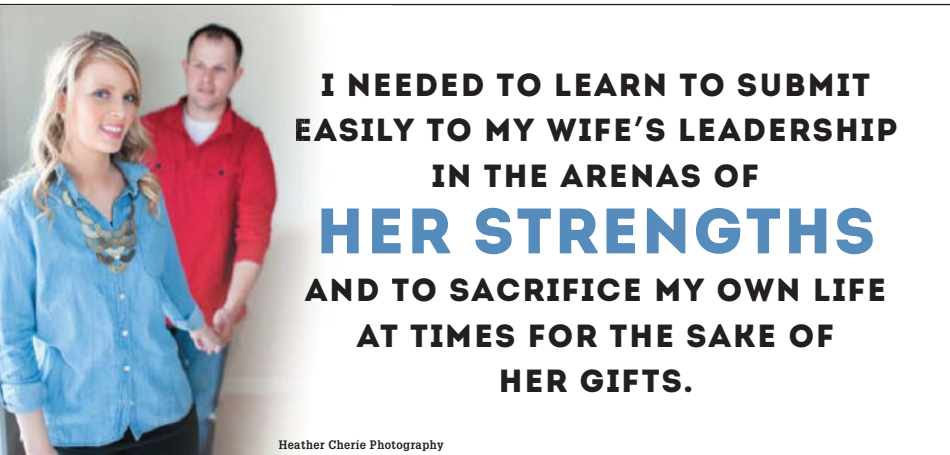


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(continued from page 61)



I NEEDED TO LEARN TO SUBMIT  
EASILY TO MY WIFE'S LEADERSHIP  
IN THE ARENAS OF  
**HER STRENGTHS**  
AND TO SACRIFICE MY OWN LIFE  
AT TIMES FOR THE SAKE OF  
HER GIFTS.

Heather Cherie Photography

right is important. Inviting friends over is a ministry to me.”

Ministry? This was the first time I'd heard that word connected with a Saturday night get-together for barbecued ribs and corn on the cob. The word pounded me between my eyes. Brenda saw this as a ministry? I finally began to get it, and when I did, I reconsidered how I'd been treating the situation. Normally, as the time neared for our guests to arrive, I half-heartedly helped with the kids, picked up around the house, or swept up outside. I slogged away at it until I could answer the doorbell and welcome our friends to come in. That's when all the prep work could finally stop.

**THERE'S MINISTRY HERE?**

I realized I had to put my foot down, all right — on me! I needed to make room for Brenda's gift of hospitality to blossom. If we were having friends over on a weeknight, I began arriving home from work an hour earlier to help around the house. On the weekends, I made sure I was home hours before our guests arrived. I shouldered the menial duties, such as vacuuming

and dusting, freeing Brenda up for her special touches. I washed pots and pans as the recipes moved through their stages. I shoveled snow off the sidewalk in the winter and swept the walkway in the summer. I started a fire in the fireplace stove and rearranged the couch pillows.

What a surprise! I soon noticed that Brenda and I became closer as I lovingly sacrificed and allowed her gift to lead when it came to hospitality in our home.

It's not that I've now been blessed with the same gifts as Brenda has or that I suddenly feel the same urgency that drives her to do all the things she does. I don't. It's just that I finally recognized she has broad

and valid ministries right in our home, and I began honoring those ministries and her gifts right alongside my own ministries and gifts.

Do you have a radiant wife? Sacrificial love produces radiant wives, thriving in oneness and intimacy with their husbands. The promise is clear. ■

Adapted from *Every Man's Marriage* by Fred Stoeker.



**FRED STOEKER** is a best-selling author of the *Every Man* series, chairman of Living True Ministries, and conference speaker who challenges men to become sexually pure and to reconnect in true intimate relationships with their wives. A graduate of Stanford University, Fred and his wife, Brenda, live in Des Moines, Iowa.

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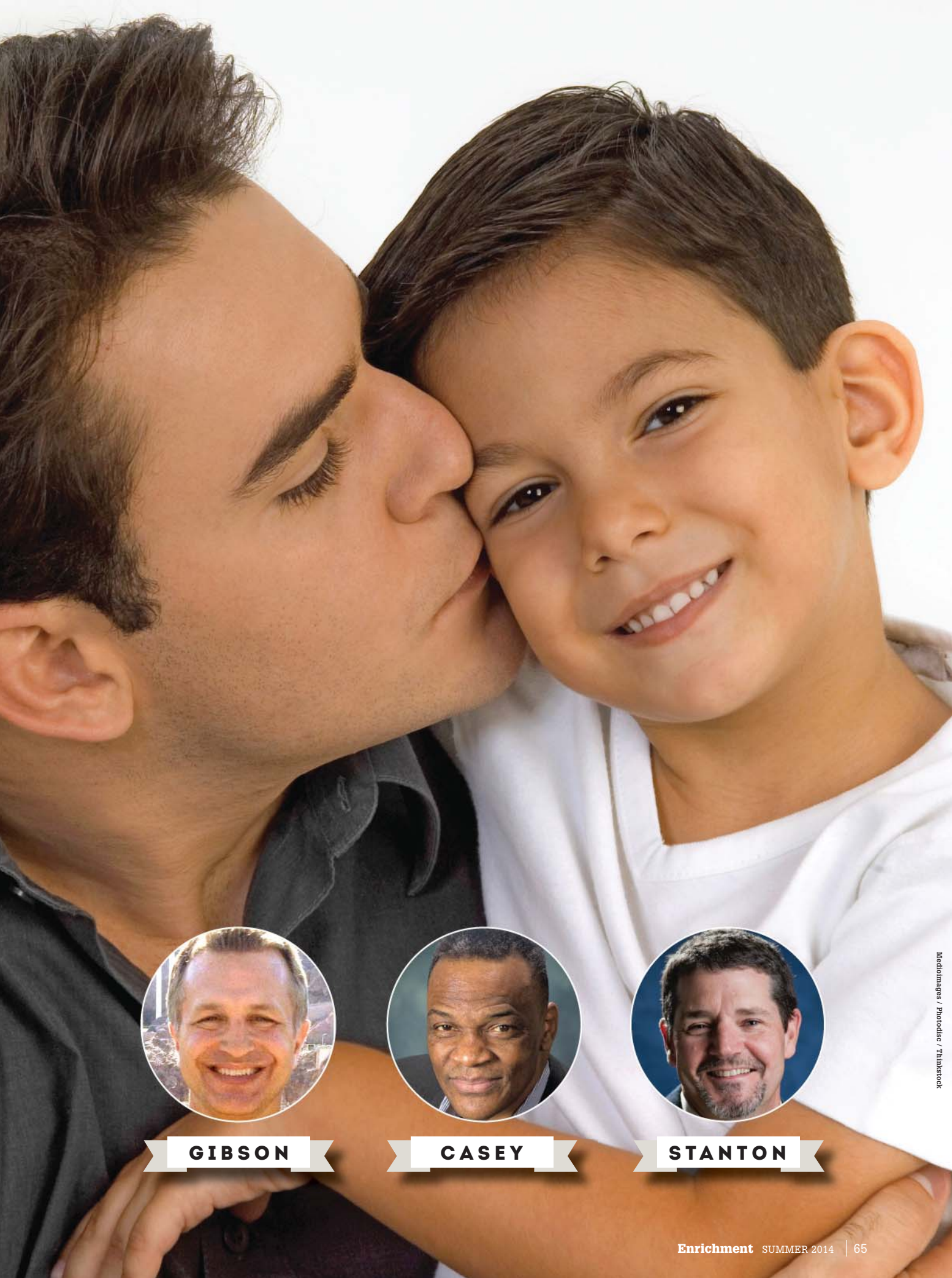
*Interview with*

**ROGER GIBSON, CAREY CASEY, and GLENN STANTON**



**F**ather knows best," according to the old adage. Yet today's culture seems to promote the idea that fathers know nothing. While a tragic number of men are missing in action where their families are concerned, others long to become the leaders and role models Christ calls them to be. How can dads reclaim their positions of godly influence? To

explore this complex and emotionally charged topic, George Paul Wood, Enrichment executive editor, interviewed Roger Gibson, senior director of Adult and Family Ministries for the Assemblies of God in Springfield, Mo.; Carey Casey, CEO of the National Center for Fathering in Kansas City, Mo.; and Glenn Stanton, director of Family Formation Studies at Focus on the Family in Colorado Springs, Colo.



**GIBSON**



**CASEY**



**STANTON**

Mediainmagas / Photodisc / Thinkstock

**S**o often interviews about fatherhood start off with the negative, and I thought it would be better to start off by laying some more positive foundations. **Why are fathers important?**

**CASEY:** God gave us the name *father*. Not belittling women or mothers in any way, but He gave us His name; He gave us His heart. In Malachi 4:6, the last verse in the Old Testament, God said He would turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers, or the land will continue to be cursed.

He is just so excited to be our Father. And dads really do love their kids and want to help them.

**STANTON:** The beginning point is that God reveals himself as Father, but as *His Father* [i.e., Jesus' Father]. As I often say, that's just not motif. That is actually who He is, and that's His heart toward us.

It takes a contribution from a male to create a new life, but fatherhood is so much more than that. And fathers contribute to the life of a child — boys and girls — in very unique ways, ways that moms simply cannot. That's not because of any shortcoming in moms, but God created us male and female to show forth His image. Divine characteristics exist in a woman's femininity and in a man's masculinity. Those are first demonstrated in creating new life, but also raising that new life to maturity — to real, full humanness — and helping little girls become great women and little boys, great men. Dads are just irreplaceable.

#### **What do fathers contribute to the spiritual well-being of their children?**

**GIBSON:** When we have our children, we desire for them to grow up and be lovers of Jesus. We always hear about helping a child be self-confident, but we really raised our family based on God confidence and John 15:5. We taught them you can't do anything apart from Him.

I really wanted my son to know what it means to become a fully devoted follower of Jesus. I want to raise up my daughter to become a Spirit-empowered woman and to know what a godly man looks like so she can expect that of the men in her life.

**STANTON:** Children, particularly our sons, need to see a dad who is strong and can take control of a situation. But when he approaches the Lord, he's also humble and respectful. And he's humble when he has to apologize to somebody. He's a servant.

Those are powerful sermons to our kids on so many levels. For the girls, it teaches them respect: "My dad respects me; he honors me; he respects other women. He respects my mom the most."

But for the son, it's teaching him how to be. And he wants to do it not so much because it's right, but he wants to do it because he saw his dad do it.

**THE BOTTOM LINE  
FOR DADS ...  
98 PERCENT OF IT  
IS JUST  
SHOWING  
UP.**

— STANTON

**In 1996, David Blankenhorn published *Fatherless America*. In that book, he wrote, "Fatherlessness is the most harmful demographic trend of this generation." We've talked about what fathers contribute to the overall well-being of their children physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. What harm does fatherlessness impose?**

**STANTON:** The research is large, diverse, and robust. In every important measure of child well-being for boys and for girls, fatherhood plays a very positive role.

A child who lives without a father is significantly more likely to live in poverty. Fatherlessness impacts graduation rates, school performance, psychological and physical well-being, criminal involvement, teen pregnancy, college attendance — and on and on it goes. Fathers play huge roles.

**CASEY:** And when you look at what's happening in a lot of our urban communities, where so many babies are born out of wedlock, you see poverty, a high dropout rate, and girls being pregnant as teenagers. So that's why we really have to battle and fight for fathers to be involved in their children's lives. Even if they're divorced, they are not off the hook.

Churches, as well, can step up. Men can provide father figures to children in their neighborhoods and communities.

**In the late 1960s, political leader Daniel Patrick Moynihan was probably the first person to identify this problem. But I think Blankenhorn spoke with sort of a landmark book. Has there been any improvement in the situation since Blankenhorn wrote, or has the fatherlessness crisis gotten worse?**

**STANTON:** In terms of numbers, it's crazy and sad. When Moynihan came out with his report in 1965 (and I would

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encourage people to go online and look up the Moynihan report) the out-of-wedlock childbearing rate in the African-American community was 25 percent. Now it's up to 75 to 79 percent. In the Caucasian community, it's around 29 percent. And the numbers continue to get worse.

The good news is the fatherless rate is not rising as fast as it has in the past. But we have to do something to turn these numbers around.

### **What are some practical ways Christian men can become better fathers?**

**GIBSON:** One of the greatest things we can do for our kids is have our home be a marriage-centered home. A dad needs to be sure his marriage is a priority and that his kids know his relationship with his wife is not only of utmost importance to him, but his commitment to her is for life — until death do us part.

Kids benefit from having a mom and dad who are happily married and in a relationship with God. Sons get to see how a husband treats his wife and honors her. Daughters get to see what a godly husband looks like.

And he is leading the home not only in loving his wife, but also in being a spiritual mentor in the home — a home that is sharing what it means to love God and to love others and as you love yourself. And those are the greatest commandments.

Another area that is really important for Christian men is serving. I'm a big proponent of family missions and going out and serving together. When the kids are serving and seeing dad leading and mom happy, it really does a lot for their spiritual growth.

### **What about Christian men who are, for instance, divorced from their children's mother or never married, and when they have become step-fathers through remarriage? What do those men need to keep in mind to be good fathers?**

**CASEY:** It can be a process of forgiveness and reconciliation. A blended family still needs to have that same priority of making sure that the ex-wife and the new wife are honored so the kids can again see that marriage is to be honored by all and that marriage is a good thing. God created and ordained marriage. So even if the marriage has been broken, kids still need to see that it is an honorable thing.

### **What can Christian men do to serve fatherless kids in their churches and communities?**

**CASEY:** Think about the greatness of what God set up in life. Number one: marriage, the institution and the covenant of marriage — before He ever made the Church. But then He made the Church for us to assemble together to learn from Him.

The divorce rate in America is just astronomical, which we all know. There are so many fatherless children, and those children are looking for love. They're going to look somewhere. If we're going to curtail fatherlessness in America, we have to look beyond our borders. The church has a great, great opportunity. And so we have to be about the community. We have to be about coming out of the four walls.

We have a program here at the National Center for Fathering called Watchdogs. Dads of students take one day out of the year where they're at their kids' school. And there are kids there that don't have a dad, but they see this man walking the halls, reading to his kids, things of this nature. So there are great opportunities for us to volunteer. That's what has to happen in America.

We don't have to spend a lot of money, but we have to be there to serve. I firmly believe the local church is the mechanism God wants to use to help the fatherless in our communities.

### **Should men be looking at particular institutions where they can really make a difference in the lives of kids, especially fatherless kids? Are there subtle biases against men being involved in elementary education or these other things?**

**GIBSON:** We need more men present where children are — healthy men. I really learned that when I was in

Uganda. I had a Ugandan man ask me, "Why do you men send women to do your work?"

What he was referring to is just being around to mold kids and children. More of us men really need to be present.

### **How can the church promote better fatherhood practices through its various ministries?**

**GIBSON:** For men to get involved, they need to feel needed. They need to feel that they're part of the solution. The number one

**I WANT TO RAISE UP  
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EXPECT THAT OF THE  
MEN IN HER LIFE.**

— GIBSON

## CALLING DADS BACK TO THE BASICS

(continued from page 67)

question men in church ask is: Now that you have me, where are you going to take me?

So in the spiritual development of a man's life — as his heart is developing more to be a reflection of Jesus — the church can set up programs, ministries, and opportunities where men are needed. I got the privilege of leading a mission trip. I went to Ethiopia five years ago, and it broke my heart to see the lack of men in Ethiopia. And what really got me was knowing that four out of every five orphans are orphaned because of poverty. There is a mom, and there is a dad, but dads are not around.

In Uganda, where the pastor asked me why American men send their women to do their work for them, we started a ministry called "Man Up and Go." The whole idea is just answering the call to go and love on the fatherless. When I first started Man Up and Go, I was hoping to have at least 12 guys step up to the plate so I wouldn't be embarrassed to have to cancel the trip. But my big prayer was to have 15 guys: "Lord, if we could get 15 guys, that would be awesome." God blessed us with 30 guys. We went from orphanage to orphanage, and widow to widow, and just loved big on the kids.

I really feel God did that. But when we started promoting the need, we said, "If you love to play, they just need someone to play catch, play with cars, and love on them."

Men signed up. I was amazed. So that's where we need to start doing a better job with recruiting Christian men. We need to see who is in need and let men know their help is wanted.

**CASEY:** I really believe that men have the goods. Of course the culture dictates many times that we're seen as buffoons — as if we don't measure up, we're absent. And so there's the negativity out there. I think from the pulpit we need to communicate positive messages and the great need of men or fathers to step up and to see that the priestly role we have is really needed — that we are somebody, and that we are the ones who are supposed to be the leaders.

And then, as we meet together, we need to encourage one another. When

**EVEN IF THE MARRIAGE  
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THING.**

— CASEY

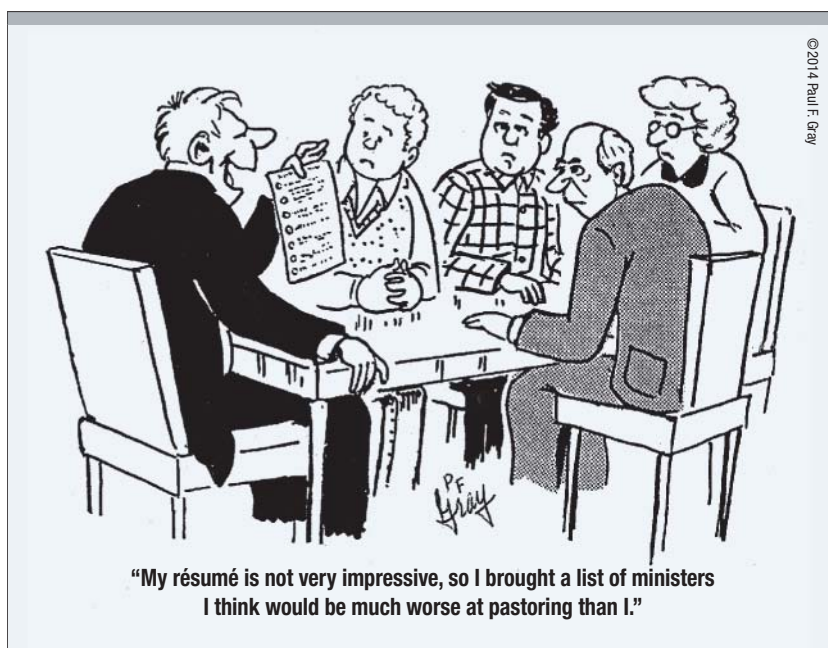
you lose a job, be in a group where other men can see it and say, "Hey, let me help you recreate yourself as far as a job."

If you are going through a divorce, don't hide it. There's shame and guilt that comes when there is a divorce, but other men can help support you. When somebody gets injured, you go see the trainer. They try to get you back on the field. And we need to do that as men and not let one another fall by wayside.

### Any final thoughts on fatherhood?

**STANTON:** The bottom line for dads to understand is 98 percent of it is just showing up. A dad just being on the field can make all the difference in the world. My dad was pretty involved in our lives, but it was typically on his terms, doing what he wanted to do. But one of the best memories I have is every two weeks, we would cut the yard, edge, clean up, and he would take us over to the 7-Eleven, me and my brothers. He would get us all Slurpees, and we would go back home and sit under the tree and cool off and just talk.

Now my dad didn't think that was any golden fatherhood moment for him, but it was rich for us because we just got his time. It wasn't built around anything "special." It was just being with him. And you know, it's not rocket science. It's just being there and giving your kids your time. ■



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**TODAY'S FATHERS CAN SPEAK  
LIFE-GIVING BLESSING INTO  
THEIR CHILDREN'S LIVES  
AND OBSERVE OUTCOMES WITH  
ETERNAL SIGNIFICANCE  
BY FOLLOWING THESE BIBLICAL  
PRINCIPLES.**

A

**FATHER'S**

**BLESSING:**

*What Scripture Teaches Dads  
About Raising Children*

By **MARK ENTZMINGER**

with **SCOTT HARRUP**



*In one of Scripture's most poignant family narratives*, the patriarch Jacob (also known as Israel) is dying in Egypt following a tumultuous life lasting well over a century. He gathers his sons around his deathbed and speaks

truth into their lives (Genesis 49:1-28). His words are honest, proclaiming both God's blessing and, in some cases, His discipline: "He blessed them, giving each the blessing appropriate to him" (verse 28).

The Book of Genesis frankly portrays the family dynamics within the formative clans of God's chosen nation. Jacob's spectrum of fatherly evaluation reflected decades of observed milestones in his sons' lives, both praiseworthy and shameful. Jacob's own devious plotting had robbed his brother, Esau, of father Isaac's blessing. Isaac, and Abraham before him, both lived as men of faith on feet of clay.

But this Genesis narrative points today's dads to a wonderful truth: God-honoring fathers can become conduits for life-changing divine influence in their children's lives. Genesis serves as the opening crack in a biblical doorway to God-directed influential fatherhood. (See the sidebars for suggestions geared to sons and daughters.) As with Jacob, today's fathers can speak life-giving blessing into their children's lives and observe outcomes with eternal significance.

That blessing goes far beyond words, even prayerful words. It encompasses all that a man is and touches all that a boy or girl will become.

### PRESENCE

Our culture would deceive a dad into believing his presence can be virtual and still be life-shaping. But tweets, instant messages, and Facebook "likes" will never replace the flesh-and-blood connection God designed between dads and kids. Consider Deuteronomy 6:6,7: "These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."

Every clause in these sentences speaks of a personal connection,

and the full picture is of interaction throughout the day. Yes, careers and school schedules and extra-familial relationships all place demands on our day, but when our goal is to connect in person at every opportunity, those opportunities multiply.

Too many parents seek to apply this passage through a false segmentation of their day. "As long as we do something in the morning, and as long as we do something at mealtime..."

That's a great place to start, but learn to grow this into every aspect of your life. Deuteronomy paints a picture of your kids watching you every step of the way — from the time you

get up until the time you go to bed at night.

Because kids are imitators, we have to live the Word. We must live our faith out loud, so our kids will catch it. It's not about, "Oh, now that we're in the car together, I have to make sure we have our Bible talk."

Rather, when I'm in the car and something happens, I need to be sure my faith and God's Word are in me to the extent they come out whether in conversation or in an emergency.

The first time you hear yourself in your children as they say the things you say, you will almost certainly react in shock: "I didn't know he picked that one up."

But Deuteronomy insists you should never be surprised by your children's mimicry. They are watching you 24/7, whether you are being intentional or not. Deuteronomy is saying: Be intentional about it, and let your faith come out of you naturally.

### MODELING

"He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands" (Psalm 78:5-7).

What exactly were the "statutes" God decreed for His people? Moving beyond the requirements of the sacrificial worship system, they were the details of daily living. So, in order to truly teach God's Law to the next generation, parents needed to heed the requirements of the Law themselves in their daily work and recreation.

Dads need to live in such a way that children grow up knowing God and are soaking in everything God has for them. This has nothing to do with legalism or self-righteousness but with a New Testament focus on living as Jesus lived and pointing our children to Him by our example. By doing so, we create a chain of godly living from generation to generation.

Our oldest son, Colby, has really caught this concept. He seeks

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to befriend the kids who don't have a strong faith or a strong home life, and we pray with Colby for them regularly. One of his first friends in school was being raised without the knowledge of God, and when Colby gave a Bible to his friend, his friend's parents made the boy return it. It was a stark but simple lesson in the influence even our children can be for Christ.

I am privileged to minister today through the influence of three Assemblies of God generations before me. My great-grandparents helped to start the church I grew up in, First Assembly of God in Jamestown, N.D. My grandmother was one of the first Sunday School teachers. She taught an elementary class for more than 60 years straight and was a Missionettes leader as well. My parents met at Trinity Bible Institute, and my dad pastored a German church for a couple of years, around the time I was born. He and Mom have remained very active in the church. Dad was even my children's pastor before that title was common.

They modeled ministry and a vibrant walk with God before me, and I retain so many of their life examples in my mind and spirit as I serve the children of our Fellowship today.

### BLESSING

When a godly father's life is consistent with his profession of faith, his words take on enormous power over a child's destiny. Verbally blessing a child is key to raising him or her with adequate spiritual safeguards.

Blessing your children will do more than impact their lives. Something dynamic also happens in the life of a parent. Yes, blessing my sons does great things in them, but when I look at Colby and Cadyn as God's blessings in my life, and when I speak blessing over their lives, I view them differently. They're not a burden to me. They're not in the way. They're not "problem children." They become measureless reservoirs

## God's Word and Your Son

**"F**athers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

Many biblical principles tie into parenting both genders, but there is an element here particularly suited to fathers in dealing with their sons. It's far too easy for male competitiveness to erode a father's good judgment in relating to an emerging man. Dads can be rough and tumble, but they should never be bullies, emotionally or physically.

"The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents" (Genesis 25:27).

Here's a great insight in today's world where society constantly assaults gender roles. Dads can train their sons to take on the biggest outdoor challenges, as well as train them to help around the

house, and both aspects of life connect with biblical example.

"Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them" (Psalm 127:4,5).

There is a God-given element of masculinity that is protective. The metaphor in this passage takes full note of the strength of loyal children, with a hint of the value of strong sons. Teach your sons to exemplify sacrificial love and to be ready to lay down their lives for the sake of a mom, a sister, or anyone threatened by evil.

"To Timothy my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord" (1 Timothy 1:2).

Here's the central truth to raising a son: Make it your supreme goal to ensure he becomes your "son in the faith." If you give him everything in the world, but lose his soul, you have suffered irreparable loss.

"O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you — O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Samuel 18:33).

Here's one of the most heart-wrenching fatherly quotes in all of Scripture. But it speaks to the very soul of what godly fathering is all about. A godly dad will make any sacrifice to rescue a struggling son. For David, Absalom was beyond rescue. For you, this plea on behalf of your son might make all the difference.



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## A FATHER'S BLESSING: WHAT SCRIPTURE TEACHES DADS ABOUT RAISING CHILDREN

(continued from page 73)

of joy deeply injected into every part of my being.

During my years of ministry, I have heard and seen so many things in the home that indicate a mom and dad don't have their hearts in the right place to even be capable of speaking true blessing. They're looking at their children as an inconvenience, as a financial expense, as obstacles to fulfilling their own dreams.

If I could really put an exclamation point on a truth for today's fathers, I'd say, "Dad, get your heart focused on your child as a blessing to be stewarded, not a project to be managed."

When you steward what God has put into your children's hearts and help them reach their greatest potential in Him, you carry them to a much higher degree of success and significance than you ever will by forcing your own dreams onto them.

I have sensed a deep gift of blessing from my parents throughout my life, and as recently as my most recent ministry transition. When we moved from our district ministry in South

Dakota to serve at the National Office in Springfield, Mo., they said, "We really would like you to be closer to home, but we value God's call on your life more than having you nearby."

That's a blessing. That's saying, "I'm releasing you. I'm stewarding what God's put inside you."

I want that for Colby and Cadyn. If I steward what God has put in their hearts rather than focus exclusively on managing them through discipline, obedience, and compliance, it changes the conversation. It transforms my parenting experience.

Does this mean there is no room for instruction and discipline? Certainly not. You can bless remotely, but you can't parent remotely. To merely bless without spending time with your child is as empty as the blessing the apostle James described: "Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical

## God's Word and Your Daughter

**H**e settles the childless woman in her home as a happy mother of children" (Psalm 113:9).

Whether or not your daughter chooses to marry, you can give her a remarkable gift if you keep the power of her potential to influence others in focus throughout her upbringing. As you grasp her potential to shape future generations, you will dedicate yourself to passing along the wisdom and spiritual commitment she will need.

"Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight" (1 Peter 3:3,4).



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The exploding sensuality of our culture lends a cautionary strength to this passage. This is not a call for severity but for a sense of priority. Raise your daughter to prioritize her inner beauty and dedication as a follower of Christ even as you help her steward her outer beauty. Stay close to her growing up (father-daughter dates are great) so that she learns how a godly man respects true beauty and would never take advantage of it.

"Who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as

this?" (Esther 4:14).

Your daughter needs to know God's plan for her should never be limited by her gender. As she discerns her "royal position" within His time, she should have you as her greatest supporter. Be the wise Mordecai who counsels her to greatness.

"One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. 'If you consider me a believer in the Lord,' she said, 'come and stay at my house.' And she persuaded us" (Acts 16:14,15).

Yesterday's "dealer in purple cloth" could be today's Fortune 500 executive. In a world that rightly encourages women to achieve greatness, help your daughter also submit herself as "a believer in the Lord" who makes a commitment to partner with other servants of God in fulfilling the Great Commission and becoming all God has designed her to be.

## PROFILE

# Growing Stronger Families

**T**he men's ministry at Bethany Assembly of God in Agawam, Mass., is popular among a surprising segment of the congregation: the women.

"The wives are very supportive of it," says Tim Reed, executive pastor and men's leader at the church. "We encourage them to make sure their husbands come — and their sons, too. We definitely get the blessing of the women because they recognize this is having a positive impact on the whole family."

The church, led by senior pastor Richard Adams, has seen marriages restored, families made whole, and lives dramatically transformed as men lead one another to an encounter with God.

"It's those relationships they build with men that allow them to share their hearts, be

vulnerable with other men, and really have a support network," Reed says. "We have an atmosphere of openness, honesty, and reality, where men can say, 'Here's the real me.' That's

brought a vibrancy to the men of this church to be real and not hide behind that facade that most men hide behind — acting one way in church and another way out in the world."

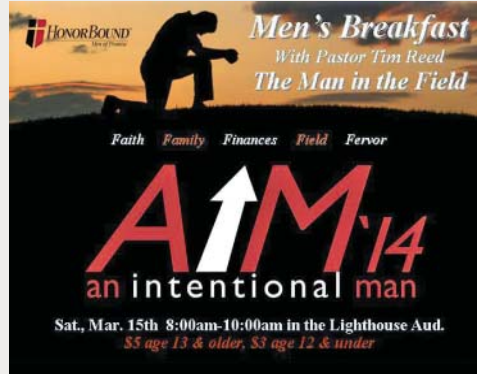


**Reed**

Small groups are the heart of the ministry. The groups meet weekly, biweekly, or monthly, offering basic discipleship for new believers and in-depth Bible study for seasoned Christians. One group is composed mostly of motorcycle riders.

Bethany also hosts a monthly men's breakfast and organizes service projects for men.

Reed says the focus of the church's ministry to men is helping each man become a godly influence in his family, church, and community.



He says that begins with a willingness to receive guys and care about them just as they are.

"They can open up about who they are and what

they're going through, as rough and sinful as it may be," Reed says. "Of course, we're not here just patting each other on the back for sins. We're helping one another overcome sins in an encouraging, relational setting. We let them know they can find the victory over these things that have plagued them throughout their lives."

Reed says the approach is creating ripple effects felt throughout the congregation.

"The guys are not just sitting in the pew and doing the Sunday morning thing anymore," Reed says. "They're growing spiritually. People are talking about it in the hallways and in our fellowship times. These relationships are building accountability and making a real difference in the church, in the community, in families, and in the body of Christ."

**CHRISTINA QUICK,**  
freelance writer, Springfield, Missouri

needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" (James 2:15-17).

I might paraphrase and say, "Blessing by itself, if not accompanied by personal investment and prayerful guidance, is dead."

## INSTRUCTION

"Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching" (Proverbs 1:8).

Instruction founded on God's Word will touch on any and

all of a spectrum of subjects. But the key is continuity. I'll use just one concept as an example. One of the things Christie and I began working through with our sons very early was the concept of trust — that the more trust you have built, the more freedoms you are allowed as a result.

"When we ask you to do something, and you do it, that builds trust. And when we ask you to do something, and you don't do it, that breaks down the level of trust."

Colby and I were recently having a discussion on a

## A FATHER'S BLESSING: WHAT SCRIPTURE TEACHES DADS ABOUT RAISING CHILDREN

(continued from page 75)

completely different issue, and it was as if a lightbulb switched on in him. "Oh, I get it," he said. "It's like when I do this, it's building that trust back up."

He had not been following the rules of the road when riding his bike. "This is important," I insisted, "because when I see you following the rules of the road with a bike, it helps me know one day I can trust you with a car."

But what do you do when your instruction is ignored, or when compliance is only marginal? Discipline becomes necessary, and too often discipline is misapplied.

### DISCIPLINE

The key to godly discipline lies in your motivation. You have to distinguish between disciplining because you want your child to live up to your expectations or disciplining with their best interest for their future as your focus. Admittedly, the lines can be blurry. It's easy to think you're focused on their best interests when you're really very self-interested.

Many times our ego robs us of godly motivation in disciplining our children. I don't want people to think I'm a bad parent when my kid acts up at the restaurant. Although what they're doing isn't necessarily bad, it's embarrassing. So what happens in my child's spirit if I discipline harshly just because I don't want to be embarrassed?

Colby was about 3 when a pastor friend at a General Council offered to take us out to Ruth's Chris Steak House. We had never been. We were sitting there with Colby and our friend's son, who was about the same age. The boys were behaving fairly well; they weren't being obnoxious. But they were active at that age, and we certainly felt the eyes.

One person made a point to come nearby and say to the dining room host in our hearing, "I'd like to be seated in the non-children's section."

To discipline our child because a 3-year-old can't behave in a grown-up environment is the wrong motive. Sometimes, and perhaps more frequently than we realize, we act on the wrong motive.

But when our motive is prayerfully addressed, we cannot shy away from identifying boundaries. And the best boundaries to communicate are those outlined in Scripture. We can help our children understand when they have crossed over those boundaries and when it is appropriate that we are disciplining them. In the end, right motivation behind loving acts of discipline, in connection with God's system of boundaries, creates a parenting dynamic of immeasurable impact.

### A FATHER'S BLESSING

Dads who commit to bringing up their children "in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4) — through presence, modeling, verbal blessing, instruction and discipline — create a channel of divine favor into those young lives. And that channel flows in both directions. A father's blessing carries the additional promise of God's favor on the father himself.

It brings a godly dad boundless joy to observe a son or daughter digging deep into a relationship with God. The spiritually nourished child who grows into a mature and fruitful member of the body of Christ will multiply the father's influence through an ever-widening circle of touched lives.

Though Jacob's deathbed blessing of his sons was bitter-sweet, the full record of his influence through their lives fills the balance of Scripture and will continue to be written large in eternity. So, too, will the complete narrative of the generations to come that can be shaped by godly fathers today. ■



**MARK ENTZMINGER**, senior director for Assemblies of God Children's Ministries, Springfield, Mo.



**SCOTT HARRUP**, managing editor, *Pentecostal Evangel*, Springfield, Mo.



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# FRIENDSHIP:

## THE BOND OF BROTHERS

By **WES YODER**

*MODERN AMERICAN MEN, INCLUDING MANY CHRISTIAN MEN,  
HAVE GOTTEN STRANDED SOMEWHERE SHORT OF HEALTHY,  
LIFE-GIVING FRIENDSHIPS WITH OTHER GUYS.  
HOW CAN DETACHED MEN BUILD FRIENDSHIPS AND  
ENJOY A RICHER, DEEPER LIFE?*

*HERE ARE PRACTICAL WAYS  
YOU CAN DEVELOP LIFELONG FRIENDSHIPS AND  
HELP OTHER BROTHERS DISCOVER THE LIFE-GIVING  
PRESENCE OF JESUS AND HIS FRIENDS.*







**N**early 18 years before my father died, he confessed sins that nearly destroyed him when he was younger. Like a typical guy, he kept them

well hidden. Then, barely able to speak, in the presence of his family, our aging father showed us what a real man does when he finds courage to tell the truth about himself. I have never seen a man in deeper sorrow.

Growing up in a kind yet stern home, I, too, learned to hide my sins. Long after I was free enough to talk about them with others, I cringed at the thought of Dad finding out. A year after his confession, we were riding together in his little blue pickup truck on his tool-sharpening route. It was the end of the day, the end of my hiding, and our new beginning.

"Since you had the courage to confess your sins to us, would it be OK, Dad, if I confessed mine to you?" I asked.

I had long ago been forgiven by God, and so was he, so what we needed that day was not forgiveness. Instead, we needed honesty to say we had failed, and compassion to transform our sorrow into never-ending father-son friendship.

Modern American men, including many Christian men, seem to have gotten stranded somewhere short of healthy, life-giving friendships with other guys. Why? What are we hiding? What did Jesus show us and tell us about this slippery topic that seems easier for women, yet so very difficult for men? How can detached men build friendships and enjoy a richer, deeper life?

#### HOW'S THE WEATHER AT THAT GAME?

The limits many guys set for themselves for conversation and friendship often go no further than shallow chatter about work, weather, and sports. You can talk all day about these topics and never once say a thing about yourself. It's safe until it's not!

"How's it going, John?"

"Great."

"How's your job? You still doin' sales?"

"Yep. Not bad. Hanging in there."

"Can you believe this weather?"

"Yeah, it's really nice. Can't believe how hot it's been. One of the worst summers ever."

"You going to the game today?"

And so it goes. Shallow. Mindless. A slow and torturous death-march for men. Please spare me! Does anyone really care how my golf game is coming along or, except for the momentary thrill of the win, what teams won their games on Monday night? Did you ever wonder why the last conquest for many American men seems to be someone else's game down at the coliseum? Why do young sports heroes dominate so much of the talk all around us? How can we keep our playfulness, yet leave our game addictions behind?

#### DANGER: ISOLATION WILL SHORTEN YOUR LIFE!

Perhaps we should ask ourselves this: Why did Jesus have so many friends? Why do we, and so many of our leaders, have so few? Jesus came to "un-shrink" our world, to infuse our shrunken existence with His astonishing life. Did you know that, according to some studies, a lack of friends can actually shorten a man's life as much as smoking 15 cigarettes a day and is more harmful than obesity and lack of physical exercise?! If you're one of the brothers who can't name more than a few guys you trust — men with whom you can share your joys and deep sorrows — please stick with me for a few moments.

When the Greeks came wanting to see Jesus, to examine for themselves whether He was one of the gods come down to earth, He ignored their tourist attraction mindset and remarked that unless a seed falls to the ground and dies, it remains alone (John 12:24). This seems to sum up where many of us get stuck. We'd like to see this amazing fellow from heaven, but we don't have a clue what it means to be friends with Him. We don't want to be the seed that falls to the ground and dies. We don't want to do anything that looks like failure, so we act as though we don't fall down and pretend we don't fail. We're afraid expressing too much passion about anything, especially about Jesus, will be viewed by our peers as less than manly. So we direct our need to express our

**WHY DID JESUS HAVE SO MANY FRIENDS? WHY DO WE, AND SO MANY OF OUR LEADERS, HAVE SO FEW?**

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deep soul-thirst into enthusiasm for yet another ball game. We don't want to follow Jesus into the hard places that require our bitterness and unforgiveness to die, and so we remain alone.

What's a man to do with that? Where's the friend who can help me look past myself and see why the other guy might have hurt me? What if I perceived the pain behind the conflict and had compassion for my enemy in his sorrow, which looks so much like fear, competitiveness, and self-sufficiency?

### NO MAN CAN ESCAPE THE SORROWS OF LIFE

A friend who betrayed me in business came to me nine years later to ask whether it had taken longer to get out of the debt he stuck me with or to get over my anger toward him. I told him the Lord provided a new client that helped me retire the debt in 18 months but that it took me nearly three years to forgive him. I asked him to forgive me for holding a grudge against him so long. Years after the betrayal, we again see each other as friends, do all we can to help each other succeed in our separate businesses, and pray for each other.

Perhaps you, too, are stuck on the end of your own sword

because of all your disappointment and hurt — the sword that says you must protect yourself because no one else will. But is it realistic to believe no one other than you cares — not even God? Betrayal can create a sense of isolation and loneliness, but those emotions belie the truth.

Jesus told His disciples that they had not chosen Him, but He had chosen them. The obvious truth is that He had chosen them for himself, but He had also chosen them for each other. Yet one of them was a betrayer. How comforting that Jesus did not always choose perfect, wise, wealthy, or powerful people to be His friends. Instead, He chose guys like you and me. When you confront the truth about yourself, you will discover (as I have) that not only have you been betrayed by those you trusted, but you have also betrayed those who trusted you. Ouch!

And here we have the very foundation of Christian friendship: truth about who we are. Such truth brings us face-to-face with ourselves so we can present our faces — who we really are, as C.S. Lewis wrote — to each other. Jesus made this principle exceedingly clear when He said true God worshippers “must worship in the Spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). Do you realize what an amazing definition of friendship this is? How



## Dinner and Conversation Questions

Use one question or set of discussion prompts each evening, and ask each man to join the conversation.

1. What is the most surprising thing that has happened in your life?
2. Tell us the story of your father. What do you admire in him? In what ways do you not want to be like your father? Did he love you? Hurt you? How or why?
3. The fears that come to a man in the “tough years” are immense. What does

God want to accomplish in you when life is filled with struggle and sorrow? What is the greatest sorrow of your life? What is your greatest fear right now?

4. What gives you joy? What is your deepest need right now in this season of your life?
5. A man's *entire* story is important! Spend an evening telling your life stories. How is choosing to reveal only our strengths to others wishful thinking about our true identity?
6. Why are confession and forgiveness the keys to enjoying your manhood and making life the adventure God designed it to be for you? Which is worse for you: bitterness, unforgiveness, and a shroud of secrecy regarding your sins and sorrows; or the risk of opening your heart and being wounded again? Why?
7. Do you believe God loves you all the time as a son? What lies or half-truths

do you accept as the truth about you? Can you discern whether a thought has a good or evil origin?

8. What makes your marriage strong? What makes it weak?
9. How has pornography affected your view of women?
10. Spend an evening telling stories about your mothers.
11. Take time at the dinners around your table to have each man tell the story of his life, and let each man who attends know you care about him. Trust that the Holy Spirit will use you, that God cares for each of you more than you do, and that deep friendships with Jesus at the center are His plan for restoring and healing each brother, including you.

WES YODER

For additional questions see the online version of this article ([ej.ag.org/bondofbrothers](http://ej.ag.org/bondofbrothers)) or scan the QR code on page 80.

## FRIENDSHIP: THE BOND OF BROTHERS

(continued from page 81)

can we be the friends God intended if our friendships are not grounded in the Spirit and in truth? In fact, as Christians, why do anything that is not rooted in the Spirit and in truth?

But many guys just don't know where or how to start. Isolation has become a way of life (or half-life). Shallow conversations with brothers rule the day — and also our hearts.

### FRIENDSHIP REQUESTS THE HONOR OF YOUR PRESENCE

What follows are practical ways you can develop lifelong friendships and help other brothers discover the life-giving presence of Jesus and His friends.

If you know yourself, you know every other man in the room. Remember that! You are not 100 percent familiar with his unique set of circumstances, but you know him. So get to know yourself, or rather, admit to yourself exactly who you are. The inner voices of your silent life lie to you. They tell you you're alone, that you're the only guy who feels this way, and that you should be filled with guilt and shame. Wrong! Every man in the room has the same stuff, the same sin, and the same hopes and desires at the very core. We'd like our life to matter, and we're desperate to be loved and not alone, rejected, or misunderstood. Acknowledge who you actually are, and destroy the secret within you by finding another brother who will listen and share his own story. These are the first steps toward freedom and deep friendships.

If you're stuck in the shallows or continue to have clumsy conversations with other men, develop and keep some good questions handy for pushing past those awkward encounters.

"Jack, I've known you a long time, but I've never heard you talk about your dad. What was he like?"

Or, "What's the most surprising thing that has ever happened in your life?"

Don't be a professional "interviewer," but do learn how to ask good questions, and be willing to share your story, too. Don't try this unless you actually care about your brother. Remember, you're showing up in the Spirit and in truth.

Write down the names of the six men who will carry your coffin. I know, that's a little morbid, right? Or is it? Will these brothers carry you because they know you and love you, or because they feel sorry for your wife? Next to their names, write down three or four things you appreciate and respect about them. Then ask yourself whether they know how much you appreciate them. Invite them to dinner around your table and plan a night where you all share your stories — and where you let them know why they mean so much to you.

Have a dinner every four to six weeks for several guys with whom you want to build deeper friendships. Keep talk about sports, work, and weather to a minimum. Don't make the primary focus of your group confession of sin, but if a brother confesses sin when you are together, don't hang him out to dry. Confess yours, and pray for the healing you both need. Watch God do some amazing things in those sacred moments. Our Dinner and Conversation group has met almost monthly for nearly nine years.

What should you do if one of your friends wants to invite a brother you don't know or don't care to be with? Let him come. You'll be amazed to discover you can become friends with almost any man who is willing to be honest about his life.

Some churches really "get it" about men. Sadly, some do not. Ask the other guys you know where they are finding rich and meaningful life together. Get off the couch, and go join them! Take along your newfound commitment to living in the Spirit and in truth. (I know I've mentioned this three times already, but it's that important.)

Think about others. Once you start building this core of friends around your dinner table, seriously consider spending a week working together at an orphanage in Haiti or some other needy place. Or start with the needs in your nearby inner city. You will be amazed at the depth of community that comes, not just from conversation, but when you get down in the dirt of this world to help others. Take a night to serve the men at your local rescue mission, and when you do, talk with the brothers there. Their needs and yours are very similar. Everyone needs a friend. Everyone needs friendship with Jesus and His friends.

Watch for the points of need and places of sorrow in the lives of the men around you. Don't be afraid to *be* a friend to them. Ask what you can do to lighten their load or bear some of their burdens. Look for practical ways you can help. My friend, B.J., went to Alcoholics Anonymous with a buddy almost every day for 15 months straight until his friend was



clean and free of his addiction. Friendship can get messy and costly, but the rewards always exceed the investment.

Above all, don't be afraid. Pray for each other, and do not be discouraged. Realize the awareness of your need for deeper friendship is the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. I can assure you the Holy Spirit is doing this not only in you but also in the hearts of men all across this nation and around the world. I am thrilled to see this hunger and thirst for spiritual friendship that is rooted and grounded in the presence of Jesus, who is with us and refuses to make of us His first orphans.

Take a fresh, new look at Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. What did He do with men? What did He declare as His purpose for us? His words, "I came that they may have

life, and have it to the full" is one of the most encouraging truths I know (John 10:10). I am dismayed at how long it has taken me to discover the depth of the life Jesus intends for us to have inside relationships. Yet I'm thankful for beauty found in true friendship.

I have been taught the Scriptures since birth. I have desired to walk with God through each and every circumstance of life. I know the truth, and the truth sets me free. But when disappointments, betrayal, and deep, deep sorrow come like a storm in my life, I know I can't go it alone. It's not financial help or religious theory I need then. It's the presence of a brother who understands the depth of my sorrow and can help me forgive and trust that "my anchor holds within the veil," as hymn writer Edward Mote wrote. What I need most when the

## PROFILE

# A Badge and a Bible

**J**ustin Noel knows the importance of ministry to men. As a sheriff's deputy and school resource officer, he regularly encounters guys who desperately need the transforming power of Christ.

"I see it all the time — fatherless homes, substance abuse, and men who aren't stepping up to the plate and being responsible," says Noel, men's ministry leader at Oswego Assembly of God in Kansas. "Men get in trouble, and it trickles down to their kids. I see these issues firsthand, and it makes me want to reach out to those guys more."

Noel often ministers to men as he transports them to jail. He even hands out cards with his personal cell phone number, inviting suspects to call and talk about their lives.

"I wonder what I'm opening myself up to sometimes giving my number to a guy I've just arrested," Noel says. "But I see it as another avenue for reaching men."

Noel can relate to many of the struggles today's men face. When he was 2 years old, his father was murdered. He says growing up in a fatherless home impacted him in some negative ways.

"I used to be embarrassed to talk about poverty and not having a dad, and the wrong choices I've made," Noel says. "But I see so many men who are dealing with the same things. I tell them, 'I've struggled; I drank; I went down those roads. But the Lord delivered me.'"

Noel was on the verge of divorce when he rededicated his life to Christ in 2009. He says if the men in his congregation had not reached out to him with compassion and kept him accountable in his spiritual growth, the turnaround he experienced in his life and family would not have been possible.

Less than two years after returning to his childhood faith, Noel sensed God calling him to lead men's ministries. The church's senior pastor, Steve McBrien, had been praying for someone to step into that role.

Today, Noel leads a monthly meeting of about 18 guys. The group often gathers in homes for food,



The Noel family

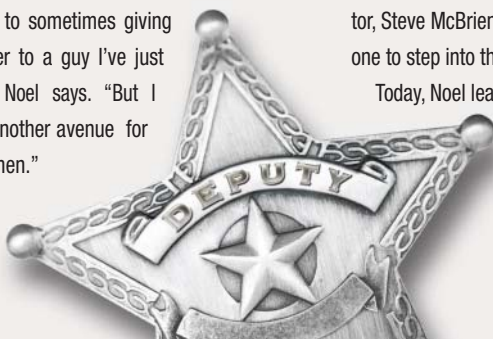
fellowship, and Bible discussions. Noel also tries to touch base with each of the men on a weekly basis, through a phone conversation, text message, or personal meeting.

The men take part in special events throughout the year, such as campouts and fishing tournaments. An annual retreat at a Christian hunting resort includes target shooting, ATV riding, and a variety of competitive games. The retreat ends with a meal and spiritual emphasis.

Noel says churches must be creative in seeking ways to bring men back into the fold.

"Some guys think church isn't for them," Noel says. "They see it as a feminine thing. Some have already been down that road and become burned out. I want to go a church filled with men who are hungry for God. That is my vision."

**CHRISTINA QUICK, freelance writer,  
Springfield, Missouri**



## FRIENDSHIP: THE BOND OF BROTHERS

(continued from page 83)

world goes dark is a friend who won't run away.

### RESTORING OUR HUMANITY

I believe with all my heart that healthy manhood involves a life of shared sorrows. A loving, knowing, and caring community of men displaces deadly isolation. In such an atmosphere, Jesus — “a man of suffering ... familiar with pain” (Isaiah 53:5) — forges strong bonds from brokenness. This community no longer hides its face from Christ, nor does it shrink from brothers, wives, children, or neighbors. In tough times, we hold tight to one another and find the joy for which our souls yearn.

Brothers, we can't do this thing called life alone. We were never meant to live in isolation. Find the courage to take a few steps toward your brothers. The first time I invited a group of men to my table I was scared to death. Looking back, it was hilarious. I grilled some steaks, threw some potatoes in the oven, and my wife made a salad before she went to visit friends.

I introduced the evening by saying I was tired of living in the shallow world of men, tired of having conversations with brothers that meant little to any of us. I told them I had one question each of us would answer and see where the conversation led, but that in any event, we would end in two hours with some Scripture and a prayer. That is exactly what we did. The amazing thing was no one left for another 75 minutes, and everyone asked whether we could please meet again. That was nearly nine years ago.

God's purposes for men are to provide life and restoration. He gives us His life through friendship with himself (John 15:15) and in community with others. ■

**ACCORDING TO SOME STUDIES, A LACK OF FRIENDS CAN ACTUALLY SHORTEN A MAN'S LIFE AS MUCH AS SMOKING 15 CIGARETTES A DAY AND IS MORE HARMFUL THAN OBESITY AND LACK OF PHYSICAL EXERCISE.**



**WES YODER**, author of *Bond of Brothers: Connecting with Other Men beyond Work, Weather and Sports* (Zondervan) and president of Ambassador Speakers and Literary Agency.

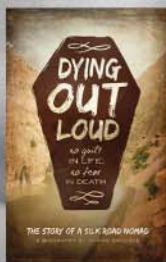
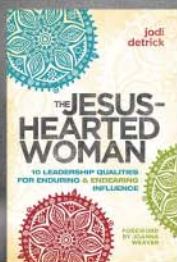
### Notes

1. UNC/Brigham Young research
2. Laura Blue, "Recipe for Longevity: No Smoking, Lots of Friends," *TIME* 28 (July 2010) <http://content.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,2006938,00.html>.

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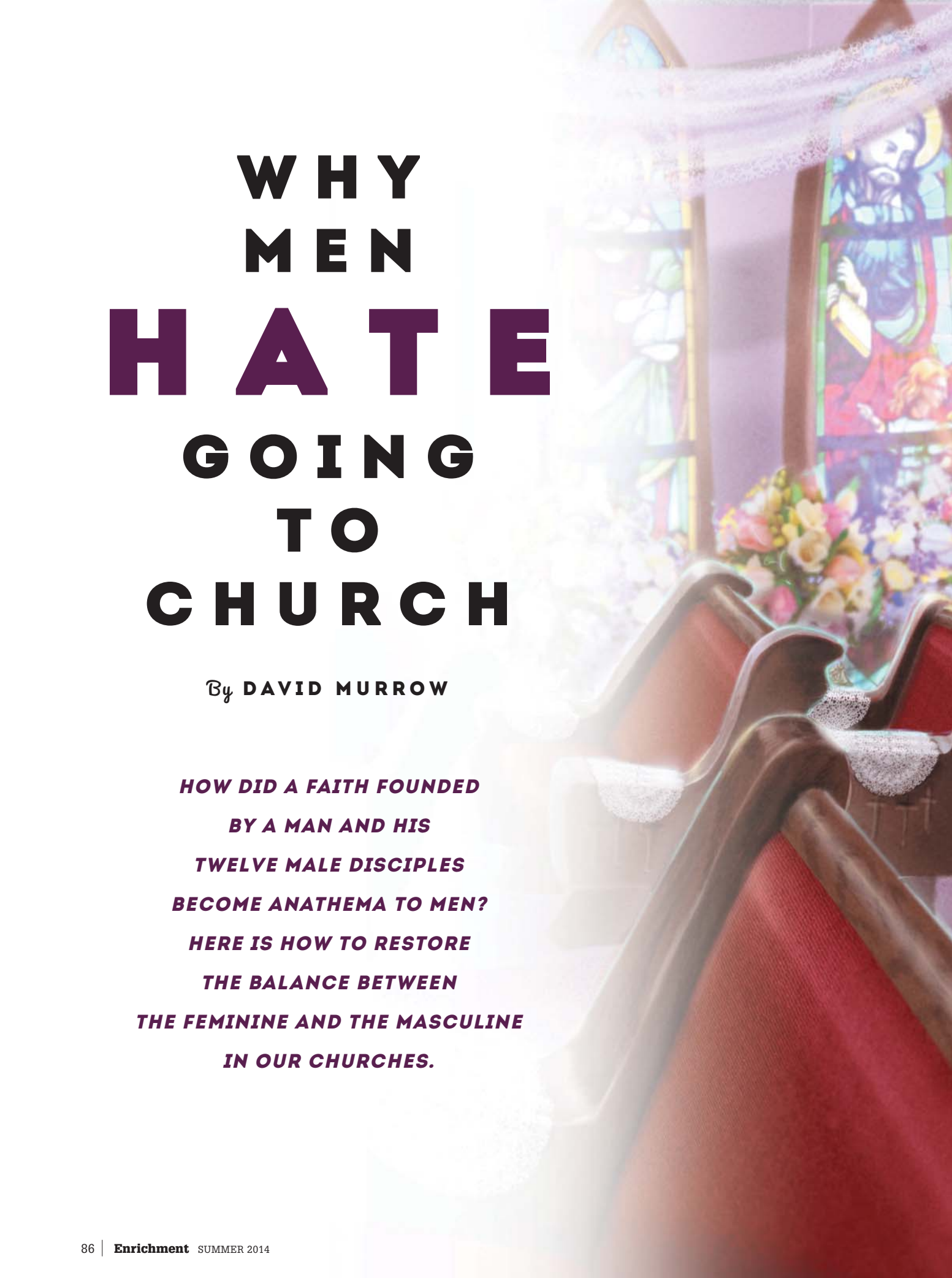
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A photograph of a church interior, showing rows of red upholstered pews in the foreground. In the background, there is a large floral arrangement on a table and several stained glass windows with colorful depictions of religious figures. The lighting is soft and warm, creating a serene atmosphere.

# WHY MEN HATE GOING TO CHURCH

By DAVID MURROW

*HOW DID A FAITH FOUNDED  
BY A MAN AND HIS  
TWELVE MALE DISCIPLES  
BECOME ANATHEMA TO MEN?  
HERE IS HOW TO RESTORE  
THE BALANCE BETWEEN  
THE FEMININE AND THE MASCULINE  
IN OUR CHURCHES.*







Welcome to Lakeside Church, the statistically average U.S. congregation.

- This week Lakeside will draw an adult congregation that's 61 percent female, 39 percent male.<sup>1</sup>
- Almost 25 percent of the married women who attend will do so without their husbands.<sup>2</sup>
- The church will attract a healthy number of single women but few single men.
- The majority of men who actually show up for Sunday worship are there in body only. Their hearts just aren't in it.
- Few will do anything during the week to nurture their faith.

Lakeside is the norm in Christianity — in the United States and around the world. Next time you're in church, count noses. A 60/40 gender gap (or larger) probably affects your worship services, midweek meetings, Bible studies, ministry teams, youth group, and so on. Overseas congregations often run 80 to 90 percent female.<sup>3</sup> In today's church, women are the participators, and men are the spectators.

How did a faith founded by a man and His twelve male disciples become anathema to men? Why is Christianity the only major religion with a worldwide gender gap? Why are churchgoing men so hesitant to live their faith, when men of other religions willingly die for theirs?

Many church leaders seem unaware of the gender gap — or if they are, they don't really see it as a problem. After all, if you want a smooth-running congregation, women are the key. They sing in the choir (or the worship team), care for children, teach classes, cook for potlucks, and serve on committees. They're more pleasant to deal with and more likely to volunteer. Researcher and author George Barna puts it this way: "Women are the backbone of Christian congregations."<sup>4</sup>

It would seem that men, on the other hand, are like hood ornaments on cars: nice, but not necessary.

Over the long term, however, a lack of men will doom a congregation. Multiple studies have shown that a lack of men is one of the strongest predictors of church decline.<sup>5</sup> Denominations with the fewest men are the same ones that have been losing members and shutting churches. For example, the United Church of Canada, that nation's largest denomination, is comprised of 80 percent female worshippers — and overall attendance has dropped by half in the past decade.<sup>6</sup>

But there's an encouraging flip side to this equation. Churches with robust male participation are generally growing. That's the secret megachurch planters such as Rick Warren and Bill Hybels learned a generation ago: grow your men, and your church will grow. This was Jesus' strategy. It still works today.

There's just one problem. Men hate going to church.

#### LANCE VS. LAURA AT CHURCH

While some men have had specific, negative church experiences, others simply feel a general unease with attending. Men like Lance are common: "My wife Laura loves church, but it just doesn't work for me," he says. "The whole feel of it just doesn't connect."

So why does Laura feel right at home in church, while Lance feels out of place?

In our society, men tend to avoid any behavior (or venue) that might call their manhood into question. They don't go to baby showers, fabric stores, or "chick flicks." So it is with church. Men believe, deep in their hearts, that church is "a woman's thing."

You may be thinking, *Church is a woman's thing? How can men think this? Haven't we been told for decades that the church is male-dominated?* If you're speaking of professional clergy, then yes, the church is male-dominated. The governing boards of many congregations remain male-only. But almost every other area of church life is dominated by women, from committees and ministries to the church office and volunteer roles. In many cases, 80 percent of the people running these key organs of the church are female.

Like a glove that slowly conforms to the hand of its wearer, Christianity has subtly conformed to the needs and expectations of its most faithful constituency — married women age 50 and up.

What do I mean? Today's congregations focus on creating a warm, nurturing environment where the top priority is making everyone feel loved and accepted. We gather. We worship. We love one another. We sing. We instruct children. We

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comfort the hurting. This lineup is both beneficial and biblical, but these things alone will not get men out of bed on a Sunday morning.

### SUBTLE SIGNALS

Every Sunday, without even realizing it, we send subtle signals to guys that they are in feminine territory. Think of the pictures of Jesus you saw as a child. Didn't they suggest a tender, sweet man in a shining white dress? As our boys grow up, whom will they choose as a role model? Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, or the action heroes they see in films and video games? The irony here is that the real Jesus is the ultimate hero, bold and courageous as any man alive, but we've turned Him into a wimp.

Let's say a common working stiff named Nick visits your church. What's the first thing he sees? Fresh flowers on the altar. Soft, cushiony pews with boxes of tissue underneath. Walls adorned with quilted banners or Thomas Kinkade paintings. A lace doily on the Communion table. How do we expect Nick to connect with God in a place that feels so feminine?

The signals keep coming during the service. Nick may be asked to hold hands with his neighbor or sing a love song to Christ, such as, "Lord, You're Beautiful." Displays of emotion such as weeping, shouting, and swooning are encouraged. Then Nick will have his 8-minute male attention span put to the test by a sermon that can run an hour or more.

When this torture test is finally over, Nick is invited to have "a personal relationship with Jesus." That phrase never appears in the Bible. Yet in the last 50 years it's become the No. 1 way the evangelical church describes the Christian walk. When we describe our faith as a personal relationship, we're using the native language of women.

Nick comes alive outdoors, but 99 percent of church life takes place indoors. Nick was never much of a student, but taking classes, reading the Bible, and studying books are presented as cornerstones of a living faith. He lacks the verbal skills to pray aloud or to sit in a circle and share his feelings.

What if Nick should decide to volunteer? The typical church needs people to care for infants, teach children and

youth, sing, cook meals, serve on committees, and usher. Men want to serve God, but many feel ill-prepared for the ministry opportunities we're offering them.

Bottom line: the typical church of about 100 members is no longer designed to do what Jesus did — reach men with the good news. We've created the perfect environment for sensitive, soft-hearted people to meet with Jesus. There are more women than men who fit the bill, so we see more of them in church.

Now don't misunderstand me. A healthy church needs the contributions of both men and women. The answer is not to drive women and femininity out of the church. We don't need to turn the church into a monster truck rally in order to engage men.

The answer is to make men feel wanted and needed in church again. This is surprisingly easy to do. Small, subtle changes make a huge difference.

### TURNING THE SHIP

I once interviewed Mark Driscoll, the pastor of Mars Hill Church in Seattle. Driscoll has grown a large, influential church that's full of young men. I asked him, "Does Mars Hill Church have a men's ministry program?"

Driscoll answered with a chuckle, "Mars Hill Church is a men's ministry program."

That's the key. Instead of starting a men's ministry program, take what you're already doing and make it man-friendly. Here are a few ideas:

#### Men need great leadership.

They are drawn by vision and purpose, achievement and power. Churches that attract enthusiastic men do so by taking risks, dreaming big, and bringing a measure of adventure

back to the Christian life. Courageous leadership involves change and stirs up opposition, but over the long term it stirs hope in the hearts of men.

**Help men learn.** With brains less verbally agile than those of women, men require a different approach.<sup>7</sup> The lengthy monologue sermon, so effective in the Victorian era, often fails to reach today's male. Object lessons are essential. Jesus called these parables, and they survive to this day because men remember them. Effective pastors and teachers draw metaphors and illustrations from the realms of sports, business, battle, and survival.

**WHY ARE  
CHURCHGOING MEN SO  
HESITANT  
TO LIVE THEIR FAITH,  
WHEN MEN OF OTHER  
RELIGIONS WILLINGLY  
DIE FOR THEIRS?**



## WHY MEN HATE GOING TO CHURCH

(continued from page 89)

**Help men worship.** With guys, it's all about quality. Men appreciate good music from talented musicians, played in their vocal range. When possible, choose songs with masculine lyrics. Many of today's praise and worship songs feature

lovey-dovey words set to a romantic tune. Nick may feel strange singing, "I'm so in love with You," to a male deity.

**Help men serve.** Men will gladly serve if we let them do what they're good at. Why not work on cars? One Illinois

### PROFILE

## Welcome to Man Land

**W**hat do NASCAR, basketball, camouflage, and mounted deer heads have in common? These themes were all part of a male-centered sermon emphasis three years ago at Mechanicsville Christian Center in Mechanicsville, Va.

Lead Pastor Carter Goolsby introduced the four-week Sunday morning series, called Man Land, after he sensed God prompting him to develop an intentional outreach to guys.

"The Holy Spirit said, 'You need to invest in the men for the health and well-being of your



church,' " Goolsby recalls. "When the men are involved, the church tends to thrive in so many other ways."

Goolsby says the women of the congregation supported his efforts and appreciated the emphasis on strengthening families. (The following year, Goolsby planned a similar series focusing on women's needs and interests.)

Man Land was just the beginning for Mechanicsville men's ministries. The series culminated with the church launching small groups for men. Today, 16 such groups, each made up of 6 to 10 men, meet throughout the week at restaurants, coffee shops, homes, and the church.

"One of the most beautiful things today is that when you walk down the church corridor, there are three or four men's groups meeting," Goolsby states. "They're laughing together, praying for one another, and just living out their faith. The church calendar and leadership isn't driving it; it's organic. They're thriving in their relationships and friendships."

Dwayne Moore, associate pastor and men's leader, says the ministry grows largely through personal invitations.

"We're not doing a lot of targeted events to reach men outside our sphere, but typically I'm meeting a new man every week who is coming because his friend invited him," Moore says.

The church encourages men not only to participate in small groups and invite others but also to get involved in Christian service. Opportunities include mission trips, inner-city construction projects, and ministries within the church.

Goolsby says men want to be leaders in the church and in their families, but many times they feel sidelined by a culture that diminishes their contributions.

"The idea of manhood in general is being defined and redefined," Goolsby says. "Rarely do you see men who are true men and true leaders of their families in sitcoms. It tends to be funny to show women who are strong and men who are weak. Women are portrayed as the leaders, while men are withdrawn. We're trying to bring that back into alignment. It's a win-win for me, as a pastor, when men come to me and say, 'Where can I serve?'"

**CHRISTINA QUICK, freelance writer,  
Springfield, Missouri**



church has an on-site, auto repair facility, staffed by volunteers, that benefits single mothers and the working poor. Even a small church can offer free oil changes in the parking lot. Our congregation started doing this twice a year; the event attracts more than 50 men who give up a Saturday morning to serve God. Even more remarkable, we almost always get a few nonreligious husbands of church-going wives.

**Consider redecorating.** Is your church adorned with quilts, ribbons, lace, and felt banners? Are the walls pink or lavender? Such details can make a difference. Men are visual, and if your worship space looks like a ladies' parlor, men will feel uncomfortable gathering there.

**Meet men's deepest needs.** Making our Sunday services male-friendly will help, but if we want men to come truly alive, we must recover two ancient roles the founders of our faith understood, but which we have lost. Men need "spiritual fathers" and a "band of brothers."

A spiritual father is simply a layman who takes responsibility for bringing other men to maturity in the faith. This idea emerges from the discipleship models of Jesus (Luke 6:12-16) and Paul (1 Corinthians 4:14,15). I recently visited a church in Texas that embraces the concept of spiritual fathering. You cannot imagine the enthusiasm of the men in that church body.

Second, every man needs a band of brothers. Jesus began His ministry by assembling a team. They trained together, worked together, and suffered together. Men cannot succeed as followers of Jesus without a team surrounding them.

Jesus promised to make us fishers of men, but today we catch relatively few. I believe millions of men are ready to walk with their Maker if only we'll restore the balance between the feminine and the masculine in our churches. 📌



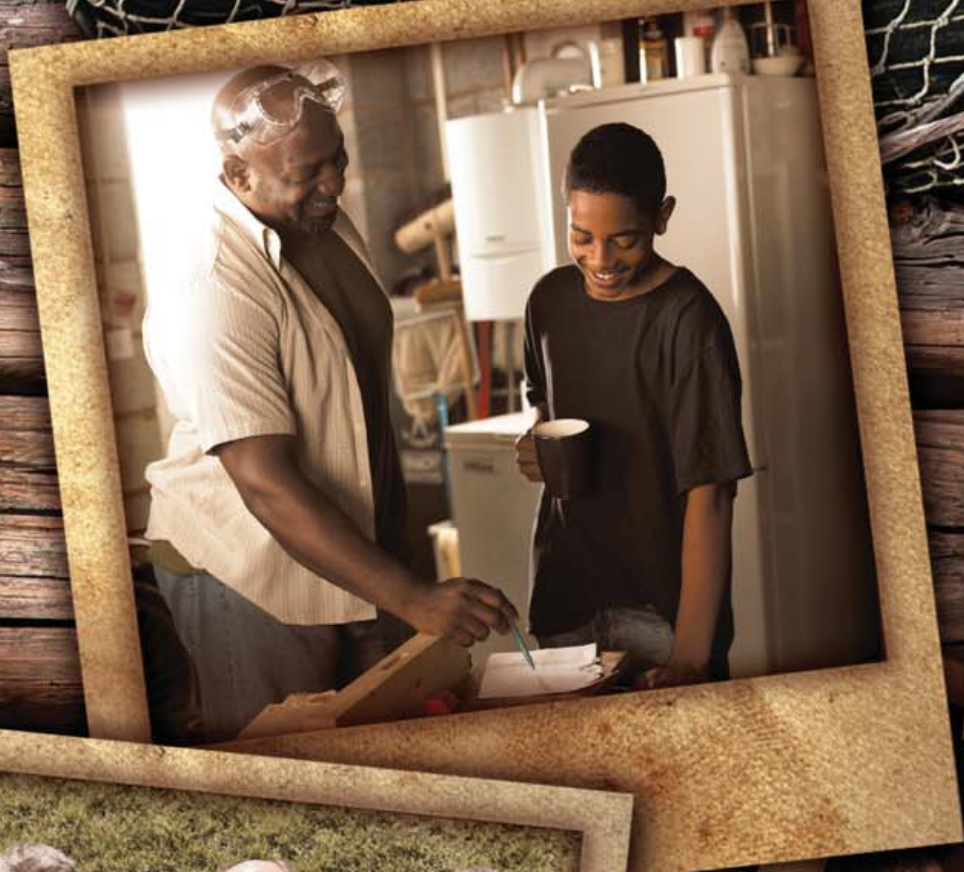
**Notes**

1. "Key Findings: Who Worships in the U.S.?" U.S. Congregational Life Survey — Key Findings," 29 October 2003, [www.uscongregations.org/key.htm](http://www.uscongregations.org/key.htm) (See more at <http://churchformen.com/men-and-church/where-are-the-men/#sthash.LB59Gglc.dpuf>)
2. I came up with this figure by taking the U.S. Census 2000 numbers for total married adults and overlaying Barna Research's year 2000 percentages of male vs. female attendance at weekly worship services. The figures suggest at least 24.5 million married women attend church on a given weekend, but only 19 million married men attend. That's 5.5 million more women, or 22.5 percent. The actual number may be even higher, because married people attend church in much greater numbers than singles. (See more at: <http://churchformen.com/men-and-church/where-are-the-men/#sthash.LB59Gglc.dpuf>)
3. I'm unaware of a worldwide survey of gender distribution in local churches. However, I've spoken to numerous missionaries, particularly from Latin America and Southeast Asia who report up to 90 percent female attendance in their worship services.
4. "Women are the Backbone of Christian Congregations in America," *Barna Research Online* 6 (March 2000). <https://www.barna.org/> (See more at: <http://churchformen.com/men-and-church/where-are-the-men/#sthash.LB59Gglc.dpuf>)
5. C. Kirk Hadaway, "FACTs on Growth." <http://faithcommunitiestoday.org/sites/all/themes/factzen4/files/CongGrowth.pdf>
6. <http://www.canada.com/story.html?id=4333b9da-b61b-487a-934a-21cf4e2262c7>
7. Robin Nixon, "Matters of the Brain: Why Men and Women are So Different," *Live Science* 1 (May 2012) <http://www.livescience.com/20011-brain-cognition-gender-differences.html>



**DAVID MURROW**, director of Church for Men ([www.churchformen.com](http://www.churchformen.com)), an organization dedicated to restoring a healthy, life-giving masculine spirit in Christian congregations. He is the author of four books, including his best-selling *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, which was completely revised and updated in 2012. He lives in Anchorage, Alaska, with his wife of 29 years, Gina.







**FISHERS**

**O F**

**MEN:**

*Best Practices  
for Effective  
Ministry to*

**MEN AND BOYS**

*By* **KENNY LUCK**

**HOW WELL ARE WE  
INVESTING IN MEN?**

**ARE THEY BEING TRANSFORMED  
FROM A WEEKEND AUDIENCE TO  
A KINGDOM ARMY FULFILLING  
A KINGDOM VISION?**



## When a man's character and conduct

become Christlike, life changes for those around him. Most

directly, the women and children connected to his life and choices

suffer less and develop better. Fewer literal and emotional orphans

fall prey to cultural predators who exploit their loneliness, needs, and insecurities

for evil purposes. Negative generational and cultural cycles of chaos, dysfunction,

and destruction stop in their tracks.

In the most basic analysis, when men have the capacity to act in the interests of others versus solely acting in the interest of themselves, the foundations of societies and nations change. Wherever these men go, their character goes with them. Professional, political, social, cultural, and religious institutions become the beneficiaries of well-formed men. As a consequence, those organizations become less corrupt and produce fewer cynics. Maybe your families, your community, or your church could use a few more men like this — men who bring hope by their very presence.

Spiritually healthy, moral men are like a cleared field that is ready for cultivation. Spiritually unhealthy, immoral men are destructive to themselves and those around them. Like dynamite, self-centered men produce blast zones of pain and suffering as they self-preserve, self-indulge, and seek to be self-important at the expense of others.

This dangerous potential and reality brings disappointment to a loving

Father who watches His sons expectantly, hoping for a healthy expression of His character in their lives. Scripture tells us the blast zones of ungodly male character and conduct break God's heart: "For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, And the men of Judah are His pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; For righteousness, but, behold, a cry for help" (Isaiah 5:7, NKJV).<sup>1</sup>

Pick up a newspaper or click onto a major news outlet and within seconds one can lament male sinfulness. From sexual violence against women in Uganda and human trafficking in Thailand to Wall Street greed and epidemic fatherlessness in the United States, the crisis is obvious. The information age has crushed the ability of the male culture to escape the one thing men have relied on for centuries: invisibility. Men prefer to hide their weakness and guilt. Yet a simple but powerful global awareness has occurred. Suffering makes the news, and the

behaviors of men are at the center of much of the suffering.

This is the first factor every church must be aware of when considering a real and resonating revival that women, children, communities, and countries will find meaningful on a personal level. Pain resonates deeply, and anything that successfully reduces suffering by touching and transforming men becomes immediately relevant. As pastors and churches

**HERE ARE SOME BASIC STEPS FOR  
DEVELOPING A LEADERSHIP PIPELINE  
THAT ADDRESSES MEN'S NEEDS,  
TRANSFORMS THEIR LIVES,  
AND DEPLOYS THEM FOR  
SERVICE.**

attempt to focus on reaching people with the gospel, it should be asking: "What problems can we solve that dramatically impact the people and communities we are trying to reach?" The answer is broken male culture and its victims.

Many women today actively seek emotional, relational, intellectual, and financial independence from men. For the first time in United States history, women outnumber men in earning undergraduate and graduate degrees, holding managerial positions, and gaining qualifications for high-growth job sectors in the foreseeable future.<sup>2</sup> These trends add to the challenges facing men. Lacking moral authority, feeling unneeded and unable to contribute or provide emotional support, many men are running scared.

Statistics indicate there are 2.18 billion Christians in the

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world. This means there are between 500 and 700 million Christian men roaming the planet Earth.<sup>3</sup> Christian men are the largest standing army for potential good on the planet. Good men surround us. We work with their wives and children. But how well are we investing in men? Are they moving from affiliated to activated? Are they being transformed from a weekend audience to a Kingdom army fulfilling a Kingdom vision? We can only expect to get back from people what we invest in them. Effective churches realize this.

What do we call a healthy men's culture, where consistency of convictions brings justice, and with justice, hope? We call it a solution to a problem that dramatically impacts the people and communities we are called to evangelize.

### FISHING FOR MEN IN A BROKEN CULTURE

Like today's men, the average first-century Jewish male was influenced by cultural ideals of masculinity. His thinking, consciously and subconsciously, was shaped by sentiments such as the ones expressed in this ceremonial prayer: "Blessed art thou, O God, for not making me a Gentile, slave, or woman." Into this broken thinking came Jesus, who challenged many cultural biases. He defended and dignified women, invited children into His lap, and told parables about honorable Samaritans.

What stands out to me as a pastor is that Jesus modeled this brand of Spirit-filled masculinity to the men of His time through a public ministry to large numbers of people as well as a private discipleship relationship with a small group of men. Before we move on, we need to establish the connection: Jesus used the former to accomplish the latter.

Public and planned ministry should happen at the same time as private modeling, messaging, and mentoring. Matthew 4:19 captures the heart of Jesus' call: " 'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will send you out to fish for people.' " This call reflects the Lord's plan for men to follow Him, learn from Him, and change the world for Him. At its core are the concepts of a personal invitation, personal imitation, and personal impartation that produce personal replication. The key word is *personal*. The discipleship process among men involves one man personally inviting and investing in other men. What started with 12 men and three years of discipleship led to 20 centuries of Kingdom expansion. This was Jesus' plan for men.

### PASTOR, YOU NEED A RELIABLE LEADERSHIP PIPELINE

Just as the Alaskan pipeline distributes much-needed fuel to the lower United States, a leadership pipeline is vital to pastors. It's a matter of effective stewardship of resources. We may not want to acknowledge the lack of effective training for men. We may not even be aware of the need for this leadership pipeline. But it is a timely conversation grounded in the timeless mandates of Scripture.



## Unintentional Versus Intentional Men's Ministry

**M**any churches are good at public ministry to men. There is a men's calendar of events and gatherings that include weekend retreats, pancake breakfasts, recovery groups, service opportunities within the church, and other affinity groups of men who share a common interest in a sport or hobby. These funnels draw men initially. But they usually run out of fuel because there is no larger vision beyond the "gathering." Nothing connects men directly to the church's mission in a compelling way. As time passes, men's ministry becomes nothing more than bulletin announcements and arbitrary tasks that translate to the men as, "This is good for you; you should do this if you are a man."

In equipping men, however, a great event is only as good as the vision behind all the energy and expense. A high-commitment discipleship program is good if a few make it all the way to the end. But it's infinitely better if the events that gather men also cast a vision for the church's goals and draw men into life change and leadership development. This link between the "getting in" pieces of men's ministry and the getting "healthy, strong, and going" aspects makes the difference between unintentional and intentional men's ministry.

Clearly, Jesus practiced an intentional and relational brand of men's ministry. I call Jesus' way of doing men's ministry the "show-how" method. The message to men in this process from the start is:

**I do, you watch.**

**We do together.**

**You do, I watch.**

**You do, others watch.**

Until churches find a way to involve men, intentionally, beyond the great event, they will not produce strong, spiritual men the way Jesus did.

**KENNY LUCK**

(continued from page 95)

Consider Jethro's wise counsel to Moses: "Moses' father-in-law replied, 'What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. ... But select capable men from all the people — men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain — and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. If you do this and God so

commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied' " (Exodus 18:17,18, 21–23).

Jethro showed Moses his need for additional leadership — a leadership pipeline. These other leaders would help Moses as he led the Israelites. In the same way, pastors can develop leaders who will help them lead their church.

Most pastors dream of having a strong and vibrant men's community that drives ministry in their churches. Their dream rarely becomes a reality because they have no compelling vision for men that they articulate. They fail to demonstrate the model or connect it to a meaningful process that

## Helping Unmarried Men

**T**hey are single by default, by circumstance, or by choice. Some have visions of marriage and family, while others have given up. Still others see their relational context as a gift.

Regardless of their perspectives and desires, all these men face unique moral and spiritual struggles that require more, not less, character than their married friends. They need strong beliefs to support stronger — but culturally disapproved — behaviors that preserve spiritual integrity.

The most influential Man who ever walked the

planet was unmarried and had a sense of self, rooted in God and His purposes, that transcended the broken male culture of His day. Jesus, along with a host of God-honoring men in the Bible, provides the template for our conversations with and ministry to unmarried men. Here are the top three issues, examples, and principles we should be addressing with this group of men God wants to use mightily.

### **Identity** (1 Timothy 6:11,12)

"But you, man of God ... fight the good fight of the faith ...."

These intentionally directed words toward Timothy call out his identity. What does Paul know that we should know too? He knows that whatever commands this unmarried man's identity will also command his energy and expression as a man. Security of identity in Christ produces powerful discipline, patience, perspective, and purpose in the midst of the unmarried man's battles. Like Paul, we want men responding and reacting out of their identity in God first — regardless of the unique context or issue that arises in the moment.

For resources on this topic, type the key word "identity" into the search bar at [everymanminisities.com](http://everymanminisities.com).

### **Women and Sexual Integrity**

(Ephesians 4:17–24)

With the Holy Spirit's help, today's single men can exercise self-control and maintain an honoring attitude toward women.

Leaders must directly and transparently address the need for sexual restraint in today's culture. They also must teach lifestyle habits that replace resistance alone — including healthy male and female

relationships that support a man's spiritual and sexual boundaries.

For resources on this topic, type the key word "sex" into the search bar at [everymanminisities.com](http://everymanminisities.com).

### **Contentment Vs. Comparison**

(1 Corinthians 1:3–9; Philippians 4:12,13)

Managing expectations — and dashed expectations — is a huge part of ministry to unmarried men.

Every man has expectations, but many times God is not operating on our time frame of delivery — for His good reasons and His good purposes. Over time, unfulfilled desires for intimacy can lead to panic and fear-based attempts to meet needs ahead of God's timing or outside His will.

This aspect of being single, or "single again," can rob men of hope, create a reservoir of negative emotions, and, consequently, make them vulnerable to attack from within and without.

The only path for unmarried men that guarantees greater contentment and hope — and less comparison and cynicism — is a clear vision of God. More specifically, single men need to see God as their faithful Creator, while serving Him in purposeful ministry that provides meaning, connection, and intimacy.

We have all heard stories of God's miraculous realization of a person's hopes after they yielded to Christ's loving sovereignty, care, and rule.

Personal dreams and longings may remain, but God's purpose goes a long way toward replacing comparison with contentment.

For resources on this topic, type the key word "contentment" into the search bar at [everymanminisities.com](http://everymanminisities.com).

**KENNY LUCK**



transforms and trains men to take the initiative. In other words, there is no end game, no set of goals, no pathway, and no larger vision for men.

When a church's vision for men in the community and in the congregation is no larger than "this is good for you" or "you should do this," with no personally transcendent or transformational component driving interest or curiosity, why would men want to participate? On the flip side, if a church has a strong vision, a defined process that helps a man realize it, and outcomes that make men stakeholders in the ongoing success of the church's mission, men line up to get involved.

### **DEVELOPING VISION, MEANING, CLEAR PROCESS, AND INFLUENCE**

Though today's men face complex challenges, reaching them doesn't have to be complicated. Men like simplicity. Through years of helping hundreds of churches improve their outreaches, I've identified some basic steps for developing a leadership pipeline that addresses men's needs, transforms their lives, and deploys them for service.

#### **"Get In"**

Nearly every man has a "go-to guy" he knows who can help him fix his car or write his next home loan. But few men know where to turn for help with spiritual and relational battles. A successful pathway for male discipleship emphasizes getting guys *in* with other guys who share a personal commitment to grow personally and spiritually — preferably on a weekly basis.

(For GET IN resources, go to [www.everymanministries.com/how-it-works](http://www.everymanministries.com/how-it-works).)

A successful outreach consistently helps men see the value of connecting with one another. It creates meaningful contexts for them to foster spiritual friendships. It also invests in quality resources to equip the men who come.

Once guys get connected, they will naturally want to know, "What's next?" It is imperative that you know the answer to that question before they ask it. The answer must resonate with how men think. This is why the next stop on the pathway is about giving them meaningful wins.

#### **"Get Healthy"**

This step involves defining and meeting the felt needs of men and helping them get a "win" that is meaningful to them.

Like icebergs, many men keep a large part of themselves submerged. Hidden beneath the waterline of their lives are a host of issues — moral, relational, marital, professional, and emotional concerns — that produce

# What Young Boys and Fatherless Sons Need Most

*Enrichment* journal asked Kenny Luck:

### **Q: What does ministry to fatherless boys look like and involve, in your opinion?**

**A:** The most powerful example is when God the Father blesses and commends God the Son, with God the Holy Spirit present, in Matthew 3:16,17.

It has within it the core elements of interactions intended to fortify any young man — or older man, for that matter — concerning what God created him to be. There is a special moment where a special voice speaks into the heart of a son. We also see a special name given, along with a special love and a special blessing.

A moment. A voice. A name. A love. A blessing.

All young boys need moments, masculine voices, conferred identity and sonship, masculine love, and validations that bless them from another man.

In Matthew 3, Jesus had yet to preach one message, perform one miracle, heal one person, or forgive one sinner. Perhaps the affirmation He heard from His Father provided the resolve He needed to go, to be, and to do the very things that were purposed for Him from the beginning.

If God spoke such affirming words about Jesus, then such words are also beneficial for every man to gain the courage and confidence to fulfill God's purpose in his life.

### **Q: How important is it for a boy to hear from his father or another man that he looks up to about "manhood"? What happens if a boy does not hear from another man on this issue?**

**A:** I would reframe it this way. Every son or boy is hearing from his father or peers about what it means to be a man, through what he sees being modeled.

The question is not: Should sons or boys hear from us about manhood? The question is: What are they already learning from us or from their relational environment about manhood — directly and indirectly? Modeling, not talking, is the most powerful channel for reproducing healthy or unhealthy masculinity. Modeling *plus* talking is optimal. Talking or instructing minus modeling creates confusion and latent anger at the hypocrisy.

The lesson is this: Dads or mentors cannot give away to their sons or mentees what they do not possess. A baseline of integrity is required to get moral traction. For a son to "hear" it, the father — or father figure — needs to "live" it.



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## FISHERS OF MEN: BEST PRACTICES FOR EFFECTIVE MINISTRY TO MEN AND BOYS

(continued from page 97)

enormous stress and define the true substance of their existence. They work at being tough guys who have it all together, but it's just an act.

In a safe group context, men can honestly pursue health in their character and their relationships. This involves an open discussion of temptation and compromise (moral health); views of women and marriage (marital health); responsibilities in the home (family health); and how masculine friendship and accountability work (relational health).

True health in these core areas is the difference between a synthetic leader who pretends to be something he is not and an authentic leader. A synthetic leader talks about mission and vision, but lacks the character to meet the demands of it in his own life. He is divided between what he says and how he actually lives. An authentic leader, on the other hand, has the inner character to match the demands of the mission and vision. He is undivided between what he says and how he lives. (See Jesus address and expose the synthetic leader in Matthew 23:13-28.) The Bible requires core health and strong leadership in these areas prior to selection for church leadership (1 Timothy 3:1-10,12; Titus 1:6-9).

Once a church has defined and met men's felt needs, guided them through honest discussion, and led them to spiritual growth and accountability, the process of leadership development can begin.

### "Get Strong"

The next phase involves casting a vision for continued church involvement and preparation for ministry. This calls for greater commitment and sacrifice. In a relational context, the goal is to think and behave increasingly like Christ. It is the natural progression from transformation to activation into leadership training. Practically, men should sense their transition to the next level of ministry commitment — personally, spiritually, and practically.

Resources and relationships should center on strong spiritual formation that leads to personal expression of the greatest commandment (Matthew 22:38) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19).

Once fully trained, there is only one call left.

(For GET HEALTHY AND GET STRONG resources go to [www.everymanministries.com/products/Class-Resources](http://www.everymanministries.com/products/Class-Resources).)

### "Get Going"

A trained "God's man" is responsible for ministering, discipling new leaders, and partnering with pastoral staff to advance the church's mission. He stands strong, but he doesn't stand alone. Tools, resources, and relationships support his continued success and spiritual growth.

A solid leadership engine that produces solid men accelerates the church's mission and vision. That's the desired outcome. Ultimately, you want to be confident that your discipleship efforts, like Christ's, will grow the kingdom of God.

## FINALLY

Masculinity is up for grabs at this moment in history. Much of society now rejects the broken male culture's uncaring and self-centered "Alpha Male." Over-sensitive and weak "Omega Male" lacks a spine and is too codependent. The world looks for the next wave of Spirit-filled male leadership. People seek congruence between courage and compassion, strength and service, toughness and tenderness — qualities that are perfected in the character of Jesus Christ. But making such men requires a new wave of modeling and mentoring. The Church is both equipped and called to deliver to accomplish this. ■

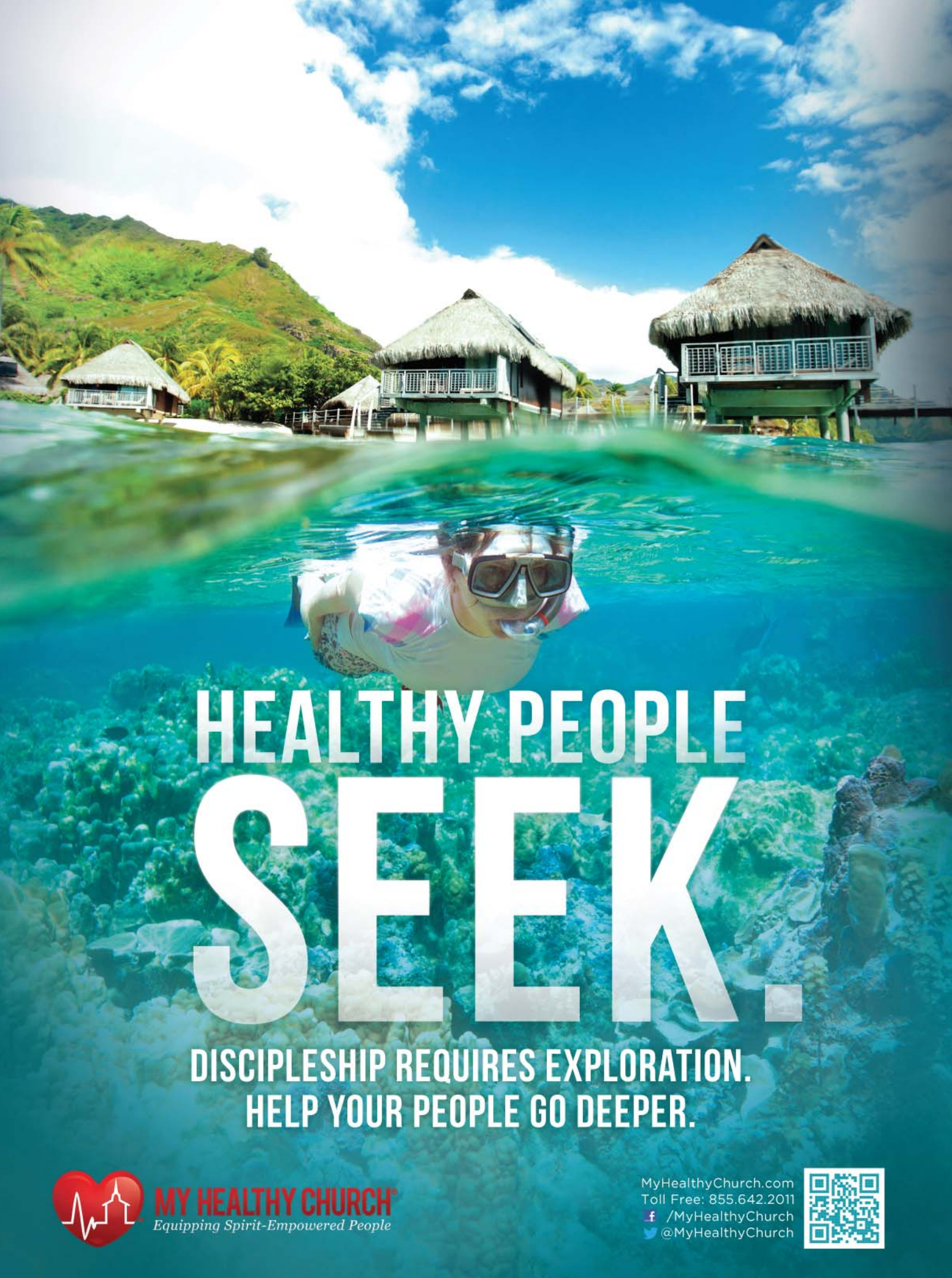


**KENNY LUCK**, men's pastor at Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California, and founder and president of Every Man Ministries.

### Notes

1. Scripture quotations marked NKJV are taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
2. Hanna Rosin, "The End of Men," in *The Atlantic* (July/August 2010). Found at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2010/07/the-end-of-men/308135/>.
3. Pew Research Center. "Global Christianity" (December 19, 2011). Found at: <http://www.pewresearch.org/2011/12/19/global-christianity/>. Church statisticians project consistently 2.18 billion Christians worldwide. Approximately one third of this number is women, one third is men, and the last third are children.





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des·ti·na·tion [des-tuh-ney-shuhn]

# MANDES

# TINATION

By RICK ALLEN

**IN A WORLD OF  
LOUD VOICES  
AND COMPETING  
MESSAGES, GOD  
CALLS MEN TO  
FOLLOW HIM AND  
LIVE OUT THE GREAT  
COMMISSION.  
HOW DO PASTORS  
LEAD MEN TO THEIR  
MANDESTINATION  
AND CONNECT  
THEM TO THE  
HEART OF GOD?**



God created people in His image. He wants us to reflect His heart, His desires, and His character.

We are not a project God completed so He could wash His hands and say, "Done!"

God made us to experience His plan and His presence as He reveals them — day by day. Our life in Christ is a journey with highs and lows that bring moments of exhilaration, times of travail, and seasons of joy, wonderment, and exploration. We are on a divine mission that can only be fulfilled as we seek the One who made us and called us. In a world of loud voices and competing messages, the Son of God calls us to follow Him and fish for people.

Answering that call brings us face-to-face with life's purpose and meaning — our reason for being. Following Christ and fulfilling His kingdom purpose through missions is our *mandate*. Knowing Him and living with Him forever is our *destination*. Together, these make up what I call our *mandestination*.

How do we, as pastors and leaders, bring this mandate to the men in our congregations and connect them to His heartbeat? We must echo Christ's call in the words we speak. And we should exemplify His concern for others by reaching out to those who live across the street, across the state, and even across the seas.

Obviously, *mandestination* is an invented word, but I like it. It challenges men to embark on the adventure God wants them to take. It calls them to take up the cross and follow Him. It emboldens them to journey where they have never journeyed before.

Missions isn't tough once men put their minds to it. Men like challenges and adventures. When they make a decision to follow the Great Commission — the pilgrimage that has no end in this world — they begin their *mandestination*.

Calling men to their *mandestination* is not for the faint of heart, fearful, or cowardly. Pastors must decide how many times throughout the year they will give their congregation the opportunity to hear from missionaries who are connecting to unreached people groups. Some attendees will likely complain until they give their hearts to the Great Commission. But the response from people who become committed to missions is worth the potential hassle. This is only for the pure in spirit, those who mourn, and the meek. It is for those who seek after righteousness, the

merciful, the pure in heart, and the peacemakers.

Let us not forget those who willingly endure persecution for the stand they take for Christ. These men will not back down against a spiritual enemy. They receive and accept the call to go to the ends of the earth in the love of Christ. The Holy Spirit leads them as they proclaim Christ's name to all generations, people, and cultures.

From the beginning, men have been on a mission to know God. We call others to that mission as we deliver the message that cannot be stopped, trampled, or cast down. This

message never returns void, loses its impact, or changes.

Mandestination takes us places we never thought we would go. It also teaches us to speak like we've never before spoken. Mandestination calls us to live out the Great Commission and gives us courage to follow Christ in a world that does not recognize Him.

It is the middle of the night as I write these words. I am on a plane headed to Africa to meet with some of the greatest missionaries in the world. Viewing the travel path of this 747 reminds me every step I take is ordered by God.

I learn more about myself as I engage in missions. As I meet people, participate in outreaches, and see what God is doing in my own community or another part of the world, I gain a Kingdom worldview.

This is my first trip to Africa. I will meet people I've preached about and read about throughout my lifetime. I will hear testimonies of people who have accepted Christ. I will hear stories of how Jesus changed lives just as He changed mine 38 years ago. I will see the results of my prayers, my giving, and my hope that one day this would happen. I grew up on the wrong side of the tracks. I did not look like those I met when I started going to church. Yet I longed for an adventure with God, and here I am.

Mandestination has a funny way of bringing men into the deeper things of God. It takes over your life and brings fulfillment that only comes by following after Christ.

If you want to breathe new life into your ministry to men, go to your prayer closet, shut the door, and don't come out until you are ready for the journey of a lifetime. You will find yourself considering the potential of the men in your church

and wondering whether they will begin a God-ordained adventure with you. You'll find yourself seeking God for new ways to share missions throughout the year — to raise more dollars to reach more people for Christ. You might even see your city through a different set of lenses — with renewed hope and purpose.

Mandestination is contagious. Since the inception of the Assemblies of God, men [and women] have longed to reach the world

**MANDESTINATION  
CHALLENGES MEN TO EMBARK  
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WANTS THEM TO TAKE.  
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IT EMBOLDENS THEM TO  
JOURNEY WHERE THEY HAVE  
NEVER JOURNEYED BEFORE.**

for Christ. Evangelism was the AG's primary directive 100 years ago, and it remains our focus today. We have reached more countries with the gospel, sent more missionaries around the globe, and launched more Pentecostal churches than anyone at any time in history. This is no time to stop. The momentum, through the leading of the Holy Spirit, is igniting more men, and more churches, to reach the

unreachable by going to the ends of the Earth and announcing that Jesus is Lord.

The men in your church will begin to grow just as they did in the first century church. One day they're hearing the Acts 2 message, and the next day they are taking the gospel to their world. Preachers, deacons, prayer warriors, and servants who don't mind serving — as long as their Master is Christ — will rise up.

Mandestination can begin in simple conversations — at a coffee shop, with a neighbor, or around the water cooler — as men share their life in Christ with others. It continues as they hear from missionaries, pastors, and leaders who challenge them to pursue the Great Commission in every aspect of their lives. And it really takes off when men hear from God and accept their mandestination journey — the unique Kingdom plan He has for them.

For men, missions starts with simple steps. But once the journey begins, it is hard to go back. I've watched men take their vacations to go on a missions trip, work in a compassion center, or help with a disaster response. Men want to know they make a difference. They desire to use their skills and energy in worthwhile, lasting ways.

Missions gives every man that opportunity — not just in exotic locations but also at home and on the job. Missions can include maintaining a godly character that draws others to Jesus, loving a wife as Christ loves the Church, and raising children to serve God. Our example will shape those who have a front row seat to our lives in times of victory, repentance, adjustment, and security. Our treatment of others can help them understand the power of God's compassion, forgiveness, grace, and truth. Our families will know what love is by the examples we set.

Missions drives men to be disciples of Christ, workers in the church, givers of their resources, and travelers for the gospel. I've watched men who allowed mandestination to change the

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way they view life, their homes, and churches. They've become the servants of Christ for which every pastor prays. Through missions, men change.

As the national director of Light for the Lost, I've read and heard the stories of men who worked jobs, attended churches, had life-changing experiences, and created Light for the Lost at an altar one Sunday. Sixty years later, men around the United States and all over the world offer their time, hands-on involvement, and finances to continue this mandestination for missions. From that simple beginning, countless men have partnered with Light for the Lost to live out the Great Commission by distributing evangelism resources across the globe.

As leaders, we have an amazing opportunity to invite men on a journey of a lifetime — to go to places few have gone, share the message that will never cease, and understand the

destiny God alone has given us to make disciples.

God is calling us to know Him, share the greatest message ever told, and be the men He wants us to be. This is our mandate and our destination — our mandestination. 📌



**RICK ALLEN**, director, Light for the Lost, Assemblies of God National Leadership and Resource Center, Springfield, Missouri

## PROFILE

# Extreme Makeover: Church Edition

**I**t's an extreme makeover that makes an eternal impact. The Potomac District of the Assemblies of God is transforming houses of worship — one building project at a time.

Over the last three years, teams of volunteers have provided facelifts for nine churches in the district. Bobby Basham, men's ministries director for the Potomac Ministry Network, says each of these congregations has since reported increased attendance.

"It literally infuses new life into the churches," Basham says. "Imagine walking in and seeing a brand new sanctuary. Each of these churches has grown because they now look attractive and inviting. We help make them places where people want to be."

The project started as a men's ministries effort. The men have since teamed with women's ministries to revitalize churches from the rural mountains of West Virginia to inner city Washington D.C.

Groups of 25 to 30 volunteers spend three days on each weekend makeover. They stay overnight in the church facilities or in housing the church provides. The work might include anything from repairing a roof to painting, installing new light



**Basham**



Frostburg, Md. Assembly of God before the makeover.

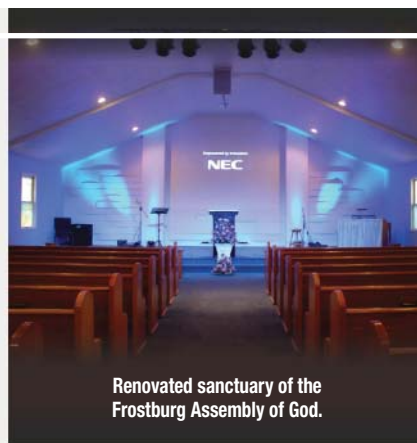
fixtures, or replacing carpeting. Volunteers and churches raise funds, and the district provides matching grants. Basham estimates the value of each makeover ranges from \$12,000 to \$20,000.

A number of AG churches in the district have fewer than 100 attendees, with most of the congregations receiving help averaging 25 to 30, according to Basham.

He says these small churches have few resources for facility upkeep and modernizing, which can make it difficult to attract new adherents.

"One church in a college town realized if they were going to grow they had to reach out to college students," Basham says. "That is tough in a building that looks like it is falling down. We fixed it up and updated it with more contemporary décor. We installed stage lighting, LED lights, and contemporary colors. We replaced the hanging chandelier with recessed lighting. We made it an inviting atmosphere for students and young families."

The district plans to complete three makeover projects



Renovated sanctuary of the Frostburg Assembly of God.

per year. For a church to receive help, the pastor and leadership team must participate in a revitalization process, which includes meeting regularly with the district revitalization director.

"This is part of what the church was created to be: helping each other," Basham says.

He says the makeover volunteers often benefit as much as the churches.

"They get the satisfaction of knowing they're making a difference and that God is using them and their skills," Basham says. "Their lives often change, and they start coming back and wanting to know where the next project will be."

**CHRISTINA QUICK**, freelance writer, Springfield, Missouri

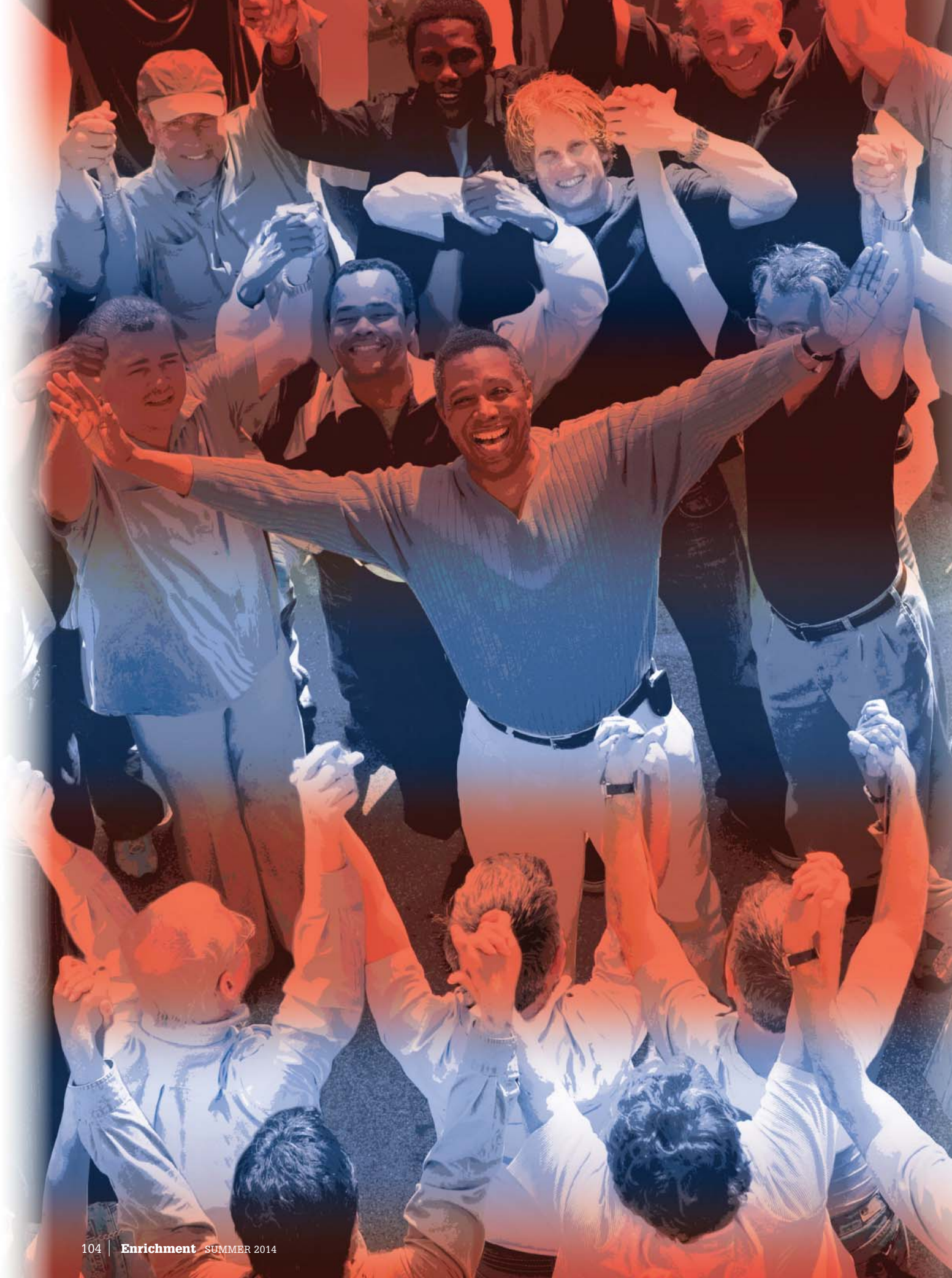
Scan the QR codes to view videos of Extreme Makeover, Church Edition projects from the Potomac District.



South Cumberland Assembly of God, Cumberland, Maryland



Frostburg Assembly of God, Frostburg, Maryland





SONS  
OF

# ISSACHAR:

*Becoming Men of*

**UNDERSTANDING  
AND INFLUENCE**

*in the Community*

By **SAMUEL RODRIGUEZ**

***AS CHRIST-CENTERED, BIBLE-BASED,  
21ST CENTURY "SONS OF ISSACHAR," MEN CARRY  
THE POWER TO EXERT CATALYTIC INFLUENCE  
IN THEIR RESPECTIVE COMMUNITIES.  
HERE ARE THREE WAYS MEN CAN  
CHANGE THE WORLD.***



*Our faith is not like any other faith.* Our faith is transparent, transcendent, and transformational. Our faith teaches us to cross over obstacles, shout down walls, break through crowds, and walk on water — even in the midst of storms.

Our faith enables us to survive the fires of life, overcome dens of lions, shake off serpents, and move mountains. Our faith empowers us to see the invisible, embrace the impossible, and hope for the incredible.

Corresponding faith enables us to distinguish between the pathetic and the prophetic. For we recognize that we live in difficult times — times darkened by moral relativism, spiritual apathy, cultural decadence, and ecclesiastical complacency. Yet our current spiritual socio-cultural malaise stands exacerbated as a result of a lack: the lack of Christian men exerting influence.

Throughout American history, Christian men confronted challenging moments with righteous courage, virtuous heroism, anointed leadership, and prophetic activism. From pastors who preached against tyranny during the Revolutionary War to Christian abolitionist leaders of the 19th century, Christ-serving men changed our nation. Today, the lack of Christian male leadership in our culture and in the public square speeds this generation's unprecedented moral and spiritual decline.

Yet in the midst of a pathetic reality lies a clarion call for the engagement of a demographic within the Church: Christian men, with the potential of providing a prophetic antidote to our precarious surroundings. The Church and nation desperately need the engagement, empowerment, and emergence of America's Christian fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons as the "Sons of Issachar."

"From the tribe of Issachar, there were 200 leaders of the tribe with their relatives. All these men understood the signs of the times and knew the best course for Israel to take" (1 Chronicles 12:32, NLT).<sup>1</sup>

Issachar's tribe lived surrounded by paganism, idolatry, unrighteousness, consternation, angst, and flux. Yet the men of this tribe understood the times and subsequently proceeded to provide direction for Israel through influential leadership.

Accordingly, as Christ-centered, Bible-based, 21st century "Sons of Issachar," we carry the power to exert catalytic influence in our respective communities. We can initiate change by reconciling the

vertical and horizontal planes of the Christian message, renewing a Spirit-empowered ethos, repudiating complacency, and redeeming the narrative of prophetic activism.

### RECONCILE THE VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL

The men from Issachar's tribe understood the times and led

according to that understanding. Today, Christian men are poised to influence family, community, church, and culture when we understand the holistic message of the Cross.

No other symbol incorporates passion and promise like the cross. A simple symbol depicting two pieces of wood, one vertical and the other horizontal, successfully branded the eternal hope of glory to all mankind.

In Genesis 22:7, Isaac asked Abraham, "Where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" John the Baptist answered in John 1:29: "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"



Enrichment / Outreach / Thinkstock

The sinless Lamb of God provided the means for human redemption by bearing sin's curse on the cross. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole'" (Galatians 3:13).

Madison Avenue and billion dollar ad campaigns could not conjure up the loyalty, commitment, and multigenerational allegiance to a message the humble cross inspires. You won't find the message of the cross written on the wood. Rather, Christ's sacrifice communicates this amazing message: love, grace, and eternal life.

That universal Christian symbol powerfully and with

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unbridled persuasion not only conveys a message of what is to come, it also reminds us what life truly is: a cross. Jesus said, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23).

The Cross, like life, is both vertical and horizontal. Vertically, we connect to God, His kingdom, eternal life, spiritual truths, divine principles, and glory. Horizontally, to our left and right, we live in community and function in the context of relationships, family, culture, and society.

Simply stated, the Cross is both vertical and horizontal, redemption and relationship, holiness and humility, covenant and community, Kingdom and society, righteousness and justice, salvation and transformation.

For too long, men have lived either vertically or horizontally, but few have succeeded in living, speaking, equipping, leading, and ministering from where the vertical and horizontal planes of the Cross intersect — the nexus of Christianity.

Markedly, this is the place where conviction marries compassion and truth joins hands with mercy. The nexus represents the location where men reconcile the prophetic with the practical and faith with action.

The Sons of Issachar must remain committed to both the vertical and horizontal. Yet how do men reconcile these two planes? We embrace our biblical mandate to provide leadership in our homes, community, and spheres of influence. Our reconciliatory activities require the acceptance of a simple truth: God changes us so we can change the world.

In addition to living a life of integrity and providing both spiritual and physical nourishment for our families, male Christ followers must make cultural reformation a priority. We will accomplish this corresponding goal when, on a daily basis, we seek to address a need in our community, whether it is feeding the hungry, welcoming a stranger, ending human trafficking, promoting racial reconciliation, mentoring fatherless children, or bringing good news to the poor.

For example, if praying, fasting, worshipping, and sharing the gospel represents the vertical then defending life, protecting marriage, voting biblical values, confronting injustice, warning against pornography, rebuking racism, mentoring the fatherless, and serving the least of these represents the horizontal. Additionally, as vertical and horizontal high priests and worshippers, we receive God's anointing and instruction on Sunday so we can change the world for the glory of Christ Monday through Saturday.

We need men dedicated to prayerful deliberation and prophetic activism, addressing sin and confronting injustice, protecting life and alleviating poverty, reaching the sinner and reforming the culture. It's not either/or; it's both/and. It's righteousness and justice.

Church and society will be best served when Christ-following men reconcile Billy Graham's message of salvation through Christ with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s march for justice. As Sons of Issachar, we can and will exert maximum

influence when we lift holy hands in conviction and stretch out helping hands with compassion.

## RENEW A SPIRIT-EMPOWERED ETHOS

Issachar's men understood the times and led with prophetic courage — not as a result of happenstance but as a consequence of spiritual empowerment. Similarly, the sons of today's Christ-following tribe can influence our communities and provide prophetic leadership by renewing Spirit-empowered living.

For this reason, application of Holy Spirit-guided lenses will enable us to discern and understand our times. Thus via the conduit of biblical allusions we understand and acknowledge that real spirits exist in communities throughout America today.

For example, a spirit of Pharaoh lives holding people captive in the Egypt of bondage and fear. A spirit of Goliath persists in mocking and intimidating the children of God. A spirit of Jezebel still prompts men and women to hide in caves through sexual perversion and manipulation. A spirit of Absalom

## 5 Cultural Challenges Men Need to Address

### 1. DEATH AND VIOLENCE

Christian men must address a culture that often disregards life — in and out of the womb. We must provide a biblical alternative to a culture that celebrates violence by serving as mentors to fatherless children, providing space for conflict resolution, and facilitating a constant ministry of reconciliation.

### 2. IMAGO DEI (Image of God)

We must recognize that all humans are created in the image of God, which serves as the foundational framework for engaging a culture that suffers from spiritual and cultural myopia.

### 3. ADVANCE LIFE

Encourage adoption, and advocate for sanctity of life principles for the unborn and others.

### 4. RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Guard the liberties our founding fathers recognized, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

### 5. PROTECT MARRIAGE

Defend this God-ordained, sacred institution against internal and external adversarial forces, including pornography, adultery, divorce, and judicial/legislative redefinitions.

## SONS OF ISSACHAR: BECOMING MEN OF UNDERSTANDING AND INFLUENCE IN THE COMMUNITY

(continued from page 107)

continues to divide homes, churches, and relationships. And a spirit of Herod tragically kills the young through abortion, poverty, and sex trafficking, murdering infant dreams and vision.

Yet, Sons of Issachar, let us be assured that there exists a Spirit more powerful than all these spirits combined. Our tribe's mandate is demonstrating that the most powerful Spirit alive today is not a spirit of Pharaoh, Saul, Absalom, Goliath, Jezebel, or Herod. Our generational call and commission require us to articulate, with truth and love, that the most powerful Spirit on the planet is none other than the Holy Spirit of Almighty God. " 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty" (Zechariah 4:6).

At the same time, Spirit-empowered living enables us to exert influence in our communities by living a life of freedom (2 Corinthians 3:17); holiness (1 Peter 1:16); comfort (John 14:16); and power (Acts 1:8). We must remember that charisma without character is like driving a luxury car on reserve fuel. It can only take you so far.

As Spirit-empowered men of understanding and influence, we live to offer a counter-narrative. Hence, to every spirit that facilitates the platform of moral relativism, spiritual apathy,

cultural decadence, and lukewarm spirituality we construct the following alternative: For every Pharaoh there must be a Moses. For every Goliath there must be a David. For every Nebuchadnezzar there must be a Daniel. For every Jezebel there must be an Elijah. And for every devil or demon that rises up against us, there is a mightier God that rises up for us.

### REPUDIATE COMPLACENCY

There exists a fine line between the prophetic and the pathetic. A prophetic church recognizes the biggest problem in America is not a pathetic moral relativism, cultural decadence, or spiritual decline. The number one problem in America is the unfortunate posture of a lukewarm church.

In Old Testament days, Issachar's men understood the times in which they lived and led with wisdom. They repudiated apathy, understanding that today's complacency is tomorrow's captivity.

Arguably, the Church, once the most catalytic and influential institution in our respective communities, stands guilty of not only complacency but of sacrificing biblical truth on the altar of political and cultural expediency. To a great degree we have

## PROFILE

# No Man Left Behind

**A**n Army veteran who served during the Vietnam War, Pastor Mike Modica believes no one should have to face life's battles alone.

The motto for his church's men's group is: "No man left behind." Guys who attend the weekly men's services receive a military-style dog tag with this inscription.

"I would take these guys to any firefight in the world," says Modica, senior pastor and men's ministries director at First Assembly of God in South Hills, Fla. "We're all brothers. It's just a great thing, what we have." Modica says this army of men is the backbone of his church.

"When you get a dad in church and serving the Lord, there is a 75 percent chance of reaching his entire

family," Modica says. "We want to hold men accountable to their calling: to love God, love their wives, and love their children."

The group meets every Thursday, with attendance ranging from 50 to 160. When the Florida weather is mild, the guys gather around an outdoor fire pit with cups of gourmet coffee. Each man introduces himself and then either offers a simple prayer or shares a need, struggle, temptation, or prayer request. Modica says this routine creates an atmosphere of bonding, brotherhood, and open communication.

"Building a fire and being outdoors with a beautiful view adds something," Modica says. "It's a great place for men to be accountable, share their needs, and bring their friends. The Holy Spirit really moves during these times. If someone is struggling, we're able to take the time to pray and help that person. Sometimes we have salvations from guys just visiting."

Though he juggles a multitude of responsibilities as senior pastor of a large congregation, Modica makes

himself readily available to every man in the group. He passes out his personal cell phone number and invites the guys to call him any time. He prepares a daily devotion called Morning Munitions and delivers it, via text, to the men and others in the church and community. And he personally leads the weekly men's meeting.

"They have access to me 24/7, and I wouldn't have it any other way," Modica says. "How can I send my men out to battle without me being with them?"

The military motif is more than just a metaphor. The men's group represents an army of volunteers. Specially trained by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Convoy of Hope, the group mobilizes and springs into action following hurricanes, tornadoes, wildfires, and other natural disasters in the region.

"Men want to have a mission and be able to serve their community," Modica says. "We bring them in and give them a place. Then we give them a purpose."

**CHRISTINA QUICK, freelance writer,  
Springfield, Missouri**



abandoned our truth-telling mantle and God-given purpose.

The voices of many Christian men today are silenced by a culture and society committed to marginalizing faith, redefining family, and limiting freedom. Only the repudiation of complacency by Bible-believing agents of change will build a firewall against the enemies of truth and grace.

The situation reminds me of a nature documentary I watched. A lion returning from a hunt was ambushed, suffering seemingly mortal wounds. She had no strength — not even enough to raise her claws, lift her head, or open her eyes.

At that moment, the cameras captured the images of a band of predators moving toward the lion's position. They didn't come to finish off the injured animal but to kill her cubs. Though the wounded lion could barely move, she used her last available resource: her roar. Immediately, all the enemies threatening the lion's offspring fled.

The film's narrator said, "Why did the enemies of the lioness flee? They know very well that as long as the lioness roars, they cannot take away what belongs to her."

What about our generation of men? Will we be complacent, or will we roar? Today's Sons of Issachar must reconcile an understanding of our time with deliberate determination to repudiate complacency. We cannot remain silent.

We must not permit the pathetic noise to silence the prophetic voice. Silence is not an option when 30 million of our brothers and sisters live in poverty. Silence is not an option when, in 2014 America, men abandon their roles as fathers, our children are slaughtered, pornography marries technology, God is mocked, pushers are more admired than preachers, school grounds look like battlegrounds, and our neighbors sit paralyzed by the gate called Beautiful begging for change. It's time to emerge as vertical lambs and horizontal lions. It's time to pray, but it's also time to release a collective, faith-filled roar.

### REDEEM THE NARRATIVE OF PROPHETIC ACTIVISM

In the Old Testament, the men of Issachar's tribe knew what course to take and what actions to engage in for an effective outcome. Today's Sons of Issachar must understand and embrace what I recently shared with a group of men committed to transforming their communities in the name of Jesus.

First, there is no such thing as comfortable Christianity. Second, truth must never be sacrificed on the altar of political expediency. Thirdly, we should measure Christianity by the constant of loving actions rather than the variable of rhetorical eloquence.

As Christian men, our mandate includes redeeming the narrative of prophetic activism. In other words, we, as men of righteousness, must live out the gospel on a daily basis not just through the words uttered internally in our homes but even more by the actions taken externally in the world.

Meanwhile, as the enemies of truth and grace continue to project our values as archaic, intolerant, and irrelevant, we are called to shine the light of Christ in a world darkened by agnosticism, eclectic spirituality, and moral ambiguity. As men

of God — as godly men — we can redeem the narrative by our fruit and actions. We can show the world that Christianity is not primarily about what we oppose, and it's never about anything we desire to impose. Christianity is about what we propose: a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Sons of Issachar, it's our time to arise. This hour represents the greatest opportunity to redeem the narrative of prophetic activism. A secular reporter, skeptical of Christianity, asked, "What do Christians do, besides going to church on Sunday?"

*We love.*

*We forgive.*

*We turn the other cheek.*

*We bless our enemies.*

*We walk in integrity.*

*We live abundantly.*

*We give food, water, and clothing to those in need.*

*We welcome strangers.*

*We preach in and out of season.*

*We worship in the Spirit and in truth.*

*We shine the light of Christ.*

*We do justice.*

*We love mercy.*

*We walk humbly before God.*

*We change the world!*

Therefore, righteous warriors, rise up and make disciples. Rise up and fulfill the Great Commission. Rise up and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Rise up and heal in His name. Rise up and deliver with His power.

Rise up and live out true religion, clothe the naked, and give shelter to the homeless. Rise up and defend life, eradicate poverty, and speak on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves. Rise up and defend religious liberty, end human trafficking, and welcome strangers.

As 21st century Sons of Issachar who understand the times and exert prophetic influence by reconciling the vertical and horizontal, renewing a Spirit-empowered ethos, and repudiating complacency, what will we accomplish? We will change the world! 📌



**SAMUEL RODRIGUEZ**, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (Hispanic Evangelical Association)

#### Note

1. Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright ©1996. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.

**WHAT  
PENTECOSTAL  
WOMEN  
WANT  
FROM  
PENTECOSTAL  
MEN**

By **JOY QUALLS**

*IF WE WANT TO BREAK DOWN THE STAINED-GLASS CEILING  
THAT PREVENTS WOMEN FROM THEIR  
FULL PARTICIPATION IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE,  
WE MUST ADDRESS WHAT WOMEN WANT  
FROM THOSE WITH WHOM THEY WILL PARTNER,  
TO WHOM THEY WILL MINISTER, AND  
ALONGSIDE THOSE WITH WHOM THEY LIVE LIFE.*







## Dear Pentecostal Men,

Please let me begin by acknowledging that often, when discussions of gender roles arise, it can seem as though it is open season and you are the target. Discussions like this often frustrate me because they are not representative of so many of the men in my life. Men like my husband, who did not always

believe he could sit under the leadership of a woman, but who was open and agreed to pray and study Scripture until the Lord moved upon his heart. He is my biggest fan, supporter, and defender.

My grandfather who, until 70 years of age, only had an eighth grade education yet read my dissertation from cover to cover because he wanted to learn more about the history of the role of women in the Assemblies of God — the church in which he had been raised and, in turn, raised my brothers and me.

And men like my mentor at Vanguard University, who believed in and spoke openly and publicly of the anointing and call on my life.

I am living the life to which God called me: wife, mom, Ph.D. I get to do so, in part, because men like these believed the God who called me and, in response, provided their blessing and full support.

Too often, however, it is not the stories of affirmation that drive the discussion on gender roles. Rather, it is the stories of women being dismissed when they are called to roles traditionally carried out by men — along with glares and snide comments about whether she has the “right” to preach when there are men who are more than capable and available. It is the rebuke given a wife when she is a leader and her husband stays at home with the kids. Discussions on gender roles often grow tense when the focus is “women as leaders” rather than people called to lead.

Discussions hostile in nature to either women or men are in no way beneficial. As Pentecostal men and women who affirm

the active and present work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and ministries, I want to have a discussion about how we live out the Scriptures of Acts 2 and Galatians 3:28 as if we really believe that the Holy Spirit is the great equalizer, as if we acknowledge that He does not play favorites but breaks down social barriers that inhibit us. If we, together as Spirit-empowered women and men, want to break down the stained-glass ceiling that prevents

women from their full participation in the Christian life, we must address what women want from those with whom they will partner, to whom they will minister, and alongside those with whom they live life.

What I want is the beginning of a dialogue, one where women and men can speak openly about their understanding of gender — scripturally, culturally, and in relationship with one another. What Pentecostal women want from men in their homes, in the church, and in society is not exclusive to each sphere. What women desire and need is a renewed perspective of the relationship between the domestic roles of the home, ministry in the church, and engagement in society.<sup>1</sup>

### A COMPLEX NARRATIVE

When it comes to discussion on gender and leadership in the Assemblies of God, there is no single narrative; rather, it is complex, and often confusing.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of this letter is not to advocate specifically for the role of women in the Assemblies of God. Our position is clear, and our guiding documents provide space for women in ways that are fully affirming — a position many of our sisters in the faith do not have. What I did not fully appreciate until I began to research my dissertation was how the intricate relationship between genders in the home, society, and church plays out.

The Crosby, N.D., church in which I grew up had hanging on the wall a photograph of a young woman. The woman was Blanche Britton, a firebrand evangelist who planted this and 24 other churches. Yet since its foundation this church has never had a woman serve in a pastoral role. Blanche’s husband did not support her or acknowledge her call to pastor until he was on his deathbed, where he finally blessed her and her call to ministry. Her story, and the story of the churches she founded, is one often told in our Fellowship’s 100-year history.

So what is the official position of the Assemblies of God on the roles of women? The AG Constitution and By-laws Article VII, Section 2(1) has changed very little from 1914, when it was first adopted. It currently reads:

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"The Scriptures plainly teach that divinely called and qualified women may also serve the church in the ministry of the Word (Joel 2:29; Acts 21:9; 1 Corinthians 11:5). Women who meet the qualifications for ministerial credentials are eligible for whatever grade of credentials their qualifications warrant and have the right to administer the ordinances of the church and are eligible to serve in all levels of church ministry and/or district and General Council leadership."<sup>3</sup>

Several years ago in an interview with George O. Wood, general superintendent of the Assemblies of God, I asked him why the Assemblies of God's position on women is so broad and all-encompassing. His response? "It's who we are!"<sup>4</sup>

Wood has also written that it is the Holy Spirit who empowers, in light of the prophetic promise of Joel 2:28-30 that God will pour out His Spirit on all flesh — both men and women — which was fulfilled in Acts 2:17,18.<sup>5</sup> These Scriptures, the premise for our distinctive doctrine on the purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit as an empowerment for service, are the same passages that affirm the Assemblies of God's egalitarian stance on gender roles. While this doctrinal focus has been on women serving in ministry roles, the logic also lends itself to women serving as leaders in their homes and in society.

The Commission on Doctrinal Purity and the Executive Presbytery acknowledge that tradition, culture, and other assumptions about the meaning and application of some Scriptures have generated confusion regarding God's will for men and women.<sup>6</sup> As a result, our practice is murky. The Assemblies of God has not always been active in speaking out against assumptions that contradict our doctrinal position on the democratizing nature of the Holy Spirit to break down social hierarchies and create space for women's full participation. The history of women pastors, evangelists, and missionaries is often celebrated in the sermons of Assemblies of God leaders, while many still express great reservations in private discussion regarding the

hiring and credentialing processes, as well as how these roles translate in the home.<sup>7</sup>

Given this complexity, what do Pentecostal women want? More specifically, what do Pentecostal women want from men in the church, in the home, and in society? I believe what women want is for men and women together to practice mutuality, affirm calling, think "both/and" instead of "either/or," and rethink their understanding of authoritative roles.

**I BELIEVE OUR  
PENTECOSTAL  
UNDERSTANDING OF  
WOMEN'S  
ROLES  
IS AS UNIQUE AS OUR  
BELIEF IN THE INITIAL  
PHYSICAL EVIDENCE  
OF THE BAPTISM  
IN THE HOLY SPIRIT.**



Design Pics / Thinkstock

### **PRACTICE MUTUALITY**

Women want mutuality. Pentecostal women are weary of gender-specific roles. We want men to view us as coservants — called of God to our marriages, vocations, and communities.

At home, women want men who are secure — regardless of circumstances. We want to see men who believe that being godly is more important than being "the man." Our culture has sold men a bill of goods that emotion is feminine, so you emotionally check out of your homes and families. When you hide your emotions because you believe they are not masculine, they manifest in secret and have potential to ravage your life — by way of addiction, depression, work, pornography or other lustful thoughts, and even affairs.

Men, stop listening to the voices that tell you what it means to be masculine, and be who God created you to be. I believe that when you pursue godliness, a holy confidence will rise up in you. Then you will possess the courage to fulfill your roles. Whether God calls you to stay home and raise your

children, work from a home office, engage in the marketplace, or pursue ministry, you can obey without fear of neglecting your manhood or being defined by what you do.

I have seen firsthand the destruction that denying emotion can do to a man and his family. I grew up in a home where anger, hurt, and rejection were not expressed in a healthy manner. Verbal and emotional abuse at the hand of my father was a regular part of my life from the time I was a small child. My father eventually left our family rather

## WHAT PENTECOSTAL WOMEN WANT FROM PENTECOSTAL MEN

(continued from page 113)

than face his own insecurities over failures in ministry, loss of a parent, and the effects of the Vietnam War. Rather than allowing God to bring healing and restoration, my father chose the cowardly path, leaving it up to others to define for his children what it means to be a man.

Mutuality also means rejecting what society dictates regarding what your struggles should be. While pornography and sexual exploitation are issues to which we as Pentecostals cannot turn a blind eye, I want to believe that most of you are men who live noble lives. It is demeaning to you as men for us to believe that you lack the strength or character because of your gender to do what is right.

Pentecostal men, rise up and be an example in your community of what it means to live a holy and set apart life. Acknowledge that God did not create the women in your lives merely for your pleasure, but for His kingdom purposes. Let the knowledge that God designed both men and women in His image and called them to His divine plan impact your relationships. Be the exception in your ministries, your families, and your communities. Model mutuality in every aspect of your lives.

Mutuality means men and women working together and not in competition or conflict. It means the practice of inclusivity, not exclusivity. God calls men and women to serve alongside one another rather than in isolation. While we are different in complementary ways, we need to hear women's voices in leadership and see their participation in decision-making.

### AFFIRM CALLING

Women want an affirmation of their calling and gifts (inside and outside the church) and what they bring to the family and society. The distinction is less about male or female and more about what God has breathed into each of us. Women want to walk boldly in those inherently spiritual gifts.<sup>8</sup> Women, like men, have a deep desire to be respected, encouraged, equipped, and empowered — regardless of their call. All of our attempts at trying to place men and women in gender-specific boxes leave a bitter taste in the mouths of those who do

not fit neatly into those spaces.

I am weary of the perception that women are “suspect” and desire to tempt men or lead them astray. When men perceive women as suspicious and keep them at arm's length, it objectifies both the woman and the man. The result is that we find ourselves unable to develop our potential. We feel our voices silenced. The mentality that the church is a “boy's club” is reinforced, and a woman's place is relegated to spaces specific to her gender.

If we truly believe the empowerment of the Holy Spirit removes gender hierarchies, you must be willing to treat women in the church with the same respect you give other men. There cannot be a double standard. Please, use wisdom and discretion when interacting with the women who serve alongside you. Stop treating women in the church as potential love affairs, and instead model what it means to be a man — perhaps a man who is not above changing diapers in the nursery, serving in the food line at the potluck, or leading the outreach to single parents.

### THINK BOTH/AND

Men, as I write to you I am keenly aware that we must guard against the tendency to assign mutual exclusivity to what we desire from one another. I am reminded again of the narrative in Judges 4 and 5 that tells of Deborah, “a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth ... leading Israel” as a judge (Judges 4:4). Mary Ruth Stone writes that Deborah's three roles of prophetess, wife, and judge were neither mutually exclusive nor destructive to one another. It was God's favor, not the culture or Deborah's desire to usurp authority, that gave her influence over Barak. It was God who accompanied Deborah to war even as she accompanied the male military leader.

A male and female team (with a strong supporting role from Jael) led the charge to victory that day. In Deborah's fight song, both she and Barak sang blessings to the Lord. Deborah herself described the military victory (traditionally reserved for men) as a rising of a mother in Israel. The male role of warrior and the female role of mother, according to Stone, were not mutually exclusive. Neither were the roles destructive to one another.<sup>9</sup>

WHEN YOU HIDE YOUR  
**EMOTIONS**  
BECAUSE YOU BELIEVE  
THEY ARE NOT  
MASCULINE, THEY  
MANIFEST IN SECRET  
AND HAVE POTENTIAL TO  
RAVAGE YOUR LIFE.



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## RETHINK AUTHORITY

Often, talk on gender roles revolves around one specific issue: authority. Who holds the power to make decisions and be the leader? The question of authority underlies our assumptions about what each of our roles must be. The power of the Holy

Spirit is empowerment for service. Mutuality, fueled by the Holy Spirit, changes the way we view authority. We, as women, do not desire to take away from you. We want to join you in ministry, to come alongside you in advocating for compassion and justice, and to have full partnership with you as



## PROFILE

# Growing the Church, One Man at a Time

**T**he Worship Centre in Fowler, Calif., started as a church plant with 22 people. Twelve years later, the largely Hispanic congregation numbers 1,200.

Lead pastor Rod Haro attributes the church's remarkable growth to its commitment to reaching men. With 20 years of experience leading men's ministries, Haro says he has long believed a strong outreach to men is the key to transforming entire communities.

"Every time men's ministry grows, the church grows as well," Haro says. "Most men who get saved influence their families to come to church, hear the gospel, and, in many cases, become Christians. We've seen this happen so many times we know ministry to men is vitally important — not only to the growing of a church but, more importantly, to the family."

Situated in California's agriculturally fertile Central Valley, Fowler is a diverse community of farmers, entrepreneurs, and executives, many of whom have no church background. The Worship Centre, located in a former casino, hosts a men's dinner and church service every Monday evening.

"We have worship, teaching, and an altar call," says Haro, who leads the weekly gathering.

"It is essentially a Sunday morning worship service on Monday nights for men. Some men won't come on a Sunday morning because they get this mental image of what church is about. But they'll come to have dinner and hang out with a bunch of guys."

About a third of the 200 weekly participants are from other churches. As a result, Haro says, the ministry positively impacts the faith community as a whole. "I know there have been at least 10 to 15 men's ministries over the years in various churches that have started because men came here, got on fire, and then went and started ministries in their churches," Haro says.

Haro follows a three-pronged approach to men's ministry: connecting men to one another through



Haro

meaningful friendships; leading them to a growing relationship with Jesus Christ; and challenging them to become godly role models in the church, their families, and the community.

"We're seeing men going from indifferent and complacent to men who are involved, on fire for the Lord, and ready to be leaders, so we know it is making an impact," Haro says. "That's why I do men's ministry: because of the lives that

are ultimately changed. It is transforming not only families but this community."

Haro recalls stepping to the pulpit one Sunday morning and seeing two men standing together, serving as ushers. It was an inspiring moment as he realized these individuals had been rival gang members before they came to know Christ.

"At one time they were enemies who would have killed anyone who looked at them in the wrong way," Haro says. "Now here they were, loving Jesus, working in the church side-by-side, filled with the love of God," Haro says. "I see things like that, and I'm reminded this is what it's all about."

**CHRISTINA QUICK,**  
freelance writer, Springfield, Missouri

## WHAT PENTECOSTAL WOMEN WANT FROM PENTECOSTAL MEN

(continued from page 115)

our spouses or potential mates, each of us empowered by the Spirit. The warnings of the apostle Paul regarding the usurping of authority serve as cautions to all of us to examine our motivations for desiring authority.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was, and remains today, a game changer, relativizing social stigma and strata. Social structures are secondary to the working of the Holy Spirit, and so the authority rests with Him.

**MEN,  
YOU DO NOT  
HAVE TO  
SIT  
DOWN  
IN ORDER  
FOR WOMEN  
TO BE  
RAISED  
UP.**

If the Holy Spirit is leading our lives, there is no question of authority. Rather, the Holy Spirit's empowerment in a person's life provides evidence of authority — and this takes precedence over all social standing.

I believe this is especially important in talking about what we, as women, want from men in our homes. It is dissonant when you say you believe women can lead in the church, business and industry, education or social service, but

you deny that the same empowerment for service that breaks down gender barriers in society also breaks down barriers in our interpersonal relationships in the home.

I believe our Pentecostal understanding of women's roles is as unique as our belief in the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. We must preach this distinctive. We must hand it down to young women and men. We must demonstrate it in our hiring practices and in every level of our leadership. We must practice it in our marriages and model it in our homes.

Men, you do not have to sit down in order for women to be raised up. Neither should we have to silence the giftings and call placed upon us for fear they are usurping the place of a man. The power of the Holy Spirit is given to each as empowerment for service to the kingdom of God, and that is something both Pentecostal women and men should want and be encouraged to seek. We owe it to future generations to raise up men and women who live out their giftings and call without inhibition.

Men, we as Pentecostal women believe in you. We want to see you embrace who you are in Christ. We need you. We need men and women working together in service to the Lord,

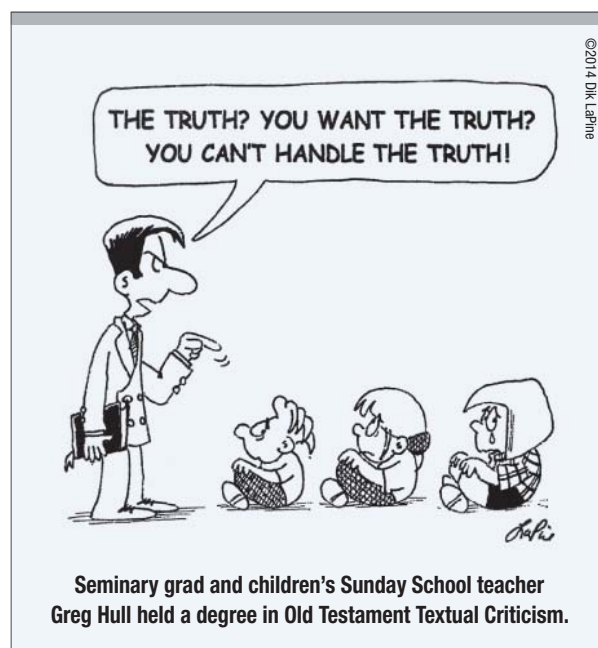
empowered by His Spirit, blotting away the gender lines that distort and separate. ■



**JOY E. A. QUALLS, Ph.D.**, assistant professor of Rhetoric and Communication, Evangel University, Springfield, Missouri

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BOOMERS TO ZOOMERS

## THE MENTORING GAP

**W**hat do Millennials seek? A 2013 survey by LifeCourse Associates<sup>1</sup>, a consulting firm that provides corporate America with demographic data on the generations, reveals a disparity between the expectations and realities of the Millennial generation (a term that generally refers to individuals born after 1980).

The poll of workers in the insurance industry reveals a wide gap between the desire for career advancement (81 percent) and the actual opportunity to advance (11 percent) among Millennials. The report also shows that while 94 percent want rewards for achieving goals, only 52 percent get rewards.

Perhaps the most interesting gap is in the area of mentoring. While 81 percent of Millennials long to work in a company that provides mentoring, only 8 percent receive mentoring. Millennials surveyed were 33 percent more likely than Baby Boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964), and 24 percent more likely than Generation Xers (those born between 1965 and 1980) to want hands-on guidance by their supervisors.

I wonder whether this 73 percent mentoring gap has something to say to church leaders. If Millennials seek mentoring, are we providing it? If not, shouldn't the church find ways to do so?

Millennials in the survey were 32 percent more likely than Baby Boomers and 18 percent more likely than Generation Xers to have a college education. How can we keep this more highly educated generation on the bench when they are begging the coach to help them develop the necessary skills and put them in the game?

— **RANDY WALLS, D.Min.**, director of continuing education, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri.

**Note**

1. LifeCourse Associates, "The Millennial Insurance Gap," <http://www.lifecourse.com/media/articles/lib/2013/03282013.html> (accessed October 22, 2013).

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### PROVERBIAL INTAKE

#### SHORT-TERM THINKING, LONG-TERM DISASTER

**T**oday's financial headlines concentrate on quarterly profits, mergers and acquisitions, and the latest trends. Advertisers cash in on this by bombarding us with reasons to buy things now. It's no wonder we lose the ability to think long-term.

King Solomon warned us about this trap centuries ago. It applied then, and it applies now. "Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it" (Proverbs 13:11, ESV).

In my profession of financial services, losing sight of long-term thinking can cause me to focus on my commissions instead of doing the right thing for my clients. As I focus on their long-term goals, it

also affects my future in a positive way. Short-term thinking seldom leads to lasting success.

Corporations that focus on quarterly profits to appease shareholders often find themselves failing down the road. The need to show great numbers today prevents the investments needed to secure the future.

Churches are not immune to this either. Pastors need to fill the seats to grow their churches. But when they focus on today's popular trends to fulfill this mission, they may look out into empty seats after the trend dissipates.

Leaders who understand how to promote long-term thinking stand the test of time. Focusing on the universal truths of the Bible never goes out of style, and this helps all of us grow long-term.

— **JAMES L. CASTELLANO, Emmaus, Pennsylvania**

**Note**

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TURNAROUND CHURCH SURVIVAL TIPS

# Dealing With Discouragement

**A** turnaround pastor's closest enemy is discouragement. It can come from anywhere and through anyone. Sometimes it seems like things are just starting to go the right way and then: "Boom!" It all comes apart.

It could be an email from a family leaving your church; not enough money in the account for you to get paid; or a sacrifice on your part that goes unnoticed. Discouragement happens.

Here is an ally for you in the battle of discouragement. I'm not talking about prayer or God's Word or remembering that Jesus is still in control. I'm not discounting those things; I just think you already know about them. There is another gift from God for you, and it is time. Time is a great ally in fighting against discouragement.

**I learned to take some time before responding, reacting, or deciding anything.**

About three years into leading our church through a turnaround, I realized it was going to be a long haul. Instead of this project taking years, it would take more than a decade. In the midst of this chapter, it was very discouraging. I went through a six-year period with an elder resigning every January. And of course, more people left us than stayed. During this season, I led the church from 600 to 175. It was painful, but I learned a valuable lesson.

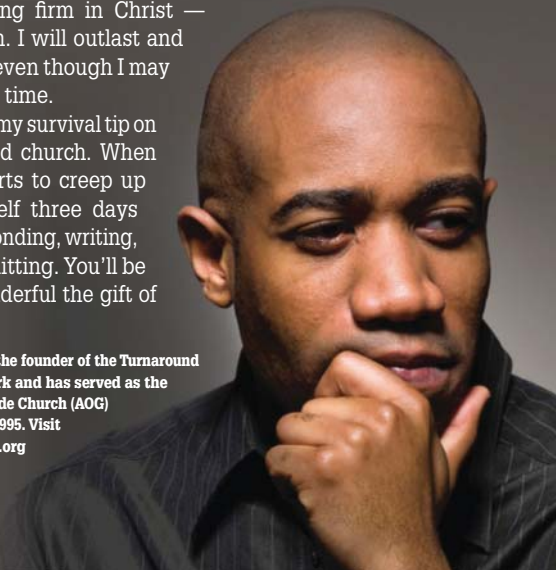
When I got a bad phone call, received a painful email, or had a gut-twisting conversation, I learned to give myself this little reminder: "Take some time before responding, reacting, or deciding anything."

Usually I would give myself at least three days. The problem or situation seldom improved during that time, but I did. Somehow giving myself permission to take time and briefly forget about the circumstances helped me gain perspective and figure out what to do.

Now I have a theory about why this is. When the enemy comes against us through people or situations, his goal is to get us to quit. But the enemy can't sustain his attack against us indefinitely. He is not omnipotent; only God is. So if I can do what Ephesians 6:13 says — standing firm in Christ — eventually I will win. I will outlast and outplay the enemy, even though I may not feel like it at the time.

So that's it. That's my survival tip on leading a turnaround church. When discouragement starts to creep up on you, give yourself three days before reacting, responding, writing, calling, yelling, or quitting. You'll be amazed at how wonderful the gift of time can be.

— DONALD E. ROSS is the founder of the Turnaround Church Coaching Network and has served as the lead pastor of the Creekside Church (AOG) in the Seattle area since 1995. Visit [www.TurnaroundChurch.org](http://www.TurnaroundChurch.org)



THE HEALTHY LEADER

## PAUSE FOR A MOMENT

**like work.** It's enjoyable to accomplish things, and get a job done well. But, like many, I often don't know when I'm over tired, even exhausted.

James wrote, "Be *quick* to listen, *slow* to speak" (James 1:19, italics mine). "Slow" is recommended. Saying to yourself, "*Slow down; don't do that right now; don't say that right now; just listen,*" is often a good thing, even the right thing.

Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:29). Pausing ... going somewhere to have solitude, to meditate on the Word, to listen, think, to observe, and to be alone is essential to our well-being.

This week is there a possibility that you can look at your schedule and find places just to pause and ask three questions?

**1. What is my yoke?** You are not asked to carry any yoke other than your own. Ask, "What does God want me to do?" When you are trying to please everybody, your load is simply too heavy.

**2. How heavy is my yoke?** Jesus said it would be "easy." If you feel burned out, exhausted, or consumed with worry and anxiety, then you are not living in "easy." If this is your situation (and I have been there), you need to consider how to "back off."

**3. How can I do this today?** How can you get balance and rest before it's too late and you wear yourself down to a frazzle, get anxious, depressed, etc.? How can you put your life on "pause" for reflection? Pause (at times) is normal.

"I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

— WAYDE GOODALL, D.Min., dean, College of Ministry, Northwest University, Kirkland, Washington



IN THE BEGINNING...

# Turn Up the Volume

**Dean, you need to go to Genesis."**

That was it, but it was the first time I heard God's voice. He was not telling me to turn to the first book in the Bible. Instead, He was directing me to enroll at Genesis Discipleship Training Center, a two-year discipleship school founded by Jim Argue — a beginning place where God would lay a solid biblical foundation in my life that I've built my life and ministry upon for the last 25 years.

Pastors and leaders, be reminded of what God spoke to you at the beginning. It is at the beginning where you will remember what God said to you and about you. Every beginning you have experienced was a result of hearing God's voice. Make no mistake about it, and resist the temptation to doubt it.

God spoke, and you yielded to His call.

God spoke, and you married your spouse.

God spoke, and you said yes to a specific ministry or vocation.

Why go back to the beginning?

In the beginning, God said .... And what He said, He is still saying! At the beginning, you will find courage and confidence amid the chaos you may be facing in regard to your call, your marriage, and your ministry — or all three.

As the voices of doubt, discord, and discouragement shout loudly in an attempt to see your call, your marriage, and your ministry come to a tragic end, go back to the beginning. Turn up the volume on what God spoke to you, and allow the Holy Spirit to create hope in your situation.

The volume of His voice will create light in your darkness, bring order to your chaos, and speak peace to your storm. Turn it up, and allow the volume of His voice to become the loudest in your life.

— **DEAN DEGUARA**, Folsom, Calif., is an emerging voice of encouragement for leaders at all levels. He is a graduate of Southwestern Assemblies of God University and an AG minister, blogger, speaker, and leadership specialist. Visit his website at [deandeguara.com](http://deandeguara.com).

JUST BEFORE THE OFFERING

## INVESTING IN ETERNITY

**A**s you give this morning, your gifts will be a blessing to many people here and around the world. But, more than that, your giving also benefits yourself. You ask, "How can giving benefit my own life?"

So far we have learned that giving makes us more like God, draws us closer to God, provides an antidote to materialism, and strengthens our faith. But giving also makes an investment in eternity.

First Timothy 6:18,19, says, "Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others. By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may experience true life."<sup>1</sup>

Your investment in stocks and bonds goes up and down, but your investment in the kingdom of God pays dividends for eternity.

So this morning I encourage you to enjoy the benefit of giving today by investing in eternity.

— **GLENN REYNOLDS**, Hampton, Virginia

### Note

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## THE CHURCH THAT WORKS

# HOW CHURCHES BECOME DEACON-POSSESSED

**C**hurches seldom create entrenched boards. Such boards evolve.

At least four situations may tempt deacons to overstep their biblical bounds. One or more occur at some time in the life of almost every church. They include resignation of the pastor,

moral failure by a pastor, relocation of a board member or leader, and a lapse in pastoral leadership by a misinformed servant of God. This article explores only the first situation.

Departure of a pastor, especially a long-tenured one, sets some churches on the wrong course. When the pastorate is vacant, deacons are responsible for overseeing the church. This can be a sensitive and vulnerable time.

Deacons should faithfully carry out their task, lead a fruitful search for God's choice, and surrender authority to the new shepherd. When they fail to do so, trouble begins.

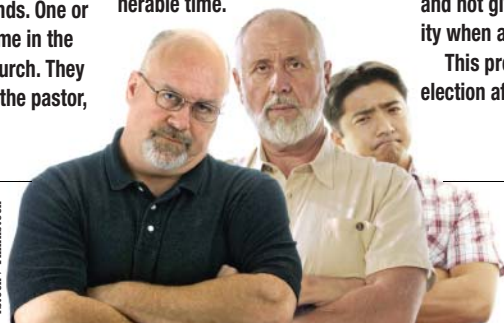
Board members may enjoy their situation, and they should. The Lord wants to bless them and give them direction, but that does not mean they are to hold on to the reigns. If deacons lose sight of this, they may drag their feet and not give back all the authority when a new pastor arrives.

This process can continue, election after election, to diminish

the pastor's role to that of a hireling shepherd. It produces a revolving door of short-term pastors, and each transition reinforces the illicit power base. The board no longer looks for a pastor to lead. They want only someone to preach and carry out their wishes.

The gates of hell will not prevail against Christ's church, but this subtle power encroachment brings a local church down from the inside.

— **MEL SURFACE**, Crowley, Texas, and **RICK DUBOSE**, Hurst, Texas. Adapted from *The Church that Works* by Rick DuBose and Mel Surface.



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## AG Chaplain Helps Pastors Shape Up

**A**s the founder of **Iron One Fitness Solutions**, Assemblies of God Chaplain Ricky Van Pay helps people find physical, as well as spiritual, wellness.

Van Pay works with pastors, church staff members, and congregants seeking to eat less and exercise more. Van Pay knows the road from experience.

Van Pay can relate to ministry leaders who would rather chow down on comfort food than visit the gym. Whenever

he felt discouraged as a young man, Van Pay visited a Mexican café and ordered a huge plate of fajitas, with extra fattening food on the side.

“I was hurting, and it made me feel better,” Van Pay says. “Deep down, I was craving chips and salsa more than Christ.”

As a 25-year-old, 225-pound youth pastor with high blood pressure and high cholesterol, Van Pay had a wake-up call when a physician told him he

was a candidate for an early grave. And when he could no longer fit into his suit coat soon after the birth of his first child, Van Pay knew he had to get in shape.

“I was preaching self-control, but I was a hypocrite because I had no discipline in eating or caring for my body,” Van Pay says. “What kind of example was I setting?”

Van Pay changed his lifestyle, dropping 75 pounds. He says he can empathize with the overweight ministers he encounters. He understands the toll of an office job that leads to a sedentary lifestyle. But he believes the effort of working out and resisting fattening foods is preferable to the back pain, shortness of breath, and high medical bills he experienced.

In his ministry at churches, Van Pay preaches sermons about health from a biblical perspective. He also coaches individuals in wellness clinics and conducts accountability sessions for ministers, teaching

nutrition basics and techniques for achieving and maintaining a healthy weight. Participating pastors keep a daily online food log for Van Pay to review.

Van Pay is an ordained AG triathlon chaplain, based in Boulder, Colo. He has participated in more than 20 triathlons since 2006, finishing three Ironman events, which involve a 2.4-mile swim, a 112-mile bicycle ride, and a 26.2-mile marathon — all done consecutively without stopping.

In whatever venue he finds himself, Van Pay keeps the apostle Paul’s advice in mind: “I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified” (1 Corinthians 9:27, NLT).<sup>1</sup>

Van Pay can be reached through his website: [rickyvvanpay.com](http://rickyvvanpay.com).

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## MODELING FAITH PAYS LATER DIVIDENDS FOR KIDS

**W**hile young adults aren’t in church as much as in previous generations, an analysis by Focus on the Family suggests children raised in a home where religious values are important are much less likely to abandon the faith.

Only 11 percent of young adults who leave the faith come from a home that models genuine spiritual commitment, according to the Millennial Faith Participation and Retention research report by Andrew Hess and Glenn T. Stanton.

“The overwhelming majority (89 percent) came from lukewarm homes or those with no faith at all,” Stanton said. “Young people who come from families that practice and instill a vital faith are very likely to stick with that faith through their young adult years and beyond.”

Doomsday reports of young adults fleeing the church in droves are overweight, according to the Focus on the Family

researchers. Only 18 percent of young adults raised with any religion are now part of the group known as the “nones,” which makes up about one in five in the general population. By comparison, 20 percent of young adults transition from one denomination to another. Thus, young adults are more likely to switch affiliations than leave the faith altogether, the report found.

Overall, conservative Protestant church membership actually showed slight growth from 30.9 percent in 1991 to 31.5 percent in 2012, the report said.

“Homes modeling lukewarm faith do not create enduring faith in children,” the authors wrote. “These young adults are leaving something they never had a good grasp of in the first place. This is not a crisis of faith, per se, but of parenting.”

The researchers said parents who exhibit Christian behavior day in and day out are likely to influence their children to do the same down the line.

“Parents who provide a home where faith is vibrantly practiced — even imperfectly — are remarkably likely to create young adults who remain serious Christians, even as they sometimes go through bumpy spots in the road,” the report concluded.

## Study Cites High Risk of Clergy Depression

**T**he unique strains of their job demands put pastors at a much higher risk of depression than those in other occupations, according to a report by the Clergy Health Initiative at Duke University.

The study, published in the *Journal of Primary Prevention*, compared the mental health of 1,726 United Methodist ministers in North Carolina to a representative sample of U.S. workers. Responses to phone interviews showed a clergy depression rate of 8.7 percent, while online answers yielded an 11.1 percent rate — twice as high as the national typical job rate of 5.5 percent.

Clergy stress arises from outside expectations, as well as self-imposed ones, researchers found. Common job stressors cited included grief counseling and delivering a weekly sermon that is subject to scrutiny. Ministers with less social support were at higher risk for depression.

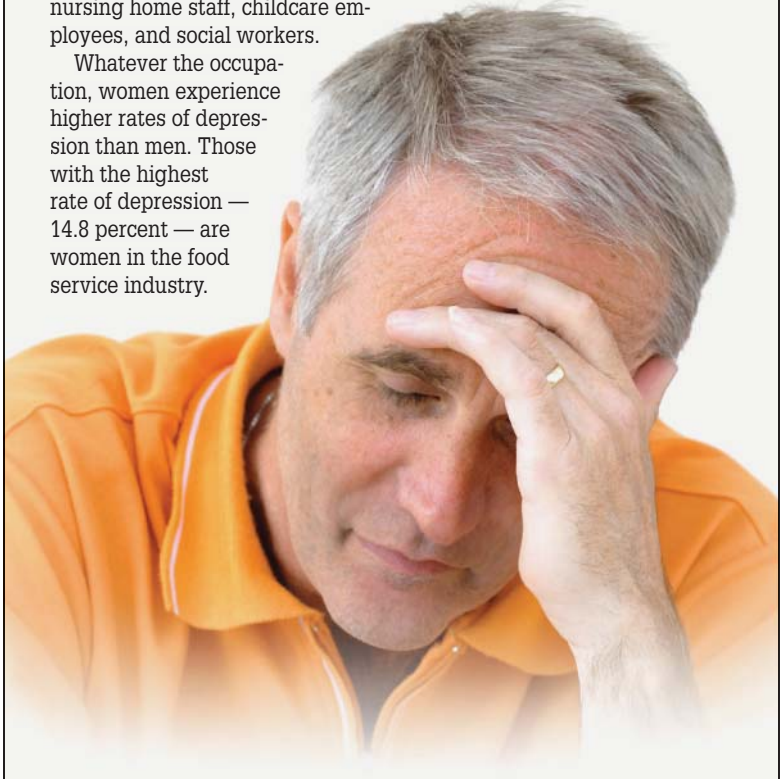
The study also found feelings of guilt over not working hard enough was a top predictor of depression, while doubt about the ministerial calling was a top predictor of anxiety. More than 7 percent of clergy simultaneously experienced depression and anxiety.

While part of the trouble stems from the demanding tasks of ministry, Rae Jean Proeschold-Bell, the Clergy Health Institute's research director, says pastors have a difficult time separating their job from their own identity.

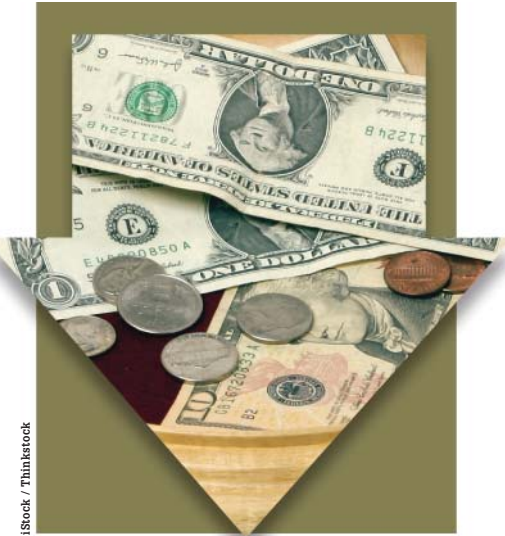
"Pastors have created a life for themselves that is so strongly intertwined with their ministry that their emotional health is dependent on the state of their ministry," Proeschold-Bell says.

Various studies indicate that other demanding jobs prompting higher-than-average depression rates also are service oriented, including nursing home staff, childcare employees, and social workers.

Whatever the occupation, women experience higher rates of depression than men. Those with the highest rate of depression — 14.8 percent — are women in the food service industry.



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### CHURCH GIVING LOWEST SINCE GREAT DEPRESSION

**I**ndividual contributions to churches fell for the fourth straight year in 2011, according to figures compiled recently by the organization Empty Tomb. This marks the longest downturn since the consecutive decreases recorded from 1928 through 1934, which included the earliest years of the Great Depression.

In 2011, the typical church member donated 2.3 percent of income to church, a dip from 2.4 percent the previous year. The study examined giving patterns of more than 100,000 U.S. congregations from 23 denominations connected with the National Association of Evangelicals and the National Council of Churches. Independent churches also were polled.

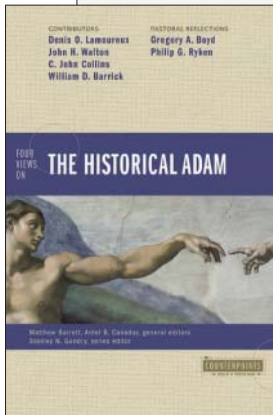
The report found NAE-affiliated denominations since the base year of 1968 have contributed a greater percentage of income than churches associated with the NCC. Yet in the same time span, NAE-member churches have shown a steeper drop in total contributions.

The study indicates those ages 65 to 74 give the most to charity, while those 75 and older give the largest portion of income. Adults 25 and younger donate the smallest percentage to charity.

Sylvia Ronsvalle, Empty Tomb vice president, says pastors should address the issue rather than ignore it. She says church leaders can encourage congregants to dig deeper, noting that while contributions to church coffers have declined, spending on luxury items has not.

## Four Views on the Historical Adam (Counterpoints: Bible and Theology)

ARDEL B. CANEDAY, MATTHEW BARRETT, and STANLEY N. GUNDRY, EDITORS (Zondervan, 288 pp., paperback)



One of the most spirited debates in American evangelicalism today has to do with whether Adam is a historical person.

The question arises inevitably from the clash of old and young Earth creation theories, including “theistic evolution,” and has gained new urgency in the face of expanding biological sci-

ence. This timely book aims to shed light on the debate and advances four different perspectives by evangelical scholars, all of whom confess high views of biblical inspiration and authority.

An informative introduction by the editors provides history and background for the origins debate and for Adam’s role in Scripture. Then each of the four contributors, reasoning exegetically and in dialogue with Ancient Near Eastern literature, sets forth his view; critiques his colleagues’ points; and addresses opposing arguments. Two pastor-theologians close out the discussion by evaluating the significance of

Adam’s historicity for the life of the Church.

First, Denis O. Lamoureux of St. Joseph’s College, University of Alberta, argues that the evidence for evolution is so convincing as to preclude belief in a historical Adam. In his view, Genesis 1–11 is a unique literary genre not written as actual history. He claims “real” Bible history only begins with Abraham. For Lamoureux, “the arrival [and fall] of the first true humans is . . . a theological mystery.”

“Adam functions as the archetype of every man and woman. In Genesis 2 and 3, he is an incidental ancient vessel that delivers numerous inerrant spiritual truths” (65).

Second, John Walton of Wheaton College argues for a historical Adam, labeling his perspective “An Archetypal Creation View.” The Genesis emphasis, he suggests, is not so much on the scientific details of Adam’s creation, but on his archetypal representation of humanity. Therefore, no appeal should be made to Adam regarding the biological origins of humanity. Walton says Adam may not, in fact, be the first human. Yet he argues this should not imperil the inerrancy of Scripture or its teachings on sin, death, and the second Adam. Walton does not adopt Evolutionary Creation (114), but his view allows for it and presupposes an old Earth. Third, C. John Collins of Covenant Theological Seminary incorporates belief in a historical Adam into his “Old-Earth Creation View.” While he recognizes there may have been some evolutionary processes over the ages, he does not accept theistic evolution. The salvation history of the Bible, to him, necessitates the historical reality of Adam’s creation in the image of God, his fall into sin, and redemption through the

second Adam, Christ. The New Testament mentions of Adam authenticate his historicity.

Fourth, William D. Barrick of the Master’s Seminary argues for a historical Adam set within the context of a “Young-Earth Creation View.” His approach to Adam’s historical reality is similar to that of Collins, with the exception that he believes the days of creation are literal 24-hour days that occurred in the fairly recent past. He says a literal reading of the creation narratives best supports the doctrines that flow from Adam’s creation and fall.

The concluding pastoral reflections show concern for the historicity of Adam, though Gregory Boyd is somewhat more tentative. He is “currently inclined to the view that Adam was, in fact, a historical figure” but does “not see this belief as central to the orthodox Christian faith” (255).

Philip Ryken, on the other hand, points out unequivocally that, “The compelling case for [Adam’s and Eve’s] historicity runs right through Scripture. To deny the historical Adam is to stand against the teaching of Moses, Luke, Jesus, and Paul” (268).

Ryken argues: “The historical Adam has a direct bearing on many areas of faith and practice. His person serves an integrating function in Christian theology” (278).

Moreover, Ryken says, “At many points denying Adam’s existence appears to be inconsistent with Christian orthodoxy” (270).

— Reviewed by Edgar Lee, S.T.D., academic dean emeritus, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, and chair, Commission on Doctrinal Purity, The General Council of the Assemblies of God.

## Innovation’s Dirty Little Secret: Why Serial Innovators Succeed Where Others Fail

LARRY OSBORNE (Zondervan, 176 pp., hardcover)



We’ve all heard them: motivational gurus touting rags-to-riches, against-all-odds success stories to inspire us to take a leadership leap of faith. Because, after all, real leaders are always willing to throw caution to the wind and offer up a Hail Mary risk in the all-out pursuit of something radically new, right? Wrong, says Larry Osborne in his latest leadership book.

After the guru leaves the stage, Osborne

pulls back the curtain to reveal that truly innovative leaders keep their options open as long as possible, make midcourse corrections, have an escape plan always at the ready, and are generally risk averse.

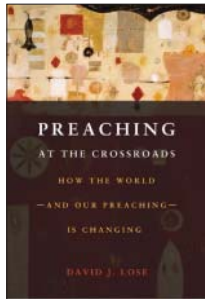
Honed from the insights of wisdom rather than hype, the book comes across like reading the transcript of a particularly effective coaching session. Well-crafted questions at the end of each section make it an accessible and practical tool for team discussion.

This is a worthwhile read if you are facing change in your organization — whether it’s planting a new church, constructing a building, opening a satellite campus, adding an additional service, or just changing the way you do Sunday School. It doesn’t matter the size of the endeavor. If you are considering a change that could cost you significant time, money, or influence, this book deserves a place on your New Year’s reading list.

— Reviewed by Anthony Scoma, pastor and founder of Southwest Family Fellowship in Austin, Texas.

## Preaching at the Close of the Age: How the World — and Our Preaching — Is Changing

DAVID J. LOSE (*Fortress Press, 124 pp., paperback*)



**There has been no shortage of warnings** about the corrosive effects of post-modernism, secularism, and pluralism in the life of the Church. What if these cultural changes could serve as opportunities instead of obstacles? In his new book, *Preaching at the Close of the Age*, David J. Lose argues they can.

Lose analyzes several modern cultural elements by identifying the central questions they seek to answer. He encourages

preachers to evaluate how their ministry and discipleship methods should adapt to a rapidly changing world.

Lose discusses the importance of anticipating and answering the questions seekers ask. He also says churches must help people see the world and their everyday lives as places where God is actually at work. Finally, he suggests approaches to preaching that generate greater participation. (His seven suggestions for inviting more congregational participation in the sermon are worthy of serious reflection.)

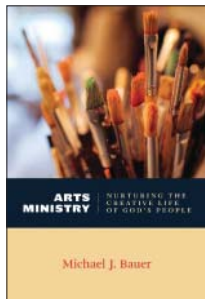
Readers of *Enrichment* journal will likely disagree with certain aspects of the author's theology. Yet Lose's practical ministry strategies and cultural analysis are worth considering.

— Reviewed by Jeff Magruder, Ph.D.,  
associate professor of Bible and Church Ministries,  
Southwestern Assemblies of God University, Waxahachie, Texas.

## Arts Ministry: Nurturing the Creative Life of God's People

MICHAEL J. BAUER

(*Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 352 pp., paperback*)



**A mentor once shared a powerful truth: "The senior pastor is the lead worshipper.** He or she may delegate that authority to others, but in the end the pastor leads the community — even in worship."

At the time I could not decide whether he was being self-important or if my lack of musical ability and subsequent discomfort with all things involving "being on key" kept me from seeing the

truth. If some of us find the idea of leading worship intimidating, many more simply ignore the relationship of art to ministry.

In *Arts Ministry*, Michael J. Bauer challenges that ignorance. He provides a comprehensive introduction to the history and practice of arts ministry. He defines arts ministry as "an attempt to help human beings incorporate beauty into their individual and corporate lives in an appropriate fashion."

Bauer says thoughtful engagement and active participation can empower the church to experience both the imminence and transcendence of God. He repeatedly brings his readers to the power of art to move people into spiritual depths that other expressions of ministry cannot.

The questions Bauer addresses are timely and practical: How does art help us grow toward God? What forms of artistic expression are appropriate for worship? What is the role of popular culture in arts ministry? His answers include warnings against artistic expressions that encourage people to desire entertainment rather than God. He also provides compelling alternatives to an entertainment-driven approach to art in ministry.

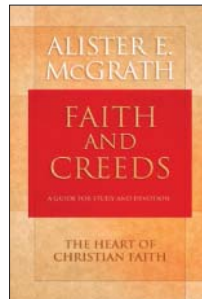
On the whole, *Arts Ministry's* academic tone may limit its usefulness or readability for some readers. Many, however, will find within its pages an artistic acumen that will serve them well as they seek to integrate faith, creativity, and art into life and ministry.

— Reviewed by Rachel Triska,  
copastor of Life in Deep Ellum, Dallas, Texas.

## Faith and Creeds: A Guide for Study and Devotion

ALISTER E. MCGRATH

(*Westminster John Knox Press, 128 pp., paperback*)



**"What do Christians believe? Why do we believe this? And what difference does it make?"**

Alister McGrath sets out to answer these three questions in *Faith and Creeds*, the first of five small books in *The Heart of Christian Faith* series. This book deals with the nature of faith and how it comes to be expressed in creeds such as the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed. Succeeding books will deal with

God the Father (book 2), Jesus Christ (book 3), the Holy Spirit (book 4), and Christian hope (book 5).

McGrath self-consciously follows in the Christian literary tradition of G.K. Chesterton, C.S. Lewis, and Dorothy Sayers as he explains the faith to nonacademic readers. He begins with ordinary experience — our desire for joy and for justice — as an entrée of spiritual reality. Then he uses that spiritual reality to shine a warm, bright light on our ordinary experience. Life shows the need for faith, and faith, in turn, shows the meaning of life.

With the Christian tradition more broadly, he distinguishes between the "faith by which we believe" and the "faith that we believe." The former is "the act of trust and assent that says 'yes' to God," while the latter is "a set of beliefs." He makes a case for why the former always involves the latter, even if the latter cannot fully express the former. He shows how Christian faith gradually came to be expressed in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. And he notes that how we believe always changes how we behave.

Though Assemblies of God churches do not consistently use either the Apostles' Creed or Nicene Creed in worship, evangelism, or discipleship, I think all Christian readers can benefit from this

## Books

volume. Its focus is “mere Christianity,” not denominational distinctions. Its tone is both warm and reasonable. And its short length makes it ideal for use in Sunday School, small groups, or book clubs.

— Reviewed by George Paul Wood, director,  
Ministerial Resourcing for the Assemblies of God  
and executive editor of *Enrichment* journal, Springfield, Missouri.

### Gods at War: Defeating the Idols That Battle for Your Heart

KYLE IDLEMAN (Zondervan, 240 pp., paperback)



It is rare when someone discovers what pastors seldom speak about from the pulpit and effectively deals with it in the details that only the discourse of a book provides. It is not often that today's preachers would preach on idolatry. After all, that is a problem confined to the pages of the Old Testament or practiced in cultures far removed from America. Why concern yourself with such an irrelevant and outdated subject?

That is what pastor, teacher, and author Kyle Idleman has done in his recent book, *Gods at War*. And for good reason. He makes it clear that the objects of worship today may not be fashioned into a golden statue, but are certainly an everyday obstacle for today's believers as they attempt to live a godly lifestyle.

From the opening paragraphs, Idleman lays a foundation based on the Ten Commandments. As we defend our personal standards by declaring that sins such as swearing, lying, murder, and adultery are not on our radar, we overlook what Martin Luther said — that you can't violate the other nine without breaking this one first — idolatry.

Although written for every person attempting to please Christ, I personally see this as a valuable manual for men. The author, without a condescending tone, speaks clearly, simply, and directly to every man's challenges. Making the correct choices is much easier when you are made aware of the dangerous obstructions in the minefield of life.

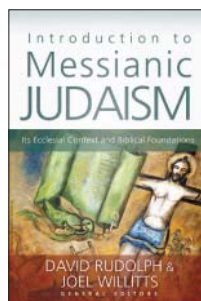
The author straightforwardly acknowledges the gods of food, sex, entertainment, and money and deals with them in a clear manner. The exposure and discussion of the “not so obvious” gods of success, achievement, and family will prove to be eye opening and valued knowledge for the long haul.

Whether as a teaching tool, preaching material, or personal application — or all of the above — this volume will prove to be a valuable addition to anyone's library.

— Reviewed by Tom Greene, former director,  
Men's Ministries of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri.

### Introduction to Messianic Judaism: Its Ecclesial Context and Biblical Foundations

DAVID RUDOLPH AND JOEL WILLITS, Gen. eds.  
(Zondervan, 335 pp., paperback)



Messianic Judaism has been one of the most misunderstood topics among Christian believers and leaders for decades. Finally, a book striking in its simultaneous clarity and depth serves as a portal into the history, theology, praxis, and future of this multifaceted movement.

The book is excellently structured, flowing naturally out of the collegial bond between its editor-collaborators:

messianic rabbi David Rudolph and Gentile scholar Joel Willits. Rudolph's introduction and Willits' summary and conclusion serve as bookends to the volume. At the heart of the book, 12 messianic Jewish authors and 14 Gentile Christian scholars navigate a variety of key biblical texts and theological themes (such as law, grace, election, chosenness, mission, covenant, peoplehood), and wrestle with fundamental questions such as Jewish believers having total faith in Yeshua while simultaneously devoting themselves to living a traditional Jewish life.

Several threads run through the book related to the relationship between Jews and Gentiles both throughout history and in the Church. Issues related to God's redemption of Israel for the sake of the Gentiles, ongoing equality and unity of Jewish and Gentile believers concurrent with ethnic and missional distinction, a “post-supercessionist interpretation of the New Testament” (18), interdependence of the Jew-Gentile body of Christ, and the nature of our future hope make the book a real page-turner. What emerges is a clearer picture of messianic Judaism “at its center and on its margins.” (11) The book does not attempt to hide the reality of tension between that center and its margins. It expounds on the complex work of messianic believers of all stripes continuing to work through issues with long-term implications that present challenges both *within* the messianic movement as well as *between* it and evangelical bodies.

The book's audience is primarily those serious about interpreting key biblical texts and strengthening relationships between messianic Jewish and Gentile Christian believers, leaders, and organizations. It is a must-read for evangelical pastors, messianic rabbis, upper-level students and seminarians, as well as those in the mainstream Jewish world. The content will prove useful both for initial introduction as well as ongoing extensive study, ushering the reader into a way of articulating difficult theological and practical issues. Gentile Christian pastors in particular will find it useful for understanding their own faith better, cultivating a vision for humble partnership with messianic believers not only to coexist but to thrive in a place of mutual blessing in the body of Christ.

— Reviewed by Lois E. Olena, D.Min.,  
associate professor of practical theology and Jewish studies,  
Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri.

“  
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”

— Kyle Idleman

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North Richland Hills, Texas

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## U.S. Missions Launches Compassion Ministries Resource Website



**Assemblies of God U.S. Missions recently launched a new website** to provide churches and individuals with tools for developing compassion ministries in their local communities.

“Scripture is clear that compassion is the means by which Christians live out their Christianity,” says Zollie Smith Jr., U.S. Missions executive director. “We want to partner our team of missionaries, chaplains, and project volunteers with the local church so we can work together feeding the hungry and helping the disabled, the widow, the orphan, the prisoner, the trafficking victim, the pregnant teen, and the addict.”

The website provides information on such topics as addiction, homelessness, hunger, human trafficking, foster care, prison ministry, rural outreach, and caring for the disabled. There are also sections on grants, a calendar of upcoming events, and recommended readings related to compassion ministries.

View the website at [agusmresources.ag.org](http://agusmresources.ag.org). For more information, contact Cynthia Thomas at [cthomas@ag.org](mailto:cthomas@ag.org).

### Reaching Muslims in Your Community

**The Muslim world represents 1.5 billion people** who are lost without Jesus. And this population is growing at a rapid pace in every corner of the world.

Global Initiative: Reaching Muslim Peoples seeks to facilitate an understanding of Islam, enlist believers as intercessors and equip them for witnessing and discipleship, and ultimately birth a burden for the salvation of those 1.5 billion lost Muslims.

A special Muslim-awareness seminar, Reaching Muslims in Your Community, examines the attitudes and prejudices many people carry toward Muslims, explains the tenets and culture of Islam, and provides tools for learning about the Muslim world. The seminar inspires Christians to respond to the challenges and opportunities Islam presents to the Church and encourages them to befriend the Muslims in their local communities.

For information on hosting a local seminar at your church, call 417-866-3313, e-mail [contact@globalinitiativeinfo.com](mailto:contact@globalinitiativeinfo.com), or visit [www.GlobalInitiativeInfo.com](http://www.GlobalInitiativeInfo.com).

### The Warrior's Bible: A Bible for the Military Community

**Life Publishers recently partnered** with military officers, chaplains, and other enlisted personnel to create a unique Bible for servicemen and women.

*The Warrior's Bible* includes over 450 theme-based notes and articles that relate the challenges of military life to biblical truth.

Topics include post-traumatic stress disorder, spiritual warfare, deployment, and military family life.

The Bible will be available in early summer. For more information, visit [lifepublishers.org](http://lifepublishers.org).



## Jacob's Hope: Historical Opportunities

**Since its inception, Jacob's Hope has broken new ground.** The first Assemblies of God World Missions outreach to minister to the international Jewish community, Jacob's Hope is now helping establish a Messianic Jewish congregation in a predominantly Muslim country.

Jacob's Hope has established a job-training center for the Jewish people in Ethiopia and 10 compassion ministry centers throughout Israel. The organization seeks to open 20 more. Nearly 20,000 Israelis visited the centers in 2012, and more than 100 accepted Jesus as their Messiah.

Jacob's Hope is also raising funds for the Hope Center in Israel. It will include a warehouse, a compassion ministry center, a meeting place for Jewish believers, an evangelistic coffeehouse, a job training center, and apartments for volunteer workers.

For more information, visit [www.jacobshope.com](http://www.jacobshope.com).

## Take a Spiritual Retreat to the Lands of the Bible



**A journey to the lands of the Bible** can be more than just a memorable vacation. It can also be a learning and spiritual retreat — an investment in ministry.

The Center for Holy Lands Studies offers two dynamic programs for ministers who want to enhance their teaching and preaching. As One with Authority (based on Matthew 7:29) is a nine-day journey that takes travelers through the land of Israel, focusing on biblical leadership, Bible interpretation, and communication modeled after the life of Christ.

Summer Institute is a five-week program that offers an extended sabbatical in Israel. Participants visit Jerusalem and the shores of the Sea of Galilee, studying in-depth with world-renowned scholars in the fields of biblical history, archaeology, geography, Dead Sea Scrolls, and biblical languages. Onsite field studies bring classroom learning and the Bible to life.

For more information, visit [holylandsstudies.org](http://holylandsstudies.org) or call 1-855-700-CHLS (2457).

## General Superintendent's Tour Launches Armenia Bible College



**The gospel will soon penetrate Armenia** like never before as the nation's first Bible college opens its doors.

George O. Wood, general superintendent of the Assemblies of God, and Gary Seevers, president of Global University, will lead a special expedition to Armenia May 30 through June 6. Wood, Seevers, and other participants will meet key Armenian believers and see firsthand how God is moving in this strategic country. The event will include the historic launch of the Armenia Bible College, a partnership with Global University.

The Union of Churches of Evangelical Faith, a Pentecostal union led by Superintendent Raphael Grigoryan, requested Global University's help in launching Armenia Bible College and training



missionaries. The Union seeks to expand the Church's influence in an increasingly Muslim region of the world, but it lacked a school for equipping leaders to carry out the task.

Global University seeks sponsors so it can translate 48 Global University courses into the Armenian language, at an estimated cost of \$480,000.

For more information, call Global University at 1-800-443-1083, extension 2136.

### 123 AG College Students Receive Scholarships



**Sandy-Catherine Rodriguez, a junior at Northpoint Bible College** in Haverhill, Mass., was among 123 recipients of the Assemblies of God Making the Difference Scholarship last fall.

The Assemblies of God Trust funds these awards. Since its formation in 2008, AGTrust has awarded \$1,776,320 through three scholarship programs and provided loan repayment assistance to 684 students attending AG colleges and universities.

"Being here has been an amazing adventure," says Rodriguez, a biblical studies and church ministries major. "The environment at Northpoint is surrounded with opportunities to grow and flourish. The MTD Scholarship has played an integral role in making this growth possible. I want to thank the AGTrust donors. They are not only partnering with me, but countless others, in the cause to spread the love of Jesus to a lost world."

Rodriguez plans to seek an internship with a human trafficking organization.

Visit [AGTrust.org](http://AGTrust.org) to learn more about the scholarship and grant programs available to AG college students and to learn how churches, districts, businesses, and individuals can become members of Assemblies of God Trust.

### China Bible College Sees Surge in Enrollment

Since **China Bible College** launched in Oct. 2012, more than 12,000 students have enrolled in a course online. The college, powered by Global University in collaboration with the Northern Asia Region of Assemblies of God World Missions, now enrolls an average of 30 new students daily.

China Bible College, the only school of its kind in the Asian nation, offers 54 online Global University discipleship and ministry courses for just \$1 per course. Qualified Chinese students can also earn a fully accredited master's degree through Global University.

"We are grateful to those who provide funding for China Bible College," says Global University President Gary SeEVERS. "It's amazing to think that a Chinese believer can get quality, Pentecostal Bible training for only \$54. We expect that eventually our student body within China could reach 100,000."

For more information about China Bible College, contact Global University at 1-800-443-1083, extension 2136, or visit [globaluniversity.edu/missions\\_china.cfm](http://globaluniversity.edu/missions_china.cfm).

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## AdIndex

### Assemblies of God:

- Centennial celebration ..... 12
- *Enrichment* journal ..... 84
- Financial Solutions ... 3, inside back / outside back cover
- Global Church Planting Summit ..... 12
- Holy Lands Studies ..... 63, 126
- Light for the Lost ..... 53
- Project Rescue ..... 77
- World AG Congress ..... 12

Cancer Treatment Centers of America ..... 2

Churches by Daniels Construction ..... 15

Faith and Science Conference ..... 29

Global University ..... 61, 126, 127

### MyHealthyChurch:

- Adult ministry materials ..... 85
- Discipleship ..... 99
- Incredible Islands ..... inside front cover / 1
- Kids' ministry materials ..... 69
- Leadership materials ..... 39
- Youth leader materials ..... 4

Our Journey of Hope ..... 2

*The One Jesus Loves* ..... 13

*The Renegade Pastor* ..... 7

Thomas Nelson Publishers ..... 13

# A MANDATE for MEN

By NEIL KENNEDY



*y strategy failed.*

I have started two churches and served as executive pastor at one of the nation's largest churches. By some measures, we were successful. We had thriving youth and children's ministries, a good core of small groups, and vibrant women's ministries. We grew numerically. We built buildings. We saw hundreds, even thousands, saved. Yet I failed. I failed — we failed — because we did not have a specific strategy to reach men.

The few churches that attempt to reach new men, or retain those they have, often do so with sophomoric themes — naming their ministries after movies, video games, or militaristic styling, all of which treat men as juveniles. We must admit the occasional men's breakfast doesn't win many men to Christ, and an annual retreat seldom gives men the spiritual stamina to face the challenges of manhood.

For the most part, churches have grown in their efforts to reach women, children, and teenagers. They have become very aware of the need for outreaches to specific groups. They know the likes and dislikes of children, teenagers, and, of course, women. However, our churches have not worked as creatively and effectively at communicating to men. For the church to be successful, it must put more thought and prayer toward reaching men.

Many pastors and leaders believe the myth that men are not spiritual. According to Barna research, however, more than 90 percent of American men believe in God, and five out of six call themselves Christians. Yet only one in six men attend church.<sup>1</sup>

There is a huge disconnect between men's interest in God and the value they place in the local church. In reality, nine out

of 10 men are already interested in God. Knowing this should give leaders confidence that if we change a few things and become creative and strategically acute in our efforts, we can see an enormous growth in our churches. We can witness an amazing harvest of men who believe in God but who also receive value, and add value, to the local congregation.

I honestly believe there has never been a more perfect time to reach men. Today's men are aware they

need God. They sense that their lives have a higher purpose than chasing after cars, clothes, or cottages. They're ready for a cause — one with eternal significance.

The Bible says, "The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out" (Proverbs 20:5 ESV).<sup>2</sup>

In my book, *Fivestarmen: The Five Passions of Authentic Manhood*, I identify five things that motivate healthy men: an adventurous spirit, an entrepreneurial drive, a desire to be gallant in relationships, faithful in character, and the longing to leave a legacy through a philanthropic cause.

We can reach more men by appealing to their deep need for purpose. By challenging and equipping men to fulfill their God-given purposes, we can empower them to cast off the things that restrain them.

A passage of Scripture concerning the life of David says, "In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war ... David remained in Jerusalem. One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace..." (2 Samuel 11:1,2).

This moment brought tragic consequences for David and the nation of Israel. A night of boredom aided by losing sight of his relationship with God led King David to commit sins of adultery and murder. When David withdrew from the pursuit of his purposes, he gave in to lust.

Recently while giving an altar call at a large men's conference, I asked the question, "How many of you are bored with your life?" Overwhelmingly, the majority of the men's hands were raised. I believe men are bored.

We must speak to the purposes that drive men and help them understand those purposes. When a man has a meaningful mission, his life becomes a passionate pursuit of biblical manhood.

It's time for us to resurrect biblical manhood and draw out the purposes of the men of our congregations. We need a strategic plan of action — daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annually — that will communicate to men's purposes.

This issue of *Enrichment* has thoughtful ideas and strategies that every church and pastor should employ in their ministry to men. ☒

#### Notes

1. Barna Research Online, "Women are the Backbone of Christian Congregations in America," March 6, 2000, [www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org).
2. The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. Scripture quotations marked ESV are taken from The Holy Bible: English Standard Version, copyright 2001, Wheaton: Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.



**NEIL KENNEDY**, founder and president, FivestarMan. He is author of the *FivestarMan* series, including *FivestarMan: The Five Passions of Authentic Manhood*.

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