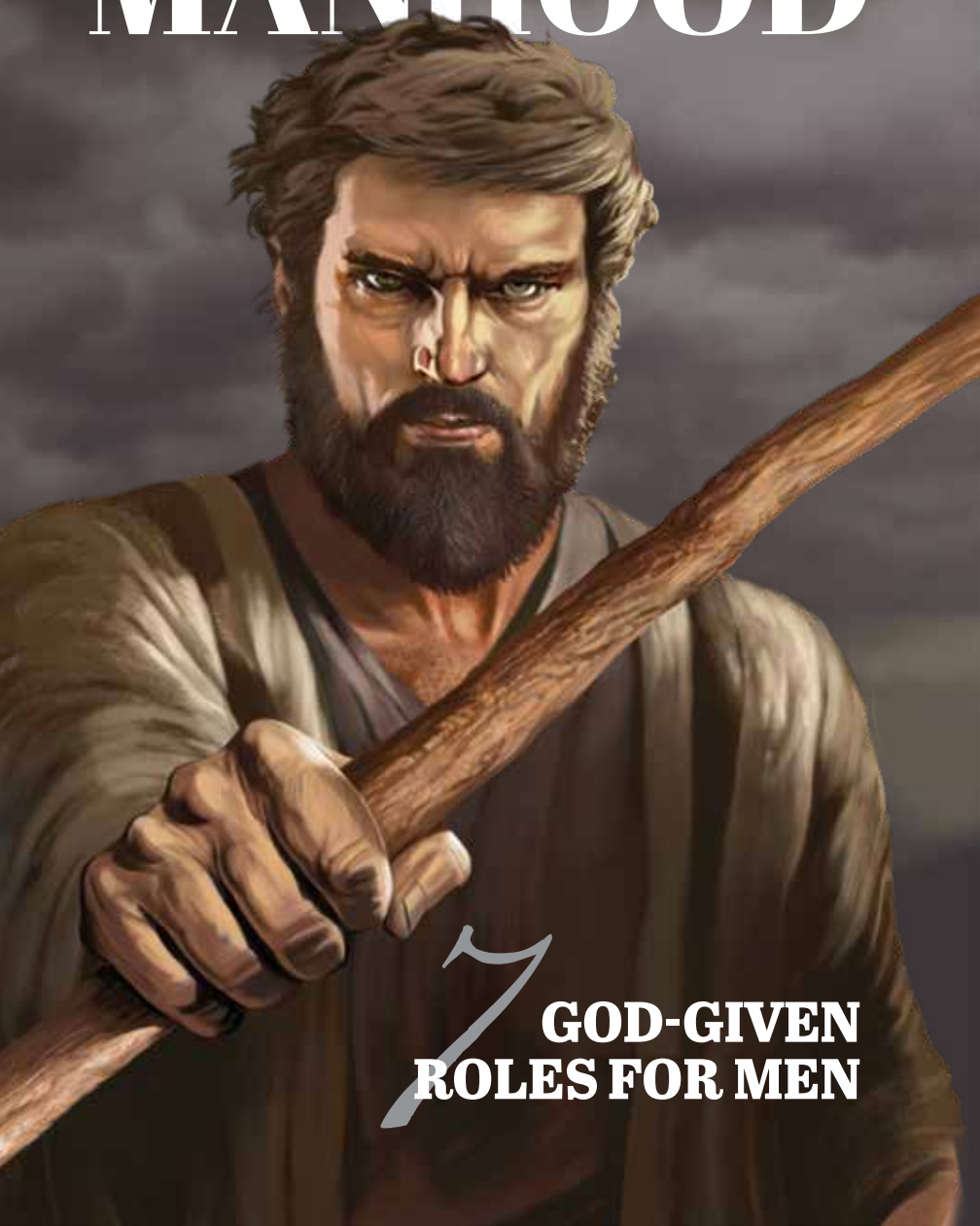


Biblical **MANHOOD**



**7 GOD-GIVEN
ROLES FOR MEN**

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Biblical **MANHOOD**

Seven God-given roles for men

**MAN OF GOD
LEADER
PROVIDER
PROTECTOR
HUSBAND
FATHER
BUILDER**

BY JOEL HILLIKER

What does it mean to be a man?

In a society of same-sex “marriages” and transgender bathrooms, the answer to this question has never been more confusing. This generation has challenged, castigated and changed virtually everything that has defined manhood throughout human history.

Biblical Manhood gets back to the basics. It seeks guidance from the Creator of masculinity as revealed in His Instruction Book.

It provides detailed, practical direction on how to fulfill seven God-given roles for men:

- Man of God • Leader • Provider
- Protector • Husband • Father • Builder

It also includes short biographies of men in the Bible who exemplified these roles.

In a world of ambiguity, this book gives clarity. In a society overflowing with questions, this book supplies answers. It relies on the ultimate Source in pursuit of an enduring, reliable, rock-solid definition of what it means to be a man.

Sincere thanks to all who contributed to this book. It includes the ideas and words of many Church authors including Gerald Flurry, Stephen Flurry, Alex Harrison, Ron Fraser, Wik Heerma, Brad Macdonald, Eric Anderson, Ryan Malone, Dennis Leap and Mark Hyde. Thanks also for the invaluable editorial help of Andrew Hessong, Philip Nice and many others.

Biblical **MANHOOD**

Preface What Happened to Manhood?

Section 1

THE MAN OF GOD

16 1.1 Embrace Your Destiny

24 *Jesus Christ—Exemplar of Masculinity*

28 1.2 Anoint Your Eyes

34 1.3 Purify Your Heart

46 *Joseph—Flee Fornication*

48 1.4 Do Hard Things

56 *Jacob—Wrestle Through Pain*

58 1.5 Keep Your Word

66 *Eleazar—Stand Alone*

Section 2

THE LEADER

- 70 **2.1 Lead**
- 80 *David's Mighty Men—Slay Giants*
- 82 **2.2 Crush Inferiority and Weakness**
- 91 *4 Qualities of a Godly Leader*
- 92 **2.3 Take Responsibility**
- 102 *Shammah—Stand Your Ground*
- 104 **2.4 Decide**
- 112 **2.5 Be a People Person**
-

Section 3

THE PROVIDER

- 120 **3.1 Be the Breadwinner**
- 130 **3.2 Build Your Work Ethic**
- 140 *Paul—Fight the Good Fight*
- 142 **3.3 Forge Vigorous Health**
- 152 **3.4 Get Stronger**
- 158 **3.5 Maintain Your Home**
- 163 *The Isaiah 32 Man*
-

Section 4

THE PROTECTOR

166 **4.1 Protect Women and Children**

177 *Moses—and Other Protectors*

178 **4.2 Confront**

184 *Nehemiah—Repel Unrighteousness*

186 **4.3 Smile Through Trial**

192 **4.4 Pray for Others**

Section 5

THE HUSBAND

200 **5.1 Keep Your Wedding Vows**

212 **5.2 Lead Her Spiritually**

224 **5.3 Understand Her**

232 *The Proverbs 31 Husband*

234 **5.4 Deepen Your Love**

Section 6

THE FATHER

- 244 **6.1 Use Your Office**
- 258 **6.2 Fill Your Home With Love**
- 268 **6.3 Turn Their Hearts to God**
- 276 *Abraham—Teach Your Household*
- 278 **6.4 Make a Man**
- 288 *David—Instruct Your Sons*
- 290 **6.5 Be Your Daughter's Hero**
-

Section 7

THE BUILDER

- 300 **7.1 Think Big**
- 310 **7.2 Share Your Talents**
- 316 **7.3 Mentor Others**
- 322 *Jonathan—Build Manly Friendships*
- 324 **7.4 Live With Purpose**
- 334 **7.5 Start Now**
-

Preface

WHAT HAPPENED TO MANHOOD?

*See what God wants to
accomplish through you.*

WHAT IS MANHOOD?

Surely almost every adult male considers himself a *man*. Yet if asked to define just what it means to be a man, they would give a variety of conflicting definitions.

If you want to define manhood for yourself, you will probably always meet your own criteria.

But if you want to define manhood *in reality*, you need to look into the Holy Bible and consult the *Creator* of manhood.

He has a lot to say about it. And if you are male, you should be deeply interested in His view.

How well do you measure up to *God's* definition of manhood? Are you stepping up as a man as He intends? Are you fulfilling your duties as a man in your home, with your family? In your job? To your neighbors and other people in your life? Within society? Frankly, few men could look their Maker in the face and answer yes to these questions.

Meeting God's standard is a challenge—a noble challenge—and He intends it to be. But it is made all the more difficult by powerful forces within modern society working against you. Over a period of decades, society has employed a variety of tools and weapons to prevent men from fulfilling their God-ordained role. Confusion over just what is expected of man is rife. The result is that many of us fail even to fully *understand* what it means to be a man, let alone to embody it.

The absence of biblical manhood today represents a *revolution* in modern society. And when you truly evaluate the effects, you realize just how devastating it has been.

God, however, has a solution. He is working with a group of men today—men whom He is preparing to assist Jesus Christ in *restoring biblical manhood*, setting this upside-down world right-side up.

You can be one of those men.

Seeing the full picture of the masculine duty God has vested in you is awesome and inspiring. It can also be intimidating, even overwhelming. But take heart. Maturing as a godly man is a lifelong endeavor, and it is never too early or too late to start. *Every* man struggles. *Every* man can grow in biblical manhood. You have everything to gain from studying this subject. *Every* bit

of effort you put toward better grasping and fulfilling the powerful, spiritually rich and enriching role God has given you will be worth it.

This book is a frank discussion by men for men. It is not intended for women (although *anyone* studying biblical manhood will receive an exhilarating vision into the mind of God). Any woman who listens in on this discussion is requested to keep to herself the elbows she may want to place in the ribs of the men in her life, *never* to use against them anything she happens to read here.

We will begin by surveying the world as it is today. As we do, assess how much of society's thinking has rubbed off on you.

The Incredible Shrinking Man

What is manhood in society today?

In a world of same-sex “marriages” and transgender bathrooms, the answer to this question has never been more confusing. This generation has challenged, castigated and changed virtually everything that has defined manhood throughout human history.

Consider some facts.

In 1960, about two thirds of American men, by age 30, had finished school, left their parents' home, become financially independent, gotten married and had a child. By 2000, that number was cut in half. In 1970, 80 percent of 25-to-29-year-old American men were married. Now that number has also been cut in half. In 1950, one in 20 men of prime working age was not working. Today, it's about 1 in 6.

Today, about 60 percent of 18-to-24-year-old males live with their parents. Among 25-to-34-year-olds, it's about 20 percent—almost double the rate among women the same age.

In secondary education, boys are outnumbered by girls in student government, honor societies, debating clubs and on school newspapers. They are outperformed on tests of artistic and musical ability. The typical boy is a year and a half behind the typical girl in reading and writing skills. Boys are more likely to be held back or suspended from school. More boys drop out.

More boys are on Ritalin, and more get involved in crime, alcohol and illegal drugs.

Women are pursuing higher education in far greater numbers than men. Every year, 170,000 more women than men earn bachelor's degrees. They expect higher earnings and better professional advancement than young men do. And although the average man earns 10 percent more, the average 20-something woman earns more than the average 20-something man.

Women are even avoiding serious relationships so as not to derail their career goals. When they decide they want to marry, they are finding fewer men who have developed their minds, bodies and skills. Their choice is to either "marry down" or not marry at all.

More single women than single men are buying their own homes. More and more are having children on their own. Many think marriage would be nice, but they find it unnecessary. They can take care of themselves, after all, and don't need another dependent, another mouth to feed.

These developments are a reversal of the relationship between males and females that has existed for virtually all of human history. This is no small change; it is a complete restructuring of a social order. Social historian Stephanie Coontz calls it "a historical revolution every bit as wrenching, far-reaching and irreversible as the Industrial Revolution." She told the *Atlantic*, "When it comes to what people actually want and expect from marriage and relationships, and how they organize their sexual and romantic lives, *all the old ways have broken down*" (November 2011; emphasis added throughout).

She is describing the *destruction* of virtually everything that has DEFINED MANHOOD for much of human history!

Feminists may celebrate, but more and more people are recognizing that this trend comes with some steep costs we are only starting to see.

A Relic

For millennia, men have been providers: providers of defense, security, shelter, food and the means for other heavy

necessities of life for women, who themselves provided the finer necessities of the relationship. As pioneering, farming and other occupations gave way to wage-earning jobs, men did the smithing, ranching, mining, felling, milling, building, clerking and other work outside the home—the work of providers. This integral role in life propelled males forward through their childhoods, their educations, their careers and their lives.

Now, this model is mocked. Two-income families are the norm, with neither husband nor wife fulfilling their historic role. Feminists encourage women to stand on their own, shunning dependency on men, and becoming laborers, wage-earners, managers, executives and even soldiers.

Women have proved to be spectacularly capable, and men have gotten the clear message: *You are no longer needed.*

It's a proven, demonstrable aftereffect: In areas where they compete, women's success tends to discourage men. You can attribute this to chauvinism, sexist indoctrination or whatever you would like, but it is real, and it is potent. Once men see women providing for themselves, they lose interest in doing so. This effect is apparent throughout the workforce. As women enter a profession, men lose interest in it. Thus, men are abandoning more and more jobs, and women are rushing in even faster to fill the void. Women's options for employment keep expanding as men surrender them.

The upshot of all this is “the emergence of an American matriarchy, where the *younger men especially are unmoored, AND CLOSER THAN AT ANY OTHER TIME IN HISTORY TO BEING OBSOLETE*—at least by most traditional measures of social utility. And the women are left picking up the pieces” (Hanna Rosin, *The End of Men*).

Unmoored. Obsolete. These are painfully accurate terms for far too many of today's aimless, indifferent men. This is the void that now exists where the sense of duty to provide used to be.

This is what happens when you throw out “all the old ways” without even asking where they came from, whether they had validity, or what might take their place. This is what happens when you cut society from its moorings. But there is more.

Retreat

Lacking any apparent responsibility, men have devoted themselves to their own pleasure. It is a self-perpetuating cycle: A man with less motivation to provide devotes more time to senseless pursuits, which renders him *even less* capable of fulfilling that role. And the instant he turns away from his masculine responsibilities, a black hole of vice and wastage sucks him in.

Video game addiction is about four times more common among boys than girls. The average American boy spends 13 hours a week absorbed in video games, compared to five hours for the average girl. Half of college students admit that video games preempt their studies “some” or “a lot.” By the time the average American youth reaches drinking age, he will have devoted 10,000 hours to gaming—enough time to have earned two bachelor’s degrees.

Those 10,000 hours are often spent viewing and interacting with fictional characters in outright sexualized, violent or ghoulish worlds. Millions of young people are immersing themselves in realistic games that encourage them to become killers, sadists, mutilators and monsters that use every conceivable weapon for murder, torture, dismemberment, decapitation, impaling, ethnic cleansing and rape.

When they turn away from video games, millions of boys and men turn to pornography. Explicit sexual media are now mainstream, pervasive, socially accepted, devilishly easy to get and intensely addictive. The demand is monstrous: For every TWO feature films made in America, the country produces FORTY-FIVE full-length commercial pornography films. The average high school boy watches *two hours of pornography a week*. Researchers conducting a study in July 2011 on pornography and prostitution had so much difficulty finding nonusers that they had to *loosen their definition* in order to muster 100 men for a control group.

These perverted images and warped concepts filling men’s minds have devastating effects on men’s relationships and mental health. Video games and pornography tend to become a

substitute for normal face-to-face interactions, which makes users more isolated, socially awkward and susceptible to depression. They have also been shown to suppress the willingness to take risks and to navigate the intricacies of real-world relationships, education and employment.

These influences are CRUSHING MANHOOD. One specific proof: Academics have uncovered a correlation between pornography viewing and an increase in a man's willingness to move back in with his parents. Risk-averse men who cannot handle life's complexities are deeply disadvantaged if not crippled in ever being able to support a family and assume other responsibilities of manhood.

When Father Is Not Around

Feminists applaud the breakdown of long-held traditions in male-female relations. But look what has taken their place: academically and financially thriving women with no one to marry, juvenile men huddling in caves of self-indulgence, and children who think this is normal, then grow up and break down these historical norms even further. Is this what feminists want?

The loss of bread-winning men in favor of perpetual adolescents has produced a swarm of other problems that result when men disengage from family and from society. Yes, women are succeeding financially and professionally—but families are fragmenting, and society is morally and spiritually disintegrating.

The role of fathers has shrunk dramatically. More and more children are growing up without fathers at all. And the science is in: Fatherlessness causes severe problems. Nearly half of children who live with their single mother live in poverty. Children who have limited interaction with fathers have higher rates of behavioral issues; these show up as early as age 1. Children without a positive father relationship are more negative about school and their teachers. Fatherless boys are far more inclined to commit crime, take illegal drugs, smoke cigarettes and abuse alcohol. Males with an absentee father are nearly three times likelier to carry a gun and engage in drug

deals than those who have a father at home. Fatherless girls are much more prone to fornicate; teenage pregnancy for girls who grow up without a father is four times higher than among those with a father in the home. And fatherless girls who marry are far more likely to file for divorce as adults.

Today, about *40 percent* of all 18-and-under children in America—27 million kids—do not live with their biological fathers! Yet few Americans are upset about it. Many even argue that society is *better off* with a diminishing father's role and children growing up in single-parent homes!

Anyone who looks at these real-world results and applauds them is insane. Anyone assessing them honestly sees that this revolution has been a disaster. The loss of strong manliness is a *plague* on our society.

Believe it or not, this exact calamity was *prophesied* in your Bible thousands of years ago.

Where Are the Real Men?

The prophecy is in Isaiah 3, and it is primarily about the end time, which other passages prove is the era we are living in right now. It specifically focuses on “Jerusalem” and “Judah,” biblical language for the modern descendants of ancient Israel, including America and Britain. Look around! Isaiah described exactly what we see before our eyes: nations where strong male leadership has virtually **DISAPPEARED**.

Notice: “For, behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah ... The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient, The captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator” (Isaiah 3:1-3). On the whole, mighty, heroic, discerning, farsighted, wise, honest, skilled, articulate, spiritual male leadership is gone.

This prophecy reveals the true, *but hidden*, CAUSE: God has *removed* strong men as a *curse* on our nations—BECAUSE OF OUR SINS.

Yes, He considers the loss of masculine men a *terrible curse*.

This prophecy also speaks of another, parallel trend: the infantilization of men. Verse 4 is a prophecy that our adult leaders will act like children. Notice what kind of children: “And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour: the *child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient*, and the base against the honourable” (verse 5). This is talking about spoiled, undisciplined, selfish, disobedient and angry children who never really grow up! Rebellious children simply become unruly ADULTS.

Consider the effect *on our boys*—tomorrow’s men—of a world where men have abdicated their God-given role as the loving head of the home and where popular culture lures children into perversion. Feminists look on masculinity as a potential evil that needs to be feminized. The “boyish culture” encourages boys to indulge in depraved sins, and men to become more reckless and irresponsible.

When strong men are not here to lead, something fills the void: “As for my people, *children* are their oppressors, and *women* rule over them ...” (verse 12). Some say more work needs to be done to secure women’s rights. God says the opposite! He says women and children *already* lead society!

The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary* shows that this verse can also refer to men who *act like children* and who *rule like women*. Look around: Do you see leaders who are immature, effeminate and worse?

Reaping What We Have Sown

Problems associated with the disappearance of strong male leadership are everywhere in America and other English-speaking nations.

Modern education is increasingly sacrificing intellectual excellence on the altar of anti-masculine liberal ideology. Students are embracing ridiculous utopianist notions that absolve them of personal accountability. Like spoiled children, they blame their personal failings on a supposedly unfair and unjust world rather than growing up and taking responsibility for themselves.

The loss of masculine wisdom, righteousness, honor and virility has hollowed out the strength of the world's most powerful militaries and economies. America's military is plagued by weakness of will. Political correctness has become the priority over effectiveness and victories. Sex integration has gone so far that women are now purposefully sent into combat situations. Many strong warriors and military leaders have left the forces in disgust at the changing policies.

Our governments are plagued with immaturity and selfishness. Vicious divisions prevail, and politicians increasingly express blind bias, unabashed arrogance and open hatred for their opponents. Politicians approach their responsibilities like spiteful children. In America the political atmosphere has become so hostile and the government is so paralyzed by division that it is killing the government's ability to manage crises. Our leadership is incapable of acting wisely and decisively on important security, defense, foreign-policy, economic and social concerns. Meanwhile, law and order are giving way to social breakdown, racial hatred and criminal activity.

This weakness domestically is undercutting America's global leadership role. Like Great Britain before it, the power that has been used to benefit the world for decades is being squandered through poor decision-making and leadership. Tyrants are filling the void. America's weakness is enabling the rise of Iran and radical Islam, a belligerent Russia, an ascendant China, and other dangerous and unpredictable powers. The instability seizing today's world can be traced directly back to America's retreat—which is a result of the disappearance of godly men.

Disappearing masculinity, which many view as a minor cultural or societal issue, has *real-world consequences* for you, your family, your finances, your health, your future and your very security!

Decades of godless living are taking their toll. We are reaping what we have sown. Unless we return to the Bible's wisdom, men will continue to flounder. Boys will grow up aimless and rudderless, uninterested in filling a constructive role within families, communities and nations.

The Path to True Manhood

Feminists say they want equality for women. But how many of them actually want weak men? No woman applauds a man for being addicted to video games and pornography. What is honorable and worthy of admiration is the man with self-mastery, who refrains from being entrapped by such sins. We yearn for the man with self-control, with temperance, with strong moral character.

A strong man is a blessing to his wife and children. He provides more than money—he provides security, attentive engagement, successful leadership, firm guidance, emotional stability and real love.

Society, often without realizing it, cries out for masculinity of substance: solid character, untarnished fidelity, exemplary behavior, empathetic yet decisive leadership. Deep down, we yearn for men with spines.

Society still appreciates such men, yet it teaches and pressures males to do the opposite. To grow into a real man, you must be strong enough to follow a different path.

Where is that path? How do you walk it? What is true masculinity? By now it should be clear that you won't find the answer on cable television, the news media, bookstores, legislatures or universities. To know what manhood really should be, you must look into the Holy Bible and consult the *Creator* of manhood.

Learn *God's* definition of manhood. Learn your God-given duties. Understand what masculinity truly is—a definition that does not change from day to day, from year to year, or even from generation to generation.

You live in a society that has undergone a successful *revolution* to overthrow biblical manhood. Most men have joined in or allowed themselves to be passively led along. You now have a choice: Will you be different? Will you live your life as a man according to the pressures of society—or according to the clear commands of God?

Your job AS A MAN is perhaps the most challenging job God gives you! The Bible shows that you hold an *office*: the office of a son, the office of a brother, the office of a husband, the office of a father, the office of a *man*.

Any man who wants to live up to *God's* definition of manhood has real work to do. He must devote his energies to swimming upstream against society. He must make it his unwavering aim to grow in those qualities that will arm him for the rigors of true manhood. He must eschew the pastimes that weaken men. He must avoid the addictions that eat away at men's minds, blacken their consciences and destroy their confidence. He must stoke the flames of ambition in his life. He must aim high and equip himself to become an able leader of a strong, capable woman, and a builder of family and society.

If you want to be one of those men, the book you hold in your hands will help you in this noble, invigorating venture.

How to Use This Book

To fulfill any job, you must be educated in your responsibilities. The more challenging the job, the more effort you need to devote to that education, typically on an ongoing basis, continually striving to get better.

This is absolutely true of your job AS A MAN—perhaps the most challenging job God gives you! You hold the OFFICE of a Christian man. Do you know what God expects you to *do* with that position? Whether or not you study it, you are responsible for fulfilling it!

Because of the inescapable spirit of this age, you may not *feel* like studying biblical manhood. Nevertheless, *biblical manhood is a subject every man needs to study*. Satan has ravaged manhood to the point that each of us is in danger of losing it! BUT GOD STILL OFFERS YOU THIS TRUTH!

If you don't find yourself excited about it, *study it anyway*. Because *God* is excited about it. Study it and He will *give you* His excitement!

This book is an excellent start. It can kindle or stoke the fire in you. You will receive great joy and pleasure from it. You will want to consult it regularly for inspiration, guidance, correction and precious truth on what manhood really means.

The book is organized into seven sections, built around seven distinct roles God intends you to fulfill. Each section contains several chapters detailing specific aspects of each role.

Interspersed throughout are short biographies of great men in the Bible who exemplified aspects of manhood worthy of aspiration and emulation.

You will gain a lot by reading the book from beginning to end; however, *each chapter and mini-biography stands alone*. Study the Table of Contents and feel free to jump to any portion of the book that speaks to a challenge you face at the moment. If you are having trouble connecting with your teenage daughter, for example, you might want to go straight to Section 6.5, “Be Your Daughter’s Hero.” If you are married to a woman with whom you are at odds because of your religion, read Section 5.2, “Lead Her Spiritually,” and pay particular attention to the material after the subhead “When You Are *Not* Her Spiritual Head.”

As you study this subject and grow in understanding, IT IS CRUCIAL THAT YOU RESIST ANY TENDENCY TO GROW DISCOURAGED. Yesterday’s mistakes are past. Have a positive approach to what God can do with you *today*—and *tomorrow*. Always view those areas where you can improve as *opportunities*. Nourish a vision of the man God wants to help you become. Allow that vision to stir a fire within your heart, a flame of resolve, a determination to become a better man. What matters is *growth*—steady improvement, however slow, however incremental. The more progress you make, the greater rewards you will reap, the more personal satisfaction you will gain, and the greater blessing you will be to the people around you.

Men, we must allow God to shape us, to forge us into instruments firm enough to lead strong families, to give confidence to women, to give stability to children, to give solidity to society.

This is what God wants. This is how we were created. This is literally what we were born to do: to grow up, achieve, mature and embrace the role that our masculine minds and bodies were designed for.

This is the elusive solution—hiding in plain sight if your Bible is open—to our manless society. It’s not about getting back to the traditions of yesteryear. It’s about EMBRACING HOW WE WERE CREATED. Discover that, live that, and you will be embarking on a life full of growth, challenge, fulfillment and happiness built on knowing what it really means to be a man.

Section 1

THE MAN OF GO

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*He attains full stature as a man
who can stand unashamed
in the presence of his Maker.*

16	1.1 Embrace Your Destiny
24	<i>Jesus Christ—Exemplar of Masculinity</i>
28	1.2 Anoint Your Eyes
34	1.3 Purify Your Heart
46	<i>Joseph—Flee Fornication</i>
48	1.4 Do Hard Things
56	<i>Jacob—Wrestle Through Pain</i>
58	1.5 Keep Your Word
66	<i>Eleazar—Stand Alone</i>

1.1

EMBRACE YOUR DESTINY

You were created for greatness.

GOD MADE MEN. He authored *maleness*, *manliness* and *manhood*, and everything these embody. Sex is no accident. It is the product of deliberate design and intent. It is, in fact, a masterstroke of engineering with many fascinating ramifications. The great Architect of the universe created male and female for a magnificent purpose.

What *was* that purpose? God reveals it in creation itself, through the unique physical designs of men and women—and through special revelation in the pages of the Bible.

As you study and fulfill that divine purpose, you will find great joy, happiness and satisfaction. You will be a blessing to your family, to those around you and to society. And whether or not you realize it, you will also be learning spiritual lessons that will prepare you for eternal life.

What Creation Teaches

Before you even begin to examine the Bible's instruction on manhood, consider what you can learn from creation itself.

Not all that long ago, before current conveniences came along, regular, daily life required toughness, stamina and muscle. Hunting wasn't a sport; it was the equivalent of a grocery-store run. Naturally, the more strenuous work went to those who were taller, heavier and stronger—that is, men. The man's native capacities for greater strength, speed and endurance made him the logical choice for building, protecting, providing and fighting. His more powerful frame and voice also contributed to making him the natural leader in relationships with women.

The fact that human reproduction requires one man and one woman naturally brings men and women into close relationships and family life. And because the woman carries new life, gives birth and nurses the young, she is the natural fit for responsibilities that flow from these biological realities.

Throughout history, division of labor between the sexes simply made sense. And as men and women have assumed duties consistent with these differences, they have knowingly or unknowingly harmonized with the intent of the Maker of male and female.

However, if these aspects of creation are our *only* source for understanding our purpose, other problems inevitably arise. For example, the fact that a man's part in reproduction ends biologically at conception has allowed untold numbers of males to abandon the offspring they beget. Men's physical dominance has led many men to abuse women rather than protect them.

This is why it is so critical to *also* have the special revelation of Scripture, which reveals, for example, a man's God-given responsibilities to marry, cleave to and provide for the woman who becomes mother of his children, to actively care for and guide the offspring he begets, and to defend his wife and children from harm rather than posing a threat to them himself.

Today's society, however, has also rejected the biblical revelation on this subject. Thus, for most people, God's purposes in creating the sexes are an utter mystery. Distinctions between male and female seem arbitrary—*so* arbitrary, in fact, that many people have essentially come to view them as interchangeable. It is now common to consider gender more a matter of choice than of biology. Society is conducting a set of radical experiments on marriage, family, gender and sex that overturn millenniums of tradition and wisdom. Nothing reflects the utter confusion about *why male and female* like the mainstreaming of homosexuality, transgenderism, gender fluidity and related trends.

The consequences of this confusion are disastrous. But society, unwilling to admit this obvious reality, is accelerating in its flight from reason and good sense along with its rejection of God's truth.

You can choose a saner path.

What the Bible Teaches

God's laws illuminate the path to happy living. Departing from them is what leaves us in a dark, confused thicket.

The Bible defines *sin* as the transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4). His law codifies His way of life, which is *love* (Matthew 22:36-40; Romans 13:10; Galatians 5:14; 1 John 5:3). It means outgoing concern, giving and sharing, kindness and

courtesy, putting the needs of another above your own. God's way of life is the way of give.

The prevailing spirit of today's society—self-indulgence, lust, greed, materialism, excess, deceit, cheating and pride—is the way of *get*, the way of *sin*. It is also the way of human nature, the way that comes *naturally* (e.g. Mark 7:21-23; Romans 8:7-8). God helps us *overcome* this natural tendency, develop righteous character, and live His way of love that produces happiness, joy and peace.

One of the most powerful tools God created to teach us that way is *family*. A man learns that noble, wonderful way by absorbing himself in his God-given role within the family.

The Bible clearly states that GOD CREATED HUMANKIND MALE AND FEMALE (Genesis 1:26-27). God is the source of everything that makes men *men* and women *women*. He designed the differences in physique, in emotions, in intellectual and psychological composition. He is the author of masculinity and femininity.

But WHY? Even those who claim to get their religion from the Bible—can they explain Genesis 1:27? Why did God create sex?

Collate all the observable and scriptural evidence, and you can clearly see that God created these differences to *establish order and structure*, especially *within the family*. “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God” (1 Corinthians 11:3). Non-Bible believers scoff at this scripture. “Christians” who don't like it find ways to make it mean something else. But godly men and women see simple logic and beauty in it.

This is getting at the heart of true manhood and womanhood.

For the sake of order and organization, God created men to fulfill one set of responsibilities within the family and within society, and He created women to fill a different and beautifully complementary set of responsibilities.

The Bible shows that men and women, of themselves, are *incomplete*. After creating Adam, God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone ...” (Genesis 2:18). So He made Eve—literally from Adam's rib (verses 21-22). “And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman

[Hebrew, *ishshah*], because she was taken out of Man [Hebrew, *ish*]” (verse 23). *Ish* is the Hebrew root word for *ishshah*, just as *man* is the root for *woman*. The woman’s very name and original existence came out of the man as purposefully designed by God. Man and woman became “one flesh” through marriage (verse 24). God appointed the man as head of the wife (Ephesians 5:23). The woman was to be his *helper*, his assistant (Genesis 2:20).

This is the reality that God created and *revealed* to humankind. It is a vital key to individual, family and societal success! When you understand and wholeheartedly embrace God’s roles for men and women, it brings satisfaction and fulfillment in all your most important relationships: friends, dating, marriage, family. It brings peace to your home and success to your relationships with women.

Are you willing to honestly evaluate yourself and your own attitudes? Are you prepared to discard wrong ideas? Will you accept truth, even when it hurts? It strains the eyes to step from a dark cave into bright sunlight, but “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (read 1 John 1:4-9).

What True Masculinity Looks Like

God’s truth cuts through all of society’s confusion about masculinity and manhood. In His eyes, true masculinity is the evidence in the words and deeds of a man *embracing his God-given role—his destiny as a man*. In doing so, he is taking on the character and divine nature of God the Father and Jesus Christ.

A masculine man sets his mind to attain the strong qualities of sound character, rock-solid confidence and strength. He is an unselfish, stable, dominant (though not domineering), decisive leader. Yet he is balanced and tempered by the complementary traits of humility, attentiveness, gentleness and refinement. In short, he strives to live as Jesus Christ did.

How can you recognize a truly masculine man?

A positive, upbeat outlook is the first thing you notice. The masculine man has a “can do” attitude and is eager to accept challenges and responsibility. He is a man of *balance*. He is not egotistical or arrogant, but rather has proper humility,

recognizing his own limitations and his deep need for God (Isaiah 64:6; John 15:5). However, he doesn't put himself down or fret over what others think of him. He allows God to employ and develop his talents and abilities for their best use. He doesn't covet others' gifts, nor judge his own worth by comparing himself against others (2 Corinthians 10:12).

His life clearly centers on God. He shows the mindset and demeanor of a man who is in effective daily contact with God through prayer and Bible study. Though content with his station in life (Philippians 4:11), he has real drive and ambition—not because he craves personal aggrandizement, but because he wants to help and serve others, to fulfill his God-given potential, and to bring God glory. He radiates proper confidence, even boldness, knowing he “can do all things through Christ” (verse 13; Proverbs 28:1). This understanding, solidified by experience, drives out unmanly feelings of inferiority and fear.

The masculine man is a man of conviction. He uses common sense and good judgment. He aims to make his decisions based on truth and rightness rather than on others' opinions, or on taking the easy road. He strives to practice what he preaches, to eliminate hypocrisy and to embody sincerity. He doesn't compromise his principles. He accepts correction gracefully and is not destroyed by criticism. He doesn't snap under stress and pressure. Putting his trust in God, he is able to navigate life's storms with inner strength, stability and peace. He faces challenges head on, alert to opportunities.

The masculine man is master of his body. He maintains vigor, vitality and good health. He tempers his appetites, gets proper exercise and is careful to get good rest. He has the self-control to abstain from drunkenness, premarital sex, illicit drug use and other vices that may tempt him.

He is also unafraid to show emotion (John 11:35). He feels and expresses both joy and pain, yet controls his temper. He is an understanding man, artful in tact and diplomacy. He is attentive to women and children.

The truly masculine man draws other people to him. People sense that he is different, and recognize a winning attitude of right leadership. He demonstrates self-respect as well as

respect for others. He appreciates the role of women. At the same time, he takes charge when necessary, properly using authority in a godly manner. He is a blessing to his wife and children, providing security, attentive engagement, successful leadership, firm guidance, emotional stability and real love. He earns esteem from other men and respect from women, providing an example they can look to. His masculine authority, balanced with sensitivity, makes him attractive. When a woman recognizes that a man has her best interests at heart and will consider her needs in his decision-making, she will gladly follow him. She appreciates and is inspired by his positive confidence along with his concern for her and for others.

Such a man is truly a benefit and a blessing to those around him. This is the kind of masculinity the world needs more of.

The truly exciting thing about such masculinity is its *spiritual dimension*. Study the jobs that God has spelled out for men: protector of women and children; provider for families; husband; father; leader; head. Consider the responsibilities and qualities God commissions in men: supporting those who are weaker; using strength for others' benefit; supplying a family's needs and wants; sacrificing for the good of the family and others; loving a woman through firm, compassionate leadership; expanding the family by siring children and then bringing them up, educating them, leading them in the way they should go, helping them grow in character; building society. *All of these point in inspiring ways to Jesus Christ and God the Father!* They have spectacular spiritual parallels. As you study them and fulfill them, you build a spiritual mindset that brings you in closer harmony with God. MANLINESS IS NEXT TO GODLINESS (just as, for a woman, femininity is next to godliness).

The more you fulfill your purpose as a man, the more masculine you become. That is godly masculinity.

Manhood Is a Weapon of Righteousness

Biblical manhood is a weapon to destroy selfishness and to eradicate the wrong thinking, the wishy-washy perspectives, the inward focus of modern manhood.

The office of a godly man shapes you. You can't shy away from it: You were born for it! God wants to use it to help you grow—not just into a Christian leader, but into a born son of God! You must strive together *with God*, allowing Him to forge you into the man He needs you to be.

This is the path to manliness, to nobility, to accomplishment, to genuine satisfaction. This is the road that leads your family from disorder to harmony, from darkness into light. It gives your wife security, stability, contentment, peace of mind. It gives your children a window into godliness, a blueprint for achievement and success. This is the route that leads to a shining place of honor in the eternal Family of God.

Embrace your God-given destiny!

JESUS CHRIST

Exemplar of Masculinity

Artists and theologians have portrayed Christ as a skinny, soft-spoken, long-haired, effeminate wimp who died of a broken heart. This is not who He was. The Bible says it is shameful for a man to have long hair and that effeminate men won't even be in God's Kingdom (1 Corinthians 11:14; 6:9).

Jesus was a REAL MAN.

The *real* Jesus was nothing like what most people imagine! The Bible says Jesus was a muscular man of perfect health and enduring strength. He kept all the physical laws of good health (Hebrews 4:15). Before His ministry began at age 30, He worked with stone and timber as a carpenter (Mark 6:3). He had well-developed, hardened muscles and tanned skin from laboring outdoors throughout His life. During His ministry, He walked from city to city through mountainous terrain, sometimes traveling many miles in one day.

Artists who paint Jesus as effeminate must not have read John 2, where Christ confronted moneychangers in the temple. When He saw shady business transacting inside God's house, He took a handful of ropes and whipped the livestock to drive them out. He kicked over tables and chairs and scattered money across the floor. His deep voice bellowed through the halls: "Get out of God's house, and take your things with you!" This was at the beginning of His ministry, when few even knew who this man was (verse 18). Yet these Jews were too fearful to challenge this strapping, righteously indignant young man.

Before being tempted of the devil, Jesus went without food and water for 40 days—something no frail weakling could ever endure. Before His crucifixion, Jesus was brutally beaten (John 19:1), then nailed to a stake with iron spikes. Yet His health was so robust that He lived through what would have easily killed

the average man. He survived until a Roman soldier finally thrust a spear into His side.

Physical fitness is only a fraction of godly masculinity, though. Jesus was a learned man who took His education seriously even as a youth. Though little is recorded about His younger years, there is enough for us to know that, as a boy, Jesus obeyed His parents, Joseph and Mary, and developed an intimate relationship with His spiritual Father in heaven (Luke 2:51-52).

At 12 years old, He entered the temple at Jerusalem and discussed the truth of God with the most educated theologians. Luke 2:47 says those who heard Him were “*astonished* at his understanding and answers.” They were amazed by how much He understood—and He was 12! As Jesus grew up, He “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (verse 52).

The mere fact that Christ began His ministry at the relatively young age of 30 reveals what kind of character He had as a boy, a teenager and a young adult. By the time His ministry began, Jesus had developed into a persuasive speaker. Those who heard Him were astounded, and those who hadn’t heard Him traveled a long way so they could. People who knew Him as a child were astounded by His eloquence. When He finished speaking, He often tried to withdraw for a quiet moment, yet throngs of people would sometimes track Him down (Luke 4:42).

Jesus also had a commanding presence. His doctrine astonished the masses, because He “taught them as one having AUTHORITY” (Matthew 7:29). He boldly castigated the self-righteous religious leaders of the day: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” He cried. “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” (Matthew 23:29, 33). Yet Jewish authorities coveted His popularity. Even Pontius Pilate, who oversaw Christ’s execution, acknowledged that Jesus was a just man who spoke the truth (Matthew 27:24).

Together with steel-like traits of vibrant health, intelligence, decisive leadership, righteous indignation and powerful persuasiveness, Jesus also exhibited many velvet qualities. Above all, He was humble. Scribes and Pharisees criticized Him for spending time with sinners, but He knew that the sick are

the ones who need the physician (Luke 5:31-32). The Lord and Master of the disciples instituted an ordinance of humility at His final Passover, and He washed their feet (John 13:13-14). Though He was their Lord and Master, that merely meant He served them *all the more*. He taught that those who serve most will receive the highest positions in God's Kingdom. Jesus, the most humble servant ever, qualified to be King in God's Kingdom.

Jesus was also a compassionate man. No matter how busy He was or how crowded the scene, He made time for the disadvantaged. Christ once left Jericho with a great multitude, and two blind men cried out to Him for mercy. The multitude rebuked them, but Jesus stopped to help. "So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him" (Matthew 20:34).

This genuine compassion for others even caused Christ to weep on occasion. In the case of Lazarus, Jesus cried because of the people's lack of faith (John 11:32-43).

The gentleness of Jesus is reflected in how He treated children. In Mark 10, after some adults pressed to have Him lay hands on their little ones, His own disciples rebuked the parents. But He reprimanded the disciples, saying we must *all* become as little children to enter God's Kingdom. He then took these children up in His arms and blessed them.


This same kindness drew many women to Christ. Some even wept at His feet. At Jacob's well, Jesus asked a Samaritan woman for water. She was taken aback, since other Jews wouldn't even speak to Samaritans. Christ discerned that this woman was involved in an adulterous relationship; the way He dealt with her moved her and may have led her to reconsider her sinful lifestyle (John 4:28-30).

On another occasion, scribes and Pharisees were about to stone a woman caught in the act of adultery. But Jesus intervened to prick everyone's conscience: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8:7). After everyone left, He told the woman to go and sin no more.

Jesus Christ was the epitome of true masculinity. He wasn't all steel—lording His authority over people. Neither was He all velvet—weak and effeminate, standing for nothing. He

possessed the perfect balance of virtues both powerful and tender, uncompromising and compassionate, blameless and merciful. He was both steel and velvet: strong, bold, courageous, gentle, patient and meek. This godly form of masculinity drew many men, women and children to Him.

The Bible paints the portrait of a REAL MAN—the kind of man all men should strive to become.



1.2

ANOINT YOUR EYES

*See what God wants to
accomplish through you.*

Ours is a world of *you do your thing, I'll do mine*. It has grown comfortable with accommodating and excusing evil, immorality and perversion that was scarcely *imaginable* just a few generations ago. Yet people feel smug and self-satisfied, convinced that such tolerance is a virtue.

God's assessment of this age is evident in the personal message Jesus Christ sends to "the church of the Laodiceans" (Revelation 3:14-22). This is the final era of God's Church, which exists right before Christ's Second Coming. This is a time when truth has been cast to the ground (Daniel 8:12). Laodiceanism is the *spirit of the age*—a spiritual disease that permeates not only the majority of God's people but also society as a whole.

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot," Christ says. "I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:15-17).

This spiritual wretchedness, accompanied by complacency and self-righteousness, deeply affects modern manhood. Many men are weak, effeminate, indeterminate, numbed by materialistic luxury and idleness, blanketed in a spirit of lukewarmness.

God wants men to be strong, masculine and *on fire* for the truth! God needs men who are burning with zeal. His Work needs men who are ardently devoted to God's purpose. Children need fathers, and wives need husbands, who are keenly engaged in their daily lives, leading the way God ordained.

Be honest: To what degree have you allowed yourself to get weighed down by Satan's world? To take comfort in complacency, to shrink back into unmanliness? To feed your own laziness, selfishness, smallness? Is the trajectory of your life really leading you to where God wants you to be?

Fight the Spirit of the Age

This world constantly encourages self-indulgence: *Isn't it time you take care of yourself? Take a break! You've worked hard. You*

deserve this! It's in the commercials; it's in our entertainment; it's in our diets; it's in our workplaces; it's in our schools; it's in our leadership—it's in the air! It is a powerful and influential *attitude* that Satan broadcasts through the atmosphere around us: *self*-importance, *self*-promotion, *self*-serving, *self*-righteousness—*selfishness!*

The Western world is full of the spirit of contributing *nothing*. Rare are the men who make good things happen. Rare are the men who drive themselves to make a positive difference in others' lives. We are surrounded by men who, at best, may be wealthy or intellectual, but who are spiritually wretched, miserable, impoverished, blind and naked!

Even we who are striving to be obedient to God tend to shrink back, to become complacent, to slip into ruts from time to time. We are tempted by the desire for “me” time—the allure of checking out of our responsibilities for a while.

If you are not *fighting* this spirit of corrupted manhood, you will succumb to it!

What counsel does God give the person afflicted by the attitude of rich, luxurious and spiritually destitute Laodicea? “[A]NOINT THINE EYES WITH EYESALVE, THAT THOU MAYEST SEE” (Revelation 3:18).

We need to OPEN OUR EYES to the *gaping needs* that are all around us, needs that have opened up because of the myriad *voids* of biblical manhood.

Those shortcomings must be met by godly men who *see* them and charge forward to fill them. Men who see the vision of what God created them to be. Men who recognize their own deficiencies, rely on His Spirit to fill the gap, then *act* to help others.

We need to *see* where our families need more of our presence and attention. We need to *see* where our congregations need more Christian manliness.

God says in verse 19 that if He loves us, He rebukes and chastens us. Many men wilt under even gentle correction—or promptly begin justifying themselves and deflecting blame onto others. The godly man embraces correction and zealously repents.

See Opportunities and Seize Them

Anoint your eyes, and you will see opportunities to express godly manhood all around you.

Consider Christ's own example, which *defines* biblical manhood. Here is His perspective: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4). Christ's life was short, limited in duration. He was *urgent* about taking full advantage of EVERY MOMENT and EVERY INTERACTION.

This is the unselfish attitude godly men must have: a vigilant urgency to *take action* and to *work* at serving others. You have to pay attention to other people's lives and *act* on what you see.

You may look at tomorrow as just another routine day: Snag breakfast, endure the workday, unwind at home, watch a show, go to sleep. But Christ in you looks at tomorrow as a string of opportunities: *What can I do? Who can I help? How much can I give?*

Don't underestimate the potential value of *every* decision, *every* encounter, *every* conversation you have. Recognize opportunities to give for what they are. You'll probably have one as soon as you finish reading this chapter.

To follow Christ's example and seize that opportunity, you must fight the pull of selfishness and relaxation and keep your eyes open to opportunities to fulfill your duties as a man!

The question is not whether you *have* a duty to serve others more than yourself. The question is whether you will *fulfill* your duty. The more you do, the more like God you will become, and the more habitual this Christ-like attitude will be. The more Christ-like you become, the more masculine you become.

Many of us intellectually understand and agree with the concept of male Christian leadership. But the harder step is to encounter a day-to-day routine occurrence and actively recognize: *I need to use THIS moment—right NOW—to express biblical manhood!*

It is easy to overlook those opportunities. It is also easy to underestimate the effect that *YOU*, reading these words right now, can have on other people's lives.

Correcting the matter starts with *anointing your eyes*. Ask God to show you how to develop into a more dynamic and effective Christian leader.

A torrent of opportunities is coming at you. Helping your son with his math homework, approving your daughter's new dress before she wears it, setting a household rule to unburden your wife, helping your neighbor fix his porch step, knocking out the reports nobody else wants to do at work, holding the door open for the mother of two children at the gas station, skipping the football game to visit an elderly member in your congregation, putting your phone away so you're not distracted when playing with your children, noting something troubling in your teenager's voice inflection and asking him about it, establishing etiquette and manners so dinnertime can be quality family time, choosing a topic to lead in conversation after Church services—the deluge of opportunities *never ends*. And Christ wants to empower you to fulfill those opportunities.

But before He can do so, you must be diligent enough to spot them for what they are.

Report for Duty

As a Christian father, you must remain alert as long as your children are under your authority. Even after they leave the home, you may still be able to, and should, exert regular positive influence—even with your grandchildren (e.g. Deuteronomy 4:9).

As a single, you are training for that duty right now by learning to *pay attention* to others, by learning how to treat women and children with honor, by dating honorably and learning to be attentive to the needs of single ladies, by striving to serve the widows and the fatherless. These responsibilities also remain after you marry.

In your conversations, look for *needs*. Ask about things you can help with or you can find someone else to help with. Find things you can pray about. Pay attention!

Here is a specific example of masculine leadership that arises regularly in a family: telling your children what to do. An engaged Christian father regularly issues instructions as he

actively directs his children to do things that will benefit them and others. But it only *starts* there.

Once you tell your child to do something, you must then pay attention to the child's attitude toward that instruction, and then to his performance. You cannot simply give an instruction, then return to what you were doing and forget what you said. Children, particularly if untrained, will often test the limits of your authority. If you give some direction and then return your full attention to what you were doing before, you are training your child not to be overly concerned about your commands. The child you just told to stop racing his car on the coffee table will go right back to it.

Once you give a command, remain on duty. Ensure the child follows through. This must be the case at home, in public, at Church services, everywhere. You simply cannot expect good results if you lose track of what you have instructed your child to do and fail to make sure the lesson sticks.

The duties of a man are constant. They require *vigilance*. They require you to work the works of Him that sent you, while you can. Be urgent. Recognize the onrushing river of opportunities for what it is. Seize each one. Let God's influence come into other people's lives *through you*. Express dynamic male leadership. Put biblical manhood into action!

God can do *so much* in your life through your manly role. He can make your home life enriching and wonderful. He can grant you a promotion at work. He can add purpose, spark and joy to the lives of the people around you. He can cause your wife to blossom emotionally, intellectually, spiritually. He can nourish your children or grandchildren into joyful, wise, enjoyable young people. He can make you a different man, your family a different family, and your work a different work!

But you must anoint your eyes. *See* where God wants to lead you, what He wants to make of you, and how He wants to bless others through you!

1.3

PURIFY YOUR HEART

*Become a man of substance,
the genuine article, pure to the core.*

Within every man lies a human heart, deceitful and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). It is your responsibility each day to solicit God's aid in circumcising that heart—and to daily submit to God so He will create in you a new, clean heart (Psalm 51:10).

“Thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God with *ALL* thy heart,” Christ says (Matthew 22:37). This is His command. You shall hold *nothing* back.

What is the state of your heart? Where is it divided? Where are there shadows? What are your areas of weakness?

A godly man is the genuine article. He lives with *singleness of heart*, striving diligently to think with integrity and to live in harmony with how he speaks. Singleness and purity of heart means mastery of your mind. It is a heart uncluttered with the things of the world, uncomplicated by the lusts of the flesh. To achieve such a state takes real diligence and effort, and it can only be truly achieved by yielding to God.

King David kept that first and great commandment perhaps better than any human except Jesus Christ. His psalms enable us to scrutinize the most intimate details of his relationship with God and to emulate them.

“O God, thou art my God, I YEARN for thee, body and soul, I THIRST, I LONG for thee, like a land without water, weary, dry. ... THY LOVE IS MORE THAN LIFE TO ME ...” (Psalm 63:1, 3; Moffatt). How did David achieve such an unnatural craving, such *heartfelt*, Christ-like sincerity in his innermost being?

Such love is shed abroad in a human heart by the Holy Spirit, which is a gift from God (Romans 5:5). Once we receive that Spirit upon repentance and baptism, we maintain its flow and influence in our lives by submitting wholly to God, moment by moment. This requires *training your heart*—with diligence, vigor and violence.

David trained his heart like a great general trains a soldier, demanding constant exercise to run it in its proper course. That is the *only way* to train something so unruly as a human heart.

Go After Your Weaknesses

To be a godly man, you must go after your weaknesses and be serious about it. Ask God for help to bury the old man

(see Romans 6). We must be continually, actively *casting off* corruption and *putting on* God's righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4:22-24).

"Our problems always try to come back," Gerald Flurry writes in *How to Be an Overcomer*. "God instructs us to destroy that old man so completely that he doesn't have the *will* to come back! If you deal with a problem lightly and return to your business, it will come right back. You will be dealing with the same problems year after year!" He encourages us to fight our problems systematically.

Mastering your problems requires contending in battle (2 Timothy 2:3-5). Ask God for strength in this fight. He wants you to seek Him for help. In His hand is power and might, and He can provide real strength (1 Chronicles 29:12). If you face your struggles with God, you will emerge a stronger man on the other side.

Perhaps you are well aware of some areas you need to change to achieve real purity of heart. After all, Satan has marshaled his best efforts to shape society in such a way as to destroy men, and many of his weapons are quite obvious.

"What is your greatest enemy? How much do you think about that?" Mr. Flurry asks. He then gives this list, worth contemplating: "Is it laziness? Or lust? Resistance to government? Discouragement? Do you have to battle selfishness? Or an inferiority complex? How about intellectual vanity? Or all of the above?" (ibid). Every one of these represents a problem that must be dealt with forcibly. And there are many more such sins and weaknesses, areas that need to change—many of which we cannot even recognize fully without God's help.

The rest of this chapter focuses on one sin, not uncommon among men, and how to overcome it: the sin of *pornography*. Consider this instruction emblematic of the process of purifying the heart that must take place no matter what the sin may be.

Protect Your Mind

Our culture is saturated in sex. Highly sexualized images and messages are printed, displayed and broadcast incessantly through every form of mass communication. A lot of sexualized content isn't even commonly called pornography. Many people

have convinced themselves that there is nothing wrong with this—that it is harmless, even healthy.

Such thinking is deception. Jesus Christ plainly condemned our pornophilic culture. He called it *adultery*, a violation of God's eternal spiritual law: "I say unto you, That whosoever *looketh on a woman to lust after her* hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:28).

With pervasive temptations, by no means is it *easy* to keep your mind free of lustful thoughts. The Apostle Paul actually called it a *life-and-death* struggle: "Put to DEATH, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: *sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires* and greed, which is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5; New International Version). The Apostle Peter also spoke of this struggle with sin as being a *war*: "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11).

Does your attitude toward pornography match God's?

Many who look at sexual images say they don't feel guilty about it. Their conscience is either uneducated, or it has been seared (Jeremiah 6:15; Ephesians 4:17-19). They need to understand that pornography is sin. It is a major weapon the devil uses to destroy men in particular, as well as women, children and families. He has more tools today than ever with which to entrap people in sin.

Many others acknowledge that pornography is destructive and want to steer clear. For anyone who has any degree of contact with mass media—movies, Internet, television, magazines, newspapers, books—this requires genuine effort. Practically speaking, failing to battle means *losing* the battle. You must *fight* to protect your mind, body and spirit.

Sadly, many who are trying to avoid this sin are losing the battle. Pornography and the immoral sexual habits it causes can be powerfully addictive. And it can be much harder to overcome than some addictions. Generally pornography addicts don't want to give it up, and although you can purge the elements from your bloodstream in a chemical addiction, you cannot purge the mental images you absorb from pornography.

Many are caught in the trap of pornography and want to be free of it. They can see the damage done to themselves and their

families. They wish they had more self-control—but they feel unable to free themselves. They are living testimony of the truth stated in 2 Peter 2:19: “[W]hatever overcomes a man, to that he is enslaved” (Revised Standard Version).

Is this a problem you face?

The First Step

To break free from this sin, the obvious first step is to acknowledge that it is a problem.

You need God’s perspective on sin—whether lust or any other sin. God HATES IT PASSIONATELY! (e.g. Proverbs 8:13). Sin is what claimed the life of His Son Jesus Christ, and sin is what causes all the misery and suffering that afflicts humankind. It is for *sin* that God will pour out *His wrath* on this world, and for which He commands His people to come *out of* this world! (e.g. Ephesians 5:5-7; Colossians 3:5-6; Revelation 18:4).

Because public sexuality is so pervasive, it is easy to compromise with. We must understand, however, just how damaging compromise is. One compromise can mean losing the battle!

The Bible makes a powerful comparison between sexual immorality and fire, or hot coals. Permitting yourself a “little” sexual lust is like carrying a “small amount” of fire close to your chest, or walking barefoot on red-hot embers: You will be burned and blistered every time (Proverbs 6:23-29).

The Bible contains a two-part definition of “[p]ure religion and undefiled before God and the Father.” It says a man practicing pure religion is “to *keep himself unspotted [or unstained] from the world*” (James 1:27). This is a true challenge in a world *deeply stained* with sexual impurity!

It is truly a rare man who will fight and strive, even against powerful personal temptation, for true *purity*.

Pure water contains no contaminants; you would not call a glass of water with a “little bit” of mud in it *pure water*. A *pure* sexual life includes nothing outside God’s commanded use of sex between a lawfully wedded husband and wife—a relationship God created to be fully satisfying and rewarding sexually.

Pornography is poison. A meal containing a “little bit” of cyanide is a toxic meal. Indulging lust *to any degree* is sin. Compromising with pornographic or lust-inducing material is essentially making the same choice Adam and Eve made in eating from the tree of the knowledge of *good and evil*—that is, a satanic *mixture* that appeals to the senses but leads to death (Genesis 2:17).

Mixing good and evil is ingrained in our thinking as a society. The entertainment industry, for example, is filled with artistic excellence mixed with moral depravity. In many cases, the material most lauded by critics and insiders is the most corrupt.

How much of society’s compromising mindset has affected you? Prayerfully confront assumptions and faults in your own thinking. How has pornography hurt or hindered you and those around you? Do you truly want to be rid of it? Are you willing to do whatever it takes? If not, why not? How can you overcome that resistance? Your assessment must be honest to be beneficial.

As Jesus Christ said, purity includes not just law-abiding *actions*, but also *thoughts*. As King David prayed, “Let the words of my mouth, and *the meditation of my heart*, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer” (Psalm 19:14). 2 Corinthians 10:5 enjoins, “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and *bringing into captivity EVERY THOUGHT to the obedience of Christ.*”

What we *look at* certainly affects what we think about. To become pure, we must be vigilant gatekeepers for what goes into our minds. That means not rationalizing what we can “handle,” but rather being truthful with ourselves and with God, and seeking to keep ourselves and our families as far from unsuitable material as possible.

In determining acceptable media use, *we cannot use societal standards*. These are in constant flux, with a clear trend toward corruption. *God’s unchanging law* must be our only standard.

If you have a problem in this area, *you must correct it*. Make it your *top priority* in overcoming. Ask God for His forgiveness, pray for the gift of sincere repentance, and beseech Him for the help that only He can provide. Then do everything you can to show God how serious and determined you are to overcome. You want to be

able to say, like the Apostle Paul in Acts 24:16, “I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward God and toward men” (RSV).

No Provision for the Flesh

What if you do find yourself drawn toward sexual material?

The most important principle to live by in overcoming such temptations is to stay as far away from the problem as possible. Human nature wants to get as *close* to the problem as it can. That is a guaranteed path to failure, because, as Christ said, “[T]he spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:41).

Shun entertainment with improper sexual content. Strictly avoid movies that contain nudity or lust-inducing sexuality. Before deciding to see a movie, check reviews from moral-based film critics; websites such as *MovieGuide.org* provide much better explanations of objectionable material than the only vaguely trustworthy MPAA system used in the United States. Consider cutting out “R”- or even “PG-13”-rated movies altogether.

Romans 13:14 instructs us to “make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” *The Living Bible* translates this, “[D]on’t make plans to enjoy evil.” The New International Version reads, “[D]o not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.” In other words, rid your life of all the temptations you can, and then *burn your bridges*.

If you have sexual material in your home, get rid of it. Toss out or destroy any indecent magazines, books or videos. If you need to have certain channels blocked from your TV service, do it. If you need to cancel your cable, do it. If you need to get rid of your video player or television, do it. If you need to purchase a content filter for your Internet connection, do it. If you need to change your Internet service provider to one that screens out pornography, do it. If you need to cancel your Internet service, do it. If you need to get rid of your computer, do it.

Get as far away as necessary, take whatever steps you need, to eliminate the temptation. Don’t debate it and find a way to reason around it. Christ advocated *radical measures* where necessary to preserve your spiritual health and well-being. After explaining that simply looking lustfully can constitute adultery, He said, “And

if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell” (Matthew 5:29).

Are you willing to get radical—to figuratively pull out your eye?

Have a Battle Plan

Purity requires a battle plan. Examine your life for things you may need to change about your lifestyle. Look for patterns of failure. Think ahead about situations you know will pose a temptation. Know where you are weak and take action *in advance* to avoid those situations where possible, and remove destructive options where necessary. “A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished” (Proverbs 22:3; 27:12).

Perhaps you get into trouble when you have too much idle time. If so, plan your free time. Stay active. Make sure you’re getting regular, vigorous physical exercise. Rather than using those idle moments in the wrong activities, force yourself to get up and go for a run or shoot some basketball. Keep your *mind* active as well, so it won’t have an opportunity to wander into places it shouldn’t. Overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21).

At times temptation will still arise—or, in a moment of weakness, you may seek out something you should not. When things begin to go off track, resort to *emergency procedures*.

Immediate Action

Understand: It is *not* a sin to have a tempting thought. The “prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2), Satan the devil, has filled society with influences and temptations, as well as pervasive spiritual broadcasts of attitudes, impulses and feelings, that can enter our minds and thoughts. It is not necessarily a sin to have a tempting thought—the sin is allowing yourself to *dwell* on that temptation.

This is why it is important to become skilled at *directing your thoughts*—to build the habit of *immediately* stopping a sinful line of thinking the moment you recognize it. This is realistically

the best—and perhaps *only*—moment you can make a genuine choice to block it. Once you’ve tossed it around mentally a few times, it can be virtually impossible to then get rid of it before it leads to a sinful *act*. As James wrote, “[E]very man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. [Notice—‘*every man*’! You are not alone!] Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:14-15).

At the first moment of temptation, you must break that thought before it takes root. Imagine a big red “NO” being written across your mind. Recall a scripture that you have memorized specifically to recite to yourself when temptation hits. Pinch your cheek. Whistle. Get out your Bible and read a random passage. Go to a private spot and pray. Have something specific to do in order to flee that temptation. Do whatever it takes.

If you find yourself mulling over plans about how you may see a certain website or movie or go to a certain place, expunge those thoughts *immediately* and force yourself to think on something else. The longer you let wrong thoughts linger, the harder they are to evict and the likelier they are to lead to action.

When you are alone in a place where people don’t know you, it may be easy to take advantage of your anonymity and convince yourself that no one will know if you succumb to lust—but of course, *you* will know—and so will *God*. God sees what you are doing, and you are accountable to *Him*. FEAR GOD enough to actually *depart from evil*! (Proverbs 14:27; 16:6).

What do you do if you fail?

If you succumb and you look at pornography, STOP IMMEDIATELY. This sin is bad—but it compounds when you *continue to sin and violate your conscience*, carrying on with the wrongful act even after recognizing it as wrong. In such a situation, the *moment* you realize you are off track, stand up and walk away, throw the magazine down, turn off the computer—do whatever you must to STOP WITHOUT DELAY.

The biblical command is simple: *Flee fornication* (1 Corinthians 6:18).

That’s right. Don’t wrestle in your mind. Don’t try to be calm and collected. FLEE. Physically *run*—get away from the source of

temptation. Immediately change the channel, turn off the TV, walk out of the theater. Often in our battle for purity in the world, if we just *get out of the physical environment*, the temptation will diminish or disappear.

If you have failed, you must learn from the situation so you don't repeat it. Trace the lead-up to your decision to view the pornography. Try to discern how you got into it in the first place. Then take the necessary measures to deny yourself that option the next time around.

Eliminating lustful options for yourself is *liberating*. It may be difficult for a moment, but you will experience tremendous *peace of mind* when you are no longer tossing back and forth, wrestling with your own thoughts, over some temptation that is still within your reach.

Powerful Help

These strategies can help in purifying your heart from *any* sin or temptation you face. These are tangible, physical means of eliminating or at least minimizing the temptations presented by this world and our own minds. It is worth every effort to keep yourself clean. Every time you give in to temptation and indulge in sin, you hurt yourself and break down your character. Every time you take the high ground and avoid it, you strengthen your character and spare yourself and your loved ones real pain.

The trouble is, some people have deep-rooted addictions that *cannot* be solved by such methods. They suffer the effects of childhood trauma, deep emotional emptiness or simple entrenched habit. Some have tried countless times to free themselves from the deadly grip of sin and always stumble and again become ensnared.

The truth is, true freedom from sin cannot come from the “flesh.” So often, *the spirit* is WILLING—but the FLESH is *too weak* to produce lasting change!

But change can come.

The Bible is *filled* with promises of *spiritual help* in overcoming such obstacles!

Read this guarantee in Psalm 119:9-11: “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? *by taking heed thereto according to thy word.* With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” Christ Himself supported this fact in John 8:32: “And ye shall know the truth, and **THE TRUTH shall make you free.**”

The Apostle Paul gave similar counsel: “**FLEE** also *youthful lusts*: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Timothy 2:22). If you find yourself going after youthful lusts, *flee* those things—and *run* to the righteous things. Put in the good to get rid of the bad.

Follow righteousness. Absorb yourself in the law of God—in the Word. *Follow faith.* Trust that God will deliver you from those temptations. *Follow charity.* Stop thinking selfishly—and start thinking about the God you are to be serving with all your heart. Throw yourself into building your relationships with others with *a pure heart*. *Follow peace.* Flee those lusts, so you can be at peace with God, and with yourself, having a clean conscience.

Train Your Heart

Actively setting your mind on the things of God is exactly the training that an unruly human heart demands. It is how David achieved such success in it: He trained his thoughts on God—as he was drifting into sleep, when he woke in the deep night, as he rose in the early morning—always on God (e.g. Psalm 63:5-8). He prayed three times a day: evening, morning and noon (Psalm 55:17). He praised God *several times a day* (e.g. Psalm 119:164). He set his *heart* on God—over and over—throughout his waking hours. He committed God’s words to memory and recalled them in his meditation and his times of need. *No* man is too busy to emulate him. David knew that, as occupied as he was with the affairs of state, a failure to *take time* to commune with God would guarantee that those physical matters would swamp his heart! To love God with *all* his heart demanded never allowing that to happen.

David trained himself to keep God at the center of his life, so the love of God that comes only from the Spirit shed abroad in

our hearts could flow (Romans 5:5). As long as he maintained this focus, then his thinking, his interests, his passions—what was in his heart—was *the same* as what was in God’s heart. That’s not to say he never went off track. But he worked to discipline his mind, control his thoughts, bridle his emotions. That is loving God with ALL your heart.

Notice too this ironclad promise in James 4:7-8: “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and PURIFY YOUR HEARTS, ye double minded.”

These are promises God makes to His begotten children—those in whom, upon His calling them and their responding in repentance, He has imparted a measure of His Holy Spirit. He then fulfills these promises through the power of that Spirit. This awesome spiritual power is not available to any but those whom He has called and to whom He has given it upon their repentance.

Perhaps God is convicting you and calling YOU to REPENTANCE—a complete *turnaround* from a life of sin to a life of OVERCOMING, using the power of His Spirit. God wants *all people* to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9), but at this point He is calling only a very few to do so. If you believe you may be one of them, request immediately a free copy of our potent and convicting booklet *How to Be an Overcomer*, by Gerald Flurry. It could be the first step toward truly training your heart and achieving the *true* purity God wants in your life!

“Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and HE SHALL STRENGTHEN THINE HEART: wait, I say, on the LORD” (Psalm 27:14). This is a beautiful promise. We desperately need that strength of heart that only God can supply.

David’s heart was deceitful and desperately wicked, like yours. But he set a powerful example of allowing God to convert that heart. David truly circumcised his heart. He sought God’s help in training and disciplining his thoughts, feelings, affections, emotions, passions—and directing all those to serve God. By doing so, he enabled God to create a clean heart in him—a heart after God’s own. And he loved God with the whole of it.

Follow that example, and attain your FULL STATURE AS A MAN—a man after *God’s own heart*.

JOSEPH

His Fornication

Though he was a slave in a foreign land, Joseph applied himself to the tasks he was given. His master, Potiphar, recognized that everything Joseph set out to do worked out successfully. He understood that Joseph's God was working things out for him. Wanting Joseph to excel even more, Potiphar promoted him as overseer of his house (Genesis 39:3-5). He grew to love Joseph as a son.

Joseph was "a goodly person, and well favoured" (verse 6). He was a handsome, manly young man. His strong spiritual character made him even more attractive and likely drew people to him.

But Joseph had one problem: Potiphar's wife.

Though he concealed his true feelings well, Joseph disliked being in the same room with this woman. Though she was very beautiful, she came too close to him. She took every opportunity to touch him. Then the day came when she became explicit and commanded Joseph to sleep with her (verse 7).

This was a great temptation: A beautiful woman was enticing him to give in to lust. Even more, she was the woman of the house, the wife of Joseph's master; defying her could have serious consequences. How many men would give in? How many would do what seemed desirable or expedient in the circumstances?

Joseph, however, was not a man of compromise. He flatly rejected even the possibility. Trying to extricate himself without causing unnecessary offense, he respectfully explained, "Lo, having me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my hand; he is not greater in this house than I am; nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife; how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (verses 8-9; RSV). Joseph knew he was *accountable to God*! He

knew adultery would be a grievous sin and cause great trouble. He would never agree to such a shameful act.

God was allowing Joseph to be tested. With promotion often comes the swelling of vanity. God needed to know if Joseph could handle promotion without it going to his head. Many men who achieve high status are snared by vices that bring them down. King David and Solomon are two examples of such male tragedy. Joseph's future was critical to God's master plan; He had to know where Joseph stood. So the heat of trial was turned up.

Potiphar's wife was persistent in her attempts to draw the young slave into her bedchamber. She bullied Joseph, trying to seduce him daily. And daily, he refused her (verse 10).

Joseph always tried to surround himself with plenty of other male slaves. But one day Joseph was alone in the house working at his master's business when Potiphar's wife came to him. She grabbed him and insisted sensuously, "LIE WITH ME"! (verse 12). Joseph's mind raced to a decision. It was time she faced reality: He would *never* sin against God—no matter the consequences!

Joseph wrestled to break free of her grip—and then RAN!

"Flee fornication," the Apostle Paul wrote (1 Corinthians 6:18). There is no more vivid example in the Bible than what Joseph did here. Human nature tends to want to entertain it, to walk close to the line, to linger on the edge of the cliff and admire the view. God, knowing the weakness of the flesh and the human proclivity for compromise, rationalization and justification, commands that we instead follow Joseph's example—and RUN.

The lust Potiphar's wife had for Joseph instantly turned to vile hate. She accused Joseph of trying to rape her and had him imprisoned (Genesis 39:14-20). As Joseph sat in prison, surely he questioned why God had allowed him to be punished for *doing the right thing*. Yet God used even this incarceration to catapult him into greater prominence (Genesis 41).

Joseph is a model of the moral rectitude every man should work to develop. And his uncompromising courage to escape temptation gives a practical prescription for how to preserve purity and honor in an aggressively immoral world.

1.4

DO HARD THINGS

*The path to growth
goes straight through
the guts of a challenge.*

God intends your life to be difficult. God calls us to a life of overcoming. He wants us to *embrace* this struggle, because by doing so while relying on Him, we develop holy, righteous character.

The old saying is true: *No pain, no gain*. Challenges bring growth. Hard work builds character. A soft life weakens it. Our natural tendency is to shrink back, to snuggle into our comfort zones. But in order to live lives of growing and overcoming, we must *embrace* challenges, difficulties and trials!

A man must be comfortable with stepping out and doing hard things for his family. God wants men to be good soldiers who endure hardness. Men who work hard, sacrifice, provide for their families; men who confront dangers, protect and take care of others. God needs strong men to build His Church, men who are dedicated servants of God!

“The keys to satisfaction, excitement, joy, and more lie on the other side of a great challenge,” wrote one Navy SEAL. “[S]hatter the myth that easy is good and hard is bad. What qualifies as ‘hard’ occurs on a spectrum that will be different for everyone based on your circumstances—the point is to push your limits and acknowledge this mighty effort as both positive and necessary for true happiness.”

Endure Hardness

2 Timothy was the last book the Apostle Paul wrote. He wrote it from a first-century Roman prison—not a comfortable place—right before he was put to death. Despite the hardship, this is his *most inspiring book*.

Paul wrote to Timothy because he knew this young minister was *shaken* by Paul’s imprisonment and by the apostasy raging in God’s Church. He was afraid, even *ashamed*.

“Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:6-7). *Be strong!* Paul tells Timothy.

“Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of

the gospel according to the power of God” (verse 8). This isn’t going to be easy, Paul was saying; doing God’s Work involves some *affliction*. “Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed ...” (verses 11-12).

Paul *suffered* to fulfill his duty! Read 2 Corinthians 11:24-28. Five times Paul was beaten with 39 stripes; thrice beaten with rods; stoned; shipwrecked three times; he suffered in dangerous journeys, perils, weariness, pain, hunger, thirst, cold, nakedness. He lived a rough life in service to God!

God put this man through a lot. But Paul told Timothy, *That’s the way it is! This is the life we’re called to*—not a life of snuggling in our comfort zones, but a life of struggling, battling, overcoming, *conquering*! A life of doing what needs to be done for God. “Thou therefore, my son, *be strong* in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 2:1). This is manly advice: Don’t be weak—be *strong*!

“Thou therefore ENDURE HARDNESS, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (verse 3). As Paul well understood from grinding experience, there is hardness that benefits you. We *need* the problems, challenges and afflictions life presents. Without them, we tend to become spiritually complacent. We want to simply maintain the status quo. Most of us have the natural tendency to just scrape by. Once we have fulfilled the minimum requirement, we stop pushing ourselves. Even when we have been successful to a point, we have a tendency to *coast*.

God has to break us out of that pattern. Very often, trials are the means. When you embrace that struggle—and learn to rely on God—He can develop more of His character in you.

How God Exposes Our Hearts

Bondage in Egypt was hard for the Israelites, but there were also pleasures. Liberated but located in the wilderness, the Israelites fondly recalled the melons, leeks and other foods, and the fleshpots. Their leader, Moses, was a former high-ranking officer in Egypt who could have enjoyed “the pleasures of sin” in the royal palace perhaps for the rest of his life.

Satan wants to seduce us and lure us to sleep by getting us *addicted* to comforts and pleasures. This is a real danger!

“And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble [or *afflict*] thee, and to prove [or *sorely try*] thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no” (Deuteronomy 8:2). God *afflicted* and *sorely tried* the Israelites. He stripped life down to the basics to teach them a spiritual lesson (verse 3). He wanted to know what was in their hearts.

CHALLENGES REVEAL OUR HEARTS. They teach us about ourselves, reveal our weaknesses, and show us the areas where we need to be stronger, more like Jesus Christ.

Satan wants to entrap us in materialism and comforts. If we succumb, we tend to become *afraid of discomfort*. Satan *wants* us to fear discomfort—so we are willing to do anything to avoid it! When we get too comfortable for too long, we shy away from things that might hurt—even good, noble things: things like hard work, leaving Egypt and sin, making sacrifices for the family, doing God’s Work, standing up to persecution, or fighting for God! If your goal is just to remain comfortable, you won’t do these things.

But problems, temptations, trials, persecutions and afflictions can stir us to action and help us overcome our spiritual lethargy. God will supply them in order to toughen us spiritually—and to show us how much we need Him, how we need to rely on Him.

GET COMFORTABLE WITH BEING UNCOMFORTABLE.

“Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee” (verse 5). God says, *Brace yourself—I’m going to make you uncomfortable at times. I have to because I love you*. We shouldn’t fear chastening and discomfort. We must see the big picture and actually *embrace* it.

God wants to give us blessings, but He knows our human nature. Prosperity *can* be dangerous. We get fat and happy, contented and complacent, materialistic—and unwilling to *work*, unwilling to *fight*! (verses 12-14). If it was true of the Israelites inheriting the Promised Land, how much more true is this today in our industrial age of prosperity and luxury? We

have eliminated so many of the challenges life used to bring. Unsurprisingly, we also have epidemic obesity and poor health; people with no purpose in life who are gluttoned on entertainment; people *unwilling to work!*

Luxury can be a snare. The fear of suffering is a *trap*. It debilitates us. We stop growing. We stagnate and wither away.

What is going to happen to all the soft, self-indulgent people in our modern society when “great tribulation” (Matthew 24:21) strikes? You can be sure that when conditions start getting hard, they will fall apart! But what about *you*?

Paul’s Example

Paul endured many intense trials to do the Work, yet he always went right back out and preached. Read one example in Acts 14, beginning in verse 11, where Paul and Barnabas visited Lystra. Angry religious leaders, feeling threatened by these men’s success, *stoned* Paul and left him for dead.

But Paul rose up and went straight back to work. Returning to the city that stoned him, this was his message: “Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that WE MUST THROUGH MUCH TRIBULATION ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD” (verse 22).

We will only inherit this spectacular reward through *much tribulation*—just like Joshua had to fight his way into the Promised Land. Nobody is going to slouch his way into the Kingdom, or trip and stumble in. Christ said “the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force” (Matthew 11:12). The margin says the kingdom is “gotten by *force*—and it is gotten by men of driving force.” *Vine’s Expository Dictionary* reads, “[T]hose who are possessed of *eagerness and zeal*, instead of yielding to the opposition ... *press* their way into the Kingdom” (emphasis added).

When you understand the magnitude of the reward, it makes sense that we have to go after it. Paul understood this, which is why he was willing to endure so much, and with such a positive attitude! He said, “[W]e *glory* in tribulations ... knowing that tribulation worketh patience” (Romans 5:3). “Therefore *I take*

pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake ..." (2 Corinthians 12:10).

Paul didn't just *endure* hardness—he learned to *embrace* it! And he taught others to do the same (e.g. 2 Thessalonians 1:3-5).

We need to teach this to our sons. Don't let them shrink back in timidity. Boys and teens need to do hard things. Shun the ridiculous modern notion that adolescence is a time to act like a child with no expectations. It has never been like that in history! Before the 20th century, there was no such thing as "teenagers." There were children and adults, and the goal of the former was to mature quickly in order to bear the burdens and enjoy the opportunities and blessings of the latter.

A young man should work hard, use his body and develop his muscles by doing uncomfortable things. A young man who doesn't like to work should be taught to challenge himself, to force himself to overcome that fear. Help him get to the point where he *loves* it. God made our bodies to *work*! He made them to be able to endure hardness! If you don't use it, you will lose it. You will get soft and weak and break down. Muscles love heavy use: The more you use them properly, the healthier they become.

The same is true spiritually in many ways. "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations" (James 1:2). Embrace that hardness! It's going to produce growth! You would never grow if life were always easy. "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience" (verse 3). Trials make us stronger. Difficult circumstances help us grow.

Even when you grow into your older years, you must resist the tendency to want to coast along and think that being a senior means nothing is expected of you. Strive to follow Herbert W. Armstrong's example. At the age of 84, he wrote, "It is true that probably not one in a hundred half my age could do the work that I have been doing. But what I feel most of you have not realized is that much if not most of all that energy, vitality, drive and power has come from two sources—God, of course (Isaiah 40:29-31), and sheer determination and SELF-drive, even when I did not feel up to it." It is never too late in life to embrace challenges. Make a commitment to staying active physically and mentally. Take up a new hobby; learn a foreign language; read a

difficult book; ask that old widow out on a date. Be excited about life—it really can get better with age if you keep the prod on yourself! Don’t focus on the past; look forward to the future.

Everything that helps you grow is uncomfortable—learning something new, meeting new people, eating healthier, building a new habit, changing your routine to introduce something good for you. All these things are *hard*. Your mind and body want to resist. That is what makes it a fight—and why it works!

These things break you out of complacency. They lead to growth. They make you a better, stronger person. When you live at the margins of your comfort zone, that zone will *expand*.

What do you fear? What makes you uncomfortable? Tackle that. Get after that.

Squirming Away From Adversity

The January 1970 *Good News*, after quoting Paul’s admonition in 2 Timothy 2:3 to “endure hardness,” made this observation: “Here is one of the first principles a soldier must learn. ... Look at our men in Vietnam. They have to be willing to slosh through mud, endure jungle heat, fight insects and jungle rot, and put up with uncomfortable sleeping conditions and canned food. What if a soldier had this attitude? ‘I’ll fight for my country if I can have my three hot meals a day, box spring and mattress, warm fire and stuffed easy chair at night. And I don’t mind the shooting as long as it’s not in the rain or under muddy conditions. And, I can’t stand blood, nor can I afford to miss my favorite TV programs on Sunday night!’”

As ridiculous as that sounds, is it possible you have that attitude? That you are willing to be a Christian only as long as everything is going great?

In Christ’s parable of the sower, one group of people failed because “hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for *when tribulation or persecution ariseth* because of the word, by and by he is offended” (Matthew 13:21).

Remember, we live in a *Laodicean age* (Revelation 3:14-22). Laodicea’s problems include self-satisfaction and complacency. We must robustly resist these things! If you study the history of

God's true Church, you see that God's people have faced much adversity over the centuries. Yet one consistent problem has arisen: They repeatedly sought the easy way out rather than doing the hard things. God often had to correct them for trying to squirm away from adversity.

God has always had to contend with this natural human tendency. He charged Moses with bringing His people out of Egypt—and Moses gave God every possible excuse he could think of. He ordered Jonah to warn Nineveh—and Jonah ran the other way. He commissioned Jeremiah to be a prophet to the nations—and Jeremiah wanted out. These men all wanted to shrink back, but God challenged them to step forward.

Fight the Good Fight

Selfish human nature always pulls inward. We so easily retreat into *small, self-absorbed thinking*. It takes hard work to hold on to the vision of what God wants to accomplish with our lives!

At the end of his life, Paul offered some timeless advice. After warning Timothy of the many dangers he would face, he said, “But watch thou in all things, *endure afflictions*, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry” (2 Timothy 4:5). *Endure afflictions*—this is part of the job. “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I HAVE FOUGHT A GOOD FIGHT, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (verses 6-7). Paul described his Christian life as a fight! He did not say, “I have lived a good life.” He said, “I have fought a good *fight*.”

God has much He wants to accomplish in your life. He has a tremendous future waiting for you. You have to GROW to achieve these things. You will never make it if you stay in your comfort zone.

God knows that physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually you are capable of far more than you think. Endure hardness! Embrace challenge! Fulfill your calling as a good soldier. Let God lead you in a life of growing, overcoming, fighting—*battling* for God—conquering and winning.

JACOB

Wrestle Through Pain

What do you do in tough times? This is an important measure of a man. The Bible's verdict is clear: "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small" (Proverbs 24:10).

Toughness is a defining virtue. A man must be tough. As Rudyard Kipling put it, you must build the capacity to "force your heart and nerve and sinew to serve your turn long after they are gone."

God wants to build that toughness in you, but He requires that you chase it down. His esteem for this quality is evident in many biblical examples. Perhaps the starkest is that of Jacob, who literally *wrestled God Himself*.

The details in Scripture are scant, but it is clear that Jacob found himself in a midnight grappling match that lasted into the morning (Genesis 32:24). Wrestling even a few minutes is exhausting; this contest apparently lasted for hours! At last, this man—who was actually a God Being manifested in the flesh—put Jacob's thigh out of joint (verse 25). Yet as painful as his injury was, somehow Jacob summoned the will to keep fighting!

Imagine wrestling with your hip out of joint! What Jacob did here demonstrated incredible tenacity and toughness!

Consider the fact that *God deliberately threw out Jacob's hip*, and then *kept wrestling with him*. Clearly He wanted to MEASURE JACOB'S CHARACTER.

Finally this divine Being said, "Let me go, for the day breaketh." Jacob's response revealed his recognition of and respect for the superiority of his sparring partner. It also showed the full measure of his own resilience and grit: "I WILL NOT LET THEE GO, EXCEPT THOU BLESS ME" (verse 26).

This quality in Jacob deeply impressed God. And it was this quality for which God renamed him *Israel*. This name means

prince of God, or *striver with God*: “for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed” (verse 28).

What a vivid picture of the *toughness* required to be part of spiritual Israel! God’s people must be *contenders*, *strivers*—individuals who will drive themselves to struggle and fight as long as is necessary to attain victory. “Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him” (James 1:12; English Standard Version).

God tested Jacob’s endurance and conquering spirit to its limit—and He is testing ours as well. At times, our trials can become quite grievous. We are grappling with an adversary, and then, just as it seems we are at our breaking point, our hip goes out of joint. Circumstances may seem overwhelming, impossibly demanding and painful. At those times we naturally want to quit and be left alone to tend to our wounds and injuries.

Yet God demands that we **KEEP FIGHTING!** We must stay engaged and continue to *wrestle*—with unexpected conflicts, with protracted fatigue setting in, with a *hip out of joint*. He wants to know how bad we want victory.

In your trials, draw on God’s power and call upon His help—absolutely. But also consider it an opportunity to be like Jacob, and maintain a dauntless determination in the face of that adversity to never give in, to never faint, to fight and even to “struggle with God” for the victory.

Develop the toughness, the manliness, the *princeliness*, of Jacob, the spirit that will say—no matter the odds or the pain—“I will not let you go until you bless me”!

1.5

KEEP YOUR WORD

*It's one thing to say you'll do it.
The hard part is the doing.*

“I’ll do it,” you say. Then the time comes to do it. What happens? Do you keep your word? When you tell your friend you will meet him at 6 o’clock, are you there at 6 o’clock? When you say you’ll finish that project by Wednesday morning, is it finished on Tuesday night? When you say you will do something, do people KNOW it’s as good as done?

Are you known as a man of your word?

It is easy to break your word. People often won’t even fault you for it. They rationalize it just like you do: *Something came up. I didn’t foresee this other factor. Things happen. No big deal.*

Because this attitude is so prevalent, most of us fail to recognize that breaking our word is a SIN!

Being a man of your word is essential to biblical manhood.

God’s Awesome Example

Remember, sin is anything that breaks God’s law of love. His law is the codified form of what God is and how He lives. Sin is anything contrary to the way God does things.

Breaking your word is *very* contrary to God’s way!

“God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?” (Numbers 23:19; ESV). When God says something, *it is true*. His word is rock-solid, totally trustworthy.

What a difference between God and man! When *we* say we’ll do something, we often forget we even *said* it. When we do remember, we often back out. When we announce we will change something in our lives, we often fail.

Not God! When *He* says He will do something, HE DOES IT. When He makes a promise, HE KEEPS IT. When He determines to accomplish something, He ALWAYS sees it through. Every jot and tittle of God’s Word will be fulfilled! This complete dependability is the very foundation of our faith. Imagine if God fulfilled 70 percent of His promises. If He only heard your prayers 82 percent of the time. If His prophecies came to pass 9 out of 10 times. If there was a 96 percent chance that Jesus Christ is actually going to return. *Thank God* He keeps His word!

Then, compare yourself to God.

Godly men *must* build this quality! God wants you to become perfect even as He is (Matthew 5:48). Follow His example: When words go out of your mouth, do everything you can to bring them to pass (Isaiah 45:22-23).

Jellyfish People

In his 1916 book *Making Life a Masterpiece*, Orison Swett Marden wrote, “Only recently a prominent public man was criticized throughout the newspaper world as one not having enough character to keep his promises. He had not the stamina to make good *when to do so proved difficult*” (emphasis added throughout). That is so often the issue: You say you will do something, but then circumstances change, and you encounter an unanticipated *inconvenience*. Suddenly, the short-term costs make keeping your word seem not worth doing.

But think of the *long-term cost*: losing your credibility. Think of the high cost of being known as unreliable. Think of the high cost of *compromising your character*.

“He hadn’t the timber, the character fiber, to stand up and do the thing he knew to be right, and that he had promised to do,” Marden continued. “The world is full of these *jellyfish people* who have not lime enough in their backbone to stand erect, to do the right thing. They are always stepping into the spotlight in the *good-intention stage*, and then, when the reckoning time comes, *taking the line of least resistance*, doing the thing which will cost the least effort or money, regardless of later consequences. They think they can be as *unscrupulous* about BREAKING promises as they were about MAKING them. But sooner or later fate makes us play fair or get out of the game.”

How often do people break their word to you? They say they’ll be there at 7:30 sharp, and then say, *Oh, I forgot!* or, *Something came up!* Often there is no explanation or apology. Or there is an apology, but they do the same thing the next time. It is obvious they don’t really *care* about a broken word. How about you?

Modern society has gotten further and further from God—and from lives of honesty, integrity and trustworthiness.

Agreements must be bound by carefully worded, attorney-approved contracts. But only a couple generations ago, many if not most significant business transactions were sealed with a man's word and his handshake. No forms. No lawyers. No contracts. The man *saying* it *was* the contract.

When a man says, *I will do it*, he is signing his name to the contract and committing his reputation and his character.

How seriously do you take a word you have given?

Jesus Christ says “[E]very idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matthew 12:36).

Christ also says, “But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one” (Matthew 5:37; New King James Version).

Is your *yes* really YES? Is your *no* really NO?

“But I had something come up” Did you tell that person yes?

“I forgot about it” Did you say you would do it?

“I ran out of time” Did you give your word?

“Well, I didn’t say ‘I PROMISE I’ll do it.’” Does God make these excuses? Jesus Christ never “promised” to do anything! He let His “YES” be YES.

“But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not” (Matthew 21:28-30). Christ is contrasting those who refuse at first but then repent and change, with those who *say* all the right things—*Sure, Dad, I’ll help you out!*—but don’t follow through and keep their word.

God wants ACTION. This is how we grow in character: not by *wishing*, but by *doing*. We don’t grow by promising, but by CARRYING OUT our promises.

How to Keep Your Word to Others

1) Be careful what you promise. “Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips” (Psalm 141:3). Before you tell someone you will do something, *think about it*. Don’t say yes just because that is the most comfortable response for that

moment. Learn what it feels like to respectfully and kindly decline to commit when you don't know for certain you can deliver. Be realistic in what you say you will do. It is wise to state plans as *probabilities* rather than absolutes (James 4:13-14).

2) Admit when you can't do it. If you know you can't deliver, say so. Don't equivocate because you don't want to seem rude or incompetent. Be polite, of course, but say no. "Never be ashamed to say, whether as applied to time or money, 'I cannot afford it'—'I cannot afford to waste an hour in the idleness to which you invite me'—'I cannot afford the guinea you ask me to throw away,'" said Lord Bulwer Lytton. "Learn to say 'No' with decision, 'Yes' with caution—'No' with decision whenever it resists a temptation; 'Yes' with caution whenever it implies a promise. A promise once given is a bond inviolable." James 5:12 reiterates Christ's command in Matthew 5:37. Say *no* with decision and *yes* with caution.

3) Once you've said it, do it. When you say you'll do something, the other person must *know* your promise has value. Write it down so you don't forget. Make it large in your mind. Use a calendar. Use technology like a memo app. Keep track of the details. Schedule them; follow through. Fulfill your promise 100 percent, even if circumstances change and it becomes twice as hard to fulfill it—WIN that victory of character! Also, keep your word *to yourself*—even when no one is watching. When you say you're going to exercise three times a week, *follow through*. Do what you must in order to fulfill that commitment, even in the littlest areas, and those successes will multiply.

4) If you blow it, admit it. Don't lie or make up excuses. If you can't do it, or fail to keep your word, be honest. When you make a mistake, don't ignore it. *Apologize!* Apologize with a sense of the gravity that you have broken your word. When you make a mistake, *care* enough to do what you can to fix it. Then determine even more deeply that next time, **YOU WILL KEEP YOUR WORD.**

Keep Your Word to God

If you are striving to embrace biblical manhood, you speak often to God, praying on your knees. You speak of how you want to improve: *I want to pray more passionately. I want to love my wife*

and children more. Devote more time to Bible study. Overcome this or that sin. These are good thoughts, good commitments to make.

The question is, when you take such matters to God, *do you follow through?*

God keeps track. “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God,” says Ecclesiastes 5:2, 4-5: “for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. ... When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: *pay that which thou hast vowed.* Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.”

Be careful what you tell God. He holds you to account! Do not be rash. Do not make a promise you cannot keep.

That is not to say you should never make a commitment to God, or carefully say everything with noncommittal wording. It is to say that when you commit to God, *follow through.*

We need to develop the character to *keep our word to God.* We must make necessary changes in our lives—not just for a day or a week, but day after day after day until we *follow through*, make a *permanent* change and *keep our word!*

DOES GOD CONSIDER YOU RELIABLE? When He shows you something you need to change—through Bible study, prayer, literature, a spoken message, a conversation or an experience—can He count on you to follow through?

This is why God’s truth is *dangerous knowledge.* We are accountable for what we learn.

“The human MAN is made literally from CLAY,” Herbert W. Armstrong wrote in *The Incredible Human Potential*. “God is like the master potter forming and shaping a vessel out of clay. But if the clay is too hard, it will not bend into the form and shape he wants. If it is too soft and moist, it lacks firmness to ‘STAY PUT’ where the potter bends it. ... [T]he human CLAY must be pliable, must yield willingly. ... [Yet] if he is so *lacking in will*, purpose and determination that he won’t ‘stay put’ when God molds him partly into what God wants him to be—too wishy-washy, weak, *lacking root of character*—he will never endure to the end. He will lose out.”

God must be able to rely on you to *stay put* when He shapes you! Yes, you need His guidance and power. But you also need that “*root*

of character” in you to DO as God instructs. That “root of character” is *not* God’s righteous character; it is a necessary ingredient for God to be able to *build* His righteous character in you. It is the basic stiffness of spine that makes a man a man and not a jellyfish.

The overwhelmingly prevalent attitude is to simply fail in our attempts to overcome and then to make excuses after the fact. But as the saying goes, an excuse is nothing more than the skin of a reason wrapped around a lie.

Psalms 15 lists qualities God loves. Verse 4 praises “He *who swears to his own hurt and does not change*” (NKJV). Sometimes we can be shortsighted and commit to something that ends up being “to our hurt.” But here is the *real challenge*: If that happens, do you then *change*? God is impressed by the man who CHANGES NOT. Even when that man realizes the difficulty in the commitment, he sticks with it, even if he is going to *suffer* for it.

Think on Christ’s crucifixion. Christ had committed to it. He had second thoughts, but followed through, “TO HIS OWN HURT”!

Compare yourself to God in this area of biblical manhood. “WHY is it IMPOSSIBLE for God to sin?” Mr. Armstrong asked. “No greater power exists that will prevent Him—but God has simply *by His own power*—supreme and above all power—*set Himself* that He *will not!*” (ibid).

Do not think, *God is God; I can never be like that*. Your human potential, your masculine purpose, your duty to your God and to others, and your only hope beyond this life is to *be like that*.

This may seem overwhelming, and with the human spirit alone, it is impossible. You cannot accomplish this by simply *willing* yourself into following through. You need God’s help! Remember: With God, *all things* are possible (Matthew 19:26).

How to Keep Your Word to God

1) Ask God to set your priorities. God knows what you can handle. He does not expect you to do more than you are capable of. Ask Him to show you what to focus on, what to pour your heart and effort into, what to use His Spirit to accomplish.

2) Only commit to what you can fulfill. Jesus lived sinlessly and showed that this is possible. When He dwells in you, He can

live a sinless life through you. Never compromise on striving for that. But when it comes to specific commitments like, *I will pray for 10 people every day; I will approach my wife about this problem; I will sacrifice this and that*—do not just let these lightly tumble off your tongue in prayer. Seek God's guidance, carefully consider what needs to be done, and take your word to Him seriously.

3) Keep track. We are human beings, and we forget. We forget even our seriously considered, earnestly delivered commitments to God. When we get up from our prayers, we quickly become distracted. Record your commitments, your projects, your plans. Make note of the sin you are besieging. Write down the virtues you want to grow in. Do not let these commitments exist only in your mind while you're praying. *God* remembers them—you must too!

4) Change one thing at a time. Real change requires *focus*. If you try to change too much at once, your focus is diffused and your efforts are ineffective. Choose the most important thing, commit to it, and fix it at the forefront of your thinking. Grapple with that commitment day in and day out until it becomes a new habit. A good rule of thumb is to commit to no more than one per month.

A Word of Honor

"I have been asked what I mean by 'word of honor.' I will tell you," wrote Karl G. Maeser. "Place me behind prison walls—walls of stone ever so high, ever so thick, reaching ever so far into the ground—there is a possibility that in some way or another I might be able to escape. But stand me on the floor and draw a chalk line around me and have me give my WORD OF HONOR never to cross it. Can I get out of that circle? NO, NEVER! I'D DIE FIRST."

"A man is already of consequence in the world when it is known that we can implicitly rely upon him," Lord Bulwer Lytton said. "I have frequently seen in life a person preferred to a long list of applicants for some important charge, which lifts him at once into station and fortune, merely because he has this reputation—that when he says he knows a thing, he knows it, and when he says he will DO a thing, he WILL DO IT."

What is *your* reputation? Strive to be more like God. Follow His example! When you keep *your word*, you keep *His word*!

ELEAZAR

Stand Alone

For generations, Philistines had dominated the Israelites; their troops had raided, plundered and extorted. Under King David, Israelite forces had turned the tide on this oppression, but not eradicated it. Now Philistine forces had amassed for another assault.

This operation began badly. Rather than standing firm in the day of battle, “the men of Israel were gone away.”

But a man was there named Eleazar.

“[W]hen they defied the Philistines that were there gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel were gone away: He arose, and smote the Philistines ...” (2 Samuel 23:9-10). When other men ran, Eleazar charged. He didn’t berate his fellow soldiers; he simply took action. His *example* corrected them. This one-man army “arose, and smote the Philistines.”

Are you willing to stand alone and fight? God commands you to develop this valor (e.g. Philippians 2:12; Matthew 11:12; 1 Corinthians 9:24). You face danger. You face fear. But don’t give in. Don’t follow the mob. Don’t cave. Don’t criticize. Don’t hesitate. When others are weak, be bold. Rise, and smite the Philistines.

One man plus God is army enough to take the victory.

Eleazar fought with every mental and physical fiber he had. He wreaked as much damage, created as much havoc, spilled as much Philistine blood, as possible. He never stopped swinging. He would not allow himself to succumb to fatigue, to yield to the oncoming crush of enemies. He remained focused, single-minded—vigilantly, violently engaged.

You fight your daily battles against Satan, an ungodly society, and your own selfish nature. This melee demands determined, ceaseless exertion. Grip your sword and don’t stop swinging.

It is true that the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Eventually, even this mighty warrior’s “hand was weary.” Nevertheless,

he gripped his sword so tightly and determinedly that he could not release it: “his hand clave unto the sword” (2 Samuel 23:10).

This mighty man was also indomitable spiritually. He couldn’t drop his weapon even if he wanted to. This is the way you must be with God’s truth, “the sword of the Spirit.” Nothing and no one must ever pry it from you. Whatever the job, cling to your sword like it is welded to your hand, until the last enemy falls.

Eleazar’s will was indomitable, yet he did reach the limit of his physical strength. The man who never hits this point hasn’t worked to his capacity. This weariness is simply the mark of a mortal spending every ounce of the might God gives him. Nevertheless, God ensured his strength held out until the battle was won. Because Eleazar refused to retreat or forsake God’s cause, “the LORD wrought a great victory that day.” God prevailed because of the grit of *one man*.

Often, God chooses to fight *only* through harnessing the strength of men. If men will not fight, God will not win. How often God seeks to vanquish an entire army of Philistines—*yet those through whom He would do battle are simply “gone away.”*

We can never expect God to fight our battles for us if we flee.

We must arise and meet the enemy, entrusting our lives to the fact that God will provide the strength. If even *one soldier* avails himself of the supernatural strength God offers, God is eager to use that brave man to achieve “a great victory.”

Then, when the battle is won, we must credit the real victor.

God preserved this example to light a fire in future Eleazars like you. That is what it did within the men who saw Eleazar firsthand. After his display of boldness, they “returned after him.” Granted, it was “only to spoil.” But they were back on the battlefield, revitalized by the valor of their brother-in-arms.

When you stand up for God, others will follow. A family will get behind a man who leads. Others will grow in faith over a single outstanding example. One man’s courage can inspire even the unconverted who recognize it and witness the triumph.

Stay faithful in fight, dauntless toward danger. Execute your duty. Never relax your sword. Commit the full measure of your strength, guts and heart, and God will use you to win a great victory.

Section 2

THE LEADER

*A man does not know greatness
until he inspires others to seek it.*

70	2.1 Lead
80	<i>David's Mighty Men—Slay Giants</i>
82	2.2 Crush Inferiority and Weakness
91	<i>4 Qualities of a Godly Leader</i>
92	2.3 Take Responsibility
102	<i>Shammah—Stand Your Ground</i>
104	2.4 Decide
112	2.5 Be a People Person

2.1

LEAD

*Learn to exercise authority over others
in a way that causes them to rejoice.*

A talented basketball team with an uninspired coach is a bad basketball team. A promising company with an inept CEO is treading the path toward obsolescence. A family without engaged guidance is generally aimless—easily mired in bad habits, fruitless pursuits and mediocrity.

Success in any organized endeavor requires *good leadership*.

The quality of leadership determines the quality of a family, school, business, band, organization or congregation. Skilled leadership turns a bunch of directionless boys into a winning little league club. It transforms a classroom of indifferent youths into a hive of enthusiastic learners. It turns timid recruits into a victorious military unit.

Good leadership is a great blessing in the lives of those who operate under it. It challenges people to break patterns of failure. It points them in the right direction and inspires them to propel themselves forward. It awakens them to possibilities, stirs hope and ignites vision. It steadies the ship when stormy seas arise. It ushers people toward otherwise unattainable excellence. It converts losers into winners, failures into successes. It enables ordinary people to become extraordinary.

Effective leadership gathers individuals together into a cohesive team. It draws people into harmonious effort and unified accomplishment. It marshals the best in each person in order to create synergy—group outcomes where the result is greater than the sum of its parts.

If you have ever had a parent, teacher, coach, instructor, supervisor, boss, captain or commanding officer who did his job well and got the best from you, you know how wonderful such leadership can be.

At the same time, most of us have also lived under authority that was poorly administered, and we suffered from the results.

As Proverbs 29:2 says, “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.”

Yes leadership can cause mourning, or it can cause rejoicing. It is an extraordinary power.

And men, YOU were BORN TO LEAD.

A Responsibility for Men

At the beginning of human history, God gave human beings *dominion—rulership* over the rest of the material creation (Genesis 1:26-28). He created men and women for a tremendous purpose and plan that echoes in eternity, and He made Earth our training ground. The animals, plants, soil and other earthly elements provide opportunities to learn responsible, principled, virtuous and wise rulership.

From the beginning, God also made clear a fundamental organizing principle *among* human beings: that He intends men to be leaders over women. Most people today balk at this, but when it is followed as God intends—when men lead in a godly, loving way, and when women voluntarily fulfill their complementary role—only blessings result.

God intends *men* to be the leaders in society. He intends *men* to be the leaders in the Church. He intends *husbands* to be the leaders in their marriages. He intends *fathers* to be the leaders of their homes.

You were born to be a leader! God has implanted within your mind and body dynamic qualities that can design, build, create, teach, lead—change lives, mold the future.

How can you unlock those potentialities?

This world cries out for solid, principled leadership—leaders who are anchored and grounded, who will not be corrupted. Ambitious, virtuous leaders are needed in government, business, industry, agriculture, education—every segment of society!

It needs leaders who do things God's way. In fact, the Bible shows that very soon, God plans to put all the leaders of today *out of office* and set up a kingdom run by leaders who are willing to follow His just and right laws of leadership. You can learn the way of tomorrow's world—today.

God wants to give you an awesome position in that future Kingdom. He wants you to become a leader!

And before that, He wants you to have a happy, blessed life—now.

But receiving such a position requires training. God doesn't just give it: You must go after it.

Whom to Lead First

What is the first step toward becoming a leader God can use both now and in the future? Simply this: You begin gaining the skills of leadership by *leading yourself*.

The biblical book of Titus is a letter written by an older minister to one of the less-experienced ministers in the Church. This older minister gives one solid nugget of how to help the young men in his congregation. He wrote, “Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded” (Titus 2:6).

Other translations of this verse read, “Likewise urge the younger men to *control themselves*.” “Similarly, encourage the young men to be *self-controlled*.” “Tell the young men also to be *masters of themselves at all points*.” “Urge the young men to behave carefully, taking life seriously” (RSV; NIV; Moffatt; Living Bible).

This may sound simple, but it is the first step to becoming a godly leader. So many of those in authority in society have never learned this fundamental character principle, and as a result, they are making an absolute mess of this world!

In tomorrow’s world, ALL leadership positions will be filled by people who have learned to *control themselves first*.

When a person lacks self-control, he renders himself unfit to lead in many ways. He caves in to peer pressure easily. He is too concerned about what others think of him. He prioritizes appearance over substance, leading to forms of cheating and corner-cutting. He is susceptible to unsound judgment, favoritism, partiality and unpredictability. He wrestles with feelings of depression and inferiority. He gets jealous easily, especially when someone around him succeeds. He can become terribly manipulative and political. He loses his temper. He acts arrogantly—even tyrannically—to mask his insecurities. He does self-destructive things and succumbs to bad influences. He has difficulty controlling his own passions and lusts.

The more power and authority such a person has, the more damage he can do to more people!

“He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls” (Proverbs 25:28). Rulership must start with *ruling your own spirit*. You *must* be able to govern

and control yourself, or else you easily become prey to many destructive influences.

Emotional maturity is a crucial component of self-mastery, and critical to manhood and leadership. Before a man can successfully help a wife and children deal with the trials, tests and struggles in life in general, he must have practice at governing his own emotions. A man must be a ballast, a force of stability, providing an even-keeled environment to raise emotionally mature youth. He can only do that by first learning to govern himself.

Modern society seems to think a person can be a wonderful leader despite having weak personal character. God vehemently disagrees. In His eyes, weak character *disqualifies* someone for high office. If a man cannot rule himself, how can he rule others? As Jesus said, “[I]f the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Matthew 15:14).

When a man wins victories in the arena of self-rule, he becomes better equipped for greater challenges. “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city” (Proverbs 16:32).

“When I was young and free and my imagination had no limits, I dreamed of changing the world,” says a statement of unknown origin. “As I grew older and wiser, I realized the world would not change. And I decided to shorten my sights somewhat and change only my country. But it too seemed immovable. As I entered my twilight years, in one last desperate attempt, I sought to change only my family, those closest to me, but alas, they would have none of it. And now here I lie on my deathbed and realize (perhaps for the first time) that if only I’d changed myself first, then by example I may have influenced my family, and with their encouragement and support I may have bettered my country, and who knows—I may have changed the world.”

That is the path to principled leadership: Change yourself first. Learn to govern yourself first. If you can rule yourself—even in the little areas of your life—God knows you will be able to rule others. If you are faithful in the small things, then God can entrust you with greater responsibility (Luke 16:10-12).

This is why prioritizing self-rule will start unlocking the potential for leadership and genuine success in your life.

What Sort of Leader Is God Looking For?

Famed four-star general Norman Schwarzkopf once said, “Leadership is a potent combination of strategy and character. But if you must be without one, be without the strategy.”

This aligns with the scriptural instruction on finding leaders within the Church. There are two main passages on the subject: 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9. These provide excellent insight into what God considers foundational to sound leadership.

A godly leader is a man of TOP CHARACTER. He is vigilant, sober, not given to wine, not greedy for money or covetous. He is patient and even-tempered—emotionally mature. He is level-headed, not a man to pick fights. He is *blameless*, meaning unaccused, or irreproachable. His credibility isn’t shot because of his glaring faults.

A godly leader is “a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men.” He isn’t a socially backward recluse or hermit. He has good people skills and loves having people around and extending kindnesses.

He is also a *family man*, placing great importance on family relationships. The best leaders are also the best sons, brothers, husbands and fathers. There is a powerful reason for this: God’s master plan is a *family* plan! God is expanding His spiritual Family. Physical family today is a marvelous tool that He intends to prepare us for leadership in His Kingdom. It will do so if we are living it His way, according to His laws.

The Apostle Paul goes so far as to say that a man must “*ruleth well his own house*, having his children in subjection with all gravity”—and explains: “For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?” That is a *direct* statement of how much God wants to use our families as a means of developing our leadership. We will get into this subject much deeper in later sections of this book. But ask yourself: What is your family life like? God says it should be orderly, happy, uplifting and positive. It should be a good example of teamwork. The state of your family is a reflection of the quality of its leadership.

The Key to Great Leadership

A man should start practicing self-government from his youth. He should be building the aspects of solid, reliable character that God is looking for. As he does, he prepares himself for leadership long before he starts receiving authority over others.

Another crucial step in learning godly leadership can and should also begin as early in life as possible. It is a *mindset* that requires no position of authority to develop, yet the more it is developed, the better equipped a man is to wisely exercise authority once he begins to possess it.

This mindset is one of SERVICE: *putting the needs of others ahead of your own.*

Naturally, men tend to view a position of leadership as something that exalts a man over other people and makes him superior. Many see authority as a means of extracting what they want from other people. God, in stark contrast, views a position of leadership as a tool for *helping more people*. This is the reason God gives *any* authority: to provide BETTER OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE. The more authority you have, the greater opportunity you have to help more people more effectively. The authority is for the benefit of the *people*, not the leader. Thus, a *service mindset* is what God most seeks to develop in us to increase our usefulness as leaders.

Matthew 20 shows a typical approach to leadership. The mother of two of Jesus's disciples, James and John, asked Jesus to give her sons high offices in the Kingdom of God (verses 20-21). It is not unusual for people to seek positions of authority and greatness. In fact, when the other 10 disciples heard what was going on, they became indignant (verse 24). *Why should THEY get special positions in the Kingdom? What about us?* Many people want greatness, particularly for the privilege and honor that come with it. Here were Christ's own disciples acting like a gaggle of squabbling politicians!

Christ recognized this as an opportunity to teach a lesson in godly leadership. He called His disciples together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. *It shall not be so among*

you ...” (verses 25-26; RSV). God’s approach to leadership is radically different from the world’s.

Christ continued: “... but whoever would be *great* among you **MUST BE YOUR SERVANT**, and whoever would be *first* among you **MUST BE YOUR SLAVE**; even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (verses 26-28; RSV). The Living Bible renders verse 27, “[I]f you want to be right at the top, you must serve like a slave.”

This is a revolutionary concept of leadership! In God’s thinking, a leader is a servant. This is how to be great God’s way.

Christ set the supreme example. He made Himself a servant to all those with whom He came into contact (John 13:14-15; Philippians 2:4-8).

Godly leadership is built on *serving* those you lead. You must learn to prioritize their needs above yours.

This is a habit and a mentality that every man needs to begin developing as early in life as possible and continue growing in throughout his life.

Now in practical terms, that *service* will be different for the young man who is helping with household chores than for the father who is helping his teenage daughter through a disappointment, or the manager who is helping his team complete a big project under budget. Being a *servant* of others does not simply mean doing routine or menial jobs for them. As authority increases, the specific tasks change as well. What remains constant is **THE NEED TO RECOGNIZE AND PRIORITIZE THE NEEDS OF OTHERS**. There is a never-ending need to be attentive and alert to others, to assess what is in their best interest, and to seek the best way to attain that outcome. Always keep that uppermost in your mind. As long as you do, then the more authority you possess and the more experience and wisdom you gain as a leader, the more **GOOD** you will bring into the lives of those you lead.

This Is the Foundation

In a real sense, *leading is at the heart of biblical manhood*. Everything in this book aims to equip you to grow as a leader.

As you grow as a man of God, you form the building blocks of character required of a strong leader. As you eliminate personal sins and weaknesses, you develop habits and patterns of success and victory, and you invite more of God's presence and power in your life. As you submit to God's authority over you, you follow His direction toward success, and you establish the humility that protects you and those you lead from abusing your own authority. As you embrace challenges, you stretch your capacity and build the strength and godly confidence to stand tall in even tougher trials. As you keep your word in small matters, you forge the reliability that enables others to place their trust in you.

The remaining chapters in this section describe additional building blocks of leadership. As you accept the burdens of responsibility, you eliminate childish patterns of dependency, inaction and blame-shifting, and build habits and skills of healthy self-reliance. As you exercise your power of decision-making, you grow more practiced in how to reason with God, to have firm conviction once decided, to be resolute and single-minded, and to be confident in a positive outcome. As you mature in recognizing and fulfilling others' needs, you build compassion and love, you grow in social skills and ability to relate to others, and you learn *how* to serve people in ways that truly help them.

All these are qualities that substantially, even dramatically amplify your capacity as a leader!

Efforts to assume or to exercise authority *apart from* this rock-solid foundation can result in serious mistakes, doing terrible damage to those you would lead.

But if this is the foundation on which you are establishing your leadership, your future is filled with as much promise as the bright dawn of the first day of spring. You are well on your way to fulfilling your God-given destiny as a leader.

Building on this foundation and truly fulfilling your God-given potential as a skilled, effective leader is a challenging, exhilarating, lifelong process. There is always more to learn. Leadership comes with experience. Each new experience—whether success, failure or a combination of the two—brings

new lessons and, if you learn from them, expands your capacity all the more.

The time to start growing as a leader is *right now*. You learn by doing, and the time to start doing is **NOW**.

Ask God to open doors for you to act. Then, be alert. Look for opportunities to lead others, however small. It may be in your home, with your family, among your friends or your peers, in a classroom, in a group project, on your sports team, in a new social situation, at your office or job site, at a business meeting, or at a church service. There will be times when a conversation is going in a bad direction, a project is stagnant for lack of applied effort, a person shows promise and potential but needs guidance. There are many times when someone in authority needs strong team members to get something accomplished, and you can show leadership from *within* the team by throwing your support behind that leader.

The needs for quality leadership are everywhere. Obviously you must exercise wisdom in knowing when and how to fill those needs. But the more you are building on a godly foundation, the more wisdom you will have. Whatever doors God opens for you, don't shy away from them. Charge through with confidence.

God has big plans for you. He has a lot to accomplish through you. Keep a prod on yourself to become the kind of leader who can rally whole groups of people to take action for God!

You are not yet the leader you will be, but never forget: **YOU WERE BORN TO LEAD!** Don't shy away from that. It is your destiny.

DAVID'S MIGHTY MEN

Slay Giants

When King Saul ruled Israel, the nation suffered from a shameful lack of faith. David, a teenager, visited the army on the battlefield and saw Israel's soldiers—who should have been filled with faith and valor—cowering before a Philistine warrior (1 Samuel 17:24). Saul offered a great reward to anyone who would step up and fight Goliath, but no one would (verse 25). Saul wouldn't even consider fighting the giant himself.

Why were these men so shamefully fearful? *It was primarily because of Saul's poor leadership!*

Young David had a totally different spirit. "And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (verse 26). Later David asked, "Is there not a cause?" (verse 29). *Can't you all see there's a good reason to fight? We need to take this Philistine on!*

David displayed amazing faith and courage. He personally stepped up and killed the giant who had brought reproach on Israel.

God later replaced Saul's weak leadership with David's faith-filled leadership. This change in government brought a transformation in Israel's military.

Toward the end of David's reign, when he was an old man, there was another battle with the Philistines (2 Samuel 21:15). This army had more giants like Goliath: "And Ishbibenob, which was of the sons of the giant, the weight of whose spear weighed three hundred shekels of brass in weight, he being girded with a new sword, thought to have slain David" (verse 16). This huge man was like the ancient battlefield equivalent of a tank. But

what happened? “But Abishai the son of Zeruiah succoured [David], and smote the Philistine, and killed him. Then the men of David swore unto him, saying, Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel” (verse 17).

These soldiers under David were valiant—a stark contrast to what they had been under King Saul’s leadership.

David’s men wanted to protect their king to ensure that “the light of Israel” would not be quenched. What a superb attitude! They could have defected at some point during his reign, like when he committed adultery and murder. Instead, they were sterling examples of virtue and loyalty to a king who made mistakes but repented and who, most importantly, was the man God ordained and continued to support as king. Those men knew that staying loyal to David was following God.

“And it came to pass after this, that there was again a battle with the Philistines at Gob: then Sibbechai the Hushathite slew Saph, which was of the sons of the giant” (verse 18). Sibbechai was yet another giant-killer cast in David’s mold.

“And there was again a battle in Gob with the Philistines, where Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim, a Bethlehemite, slew the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver’s beam” (verse 19). Elhanan too followed in David’s giant-slaying footsteps. Verses 20-22 describe another of David’s mighty men killing a huge, fearsome giant.

These men killed giants just as David did! David’s army of giant-killers represents the epitome of God’s government! These men didn’t run from giants. What changed from the cowardice and timidity they displayed under Saul? They followed David’s example of faith! In so doing, they grew in their love for God.

Would you stand up and fight the way these men did? Will you unify around God’s leader today the way those men rallied around David? We must “follow the faith” of the man God is using.

It’s not enough that a nation or a Church has a great leader. Everybody under him must be great! *We all need to be giant-killers!* God makes that possible for every one of us. There can be no breakdown in any link. This towering lesson can not only make you a conqueror but can create an army of conquerors!

BY GERALD FLURRY

2.2

CRUSH INFERIORITY AND WEAKNESS

*Grow in the right kind of
confidence and boldness.*

A godly man is a confident man. His manner instills confidence in those around him. His poise and firmness are invaluable tools for his leadership.

Sadly, however, feelings of inferiority plague many men. An inferiority complex can be a debilitating weakness. It can be a man's greatest enemy.

Attacks by Satan's society on modern manhood have left many men feeling weak and inadequate. Many men have lacked strong masculine examples and competent male teachers. Many have suffered various forms of abuse by their fathers, or been hurt by women, or experienced great losses in life.

Even great men of God, at their calling, used their insecurities as excuses. Moses felt inferior as a speaker. Jeremiah felt inadequate because of his youth. Both overcame these feelings.

God can turn a failed life into a magnificent success. "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory ..." (1 Samuel 2:8). No limitation, deficiency or background is too difficult to overcome.

Debilitating feelings of inferiority and weakness hamper you from fulfilling your calling as a man and must be confronted.

The Void in You

Here is a blunt truth you must face squarely: Most feelings of inferiority spring from *actual inferiority*. That's right: To overcome those *feelings*, you must overcome your *inferiority*.

Your success in this process starts with recognizing the fact that of and by yourself, *you are incomplete*.

This isn't true of just you. It's true of every man, every human being. God made us from *dust*. We are clay models out of which God can shape us spiritually into His character image. Our potential is to one day be born of spirit, but we are not there yet.

Herbert W. Armstrong explained: "[W]hat God created in the first Adam was NOT YET COMPLETE. Man was made carnal, material—but he was made to NEED THE SPIRIT OF GOD. Without this spiritual life from God, man experiences a sense of

emptiness, hunger and thirst for that which will satisfy” (*Plain Truth*, August 1962; emphasis added throughout).

God created man to *need* a relationship with Him. Man had to *go to God* to become complete.

Think on this: *Every person on Earth* is incomplete. *You* are incomplete without the Holy Spirit. You are like a car without gasoline—you’re not going anywhere.

Everyone feels this need. We all experience “a sense of emptiness, [and we] hunger and thirst” for something to fill it, Mr. Armstrong wrote. So people look everywhere, trying this thing and that, searching and searching for what will satisfy this need. But “[t]he only thing that will impart to him this sense of satisfaction, completeness, abundance, is God’s Spirit—God’s nature—God’s fullness,” he wrote.

“Yet his carnal mind does not recognize that fact,” he went on. “Being incomplete, lacking in the spiritual waters and heavenly food—God’s Word—that would fill him to satisfaction, he has a *gnawing soul-hunger* that leaves him miserable, empty, discontented. He seeks to quench his thirst and satisfy his soul-hunger in the interests and pursuits and pleasures of this world.”

You see this everywhere. Men try to fill their own spiritual void with money, education, material success, work and career, travel, power, fame, athletic feats, possessions, entertainment, sex, drugs or other things. Many of these things can be good, but none will ever fill the void that can only be filled by God’s Spirit! Men who seek these things will still be missing that vital piece and likely find themselves still feeling incomplete and inferior.

“This very lack within him—this spiritual need—gives him *an innate inferiority complex*,” Mr. Armstrong wrote. “He senses his inferiority, as compared to God—his lack of what he was made to need; but, not understanding what it is, he seeks to quell the painful sense of inferiority by conceit, and blowing up the ego—the *self*—with vanity and self-exaltation. This *vanity*, then, is a substitute for God and His Spirit—another god before the true God.”

That is profound insight. To the human eye, self-confidence may look like the *opposite* of an inferiority complex. But the

reality is that it is a *substitute*—and a dangerous one—for true *godly* confidence.

To overcome inferiority—and really, to grow and to be truly happy and fulfilled in your life—you must first correctly identify its spiritual source. Acknowledge that you are incomplete—then *seek God* for wholeness!

Jesus Christ, our perfect example, recognized the weakness of His flesh and repeatedly said He could do *nothing* of Himself (Matthew 26:41; John 5:19; 8:28; 14:10). He confronted this reality by maintaining a robust relationship with His Father and relying on Him continually. And look at the effect in His life! Jesus didn't shrink back, walk around whipped, or exude an apologetic attitude. He was confident, powerful and bold. It was not self-confidence, but spiritual strength that gave Him the fortitude to be a strong leader, a powerful influence on the people around Him, and to accomplish His mission.

This is the foundation of true confidence.

The Fate of the Fearful

Some might consider a sense of inferiority as a type of humility. It is not. It is an aspect of self-centeredness and vanity. It is something that must be overcome.

Revelation 21:7-8 say being “fearful” is a sin that must be conquered; the alternative is the lake of fire. It is mentioned *first* in this list of capital sins. The word means *timid* or *cowardly*.

This trait is spiritually fatal. It causes us to shrink back from growth opportunities for fear of failure.

In the parable of the talents, the man given one talent was a victim of this attitude. What did he say? “I was AFRAID, and went and *hid* thy talent” (Matthew 25:25). His fear kept him from growth. His master called him wicked and lazy and ordered him to be cast into outer darkness.

This sinful fear can manifest itself in a number of ways. One is an inferiority complex, which produces chronic worry. It often produces procrastination and indecision—fear to take action.

We must master such emotions and overcome debilitating feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. How?

To Build Confidence, Build Competence

Modern society places a premium on self-esteem. Somehow the idea has infected much of education that *praise* is the only valid motivator for young people, and that self-esteem is the chief virtue, divorced from achievement or even effort. Thus, children are routinely sheltered from the sting of failure—and therefore trapped in a sunny fantasy world in which bad behavior and poor performance have no negative consequences.

This mistake creates a host of terrible problems. People with unfounded high self-esteem or self-confidence tend to be narcissistic and preoccupied with themselves, have an unbecoming sense of entitlement, lack critical thinking skills, and feel little motivation to improve. Employers are exasperated with graduates emerging from the educational system who are incompetent and unteachable, yet who consider themselves brilliant and believe the world owes them a handsome living. The unmerited praise these young people received sets them up for crushing shocks when reality hits, challenging their artificially high opinions of themselves.

It is invaluable to have a *realistic view* of yourself. Legitimately healthy self-esteem is built on virtues like self-mastery, discipline, hard work, competence, skill and actual accomplishment. There is no substitute for these. The man who has achieved nothing actually benefits from acknowledging that fact. As Winston Churchill famously commented about one of his political opponents, “Mr. Attlee is a humble man, but then, he has a lot to be humble about.”

This is another way in which overcoming feelings of inferiority requires overcoming *actual inferiority*. TO BUILD CONFIDENCE, BUILD COMPETENCE. Find work that needs to be done and do it. Learn useful skills. Pinpoint your areas of weakness and strengthen them. Identify aptitudes and develop them. Tackle a project that seems beyond your expertise and see it through to completion. Work yourself into a more challenging and responsible job. This subject is discussed at greater length in Section 7.1.

Be persistent, recognizing the importance of building successes. A pattern of failure needs to be overcome by starting

to score successes, even if they are small at first. The sense of achievement with a new skill attained, a difficult project finished, a job well done, is deeply satisfying and motivating. Success leads to success. Don't let setbacks derail you. Keep working so you can begin to experience the momentum that successful accomplishment brings.

Insecurity Is Caused by Sin

Feelings of weakness and inferiority also spring—inevitably and appropriately—from SIN. These feelings are grounded in reality: A man of weak character will *feel* weak, guilty about his own frailties. Self-indulgence, sex perversion, abdication of responsibility, focus on self rather than on sacrifice—these are *sins*. Succumbing to sin reveals a man's weakness and weakens him still further.

This is a problem in the life of any man. But it is catastrophic in a society that has grown *comfortable* with sin and actually *embraces* sin. TODAY'S MEN ARE WEAK BECAUSE OF SIN. Men's sins are creating weakness, insecurity and selfishness. They are causing the collapse of male responsibility and manly leadership. They are leading to the disappearance of manhood!

When a man or a nation surrenders to sin, God removes His blessings and the devil goes to work.

In Genesis 3, Satan, after successfully entrapping Adam and Eve in sin, immediately instilled within them an unhealthy self-awareness and self-consciousness. They became ashamed, and they “hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God” (verse 8). Why? Adam tells God in verse 10: “I was afraid, BECAUSE I WAS NAKED; AND I HID MYSELF.” There was self-consciousness and fear, like the wicked servant who was afraid and hid his talent. This sin, and its subsequent fears and complexes, led to more sins, including blaming and accusing others (verses 11-13).

Satan pummels us with a debilitating kind of “guilt.” He wants us to dwell on our inadequacies and then *hide from God*. Doing this leads us further from God, at which point Satan can amplify our feelings of inferiority. As Proverbs 23:7 says, as a man thinks in his heart, “SO IS HE.” Fixating on inadequacies can lead to many other character flaws.

When we sin, we need to GO TO God! “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Have faith in that forgiveness! Satan wants you to dwell on your sins—not to move on once the guilt has been removed upon repentance and forgiveness. Of course, we need to remember our mistakes so as not to repeat them. But we should not dwell negatively on something God has removed “[a]s far as the east is from the west” (see Psalm 103:10-12). Dwelling on and punishing ourselves with past guilt is also a sin.

Hebrews 10:19 states that because of Christ’s sacrifice for our sins, we should go to God with “boldness.” Rather than hiding, we are to “draw near ... in full assurance of faith” (verse 22), because our hearts have been “sprinkled from an evil [implying *harassed* or *labored*] conscience.” True Christians who struggle with sin should not suffer from guilty consciences. Rather we should boldly approach God because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ! When we are forgiven, we are no longer guilty and should no longer carry a guilty conscience.

Security Is Caused by Righteousness

Overcoming sinful fear actually begins with the *proper fear* of God. “In the fear of the LORD is *strong confidence* ...” (Proverbs 14:26). Psalm 112 says the man who fears God *shall not be afraid* (verses 1, 8). This kind of fear—reverence, respect, awe and being afraid to disobey—purges other, unhealthy fear and makes a man BOLD.

Sin leads to weakness. Obedience and righteousness bring confidence and courage. Proverbs 28:1 states, “The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but THE RIGHTEOUS ARE BOLD AS A LION.”

Our level of godly confidence is directly proportional to our success in our battle against sin. We all must grapple with sin and work to eliminate it from our lives. Sometimes it isn’t even our own sin—our lives can be deeply affected by the sins of others. But ridding our lives of sin also rids us of the weaknesses and problems that sin creates.

Something else that casts out sinful fear is the *love* of God, embodied in His law. 1 John 4:17-18 state, “Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have *boldness* in the day of judgment

There is no fear in love; but *perfect love casteth out fear*: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.”

Psalm 119:165 reads, “Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.” *Peace* is the Hebrew *shalom*, which can mean wholeness, tranquility, safety and security. This is the opposite of feeling *insecure*. Someone who loves God’s law has security. He knows he is safe, protected, tranquil and whole. If we *keep* and *love* God’s law, nothing can cause us to stumble. We don’t get tripped up by negative comments; we aren’t insecure about what others think of us. Loving God’s law gives us unshakable *peace* (Isaiah 32:17; Philippians 4:7).

Don’t Fear Man

Many inferiority complexes stem from the fear of people. We simply put too much stock in others’ opinions, prejudices and judgments. Often, insecurity also comes from comparing ourselves with others. Sometimes it is an unhealthy focus on our own deficiencies and a fear of being a failure in front of others.

The Bible says to keep your focus on God and not to fear man. “I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; And forgettest the LORD thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?” (Isaiah 51:12-13). If we rely on the God who stretched out the heavens, He will do marvelous things through us in spite of our shortcomings. We need GOD. We need *His power*.

This spiritual power, the Holy Spirit, is not “the spirit of *fear* [timidity or cowardice]; but of *POWER*, and of *LOVE*, and of a *SOUND MIND*” (2 Timothy 1:7). If you have God’s power and His love, you will have a *SOUND MIND*—the *opposite* of the “spirit of fear.” You must *stir up* this gift of God.

Godly confidence and faith don’t make you more self-reliant; rather they drive you toward God. The opposite of inferiority is *godly confidence* and faith. Mr. Armstrong called it “the *supreme confidence* that is *FAITH IN GOD* rather than confidence in self,”

and “full assurance, yet in *humility*. That is a difficult state for any human to attain—but one of the supreme right goals of life!”

Obedience and righteousness bring supreme confidence and faith. The righteous are *bold as a lion*. Is there anything that makes a lion feel unsafe? When you are trusting in God, obeying Him and able to claim His promises, that makes you BOLD.

God has no pleasure in those who draw back—those who are timid, who cower, shrink or withdraw (Hebrews 10:38-39). God has no pleasure in those who hide behind fig leaves out of sin and fear, or who bury their talent in the dirt.

Don't mistake inferiority complexes for humility. Humility is seeing your *nothingness* in comparison to God's *greatness*. Inferiority is drawing back from spiritual growth. The humblest people in the Bible were the boldest. They were the ones with the most confidence. They were the ones who grew the most!

Your Confidence-Building Father

Romans 8:14-15 read: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” We are not to be bound or handicapped by fear. With God leading us, we should be free from inferiority complexes. Remember, for those who have God's Holy Spirit, God is our *Abba*—our Daddy! Truly understanding that drives away many insecurities: We have a perfect, loving Father!

How many insecurities or inferiority complexes stem from the lack of a strong father? Having God as our Father should give us godly assurance and security. We, His children, must go to Him for physical, mental, emotional and spiritual support. He will help us overcome fear. He will help us keep and love His law, reaping the resultant assurance and peace.

Trust in God. Don't fear men, or your own inferiorities. Stir up God's Spirit, the fruits of which are *not* a spirit of fear or bondage, but GODLY LOVE—the very thing that *casts out* punishing fear. Have faith in God and draw close to your Father rather than hiding from Him. You can go to Him with anything. Let Him implant proper boldness and confidence in you!

4 Qualities of a Godly Leader

For 40 years, Moses had enjoyed a fairly quiet life of shepherding in the wilderness. Then God brought him back to Egypt to deliver His people Israel, and suddenly, he had over 2 million people to look after. Life got a lot noisier, more hectic and more difficult.

Soon Moses was overwhelmed with his responsibilities. The Midianite priest Jethro recognized that something needed to change, and quickly. Moses needed help. He needed to delegate some of his responsibilities to other capable men.

At the heart of his counsel was this instruction on how to choose these leaders: “Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people *able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness*; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens” (Exodus 18:21). It was sound advice. Jethro listed four specific qualities that make for an effective captain, supervisor or ruler. They are worth contemplating and aspiring to.

1) **ABILITY.** A man must be capable and competent to do the job. The word *able* implies strength and efficiency.

2) **FEAR OF GOD.** A man must be humble, having a realistic appraisal of himself, under God’s authority, sensitive to God’s direction, and happy to serve within the bounds of God’s government.

3) **TRUTH.** A man must put a high value on truth. To be truly effective, he must not be a *yes man*—timid, easily cowed or a people pleaser. He must be willing to stand up for, even initiate confrontation for, the sake of what is *true* rather than bowing to pressure in order to make peace, if such “peace” means that falsehood prevails.

4) **HATRED OF COVETOUSNESS.** A man must not be greedy for money or motivated by filthy lucre. Leaders who are can be a curse to their people (e.g. 1 Samuel 8:3; Proverbs 1:19; 15:27; 28:16). Be unyielding in obeying principle and virtue.

2.3

TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

Grab the reins of your own life.

If you are anything like the average modern man, you do not want to take responsibility. You might be interested in getting results or receiving credit, but taking responsibility is a no-win situation. It's better to avoid responsibility: You might not get any credit, but you also won't get any blame—and you don't have to do all the hard work.

This is not only a modern phenomenon. Men have been trying to wriggle out of responsibility ever since God asked Adam a direct question: "Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?"

Almost 6,000 years of excusing, covering, evading, shirking, shrugging and rationalizing later, men have elevated avoiding responsibility to an art form. Today, even in the most prosperous and free nations on the planet, you have a kaleidoscope of options for shifting responsibility for your choices. You can even take college courses designed to help you do so. You can blame your parents, your socioeconomic status, your schooling, your boss, your friends, big banks, corporate greed, racism, special-interest groups, self-serving politicians, whatever suits you.

This is the dominant attitude in a world ruled by Satan. Why? Because he has never accepted responsibility for his own failures. He blames everything on God Himself!

Men: Take responsibility.

Stop making excuses. Accept the fact that *your* life is *your* responsibility.

Put Away Childish Things

What happens if you go through life focusing on what you *don't* have? If you focus on what other people *aren't* doing for you? If you never take responsibility for yourself? What happens is that *you never mature*. You become stuck thinking like a child. In some form, you forfeit responsibility for your life to someone else.

As a newborn, you need someone else to do *everything* for you. Growing up means taking on one responsibility after another: going to the bathroom yourself, dressing yourself, doing chores, going to school, finishing your homework, driving a car, getting a job, marrying a wife and having a child of your

own. You end up being the one with all the responsibility.

One of the major determinants of a man's maturity is how much he EMBRACES RESPONSIBILITY. A responsible 16-year-old can be more mature than an irresponsible 40-year-old. This process is a journey that moves you from being taken care of to taking care of yourself and others.

"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child," the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13:11, "but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

The man who believes society owes him a comfortable living is still thinking like a child. The man who grouches about how unfair the world is, and who says riches and privilege are just a matter of luck, still thinks like a child. The man whose failures are always someone else's fault is stuck in childish thinking. The man with no ambition, who is content to live off his parents' largesse or a government handout rather than applying himself and building character, still speaks and understands as a child. The man who is more focused on what the world should do for him than on what he can contribute to those around him is not yet thinking like a man. The man who sinks significant time into worthless, selfish pursuits like video games, superhero movies, comic books, partying or chasing women, has not yet put away childish things.

Maturing means that you grow from deflecting blame to accepting responsibility. You grow from being a passive observer to an initiator. You grow from being a victim to being a doer. You grow from expecting things to providing things. You grow from following to leading.

Becoming a man means taking hold of your God-given power to direct your own life, to overcome mediocrity, to welcome challenge, to surmount obstacles, to achieve victories.

The Power to Choose

God created your brain and your mind. With it, He has given you an amazing power: the power not only of thought but of *free choice*. He has also revealed in His Word how to make right choices that lead to abundant life. Now He leaves the choice, and its inherent responsibility, up to you.

This is extraordinary. If God only wanted peace, He wouldn't have created human beings in the first place, or He would have programmed human minds to do the right thing every time. He could have made humans like nice pets: A pet is enjoyable to have around, always friendly, and it does not keep you up at night trying to figure out how to help it make better choices in life.

But God isn't interested in that. He wants a *family*: sons who have voluntarily *chosen* to live the blessed, productive, exciting and thrilling way of love that He Himself lives.

As a human being, you can't *not* choose. God makes this clear in Deuteronomy 30:11-20. There He reveals the only two alternatives: obedience or disobedience. Obedience brings blessings; disobedience brings curses. You might want to ignore the choice; you might want to do a bit of both; you might want to remain "neutral." God says there is no such thing. There are only two alternatives, and you must choose. And because you're the one who chooses, you're the one who receives the consequences.

God gave Adam two trees to choose from, and Adam had to make a decision. He made his choice, then tried to wriggle out of the consequences. Before he even answered God's direct question, he blamed his wife and then even God Himself for his decision (Genesis 3:12).

Men always want to make excuses. God exposes those excuses for what they are: illusions. Men cannot avoid consequences for their decisions any more than they can avoid making decisions. Men who ignore God and make wrong choices always have an excuse at the ready. But God is clear in Romans 1:20: Those who reject the truth "are without excuse."

Don't run away from this reality. God has given you an awesome power: the power to choose—the power to take responsibility, to mature into a better, more powerful, more fulfilled man—the power to steer your life toward success!

Bear Your Own Burden

Is God hard because He wants us to bear our own responsibility? No! He is a loving Father who wants to help us grow up into better, greater, more fulfilling, more meaningful lives.

Shrugging off personal responsibility is not a luxury, it's a trap. It is like sleepwalking into a pit. If you insist that your problems are someone else's responsibility, what can you do about it? Nothing! You just have to wait for someone else or some other force beyond your control to come along and pull you out. You waste your time languishing in dissatisfaction, waiting for that magic moment, that pandering politician, that figurative lottery ticket. As long as you blame other people, you are *trapped*.

Of course the actions of other people do affect you, but don't deceive yourself. You are responsible for your own life, including its mediocrity and its failures. "If you are wise, you are wise for yourself, And if you scoff, you will bear it alone" (Proverbs 9:12; NKJV).

"Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live," God writes in Ezekiel 18:19-20. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."

Don't be a victim. Take responsibility for your own life, even if it is a mess. All men have problems they would rather someone else deal with. The godly man takes charge of his own circumstances, including his problems. Then he appeals to God for His help, and partners with Him to change his own life.

Realize: You control the way people respond to you by how you conduct yourself. You tell people how to treat you with your attitude, appearance and actions: how you talk, how you dress, whether you are respectful, your work ethic, how you keep your word, whether you give or take. Take responsibility for the reactions that come from your choices. Don't blame other people for their reactions to what *you* are doing. Focus on being a respectable man, worthy of confidence and trust, capable of exceeding expectations. Then let the world decide how to respond.

God says the person who is responsible for you is *you*. "But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing

in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden” (Galatians 6:4-5). You must carry your own load. In fact, God wants you to go *beyond* simply bearing your own burden. He wants you to reach out to help others carry theirs as well (verse 2). That makes it all the more clear that you must brace yourself to bear your own.

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (verses 7-8). If you don’t like what you’re reaping, take a hard, honest look at what you’ve been sowing. And start making some changes.

God’s way is radically pro-responsibility! The sooner you learn this fact, the faster you will grow and mature, and the more success you will have.

Think about the command in 2 Thessalonians 3:10: “that if any would not work, neither should he eat.” That is God’s way: Everyone who is able *must work* in order to eat. If we followed this command, there would be whining, pleading, tantrum-throwing—but at the end of the day, everyone would take responsibility, everyone would work, and everyone would eat.

In our modern world that has grown intoxicated with government benefits and welfare, we have come to view 2 Thessalonians 3:10 as cruel. We believe we have a better way: Give the meal to the sluggard who chooses not to take responsibility. Who cares if it stunts his growth, his maturity, his productivity, his value, his dignity and even his happiness?

God says if a man does not provide for his family, his religion is worthless (1 Timothy 5:8). Is this cruel of God? Or is He trying to teach a man to become useful and skillful? Is He harsh, or is He trying to build godly character in us? Does He want you to suffer, or does He want to make you better, stronger and happier?

Be Dependable

Taking responsibility means the buck stops with you. It means taking *ownership* of a job: You cause something to happen, you do all you can to make it a success, and you accept blame if it fails.

The Apostle Paul had an intense commission serving a multitude of people across a huge area and enduring major persecution. He needed help. He found one young man he could rely on: Timothy. God recorded and preserved Timothy's attributes in the Bible for millions of other men to read.

Paul sent Timothy to the Philippians and wrote, "For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel" (Philippians 2:20-22). Among so many others who were simply looking after their own interests, Timothy stood out as a paragon of dependability. He was reliably responsible not only for himself but for many other people. He did the job right, even when it was difficult, even when he didn't like it, even when it was inconvenient. He embraced responsibility and refused to quit until the job was done.

It takes effort, but it is a choice: *You choose* whether you can be relied on or not. If it is your priority, you will take responsibility for yourself and not leave your needs and wants lying around to be picked up by others. You will be dependable and trustworthy, carrying out your commitments to others. If this is *not* your priority, you will be unreliable, unpredictable, distracted, needful of reminders, and always showing up late. You will consume more time, attention and resources than you produce.

Have you ever given God excuses? Moses did: *I'm not good enough. Who am I to go to Pharaoh? Why would he listen to me? I can't even communicate well!* (Exodus 3:11; 4:10). Jeremiah did: *I can't speak—I'm just a child!* (Jeremiah 1:6). Gideon did: *I come from a poor family. I have a bad background!* (Judges 6:15). The irresponsible servant in the parable of the talents gave excuses: *My boss is too hard. I was afraid!* (Matthew 25:24-25). The slothful man does too: *I can't go out there and fulfill my duties because ... there's a lion in the streets!* (Proverbs 22:13).

God doesn't accept such excuses. He still expected the men He called to do their jobs. He still held the servant responsible for his choice. And He labels the preposterous pretexts and outrageous rationalizations of the sluggard for what they are. We might kid ourselves, but we cannot fool God.

1 Corinthians 4:2 says a requirement for a steward is that he be *faithful*. This word describes a man who proves himself worthy of trust, a man who can be relied on in transacting business, executing commands or discharging official duties.

The motto of the United States Marine Corps is *Semper Fidelis*: ALWAYS FAITHFUL. That is a good motto for any man.

God needs you to become reliable, trustworthy, responsible. Think about that with every responsibility you have, with every job you are given. See it through, even when it gets hard. As you do, you will gain a *reputation* for responsibility, and God will be able to count on you.

Own Up to Mistakes

When God gives a job, He wants results. Human nature wants to wriggle out, to put up excuses. If you are given a duty, take responsibility. If you make a mistake, take responsibility.

This is the difference between a child and a grown man. Just watch children playing. A lamp breaks. Do any of them own up to it? If they have not been *taught* honesty, they all insist on their own innocence. They point fingers at others. They downplay their own guilt. They even devise preposterous explanations of how the lamp was essentially responsible for its own demise.

We have that same nature. As we get older, we may get more sophisticated about rationalizing it, but it is the same tendency. Even when we do wrong, we want to be thought of as good. We value people's opinions more than truth. We justify ourselves, we minimize our sins, we evade exposure, we deflect blame. All because we don't want to take responsibility.

Exodus 32 records a perfect example of this. Aaron failed by leading the people in terrible sin (verses 1-5). Moses confronted him (verses 19-21). Follow Aaron's reasoning in verses 22-24 as it progresses toward utter absurdity: *I know this looks bad, but it's not THAT bad. Don't overreact here. You know these people—they're always up to mischief! They insisted that we do something to worship God. And after all, you had been gone for quite a while; maybe if you'd returned sooner they wouldn't have gotten so anx-*

ious. As for my part, I just asked them to break off their gold. I threw it into the fire, and poof—out came this calf!

Astounding! Aaron had *received* gold, *fashioned* it with a tool, *made* it into a calf, *built* an altar, and *made* proclamation in this rank convulsion of idolatry (verses 4-5). And yet here, now brimming with carnal reasoning, this full-grown, prominent national leader managed to explain away the entire incident without taking one shred of responsibility!

But God says, “[B]e sure your sin will find you out” (Numbers 32:23).

When you make a mistake, take responsibility. You can’t change something you don’t admit. Until you own up to your own failures, you will remain stuck in them. “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Proverbs 28:13). Confess it! Then forsake it—make a different choice the next time.

If you have a son, teach him to do the same. Don’t let him get away with passing blame and sidestepping guilt. Teach him to be up front about his mistakes. This is a crucial part of growing up and becoming a man.

Get Busy

What is your attitude toward responsibility? Do you embrace it? Do you want more of it? If you tend to be complacent and content with mediocrity, challenge that tendency. Think bigger. Seek more. Stoke the fires of ambition within you!

God wants you to take action. You only get the things you work for. There are no shortcuts to mastering a profitable skill, to fortifying your work ethic, to learning to fix your car, to breaking a time-wasting habit, to improving your diet. What are the things you have always wanted to do but have not acted on? Write them down. Bring them to God in prayer. Educate yourself in the steps to take.

Then ACT! Do it now! Get busy!

Perhaps you are single and would like to be married. At no point will you ever hear your doorbell ring and then open the door to an attractive woman who says, “God sent me.” You can

expect to remain single and disappointed until you begin to *take some action*. Put yourself in a stable financial position; prepare to assume the responsibilities of a provider. And all the while, *spend time with women*. Develop your people skills. Learn how to relate well with all types. Don't bemoan your inability to find the right one. *Become* the "right one" for someone else.

Whatever the endeavor, take responsibility. Take action. Even risk failure. If you don't try, you cannot succeed. If you fail (which you often will if you are attempting anything greatly worthwhile), do not give up. Take more action, put in more work, power through it with God's Spirit and with your effort. (Obviously, you don't want to be hasty or risky with marriage—that is something you, ideally, do only once!)

You have windows of opportunity in life. Sometimes they are open only for a moment. If you are half-asleep, or entrapped in self-pity, you won't even recognize those moments. If you are habitually inactive and complacent, you will allow timidity and fear to immobilize you. But if you are determined to take responsibility for your own life, then you will be alert to those opportunities, and you will face down your fear—and vault yourself through that window!

Life rewards action. And taking action tends to season and fortify you for taking more action. Accepting responsibility builds momentum toward greater responsibility.

God wants to give you *a lot* of responsibility. He is watching to see what you do with what you have. When He gives you resources or talents, He wants results. The man who produces the most results is the one God knows can be trusted with more responsibility (Matthew 25:28).

Someday you will have to stand before God and give account (Romans 14:10-12). You cannot stand before God and look around, pointing your fingers of blame at others. Those people will have to answer for themselves. And you, face to face with God, will have to answer for you.

Don't wait until then to start. God is measuring you right now. So take responsibility. Then God can help you grow, and grow and grow! Then God can give you far greater responsibility—in the Kingdom of God!

SHAMMAH

Stand Your Ground

He had the frame and bearing of a man who knew and welcomed hard work—a man with a strong back, broad shoulders and rough, calloused hands. Today would reveal whether he had strength of character to match.

Shammah and several Israelite men labored in the field. In the distance, they heard an ominous sound: a low rumble and the clanking of metal. The source of the sound appeared over the hillcrest: a Philistine army.

The man next to Shammah dropped his bag of lentils without hesitating, turned and ran for his life. More and more men fled the scene, terrified.

“And next to him was Shammah, the son of Agee the Hararite. The Philistines gathered together at Lehi, where there was a plot of ground full of lentils; and the men fled from the Philistines” (2 Samuel 23:11; RSV).

This was the natural reaction of a group of unprotected laborers downrange from an invading army. But not for Shammah.

“Do not flee!” he shouted. “Have faith! Don’t cower from these savages! Stand your ground, men! Stand and fight!”

The other Israelites didn’t even look back. “Shammah, run or die!” one shouted as he passed. Another grabbed him by the arm, trying to save his life.

But Shammah didn’t listen, and he didn’t move. As the Philistine raiders drew near, Shammah was no longer just a laborer. He was a target. But he didn’t let fear overcome him. He was determined to fulfill his duty as an Israelite warrior, whatever the cost.

Why this reaction—so unnatural to his co-workers? Shammah had faith in God. It didn’t matter how numerous or well-armed the enemy was; he trusted that God would deliver

him and use him to stop them from whatever Israelite bloodshed they were planning.

“But he stood in the midst of the ground, and defended it ...” (verse 12).

A group of Philistines detached from the marching ranks and closed in on Shammah with swords, spears and shields. It was time to make this laborer their first victim. But Shammah agilely avoided their strikes, went hand-to-sword against one soldier, and took his weapon.

Strengthened by God, Shammah survived, deflected, beat back and counterattacked. One invader fell to Shammah’s sword. Then another, then another. Shammah wielded his blade so skillfully that no Philistine weapon injured him. Squads of soldiers rushed the lone Israelite, but one by one, they fell to their death.

The Philistines were bewildered and appalled. *How can one man defeat so many of us?* they wondered. They began to shrink back. Then they began to run, fleeing the bloody lentil field to escape death. What had started as an anticipated execution had become a battle—and what had started as an unbelievably lopsided battle now became a rout.

Soon the struggle came to its astonishing end. Silence filled the scene. The field was strewn with corpses. Shammah “slew the Philistines: and the LORD wrought a great victory” (verse 12).

This is an extraordinary example of a faith-filled man of God who stood his ground.

What kind of warrior are you? How strong is *your* faith? While Shammah stood and defended a physical plot of land, we must stand and defend our spiritual ground. Satan is always trying to intimidate us. Society threatens to drive us from holding fast to God’s truth, law, standards and morals. Males throughout society are fleeing from their responsibilities as men.

Will you follow the crowd? It takes determination to resist the rush in the wrong direction. It takes true faith to do the right and fulfill your duty, even when doing so leaves you alone.

When enemies arise, will you run, or will you stand for God?

God needs faith-filled men to stand and fight for Him and His way of life. Remember Shammah’s example. Stand your ground!

2.4

DECIDE

*Every day teems with opportunities
to grow in this crucial skill.*

Leadership is at the core of biblical manhood. And what is the *essence* of leadership? *Making decisions*.

In its chapter on “The Essence of Leadership,” *American Generalship* quotes Gen. Dwight Eisenhower: “Leadership is, of course, being exerted all the time in the capacity of boosting morale, confidence and all that—but leadership is most noticeable when tough decisions finally have to be made.”

Christian men must become godly decision-makers. Whether you realize it or not, every day of your life teems with decision points. This means that wherever you are in life, you can develop daily in your skill as a good and wise decider. Becoming a better decision-maker increases your capacity as a leader and as a man.

Here are three steps you can take to grow in this capacity.

1. Recognize that YOU need to decide.

God’s Word gives strong guidance on making decisions. James 1:8 supplies a key insight into this discipline: “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”

How common in society is the “double-minded man”? Sadly, this infirm masculinity can easily afflict us as well. The indecisive man is unstable, and he robs his wife, children, friends and co-workers who rely on him of the leadership God wants to provide them through him.

James is not talking about a hypocrite, but a *waverer*. The double-minded man is two-spirited. He vacillates in his opinions. He dithers in his purposes. He goes back, then forth, then back again. His interests are divided. He is uncertain. He is fickle. He doubts.

The double-minded man tries to wriggle out of even *making* decisions. But in doing so, he is trying to escape the inescapable. God *made* us to *decide*! The power of free choice is an extraordinary power—and an incredible responsibility—that God gives to human beings (e.g. Deuteronomy 30:19). And *deciding* is a particularly prominent aspect of the role God assigned to *men*. Christian men must learn to exercise it wisely and well.

Some few of us are too eager to make decisions that are not

ours to make, but it is far more common for us to try to sidestep a decision. When we do that, we squander the opportunity to think using the Bible, to counsel, to take action in faith, and to grow closer to God.

Making social plans, choosing a wife, disciplining and guiding children, building a product, performing a service, completing errands—so many situations, big and small, call for a *decisive man*! You will probably encounter more than one such situation before you go to bed tonight. And in those moments, you need to realize that the decision is *yours*.

Does it seem like nothing is really happening in your life? Or that your family's morale and spiritual quality is slowly deteriorating? It may be because your family lacks a decisive leader! But do not despair: You are in the perfect position to *become* a better and better decision-maker, one opportunity at a time. It starts with you realizing that *you* are the decision-maker.

"Your poorest leaders are those who are indecisive," said Gen. David C. Jones. "Sometimes a bad decision is better than no decision."

Theodore Roosevelt said, "In any moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing."

We usually think of decision-making in terms of big, obvious decisions: *Should we move? Which car should we buy? Should we homeschool?* But realize that the opportunity—the necessity, really—for decision-making comes up dozens of times each day.

Take the all-too-familiar example of the single man asking for a date. She says yes. He says, *What do you want to do?* She says, *I don't know, what do you want to do?* He says, *Whatever you want to do is fine.*

Make a decision! It will work out! She will be far more comfortable, happy and secure with the man who says, *I would like to take you to the new taco place and the park. Would you like to be my date?*

Perhaps your wife calls you to ask how to prepare for company, or how to guide a child. You could go around and around trying to find out her preference and then put your stamp of approval on it. You could put it off. You could tell *her* to

decide. Or—you could focus your attention on what she is saying, consider the facts, try to ascertain God’s will, step out in faith, and *decide*.

Stop the endless poll-taking, the endless soliciting of others’ opinions—the endless decision-avoiding. What is needed most of all is not accommodation but *direction*.

Man of Steel and Velvet says, “As far as the wife is concerned, she is usually less concerned as to the outcome of a decision than she is in the confident attitude of her leader.”

Instead of endlessly delaying decisions and deferring decisions, if you begin *making* decisions, God will have the opportunity to guide you and bless you and your family—because you will be fulfilling your role.

2. Seize the opportunity to decide.

Perhaps you recognize the need to be more decisive, but the task seems daunting. Here is an encouraging truth articulated in *Man of Steel and Velvet*: “This trait CAN BE CULTIVATED. One must force himself to draw conclusions quickly and firmly. But before doing so, he should make a careful study of the facts” (emphasis added throughout).

You learn good decision-making by *making decisions*. Overcome your fears. Perhaps a decision arises and you shy away from it because you fear making a wrong choice. The next time that happens, square up to that decision, *force* yourself to draw a firm conclusion, and *make the call*.

Sometimes you will need time to gather more facts for your conclusion. But don’t fall into the trap of delaying your conclusion simply to avoid making the decision altogether.

If you are doing your best to submit to God in making a decision—and making it based on His will—even wrong decisions will be steps forward in building godly, masculine character.

God gives you small decisions to start with, especially when you are younger. He gives you small decisions every day. These are opportunities for you to *practice* making decisions. Then when it’s game time and a big decision comes along, you will have plenty of practice and training under your belt.

With each decision you make, God is preparing you for greater decisions down the road.

Face problems and decisions squarely. Don't sit on the fence. Don't go back and forth. Don't wait for decisions to make themselves. Don't wait for problems to take care of themselves. Failure to decide *IS* a decision—the *wrong* one. If you're going to fear wrong decisions, fear *failing to decide!*

Instead, *seize* the opportunity God is giving you.

3. Grow in your ability to decide.

As you recognize and seize opportunities to make decisions, over time you will see patterns, learn principles, and gain practical understanding of the laws of good decision-making, and you will put them into action.

Where will your family go out to eat? Can your teenager spend the night at his friend's house? When should you get your transmission inspected? Should you refinance your house? Should you take that job and move your family to a different state? Will you volunteer for that service opportunity? What will you cover in your family Bible studies? Each decision is an opportunity to grow in your ability to decide according to God's will.

Here are six steps to making good decisions.

Step one: Seek God's guidance. Godly decision-making is not about deciding according to your will, your ideas and your comfort. It is about discovering God's will and putting it into action. Thus, the first thing you must do in order to make right decisions is to do your best to learn God's will.

Ask God for His wisdom. "In my ministry, I have seen many people make huge, terrible decisions that have hurt them badly—because of a lack of wisdom," writes Gerald Flurry. "If any of you lack wisdom, go to God, and He will give it to you!" After citing James 3:17-18, he writes, "Study this passage and really learn what God's wisdom will do in your life. If you understand it, you will be praying for more of that wisdom every day!" (*The Epistle of James*). When you face important decisions, really commit them to God in prayer and even fasting. Also, study your Bible to find relevant examples from which you can take counsel.

Step two: Get all the facts. Be careful of unnecessarily quick decisions under high pressure. Some decisions can be made quickly, but others must be carefully considered. Don't put off a decision out of fear of deciding, but don't be hasty either. On major decisions, it is crucial to ensure that you truly understand the situation. Take time to gather all the pertinent facts, make sure you are seeing all the options, and honestly assess pros and cons. In some cases, holding off for the time being is actually the best course of action.

Step three: Get wise counsel. A multitude of quality counsel will help prevent mistakes (Proverbs 11:14; 15:22; 24:6). Depending on the situation, you may receive much-needed counsel from your parents, your wife, your minister, a trusted friend, or a professional in a relevant field, such as a financial consultant for a business decision. This doesn't mean going to others to make your decision for you. Nor does it provide a scapegoat upon whom to place blame if things don't go well. But it can give you invaluable perspective that you would not gain any other way.

Step four: Decide! Make a decision based on your best judgment. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower said, "You reach a conclusion based upon the facts as you see them, the evaluations of the several factors as you see them, the relationship of one fact to another, and, above all, your convictions as to the capacity of different individuals to fit into these different places. You come to a decision after you've taken all these things into consideration. Then you decide and say, 'That's what we'll do.'"

Your decision should be clear. If someone were to ask your wife, *What did your husband decide on that?* she should be able to say, *He decided to do this.* She should not have to say, *Well, I'm not sure, but it seems like he's leaning in this direction.* When it's time, it's time: *Make a definite decision.*

Step five: Have faith in the decision. *Expect* your choice to turn out to be right and good. Don't waver or be double-minded. Don't vacillate. *Have faith* that it will work out.

For someone who does not submit to God and is not empowered by God, this step would not work. But you have submitted to God, and you *can* and *should* have faith in the decision He has

inspired. In addition, God blesses the decisions of the man who lives righteously (1 Kings 2:1-3).

You must *believe*. In Mark 9:23 Jesus said, "If thou canst *believe*, ALL THINGS are possible to him that BELIEVETH"! Trust that your decision will turn out as planned. Holding to your convictions is a huge part of this character-building process.

"It is interesting to know what this quality in a man does for a woman," says *Man of Steel and Velvet*. "Although she loves the velvet in him, she needs his steel. This is her security. [S]he wants a leader!"

As you mature in your decision-making, sometimes you will experience opposition to your decisions. What do you do then?

"Men must be aware that, although it is wise to listen to family members, to consider their ideas, to accept good suggestions, it is never good leadership to give in against one's better judgment. A mark of great leadership is to stand firm to one's convictions, regardless of the feelings of others. This is not only a leader's right, it is his obligation. [A] great leader must be a little hard-hearted at times. He must have the toughness of steel in following through on what he considers a *right decision*, even if it means bitter disappointment to those he is leading. This unalterable courage of his convictions is the supreme quality of leadership that brings order to a household" (ibid).

Consider the example of Gen. George Marshall on becoming secretary of state in 1947. In *American Generalship*, Edgar Puryear records an instance when a senior State Department officer advised Marshall to change a certain policy. Then the officer said that if his recommendation was not adopted, he would resign. The resignation would embarrass the administration; to avoid that, Secretary Marshall would be pressured into approving a decision that was actually made by the officer. But here is how Marshall promptly responded: "Mr. So-and-So, whether you or I work for the U.S. government has nothing to do with the merits of this question. So let's remove the irrelevancy. I accept your resignation, effective immediately. Now that this matter is resolved, if you wish to spend a few minutes discussing the issues with me, I'll hear your views."

Co-workers, friends, children and wives may disagree with a

decision you have made. They may even try to pressure you to change it after the fact. When that happens, have *faith* that prayer, study, research and counsel have led you to a *God-inspired* decision. And stick to your guns.

Step six: Work diligently to see it through. Here is a step we often overlook. You may put time and effort into making a good decision—but don't neglect to put time and effort into *making good on that decision!*

For a decision to actually work, you must put it into action. So roll up your sleeves and make it work! If you don't do this, even the best decision will fail. Be diligent. Be systematic. Thoroughly, diligently and judiciously do your part. Step by step, push through every phase of effort to the desired goal.

When You Make a Bad Decision

What happens when you make a decision that turns out to be a turkey? It will happen: We are human and full of fault. If it becomes clear you have made a mistake, it is important to admit wrong. Such humility is the mark of a mature man.

In some cases, you may have no choice but to live with the decision. In others, though reversing a decision may be possible, there may be more value in seeing it through and winning a victory of character in keeping your word. In yet other cases, as new facts come to light, changing course may be the best path. It takes wisdom to know when to be bullheaded and when to be flexible, “failing fast” so you can move quickly to the next decision.

After making a bad decision, analyze it to determine where you went wrong and how to do better next time. If there was sin involved, repent of it. Take responsibility, but don't allow yourself to get discouraged or to think that this failure makes *you* a failure. Learn whatever you can from a mistake, and in the end it will be just another stepping-stone to success.

Understand the *power* God has given you to grow in godly character. *Recognize* situations where the person who needs to make the decision is *you*. Become ready and willing to *seize* these opportunities. And *grow* in your ability to make better and better decisions—a crucial aspect of biblical manhood.

2.5

BE A PEOPLE PERSON

*Strong relationships are a crucial
foundation to godly leadership.*

What leadership qualities does God consider most important?

Notice this proverb about godly leadership: “Mercy and truth preserve the king, And by lovingkindness he upholds his throne” (Proverbs 20:28; NKJV). The word *lovingkindness* can mean good deeds or kindnesses. *Truth* refers to trustworthiness. The Living Bible renders this verse, “If a king is kind, honest, and fair, his kingdom stands secure.”

If you asked 100 world leaders the most important qualities contributing to the longevity of a kingdom, how many would answer *honesty* and *lovingkindness*?

The fact is, God is training people for a *different* type of government—a perfect government. To build His Kingdom, God isn’t calling today’s governors and presidents and kings, who, for all their expertise and experience, cannot solve this world’s problems. He will build a new civilization altogether. To do that, He is raising up a new type of world leader.

What qualities are tomorrow’s leaders expected to develop? Just look at the scriptural qualifications for ministers (Titus 1; 1 Timothy 3). Notice how different this list of qualifications is from what the world would consider most important.

The leadership qualities God emphasizes revolve around people. Titus 1:8 says a leader must be “a *lover of hospitality, a lover of good men*” The job of a godly leader revolves around people. So he must love hospitality. He must love having people around and extending kindnesses to people. He must love good men.

How much do you *love people*? True godly leaders must be “people people.” We must love people. We must love to be around people—love to fellowship with people—love to help people and serve people and get to know people.

We must develop our people skills. A leader for God cannot be a recluse. He must *enjoy* people—because people are what God’s plan is all about! God is creating a Family out of people!

What God’s Love Is

When Jesus Christ was asked which commandment was the greatest, He summed up God’s way of life with two simple state-

ments: essentially, *love God* and *love people* (Matthew 22:35-40).

Herbert W. Armstrong defined love as “an unselfish, outgoing concern for the good and welfare of the one loved. Love is primarily on the giving, serving, sharing side of the fence True love combines the rational aspect of outgoing concern—desire to help, serve, give or share—along with sincere concerned affectionate feeling” (*The Missing Dimension in Sex*). Godly love means having an outgoing concern and an unselfish, genuine interest in people.

The Bible says about godly love, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal” (1 Corinthians 13:1; NKJV). In other words, if I am the greatest speaker in the world but don’t have an unselfish, outgoing concern for people, my speaking skills are worthless. Without love, big talk is just noise.

“And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing” (verses 2-3; NKJV). If I do all these “loving” things but don’t have, from deep within, a God-inspired, unselfish, outgoing concern for people, I am nothing!

If you don’t like dealing with people, you will never be a leader for God. You will never make a real contribution in God’s Kingdom.

Christ Was a People Person

Jesus Christ traveled all over Galilee and was very much around people. Throughout His ministry, He gave and gave and gave. He spent time with people almost constantly—people who were asking things of Him.

Mark 6 shows one occasion when Christ and His disciples were so busy that they hadn’t had time to eat! Yet when Christ began to lead the disciples to a private place to rest, a mob followed.

Christ could have said, *Enough! We just need some space!*

Instead, He was moved with compassion because they were “as sheep not having a shepherd” (verse 34).

So what did He do? “[H]e began to teach them many things.” What an attitude! Christ was a genuine people person.

Then something else happened. After spending all day with the people, Christ’s disciples suggested He send them away to get something to eat because they were getting hungry—seemingly a reasonable idea. But what did Christ do? He told His disciples—surely to their exasperation—“*You* give them something to eat” (verse 37; NKJV). Christ then miraculously fed that great multitude with a few loaves and fishes.

What a powerful lesson for them—and us.

Qualities of People People

Read the entirety of 1 Corinthians 13. This chapter gives a wonderfully detailed picture of what true godly love looks like. It describes how an unselfish, outgoing concern for people actually manifests itself in our lives.

A man with this kind of love will be *patient* with people. If you are putting yourself out there and spending time with people, you will come in contact with their faults. “People people” love sinners. Of course, they also *hate sin*, but we have to cultivate God’s love in our lives to be able to overlook each other’s imperfections.

A man with this love is *kind*; he *acts upon* his outgoing concern for others. He isn’t selfishly possessive, inwardly focused or exclusive. Instead, he shares love and warmth so others can enjoy it, especially the disadvantaged. This is a measure of the maturity of his love. He is not jealous of another person’s abilities and blessings; he rejoices that God can use those abilities to benefit others. People people love diversity in personality and talents.

With this love, a man is not boastful and arrogant, parading his accomplishments. In conversation, a people person demonstrates humility and puts the focus on the other. He is never rude. He is modest and uses wisdom, handling situations the way God would, always looking out for the other person. He

doesn't insist on his own way. A people person always sees to it that others' needs are met.

With this love, a man is not easily provoked or irritable, even when tired or stressed. He finds a way to control himself even under difficulty. He is not touchy or oversensitive. Even if someone does wrong him in some way, he lets it go.

People people always give others the benefit of the doubt. They don't keep track of sins and wrongs. They never hold a grudge. They don't gossip, or rejoice in others' downfalls. People people desire more than anything to see others make a success of their lives. They keep sensitive information confidential. They don't make someone look bad by airing their sins. People people forgive and forget!

A man with this kind of love is "always eager to believe the best, always hopeful, always patient" (verse 7; Moffatt). We live in a poisonous world, steeped in negativity. But if we are thinking like God, we will have a positive, hopeful outlook. We will always set our minds on the positive. See people not for their weaknesses and their failures, but for their strengths and their potential.

Deep in his heart, every man longs for admiration. When he doesn't get it, it can create big problems in his life. This is a key to really endearing yourself to people: Look for what to admire in them. When you do so, not only will you find it, but the person will often grow in stature as a result of the confidence you place in him or her. As one poet put it, "If you treat a man as he is, he will stay as he is. But if you treat him as if he were what he ought to be and could be, he will become that bigger and better man." This is especially true of children. Look at the young people in your life. Look for their strengths. To the young men, express admiration for the masculine qualities you see. Build their confidence; encourage their potential.

Look at the person who just doesn't seem to fit in. Everyone has feelings. How much do you really know about that person? If there is someone who doesn't quite rub you the right way, seek that person out and get to know him. People people are not partial in their respect of persons.

The bottom line is, people people give of themselves. They live the way of give.

A People God

God created people as a means of expanding His Family. Our physical families are only a type—an analogy—of His ultimate goal. The reality is God's Family. And God wants to invite every member of the human race into that Family (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9).

In Galatians 6:9-10, Paul gives us an idea of what that transcendent truth means for us: “And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. *As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

That is a tall order! God wants us to do good unto *all men*—all people—all potential members of His future Family! It truly takes a people person to follow this instruction.

Barnes' commentary states about this verse, “This is the true rule about doing good. ‘The opportunity to do good,’ says Cotton Mather, ‘imposes the obligation to do it.’ The simple rule is, that we are favored with the opportunity, and that we have the power. It is not that we are to do it when it is convenient; or when it will advance the interest of a party; or when it may contribute to our fame; the rule is, that we are to do it when we have the opportunity. No matter how often that occurs; no matter how many objects of benevolence are presented—the more the better; no matter how much self-denial it may cost us; no matter how little fame we may get by it; still, if we have the opportunity to do good, we are to do it, and should be thankful for the privilege.”

You have to develop genuine selflessness. You have to love being around people. There are times you may not want to—you may want a break—but you must discipline your emotions and direct your energies away from self and toward them.

That is, after all, how God thinks about the whole world! Are there times God gets disappointed, even angry, because of people's failings? Of course there are. But He remains positive because He is committed. He is committed to His Family.

God is a “people God”! His plan is a people plan—turning people into God. God loves people! And to be leaders in God's future world-ruling government, we must love people. We are going to be working with them intensively for as long as we can imagine.

Section 3

THE PROVIDER

*The noble duty to provide
sparks a man's purpose,
fuels his ambition,
and ignites his vision.*

120	3.1 Be the Breadwinner
130	3.2 Build Your Work Ethic
140	<i>Paul—Fight the Good Fight</i>
142	3.3 Forge Vigorous Health
152	3.4 Get Stronger
158	3.5 Maintain Your Home
163	<i>The Isaiah 32 Man</i>

3.1

BE THE BREADWINNER

*This God-given responsibility
teaches the wonderful way of give.*

The moment he stepped in the door to his home, he could hear the baby crying, smitten with hunger.

The problem was, he was too poor to feed his *wife* enough that she could supply the baby sufficient milk. And this particular afternoon, he didn't even have a *dime* to buy milk for the baby!

It was 1930, in the midst of a crippling national depression. What's a good husband to do? Herbert Armstrong knew it was his responsibility to provide for his family. He had been working every option he had and coming up short.

"There's only one thing to do," he told his wife. "We're helpless, of ourselves. There's no human to help us. We'll have to rely on God. He has *promised* to supply all our NEED—and this is a need" (*Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong*). Mr. Armstrong prayed right then that God would hastily provide a dime to buy a quart of milk for his newborn.

Within *the very minute* of that prayer, a "rag and bottle man" wandered by the Armstrongs' house. Amazing! They flagged him down and asked if he would like to buy anything from their basement. He went to look. Sure enough, a stack of old magazines caught his eye, and he offered to buy it for exactly one dime.

What a miraculous answer to prayer. What an impression it must have made on Mr. Armstrong. This was among a few notable experiences early in his converted life that taught him a lesson he never forgot.

A Critical Responsibility

The duty of *provider* is fundamental to a man's role. "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Timothy 5:8). This is a scripture every man should think deeply on. Its ramifications are profound and far-reaching.

Every man naturally sees to his *own* needs. But God commands that a man provide for others as well, *especially* those of his own family. The context shows this specifically includes providing for his own widowed mother. Provision is a man's God-given responsibility. It is not optional.

This command certainly applies to material provision. A man's body was engineered to handle hard physical labor. God *designed* men to be providers in the sense of ensuring physical needs are met. That is crucial and vital to both a man and his family.

But the full picture of a man's role as provider goes far beyond bringing home a paycheck. True provision such as God commands here requires that a man supply his family mentally, emotionally and spiritually. It means providing leadership, direction, active engagement, masculine strength and stability, protection, justice, compassion and other godly traits. A man's duty to PROVIDE "for his own, and specially for those of his own house" is a magnificent mandate from God that gives his life real purpose and direction.

How many men today disregard this plain biblical command? How many men have sex with women with no intention of providing for them financially or emotionally, or for any children that might result from their actions? How many men expect or force their wives to work because they will not?

There are even some men who consider it enough to be supportive and involved with their family—yet fail to fulfill the *physical* duties of *material* provision. Providing spiritually is crucial, but a man must not underestimate or neglect his responsibility to provide physically.

The transition from boyhood to manhood is largely a transition from taking to giving. From being *dependent* to being a *provider*. From being someone for whom others make sacrifices to being one who sacrifices for others. A boy who physically grows to look like a man but has not made that change is not truly a man. A man who prioritizes his own selfish cravings above the needs of others grows smaller. He enters a negative cycle that pulls him away from responsibility, away from accomplishment and achievement—away from family. He grows more inward-focused, self-absorbed, myopic, lazy, self-indulgent. His perspective contracts; the size of his world shrinks. He puts his own interests above those of his family; his wife's needs become secondary. His ability to lead suffers.

In a word, he becomes less of a man.

God says any man who fails in this duty has denied or disowned his religion and is *worse* than an unbeliever! That is a serious condemnation. Society has discarded the model of the male breadwinner as if it is arbitrary who provides for a family and what a man does. But clearly this is not arbitrary to God!

The Way of Give in Action

Why does God consider it so important that a man provide? He designed the physical to point us to the spiritual. His laws governing family and marriage teach us about the spiritual Family of God and the Church's marriage to Jesus Christ.

A physical father providing for his family points to God the Father doing the same! A husband providing for his wife typifies Christ fulfilling this responsibility toward the Church. Many scriptures, both Old Testament and New, illustrate this fact. “[M]y God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19; see also scriptures like Deuteronomy 8:3-4; Nehemiah 9:13; Psalm 23; 84:11; Luke 12:30-31; 2 Corinthians 9:8-11).

God is the Provider for His Family! Think of that. In this way, God and Christ do not require anything of us that they themselves don't do. They are exemplary in fulfilling this role. It is their example that husbands and fathers must emulate.

Being a provider is God's *way of give* in action. It is fundamentally a giving, sacrificing responsibility. It is a tangible expression of godly, unselfish love toward one's wife and family.

Paul instructed, “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church” (Ephesians 5:28-29). A man who truly cherishes his wife will *nourish* and *care for* her physically.

The later sections of this book—particularly Section 5 on The Husband and Section 6 on The Father—will give more instruction on the mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of provision. The rest of this section will focus on elements of *physical* provision, especially a man's work and career, as well as details of caring for material things and building one's

health and strength. Even these physical elements, however, teach essential spiritual lessons, and their importance should not be underestimated.

To fulfill simply the *physical* aspect of provision, a man needs to be hardworking, dependable and useful. A man must apply his strength, his capabilities and his talents to produce something of value to more than just himself. As he earns enough to support a wife and children, he builds personal character and stabilizes and strengthens society in the process.

Though this duty requires discipline and self-denial, the man who fulfills it as God intends receives tremendous satisfaction. He thrives where his strength and skill are put to productive use, where he is needed and respected, where others benefit from his accomplishment. He derives joy from being able to give to his family, to open opportunities for them, to supply their needs and many of their wants. He learns to value these things even above his own desires.

Even in a society that so routinely exalts self-actualization and selfishness, many people, deep down, know this to be true. They see nobility in a man who thinks this way.

And as Mr. Armstrong learned, being the provider can also lead a man into a closer relationship with his own Father, the ultimate Provider. As a man fulfills his responsibility to his family, having God as his adviser and partner teaches him invaluable spiritual lessons.

Instruction for Youth

Every man should do all he can to become self-sufficient and ultimately to produce more than he consumes. Only as he does so can his thoughts begin to take on the dignity of godly manhood.

Even a young man can begin to build the mindset of moving from being a *liability* to his family to being an *asset*—even earning money to bring into the home. “The goal isn’t to get rich. The goal is to learn to be a useful man, not a burden,” wrote author Bob Schultz. “Have you learned to mow a lawn, clean a gutter, or vacuum a car? Can you quickly wash a window without leaving streaks? Are you strong enough to carry boxes

from a house into a moving van? Do you know the needs of children? Can you babysit for an hour or two while a parent runs to the store? When a neighbor takes a vacation, are you responsible enough to watch their house, walk their dog, and weed their garden?

“If you don’t know how to accomplish these simple tasks, ask somebody to teach you. Take the time to learn. Every skill you develop becomes a talent to use at home and to serve your neighbors. The possibilities are endless. Simply find out what people need and provide it. By providing for the needs of others, you’ll have the resources to provide for your own” (*Created for Work*).

Ecclesiastes 9:10 says, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might ...” Too many men simply haven’t been taught this principle when it comes to *work*.

Young boys and teens need to learn how to work efficiently, hard and quickly. Having a good work ethic is essential to masculinity. They need to learn how to maintain focus on a task and to be productive without supervision (e.g. Proverbs 6:6-8). They need to develop self-motivation and drive. And they need to learn *skills* and become comfortable with tools like a shovel, rake, screwdriver, hammer, wrench, pliers, tape measure, hatchet, ax, saw and so on. They need to learn how to do a job properly and to take pride in their work.

When you hit age 25, you will have several decades of work ahead of you as a man, a husband and a father. No matter what your career is during these years, continually developing basic work skills will always pay off. Work is one area where ongoing education is a necessity. And having a good work ethic is a large part of developing strong Christian character in men. More about this in the next chapter.

Prepare yourself for success by working hard at whatever job you undertake. For boys and teens, skills and good work habits are developed by doing chores around the home and are helpful in finding and keeping part-time jobs. Parents should encourage their teenage sons to find at least a summer job, especially after age 16. Having a job and learning to pay your own way will help develop your independence as a masculine young man.

Choosing a Career

The teen years are also important to begin thinking about and developing specific career goals. The most important thing for you as a young man is to *begin submitting the direction of your life to God*. He knows you well. He has plans for you. He can steer your life in marvelous ways that you cannot anticipate. Jobs or opportunities that may seem insignificant to you may be valuable training, stepping-stones God is providing toward larger responsibilities He has in mind for you in the future!

Pray that God would open the right doors and show His will in your life. After that, the best way to invite God to direct your life in this way is to *put your whole heart into whatever job you are given*, whether at home or on a job site. Be attentive to direction, and complete your tasks in a way that is reliable, efficient, timely and top quality. Developing this habit—and this *reputation*—is guaranteed to lead to greater opportunities.

For many young men, taking this approach leads to lucrative careers. Employers *love* to hold on to dependable employees and increase their responsibilities.

Some careers do require years of formal education, either in a vocational school, college or university. But be conscientious about this decision. Many young people today simply jump into college unthinkingly—incurring great debt and spending years of their life with no plan or direction. Before you pursue higher education, you should have a strong sense that it is the right course and will lead you toward the right goals in life.

Consider taking an aptitude test to determine your strengths and abilities. Though it is more and more common for people to change jobs several times throughout adulthood, the better you know yourself, the likelier you are to find work you are well suited for. Most high schools and colleges offer free job-placement testing; most libraries have guidebooks on how to educate oneself toward a career.

You may choose not to attend an institution of higher learning. Perhaps your talents and interests will lead you to

obtain education through practical, hands-on experience. You might pursue the opportunity to work on a farm or in an apprenticeship with a carpenter, plumber or electrician. You might even start your own business.

Whatever path you choose with God's guidance, always keep in mind your goal to be able to support a family. This will give you the direction and motivation you need to aim high and take the road that will truly maximize your potential life.

Do Not Abdicate This Duty

Barring debility of some kind, *a man must provide*. If this requires cutting expenses, getting two jobs, taking night classes, looking for better pay, so be it. But the responsibility lies squarely with him. If a man loses his job, he should work eight hours a day to get another job! Until he finds a new job that fits his career, he should also be willing to work several part-time jobs. If a man cannot find a job in his area of training, he should seek the proper education or retraining to obtain a job.

What if you want to change your career? It is harder to change careers once you enter your 30s, 40s or 50s, but it can be done with careful planning and education. It is imperative to get counsel and advice—not only from professional career counselors but also from God's ministry.

Some men in the Church in Paul's day were not working as they should. It was in that context that Paul instructed, "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that *if any would not work, neither should he eat*" (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

A man who has willingly abdicated the role of provider—who is content to live off the generosity of others rather than marshaling his powers to produce for others—is failing in his manly duty.

The importance of this role becomes irrefutable when you consider the revolutionary transformations in modern society that have resulted from the disappearance of the male breadwinner. Men who feel no responsibility to be providers tend to have blunted ambition and retreat into selfish, time-wasting activities.

This loss of robust, active manliness and shift toward a feminized economy has caused inestimable changes in society, most of which were unplanned and unforeseen, and the effects of which few even question. It is probably impossible to calculate how much this trend has contributed to the swing in Western nations, particularly America, away from production, manufacturing and industry and toward soft services, health care and information-based commerce. The very fabric of our families has also been irreversibly altered: The increase in financially self-sufficient women and ambitionless men means fewer families, a higher proportion of children growing up with one parent, the replacement of stay-at-home mothers with professional child care, and other drastic social changes.

A man who fulfills his duty as a provider is a blessing to society. A man who does not is a *burden*, and his family likely is as well. As male breadwinners have declined, government welfare has increased. In more and more families, *the state* is taking the place of the man. Now multiple generations are accustomed to sponging off the government. Again, it is impossible to calculate the damage of this loss of self-sufficiency to our national and individual character, responsibility and liberty.

Yes, these are difficult times economically. Many people believe two incomes are absolutely necessary in order to maintain an appropriate standard of living. But this reasoning should be challenged. Consider the *costs* of working that offset the added income, including transportation, clothing and other direct work-related expenses, along with child care and additional food costs that become necessary. A full-time homemaker can provide many things at less expense and higher quality. How much of a family's quality of life is *sacrificed* by the absence of a homemaker? A second income may provide *more things* or *nicer stuff*, but often a family is still better off in many other ways without it. It requires honesty to distinguish genuine needs from wants. Particularly if there are children at home, especially young children, the wife should not work outside the home if at all possible. Having a wife working outside the home is a serious decision and should not be made lightly.

What a Man Should Provide

In an increasingly materialistic world, it is important to distinguish real needs from luxuries. It is also crucial to recognize when the pursuit of material wealth is harming your family—when, in the supposed pursuit of providing for the family, a man is *sacrificing* his family for his career.

What should a man provide, physically speaking? “Simply stated, he should provide the necessities,” Aubrey Andelin wrote. “This means food, clothing and shelter, plus a few comforts and conveniences. ... Although a man has a sacred and binding obligation to provide the necessities, he is under no such obligation to provide the luxuries. ... In providing a high standard of living, some men make near economic slaves of themselves with great disadvantage to themselves and their families. ... He has little of himself to give—time to teach the values of life, how to live, standards to follow and time to build strong family ties” (*Man of Steel and Velvet*).

This is why the *full scope* of the provider’s role must never be overlooked. A man who provides well for his family materially and thus considers his responsibility to them complete will make disastrous mistakes. Perhaps his house is palatial and impressive, his wife wears designer clothing, and he has expensive man-toys—a big-screen TV, power boat and outdoor kitchen. But if he is failing to provide nonmaterial things such as an environment of open communication, a sense of belonging and security, structure and order in the home, then he is leaving some of the most crucial aspects of his job undone. A man must strive to provide generously *of himself*—his presence, his attention, his engaged leadership, his decision-making, his encouragement, HIS LOVE—in order to truly fulfill this wonderful God-given role.

Being a provider is a marvelous calling. God wants to use it in order to stretch you and help you grow. Fulfill it the best you can. No matter what your job, work at it to the best of your ability. Use your duty as a provider to combat laziness and selfishness. Let it prod you to develop your skills and abilities, let it fuel your ambition in life, and let it build within you more of the mindset of your heavenly Provider!

3.2

BUILD YOUR WORK ETHIC

*Follow the hardworking example
of the Architect, Creator and
Sustainer of the universe.*

God is a hard worker. “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work,” Jesus said (John 5:17). This is the God Family way of thinking and living.

Are *you* a worker like God is? Many people *hate* work. God loves it.

God works like a farmer. Christ said, “[M]y Father is the *husbandman*”—one who plows and cultivates land (John 15:1). God plants in order to produce fruit that He can enjoy (1 Corinthians 9:7; 2 Timothy 2:6). The harvest He seeks is *spiritual character* in us. God’s people are God’s *husbandry*—His cultivated field (1 Corinthians 3:9). If you abide in Christ, you will produce much spiritual fruit (John 15:5). The more you do this, the more glory you bring to the Farmer (verse 8).

One powerful tool God uses to build character in us is **WORK**. God uses our work to build our character and to make us more like Himself. It is a means by which we can learn to think, labor and produce as He does.

The *way you work* is deeply important to God. How important is it to you?

The First Gardener

In the creation account in Genesis, God labored to create all the elements needed to support human life. Genesis 2:1-3 mention three times that this required *work*.

God created man in His image and likeness (Genesis 1:26). He wants us to become like Him—so He gave us **WORK** to do. Our first job was to exert “dominion over” all the animals (same verse). He wants man to rule all things, including, eventually, the universe. So He gave us Earth as our first job site, filled with material to work with. He instructed Adam and Eve on how to properly exercise dominion over it (e.g. verses 29-30).

Why were cattle, sheep, goats and other livestock placed under our care? Why did God create wheat, oats, barley, rice and cotton? Why potatoes, peas, carrots, cabbage, cauliflower and the vast variety of fruits, nuts and herbs, fish and birds? This support system is complicated and labor-intensive. Think of all the effort involved in making bread. Why didn’t God just

make a bread tree? Why not have manna fall from the sky every morning? Why not design man to eat directly from the soil like an earthworm? Or pre-fuel us for a lifetime, like a nuclear reactor?

God created a complicated, labor-intensive environmental system that demands a huge amount of our time, thought and energy just to eat. And He did it this way *for a purpose*.

After creating Adam, “the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. ... And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden *to dress it and to keep it*” (Genesis 2:8, 15). God gave man something special and commissioned him to take care of it. *Dress* means to work, serve, till, make use of, increase, ennoble, make better. *Keep* means to guard and protect from injury or loss.

This tells you a lot about God. He is a husbandman, growing His righteous character in human beings. How? By planting a physical garden and having human beings care for it!

This is a major way to grow in righteous character: through *work*! Through learning how to be a worker—just like God.

Multiply

In his 1859 book *Self-Help*, Samuel Smiles wrote, “Hugh Miller [a well-known writer at the time] stated the result of his experience to be, that work, even the hardest, is full of pleasure and materials for self-improvement. He held honest labor to be the best of teachers, and that the school of toil to be the noblest of schools—save only the Christian one—that is a school in which the ability of being useful is imparted, the spirit of independence learned, and the habit of persevering effort acquired. He was even of the opinion that the training of the mechanic—by the exercise which it gives to his observant faculties, from his daily dealing with things actual and practical ...—better fits him for picking his way through the journey of life ... than the training afforded by any other condition.”

Think of everything in your life that God gives you charge over: Your family and relationships, your job, your home, your

possessions. Are you taking care of them? Your talents and abilities—are you using them, developing them, multiplying them? Are you *serving others* with these things? Every physical and spiritual gift and blessing God gives you represents your Father and your Husband reaching out to you and committing something into your care to learn *how to be a worker*. They want you to *use* that gift to become *more like them*: more responsible, more giving, more selfless and more loving.

God wants us to take the resources He provides and make them *grow and multiply* (e.g. Mark 4:8). He gives plants, shrubs and trees to create beautiful landscaping and delicious food. He gives us spiritual knowledge in order to *spread it*. He wants us to *work*—and be *satisfied* in our work (Ecclesiastes 2:24). “Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof ...” (Proverbs 27:18). Work makes us happy. When we accomplish something, we feel good! When we waste time, we are unfulfilled and unhappy.

“God instilled a desire within each of us to accomplish, create, invent and build,” Bob Schultz wrote. “We tend to feel good when we make increase and not so good when we can’t or don’t. Whenever I feel a little discouraged, one thing is sure to perk me up—accomplishing something. I pick some small task like changing the water in the chicken pen. I take on another, like sharpening my chisels. Then another, like cleaning off my desk, or writing that long-overdue letter, harvesting some carrots from the garden, washing the truck, or picking up the shop. After a few of these projects, life seems to brighten.

“Don’t sit around, bored with life. Look around you. Meager as they might be, find your resources, add to them your labor, and make some increase today” (*Created for Work*).

Thorns and Thistles

God wanted Adam and Eve to make increase in the Garden of Eden. They failed, so God removed them. As punishment, God said to Adam, “[C]ursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of

the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Genesis 3:17-19).

Now that sin was in the picture and Satan was in charge, agriculture became far more difficult—just as the spiritual process it pictures, that of our qualifying for God’s Kingdom, became far more difficult! That process now involves much more sorrow, sweat, toil—effort!

However, that’s not all bad. We have a long way to go before becoming like God, and He knows that the way we grow is *through difficulty*. Thorns, thistles, obstacles and troubles actually help us. By giving us *work*—having us do hard things, build, create beauty, fight the downward pulls of the flesh and combat decay—God forges stronger, deeper character in our lives.

Work teaches us to *embrace a challenge*. Never shy away from a job because it requires you to get dirty. After all, God made us out of dirt (verse 19) and ordained that we work the soil for our food and our livelihood. Be determined to get the job done, whatever is required.

If you shrink from a challenge God gives you, you will fail to mature. If you are never willing to pick up a heavy weight, your muscles will weaken. If you avoid hard mental work, your mind will wither. God uses challenges to spur our growth and prepare us for even greater challenges.

God Is Your Work Partner

When God gave Moses instructions on building the tabernacle, He personally handpicked a man named Bezaleel for the job. “And [God] hath *filled him with the spirit of God*, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship; And to devise curious works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, And in the cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of wood, to make any manner of cunning work” (Exodus 35:31-33). God wanted the finest workmanship—and He gave *spiritual help* to this worker in order to achieve it!

God makes that kind of help available to you.

One of the most valuable lessons we can learn from hard

work is to learn to *trust God* and get Him involved in our tasks, rather than shouldering our entire burden in isolation, grappling with all its stresses and frustrations alone—as we are all prone to do. When you think of work that way, you realize how much it can draw you closer to God each day! When something is too difficult for you, realize that *God has the answers!* He can give you those answers—oftentimes through your supervisor, co-workers or family members, and, if you possess it, even through the power of His Holy Spirit.

God is a builder. God told Noah *exactly* how to build the ark; He gave Moses *exact* instructions for the tabernacle; He relayed to Solomon *precise* instructions for the temple. God is the *master* at everything—and *He wants to help you in your job.*

Don't try to do your work solely on your own. *Go to Him!* He wants to teach you (Proverbs 8:1-6). He wants to use your work to build your character and to build His relationship with you. What a marvelous process! He gives you jobs to do, then helps you accomplish them. This isn't daily drudgery; this is an experience with God as your boss and co-worker!

Who Is Your Real Boss?

“Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men” (Ephesians 6:5-7). God doesn't care who your employer or supervisor is or what your job is—He wants you to work as if *Jesus Christ Himself* is your boss!

Think about your daily work as if you were filling out your job application for God's Kingdom! God wants to see what kind of a worker you are. So conduct your business like you mean it. Respond to and treat your boss *as if he were Christ*, and that will deeply affect your job performance.

Our human nature shies away from hard work. This world is full of people who only do the minimum. People even tend to *criticize* those who work hard, because that exposes their own

lethargy. A godly man pushes aside that criticism and continues to work “heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ” (Colossians 3:23-24).

“Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things” (Titus 2:9-10). These are really practical points: Please your boss well in all things; don’t talk back; don’t steal time or minimize effort; show yourself faithful in everything you are entrusted with.

How important is this? God says when you work this way, you adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things! You set a godly example and demonstrate the God Family way of life. You build the character of God, and prepare for His Kingdom!

How to Always Have a Job

Be aware of your boss’s needs and desires. If possible, try to provide them before he even asks, the way you would with Jesus Christ! But don’t just take initiative while you’re on the clock: Strive to develop this mindset *throughout life*. Look for needs and fill them—in your family and beyond.

This is simply a godly way of living. Modern society encourages the easy life. But God is developing in us His *nature* of producing, creating, giving. Work provides an education in becoming unselfish, thinking of what we can provide for others.

Even in times of high unemployment, the truth is that employers everywhere are looking for *diligent, reliable, motivated employees*. “As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him” (Proverbs 10:26). Bosses quickly grow irritated and impatient with employees who drag their feet, exert minimum effort, require constant monitoring to stay on task, produce careless work, distract other employees, take frequent breaks, and allow personal problems to affect their work.

Strive to be that all-too-rare employee who gives a full day’s work, exhibits drive and enthusiasm for the job, listens to

instructions and follows through, does a task well and on time, is willing to stay until a job is complete, has a positive attitude, gets along well with others, educates himself about his field, and shows concern for the company's success. Cultivate a godly work ethic, and there will always be work for you!

Put Your Heart Into It!

Creating is what God does for work, and He throws His whole heart into it. His ingenuity and creativity are boundless. He has filled His creation with special poetic touches.

He crafted butterflies as tiny marvels of flight engineering—then took pains to paint their wings with patterns of intricate beauty to transform them into fluttering, dancing artwork. To feed us, God developed an infinite variety of fruits and vegetables, each with its own shape, color, aroma, texture and flavor. To serve us, He propagated a multitude of animals with diverse anatomies, abilities and personalities. He raised up majestic mountains that inspire us with their immensity, even while they shelter wildlife and alter weather patterns. He fashioned lakes to glow and shimmer with reflections of His brilliant skies, even while they sustain myriad aquatic organisms and supply us with life-giving water.

Every millimeter of creation manifests virtuosity—the meticulous work of a Master Scientist, Designer, Engineer, Composer and Artist. All that God does, He does with abundant vibrancy and beauty.

The Master Creator wants to build that same mindset *in you*, whom He made in His likeness. He tells you in Colossians 3:23, “[W]hatsoever ye do, DO IT HEARTILY”

In all your work—in your family, your home, your chores, your job, your activities, your hobbies, your meals, your dress—you have opportunity to cultivate quality, to strive for the superb, and thus to elevate your thinking closer to the mindset of your Maker!

In this world, so often you see people doing things halfway. You see people lackadaisically scraping by, expending as little effort as possible, trying to get the maximum and give the

minimum. *Do only what is necessary—and do so grudgingly, they say. If you can get away with it, cheat the other guy.*

There is no joy in that way.

God wants us to go *all out*—and then to add that extra creative touch, that splash of special. He wants us to take pleasure in doing more than is required (Luke 17:7-10). To view any task before us as a chance to beat back darkness, to reverse decay. To seize every opportunity to shine, to excel, to labor in a way that reflects God's mindset and gives Him glory.

Think of a simple task like mowing the lawn. On one end of the spectrum is the lazy homeowner who, after complaints from the neighbors, resentfully hustles through the job, cutting corners and leaving mounds of dead clippings behind. On the other is the professional who sees the green within the baseball stadium as an artist views a blank canvas, who plans and executes his assignment with diligence and pride, and transforms that field into a marvel of geometric elegance.

In all your labor, make the effort to advance toward the godly end of that spectrum—and take note of how your thinking transforms as you do. Give your customer an added perk he didn't pay for. Put some extra analysis into that paper. Add a special touch to that report for your boss. Surprise your family with a trip to the park. Light the candles for that special evening meal. Put a little flourish in the calligraphy on that thank-you note. Do the extra things that put smiles on other people's faces.

In all you do, look for ways to glorify the Creator who wants to make you in His very own image—the image of the Master Artisan, who does everything with all His heart.

An Education in Unselfishness

God has a big job in helping us overcome our selfishness. He uses every means possible to do so: by commanding us to serve others; to pray for others; to teach others; to strengthen our mates, our children, our brethren. **WORK** is another important tool at His disposal. And not only our own daily work but also our support for His spiritual Work.

Whenever God calls someone into His service, He gives that person a job. That is certainly true of every apostle, prophet, evangelist, minister and deacon He has ever called. But those He places into His Church as it pleases Him (1 Corinthians 12:18) also have a vital part in supporting His Work, which is *serving the world* by doing God's business. That is a powerful and potent means God uses to help us get our minds off ourselves and onto the noble business of serving and helping people. God's Work is one of freely GIVING His truth. And as Herbert W. Armstrong said, only those whose hearts are in that Work are growing spiritually. This is a crucial way we grow and get ready for the Kingdom: by doing our part to *finish God's Work*.

God is a worker! He has big plans to accomplish throughout the universe and for eternity. He is building a family of workers—*hard workers*—people who *love* to work! Allow God to reproduce Himself in you through this important part of your life. Build a godly work ethic! Throw yourself into your daily work, and put your *whole heart* into God's Work!

PAUL

Fight the Good Fight

One of the hardest-working men in the Bible was the Apostle Paul. He knew he didn't deserve his calling. He was grateful and wanted to prove to God that the privilege of being His minister hadn't been given in vain. So what did he do?

He worked his tail off.

"For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I LABOURED MORE ABUNDANTLY THAN THEY ALL: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Corinthians 15:9-10).

He considered his work his *duty* before God (1 Corinthians 9:16). He felt a real weight on him, in a sense, and looked for *every possible means to do his job better* (verses 19-22).

Think of your responsibilities this way. Look for ways to be more efficient and effective. You can't afford to plateau. Always drive yourself toward perfection (Matthew 5:48). "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? SO RUN, THAT YE MAY OBTAIN," Paul continued (1 Corinthians 9:24). Don't just run—*run to win!* Run as if everything depended on your crossing that line **FIRST**. Paul isn't talking about being competitive, trying to beat out others—but about applying the same effort, determination and drive that a *champion* does.

That is what Paul did: He drove and prodded himself to *ensure* he'd cross the finish line as a spiritual success (verses 25-27).

Paul was acutely aware of how much fruit he was producing in his life. He viewed his efforts in terms of the number of people reached, the number of lives saved, and the amount of spiritual growth God was effecting in him personally.

In Hebrews 6:7-8, Paul likens God to a farmer, watering and tending the land to produce fruit. If the work He invests gets no

results, then, as any farmer would say, “it is worthless and near to being cursed; its end is to be burned” (verse 8; RSV).

God has put a lot of work into *you*, and He expects a good crop. Now, *you* need to truly yield to Him so you can grow and produce fruit. In your job, your marriage, your parenting, your congregation, your study and prayer, your thoughts, *work hard* to be as fruitful as possible. You can be sure that as you do, God will reward that (verse 10). He notices. He is pleased with effort. He will respond by answering fervent prayers. If you really have a mind to work, He will open doors of opportunity for you.

This hard-working apostle’s advice continues: “And we desire that every one of you do shew the same *diligence* to the *full assurance of hope* unto the end: That ye *be not slothful* ...” (verses 11-12). Be *diligent*. Keep driving yourself to the end. You have done well today—now show that same diligence tomorrow and the next day. If you start to run out of energy, ask God for more—because you will only inherit God’s Kingdom if you work for it!

Paul assures us that God is “a rewarder of them that *diligently seek him*” (Hebrews 11:6). If you are not seeking God diligently, you need to start. If you think it’s too hard, evaluate your life and start cutting out whatever is getting in your way. Read Paul’s advice in 1 Timothy 6:6-11. Don’t let this world’s distractions pull you off course, he says. You don’t need that stuff—it’s all dust. Take radical *action*: FLEE those things—and *pursue* the things of God! This takes dynamic, purposeful, driving *WORK*.

If you are being chased by a grizzly bear, you won’t flee half-heartedly, you’ll run like an Olympian! If you’re trying to overtake the runner ahead of you to win a million-dollar prize, you won’t give 90 percent, you will run with everything you have!

“Fight the good fight of faith,” Paul concludes, “lay hold on eternal life ...” (verse 12). Eternal life is a gift, but it won’t be handed to you—you must *lay hold* on it! And you have to do it again every day, day after day. That is a fight. But it’s a *good fight*.

Follow Paul’s example, driving yourself in all God gives you to do. In the end you’ll be able to say, like he said in 2 Timothy 4:7-8: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness”

3.3

FORGE VIGOROUS HEALTH

*Good posture, exercise, quality nutrition,
cleanliness, adequate sleep—
these equip your body to handle
the rigors of manhood.*

Biblical manhood means leading, providing and protecting. Fully carrying out these roles requires *robust physical health*.

A masculine man is a strong physical specimen. He stands upright with strong posture; his muscles are well developed from use; his movements are coordinated and vigorous. He has a vitality of spirit and a commanding presence. His eyes are radiant; his skin is clear and healthy.

Contrast this strong and healthy man with a frail, unhealthy man. He is stooped over, probably overweight, with weak muscles. He lacks physical vigor and energy.

Sadly, modern society is producing far more of the second type of man than the first. Look around you. Notice how many men look unhealthy and weak. The shameful truth is that many not only lack strength or athleticism, they have no interest in developing it.

To be out of shape, skin and bones, chubby and fat, or weak and effeminate is not true masculinity. A soft, flabby, degenerate body detracts from one's manhood. Yet without rigorous and intelligent effort, this is exactly what we will come to possess. The causes for these unmanly effects on our bodies are everywhere. Much of our work is physically easy; we sit for most of our days; we drive everywhere; opportunities to exercise seem inconvenient; we lack sunshine and fresh air. Our food supply is calorie-rich and nutrient-poor; sugar and junk food abound. Unsurprisingly, ill health is epidemic.

Do not underestimate the value of good health to fulfilling your role as a man. A strong, healthy physical body gives you the energy to embrace life's challenges. It enables you to accomplish many of the tasks and work associated with manhood. It even has a profound effect on your mindset. Physical and mental fitness go together like a lock and key; a sluggish, weak body usually means a dull mind. Good health aids in mental wellness and clear thinking. Beyond that, it motivates you to tackle manly responsibilities. And beyond even that, it sets a right example for your family and those who look to you for leadership.

Good health is not just something nice to have—it *is a basic law of success*. God's men should be vigorously healthy, have a

vibrant countenance and look fit. Thankfully, for most of us, good health is attainable. It starts with a masculine *will* to build our bodies into what God designed them to be. It requires discipline. It requires establishing good daily habits in what we eat and how we spend our time.

Be Upright

A Christian man who is striving to implement biblical manhood in his life will have honest, strong character. And his body will actually reflect that, because he will stand in a healthy, sturdy, upright position—the way his Creator made his body to stand.

Psalms 37:37 says, “Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.” This means to observe, give heed to, consider and inspect the man who is whole, lacking nothing in physical strength and beauty, upright, straight, correct or level in a physical or a moral sense. Look for men who are physically and spiritually *strong*—and watch them! The word *upright* literally means positioned to be straight up. That means being vertical, erect in carriage or posture. What does such a man have in store for him? *Peace*, which can mean completeness, soundness, safety or soundness in body, welfare, health or prosperity.

Just as being perfect and upright *morally* will lead to being successful, happy and at peace when you are older, being upright *physically* will lead to being healthy and upright in later years. If you are strong and upright physically, you will be healthier and sounder in body and enjoy better welfare in your old age.

However, look around. Everywhere in society you will notice poor posture: head forward and dropped, arched neck, stooped shoulders, cocked hips, uneven footing. In many ways, society’s generally poor physical comportment reflects its drooping mental, moral and spiritual posture.

How you stand makes a big difference in *how you project yourself as a man*. A slouched, bent posture reflects weakness and trepidation. When you see a man hunched over his phone, what impression is he creating? A man’s body language communicates a lot—and most men are communicating with their bodies that they are weak, tired, timid, sheltered, awkward

and/or ashamed. Good posture projects more vigor, authority, confidence and power.

Bad posture causes your ribcage to push down on your organs, which actually can begin to protrude out and push against your abdominal wall. Unmanly! Want to take inches off your waistline—literally instantly? *Stand up straight.* Standing like a man reduces beer belly; improves your organ function; prevents humped shoulders; reduces pain in your neck, shoulders and back; and can make you about an inch taller.

Your body language affects how other people think about you—and how you think about you! Note what a 1946 War Department Field Manual says: “A soldier is often judged by his appearance. The man with good posture looks like a soldier. He commands attention. ... Good posture is associated with good morale. A man with a good posture feels better and is more positive. A man with poor posture cannot feel as positive; consequently he may develop a negative and discouraged attitude.”

Standing the way God created your body to stand has been shown to increase confidence, concentration and mental performance. One study found that “an upright posture makes people feel dominant and successful, which in turn improves their ability to relax and focus on problems.”

Becoming upright takes practice, especially if you’re used to standing poorly. Practice putting your ears, shoulders, hips, knees and heels into alignment, stacked on top of each other. You can quickly check your posture by standing as you normally would with your back to the wall. If the back of your head, your shoulders, your behind and your heels all touch the wall, then you have good posture. If they don’t, you need more practice.



Here is how to practice your stance:

- Plant your feet shoulder-width apart.
- Feel your weight in your heels (not your toes).
- Twist your heels into the ground (so the weight shifts to the outside of your feet) as you tighten your behind.
- Allow your arms to hang at your sides and open your palms forward.
- Spread your fingers and reach for the ground; feel the weight come off your shoulders.

- Imagine you have a tennis ball between your chin and your chest; don't let the ball fall.
- Imagine someone pulling straight up on a hair at the top of your head.
- Breathe.

Doesn't this feel good? You are standing at the full height God made you! You are standing like a man! With practice, this will become how you naturally stand. But it *will* take practice and effort. You have to think about it.



Here is how to practice sitting properly:

- Plant both feet on the floor.
- Keep a good arch in your lower back.
- Lift your chest.
- Keep your shoulders back.
- Lift your chin.
- Keep your ears over your shoulders.

You have to check yourself: Once an hour, every day for the rest of your life is a good goal. You will fall into slouching, into hunching, into “chicken-head” posture. Recognize it and fix it, putting everything back into alignment. When it happens again, fix it again. Keep putting yourself back into a strong, stable position. Day by day, you will bring your posture further and further into erect alignment.

Get Moving

A consistent exercise program will invigorate your body. No matter how poor your current level of fitness, you can start a routine and become fitter and healthier. You are never too young or too old to benefit. Our body remains remarkably resilient even when we neglect it for a long time. Elderly people who begin to exercise can *reverse* many of the effects of aging.

Both aerobic training and weight training provide profound benefits right from the start, including: strengthening your skeletal muscle strength, power and endurance; improving bone density, reducing risk of osteoarthritis and osteoporosis (which is particularly important as we age; it has been said that weight lifting becomes *more* important the older we get);

increasing flexibility and joint range of motion; improving balance; reducing loss of muscle mass; reducing risk of high blood pressure and diabetes; even reducing mental decline.

It's not easy getting started, but keep in focus the benefits of taking care of your body—including those to your spiritual life, your family, your job. Pushing yourself to exercise and enduring temporary discomfort and healthy soreness are worth it. Force yourself to exercise at a set time, no matter how you feel. Don't give in to tiredness. You will be surprised to discover the wellspring of energy that bubbles up while you are growing fitter and stronger through exercise.

Enjoy vigorous physical activities such as hiking, swimming, cycling, racket sports or running. Team sports are good to participate in if you can; aside from having physical benefits, they teach government, teamwork, selflessness and leadership. Don't worry about being a star athlete. Every man, young and old, can profit from sports.

One thing that will help motivate you to stick with a certain exercise regimen is to choose physical activities you enjoy. You'll be likelier to push yourself if you like the sports or exercises you do. If you find that all you can do is go for a walk outside, start with that. Then challenge yourself to walk faster and increase your distance. Then challenge yourself to run portions of your route. Then challenge yourself to run the entire route.

Set goals for your health and fitness: Shave a minute off your mile time; be able to do 10 pull-ups; drop 15 pounds; run in that local 10K race. These can be very motivating. Form a realistic picture in your mind of where you want to be in six months or a year, and take the steps to achieve that.

There are no shortcuts, but if you take on the challenge of building your body, if you go to God for help, and if you don't give up, you will grow healthier, stronger and tougher—physically *and* mentally.

The Right Fuel

Good health requires good fuel. Just as surely as your car needs certain fluids and a particular kind of gasoline to work properly,

your body's operation depends on the fuel you put into it.

Modern food production is concerned primarily with pleasing our palates rather than fueling robust physical wellbeing. We are paying a tremendously high price in our health.

Herbert W. Armstrong taught *seven laws of radiant health*. The first of these is the law most frequently broken: proper food. He said 85 to 95 percent of all sickness and disease result directly from what we eat.

"Most degenerative diseases are modern diseases—penalties for eating foods that have been demineralized in food factories—usually an excess of starch, sugar (the carbohydrates) and fats [talking about bad fats—there are good fats!]. ... [T]he medical profession has made great strides toward eliminating communicable diseases, yet is having little success coping with the increase of the noncommunicable diseases—such as cancer, heart diseases, diabetes, kidney diseases. THESE LATTER ARE AFFECTED BY FAULTY DIET" (*The Seven Laws of Success*; emphasis added).

So, what *should* we eat? There is a lot of information out there, but here is a terrific single-sentence summary you can trust. It comes from *Principles of Healthful Living*: "Two basic factors to remember in selecting foods are to avoid those foods which have been corrupted or perverted in man-made 'food' factories, and to maintain a balanced diet containing all the elements the body requires to sustain and build health."

Put another way: 1) *eat whole foods*; 2) *in right proportions*.

Mr. Armstrong advocated this sound, basic rule: *Eat only those natural foods that will spoil, and eat them before they do*. Follow this rule and you will eat far less processed and refined food that is loaded with preservatives. You will eat far more fresh fruits and vegetables, fresh meats and whole grains.

As much as possible, eat **WHOLE FOODS**: foods God created you to eat, the way He created them. He made us, and He made food for us to eat. Our bodies get the most nourishment out of food that exists in the form God created it. Man cannot make anything He made any better. For that reason, *avoid processed, refined foods* as much as possible. Most of these are laden with chemicals, preservatives, taste enhancers and colorings that God did not create for us to consume. Industrialists have created

these ingredients to sell more units and make more money. They are in business to sell—not to keep us healthy. They will use anything they can to make their food look better, taste better, last longer, and even unnaturally make you crave more!

Do not overeat. In the Western world, we generally eat far more than necessary. Overweight and obesity are terrible conditions with many ill effects on our health. God actually prophesied that our people, enjoying the abundant blessings He provided, would become overindulgent and fat (Deuteronomy 32:13-15). The Bible condemns gluttony, along with immoderate use of alcohol (e.g. Proverbs 23:2, 20-21). Drinking to dull the senses, or to the point of getting “buzzed” or drunk, is not appropriate. God commands a life of moderation (Philippians 4:5), eating for health, drinking responsibly, and not being slave to our appetites. Moderate use of alcohol can be healthful; more than one or two drinks at a time can harm your health and is pushing the bounds of moderation.

Occasional fasting, which the Bible commands for spiritual reasons (e.g. Matthew 6:16; 9:14-15; Psalm 69:10; 1 Corinthians 7:5), is also proven to have physical benefits. Among them, it can help you to develop a better sense of proper portions, in addition to improving your self-control.

In our society, eating healthy is hard. Obtaining healthy food is an ongoing struggle that requires attention and diligence. But if you invest that attention and diligence, you can make drastic improvements in your health.

Ask God for help. Get the best food you can afford. Although it is tempting, try not to save money by buying low-quality foods; look for other ways to cut costs. We are limited by the time and money we have to devote to our food budget. But see where you can make it a priority, and then rely on God to do the rest. Your health and your family’s health are worth it.

Cleanliness and Dress

Caring for the body God gives you includes proper hygiene and dress. Many scriptures show the importance God places on these elements of health. To ancient Israel, He gave many regulations requiring them to bathe or wash their clothes to

ensure they didn't pick up communicable diseases. Regular bathing and eliminating body odor is important. Taking care of our skin, hair, nails and teeth all contribute to health.

Keep not only your body, but also your clothing and your living quarters and environment clean. This is part of good stewardship. Not only does this promote good health, but it also helps you maintain a positive, productive frame of mind, and it reflects clean character.

Consider as well what your clothing says about you. If you dress slovenly, you project a bad, unmanly image. This affects your own mindset and the way that others perceive and treat you. Dress sharply, appropriate for the occasion, in the highest quality you can afford, and it will properly frame and enhance your masculinity.

Sleep and Rest

Lack of sleep and rest is common. Few of us get the seven to nine hours of sleep needed by the average adult. Sleep deprivation has been found to hinder focus, create brain fogginess, reduce memory retention, hurt productivity, undermine capacity to fight infections and handle stress, raise levels of inflammation, increase likelihood of weight gain, boost susceptibility to heart disease and cancer, and increase sadness and depression.

God made us to need sleep. While you sleep, your brain is busy performing a range of biological maintenance jobs that keep your body running in top condition, preparing you for the day ahead. The quality of your sleep largely determines the quality of your waking life.

Probably the most important thing you can do in this area is to *go to bed on time* each night. It is easy to keep pushing back your bedtime so you can finish that project, surf the Internet, unwind with a book, watch a television show, chat with friends or do any number of activities. Yet they all have the same inescapable consequence: They cut down on your sleep.

When you stay up late, how do you usually spend that time? By contrast, when you wake early in the morning, how do you usually spend that time? The early riser is much likelier than the night

owl to start his day with praying, studying the Bible, working out, showering, and eating a healthy meal. The early riser is generally on his way to a more successful life (Proverbs 20:13).

If you have a hard time *falling* asleep, here are some quick tips:

- Practice relaxation techniques before bed to increase your quality of sleep.
- Avoid doing work immediately before (or in) bed.
- Avoid watching television or using a computer before bed.
- Cut off late-night Internet access.
- Adjust your evening exposure to artificial light. Dim overhead lights or use lamps. Install an app that dims the most stimulating light wavelengths on your computer screen as evening approaches.
- Adjust your wake-up time. If you force yourself to wake earlier, you will be likelier to go to bed earlier.
- Take a nap. If you don't get a full night's sleep, a nap can help make up the difference. Research shows that napping 10 to 45 minutes can increase performance.
- Avoid caffeine, especially mid- to late afternoon and at night.
- Exercise. This can really help not only your fitness but also the amount and quality of your sleep.
- Pray for good sleep (e.g. Psalm 127:2).

A good night's sleep is essential. No matter your age, it's not too late to establish a routine and get proper sleep. Don't let sleep deprivation and lack of mental focus slow you down and reduce your effectiveness as a man. Get enough sleep so you can stay focused, be more productive, think sharper and live with vitality.

Your body is the tool with which you carry out your responsibilities as a man. Neglecting or abusing it impairs your effectiveness in untold ways. God gave it to you to serve you for many years if you take care of it. Show Him your appreciation by keeping it tuned up and ready for action!

3.4

GET STRONGER

*There are reasons God made you
the stronger vessel.
Make sure you are fulfilling them.*

Military recruiters know an important truth that a lot of other people want to ignore. In a 1992 report, the Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces wrote this: “The average female Army recruit is 4.8 inches shorter, 31.7 pounds lighter, has 37.4 fewer pounds of muscle She has only 55 percent of the upper-body strength and 72 percent of the lower-body strength.” Women are far likelier than men to suffer injuries like stress fractures, their aerobic capacity is significantly lower, they cannot carry as much as far and as fast, and they are more susceptible to fatigue. In physical capability, “the upper 5 percent of women are at the level of the male median.”

This basic biological reality has been universally recognized, accommodated and embraced throughout human history. Even in our gender-confused age, you never see women trying to compete against men in professional sports like soccer, basketball, football or even tennis. We understand this would be unfair.

Nobody should take these irrefutable facts to mean women are inferior. When God made human beings male and female, He purposefully gave greater natural physical strength and greater capacity for strength to the man. This is an intelligently designed, masterfully created fact of life He instituted for a reason. He fashioned the woman’s body to accomplish the demands of *her* role, not those of the man’s role.

Proverbs 20:29 explains, “The glory of young men is their *strength*” *Strength* means firmness, vigor and force. It refers to a young man’s physical capacity and ability, the might and power of his young body. This sets young men apart from everyone else and makes them special.

God gave men this *glory* of greater bodily strength! Why? *To help us fulfill our roles as providers, protectors and leaders.*

A Young Man’s Glory

Yes, fulfilling a man’s role takes strength of character, strength in resolve, strength in determination, strength in confrontation. But it also takes *physical* strength.

A man should not shy away from this—he should maximize it

and take advantage of it. Men should develop their God-given glory: their bodily strength. Life often demands hard physical effort, and a stronger body is always a benefit. Though our modern environment requires less strength for daily survival, who knows what physical challenges you may suddenly face?

God built men to bear life's heavy burdens. He intends us to relish sacrificing our strength for good, noble purposes. A young man with strength, who uses it to lift, carry, hold, push, pull, build, hammer, cut, pick, shovel, stack and sweat is internalizing important lessons in manliness.

God gives young men the *potential* for useful, glorious physical strength, but that strength doesn't develop automatically. It requires hard work. Lots of it. Young men who put in the work are rewarded for it: With their God-given capacity, they see faster gains in strength and stamina, and recover faster, than anyone.

Many young men neglect to develop strength. Poor diets, sedentary lives, too much screen time and not enough vigorous exercise produce soft, weak young men.

Young men, *build* your strength. God created you to be strong. He wants your strength to be your glory! He has given you the *capacity*—but you must develop it.

Even as you get older, you must *continue* to develop strength. It is a crucial measure of health. Making a consistent, active effort to get stronger helps you remain useful and can stave off many problems that will otherwise besiege you as you age.

We need to do what God designed our bodies to do. We need to become more physically capable in our masculine duties. And we need to strengthen our thinking toward fulfilling these duties. Building your physical strength is a specific, tangible, effective means of accomplishing *all these goals*.

Strength Helps You in Your Manly Role

How does strength help you fulfill your role as a man?

Physical strength increases your capacity as a *provider*. If you work with your hands, then the stronger you are physically, the higher your quality and speed of work. Your vitality is often connected to your earnings. Even in an office job, manual tasks

come up at the office and especially outside of it. And you never know when you might need to take a job as a laborer. Besides, the stronger you are, the better you can care for your property, digging postholes, lifting concrete blocks, mowing, moving furniture, and so on. The fitter your body is for these tasks, the less you will have to hire these out. And if a tool fails, you can be comfortable resorting to brute strength when you have to.

“It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth” (Lamentations 3:27). Embrace physical challenges. Exert yourself rigorously to get a job done. It is good for young men to work outside, digging, hauling, building brawn. We fathers should work with our sons around the house and yard; include them in doing jobs for widows or other needy folks. When your son is old enough to get a job, encourage him to consider something that will challenge him physically over something easy. We must ensure our sons learn how to work (e.g. Proverbs 10:4-5).

Physical strength is useful to be a *protector*. If you are on the scene when a bookcase falls on someone, or a person is trying to escape from a burning building, or a wild animal is loose, you will be more able to help if you are strong than if you are weak. Fitness also has more day-to-day benefits. When your wife is thinking about her security and the security of your children, she will feel more protected and *be* more protected if you are strong than if you are weak. When your teenage son gets bigger and stronger, he will have more respect and pay more deference to you if you are strong than if you are weak.

Physical strength is useful for a *leader*. A physically stronger man naturally commands more authority and respect than a weaker man. A strong physique is a greater asset to a leader than a weak physique. Men who are strong are healthier and have higher testosterone. Building strength combats depression, boosts mental health, increases confidence, and fortifies willingness to face challenges. A strong man will not be a good leader without higher attributes, but those higher attributes can be wasted on a physically weak man.

Building strength has an additional, perhaps even more powerful *mental* benefit: It teaches you to embrace hardship. Getting stronger is hard. A job offer, a good deal on a car, or a

50-dollar bill might blow your way on a gust of caprice. Not so with muscle. It only comes your way through *hard work*.

Embracing Hardship

In his article “Why Every Man Should Be Strong,” author Brett McKay explained why Theodore Roosevelt and Winston Churchill *built* their bodies: “Churchill and TR understood that if they wanted to develop their minds to their peak excellence, and do something significant on the world stage, they could not spend their lives curled up in bed reading stacks of books A strong body would take them where they needed to be, and help them perform nobly in the field. Without physical strength, they could never have achieved, or become, all that they did.”

“The pain and dedication required to work out regularly,” McKay wrote, “teaches you about discipline, resilience, and humility, among other things.”

“When the Iron doesn’t want to come off the mat, it’s the kindest thing it can do for you,” Henry Rollins wrote about weight lifting. “If it flew up and went through the ceiling, it wouldn’t teach you anything. That’s the way the Iron talks to you. It tells you that the material you work with is that which you will come to resemble. ... It wasn’t until my late 20s that I learned that by working out I had given myself a great gift. *I learned that nothing good comes without work and a certain amount of pain.* ... I used to fight the pain, but recently this became clear to me: Pain is not my enemy; it is my call to greatness. But when dealing with the Iron, one must be careful to interpret the pain correctly. Most injuries involving the Iron come from ego. I once spent a few weeks lifting weight that my body wasn’t ready for and spent a few months not picking up anything heavier than a fork. Try to lift what you’re not prepared to and the Iron will teach you a little lesson in restraint and self-control” (emphasis added).

You don’t need to try to attain a certain physique or a certain bodyweight. You don’t want to build your body to stoke your vanity—you already have too much vanity! No—realize that the purpose for getting physically stronger is that it is a *valuable tool for growing as a man*.

How should you grow physically stronger? Running and sports are good for conditioning, but building *strength* generally requires specific strength-building exercises.

At its most basic level, getting stronger requires simply *moving something*, whether a barbell, bricks, or just your own body. Push-ups require no gear. Pull-ups are excellent, and you can easily find an inexpensive pull-up bar designed to mount in a doorframe. Certain gymnastics movements build extraordinary strength and require no special equipment.

For basic and extremely effective strength-building, there is nothing better than weight lifting, and a used set of weights can be quite inexpensive. Find someone to coach you on four simple movements: the deadlift, the squat, the bench press and the shoulder press. Learn proper form, then devote some time to them. If you are doing it safely, the more effort and intensity you put into it, the greater return you will receive.

Building strength this way has many benefits, including reducing the risk of injuries and expanding your capacity for other activities. It also clears the mind and builds confidence.

“Strength is a defining attribute of masculinity,” McKay wrote. “It’s the literal power that has allowed generations of men to protect and provide for their families. It’s the force that built our skyscrapers, roads and bridges. ... [D]eveloping our physical strength is still a worthwhile pursuit, for it lays a foundation for developing the complete man.”

“Strive today to become stronger than you were yesterday. I promise as you do so, you’ll see a transformation not only in your body, but also your mind and spirit.”

Of all the types of strength a man can develop, you need *spiritual* strength most. That means remaining clean from the world, building good habits, mastering your passions, resisting negative pressures, standing for what’s right, becoming dependable, and consistently making the little decisions that build character.

We need strong faith, strong character, strong will. We need to build the bold, masculine qualities to succeed as leaders.

With God’s help, we and our sons will grow to inspire others to agree, in admiration, with the proverb: that the glory of young men truly is their strength.

3.5

MAINTAIN YOUR HOME

*The state of your property
reflects the state of your character.*

If you own a home, you understand the second law of thermodynamics: *entropy*. The degradation of matter and energy. Yes, home ownership is a blessing—but it is also *work*. Why? Because *everything breaks down*.

This is not true of the spirit realm. Yet God, a Spirit Being, created physical material to decay and return to dust. It happens to our homes, our gardens, our possessions, our vehicles, even our bodies.

Why did God create matter this way? Because it requires us to *take care* of these things, to preserve and protect them. In making us perform regular maintenance, God is teaching us a lesson.

A household requires a lot of maintenance work. It starts with routine day-to-day tasks such as cleaning dirty dishes, dusty floors and soiled clothing. On top of that are the demands of more involved maintenance—changing the oil, winterizing equipment, repairing plumbing, replacing electrical fixtures and so on. Traditionally there has been somewhat of a delineation between what is considered “woman’s work” and everything else, although there are differing ideas of just where that line is. The truth, however, is that *there is just work*—work that *needs* to be done. A man delegates some of it to his wife, who is his helpmeet (not his slave—Genesis 2:18), in accordance with the instruction that women be “keepers at home” (Titus 2:5). Still, in times when a woman is unable to work due to sickness, a new baby or other reasons, or not even in the picture, that work becomes the man’s responsibility. It should not go undone.

God commands us to maintain what He blesses us with, and for centuries this principle of maintenance has been a responsibility of manhood.

The Slothful Man

“I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction” (Proverbs 24:30-32).

Even a slothful man can come to possess a field and a vineyard. “What a man acquires doesn’t matter much, for goods may come by work, gifts, or just being in the right spot at the right time,” Bob Schultz wrote. Obtaining a possession might not require money, and it certainly does not require virtue. “What he does with what comes is a test that reveals his outlook on life, good and God. *The getting isn’t hard, the keeping is*” (*Created for Work*; emphasis added throughout).

It is easier to open a checking account than to keep it balanced. It is easier to buy a nice car than to keep a car nice. It is easier to *get* happily married than to *stay* happily married.

The author of this proverb knew this field owner was lazy and ignorant, though he didn’t even meet him. How could he have such insight into this man’s character? It was reflected in his property.

Perhaps this field owner was like so many of us today: so prosperous that we just tend to accumulate more and more stuff. And our tendency is to allow that stuff to deteriorate, because we have other stuff, and we can always buy more stuff if we have to.

Look around: Is your life full of *stuff*? For each object you accumulate, you have three options: let it break down, get rid of it—or maintain it.

Many of us probably need to choose the second option more frequently. Don’t just let *stuff* come into your life and pile up. When you, your wife or your children want to acquire something, ask yourself more than just, *Can we afford the money to buy it?* Also ask yourself, *Can I afford the time to maintain it?*

When you own something, the duty to *maintain* it comes with it.

Limit your possessions to what you can take care of. If you can’t afford the time or resources to maintain it, you are better off not acquiring it in the first place—or, if you already have it, getting rid of it. This is not a “throwaway” mentality; it is the opposite. The throwaway mentality is what leads to acquiring piles of stuff inside a house in disrepair with an overgrown yard. You may need to purge a lot of possessions to start: sell, donate or even discard. But moving forward, the manly mentality is to keep and preserve what you have, and to *abstain* from acquiring something new unless you intend to keep and preserve it.

Dress and Keep

When God created the first man, He gave him a job in Eden: to *dress and keep* the garden. This physical type has a spiritual parallel. Relationships need attention and work—maintenance. 1 Timothy 3’s qualifications for a minister include “[ruling] well his own house.” He cannot be a man who just married a wife: He must be working to preserve and enhance that marriage. He cannot be a man who has just sired children: He must be actively attending to and working on raising those children into godly adults. He must not simply be *in* God’s Church: He must be fostering his spiritual life by going to God to eradicate every mental and spiritual thorn and nettle—and then to pull all the new weeds the next day!

God is using the maintenance mindset to build your character to *think like Him*. He is Creator *and* Sustainer. He maintains what He creates. He created all things, and “by him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:16-17; RSV). Read Psalm 147—it is an inspiring homage to the great Sustainer. It shows how detailed is God’s work of preserving and maintaining His creation.

God “PRESERVES what He creates by His government,” Herbert W. Armstrong wrote in *The Incredible Human Potential*. “What God creates, He has created for a purpose—to be used, *preserved* and *maintained*. And this use is regulated by God’s government.” He describes the *wreck* that resulted when Lucifer and his angels rebelled, and God’s government was no longer present on Earth to tend and care for it. Everything decayed (Genesis 1:2). “God is Creator, *Preserver* and Ruler,” Mr. Armstrong wrote, “Satan is destroyer!”

Little wonder that in Satan’s world, the tendency and pressure to ignore maintenance and “just buy another one” is so strong.

Reject that mindset; learn to think like God, care like God and work like God. See the wonderful *vision* contained in the simple yet important responsibility of looking after your things.

What to Do Right Away

Here are actions you can take right now to become a maintenance man.

- Inventory the things you own. Look around: Are these vehicles, appliances, furnishings, housewares and other items in good working order? If not, ask yourself: *Fix it, or purge it?* Remember the principle of Proverbs 24: What is the state of your possessions saying about the state of your character?
- Make a checklist. Consider using or adapting the *Art of Manliness.com* version, “Keep Your House in Tip-Top Shape: An Incredibly Handy Home Maintenance Checklist.” It constitutes a comprehensive and helpful year-round plan for maintaining your home. If this looks daunting, don’t give up. You *can* learn these skills!
- Start with one skill. Take *one* step toward learning a new manual skill. For an idea on what to start with, look around the house to see what is broken. This will give you a skill that is immediately needful and will provide real, hands-on practice right away. Here are some possibilities: change your car’s oil, replace some old grout, fix a leaky faucet, install a ceiling fan, tune your bike, fell a tree, wire a light, lay tile, replace your brakes, solder an electronic component, landscape your driveway, plant a garden, or go out to your yard and clear the nettles thereof.
- Get help. Online step-by-step tutorials and videos are available in abundance, not to mention the how-to section at your local library or bookstore. If you’re still overwhelmed, ask someone you know who is handy. He learned it from someone else; you can do the same. Family members or friends will likely be happy to show you how to do it. You might take a course at your local technical college. If you have to hire someone, be there when he is doing it, and ask if he would be willing to show you what he is doing.

Learning to become a maintenance man involves more than one project. It is a mindset that will benefit you for the rest of your life, physically and spiritually. So even if you feel intimidated at first, go for it anyway: Embrace your manly duty, and become a maintenance man.

The Isaiah 32 Man

Righteous, manly leadership is a genuine blessing to others. This fact is beautifully illustrated in Isaiah 32:2: “And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.”

When leadership is lacking, family and society fracture (e.g. Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). But when men fulfill their responsibilities, society enjoys stability and safety.

The language of Isaiah 32:2 describes a man serving as *protector*. The poor, needy and distressed can rely on him as a place of protection from wind and storm. A godly man defends them from those who would exploit or oppress them. He is their champion and shield.

Isaiah 32:2 also describes a man as *provider*. He cools, nourishes and refreshes those he serves like an essential source of fresh water. As King David said in his last words, righteous government is a blessing to the governed like “the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain” (2 Samuel 23:3-4). The godly man revives and rejuvenates others as they take shelter in his shadow, seeking refuge from the scorching sun in a weary land.

Jesus Christ epitomizes all these qualities. He protects from dangers and evils, and amply supplies all our needs (Psalm 23). He personally bore the buffeting of the wind and storm to shield us from it (Isaiah 53:4-6). He offers living water (John 4:14). He is the Rock under whom we can take refuge (1 Corinthians 10:4). He pays particular heed to the poorest and neediest (e.g. Matthew 9:36).

Soon, this mighty Ruler, the King of kings, will return (Isaiah 32:1), and all nations will enjoy the blessings of His perfect leadership! We need not wait, however, to possess those beautiful effects of righteous leadership. In fact, *every man* should follow Christ's example today.

Section 4

THE PROTECTOR

DR

*A man must plant himself
resolutely between evil
and all that he loves.*

166	4.1 Protect Women and Children
177	<i>Moses—and Other Protectors</i>
178	4.2 Confront
184	<i>Nehemiah—Repel Unrighteousness</i>
186	4.3 Smile Through Trial
192	4.4 Pray for Others

4.1

PROTECT WOMEN AND CHILDREN

*Society has trashed this
cornerstone of civilization.
You must reclaim it.*

Men, pay close attention to this command from God: “YE SHALL NOT AFFLICT ANY WIDOW, OR FATHERLESS CHILD” (Exodus 22:22).

This is the inexorable law of the Ruler of the universe. And He is *serious* about it. “If thou afflict them in any wise [way], and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; And my *wrath shall wax hot*, and *I will kill you with the sword*; and YOUR WIVES shall be *widows*, and YOUR CHILDREN *fatherless*” (verses 23-24).

You do not want to mess with this God.

God is a Protector. He helps the helpless and defends the defenseless. He hears the cries of the oppressed. He avenges injustice. This is a truly awesome aspect of His nature and character.

Elsewhere in the Bible, the great Protector commands us to look after the blind, the deaf, the poor, the stranger. But of all those commands, Exodus 22 is God’s strongest, sternest and toughest. Elsewhere God prescribes the death penalty for certain sins—but nowhere else does He vow to *personally administer it*.

Realize: God’s extraordinary concern for widows and fatherless shows just how much He wants women and children *protected*. There is an unstated truth here: If you afflict a woman who has a husband or a child who has a father, *that man himself* will deal with you.

But for those who lack a man in their lives, *God Himself* fulfills the role of Protector—and with extraordinary zeal. He solemnly warns any who would hurt them: *If you afflict them and they cry to me, I’m going to kill you*.

Do you think like God?

Are you *zealous* like God about the duty He gave you to protect women and children? Are you vigilant against any threat to them? Do you shield them from harm and injustice, even at risk to yourself? Does finding them in affliction arouse *your* white-hot wrath?

Recapturing True Values

To our *great shame*, modern society sorely lacks this elementary mindset of manhood. Men are confused about sex roles.

Teaching men to protect women is not only lacking, it is condemned. The modern feminist attitude teaches that it is more “enlightened” to let women fend for themselves.

In prior generations, however, the stronger were obligated to serve the weaker in this way. And “prior generations” means almost *all* generations in almost *all* societies in almost *all* of human history! Upstanding men have defended women and children from threats for millennia. This is what society has expected. This godly quality has been a cornerstone of civilization.

This is the basis of simple rules of etiquette like a man opening doors for a woman or walking traffic-side next to his date. These small gestures reinforce this greater principle. This is why men have traditionally braved the rigors of hardest work in fields like farming, building, mining and manufacturing. This is why men have always been the soldiers. This is why the men on the *Titanic* put the women and children on the lifeboats while they went down with the ship. All but the lowest of them were imprinted with this code: *Protect the women and children*.

It is amazing and unprecedented that modern feminism has confused our society about this. For some of us, the world’s erroneous thinking has rubbed off on us more than we realize.

God’s Design

God gave the man a greater capacity for physical strength than He did the woman. He also gave him a tougher mental and emotional temperament than the woman, whom He calls “the weaker vessel” (1 Peter 3:7).

That is not to say that the woman is or should be *weak*. God exalts strength in women (e.g. Proverbs 31:17). However, He designed her *capacity* for physical strength to be less, and for her to express her strength differently than a man.

In giving half the population greater physical, mental and emotional toughness, God intends us to build a sense of *unselfish responsibility* to PROTECT, PROVIDE FOR AND DEFEND THE OTHER HALF. This law is plainly evident within nature itself.

“I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to SUPPORT THE WEAK,” wrote the Apostle Paul, “and to

remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). God wants us to use that strength to benefit others. He gave it to us to build a godly mindset: Support, care for and protect those who are weaker—including women, the “weaker vessel.”

“We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves” (Romans 15:1). Every man ought to develop and use his strength to serve others—and at the same time *to conquer his own selfishness*.

Consider further: God designed human development so a little child is utterly helpless. He then created within fathers (and mothers) a strong protective inclination. This teaches us about His own nature and reinforces the lesson: *A father protects his children*.

Fatherless children—those who lack that protection—are *two to three times* likelier to become victims of child abuse! Yes, there are men who treat a girl or woman differently if she is fatherless, *taking advantage of her* in ways they would not if she had a father who would stop them! That is unconscionable.

Modern society has more and more husbandless women and fatherless children. If *you* treat a fatherless woman more carelessly than you treat women with fathers, then read Exodus 22:22-24 again and see what GOD thinks of your actions! Realize that she absolutely DOES have a Father! And if you take advantage of her in any way, her Father is going to *come at you!*

Do you think *like God* toward widows and fatherless? Or do you unwittingly think like the evil people whom God protects the widows and fatherless *from*?

A man who thinks like God is a PROTECTOR.

Men, this is the way God designed us physically, mentally and emotionally. This is how God commands us to think. This is a duty He has given to every man who is not seriously incapacitated. He expects you to PROTECT WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

Break the Roles—Break Society

Our upside-down world, however, views this God-designed order as barbaric and backward. Satan has convinced people

that a man who wants to provide for, take care of, or even open the door for a woman is a sexist and a chauvinist.

Unsurprisingly, men have gotten that message. And they have stopped thinking the godly way! In today's society, most men no longer view themselves as protectors, providers and defenders of women. They have retreated to simply thinking about themselves.

Society no longer teaches us our responsibilities toward women, children, family and society. At the same time, society tells women, *You don't need a man to protect you, provide for you, take care of you. Look out for yourself! It's a SHAME to be a helper for a man! Pursue your talents, goals and dreams without him!* Society even tells *children* to stand up for themselves because father is a selfish buffoon and mother is never home anyway.

These are *satanic* messages! The devil has been broadcasting them incessantly for decades.

In Satan's society, men and women no longer work together, harmoniously, in complementary roles. They do not serve and help each other and provide stability for their children. Everyone competes, even the children. Selfishness has taken over, and *families are falling apart*. For that reason, SOCIETY is *falling apart*.

For families and society to hold together, you MUST have strong men who accept their God-given responsibility to women, to children, to family and to society.

We have broken this basic, foundational element of godly structure within family and society, and so it has all broken down!

Break the masculine role—and you BREAK SOCIETY!

Read Isaiah 3:1-3, where God foretells the disappearance of strong, capable, masculine leaders—the pillars of a strong society. The mighty man, the man of war, the captain of 50, those who will charge out and deal with threats against the nation—when those men are taken away, a nation is cursed and vulnerable!

In many Western nations, we haven't just integrated women into our military; we are *purposefully sending them into combat!* Because of our modern world's ridiculous sex confusion, a man's *reluctance* to pitch a woman into a war zone filled with flying bullets, grenades and suicide bombers is considered *barbaric!*

Given God's passion about the relationship between men and women, this satanic thinking arouses His wrath!

Husbands and Fathers

A man must be *committed* to defending his family, defending women and children, and defending his community—even when it hurts. “The real man gains renown by standing between his family and destruction, absorbing the blows of fate with equanimity” (David Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making*). This is what distinguishes a man from a boy.

Do you look after the women in your life? Are you the *first* to step up to a difficulty, challenge or threat? If you are married, when you hear a bump in the night, surely *you* are the one who investigates rather than hiding under the covers as your wife gets up. But are there other ways you are failing to defend your family?

If someone insults your wife, do you step up and defend her? Do you safeguard her honor and respect her in the way you talk with her? Does she feel safe and looked after in your presence? Can she call on you for help, even in little things, and know you will intervene on her behalf?

Defend the Widow and Fatherless

God condemns our selfish society and men who don't care for the needs of widows and the fatherless (Isaiah 1:23). He says providing a masculine presence and relieving their affliction is *pure religion* (verse 17; James 1:27).

In principle, even single women who live on their own should be treated with special care. When a woman has no protector, she starts to *protect herself*, and she becomes harder and more masculine. Some single men notice that and respond by saying, *I'm not interested in her because she's too hard!* They simply write her off, without feeling any sense of obligation or responsibility toward her. Yet they may well be part of the reason she has had to harden and protect herself!

These women occasionally need a man's help. Look after

single women as you would your own sisters, with all purity. Help with maintenance or yard work. Make yourself available for jobs that require a man's strength.

Single men: Work to build the mindset of a *protector* toward single women! This isn't something you can wait to do until after you marry. *Do this in your dating.* Care for and look after single women.

And realize this: When women get no dates from godly men of character, Satan notices. And he often goes after them with men of lesser character. These women become lonely and more vulnerable to that kind of temptation. You can protect your sisters from this by helping them to know that they are cherished members of God's Family!

Dating and Courtship

Also realize: A godly man who is a protector will never push the bounds of decency on a date. His honorable conduct will make the woman feel comfortable and protected, physically, mentally and emotionally. God **COMMANDS** that a man restrain and protect women from *his own* neglect, selfishness and lust! He must be a trustworthy man of character to defend women from his own baser nature.

When dating starts progressing toward marriage, the natural tendency is to loosen the standards. But at that point, it is even **MORE** important to uphold the woman's dignity. You need to *restrain yourself* to **PROTECT HER!** Many relationships— even many that *lead to marriage*—start with the man taking advantage of the woman. Thus the man is not a *protector*, but a kind of *predator!* That is a terrible foundation for a marriage.

“Fornication before marriage ... puts a scar on the future marriage that can never be erased or healed,” Herbert W. Armstrong wrote in *The Missing Dimension in Sex*. “Many today commit fornication, and then marry the partner in fornication. I do not say such a marriage cannot be happy—it may, and ought to be. But I do say that scar will always remain! It has taken something away from the marriage. Even though happy, it might have been happier!” If you have committed this sin, is it

possible you are still suffering the scars of that mistake because you never repented of it? Acknowledge your sin and repent.

Courtship is a crucial phase in a relationship. It is *critical* that the man be the protector of his bride-to-be. Never put her in a situation where she has to defend herself *from you!* If you are not serving as her protector, then she has to *protect herself!* If, during your courtship, you teach her that she has to protect herself from you, that will carry over into the marriage.

“We’re going to be married, anyway,” argue many engaged people. ‘So what’s the difference?’ What’s the *difference*? It’s the difference between *SIN* and righteousness—between *RUINING* the marriage, and *SAVING* it for a true *God-plane* relationship—between corroding and seriously detracting from this lifelong companionship, and keeping it clean, pure and full of joy” (ibid).

What a difference timing makes! *Demonstrate character in courtship.* Doing so is the difference between sin and righteousness, corrosion and purity. Men: Courtship is your opportunity to prove your trustworthiness, to show her that she can trust you and feel safe with you—that she can look to you as her protector.

Protection Within the Family

Every man must protect women and children from his own worse nature. This includes curbing his anger, impatience, cruelty and mean-spiritedness.

Simply treating women with *dignity* and *honor* is a form of protecting them. A man who demeans his wife causes her to feel defensive around him, when she should feel protected!

“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, *giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel*, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered” (1 Peter 3:7). That is profound. What is the appropriate response to the relative weakness God created in women? *Honor*. When we fail to give women that honor, we push them to put up barriers and to be *their own* protectors and defenders.

God says that a godly woman possesses a meek and quiet spirit, and wears it like a precious ornament. Such a spirit is

precious in God's sight (verses 3-4). What can really help a woman take on that precious meekness? **HAVING A MAN PROTECT HER, PROVIDE FOR HER AND GUIDE HER.**

Life requires hardness—hardness to go out and succeed in a job in the world, to deal with carnal people, to earn money and provide for a family. It takes hardness to establish order and discipline in a home. It demands hardness to ward off negative, worldly influences and protect a family from predators. God wants **MEN** to develop the greatest share of that hardness so women don't have to! He wants men to use the strength He gave them in order to fulfill those jobs.

God gives the man the role of *provider* and *leader* of his family—and even in these roles, a man is serving as *a kind of protector*. When he provides, he frees his wife from having to work outside the home and face the hardness of the world each day. He frees her to focus on her role within the home. When he truly **LEADS** his family, he shields his wife from having to step into that role and becoming manlier and harder as a result.

Hardness of this type is **FOR MEN**. When a man has that manly kind of hardness, he enables a woman to be soft. If a woman is too hard, that could indicate that the man is too soft.

Defending Against Dangers

Fathers should protect their families not only from physical dangers, but also mental and spiritual dangers. We should keep wrong influences from entering our homes and into their lives.

For example, we must protect our young people from harmful Internet use. Every smartphone is a gateway to unimaginably destructive filth. We fathers *must* defend our children from those influences.

Being a protector sometimes requires *confrontation*—confronting a threat from outside or even, at times, a problem within the person you're protecting—like confiscating a smartphone no matter how much he or she protests!

In Genesis 3, when Satan came after Eve, **WHERE WAS ADAM?** Why wasn't he protecting her? If he had fulfilled his duty as protector, surely she wouldn't have eaten the forbidden fruit!

It is important to realize, too, that being a successful protector means you must protect *your own mind* FIRST. Don't get into material influences that you shouldn't. A man who is indulging his own lusts, failing to safeguard his own mind from the evils of this world, seriously compromises his ability to protect others.

Your Responsibility

Men, defend the helpless!

Pray that God will help you think as He does. Pray He will sensitize your vigilance. Pray He will give you the right emotions. Pray He will steel you to your duty, wherever it surfaces. Pray He will prod you to right action. And pray for opportunities to step up and be a man.

Above all, being a protector is not a list of rules to follow, it is a godly *mindset*. Consider the example of Jesus Christ. He definitely protects His Bride in many ways, but not from everything. He allows us to experience character-building hardship, even extremely trying circumstances at times. There are some situations where it would be wise for a man *not* to intervene. But realize: Christ is *completely unselfish*. Much of the time, we men neglect to step up not because we are carefully allowing a woman to experience a character-building challenge, but simply because we don't feel like it. We are being selfish.

Even with something as harmless as a spider or mouse, if a woman screams for help, you have a choice. You can ridicule her for that and tell her to take care of it herself, or you can skip the sarcasm, step in and eliminate the problem—and be thankful for the opportunity to be her white knight against this scale of “threat” rather than against a violent barbarian.

Look for opportunities to step up and take care of things so she doesn't have to. Deal with those nagging home maintenance issues. Be the one to make that difficult phone call. Quickly intervene when you see her struggling with something heavy. Establish the habit of being the one to secure the house before everyone goes to sleep at night.

Every time you step up, you make her feel more secure and more loved. And you strike a blow at your selfish nature.

We must *cultivate* the protector mindset. And we must develop it in our sons. Where else will they learn it? Teach them to respect and honor girls and women. Teach them to lift the burden from Mom and their sisters where they can. Teach them to recognize needs and simply do them.

A man's role is fundamentally about putting the needs of those he leads above his own desires. Every time you take the opportunity to do that, you build the manly mindset God wants you to have.

The mindset of a protector is a vital element of godly character. It should be built—DECISION by DECISION.

Every woman longs to have a man of character in the house.

Every child needs a man of character in charge.

Without this, a family can actually become so toxic that its members need to defend themselves *from each other*. A man needs to step up and be the protector so everyone in the family can be safe, work as a team, and face the challenges of life together.

A man who becomes a protector initiates a beautiful virtuous cycle. As he fulfills his role, he himself actually grows in the respect, honor and love he holds for those he protects. And when they feel protected and loved, *they* grow in admiration and respect for *him*. When a woman feels safe with a man, she becomes more womanly and lovely. When children feel cared for, they tend to grow more humble and teachable.

When a man protects women and children from predators and evils of the world, he gives them a MODEL OF GODLINESS. He shows them what goodness looks like. He teaches them *how to trust*. He lays a foundation for them to have stronger faith in God!

When a man is a hero to his family and to others, he helps to preserve their innocence, their belief in goodness, their faith. An *unprotected* woman or child is susceptible to having her faith shattered.

RECAPTURE THIS TRUE VALUE OF MASCULINITY. Purge your mind of worldly thinking, and replace it with God's thinking. Use your strength to support and to defend the weaker. Have faith that this is God's desire, and follow it. Steel yourself to your duty, and you will become more like God our Father, and Jesus Christ—our Husband, our PROTECTOR.

MOSES—

and Other Protectors

Godly men are fighters and protectors. The Bible records several of their examples for us to emulate.

When thugs harassed the daughters of Reuel, honorable Moses stood up and drove the whole group of them off (Exodus 2:17-19). Then he followed that display of strength and courage by showing compassion and tenderness toward those women, taking care of their animals.

When the Assyrians captured Lot's family, courageous Abraham forged his household into an armed unit to rescue them (Genesis 14:14-16). He set all those poor women free like a knight in shining armor.

When the Jews were persecuted while rebuilding Jerusalem, noble Nehemiah roused the *men* to "fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses" (Nehemiah 4:14). *Stand between your families and this danger!* he said. He commissioned those men to work with one hand and carry a weapon in the other.

In ancient Israel, God always gave the business of fighting to *men*. It was the *men* God sent to defend against outside threats. When God commissioned Moses to take a census of the Israelites, it was military-eligible *men* He told him to count (Numbers 1:20). War is cruel and terrible, and God hates it. He will stamp it out in the World Tomorrow (Isaiah 2:4). It would be far better if *nobody* ever had to endure that hellish nightmare! But when it is to be done, God sends *men* to do it. And the mindset of a warrior is: *If someone must do it, let it be me* (e.g. Isaiah 6:8).

Manliness has always been associated with a willingness to lay down your life to protect others. A man recognizes a righteous cause as more important than his own life.

4.2

CONFRONT

*Do not selfishly neglect this
powerful tool for restraining evil.*

Horrifying incidents of violence and terrorism are happening with increasing frequency in our world. It seems every few weeks brings another mass shooting or other grisly attack. So often, it is perpetrated by someone everybody knew and was unsettled by—the creepy student who played violent video games and wrote hateful posts on social media; the angry co-worker who never got along with others and occasionally spouted off extremist rhetoric. But people, constrained by a mixture of political correctness, sympathy and cowardice, tend not to do anything about these warning signs until it is too late.

Failing to confront evil—both within ourselves and within our society—can have devastating consequences.

We live in a culture where the line between good and evil is broad and gray. People seek to *understand* evil, to *accommodate* it—to *explain* it as anything other than what it actually is.

The nature of evil is to spread. Like bacteria in a petri dish, self-absorption and negativity, left unchecked, grow into depression and ruin. Bad habits lead to addictions. Destructive cultural forces like vulgarity, violence and family breakdown fester and multiply. Political tyrants keep conquering territory and people until some stronger force intervenes to stop them.

Our society sits in profound denial of this plain fact—from parents who do not bridle their children, to judges who protect pornography rather than people, to politicians who insist that our enemies will vanish if we simply make nice with them.

A society loath to identify evil as something to be fought—if it is willing to identify evil at all—is helpless to resist it. Ambivalence about evil—or worse, fascination with it—invites its presence and encourages its growth.

A godly man cannot follow this trend.

There are dangers and evils in our lives, in our relationships, in our families, in our work. We need to exercise godly *authority*. We need to learn how to *confront* evil. We need to build the courage to *restrain* Satan's influence. We need to become men who deal with iniquity with godly boldness.

A core element of manhood is to CONFRONT EVIL.

Confrontation is a manly duty. If God is leading us to restrain evil, we should not run from the opportunity: We should seize it.

This requires godly wisdom. Right confrontation is motivated by love and outgoing concern. Stepping out and restraining a wrong influence, fighting evil and exercising authority must be an expression not of our will, but of *God's love*.

How God Deals With Evil

Evil covers Earth like water covers the ocean beds. It surrounds us; it seeps into our thoughts; it soaks into our families. What do you do when you see evil leaking into your household?

Though some few men have the opposite problem, many men want to avoid confrontation at any cost, especially in this feminized era.

God is not ambivalent about evil. He witnessed its unhappy origin: when the archangel Lucifer, whom He had created, began harboring vain thoughts that ultimately drove him to try to usurp God's throne (read Ezekiel 28:14-18). God did not respond with sympathy, and certainly not with cowardice. He responded with violent force, expelling His adversary, along with all his demons, out of heaven and casting them down to Earth. *God confronts evil!*

These events are described in Revelation 12:7-12, a passage that concludes with a chilling warning to us: "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth ...! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time."

Yes, the devil is right here among us—even, in some respects, *within* us. Do you recognize him?

Why would God curse us with the devil's presence? Because He wants us to learn to confront evil. And He wants us to witness firsthand the devastating consequences of failing to do so.

God confronts evil, and we are striving to become like God. He tells us repeatedly in the Bible that we must follow His example in this respect. "[I]f thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother" (Matthew 18:15; also Luke 17:3). "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness ..." (Galatians 6:1). Temper criticism with wisdom; be kind—but still, *take action*. "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn

them that are unruly [or “admonish the idle” the esv says], comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men” (1 Thessalonians 5:14).

Confronting evil is crucial for anyone who follows God. It begins with working to overcome sin in your own mind. And in some cases, it requires intervening and confronting evil in the lives of your wife, your children or other people.

“Open rebuke is better than secret love,” Proverbs 27:5 says. You might *feel* very loving toward someone, but if you’re not expressing it, it does that person no good. What is more beneficial? *Open rebuke*. At least then the person might actually profit from what is said. And sometimes, rebuke can be extremely helpful.

“Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy” (verse 6; RSV).

Are you *friend enough* to deliver a “faithful wound” when needed? If someone you care about is doing something that is *hurting* him and he cannot see it or refuses to see it, *someone* needs to intervene.

A man must not fear confrontation. Shying away from it because it is uncomfortable is *a failure to love* someone enough to help him stop hurting himself or save him from a mistake.

In Your Home

If you are a father, you *must* confront your children. Satan is broadcasting nonstop to influence, tempt and coerce people into evil thoughts and destructive actions. He is working hard, constantly fighting the positive influence that God and you are exerting on your child. *He* is not afraid to confront *you*!

If you are not confronting your children, you do not love them! Read Proverbs 13:24; 19:18 and 29:15. God says if you spare the rod—a very direct form of confrontation—you *hate* your son. If you love him, you will chasten him promptly. The father who loves his child *springs into action* when he sees evil.

Our world is dominated by Satan’s influence. Because of this, your children are vulnerable—perhaps already suffering from serious sins. Children everywhere languish under parents who

weakly address those evil influences with insufficient force, or ignore them altogether.

Neglect is not confrontation. *Nagging* is not confrontation. *Negotiation* is not confrontation. Godly confrontation means establishing firm rules with clear, just, effective penalties, and following through consistently. It is hard, but if you don't do it, the evil spreads like a brush fire on a windy day.

If you are a husband, you cannot fear confronting your wife. Don't be soft when you should not be. Stand up and confront when you need to. If you fear confrontation, then you are opening the door to your wife taking the lead.

Fear of confrontation can be subtler than you realize. Maybe you make the decisions, but you do so based on avoiding confrontation with your wife, rather than on where Christ is leading you. She is driving the house from the back seat—and she may not even realize it. But YOU NEED TO REALIZE IT.

Be honest about this. Are you doing what she wants done simply to avoid conflict? God commands YOU to be the head of your home. Your decision must be based on *His* influence. The man who fears confrontation will one day realize that his wife is actually the leader of his family.

Don't confront your wife the same way you would confront your child. She is an adult; she is your bride; she is a spiritual heir together with you. But what *is* the same is that in both cases, you *should* confront it! You *should* exercise your authority to lead your family away from harm. You *should* restrain iniquity.

How to Do It

Here are three steps for exercising godly confrontation.

1. Be courageous. When the entire nation cowered in the shadow of Goliath, David *ran* to the battle. Most of us prefer to ignore the problem and push it aside, where it smolders. In these situations, time is not on your side! Don't procrastinate when you know the responsibility is yours. Sprint forward, grab hold of the problem, and wrestle against it.

2. Be crystal clear. If you are going to really help someone, the person must know exactly what you are asking of him. Once

you have stepped forward to confront evil in the life of your child, wife, employee, friend or someone else, make sure you state things clearly. Football coach Bill Parcells said, “The only way to change people is to tell them in the *clearest possible terms* what they’re doing wrong.” Don’t equivocate. Don’t begin to back down now that you are actually eye-to-eye. Make sure that what you are saying is clear.

3. Be humble. This is essential. It should motivate you from the moment you notice something wrong to well after the confrontation has taken place. Remember that *you* have sins and need to be confronted sometimes. Recognize that the person you are talking to is a child of God. Don’t assume you see the whole situation completely. And *pray* for real godly humility.

When you confront, make sure God is with you! For Him to work through you for the benefit of the person you are confronting, you must have godly humility. In fact, the process often involves *you* being corrected yourself. Christ says in Matthew 7 that you must remove the beam in your eye before you should attempt to remove the fleck in your brother’s eye.

Remember also to be “*slow to wrath*: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God” (James 1:19-20). Your human wrath contains none of God’s righteousness. “[T]hat means WE MUST ALWAYS LET GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS DIRECT OUR ANGER, or we will make many mistakes. We absolutely must rule our emotions,” Gerald Flurry writes (*The Epistle of James*). Your impatience, your frustration, your bad temper are worthless to God! Do *not* discipline your children with these emotions; they are only destructive. Your only anger should be righteous anger against sin.

Yes, godly confrontation must be done the right way, with courage, clarity and humility. It requires you to eradicate carnal thoughts: pride, frustration, wrong emotion. It requires you to take personal correction yourself. But do not let the hard work of godly confrontation dissuade you from *doing it!* It is your *duty* as a man. Don’t fear it. Fear the sin, the evil, the suffering that results from *neglecting it!* Let God use you to confront and restrain evil. It is a critical duty of biblical manhood.

NEHEMIAH

Repel Unrighteousness

Want a magnificent example of the power of tough, righteous, manly confrontation? Gird up your loins and read Nehemiah 13.

When God allowed the Jews to return from captivity to rebuild Jerusalem, He sent Nehemiah to serve as their governor. This great man inspired them to accomplish mighty feats (Nehemiah 1-6). He oversaw their repentance, forsaking of sin and return to God (Nehemiah 8-9). After 12 years, he returned to his job in the court of King Artaxerxes of Babylon.

Later, when Nehemiah was able to return to Jerusalem, he was grieved to see that the Jews had reverted to many of their sins.

First, he learned of the shocking whereabouts of Tobiah, an enemy of the Jews. Years earlier, this man had schemed to influence politics in Jerusalem and tried to stop Nehemiah's rebuilding efforts; Nehemiah dealt with him forcibly (Nehemiah 4, 6). But in Nehemiah's absence, Tobiah had infiltrated the city, deceived the high priest into viewing him as a friend, and actually taken up residence inside the temple compound!

Nehemiah reacted instantly: Like Christ with the money-changers, he seized Tobiah's things and threw him out! (Nehemiah 13:8). He commanded that the areas Tobiah had used be cleansed and restored for their intended purpose (verse 9).

This godly leader then realized that the people had stopped tithing—another point he had corrected during his first governorship (Nehemiah 5). The Levites were having to support themselves, thus neglecting the temple service. Again he assertively set the errant Jews back on track, and then authorized officers to enforce the law (Nehemiah 13:11-14).

Nehemiah also had to correct the Jews' Sabbath-keeping. Some were treading winepresses and hauling goods into Jerusalem during holy time; Phoenician traders were doing a

great business on the Sabbath right in Jerusalem. “Then I contended with the nobles of Judah,” Nehemiah wrote, “and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath” (verses 17-18). As the next Sabbath approached, he shut the gates and set sentries to ensure no one brought goods into the city on the Sabbath (verse 19).

The traders set up camp just outside the gates. Nehemiah was so determined that they not bring their sin into the city that he turned his righteous wrath on them: “Why lodge ye about the wall?” he shouted. “If ye do so again, I will lay hands on you.” They could tell he was not a man to trifle with. They never returned on the Sabbath (verses 20-21).

Finally, Nehemiah learned of the Jews’ intermarriage with surrounding Gentiles. “And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves” (verse 25). He reminded them that marrying foreigners had derailed even the great King Solomon! (verses 26-27).

The high priest’s own grandson had married the daughter of Sanballat, governor of Samaria and Nehemiah’s archenemy! This grandson was unwilling to sever the marriage, so he was banished from Israel (verse 28).

Think deeply on the lessons of Nehemiah 13. It powerfully shows how God uses zealous, righteous leadership to correct His people and keep them spiritually clean, for their own good. It illustrates the constancy and mercy of a bold, godly man: Though Nehemiah had once before corrected the people for all these sins, when they again became ensnared, he didn’t give up on them. He went right back to work—with fiery zeal—restoring their relationship with God!

Throughout these events, Nehemiah repeatedly asked God to remember his righteous deeds (verses 14, 22, 31). He knew well his own weaknesses and sins. Yet he acted so zealously for God in purging sin from Judah that God answered his prayer: The Bible records nothing negative about the life of this great man of God.

4.3

SMILE THROUGH TRIAL

*When times get tough, your
response makes all the difference.*

On the first spring day I had the chance, I went outside to my garden. I had decided to till it the old-fashioned way: with a shovel. I started off by sinking the head of the shovel under a shrub I wanted to move. As my young daughter Ellie watched, I pressed and pushed and leaned on the handle to pry the shrub out, until—*CRACK!* My shovel split in two!

“Oh no!” I said. This was a minor disaster. This was the shovel I had planned to use *all day*. I considered going to buy a new one, but instead I opted to try and repair it. I went to the garage and began trying to mend the handle with a desperate combination of wood glue, duct tape and screws. When my wife came into the garage, I told her, “My shovel broke!” “I know,” she said. “Ellie said you were really mad.”

“Really mad”? I didn’t think I was really mad. But this little episode taught me something: *Children are watching*. When something bad happens, they watch! Those who look to you for leadership *watch* to see how you react. They wonder, *How serious is this? Should we be worried? Is everything under control?* And to answer these questions, they look at *you*.

People are looking to you. This means one thing when a shovel breaks. It means a lot more when a bone breaks or an even more serious trial hits.

What happens when a *serious trial* strikes a family? Or an organization or a military unit or a congregation? These trials can be *devastating*—or they can be *strengthening*. They can make the group tighter, tougher, stronger, sturdier, better.

So much depends on the response of the leader.

In your life, when trial strikes—whether it’s a garden tool or situation in your marriage, a difficulty affecting your whole family, or something even beyond that—its effect on your followers depends largely on *you*.

So when you experience a trial, **BE OF GOOD CHEER**. Then those who follow you can be as well.

Tests and Trials Reveal Us

What happens when you apply heat to a man? Generally, that man either melts—or he shines. He gets frustrated and loses his

cool—or he demonstrates strength of character. He wilts under the pressure—or he rises to new heights.

We use the terms “test” and “trial” to describe times of difficulty for good reason. What happens when you take a *test* in a class? You find out what you really know about the subject. What happens when you participate in a *trial* for a sports team? You prove whether you have what it takes.

The principle is consistent: Whether it is an accounting certification exam, a driving test or a racing qualifier—or whether it is a busted tool, a rancorous child or a cancerous disease, *challenges reveal our hearts*.

Trials expose your level of character and conversion. They show how much of GOD is in you—and how much *self*: self-pity, self-righteousness and self-love.

Job’s experience is a prime example of what a trial can reveal. Initially, as his quality of life went from brilliant to brutal, he seemed to maintain a good attitude. Only when the trial grew more intense did he begin to utter statements accusing God of laughing at the trials of innocent people (Job 9:23). When the heat cranked up on this impressive and accomplished man, the dross rose to the surface of his heart.

Jesus Christ was also pushed to His limit. He experienced incomparably *worse* suffering than Job. The heat of His trial soared beyond anything anyone has ever experienced. As it reached the temperature of a blast-furnace, touched the deepest part of His heart and exposed it, what was His response? He said things like, “Not my will, but yours be done.” “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” This trial revealed Christ’s heart to its core, and it *shone* like pure gold!

Here is what Christ specifically said about trials and tests right as He was entering the worst one ever experienced by a human being: “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. *In the world ye shall have tribulation*: but BE OF GOOD CHEER; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Christian men, students of biblical manhood, *we shall have tribulation*. We *will have* trials and tests. The question isn’t *if*, but *how* and *when*.

And here Christ gives us the key to acing these tests.

How Will You Respond?

Have you ever wondered how you would react in the face of a major trial? If you were called into your boss's office and fired? If you discovered you have aggressive lymphoma? If you picked up the phone to hear that your wife has been paralyzed in a car accident? If persecution for your religion suddenly intensified by several orders of magnitude?

How would you respond?

This question might be hypothetical, but you can answer it. Just look at your reactions to the *little* things that went wrong this week. How you are answering little tests tells you how you *will* respond to major trials.

If you react emotionally and faithlessly when the frying pan heats up, then the same and worse will happen when you drop into the fire. But if you react with faith and earnest obedience, greater heat will only forge your heart into something stronger!

Remember this: Trials don't just *reveal* your heart, they *affect* it. A tough final exam for a class, by showing you what you really know and don't know, helps strengthen, sharpen and clarify your mind on a subject. A stringent tryout for a sports squad helps you push yourself to the limit and builds your strength. The heat of a crucible improves the molten gold by exposing the dross for removal. God ultimately used Job's trial to skim off the dross, and his character became stronger in the end. So when your trial reveals a flaw, it is not something to be depressed about; it is something to be thankful for and to *use* to your advantage.

Day after day, week after week, small trials pop up: the washing machine breaks, your kid cracks a tooth, a project goes over deadline. As these arise, remember this invaluable truth: "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much ..." (Luke 16:10).

This is a tool to *measure yourself*: Check your response to the little test to see how you would do in a big one. But it is also a tool to *help you grow*. Every time something goes worse than expected, you have an opportunity to respond positively, to *be of good cheer*.

When that moment comes, don't just grit your teeth, suffer through it, and grumble about it afterward. That moment is presenting you with an *opportunity* more valuable than you probably realize: the opportunity to build resilience for a bigger trial down the road.

Morale

One of Napoleon's best-known maxims is: "[I]n war, the morale is to the physical as three is to one." Fighting with high morale produces far more success. This is true of physical challenges in daily life, and it is true in spiritual warfare.

A GODLY MAN IS A HAPPY WARRIOR. His morale helps him win victories. The higher your morale, the fiercer your fight! "Perhaps that high morale is the best sign that you are winning your battles," Gerald Flurry writes in *How to Be an Overcomer*.

Then he states something that gets back to the effect that our response to adversity has on *others*: "We should all have high morale—and *inspire that in others*. Do you inspire others to have high morale, or do you drag them down?" (emphasis added throughout).

When something goes wrong, remember that your wife, your children, the other members of your congregation or community are watching. And your reaction affects their morale.

When a leader wilts, he instills doubt into all those under him. In times of difficulty, a family can quickly turn negative. Women and children tend to be more emotional than men, and can become unglued without a strong male leader to provide a stabilizing presence.

In order to lead others, we must meet trials with resilience.

When your family hits a hard patch, *you* must be a source of hope! Do not panic. Do not show instability, and thus fill the rest of the family with worry. Control yourself, and point your family to God for the help you need. Show yourself faithful, confident, equipped and willing to handle the adversity. This will go a long way toward inspiring others to fight on with high spirits!

Read the book of Philippians. The Apostle Paul wrote it from jail during a time of serious persecution in the Church. Yet this letter is probably the most positive, cheerful and encouraging that Paul ever wrote!

Courage is contagious. Bravery kindles bravery in others' hearts.

Will You Stay Strong?

In the short while remaining before Jesus Christ returns, we will face difficult times. God needs us to be strong. He is using *us* as His tools to do His Work. Maybe He is using *you* as a shovel to pry a plant out of the ground. To get the job done, He has to apply pressure. Are you going to crack? Will He have to stop working in order to repair you? Or will you stay strong so He can use you to finish the job?

This really is a measure of how Christ-like we are—of how little *self* we have, and how much *faith* we have. The more faith-filled we are, the better equipped we are to handle adversity. As Ephesians 6:16 says, it is the *shield of faith* that enables us to quench all of Satan's fiery darts.

"This is an issue that will be decided *in your prayer closet*," Mr. Flurry writes. "That is where you will get most of your power. ... Are you close enough to Christ? Do you use your prayer closet *enough*—and POWERFULLY ENOUGH—that you truly have high morale? Enough so that *just your example* HELPS OTHERS to have higher morale?"

Christ promised, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." But in the same breath, He also gave a command: "Be of good cheer." *When you are in trial, be of good cheer.* God is depending on you. The family is depending on you. Smile through trial, like a leader should, like a *Christ-like man* must. Work with God to develop this crucial aspect of biblical manhood.

4.4

PRAY FOR OTHERS

An often-overlooked daily duty

A true masculine man is no chunk of cold, unfeeling granite. In fact, a man who comes to embody the full spectrum of masculinity as exemplified by Jesus Christ comes to possess extraordinary concern and compassion for others, particularly for those who are neediest.

Jesus Christ showed acute awareness of those who suffer. Before He became a human being, the God who became Christ heard the cries of the Israelites in bondage. After He delivered His people, He commanded them to give special care to the widows, the fatherless, the needy.

Even when the Israelites neglected Him, disobeyed Him, ignored Him and rebelled against Him, He showered compassion on them. Then He displayed a supreme act of compassion by *becoming a human being*. As a man, He subjected Himself not only to death, but also to the worst torture and execution ever. And His Father agonized as He watched this happen to His Son so He could offer eternal life to the people who killed Him.

We serve a God of compassion.

What did Jesus Christ do while He was a human being? He did not spend all His time with those who were wealthy or interesting or popular. He did more than spend time with disciples deep in discussion. He spent much of His time with the poor and the suffering, children and women. He expended much of His effort alleviating their distress.

Throughout His earthly ministry, Christ continually taught and preached and healed. "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd" (Matthew 9:36).

This is how the powerful, sinless God feels when He looks on this pitiful, sinful world. His perspective is not detached, intellectual, analytical. Christ is *moved with compassion*: He feels pity, concern and sympathy to His very core.

Notice just how Christ responded to what He saw. "Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; PRAY YE therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (verses 37-38).

Christ reacted to this suffering by commanding His disciples to PRAY. He told them to pray on behalf of the Work of God,

asking for greater means to help relieve that suffering right then and there.

Today, Jesus Christ is the glorified, majestic God Almighty. He is still concerned about growing God's Work so it can extend compassion and help people in their suffering and distress.

The compassionate Head of God's Work has assigned you and me a specific, empathetic mission: to *pray for God's Work*. He wants us to pray for more laborers, more reach, more power. Why? To *help people!* So that more people will be harvested into His Family.

Jesus Christ has done so much to express His love, including sacrificing His life on the stake. But perhaps what He has done more than anything—every day, continually—is *pray*. Jesus Christ prays as an Intercessor for those who suffer (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25). He is High Priest to God's people, representing our interests before God the Father (Hebrews 2:17-3:1; 4:14-16).

This is one of Christ's *full-time jobs*. Before the Father, He pleads the cases of those in need—for instance, *you!* How much of His life is full of the work of intercession—interceding in prayer for *you!* This brings His mind into frequent focus on *your* trials, *your* problems, *your* difficulties, *your* requests.

And when we sin, Christ takes that role one step further and becomes our Advocate (1 John 2:1), pleading our case and beseeching the Father for mercy.

In fulfilling these responsibilities, Christ is actually *setting an example* for us to follow as men. We have a Christ-like duty to act as intercessors.

This responsibility applies to everyone—men, women and children—who follows Jesus Christ. But consider specifically how intercession is a key part of *biblical manhood*.

The Duty of a Protector

God has assigned *men* the duty of PROTECTOR. This means protecting others from harm, from degradation and deprivation. This means recognizing those who are in need and taking action.

Perhaps the most basic, day-to-day duty of the Christian male intercessor is *prayer*. Jesus instructed His disciples to pray

in His name (e.g. John 14:13-14; 16:23-26). He instructs you, as a Christian and as a man, to intercede for others the way that He does (e.g. Matthew 5:43-48; 6:9-13; 1 Timothy 2:1; James 5:16). He wants you to learn to think about what other people need and to beseech God on their behalf.

In many ways, your prayers are an indicator of how much you think like God. They reveal how much of *Christ's mind* you have. They reveal how much you think about and advocate for the needs of others. That includes people in your family, in your congregation, in the Church and in this world. How much do you think about relieving their suffering and distress?

The more you intercede, the more *Christ* is in your prayer.

This is not only a *measure* of how much you think like God: It is also a *tool* to enable you to think *more* like God. If you drive yourself to pray more for others—to turn aside from praying for yourself and discipline yourself to pray for someone who is going through a health trial or a friend struggling to overcome a shortcoming—then you are thinking and acting more like Jesus Christ.

We who strive for biblical manhood need to continually strive to make intercession the *main part* of our prayers.

How to Intercede

How can you become a more Christ-like intercessor? Consider these practical steps.

- **Diligently maintain a prayer list.** When you hear about something that would be good to pray for on someone's behalf, you might think, *I'll remember that*. But with something as important as this, you need to *write it down*. It is not a bad idea to record the names of all the people you regularly encounter and to note situations as they come up. Looking at those names also helps you realize that *everyone* is going through *something*. This also helps you be aware of people you haven't talked with in a while. Seek out those who are in trial. Be alert during your discussions and listen for details you can pray about. During the week, give them a call or visit when needed and where possible. How much of an effect can *you* have on

someone else's trial? What if God would intervene for that person if *you* fervently prayed for him or her?

- **Let God judge others, not you.** If you see someone struggling with an attitude or a coarseness or a sin that you find off-putting, don't be put off! Rally to that individual, and pray that God will help him. If you are having trouble with someone, *pray for that person*, and your thoughts might turn from criticism to empathy. When we beat our prayers fine like incense, we have to *meditate* on others—their hopes, their needs, their struggles. That helps us think about them more like God does.
- **Set a goal to pray for a specific number of people every day.** In an hour-long prayer session, consider devoting at least 10 minutes to praying for 10 different people. This is probably a good *minimum* of daily intercession for others. You might even hold out your hand and count them down on your fingers to keep yourself on task.
- **Pray daily for your wife and your children.** Praying for them is part of your duty as their protector. You need God to watch out for them and to keep them safe physically. You also need to beseech Him to protect them spiritually. You know their weaknesses and faults. You need to be like a minister praying for the people he shepherds—and it is a sin for a minister not to pray for the people he shepherds! (1 Samuel 12:23). In principle, that is true of a man's duty toward his family.
- **Fuel your prayers for God's Work with compassion for the world.** Christ's example in Matthew 9 is striking: He had compassion, not just on members of His family or on His disciples, but on the unconverted masses. He deeply empathized with the multitude and implored His followers to pray for a more effective Work to *reach them!* Paul wrote that we should make *supplications, prayers, intercessions* and even *thanksgivings* for *all men!* (1 Timothy 2:1-4). God instructs us to think about all mankind because His plan includes *all of them*. He wants *all* to be saved and to learn the truth. God wants us to develop a "largest audience possible" mindset in our daily

prayers. Bring more of God's thinking into your prayers: Show real concern and love for *all men*.

- **Pray for your enemies and those who hurt you.** God loves and extends mercy to those who hurt Him time and time again, and that includes *us!* In a sense this reveals God's love in its purest form. Pray for those who have turned their backs on God. It *grieves* God to see someone turn away from Him and toward Satan and his way of hate, misery and pain. God wants to save His children, and He wants you to show patience, love, mercy and compassion to *all* His children. One of the most powerful ways you can do that is through fervent intercessory prayer. Is your love deep enough to think about, care about and remember to pray for these people?

Jesus Christ prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). He is the great Advocate, the High Priest and Intercessor. He prays to the Father on behalf of the weak, the sick, the needy, the ignorant, the suffering. He wants you to do this too. So use intercessory prayer to develop more of God's compassion every day.

Section 5

**THE
HUSBAND**

*There is no deeper joy,
no more awesome duty,
than to lead the heart of the woman
with whom you are one.*

200	5.1 Keep Your Wedding Vows
212	5.2 Lead Her Spiritually
224	5.3 Understand Her
232	<i>The Proverbs 31 Husband</i>
234	5.4 Deepen Your Love

5.1

KEEP YOUR WEDDING VOWS

Five promises you cannot afford to forget

Marriage is God's foundry for biblical manhood.

To build men, there is perhaps *no better tool* than a godly marriage. It helps us grow as leaders, learn selflessness and sacrifice, recognize and conquer our weaknesses, and forge character, and all the while we can genuinely, deeply *enjoy* the wonderful blessings that come with this process.

To receive all the benefits from it that God intends, however, a man must do it the way God designed it. He should learn all he can from the Architect of this divine institution and diligently strive to apply that instruction in his own marriage.

It is the *failure* to do this that creates the problems that plague so many marriages and that fracture so many families. When men discard God's marriage laws, disregard the spiritual guidance God gives, and operate in ignorance of the spiritual vision that marriage is meant to embody—when men pursue marriage their own way and do what seems right in their own eyes—they suffer terrible curses. And marriage in general gets a bad reputation because of men's failures.

You, however, can have something altogether special, rewarding and spectacular: a marriage that will help you become the man God intends you to be.

Marriage Makes the Man

Soon after God made the first man, He said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" (Genesis 2:18).

These are God's words: **IT IS NOT GOOD FOR A MAN TO BE ALONE.** All men must realize that *we need women!*

In fact, we need women in order to wholly fulfill our role as men! It is when you are *with a woman* that you are able to *fully* exercise the responsibilities and functions God designed into your role as a man. You cannot really practice and perform the jobs of *protector, provider* and *leader* when you are by yourself—certainly not the way you can when you are with a woman.

In a real sense, your masculinity is defined and expressed in **HOW YOU TREAT A WOMAN.** This is a profound point worth meditating on.

A man in a godly marriage learns more deeply *over time* just how much he *needs* his wife. If both a man and his wife truly have God at the center of their union, then that man's understanding of his wife's unique strengths and contributions, her distinct perspective and wisdom, will grow with time and experience. Through his interactions with her, he will also come to understand better and better *how* to *truly* fulfill his role as a man. He will learn *how* to provide, protect and lead in a godly way.

"Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone?" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-11). You see this wonderful dynamic within a godly marriage as nowhere else.

MARRIAGE MAKES A MAN.

A godly marriage helps fashion a godly man. A man benefits immeasurably from the support of a godly woman.

At the same time, every man should realize that for a woman to achieve her potential as a godly woman and helpmeet, *she needs a godly man!* There is a level of maturity in life that each spouse can *only* achieve by having the other to fill his or her role.

A husband and wife each need to strive to become the person who can best help the other. As each does so, each receives additional benefits of having a more effective and godly spouse.

There is a symbiosis, a synergy, a *completeness*, a *wholeness*, a *perfection*, that God masterfully designed within the marriage relationship that can only be unlocked and achieved by patterning the marriage *precisely* according to God's laws, His counsel, His blueprint, His pattern, and by having His presence and help in the relationship.

Leave, Cleave, Become One

After God gave the first man a wife, He commanded, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

Entering and fashioning a godly marriage begins with this understanding.

God's earliest definition of marriage is *leaving, cleaving and becoming one*. Marriage is the point where a man and his bride *leave* the authority structure of their parents and form a new structure that did not exist before. Marriage establishes a new family, a new life with new responsibilities and new roles.

At this point, a man becomes the head of a family, responsible to Jesus Christ for its success.

Appropriately, this moment is celebrated. A wedding is a moving occasion, rich with meaning.

In the Philadelphia Church of God, the ceremony we use was composed by the late Herbert W. Armstrong, and it beautifully expresses God's purpose for marriage and His laws guaranteeing its success.

This wedding ceremony has two basic parts. First, it explains how God ordained marriage and made it binding: He gave Adam a helper (Genesis 2:18), symbolizing the Church being wed to Jesus Christ at His Second Coming; He brought man and woman together to reproduce (Genesis 1:28), picturing the expansion of the God Family; and He made marriage permanent (Mark 10:9, 11-12), illustrating that the Church's marriage to the Son of God will never end.

Second, the ceremony covers God's scriptural instruction regarding the roles and responsibilities of husband and wife. This portion of the ceremony is built around Ephesians 5.

Ephesians 5 is the most important chapter in the Bible explaining marriage. It is a gold mine of marriage instruction. Though this passage addresses the roles of husbands and wives, it actually primarily addresses the marriage between Christ and the Church. The reason the laws in this chapter apply to you and your wife is that your marriage is a type of Christ's marriage. Both are governed by the same laws.

It starts with verse 21: "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." God Family life is a way of *mutual submission* in the fear of God. In this passage, the Apostle Paul gets more specific about what submission looks like within each role. He spells out the responsibilities of women and men in a way that reveals much about God's thinking, His love, His government and His purpose for marriage.

The two marriage roles interlock in an extraordinary way. EACH OF THEM IS ABOUT SERVICE. Each demands 100 percent commitment to the way of *give*—the way of LOVE! It takes *real faith* for each spouse to go *all the way*. It takes faith in God—His law and government—to completely sacrifice yourself in this way. The vast majority of people are too selfish to do it. We walk by sight. We want to hold on to our own ideas of the way a relationship should function. But if we are willing to simply OBEY—to walk by faith and do as God commands—wonders and miracles result.

When a husband and wife each devote themselves to following this formula, they set a God-level dynamic in motion. It creates a profound level of trust, intimacy and interdependence.

God designed these roles and responsibilities to draw us into the world of the God Family! They teach us exquisite, God-level governance and love.

The marriage ceremony then concludes with the most important part: the vows. These are the solemn promises made by the man and the woman—*not* to each other, but to GOD. When they say “I do,” they enter not into a contract but a *covenant*.

Here are the groom’s wedding vows as read in God’s Church:

Do you, then, [husband’s first name], faithfully promise and covenant with God, in the presence of these witnesses, to take [wife’s full maiden name] to be your lawful wedded wife, and to cleave to her unto death—to love her, cherish her, honor her, and provide for her?

These five specific promises—*cleave, love, cherish, honor, provide*—come straight out of God’s mind. When a husband understands and keeps them, his marriage takes on an awesome spiritual dimension. It flows more and more with God’s love, His Spirit and His blessings.

When you really think on these promises, you realize that this is a PERFECT standard! To truly fulfill them, you must be a *perfect person*! None of us is, and thus we cannot fulfill them perfectly—but we must STRIVE to do so, with God’s help. God commands us to *become* perfect as He is (Matthew 5:48).

1. Cleave

The first of these five promises echoes God's original definition of the first marriage in Genesis 2:24. Jesus Christ quoted this verse when He said, "But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and **CLEAVE** to his wife; And they twain shall be **ONE FLESH**: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh" (Mark 10:6-8).

What does God mean by *cleave*? The Hebrew word means to cling or adhere, or to catch by pursuit. Elsewhere in the Bible, it is translated *abide fast, follow close, be joined, pursue hard* and *stick*.

Amids life's hubbub, actively cleaving to your spouse in love doesn't happen accidentally. God, children, work, Church, friends, chores, errands, bills, diversions, distractions—so many concerns compete for your attention. How often, at the end of the day, do you crash the moment your head hits the pillow, and neglect spending time *cleaving* to your spouse—not just physically, but spiritually, mentally and emotionally?

It doesn't take much neglect to go from *cleaving* to merely *coexisting*.

"One flesh" is what God wants in marriage. Oneness in sharing your thoughts, attitudes, emotions, bodies and the physical things in life.

After the workday, you and your wife can continue to be pulled away from each other by outside responsibilities and interests if you are not careful. Television or other entertainment typically shuts down communication and can end up being a crutch that gives an illusion of togetherness but actually cleaves your marriage—the wrong way.

Husbands: Is your heart at home with your wife? Is that where your primary interest lies? The answer to this question can help you determine how well you are cleaving to her. Remaining truly faithful to your wife requires deep mental, emotional and psychological attachment.

Spend time cleaving. Share your life! Study the Bible together, read together, listen to music together, take walks together, talk together, do things together. Rekindle the flames of romance

that drew you together. Court her! Get a babysitter for your kids and go out for a date, and not too infrequently. Strive to take short trips together, just the two of you—two to three days long, two to three times a year.

How is your communication? You should have more to talk about together the longer your marriage lasts. If you are making a vigorous effort to cleave, then your common interests and your ability to relate will grow with time. You will feel close emotionally, and your shared understanding and affection will make your marriage a joy.

For some marriages, a mountain of mutual effort is required to restore the relationship to where it should be. If the idea of cleaving in this way seems overwhelming, that is a good indication you and your mate would benefit from counseling with a minister.

2. Love

The second promise of the marriage covenant is to *love*. This word is commonly used and rarely understood. *Love* does not mean to enjoy the way she makes you feel. Love does not mean to experience a stimulating emotion.

Love is not an incoming feeling. It is an outgoing action. It is a thought and a deed focused on the benefit for the other person and not dependent on a certain reaction from the other person.

“Husbands, LOVE your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Ephesians 5:25). How did Christ love the Church? By *giving Himself* for it. Jesus Christ died for us while we were still sinners. This verse specifically commands you as a husband to *give yourself* for your wife the way Christ gave Himself for His!

This is God-level love—love that is hard to grasp!

This responsibility to *sacrifice* lies right at the heart of your role as a husband. Think: This role points to Jesus Christ, your Husband and Savior. At its very heart is His sacrificial spirit. “Christ is the head of the church: and he is the *saviour of the body*,” verse 23 says. A godly husband demonstrates his love for his wife through *sacrifice*, the absolute opposite of self-love.

Christ is called “the Lamb” (Revelation 5:12; 7:14; 12:11; 17:14, etc).

That refers to His being the Passover sacrifice who *died* for you. What is the *ultimate Husband* like? A humble, giving, self-sacrificing lamb! His Bride will be called “the Lamb’s wife” (Revelation 21:9). Consider *how much* He does to prepare His people for that marriage! He is our High Priest, Intercessor and Advocate (e.g. Hebrews 2:17; 7:25; 1 John 2:1).

A husband must follow Christ’s example of *sacrifice* to be his wife’s provider, protector, guide, leader and head—to prioritize her physical, emotional and spiritual needs above his own.

How have you *given yourself* to your wife today? Can any of your interactions with your wife this week be characterized as a true *sacrifice*?

A big part of a man’s obligation to love his wife comes in the form of providing her firm, loving *leadership*. You must give direction, stability, decision-making and guidance. You can read more about this in Section 5.2.

By saying “I do,” a man promises to follow Christ’s example of *sacrificial* LOVE.

3. Cherish

The third promise in this covenant with God is to *cherish* your wife. “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and CHERISHETH it, even as the Lord the church” (Ephesians 5:28-29).

Cherish means to keep warm or to treat with tender love. A Christ-like husband is not mean-spirited, resentful or bitter toward his wife. When Christ lives in a man, that man reflects Jesus’s kind, considerate, affectionate and generous nature.

The word *nourish* means to nurture or bring up to maturity; its root word means *feeding*. A husband covenants with God to cherish his wife and to lovingly feed her needs, physically, emotionally and spiritually, with self-sacrificing, focused, concerned attention.

If you fail to cherish your wife, not only will you and your bride suffer problems in your day-to-day home life, but you will be depriving her of the nourishing love she depends on.

“For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones” (verse 30). The picture here is deep and extraordinarily beautiful. It portrays the UNITY, the COOPERATION, the absolute ONENESS God expects within a marriage.

Consider this: *Christ Himself* wants to nourish and cherish your wife—who, if she is in God’s Church today, will be part of His future Bride—THROUGH YOU. If you are begotten by God’s Holy Spirit, He can actually accomplish that by *coming into you* and *working through you* by that Spirit! But you must be willing to sacrifice, and yield yourself to Him, in ministering to your wife. There is a real vision here of Christ taking care of His Bride NOW!

4. Honor

The fourth promise a man makes in this marriage covenant with God is to *honor* his wife. The final scripture in the ceremony again mentions this word: “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving HONOUR unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered” (1 Peter 3:7).

Our wives must be honored. That word in the Greek means *value, esteem of the highest degree*. It refers to the honor you should extend to someone by reason of the *rank* and *state of office* he or she holds; it means *deference* or *reverence*. This is the type of *honor* you are to give your wife. The husband holds the office of leader of the household. But your wife holds an office too! You and she are spiritual “heirs together of the grace of life.” She has a magnificent spiritual future that may equal or even exceed your own! That is worthy of deference and respect.

God the Father gave such *honor* to Christ. Hebrews 2:7 says the Father crowned Christ with glory and *honor*.

YOU ought to CROWN YOUR WIFE WITH HONOR.

“Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD” (Proverbs 18:22). Are you close enough to God to understand what a valuable blessing it is to have a wife?

Think deeply about all she does for you. *Let her know* how much she means to you. Express to her that you *adore* her—that

she is a *treasure* to you. Treat her as a prized possession, a precious gift from God!

Think about this: Jesus Christ qualified to replace Satan almost 2,000 years ago. Why didn't He take over the throne of the Earth then? *Here is why*: because "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." He will not rule as King of kings until after the marriage of the Lamb takes place! Christ truly recognizes the *blessing* of receiving a *helpmeet* from God the Father!

We must get this right in our homes, because there is a serious warning within 1 Peter 3:7. If you are dwelling with your wife in ignorance, if you are not giving her honor, this will compromise your relationship with God.

Any husband who acts like a tyrant, who doesn't even *try* to love and honor his spouse, is living in TOTAL REBELLION AGAINST GOD. If you treat your wife this way, YOU DO NOT KNOW GOD. *He says He won't even listen to your prayers*. If your prayers are ineffectual, examine this area in your life.

We must work diligently to fulfill our promises to God—to love and sacrifice for our wives as Christ does for His—or our religion is worthless. We should FEAR not fulfilling this covenant to *honor* our wives!

5. Provide

The fifth and final promise of your covenant with God is to *provide* for your wife. The Bible makes an equally forceful statement about this responsibility: "But if any PROVIDE not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, HE HATH DENIED THE FAITH, AND IS WORSE THAN AN INFIDEL" (1 Timothy 5:8).

As we saw in Section 3, God has unmistakably given the job of *provider* to THE MAN. A man is to do whatever he must to provide the physical needs of his wife and children.

These are the five specific promises a man in the Church of God makes when he covenants with God to marry his wife. These promises come from the mind of God. To fulfill them requires God's mind and His power. Using that power, you must strive always to keep these promises perfectly.

A Moment of Decision

In a practical sense, fulfilling these promises comes down to a simple choice—a decision you will endlessly encounter in your marriage. It is simple: Me or my wife?

Who will you think about? On whom will you expend your energy? Who will you put first?

This moment is a critical one. What you choose in that instant is more important, with further-reaching effects, than you probably realize. Making the selfish choice is the number one decision that holds you back from being a better husband.

The love of God is the way of give. According to the Bible, anything other than that way is sin—the result of loving yourself too much, choosing yourself over your wife.

Judge your attitude and your actions within your home by this defining question: *Am I loving myself right now instead of my family?* If you are honest, you may not like what you find.

However, here is the awesome and beautiful truth about this: The role of husband that God designed is the *best tool* for overcoming and growing in God's love.

Again, at its core is the responsibility to *sacrifice*. Developing a mindset of sacrificial concern for others is the number one thing that will help you conquer selfishness and be a better husband.

Yes, you have priorities that demand your attention outside the home. You must provide; you must be a builder within the Church and the community. This absorbs your energy and time. But if you do these things out of godly sacrificial love, they actually *enhance* your standing as a husband and father.

Godly sacrifice is big-mindedness. It is *not* kowtowing to your wife's every desire and whim. It is prioritizing the true needs, the spiritual well-being and long-term good of the family, above personal desires.

When you choose to put your own self-indulgent interests first—even if it involves serving someone else because you feel more comfortable doing that than fulfilling your role at home—you are putting yourself ahead of your wife. This deprives your family of the physical, emotional and spiritual benefits God wants to provide through your office. It also squanders your

opportunity to forge godly character.

Don't let selfishness hold you back from this awesome role. Make the sacrifices of a loving husband and a giving father!

What are some practical ways you can emulate the Husband of all husbands today? How can you give your one and only precious wife the marriage experience God wants her to have? How can you imitate the Father of all fathers today? How can you provide your children the family experience that will turn their hearts to their spiritual Father?

Make a list. Maybe it is doing family Bible studies. Calling her to say you're thinking of her. Fixing what is broken. Expressing your appreciation. Picking up after yourself. Washing the dishes. Hanging that family portrait. Taking them out when she's overwhelmed. Helping with homework. Teaching a skill. Being Big Fun Dad. Going for a walk together. Tackling a family project. Giving an unexpected gift. Snuggling. Planning a getaway. Wrestling your boy. Do something from that list every day.

Make another list of the things that swallow your time and draw you *away* from being a godly husband and father. Disappearing into your study. Not listening. Being distracted. Burying your nose in the paper. Spending too much time on the computer. Getting impatient. Fondling your phone. Bringing work home. Entering television purgatory. Getting lost in sports. Contributing nothing. Study that list. Ask yourself: *Is anything on this list worth putting myself in front of my family?*

And the next time you encounter that moment of decision—*me or my wife?*—make a different choice. Sacrifice. Just like your Husband and your Father do for you.

Study and re-study those beautiful wedding vows. Whether you are about to marry, have already married, or hope to do so in the future, measure yourself against the words of this covenant, made with God:

Do you, then, [your name], faithfully promise and covenant with God, in the presence of these witnesses, to take [your spouse] to be your lawful wedded wife, and to cleave to her unto death—to love her, cherish her, honor her, and provide for her?

5.2

LEAD HER SPIRITUALLY

*God has made you the 'head.'
Here is how to fulfill this role in a
way that is a blessing to your wife.*

Here is a scripture that this world hates, but that every true Christian loves: “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God” (1 Corinthians 11:3).

That is a beautiful one-verse summary of some critical aspects of God’s family government.

Leadership flows from God to Christ to husband to wife. When it flows this way, God can bless a marriage and a household. The question isn’t merely whether the man is the head of the wife, but whether Jesus Christ is the Head of the man. The man must actively follow his Head as attentively and submissively as Christ follows His. Then the man must direct and teach his wife, and serve her spiritual needs.

Men: You must be the SPIRITUAL HEAD IN YOUR MARRIAGE AND IN YOUR HOME. The husband has a God-ordained office to lead the family. We must not underestimate the importance of this office. God watches what husbands are doing with their office, and He judges them by how well they lead.

This picture is reinforced in Ephesians 5:23: “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.”

The image of the man being a woman’s *head*—and Christ being the Church’s *Head*—is vivid and powerful. The husband is the head, and the wife is the body, following the direction of her head. This is *radically different* from the way most people structure their marriages—and altogether more magnificent!

Fathers and husbands should embrace their role as a leader, provider and protector, and ask God for the help they need. This role comes with tremendous responsibility in many forms within your marriage. Fulfilling it takes real sacrifice, but as you do so, it is a blessing to your family, and it provides a powerful means of developing you as a man. It prepares you to take on greater responsibilities in the future, even into eternity.

Your Spiritual Life

1 Corinthians 11:3 shows God’s family structure: The head of the woman is the man; the Head of the man is Christ.

Your first duty in life is to God. A husband must follow his Head. He cannot truly fulfill his role unless he himself truly submits to Jesus Christ. If he doesn't listen to his Head and tries to work things out on his own, he can get into serious trouble—just like a wife who does not submit to her husband. It is not easy for a man to submit to Christ, but he must fight to do so!

Nothing gives a woman greater security than to know her husband is completely committed to God.

Stay close to God. Whether you have the demands of married life or not, you absolutely must have daily, deep contact with your Creator. He is the source of the strength, wisdom and love you need. Leading a wife is a heavy responsibility that you cannot carry alone. Communicate with God and ask Him to help you. This is not just an enhancement to a successful marriage—it is the foundation! Without it you will fail! Do not let the pressures of your job or your home life encroach on your time with God in prayer, Bible study, meditation and fasting.

Your relationship with God affects you, but it also affects your wife. The quality of your private prayer and study and your relationship with God has real-world, everyday consequences in your marriage. If you are not growing in your submission to Christ and in your conversion, you will make it harder for your wife to submit to you, and obstruct her spiritual growth as well.

The first way to lead your wife spiritually is to lead by example. In your relationship with God, you have the opportunity and duty to set the example of prayer, Bible study, meditation, fasting, submission to God and obedience to His government. Day-to-day habits and routines will develop out of your study of the Bible, literature and sermon notes. Your decisions also determine your and your wife's involvement in serving in the Church.

Your Wife's Spiritual Life

You must lead your wife by example spiritually, but you must also take special care to help her be cleansed in preparation to marry Jesus Christ.

Christ sets the perfect example here: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:25-27). This is the spiritual role Christ fulfills toward His wife.

How much of yourself are you *giving*, helping your wife to become holy and without blemish? A Christian husband must be involved in his wife’s spiritual development.

In the same way that you must honor your wife and provide for her physical needs, you must also provide for her as an heir of eternal life. This means that you must give her the time and opportunity to attain the Kingdom of God.

Make sure your wife is able to get in her personal time with God. You cannot force her to pray and study, but you *can* make sure she has the time. We have a God-given obligation to help our wives. Discern when she is under stress, doing too much, worn down, tired during prayer. Don’t be a watchdog, but an *advocate*. Intervene, and take some of the burden off her shoulders for a while—free up her time by doing the dishes or taking the kids. And it may be necessary, if she is getting too caught up in physical responsibilities at the expense of the spiritual, to set her straight with loving correction.

Praying together occasionally as husband and wife—perhaps once a week or more—can be a wonderful and moving experience. To hear your wife talk to God—how she addresses Him and thanks Him, the details she includes in praying for God’s Work and for other people, even what she repents of before Him—can broaden your thinking and further balance your own prayer life. Praying in front of your wife can also give her a chance to learn from you and about you. Praying together teaches you much about each other and bonds you powerfully.

How easy is it for you and your mate to discuss spiritual topics? Regularly share what you are learning in your personal Bible study. Talk over the messages you hear in Church services. Consider doing some of your study together—perhaps going over articles on marriage and child rearing together. Review

your sermon notes together. Prod each other to go at a set pace through a new booklet so you can discuss it over dinner or before bedtime. Even if you are studying different things, if you study at the same time and in the same room, it may spark some spiritual conversation.

Remember to keep it all positive. The idea is not to nag each other but to stoke and to feed off each other's excitement.

Remember, you are commanded to *nourish* your wife (verses 28-29), which means to nurture or bring up to maturity; its root word means feeding. Can Christ spiritually feed your wife *through your office*? You must learn your Bible so you can guide your wife, caring for her spiritual needs with self-sacrificing, focused attention—the same care that Christ has for you.

A husband and wife can make a dynamic spiritual team in a host of other ways: encouraging each other in overcoming spiritual sins, striving for healthy diet and regular exercise, serving needs within the congregation, being given to hospitality, visiting the fatherless and widows.

Evaluate how well you are helping each other grow in virtue and godly character. Make your needs known. Get specific. If you feel your own attempts to help your mate tend to backfire, communicate about it, and have your mate show you how to use more tact and how to be most helpful. Pray about it together. Obviously, if your efforts hurt your relationship more than they help, they will fizzle quickly. So it is important to always make them constructive and uplifting.

When done right, the marriage relationship is a potent spiritual tool to help each of you attain God's Kingdom.

Teach Your Wife

Think deeply on the picture in Ephesians 5:26-27. Christ died for His people and is now washing, cleansing and correcting us through His Word, the Bible. This is a deep, intimate expression of a Husband's love! When you do Bible study, you are having a HEART-TO-HEART with your Husband! Maybe He wants to encourage you, or point out some areas you can improve. If you have the right attitude and are seeking the correction, you can

see the *love* in it—the love of a Husband who is sanctifying and cleansing His wife to make her holy and unblemished!

Jesus Christ is washing His Church today *through His teaching*. Our marriages should reflect this pattern. A MAN MUST ALSO TEACH HIS WIFE. Christ will marry a bride who is beautiful because of righteousness (Revelation 19:7-8). He creates this spiritual beauty through teaching. He is your wife's primary spiritual teacher, but as a Christ-led husband, you also have a responsibility to teach your wife spiritually.

A man must *give himself* to this role—and a wife has to receive it, and to seek out that attention and instruction from her husband as her spiritual head. Both husband and wife have to be committed to this God-ordained order.

The Apostle Paul wrote, “Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. ... And if they will learn any thing, *let them ask their husbands at home ...*” (1 Timothy 2:11-12; 1 Corinthians 14:35). If she does ask you a spiritual question, she is fulfilling her role—she is seeking out the attention and instruction of her spiritual leader. Now *you* must fulfill your role! Take the time to answer her question about a point made in a Bible study, a statement she read in a booklet, or how to reconcile two seemingly contradictory scriptures. If you don't know the answer, research her question in the Bible, using Bible helps or in Church literature. If that fails, seek answers from your minister.

Teach your wife the practical application of the Bible. Situations will arise where you can apply and remind her of a scripture about dealing with a neighbor, stopping a rumor, mentoring a child, or rising up to honor the elderly. Do not think, *She's an adult; I don't want to preach to her*. We all need reminders of what God's Word says and how to apply it.

If you need to point out a fault your wife has, follow Christ's example: Be kind and patient in your approach. Once the fault is acknowledged, help her to overcome it. In this context, be sure your wife knows how much you appreciate her. Work with her to ensure that the spots and wrinkles are being worked out and that your family is becoming holy and without blemish.

This is the kind of wonderful, God-level love Paul is talking about in Ephesians 5:25-26. When you show this sacrificial love and selfless leadership toward your wife, you are helping her spiritually. You are washing her, helping her to become clean and perfect, a bride who is ready to marry Jesus Christ!

Rule Well

In 1 Timothy 3, Paul says that for a man to qualify as a leader in the Church, he must be “[o]ne that *ruleth well his own house*, having his children in subjection with all gravity” (verse 4). In the next verse, Paul explains why this is crucial: “For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?”

Think about that: The government in the home is the *same* as the government in the Church—and the same as the government in the *eternal Family of God*! The government in your marriage is the SAME as the government in CHRIST’S MARRIAGE!

You must get the government right *in your home* to prepare for those greater responsibilities. You have to RULE WELL! This is a critical job in your family, and God gave this job to YOU. For your family to function, you *must* fulfill this God-given office.

In today’s society, we see a lot of laid-back “leadership.” Men prefer women to lead and make decisions in the family.

This is a sin! The husband *must* be the head!

A good husband will listen to his wife for the perspective and counsel she offers. But *listening to a woman* and *being led by a woman* are two different things. Do you listen to your wife when she presents ideas, weigh them and make the final decision? Or do you allow her to decide?

It is easy for a man to defer too much to his wife. It is easy to back off, to let her handle the child rearing, to expect her to establish order. But that is not the way Christ operates. The direction for the body must come FROM THE HEAD. That means you must hold to YOUR Head, then provide direction, guidance, leadership and nourishment so *your wife* can hold to *her* head! Otherwise you are blocking the flow of government from God and cutting yourself and your family off from some of God’s blessings.

If you fail to do your job, you hinder God's ability to lead your household. If you don't step up, there will be confusion, and *Satan* will fill the leadership vacuum. But when you *actively* fulfill your office and yield to Christ, *He will lead your family through you*. Then God can give peace in your marriage and in your household.

Christ has CONTROL over His Body! He orders and organizes it. He uses His power to make changes. He enforces order and change when necessary.

Your fulfillment of your role will be evident in your home in specific, practical ways:

- Have decisions come through you.
- Establish the routine and order in your house.
- Set and enforce proper bedtimes.
- Run your finances. Establish your family's budget and ensure that you stick with it.
- Don't get distracted by electronics, sports, the Internet or anything else and neglect your family.
- Read God's instructions on child rearing. Read and review *The Missing Dimension in Sex*, by Herbert W. Armstrong, and *Child Rearing With Vision*. Search *pcg.church* and *Royal Vision* magazine for biblical guidance. Implement what God says in the Bible in your family, and ensure that your wife is doing so as well.
- Even when you are away, *run your house*. Call home to see how things are going, and give guidance.

Do not underestimate the importance of how you establish your home life. Establish your and your wife's shared routine with intention and purpose. Organize and order your home life not according to your will but God's, making sure to put time with Him foremost in your routine.

Set the example even in dress, hygiene, manners and other day-to-day realities that all flow out of your relationship with God. And when it comes to motivating and leading your wife to achieve worthy goals, this responsibility again falls to you.

If what you are doing is not working, then get counsel. Too often, frustrating situations within a marriage and in child rearing drag on and on, wearing out the wife and damaging the family's relationship with God. Parents are simply too exhausted

and irritated with the children and their behavior issues to make progress.

In some cases, a woman may resist going to the ministry. Be firm. Sometimes it is *critical* to seek counsel! Bring God in, get educated, and kick Satan out of the situation.

It is also worth mentioning that if *your wife* is encouraging you to get counsel, or seeking it herself, do not dismiss this call for help. Pay serious heed and recognize that this may well be exactly what is needed to resolve a problem.

When You Are *Not* Her Spiritual Head

If your wife is not a believer, you have a special responsibility, and a special opportunity.

First and foremost, you must respect your wife's free moral agency and freedom of religion. Jesus Christ is Head of a Church that *voluntarily* submits to Him. He does not rule a wife against her will. It must be *your wife's* decision to look to you as her spiritual head. Any attempt on your part to force the issue is certain to lead to disaster. Any effort to convert her to your way of thinking or your religion is sure to fail! Remember that it is God the Father who calls (John 6:44). You cannot!

In his autobiography, Herbert W. Armstrong wrote: "In all my experience since conversion, one oft-repeated incident has brought sorrow and regret." He then described his own effort to "get our families converted."

"With the best intentions in the world, I set out on a vigorous campaign. To me, it was the loving and intense desire to *share* the wonders and glories of Bible knowledge with those we felt we loved most. But to most of them, it was an unwanted effort to 'cram my crazy religion down their throats.' ... This is a universal mistake committed by the newly converted. Especially is this true where a husband or wife yields to God's truth without the other. ...

"Most unconverted mates, especially if the converted one tries to talk the other into his or her religion, will break up the home instead.

"In all the years since my conversion, I have known of many marriages that have ended in divorce *because the newly*

converted mate tried to talk the unconverted one into it. I have never heard of a case where the unconverted mate was talked into accepting it.

“Of all things evil and harmful a newly converted Christian can do, the very WORST is to try to talk your husband or wife into your religion. WHATEVER else you do, let me *plead* with every such reader, *NEVER* commit this tragic sin. If you love your husband or wife, *don't do it!!* If you love your Savior who died for you, and now lives for you, *DON'T DO IT!!!*” (emphasis his).

A Positive Approach

At times you may feel you are fighting an uphill battle. You wonder *why* God called you and not your wife. You may even feel it is the root cause of certain problems in your Christian life. But if you think of your situation as negative, consider God's view.

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you” (1 Peter 4:12). The Christian life is a struggle—a good fight, but a fight nonetheless (1 Timothy 6:12). Perhaps this is especially true in difficult situations like these.

Each time your spouse entreats you to forsake God, His Sabbaths, holy days or commands, you have an opportunity to choose to do the right thing. Be thankful for the challenge! See it as an opportunity to fight for God in a way that a man with a converted wife cannot. Consider it a blessing.

A thorny relationship with an unconverted mate should spur you to pursue godly wisdom. Opportunities to exercise it will arise regularly. “For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace” (James 3:16-18). Living with an unbelieving mate requires wisdom from above.

Never forget that God is always there to help you (James 1:5). Ask Him for wisdom to know how to handle every situation,

believing that He will answer (verses 6-7). Living with potential hostility or periodic alienation *forces* a Christian to regularly examine himself or herself. That makes the clay that the Master Potter is working with in you *more malleable*.

Do you automatically expect the worst in any situation? Do you sometimes enter delicate situations with pride or self-righteousness, knowing your spouse does not have the spiritual understanding you do? If so, consider the description of God's love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

Strive to be an effective peacemaker, even under persecution. Read God's promises in Matthew 5:9-10 to those who do. Proverbs 18:19 warns that an offended person is harder to be won than a fortified city. Remember Paul's admonishment in Romans 12:18: "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."

Be a peacemaker, but don't compromise with God's law. Determination is vital in your situation. Never allow yourself to be pushed around or your relationship with God to be compromised. God called you alone at this time, and if you have to, you can make it without the support of your spouse.

If your spouse is not hostile, regard it as your job to keep it that way.

Also, your responsibility to fulfill the other aspects of your role as a husband and as a man is not nullified by your wife being unconverted. Strive to fulfill God's commands as they apply to you in every way you possibly can.

Appreciate the opportunity to set a balanced example of God's way of life. Be a light (Matthew 5:14). Remember that a light shines and shows a way of life without being heard, and it is pleasant and helpful if it is not glaring or garish. If you aim to live godly with all your being, you can claim God's promise of peace in Proverbs 16:7.

Paul taught the Corinthians, "If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. ... But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all

churches” (1 Corinthians 7:12-13, 17). God is *emphatic* here. And so is Paul in his ruling that, all other things being equal, those married to nonmembers should remain together.

Note why: “For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?” (verse 16). What an awesome potential! A nonmember mate may *someday* respond.

God knows your spouse better than you do, so He knows there is great VALUE to you being called in your situation. Obviously He knows all about it. If you allow the situation to get you discouraged or depressed, you show disrespect toward God.

“For the unbelieving husband is SANCTIFIED by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is SANCTIFIED by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they HOLY” (verse 14). The word *sanctified* means to consecrate or set apart for holy use. The unbelieving spouse is set apart. And to the degree that he or she responds positively to God’s selection process, to test and trial, to truth and correction, he or she is *also preserved* in Jesus Christ, yet *not yet invited* (see Jude 1). God may have several reasons for this. Have the *relaxed faith* to trust that He knows what He is doing.

If you take a negative approach toward your wife, it can hurt her and your marriage. Rather than alienating her, remember that she is sanctified through you. Work to keep your marriage progressing forward.

Do not underestimate this wonderful passage of Scripture! Use your golden opportunity to teach your unbelieving wife—not by your words, but *by your example*. This is how the unconverted may be won—through our *conduct* (1 Peter 3:1-2).

Do not make the mistake of misusing your authority, of lacking wisdom and of misrepresenting God to your wife. Your wife may not be interested in the same spiritual subjects, may not ask you spiritual questions, may not agree with your beliefs, but your responsibility to act like Christ remains unchanged. And your marriage can remain a powerful tool that God uses to strengthen your character and your biblical manhood.

5.3

UNDERSTAND HER

*How to dwell with a woman
'according to knowledge'*

“I’ll just never understand women.” If you are committed to biblical manhood, you can never resort to this stale sentiment. This is the excuse of weak masculinity. God created men and women with specific differences, and He created those differences to be *understood*.

Women are different from men. God specifically designed those differences. Do not be frustrated by them; do not ignore them or try to remove them. *Understand* them!

God commands a man to dwell with his wife “ACCORDING TO KNOWLEDGE” (1 Peter 3:7). The Greek word translated *knowledge* refers to a seeking to know, an inquiry or investigation. Men, we have some studying to do. No man *naturally* understands what the woman’s role is about. He must learn.

You need to talk to your wife, gain insight from her, notice her, *learn* from her. You must become knowledgeable about what her life is really like. Gain skill at recognizing her perspective. Know what she is going through, her itinerary, her obligations, her physical limitations, her health, her desires, her dreams.

Notice: This verse implies a link between that “knowledge” and his “giving honour” to her.

How good are you at seeing things from her perspective? How much *knowledge* do you have about what your wife’s life is really like? What is it like, for example, being around the children, alone, for hours on end? What is it like to see every mess as yet another job to do? What is it like to try finding, affording and wearing modest yet feminine clothing? What is it like to try to create nutritious meals every day, year after year? What is it like to have her particular social life?

How well do you understand what it would truly be like to have to be *subject to* YOU in everything, as unto Christ? (Ephesians 5:24). Do you make it easy and pleasant and gratifying for her to fulfill that commandment?

Understand your wife. Dwell with her “according to knowledge.”

Communicate With Her

It is common for a couple, when dating, to communicate a lot, sharing their histories, experiences, thoughts, emotions,

perspectives, needs and goals. Sadly, once they marry and time passes, it is also common for communication to slow down considerably, even to practically stop. Lack of communication has a terrible, chilling effect on a marriage.

The husband devoted to biblical manhood communicates frequently with his wife, for his own benefit and for hers. Husbands need communication more than they think they do, but wives need it even more.

If you *work* on your communication, regardless of how long you have been married, oneness will grow stronger.

Communication is not merely the opposite of silence. Real communication is a genuine, sincere expression of thoughts and feelings. For a marriage to have beauty and harmony, husband and wife must be committed to speak the truth in all things. And God tells us in Ephesians 4:15 to speak the truth “in love.” The energy of communication “in love” has a profound effect. Share your mind with your wife to become more at one with her.

What is the level of your communication with your wife? At the most basic level is small talk— cliché conversation, general platitudes: “I’m doing fine. How was your day?” Then there is reporting facts about other people: “Did you hear the Smiths got a new minivan?”

Beyond that is where real communication begins. It starts with expressing ideas and judgments based on events and what is happening around us. This involves a certain amount of self-disclosure: You reveal what is on your mind and what you think about circumstances. The communication grows even deeper when you bring feelings and emotions into the discussion. A married couple has to make sure that this type of communication is happening, and not infrequently. You should be sharing openly and honestly with each other how you think and feel on vital issues.

Every deep relationship, especially a marriage, must be based on *honest communication*, or it will suffer. You should feel comfortable sharing your full mind and heart with your wife.

Listening is a crucial and often underdeveloped skill. God commands, “[L]et every man be *swift to hear*, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (James 1:19). Many men struggle to listen well. Why? Distraction, tiredness and mental fatigue can all hurt your ability

to listen if you let them. Self-centeredness can cause you to interrupt or get impatient or intolerant rather than really listening.

It can take genuine effort to truly understand her point of view! Men and women express themselves differently. Sometimes you must consciously prevent her emotions from clogging your ears, and concentrate deeply—even prayerfully—on what is *behind* the words she is using. If you allow yourself to feel judged or indignant, or you're planning your speech while she is talking, you simply won't hear what she is trying to communicate. All these impediments must be removed so you truly *hear* her when she is talking.

Always keep in mind “speaking the truth in love.” This is miraculously powerful. It will create a world of communication that translates into beauty and harmony.

Speaking the truth in love does not mean giving in to your wife or avoiding confrontation. Sometimes confrontation is exactly what it means to speak the truth in love. Truth in love sometimes hurts; however, it should be the good kind of hurt, like applying an antiseptic ointment to a wound. When an argument develops, it is your job to bring love to the fore. This may involve tenderness or firmness, but it must never involve bitterness or selfishness. Our words should always carry a positive and helpful message. The spirit of the home must be the spirit of love, and this is primarily your responsibility.

If your marriage has confusion or pain, then kind, loving words that speak the truth can heal the problem. Led by God, such communication will produce unity, harmony and goodness in your marriage.

When you and your wife have good, regular communication, then your relationship is ready for the unexpected difficulties. At those times, the two of you can share *truly deep* communication experiences, filled with genuine empathy and unity, that strengthens you in true marital oneness.

Empathize With Her

How hard have you worked to dwell “according to knowledge” regarding your wife’s *feelings and emotions*? They are different from yours—because God *created* them to be different.

It is easy for a man to dismiss a woman's emotions as being silly or unfounded. Some of them are, but here's the problem: From our perspective, "That's just silly—you shouldn't think that!" may seem like profound wisdom. To her, it sounds like you are rejecting *her*. Never does that "wisdom" have its intended effect on a woman. It is simply not dwelling "according to knowledge."

All effective communication aims at building understanding. Seek always to *understand* your mate. Misunderstandings can create serious problems. If you find yourself exasperated by something your wife is feeling, saying or doing, resist the urge to criticize and condemn it out of hand. Do you really *understand* the *cause* of those feelings or that behavior? If you have barely talked, have barely listened and have not understood, your dismissive "You're wrong about that" rejects not only her concern, but her mind. This is not dwelling "according to knowledge."

Learn to provide a willing ear without passing judgment. The challenge is to listen not only to the words but also to the feelings and meaning behind the words. If she feels *understood*, she will be less defensive and more cooperative. Ask God to give you an understanding heart and to help you see the world from her point of view.

Don't be ignorant about the changes she experiences during her monthly cycle. Physical discomfort and hormonal fluctuations can make it harder for her to control her emotions, and should be considered and sympathized with. Most men will never have to deal with this kind of mind-body disruption. This doesn't mean coddling her—she is still responsible for her own actions—but do consider the toll it takes on her. This becomes even more important as a woman goes through menopause. For some women it can be quite uncomfortable and include hot flashes, loss of energy, emotional swings and depression. A husband can do his wife a wonderful favor by giving her love, attention, appreciation and *understanding*.

Love Her

Recognize that your wife has a deep, God-given need to be loved. It is her greatest emotional need in life. This is why God

commands you, above all else, to love her (Ephesians 5:25-33).

Perhaps one of the most important things you can communicate to your wife is that you notice her and appreciate her. Her life orbits yours; much of what she expends her time and effort on is for your benefit. If you were in that position, with a boss or a client for example, you would likely struggle if you felt unnoticed or unappreciated. Your wife's need for your recognition and praise is far greater. Notice your wife and her work—and *tell* her that you notice. Frequently express specific appreciation for the efforts she expends to make your life beautiful and peaceful. Help her understand the importance of the work she does.

You can express your appreciation in larger gestures: a gift, a date night, a spa visit, an anniversary getaway. But these cannot replace the day-to-day expressions of gratitude and love. Notice how the house looks when you walk through the door. Notice the details of the meal she has prepared. Tell her why you appreciate tonight's salad. Express praise for the ironed shirts, the scrubbed bathroom, the vacuumed floors.

Beyond that, dwelling with her “according to knowledge” means being aware of her workload and making sure it remains manageable. Before making an additional demand on her, make sure you understand just what it entails, and that it will not be an undue burden. Be attentive to her needs. *Notice* when she's feeling burned out. If possible, offer to take her out so she doesn't have to make dinner. There may be times when you have to advise her to let go of certain obligations or responsibilities.

“How often do you husbands see your wife down and depressed, and you know she needs your encouragement?” Gerald Flurry asks in *The Last Hour*. “A righteous husband will be there for his wife.” Consider: When you are discouraged, how does Jesus Christ treat you? Do you feel judged and condemned? The reality is that Christ is *doubling His efforts* to encourage you and set you back on your feet! When we sin, our Husband becomes our *Advocate* (1 John 2:1). That word also means *Encourager*.

A wife needs her husband's encouragement, or she will become disheartened. On this point, Aubrey Andelin wrote, “[An attentive person] is a sharp contrast to that person who is so concerned with his own feelings and desires that he ignores,

neglects or is indifferent towards others, taking them for granted. This is a particularly easy habit for married men to fall into. ... It is indispensable for a woman to know that her husband is aware of her as a person. His thoughtful attention to her comfort is a visible demonstration of his love. It provides a unifying bond between them, for as he shows this thoughtful concern for her, she blossoms as a flower in the sun” (*Man of Steel and Velvet*).

Be sure to keep her in mind when you are apart from one another. When you go on a trip, call her. She wants to know you’re OK—she wants to know you’re safe—she wants to feel secure.

Your love is particularly tested—and needed—when your wife is unwell. Notice when she is tired or sick. Help lighten her load. Give her a reprieve from caretaking, and be the one to take care of her. Such gestures are pure gold *not only* because they give her opportunity to recover, but also because they demonstrate that you care about what she is doing, that you appreciate her labor, that you want to nurture her happiness, and that you *love her*.

Consult Her

Your wife is many things to you: your companion, your confidant, your lover and your friend. She is also your assistant, your adviser and your consultant. Biblical manhood means making final decisions for you and your wife. This is a responsibility you cannot abdicate. At the same time, you cannot do it alone. You must follow God, and God commissions your wife to provide you with the benefit of her perception and counsel.

Dwelling “according to knowledge” means carefully considering your wife’s advice and counsel so major decisions in particular reflect the *combined wisdom* of your union. If you are shopping for a car, for example, the criteria you look for will be different from hers. Sometimes you must be big enough to see that she knows something you don’t. “According to knowledge” means encouraging her to share her view, then *listening*, coming to know her needs and wants so you can factor them in and then selflessly do what is best for the whole family. Your decision must be based not simply on pleasing your wife or yourself, but on what God leads you to see is best.

Sometimes your wife's counsel is crucial. Sometimes it is right, but other factors outweigh it. Sometimes it is wrong. But in all cases, the godly husband honors his wife and himself by listening to the other dimension of the wisdom God created for decision-making in marriage.

Your wife's tastes, preferences and desires have as much validity as yours. Don't simply force your tastes on her. A failure to allow her to make certain choices can crush her self-respect and drive, and even impede her spiritual development.

God made your wife capable of and responsible for making choices. She needs to be making decisions that develop her experience and character. God says she is to work out her own salvation, just as you are to work out yours (Philippians 2:12). If you deny your wife all authority and decision-making, you deprive her of the opportunity to learn from her decisions. You and your wife are a team; you must together grow in grace and knowledge, and both develop the character to be born into God's Kingdom.

The model wife in Proverbs 31 is capable of considering a piece of property and buying it. Verse 28 says her husband rises up and praises her for her achievements. Delegate certain decisions and jobs to your wife. Make sure she has control over certain areas of the budget and money that she can spend as she sees fit. This doesn't mean you relinquish your overall authority or your duty to step in when necessary.

'Knowledge' About Your Future!

What wonderful blessings open up when a husband dwells with his wife "according to knowledge"! The effort and persistence required to truly understand your wife is profoundly worth it. It builds a level of communion, beauty, harmony and oneness in your marriage that God desires for you to have.

And even more, true understanding of the wife's role and life deepens your understanding of a spectacular spiritual reality.

Those who have been begotten by God the Father with the Holy Spirit today are actually preparing to become the Bride of Jesus Christ. Yes—even *we men* are preparing to be a wife—a helpmeet! Remember, our physical families are just a *type* of

the spiritual reality. Right now we husbands are a type of Jesus Christ. But in the Kingdom, we won't have that job because that job is *already filled*—by Jesus Christ! So even we *men* must be developing a *helpmeet mindset* today. Both men and women in God's Church are in the same office, spiritually speaking, in this sense: We are the wife. This should surely motivate us to better understand that role today. There is much we can learn about our eternal calling from our wives.

The Proverbs 31 Husband

What man wouldn't love to have a Proverbs 31 wife? This biblical chapter describes a woman who is capable, skilled, hard-working, dedicated, intelligent, wise, loving, humble and submissive to her husband (verses 10-31).

Have you ever considered what sort of man *deserves* such a woman? What kind of husband would it take to lead, teach, protect, provide for, cherish and cleave to such a woman?

Clearly the Proverbs 31 husband is a man of great capability, manly confidence, compassion and wisdom. By working diligently to fulfill his God-given masculine role, he is a true blessing to his wife, his family and his community. He takes his place among other leading men (verse 23). He is widely respected and well known for his wisdom and ability.

He is a successful man, providing well for his family. His education and success have opened to them many doors of opportunity. He is a landowner, still expanding his holdings with his wife's assistance (verse 16). His household has full-time help ("her maidens" in verse 15), as he ensures his wife has what she needs to best carry out her responsibilities. He supplies her the resources to feed the family well (verse 14) and provide quality garments (verse 21). He has means to provide even for the poor and needy, and has directed his wife to help them (verse 20), yet

Christ will truly dwell with His wife “according to knowledge”! Not only because He is perfect—but also because He Himself fulfills a type of helpmeet role for His Father. He knows all about what it takes to be a successful helpmeet. He knows the special challenges involved in this role. He knows that a good leader must treat his helpmeet with great honor. He knows the head of a family must prize his helpmeet as a precious gift from God.

And this is exactly what He will do. Strive to follow His lead!

also makes sure she is dressed in the very best (verse 22).

These verses give an extraordinary picture of the wonderful *teamwork* this man has built with his helpmeet. He inspires the best in her, and she responds by devoting herself to helping him. “The heart of her husband safely trusts her; So he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil All the days of her life” (verses 11-12; NKJV). He honors his wife, empowers her decision-making, and encourages her education and development. He has delegated many responsibilities to her, including household organization and operations. As he sees her growing in her capacity, he entrusts her with still greater authority and provides the means for her to fulfill it. As she shows the desire and aptitude, he even encourages her to undertake personal business dealings (verses 16, 18, 24), which she ensures never take priority over caring for the family.

This woman is blossoming under her Proverbs 31 husband’s positive leadership! She is capable of offering great counsel, and he values that counsel (verse 26). She is intelligent, cultured, productive and diligent. Her husband shouts her praises for all to hear, and leads his children in honoring and praising her (verse 28), saying, “Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all”! (verse 29).

Think about how much the outstanding woman described in this passage is who she is *because of* the success, example, leadership, encouragement, trust, respect and praise of her outstanding husband!

Would you like a Proverbs 31 wife? Then work to become a Proverbs 31 husband!

5.4

DEEPEN YOUR LOVE

*Make your marriage great
by saturating it with the
greatest virtue of all.*

YOU NEED MORE *LOVE* IN YOUR MARRIAGE.

Perhaps all married people, when we were single, hoped and even prayed for just the right mate. We anticipated how much we would enjoy being together with our future spouse—working, playing and laughing together—sharing tender, intimate moments—raising a family as a team—supporting each other through whatever blessings and trials life had to offer. We may have thought about growing old together, even having the opportunity to continue working together for eternity as spirit beings.

Naturally the reality of married life differs from adolescent fantasy. But it is still worth asking: How favorably does your marriage measure up to the ideals you once held? Have you forgotten and allowed yourself to *settle* for a marriage far less than what you had hoped for?

Here is the truth: GOD WANTS YOUR MARRIAGE TO BE *GREAT*! He *created* this magnificent, God-plane relationship, and He wants it to be a *rich, joy-filled, deeply satisfying, intimate* and altogether *LOVING* experience for *everyone* who enters into it.

However lofty your expectations of marriage were when you were single, *God's expectations are higher*.

Right now, the living Jesus Christ is *eagerly* anticipating the moment when He will join in holy matrimony with His precious, beloved, righteous and exquisite Bride in a union that will stand forever. If you have been invited as part of this Bride, your marriage today is *the primary part of your life* that God is using to prepare you for that future.

This spiritual reality is the main reason why you should not settle for a mediocre marriage. Confront your problems, work through your difficulties, conquer the obstacles that stand in your way. Develop the teamwork, cultivate the intimacy, and build the trust that will make your marriage begin to mirror Christ's marriage!

Who has the biggest say in whether you settle or whether you deepen your love with your wife? You do.

And what is the most important ingredient that elevates a marriage to the supreme state God wants us to enjoy? Above all, it is *LOVE*.

What Do You Mean ... Love?

In the Bible, the word *love* can mean the love of friendship—the warm companionship that should pervade your relationship with your wife. It can also mean the sensual love expressed through sex. This is an important part of marriage. But love can also mean the LOVE OF GOD, and this is by far the most important and crucial type of love in your marriage. This is where you take your marriage from good to awe-inspiring.

None of us expresses this love perfectly or consistently. And none of us has enough of it.

Every hint of friction in your marriage, every particle of discouragement or frustration, every speck of sadness or pain, is caused by a *lack* of this kind of love.

The love of God binds the God Family together. It comes from the Holy Spirit enabling Jesus Christ to live within us (Romans 5:5; Galatians 5:22). It is a purely giving, outflowing, thoughtful, selfless, self-sacrificing, committed love. It is the love that brings true peace, joy and happiness.

God *is* this love (1 John 4:8, 16). And He wants us to become just like Him—to *become love!* (Matthew 5:48). To help you grow in this selfless, perfect, God-level love, God gave you marriage.

Never take your routine interactions with your wife for granted. These day-to-day hellos and goodbyes, questions and answers, thoughts and actions are crucial. These are interactions with the person God has given you to learn HOW TO LOVE!

Your marriage will be *great* to the degree that you pursue this goal. It will be harmonious and happy, rewarding and rich, to the extent that you drive out your *self-love* and replace it with the *love of God*. It will prepare you for marriage to Christ exactly as much as you let God live in you and love your spouse through you.

You and your wife have committed to each other for as long as you both shall live. That is a limited amount of time. Make the most of it!

A Checklist

Take some time to study the checklist in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. This tells us what God's love looks like in action. We can evaluate our marriage against it, measuring where we can grow in practicing that God-level love with the person closest to us.

"Love is patient and kind ..." (verse 4; RSV). This means being patient with each other's faults and weaknesses, which we tend to be more aware of in our spouse than in anyone else. Imagine if God were only as patient with your weaknesses as you are with your mate's. "Kind" means performing kind acts—*acting* on your love, even in little ways.

"Doth not behave itself unseemly" in verse 5 is translated "never rude" by James Moffatt. This is talking about our manners, our etiquette, our standard of conduct—how we present ourselves around others. Often we are far better at extending these courtesies to strangers or acquaintances than to our own family members. But God's love is *never* rude.

Step back and think about the way you talk to your mate. Are your interactions laced with negativity, sarcasm, criticism, nettles, guilt trips and mean-spirited humor? Or are they positive and respectful, demonstrating outgoing concern?

"During the dating and romance stage, both groom and bride-to-be put a 'best foot forward.' They are careful about manners, grooming, the courtesies. Then after marriage comes the 'letdown,'" Herbert W. Armstrong wrote in *The Missing Dimension in Sex*. "If you want a happy marriage, be far more particular about all such things *after* marriage than before. Be careful about your sleeping garments—be sure they are neat, clean, attractive to the other. Be careful about your hair—especially on rising in the morning. The very first thing I try to do on rising is to get a comb and brush, before my wife sees tousled and messed-up hair! ...

"Ever notice how people answer the telephone? A wife calls her husband at his place of business or work. He answers: 'Oh, it's *you*. Well, I wish you wouldn't bother me now. I'm busy.' But if some other woman might call on a matter of business, his voice is cheerful, courteous, warm and friendly. And of course it's the same when hubby calls the wife during the day. She's

warmly cheerful and polite to all but him. She feels, ‘Oh, he’s only my husband.’ ...

“If you *must* be cross, discourteous, or appear tired before someone, let it be *anyone* else—but *never* your husband or your wife! Don’t ever utter the alibi, ‘Oh, but we’re married, now.’ BE LOVERS, as long as you live!”

How Much Do You Love Yourself?

Moffatt translates “seeketh not her own” in 1 Corinthians 13:5 as “never selfish.” The Revised Standard Version says, “Love does not insist on its own way.” This world needs more of this kind of love: a love that is NEVER selfish, not even around your mate.

This is a crucial point that distinguishes true godly love from love that is fundamentally selfish. Do you withhold love when you feel your spouse doesn’t deserve it? Are you unwilling to overcome irritating habits that you know bother your mate but that you just don’t feel like changing? Do you allow petty personal interests to consume time that your spouse would be *thrilled* to see you devote to the family? There are perhaps hundreds of little and big ways that our *self-love* can manifest itself in our marriage.

Realize that *self-love* is SIN! This world exalts it like a virtue. Satan tries to convince you it is your natural-born *right*! But it is CONTRARY to God’s love. Though we probably don’t want to admit it, self-love does *not* make us happy. It actually creates friction, offense, hurt and grief within our marriage and within ourselves.

There is a difference between a man insisting on certain things from a leadership standpoint, for his family’s benefit, and insisting on his own way *selfishly*. Don’t confuse the two.

God’s love is *always*, ALWAYS outflowing. It does not wait for the other person to begin acting unselfishly before reciprocating with unselfishness. Christ *died* for us while we were yet *sinners*. Your wife is a sinner—and God still commands that you strive always to put her needs above your own desires.

This is fundamental to making a marriage great. If each of you is looking out for the *other* over and above yourself, then

there is plenty of overlap to ensure that the needs of both of you are amply met. This is God's love! It's not, "I'll give you this if you give me that." It is NEVER selfish. It is unconditional.

"[I]s not easily provoked" reads "never irritated" in the Moffatt, and "not irritable" in the RSV. How often do we violate this principle? We're tired, stressed—something hits us in the wrong way at the wrong time—and *BAM!* we take it out on our mate. She is usually the person who sees us in our most trying moments. But God's love is NEVER irritated. It finds a way to control itself even under difficulty. God's love is not easily provoked—it is not overly sensitive or touchy. Love covers a multitude of sins; it glides right by the minor irritations of daily life. Even if someone wrongs us in some way, God's love will let it go.

Love is "always eager to believe the best, always hopeful, always patient" (verse 7; Moffatt). We live in a negative world. But if we are thinking like God, we will have a positive, hopeful outlook. A husband who *loves* his wife never lets petty flaws overwhelm his underlying glow for her and his appreciation for the value and richness she adds to his life. He also recognizes her growth, personal victories and achievements.

These verses are extremely helpful for their practicality. Again, this love must come *from God*. But these specific qualities help us know what love should look like—and He will supply it in greater measure as we strive to demonstrate these qualities each day. Our *effort* will accelerate our miraculous growth in spiritual love.

God Commands: Husbands—Love!

Both husband and wife need to love. But God puts *particular* emphasis on the *husband's* responsibility to love his wife (Ephesians 5:25-33). Because of our emotional makeup, and our tendency to work and seek to achieve outside the home—not to mention our duty to lead our wives in righteousness by example—we men *especially* must ensure we devote attention to fulfilling God's command to LOVE.

Be the initiator. Don't wait to receive love before you give it.

Let love flow into your marriage through you. Follow God's example, who loved us first (1 John 4:19).

Remember, God commands you to *cleave* to your wife in love. This requires that you structure your priorities to regularly, actively *pursue* your wife. Put forth real effort and spend real time on cleaving to her. Make a vigorous effort to love and to cleave; your common interests and your ability to relate to her will grow with time and bring you closer emotionally and spiritually.

"Christ doesn't ask us to do things in our marriage that He will not do in His marriage to the Church. We have the supreme Husband of all husbands!" Gerald Flurry writes. "HOW WE ARE LOVED!" (*The Last Hour*).

The love Christ has for us is the *same love* He wants us to develop in our marriages. Your wife should *know without a doubt* how truly LOVED she is. Happily embrace and readily fulfill her deep-seated, God-given NEED for *your love*.

"Our physical marriages are a *type* of our marriage to Christ," Mr. Flurry writes. Contemplate these profound words: "WE MUST STRIVE TO PATTERN OUR PHYSICAL MARRIAGES AFTER CHRIST'S MARRIAGE TO THE CHURCH. *ONLY THEN* ARE WE FULFILLING THE GOD-ORDAINED PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE!"

Only then. Only as we husbands consider His example as a Husband and really endeavor to emulate it.

The End of the Matter

A husband and wife are "heirs together of the grace of life"—equal partners in receiving God's blessings, both now and eternally (1 Peter 3:7). You have been assigned different, complementary and equally important roles during this physical life, but you both aim for eternal life, at which point, sex differences will be gone (Luke 20:34-36).

A husband and wife, in carrying out their respective duties, are both striving to build God's perfect character, to trust God, to walk by faith. Both are learning to submit to and to exercise authority within the bounds of God's government. Both enjoy the same promises of forgiveness, redemption and salvation. Differences in function between a husband and a wife are

ordained by God; each mate should seek to understand, honor and respect the other's role, and to help the other flourish spiritually within it.

The lessons of *character* we learn within our marriages—patience, understanding, kindness—are qualities God wants in us for *all eternity*. Lessons in decency, loyalty, responsibility and so many other virtues are learned within marriage and family as nowhere else. Family is perhaps the greatest character-building institution on Earth! And at the center of it—just like at the center of God and His Family—is LOVE.

What a profound truth. The way you conduct your married life will make all the difference in how prepared you are to step into that eternal marriage and family relationship.

A husband and wife who submit to God's authority, embrace His design within marriage, and *strive together* to truly BUILD THE LOVE OF GOD in their relationship will open the windows of heaven and experience *showers* of blessings! Irritations will begin to disappear. Festering wounds will heal and fade. Pain will turn to peace. The curative sunshine of *joy* will fill the home. And those washed-out memories of ideals cherished as a youth—hopes of just how wonderful marriage could be—will spring back to life and bloom in vibrant color.

God will not settle for mediocre in your marriage. He truly does want you to experience GREAT—and then *even greater* and STILL GREATER! That is because *HE IS LOVE*, and that is WHAT LOVE DESIRES FOR EVERYONE.

On top of that, it is because God the Father is looking to provide His Son with the most precious, beloved, righteous and exquisite bride He possibly can. She will be a noble spiritual helpmeet made up of Spirit-begotten individuals who have proved, during their short physical lives, their abiding *commitment to* and deep LOVE FOR the magnificent, God-plane institution that is MARRIAGE.

Take advantage of your physical marriage today as your training ground for growing in godly love, and you will then be able to enjoy that greatest of all blessings for eternity: a *rich, joy-filled, deeply satisfying, intimate* and altogether LOVING marriage to Jesus Christ.

Section 6

THE FATHER

*The measure of a man's
greatest life's work
is found in the character
of his children.*

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|-----|-------------------------------------|
| 244 | 6.1 Use Your Office |
| 258 | 6.2 Fill Your Home With Love |
| 268 | 6.3 Turn Their Hearts to God |
| 276 | <i>Abraham—Teach Your Household</i> |
| 278 | 6.4 Make a Man |
| 288 | <i>David—Instruct Your Sons</i> |
| 290 | 6.5 Be Your Daughter's Hero |

6.1

USE YOUR OFFICE

*It is God's gift to your family—
but only if you use it as He intends.*

Pay close attention to this important statement from *The Plain Truth About Child Rearing*: “Just as God has set *offices* in His Church for rulership and government (Ephesians 4:11), so He has set offices in the home!”

The husband holds a God-appointed *office*. So too does the wife. When you have children, you step into the *office* of father.

There is power in that word *office*. Think of the ordinary citizen who is inaugurated into the *office* of president of the United States. Think of the man who becomes a commanding *officer*, who then has other lives depending on him. In the same way, your wedding day inaugurates you into an office of formidable responsibility. And your child's birth expands your responsibility and authority even further.

We don't tend to think of ourselves as officials, authorities, representatives, commissioned officers, captains in day-to-day matters. How many of us woke up today and thought, *I'm the commanding officer of this family?*

God made these offices because He has commissioned *specific jobs* to be done within your marriage and within the lives of your children.

Look at the scripture referred to above. The Apostle Paul recorded that God “gave *gifts* unto men” (verse 8). What are these gifts? The governmental offices within the Church: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers (verse 11). When God gives a position of authority, He is giving a gift—not to the officeholder, but to those *under* that individual.

This is especially so within a family. The *offices* of husband and wife, father and mother are marvelous GIFTS that, properly fulfilled, will bring a family blessings.

For your children to receive the benefits God wants them to have, you must **MAGNIFY YOUR OFFICE AS A FATHER**. (This principle also applies to your office as a husband, and to your wife's as a wife and mother.) Are you *fulfilling* your office as God intends?

The Responsibility of Your Office

In writing *Who Is “That Prophet”?*, Gerald Flurry meditated on and wrestled with the *office* of prophet. “I need to better understand

what God requires of this office,” he writes. There is a principle here. An exalted office is not about exalting a man, it is about UNDERSTANDING A RESPONSIBILITY. It is not a destination for the officeholder, but a channel between the people under him and the Supreme Commander. It is God *requiring* something of a man—for the benefit of the Church and the world.

How well do *you* understand what God requires of *your* office? That office is bigger than you are. It is not a prize; it is a tool. You must see what God seeks to accomplish. Submit to God’s commission so He can do wonderful things in your children’s lives

“Grappling with heavy responsibility is never easy,” Mr. Flurry continues. “Coming to realize the weight of his office caused Jonah to run. It has caused me to think about that a couple of times. Perhaps it has you too, because of what God has called YOU to do.” When God gives you responsibility, do not run from it.

In Romans 11:13, Paul declared, “I MAGNIFY MINE OFFICE” as an apostle. Why? In order to *save people* (verse 14). The office is there to build the spiritual Family.

Parents must also consider the power of their offices and use them to BUILD THE FAMILY. The husband must use his office. The wife must use her office to magnify her husband’s office.

When a child is born, these God-ordained offices are already in place. The father assumes the role of GOD THE FATHER in the child’s life. The child’s whole life is shaped within a God Family environment. The Father intends *every child* to have the benefit of a godly father and mother who teach proper fear of parental authority and turn those children’s hearts toward *Him*. This is why He put us in these parental offices. What a marvelous plan.

“Children should be taught to look up to the *office* and *authority* of their parents. The child who truly loves his parents will be able to experience an even fuller love if he is also taught a deep inner sense of respect toward his parents” (*The Plain Truth About Child Rearing*).

Do your wife and children respond favorably and cheerfully to your direction? Do they try to make your decisions work? Answering these questions can require tough honesty.

Leading your family is difficult. It requires self-sacrifice and sometimes making unpopular decisions. But as hard as it is, the

long-term benefits are incomparable. Our children need, actually *crave*, strong fatherly leadership.

Male Authority Is Important

A father should lead his home with loving leadership. In our society, this statement arouses hostility from many intellectuals, politicians and regular folks. As a result, many men do not know how to properly establish authority in their own household. They haven't seen it done. They hear that it is evil by its very nature, and they are not even sure they *should* do it because society around them seethes at even the thought of it.

That is a major reason why society is as deeply troubled as it is!

As a man, you need to clear your mind of society's erroneous biases and agendas and learn to view parental authority the way the Creator of parents, children and family views it.

The Fifth Commandment says, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee" (Exodus 20:12).

Modern child rearing focuses on building rapport with children, doing things together, developing a friendship. If this is your entire approach, you will have serious problems. The foundation of your relationship with your children *must include* ESTABLISHING YOUR AUTHORITY. You must teach them to *respect your office*.

The Fifth Commandment establishes God's government in the home. It places parents in authority over children. Of course, though it is specifically directed at children, *we parents* must be the ones to train and instruct our children to honor us, and to then *enforce the command*. The person who must make sure this commandment is in force in your family is *you*.

Leviticus 19:3 amplifies the commandment: "Ye shall *fear* every man his mother, and his father" God commands not only honor, but also *fear*. This is talking about an attitude of the heart. It is a *deep reverence* toward parents and a respect for their *law*. As the primary law-enforcer for the family, you must command respect. This includes a fear to fall under your judgment. In so doing, you actually teach your children a vital spiritual principle: reverencing God the Father.

This word *fear* is the same word God uses in commanding us to *fear Him* (e.g. Deuteronomy 10:12-13; see also Luke 12:5). Your children's interactions with you establish their future relationship with God. And that relationship *begins* with proper fear (e.g. Proverbs 1:7; 9:10; 15:33).

This is the profound truth: We prepare our children to *revere God* and *respect His law* by teaching them to REVERE US and RESPECT OUR LAW.

This is God's law. We must not reason around it. And the only way our children will learn to obey this law is if we teach them. We must establish that reverence in our children for the office of both father and mother. We must love our children enough to enforce God's law in their lives. It is the only way to get our families right.

Many people will wring their hands over the mention of words like *authority, respect, honor, enforce, fear, reverence*. They will imagine deadbeat, selfish fathers who beat their children and use their authority selfishly. But that is obviously not what God wants. He wants a strong father who leads his family by using his authority to serve them. This is what that authority is for. This is what fatherhood itself is for.

Don't underestimate how important it is to God that we get the government right with our children. God explicitly forbids children from hitting their parents or even *cursing* them (Exodus 21:15, 17). *Curses* in verse 17 means to bring contempt, despise, esteem lightly or make light. We see this commandment broken everywhere in society today: children back-talking, sassing, treating parents as the butt of jokes, laughing at them, mocking their authority. (See also Deuteronomy 27:16.)

But don't look at other families. Make this personal. Is this law being kept in *your* home? Imagine, in ancient Israel, how diligent parents would have been to enforce this law, knowing the consequences if they failed! It may seem cruel, but it motivated parents and children to respect government in their families. If this law were kept perfectly, the number of children who suffered this penalty would drop to zero overnight!

If you think this commandment doesn't apply today, read where Jesus Christ backed it up in Matthew 15:4. Obviously we don't apply the same *penalty* today that God commanded

anciently—but spiritually, our children do come under the death penalty for this sin, and God requires that they repent of it!

If you love your children, you will do all you can to make sure they don't come under that penalty! It makes the *promise* within the Fifth Commandment far more meaningful—that children who honor their parents will *live long*.

Use That Manly Voice

As man of the house, you should be the dominant force. You should have a strong presence in your home and in your children's lives.

Consider God's example in ancient Israel. Before He delivered His law in the form of the Ten Commandments, *God got Israel's attention*. He staged a dramatic display of thunder and lightning, accompanied by a deafening trumpet blast—"so that all the people that was in the camp trembled"! (Exodus 19:16). He blanketed Mount Sinai in a fiery cloud and caused an earthquake (verse 18). He showed power and authority, striking the literal *fear of God* into them! (Exodus 20:1-19).

A man should not be squeamish about striking a bit of *fear* into his children. There is a time for a man to get loud, to raise his voice. God gave men a deeper, more powerful voice for a reason. When the situation demands it, **USE IT!**

IF A CHILD DOESN'T PROPERLY FEAR HIS FATHER, HOW WILL HE LEARN TO FEAR GOD?

Gerald Flurry has said that his daughter told him there were times during her junior high school years when she could have made a wrong decision with her friends. She said what kept her out of trouble was that *she feared her father*. Is there anything wrong with a teenager staying out of trouble because she fears what her dad would do if she had to face him?

Right fear keeps us from breaking God's law and bringing curses into our lives! This fear needs to be in your children, and you need to establish it early in their lives. In an older child who has never had such fear, it can become nearly impossible to build.

1 Kings 1 describes the rebellion of King David's son Adonijah. Verse 6 lays the blame for Adonijah's conduct squarely at the feet

of whom? *David*. It says he “never restrained [his son] at any time by asking ‘What are you doing?’” (Ferrar Fenton translation). David never *confronted* his son! And Adonijah, lacking respect for authority, drove his own life—and almost the whole kingdom—to ruin! How it would have helped that young man had David *gotten in his face* and PUT HIM IN HIS PLACE!

A godly man is “[o]ne that RULETH WELL his own house, *having his children in subjection with all gravity*” (1 Timothy 3:4). You cannot fulfill this obligation simply by reading bedtime stories and throwing a ball around with your children. These activities are good, as we will discuss in later chapters. But they are *not enough*. And enjoying such activities is not the *main thing* God expects from you as a father. You must RULE—and RULE WELL.

The Rewards of Correction

When Jesus Christ establishes His Kingdom on Earth, “he shall rule [the nations] with a rod of iron” (Revelation 19:15; also 2:27; 12:5). He will forcibly put down rebellion in order to establish peace. That “rod of iron” will be a great blessing to all people!

Make sure you know how to use a “rod of iron” in godly love with your children when required. All children have human nature. They can and will easily develop a rebellious spirit. You have to *break that rebellious spirit*—without breaking your child’s spirit.

Yes, you want your children to have *spirit*—a *right* spirit, a liveliness, vivaciousness and life. They should *always* know that they are LOVED. They need encouragement and positivity. Pray for God’s help in getting the balance right. Fear is only the *beginning* of the relationship you need. But without it, things can really go off track in your family.

“And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?” (Hebrews 12:5-7).

Notice: Paul assumes as a basic fact of family life that a father

corrects, as if it would be ridiculous for him not to do so (verses 8-9). Sadly, this is not the case in many families today, and those families are the poorer for it.

It is our duty as fathers, before God, to use our office for our families' benefit. God intends the authority to flow from Christ, through you, and down through your wife (1 Corinthians 11:3). If you don't fulfill your office, the chain is broken. God's ability to lead and to bless your family is severely hampered.

"The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame" (Proverbs 29:15). Even if you live with your children, neglecting them in this regard will produce shameful results. Do not neglect them. Use your God-given family government *office* as a GIFT for them. God wants to send blessings down that chain of command to *His children*—blessings that He considers their RIGHT to have!

Administer Justice

One blessing your children should receive from you is *justice*.

God is passionate about true justice. It is truly an inspiring study into His character to see His intense concern about this. He instructs, "Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart" (Zechariah 7:9-10). We must show compassion to *all*, especially the neediest.

God is deeply angered by injustice and promises to avenge it. When He sees men oppressing others, when He sees leaders abusing their offices of authority, it infuriates Him. He will *judge* those who have executed wrong judgment, who have been unjust, who haven't shown mercy and compassion, who have been harsh and dictatorial, who have oppressed the weak! He will punish them terribly for their terrible treatment of fellow man (read verses 11-14).

We must build God's passion for justice in our dealings with all men. *It is especially critical that we are diligent in aiming to be perfectly just with our children.*

Godly leadership is a *blessing* to children and others who are

helpless. Read the effects of a righteous king in Psalm 72: “He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. ... He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor” (verses 2, 4). God’s government is not oppressive—it *breaks* oppression (see also verses 12-14 and the rest of the psalm).

This should be the effect of your leadership within your home. A godly man is authoritative, but he does not exercise authority in an arbitrary way, terrorizing his children or acting like a dictator. He never forgets that he is *under God’s authority*, and accountable to God for how he uses his own authority. He practices the *weightier matters of the law*: judgment, mercy and faith (Matthew 23:23; see also Proverbs 11:17). In every situation he seeks to apply wise judgment, thus teaching his children through example about God’s passion for perfect justice.

Do Your Children Give You Rest?

Proverbs 29:17 reads, “Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.” Meditate on this wonderful promise. It shows the positive fruits of the right kind of correction, and of establishing God’s law and government in the right way.

Wrong use of correction produces dread, terror, resentment or bitterness. Godly correction produces *rest*—comfort and quiet in the home. It produces peace within yourself and within your child. It causes you to *delight* in your children.

Do your children give you rest? Do they give delight to your soul? This is a good way to measure whether you are disciplining and instructing your children correctly. If you are, your children will be happy, free from the turmoil in their hearts caused by battling for supremacy in the family. They will not chafe at being governed, instructed, guided, corrected and loved. They will be at peace, content under the umbrella of protection and security provided by loving parents. This provides the environment under which they will truly enjoy, learn from and benefit from their time with you! It will give your whole family rest! Bring your children

under your authority, and your home becomes peaceful—a nice place to be.

You see this same principle in Hebrews 12:5-11, which says God's chastisement produces the "peaceable fruit of righteousness" in us. His correction improves our relationship with Him. We become "partakers of his holiness." We become more the people we should be, and our hearts turn to our heavenly Father!

Be honest about your own children. Do they truly respect your office? Are they truly under your authority? If not, then you will constantly be battling with them, even when you are trying to love them!

If your children are wearing you out and getting on your nerves, if you find yourself always losing patience with them, if you don't really enjoy them much of the time, if they're not giving you rest, if they're not a delight to you, then this is something you need to examine.

Evaluate the way your children behave toward you and other adults. They should not be smart-alecky, rude or presumptuous. They're not to demand our attention or interrupt adult conversations. We shouldn't allow them to make constant, whiny requests.

We should be able to say—*before* we get frazzled—"Children, you need to play quietly for a while," and say it once, and have the children respect that command!

Assess the way you interact with your children. Tell your child to do something, and see if you get a "Yes sir," followed by obedience. If you don't, that is a good indication you are not properly using discipline and instruction. You have some work to do to fulfill God's desire that you "rule well," having your children "in subjection with all gravity."

Have you inadvertently trained your children not to listen to you until the second, third, fourth or fifth time you say something? Have you trained them to seek what they want by whining, pleading or begging? Have you trained them not to obey you until you raise your voice?

When you tell your child to do something, expect obedience. If you don't get it, make sure there is a consequence.

Again, if our children are really under our authority, they will not frazzle our nerves. They will give us rest, and be a delight.

God's Example

God Himself is our supreme example of how to make this principle work in our homes. Read Psalm 103. It details all the ways that God expresses His love as a Father. He gives so much to His children. He blesses, He heals, He redeems, He crowns, He satisfies, He renews. He protects, He educates and instructs. He is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, plenteous in mercy.

“He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him” (verses 10-11). What a wonderful Father He is—the perfect example for all fathers!

But notice to whom God has great mercy: “THEM THAT FEAR HIM.” He extends these benefits to those who are *under His authority*! God does not pity the rebellious. He doesn’t extend mercy to the unrepentant. He isn’t gracious toward a “spoiled brat.” He corrects them in order to bring them to repentance so they can receive blessings.

This wonderful Father-child relationship—overflowing with blessings, mercies and affections—can only exist when a child *reverences* Him! The child must have a spirit of obedience, a humble, teachable attitude, an openness to instruction and correction, a fear of disobeying and coming under His judgment.

The same is true in your relationship with your children. The truly blessed connection we all want with our children is going to spring from TEACHING THEM TO REVERENCE US. If the reverence isn’t there, *focus on establishing that*—then bless your children as they show it. And give generously to the child who has that reverence!

The psalm continues: “Like as a father pitieth his children, so THE LORD PITIETH THEM THAT FEAR HIM” (verse 13). *Pities* means to love, love deeply, have mercy, be compassionate, and have tender affection. *Gesenius’ Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon* defines it as “to BE SOFT ... cherishing, soothing, and in a gentle emotion of the mind ... to behold with tenderest affection”

What a wonderful example God sets. As our children fear us, we can build and demonstrate that same love, mercy and

compassion for them. When we properly train our children to revere us, what blessings unfold!

Be Aware

Absenteeism and disengagement are common in fathers. For a man to be the godly head of his home, he must actively engage in child rearing. If you are not energetically involved with your children, then a lot is happening that you are unaware of. Your wife is left to do the training; she has to run the household; she has to deal with rebellion; she has to struggle with the child who is being manipulative. You simply don't see it because you are disconnected!

God needs fathers to be *connected* and *discerning*. We must have our antenna up, remaining vigilant to our children's attitudes and tendencies. Develop your capacity to identify rebellion, even in its subtle forms.

At Church services, make sure your children behave. You cannot focus 100 percent of your attention on the messages and expect your wife to deal with the children. When a child is very young, often it is your wife who must tend to his or her needs during services—though even then, you should be alert to and personally deal with *rebellion*. As children grow older, *you* set the expectations and ensure the children meet them, especially once they are school age and able to sit through services. Confront disruptive behavior immediately, even if only with a stern look. If you have established proper fear and respect in your children—if you *rule well*—then disruptions will be minimal, easily stopped, and increasingly rare.

Make sure your children know that you are the boss. You are the head! Don't sit there while your wife struggles. Use the authority God gave you! Use it with wisdom based on the circumstances of the moment—but *USE* it. Rule well!

It is also your responsibility to make sure your children respect their mother. They will challenge her. Make clear that you will not tolerate that. Take that burden off your wife. Back her authority over them (Proverbs 1:8; 6:20). Disrespecting her is disrespecting you and disobeying God's commandment.

Execute your office in a way that your wife and children can really look to you as the **HEAD** of the family! That is what being the head means. *Never* abuse God's form of government by using your family authority selfishly. And *never* relinquish God's requirement of you to *rule* your family well.

Remember, God put you in an office. You are not perfect; you will make mistakes. What is important is that you repent and turn to your Father for help. The parable of the prodigal son teaches us that God will always take us back when we repent (Luke 15:11-24). Don't allow fear or guilt to immobilize you as a leader.

Solving Family Arguments

Let's look at another specific scenario where you may be able to use your office to benefit your family.

Many men, after a long day at work, come home and withdraw from the family. But think of the needs of the family that has been without your presence all day. Perhaps your wife has been dealing with children for many hours. Not only might she be craving adult conversation and attention from her husband, at that moment she *needs* you to relieve her of the responsibility for the children—to take charge and *lead* the family.

What a difference it makes to a family to have an actively engaged man on the scene, who will push aside his own desires and truly devote himself to their needs.

On this particular day, you were chewed out at work; traffic was terrible; your nerves are shot. Then, you arrive home to have even more problems dumped on you: The children are acting up; the meal is late; your wife is frazzled. Raw emotions can easily blow the situation up into a full family argument!

This is one of those times when we can allow our emotions to get the better of us. But recognize that *confusion* in your family is not authored by God! (1 Corinthians 14:33). It indicates the presence of selfishness and vanity (e.g. James 4:1-3). The devil broadcasts these attitudes and is ready and eager to exploit such circumstances in order to tear a family apart.

Here it is especially critical for you to draw on God's help and truly *lead* your family! Don't expect your wife to take the first

step toward resolution—it must be **YOU**!

The moment you recognize what is going on, *stop*. Bring God into your thinking and seek a spirit-minded approach. This may mean apologizing for whatever you have done to contribute to the strife. You may need to pray then and there, silently in your mind, for help; other times you may be able to retire and pray alone on your knees, or even together with your wife. Before God, swallow your pride, let go of your vanity, and yield yourself to Him. Acknowledge your sin and those of your family and ask for His forgiveness. Ask that He would help expunge the negativity, resolve the problems, and draw you back together as one. Ask that, if any correction needs to be administered to the family, He will help you do it in love, with His balance of judgment, justice and mercy. Then rise from your prayer in faith, and allow God to restore your family to love, harmony and joy through you.

Remember the wisdom in Ephesians 4:26, and strive to bring any misunderstanding, disagreement or argument to a happy conclusion before the conclusion of that day.

Recognizing our faults and offering prayers of real repentance yields outstanding results for family unity. Try it—it works! God’s presence can instantly transform a war zone into a haven of peace. It is *your* responsibility to lead your family in times of difficulty in a way that invites Him in. A family led by a man who lovingly uses his office in this way will truly be blessed for it.

“When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn” (Proverbs 29:2). Under lax government, troubles will overwhelm us. But well-governed children are happy children.

Administer God’s law with affection, warmth, encouragement, instruction, correction and discipline. These are all facets of God’s love, and should flow from the authority God has given you as a father. Pray for His help in getting the balance right. Allow God to bless your family through you! Use your office so it will be the *gift* to those you lead as God intends. This is the road that leads your family from darkness into light, from disorder to harmony. It gives a wife security, stability, contentment, peace of mind. It gives children a window into godliness, and a blueprint for achievement and success.

6.2

FILL YOUR HOME WITH LOVE

*An ingredient no
family can live without*

A godly family is a **LOVING** family.
It is a place of smiles and warmth, of sharing and laughter, of joy. It is an incubator of happy memories.

Whether or not *your* family fits this description depends largely on *you*, **THE FATHER**. The *personality* of your family and the *climate* of your home life is fundamentally a reflection of *your* presence, your temperament, your approach, *your leadership*.

Yes, raising children—training human beings from birth to adulthood in how to be good human beings— is serious business. Fatherhood requires strength, discipline, virtue, courage and firmness.

But most of all, it requires **LOVE**.

Gerald Flurry has said that a parent's interaction with his children should be 85 percent love, 10 percent instruction (in love) and 5 percent correction (in love). Yes, you must have the courage to administer fatherly instruction and correction in a society that rejects both. But you must also multiply that amount of time you spend several times over in cherishing, loving and giving fatherly warmth to your children.

God the Father is the ultimate Father. And God is **LOVE** (1 John 4:8). He created human fatherhood to reflect this love onto children.

Jesus Christ declared God the Father (John 1:18). We fathers can and should follow His example and passionately declare the Father to our own children. Your righteous example as a father will help your children relate to God their Father.

What are you teaching your sons and daughters about their heavenly Father? How is your behavior shaping their attitudes toward Him? Does your home life reflect a family living under the leadership of a **LOVING FATHER**?

A Positive Personality

Love is an essential part of any human being's life. An unloved baby who receives no affection, even if mechanically cared for, will not develop into a healthy adult. He or she will suffer psychological, physical and spiritual scars. *A child learns to love*

by being loved. Spiritually it is the same: “We love him [God], *because he first loved us*” (1 John 4:19). John 3:16 explains, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son”

Work to bring that love into your family all you can. If you want your children to be loving, balanced and vibrant, set a positive personal example. It starts with you.

In 2 Corinthians 1:24, the Apostle Paul explains this about the job of a minister: “Not for that we have dominion over your faith, **BUT ARE HELPERS OF YOUR JOY**” This is a wonderful goal for the father in a family as well. Helping your children build and preserve joy is a key responsibility. And in a world where young people are under attack from so many sources, fulfilling it has never been more difficult—and *never more needed*.

Study again 1 Corinthians 13. This is a chapter we should etch into our minds and our memories. It is packed with fantastic practical points for your family life.

Consider what God is teaching us in the first three verses. What makes a family successful? It may have a lot of activity; it may develop children’s talents; it may perform charitable acts; it may seem impressive on the outside in various ways. But *does it have godly LOVE?* **THAT** is what makes a family!

Your duty is to lead, protect, provide for, correct and educate your children. Each of these jobs is critical—yet fulfilling all of them could still amount to nothing if they are not saturated with daily doses of positive, loving time and attention!

God’s love is not jealous, boastful or arrogant, rude, selfish, irritable or resentful. It is patient and kind, optimistic and hopeful, and it rejoices at goodness. This love needs to flow into and out of our lives through our actions.

A family thrives when a father is positive and optimistic. It exudes the right kind of energy when he is uplifting, happy, attentive to everyone’s abilities and strengths, and generally enjoyable to be around.

God wants us to develop our personalities so they are a force for good in our families. “Your personality is a power,” Herbert W. Armstrong wrote, “if you develop and train it so as to charm, influence, persuade others rightly, to bring pleasure and encouragement and sunshine and inspiration to others, and to

lead them as they ought to be led. ... [A] charming, captivating and persuasive personality is one of the greatest forces for GOOD with which an all-wise God endowed you" (*Good News*, November 1951).

Show *by your example* how to have joy and happiness. In general, your expression, voice and body language should radiate joy, peace, love and happiness. Happiness and joy are infectious, especially when they emanate from a position of authority. Use good humor. Be personable, warm and friendly. Smile genuinely, smile big, and smile often.

Mr. Armstrong described God's way of life as the abundant life, the simple yet cheerful life, filling people with inner happiness. "Now here is what this kind of life will mean," he wrote. "It means that you will be radiant. It means that God's Spirit in you will radiate cheerfulness and smiles, friendliness toward others, love, sincerity, calm courage, goodwill and interest in others, instead of being so self-conscious, with so much over-interest in your own self" (*Good News*, May 1986).

Be Positive!

It can be easy to see our children's flaws and weaknesses and overlook growth and accomplishment. Your job as a father does require that you pay attention to areas where your children need instruction and correction. But you must also look for areas where they need encouragement, compliments and praise. If your family environment is one of negativity, what will your children learn about God's Family?

Don't tear your children down. Beware the danger of constant, hard criticism and of arguing and belittling. Too much yelling, crying and frustration in a home invites evil influences. "[Y]e fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Yes, a father must raise his children with discipline, instruction and guidelines. But God specifically warns: *Fathers, do not be so harsh as to alienate, anger, discourage and frustrate your children.*

Talk positively about each other, both inside and outside of family settings. Don't hesitate to give sincere praise, commendation, smiles and embraces. The smallest gesture can be a big

deal when it comes from Dad. It tells a child, *I'm thinking about you*. Sincere and warranted positive reinforcement can be highly motivating to a child, inspiring him or her to greater heights of achievement.

Ask for God's guidance and blessing in getting the balance right in your child rearing. Rely on Him and His Word to guide you (Proverbs 3:5-6).

If you have multiple children, be equal in your attention; have no favorites.

"Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Philippians 2:2-4). Ensure this is happening in your home: that everyone is looking after each other, and everyone feels wanted and appreciated.

Tell your children you love them. God the Father was "well pleased" with His Son and made sure to tell Him (Matthew 3:17).

Communication

Every week there are 10,080 minutes. Do an inventory of how many of those minutes you spend in quality communication with your family. What is the communication like in your home? Do your children hear bickering and arguing? Or almost total silence? Or maybe just the continuous noise of the television?

Your home can be a place of arguing and conflict, or one of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness and self-control—the fruits of God's Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). It can be a place where you provoke your children to wrath (Ephesians 6:4), or where you provoke your family to love and to good works (Hebrews 10:24). It can be a place where time passes in solitude and neglect, or where the days are filled with activity and growth as you turn your heart to your children and your children turn their hearts to you (Malachi 4:5-6).

Communication is *vital* to a happy home. Family should be an environment where children will come and talk to you when something is on their mind—a concern, an achievement, a

simple observation. Take time to listen. Communication must go both ways: A father needs to talk, but he also needs to listen with genuine interest to what every family member has to say.

Meals are *crucial* opportunities for communication. Do not underestimate them. Do everything you can to consistently sit down to breakfast and dinner together as a family. Use this time to develop your conversational skills and those of each family member. Plan topics to discuss as necessary. Lead the conversation in a way that brings each family member in. The benefits of making this a priority will far exceed your expectations.

We need to communicate often and without fear. Seek out your sons' and daughters' thoughts and feelings. Learn about their friends, their grades, their projects, their aptitudes, their struggles, their emotions, their fears, their aspirations. If your son is dismissive about a problem happening in study hall, probe a bit. If your daughter persistently wants to buy inappropriate clothing, get more involved. Make no apology for being involved in your children's lives! Even if your children try to push you away, your love for them must win out. They will forget the friend, the skirt, the club or whatever negative influence seems so important at the moment. But they will not forget that their father loved them.

The parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) teaches powerful lessons in fatherhood. The father in this parable loved his son even after he made foolish and sinful decisions. When the son traveled home in repentance, his father's heart was filled with love, joy and gladness (verse 20), not bitterness and shame. He ran to meet his boy and expressed affection and emotion, embracing and kissing him. Before his son even said a word, he was filled with compassion and forgiveness. This godly father thought the best of his child. Like God the Father, he yearned to embrace his son into his bosom.

Notice too how the father responded to his faithful son when he reacted to his brother's return with jealousy. He was attentive to the needs of his family. Though the faithful son probably had stepped outside or had said little, his father knew him well, knew something was wrong, lovingly reasoned with him and gave him some needed perspective, and praised his faithfulness.

This father experienced two different attitude problems in his two sons, and responded to each in a masculine, compassionate, loving manner.

Time at Home

The primary way you will create joy in your home is by spending time there. Nothing can take the place of your presence.

The problem is, in today's world, your workplace is probably not in or near your home. You don't work with your son in the barn or teach your daughter to feed the chickens as fathers did in the past. During the workweek, for hours a day you are separated from your wife and children by miles of pavement. Sometimes work, errands or other responsibilities take away additional hours even in the evenings.

This makes your hours at home crucial. Each hour spent away from your children makes the hour you spend with your children even more important.

During the workday, your attention is consumed by your work. But do not forget the family. Strive to get in touch with your wife (perhaps even your children) during the day if possible. You may be absent, but your influence can be present.

When you get home, you may be mentally and or physically tired. Don't allow this to hinder you. These are precious hours. A miniature workday is just beginning: a family workday.

Connect with your children; spend time with them; lead them. Learn what they have been up to, what their attitudes and thoughts are. Share your experiences and thoughts. Discuss progress on goals for each child and for the family as a whole. God commands you to teach His law and statutes to your children and to make them a talking point in the home. You only have a short time in the morning and evening to accomplish this and to build up your children and your home.

After dinner, you may be tempted to finally check your e-mail or flip on the TV. Instead, spend these crucial hours and minutes with your wife and children. Compared with their need for your influence and interaction, the e-mail is not urgent and the show is worthless. Even time spent *together* looking at a

screen is usually squandered. It rarely builds up the family. If you do choose to have a family movie night, make sure it is worth the precious minutes and hours it eats up.

Perhaps you want or need to work on a project around the house. If possible, bring your child along. Involve him or her, even if it is only to ineffectually tap a wrench against a fixture or to watch you from the porch as you mow the lawn. Where safety allows, the more involvement, the better. Bringing your daughter with you to repair the shed door will probably take you more time to finish the job, but the ultimate effect on her will be worth it.

Do Things Together

Do you have happy memories from your childhood? You might remember picnicking at a lake, visiting your cousins, winning a game, learning to ride a horse, or taking that vacation to Yellowstone. For children, these fond recollections are memories of family, friends and fun. What children do not realize is that these occasions usually only came about because of a father's *intentional decision* and *effort* to make them happen. Your father had to take off of work early to bring you to the state fair. He had to spend several weeks' worth of pay to bring your family to visit your cousins in the mountains. He had to ignore his back pain to attend your recital.

Your father enjoyed these experiences along with you, but he also had to invest planning and resources to make them possible. If he hadn't focused on your interests instead of his own, or on your development instead of his daily grind, these happy occasions never would have happened.

Now *you* are the father. It's *your* turn to create opportunities for joyful moments for your family. Take time out to do things together. *Plan* time to be together, and plan time in both quality and quantity—because these things don't just happen. You must give thought to it to *make* them happen.

Having a weekly routine can help. Consider a Sabbath morning walk with the family, or a regular, scheduled family game night. Involve the whole family in day-to-day tasks such as

keeping up the yard, raking leaves, maintaining the home, washing the cars, preparing for the weekly and annual sabbaths, planning family goals. Design your own family ventures. Families grow close when they are involved in projects.

Plan joyous occasions and activities. Take the family to a ball game. Save up for a trip to the coast. Special opportunities do not have to be expensive or even outside of the house—there is plenty you can do right at home. Go to the extra effort of having other families over for dinner. Bring the extended family together for Thanksgiving. Get involved in group activities together through your congregation, school activities or events you organize with other individuals or families: picnics, swimming, family sports, hiking, fishing. Be aware, though, that often at a group activity, your family members can be separated and doing things apart from one another. Be sure that if this happens, you're not using it as a substitute for private family time where you can really be *together*.

A father should rarely let a day go by without seeing and being with his family at least for a while. And planned activities with the whole family should be regular—generally weekly at least. Often this will be a challenge. But make it a priority, and it will be one of the most gratifying experiences of your life. It will truly make yours a family of joy and love!

Let God Build Your Family

A family will only be happy if there is spiritual well-being. If there is spiritual disease, the whole family suffers.

Look for the fruits of God's Holy Spirit in your family. God's Spirit needs to flow. Christ said, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (John 15:1-2). In verse 11, Christ said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

Do you really want a happy family? True joy only comes through the flow of the Spirit in us. Build with God's Spirit, and use it to bring your marriage and family together.

Every family experiences tough times on occasion. Problems pull weak families apart—but they draw strong families together! If we understand God’s Word, we will recognize a trial as something that God allows for our good, to teach us and to develop our character. Every happy home needs security, especially in times of trial. When you face a challenge or test, be determined to use it as an opportunity to *unify*, especially in prayer. It will draw your family closer both physically and spiritually.

Christ, Paul, Peter and John all had joy and hope even during the toughest trials. More importantly, each had a great desire to *share* the source of their joy and hope. Even in deep trial, these men were determined to provoke happiness and joy in others.

God wants your family to be as happy as His Family! He wants you to have full joy in the abundant life right now.

“Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep. Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate” (Psalm 127:1-5).

Our children are God’s gift to us, but He must be the one building our house. Unless God is deeply involved, it will come to nothing. Let God build your family!

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren [family] to dwell together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1). This is what God has to say about a unified home, filled with His love: “It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore” (verses 2-3).

You can dwell together in that kind of unity by leading your wife and children to God the Father. This will fill your home with love, and lead to life forevermore!

6.3

TURN THEIR HEARTS TO GOD

Make your home a place of instruction.

If you have children living under your roof, then you are a minister. You pastor a little congregation, responsible before God for the spiritual education of those little lambs. This duty comes with the opportunity to instruct from Scripture.

Early in my marriage, I heard a sermon that admonished men to conduct family Bible studies. Though my wife and I had no children, I was moved to apply the instruction. I prayed that God would inspire the subjects to cover. I began thinking about what we really needed in order to grow as a couple. Then I looked into the Bible to search out God's mind in these areas.

Then—and this was the crux of it—I sat down with my wife and taught her what God had taught me. We had specific studies on preparing for the holy days, improving our Sabbath observance, deepening our fellowship. When we received some inheritance money after my grandfather died, I gave a study on managing wealth and avoiding materialism. When we started to talk about having children, I gave a study on counting the cost and recognizing the responsibility involved.

This was a life-changing experience. It put God at the center of our family. It forced me to be more attentive to my family's spiritual needs. It developed my mindset as a leader. It improved my study habits and showed me just how *practical* God's Word really is. It encouraged my wife to view me as her spiritual head. It unified our thinking and drew us closer together.

A man is responsible for leading his wife spiritually. Once children enter the picture, that duty increases. God *commands* us to instruct those children from His Word. Through us, God wants to bring those children up in His truth and usher them into His eternal Family. He also wants to use this opportunity to prepare *us* to better fulfill the job we will be doing for all eternity.

Moses's Urgent Plea

Moses felt a deep responsibility to build the families of Israel. In Deuteronomy—his final instruction to God's people just before he died—this great man repeatedly emphasized parents' duty to pass on spiritual wisdom to their children and grandchildren.

“And these words which I command you today shall be in your

heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up” (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; NKJV). The phrase “teach them diligently” means to *repeat intensively*, to do something again and again—like sharpening a blade through repeated grinding or friction. Moses had witnessed a lot of failure among Israel’s families. You can sense his urgency: *Commit these words to heart—then teach them DILIGENTLY to your children, and discuss them at every opportunity. This is how to survive as a nation!*

Moses did more than command family Bible studies: He emphasized *reinforcing* those biblical lessons *throughout the day*, both at home (“in your house”) and away (“by the way”). He expected parents and children to be interacting often, and for the Bible to be a regular topic of discussion. He stressed the need for instructing each night before bedtime (“when you lie down”) and again each morning (“when you rise up”).

Moses followed up with a very practical instruction: He advocated writing scriptures and principles down and posting them in the home to help internalize them (verse 9; see also Deuteronomy 11:18-20).

Life can be a jungle of duties and distractions. We may agree with Moses’s statements in principle but then struggle to implement them. We may make an effort but lack the consistency these scriptures demand. The mention of *diligence* and *repetition* are aimed directly at countering our tendency to let this duty slip.

Generation to Generation

Consider the *rewards* of making family Bible instruction the *priority* God intends. Moses himself described the *rich blessings* these studies and discussions would bring, including a better relationship with God, stronger families and longer, more abundant life for ourselves and our children and grandchildren (Deuteronomy 11:21; 4:9-10; 6:2).

Every parent desires a close bond with his children. Quality family Bible study and discussion is a key to achieving that. Parent-to-child and grandparent-to-child spiritual instruction

is the glue that binds generation to generation. “One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts” (Psalm 145:4). This is a powerful antidote to the poisonous worldly influences that tear children away from their parents.

Even more: Obedience to this command welds individual families into a single nation under God. Moses showed that it ensures long-lasting national stability and guarantees a future as a godly nation! Meditate on these promises in conjunction with Proverbs 22:6: “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Consider the principle, and the incredible promise, in these scriptures. If parents in Israel had diligently followed the command to teach their children, *the nation never would have departed from God’s way!*

The same is true of the Church, spiritual Israel. Family instruction guarantees spiritual stability through the generations. Failure to do so causes catastrophe. We must make sure we are rearing our children to know and love the Bible. Parents, with *fathers* taking the lead, must do the lion’s share of instructing and teaching by personal example and positive instruction. The child’s main influence during the formative years must be *Dad*—and, by extension, *God the Father*. Develop lifelong bonds with your child, early in life, through education.

God is calling His very elect today to marry His Son and participate in the child rearing and spiritual instruction of the rest of the world! There is probably no better training for these duties than bringing up the children God has entrusted to our care “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). If we ignore this responsibility to our children today, how could God consider us fit to look after His own children as the Bride of Christ? This is a priority we must not let slip.

How to Go About It

The idea of expounding on the Scriptures for your family may seem daunting. Here are a few simple points that will help you move from agreeing in principle with this biblical command to actually making it a part of your family’s regular routine.

First, *you yourself* must be excited about the Bible. Look again at Deuteronomy 6. The two verses that precede the main instruction on teaching your children read, “And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart” (verses 5-6). You have to *love God* and *love His Word* to be stirred and excited about *your own* Bible study. If you struggle with your own studies, you won’t be motivated to teach; naturally, your children will struggle as well.

How much do you know about the Bible? Are you accustomed to searching the Scriptures for answers to your problems? Can you read a passage and expound on it? Can you relate Bible verses to real-life situations? Are you comfortable using Bible helps like concordances, lexicons and alternate translations? These are skills we should continually develop and refine throughout life (2 Timothy 2:15; 3:15-17; read also Hebrews 5:12-14). Commit yourself to it, and you will find yourself drawing closer to God, the Author, in exhilarating fellowship!

As you build excitement in your personal Bible study, your eagerness to pass it on to your children will increase. Cultivate that enthusiasm by acting upon it.

Your aim is to build a *regular habit* of instructing your children from God’s Word and talking about the things of God. Until you are in the habit, it may feel awkward and forced—but keep at it. Over time, it will become easier for you, and your children will grow more receptive and accustomed to it. Have a set time each morning and each evening before bedtime to at least talk about God, His truth and way of life.

At least a few times a week, this time should include *reading straight from the Bible*. It is fine to read high-quality youth Bible-based books and articles to your children. But your main habit in family Bible study should involve the Bible itself. You may want to go somewhat methodically through a portion of the Bible such as Proverbs or the Gospels. It would be wise to adapt your study at times according to your family’s specific needs at that time. You may want to choose a particular theme each week and give several related studies hitting that topic from various angles—law, history, proverbs, examples, prophecy.

Try to make God *real* to your children. Talk about His qualities of character. Show them what He looks like and what His throne room is like. Give them a sense of His might and power. Describe His miracles; read to them about His mighty acts.

Also have your children read aloud from the Bible. However slow and awkward it may be at first, they will learn. Consider giving different family members different translations and having each one read the verse in turn from the various translations. Good-quality translations include the New King James, Revised Standard Version and Moffatt translation.

Each specific study may only involve a single verse, or perhaps two to three related verses. Read the scripture, then rephrase it in plain terms and explain it. Make it practical; link it to real-life examples. Teach the *how* and *why* so they will thoroughly understand the instruction. Be creative in getting the concepts across. Make it fun, exciting. Be sure the children understand. In a two-parent household, your wife should also add to the discussion. Ask questions; have them think of examples of their own; encourage them to link the principles to their own lives. The more *practical* and *understandable* the teaching is, the easier it will be to reinforce it in discussion during the day.

Don't go on too long. Depending on your children's age and attention span, you might go for 5 to 20 minutes. Work to hold their interest and keep it a positive experience. Praise your children as they progress. Don't discourage them about things they forget—praise them for what they remember. Take advantage of the fact that they want to please you. Ensure the overall feeling is that studying the Bible is enjoyable, and that God's way is great!

What a positive command it is that we share our spiritual riches with our children! Deuteronomy 6:7 and related scriptures embody a *way of life*. A way pulsating with robust interactions between generations. A way where God's government is firmly in place, with God at the top and every member of the household experiencing the joy and stability that result.

Family Bible studies require diligent effort—but the blessings they produce are well worth it. And the way they prepare both our children and ourselves for our future in God's Family make them an invaluable treasure!

What to Teach

Excellent, righteous character is the goal every parent ought to aim for in our children. We need to rear them so they will embrace God's way of life as they grow older. This takes diligent effort from both parents. In addition to spiritual truths and aspects of strong character, teaching your children should also include physical and intellectual components. Here is a short list of things to focus on in your children's education:

Provide opportunities to expand their world. Travel, visits to museums and historical sites, a trip to the local fire station—these can truly build children's appreciation for the scope of the world they inhabit.

Teach good sportsmanship. Sports are invaluable in a child's education. Aside from health benefits, they can develop many aspects of character: heeding instructions, following rules, respecting officials, learning teamwork, applying themselves and more. Use games to teach resilience and perspective in defeat, and graciousness in victory. Teach your children always to do their best, and with a good attitude, win or lose. Sports bring challenges and setbacks; teach them to take those problems to God. God will help your children if they are praying and getting Him involved. These are invaluable life lessons.

Teach honesty and accountability. Even when quite young, children will naturally begin to lie in order to cover up wrongdoing or to inflate personal accomplishments. Teach the importance of admitting mistakes and accepting responsibility.

Teach them a solid work ethic from an early age. Assign chores and responsibilities around the house. Show by your example that you actually *enjoy* working. Teach them to focus on what they are doing, whether it be a chore or homework. Ingrain habits of avoiding distractions and finishing the task at hand.

Hold them to high academic standards. Children respond remarkably to their parents' expectations. If you permit sloppiness and carelessness, they will oblige. But if you expect good grades and excellence, they will rise to the challenge.

Help build good time-management habits. Teach them to work efficiently rather than needlessly stretching things out.

Show how to complete the harder, less desirable tasks first so they can truly enjoy the more pleasant tasks and play afterward.

Teach good manners and social graces. Help them see the effects of their actions on others. Teach them to think of others first. During meals, help them make good manners a habit.

Teach respect for the elderly and those in authority. Ensure they spend time with older people and are comfortable talking with them, with proper respect (Leviticus 19:32).

Know and control what goes into their minds. Be actively involved in what they consume through reading, listening and watching. Teach them to recognize right and wrong forms of entertainment, exercising their senses to discern good and evil (Hebrews 5:14). As they grow older, let them start to make their own choices—and guide them to make wise ones—or you can't expect them to make right choices once they come of age.

Show the importance of family unity. Pray, communicate, eat, work and play together as a family. This will help weld you together as a cohesive, harmonious and peaceful unit.

Prepare them to have a happy marriage. The most effective way to do this is to set a good example. Do not argue with your spouse in front of your children. Strive to not be at cross-purposes with each other. Uphold God's family government in your marriage, even if your mate is an unbeliever.

Teach them to pray. Pray regularly with them so they can hear you pray and you can hear them. Show how to properly praise God, thank God, ask for forgiveness and help in overcoming weaknesses, and pray for others.

Teach your children to believe and obey God. Don't assume that simply because they attend weekly Church services they are learning the true values in life. God's law, the Ten Commandments, sums up His way of life. That way must be taught. Use everyday examples of God's intervention, protection and other miracles to reinforce living faith—*faith with works*.

Give them a vision of their future. Teach them to *look forward* to God's soon-coming Kingdom and the marvelous opportunities awaiting them as princes and princesses in God's royal Family (Psalm 45:16). Teach them about God's incredible plan for them!

ABRAHAM

Teach Your Household

How he loved family! Even before having children, Abraham and his wife had a sizable household with a huge staff of helpers (Genesis 13:2, 6-7).

Abraham had a remarkable relationship with his servants. Where Genesis 12:5 says he had “gotten” these individuals, *Lange’s Commentary* says that refers not just to him having them work for him, but also teaching them to be “obedient to the law of the true God.” Other scriptures confirm this statement. Abram thought like a father even toward his servants! He instructed them in God’s truth and ensured that they walked in God’s way. He treated them as family. He was a grand patriarch.

Genesis 14 relates an incident where Abraham rescued his nephew’s family after an Assyrian attack. Verse 14 says “he armed his *trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen.*” This was quite a large army at the time. But these weren’t just any people. These were individuals *born in Abraham’s house*—children of his servants—who had grown to military-service age. He’d had these servants for many years—to the point where *multiple generations* lived together under his fatherly influence. These 318 men were Abram’s retinue, his personal staff, such as would accompany a ruler, diplomat or dignitary. The fact that these 318 men had been born in Abram’s house indicates that his household must have had several hundred people—maybe a thousand or more! And this was before Abram had a single child of his own!

In Genesis 18, God personally appeared to Abraham. These verses show a beautifully *personal* relationship between God and Abraham (e.g. verses 17-18). God loved His friend and really wanted to share His plans with him. In verse 19, God makes this statement about Abraham: “For I know him, that *he will command his children and his household after him*, and they

shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.”

This verse shows that Abraham’s calling was linked to the fact that God wanted a man who would *teach and train his children and his household to keep God’s way*. God saw how Abraham worked with his servants. This was one of the foremost qualities that excited God about this man! God said it was *because* Abraham was so diligent to *teach his household* that he could be chosen to become the father of many nations!

Abraham seized his opportunity and responsibility to be a teacher for God. He didn’t just enjoy being God’s friend; he wanted to bring *others* into that wonderful relationship.

When God said this, Abraham had only one son, Ishmael. But God said, *I called him because I want a man who will command his CHILDREN and his WHOLE HOUSEHOLD! And I know Abraham is up to the job! He will teach them the truth about my way of life!* God knew Abraham’s children would grow up right—even those who *hadn’t been born yet*—simply by observing how this man dealt with his family.

What powerful testimony of the importance of how we conduct our marriages and raise our children! God wants them to keep His way, to do judgment and justice. And if we command them His way, they will.

The fact is, there is probably no better training for the job God is calling His people to fulfill! Like Abraham, God wants a *large family*, and A LOT OF CHILDREN!

If we make educating our children a priority as Abraham did, we show God that we want to be part of that future! Abraham’s story shows that God truly gets excited when He sees us making it a priority to train our children—when He sees a father take the lead in conducting regular family Bible studies—when He sees a mother talking to her children about God throughout the day—when He sees parents getting children into the habit of praying when problems arise. This is exactly what He is looking for to help Him build His Family!

6.4

MAKE A MAN

What to do with that boy in your home

I thought I had learned a thing or two about child rearing after bringing up two daughters for several years. Then my wife and I had a son.

It was obvious within months that he was a unique creature. His sisters were fairly quiet and conservative in their play. He was a wrecking ball with lungs.

His sisters liked to dress things, decorate things, set things up, stack things on top of other things. He saw a stack of things as an invitation for demolition. He wanted to kick and punch. He enjoyed collisions. Somehow even his dinner plate looked to him like an artillery range. “Ah-h-h-h—BOOSH!” he would say while dropping his carrot into his potato.

We didn’t teach him these things. We tried to teach him civilized table manners and respect for other people’s things and for the structural vulnerability of the walls in our home. But the urge to dominate, to subdue, to conquer, he had in spades.

Some delusional academics think there are no inborn psychological differences between boys and girls—only what society teaches them. Poppycock. Without prodding, from early on my daughters would pick up a doll and begin cradling it and cooing to it. My son would pull the head off to see what was inside.

God made boys and girls different for a reason. Society’s willing ignorance of this truth is creating a mess of problems with the way we rear our boys. Perhaps in their early years they yearn to do battle in the arena; they are keen to exercise their strength—often in undisciplined and damaging ways. But society fears this. We are deeply ambivalent about masculine energy. Our female-dominated early education seeks to squash it. We embrace the convenience of indulging our sons’ natural enthrallment with inert entertainment; after all, if the boy is absorbed in a video game, he’s not whacking his brother with a bat. Without considering the consequences, we reward passivity; it is less alarming than ferocity.

Then we watch—as if helpless—while our sons grow self-indulgent, lazy, soft. Bit by bit, the stuff that made them different from their sisters becomes muted, stifled, or swallowed whole.

That we do this is understandable. But it’s a tragic mistake.

There is something valuable in our sons’ assertive boyishness.

It needs to be shaped and guided; it needs to be refined and balanced. But woe be to us—and to them—if it gets crushed.

Why? Because they, like you and me, are destined to be *leaders*.

Where Did That Boyishness Come From?

To prepare our sons to fulfill the role for which God created them, we need a clear concept of that role, as discussed in this book. Keep in mind the vision of godly masculinity so you can measure your son's behavior against that—to know what needs to *change* and what needs to *stay*, what needs to be shaped and developed. Raising a man requires knowing what the boy is to become.

That is not to say we should force our sons to grow up too soon. Tomorrow's men should begin their lives as happy, carefree *boys*; let them play and laugh and think as children. Don't create any sense of a *battle* between boys and girls or act like there's some mystery about girls they'll never understand. They should play happily together with other boys and girls in active sports and games. When society artificially foists on them false concepts about the opposite sex, they can feel uncomfortable and self-conscious; those relationships can seem complicated. Protect their simplicity and innocence: Let children be children.

As they grow, however, our sons must gain a sense of their role, not in a way that makes them *awkward* around girls and women, but that gradually teaches them their God-given *responsibilities* toward them. While the basic principles of child rearing are the same for boys and girls, each must be taught the different jobs they will fulfill in a future family. Boys require a different mindset and a different set of skills.

We must equip our sons to resist feminization and to become successful men. We must take special effort to bring them up to be strong, effective, successful, ambitious leaders.

Look at your own son. What sort of man are you making?

Do Things With Him

Meditate on the God-given role of a man: leader, provider, protector. Study the biblical qualities of manhood—self-disci-

pline, righteousness, responsibility, industry, resolve, ambition, courage, sacrifice. You won't find many of these in the world around you. You have to struggle to learn them and to do them.

Exemplify these virtues; give your son a model of manliness. A son needs to see, and have a right pride in, the strength and accomplishments of his dad. Dad ought to be a boy's hero. *Your manly example* is your best tool in teaching your son to be a man.

Next, create opportunities to instill these traits in your son.

Build his physical body. Sports can be a great opportunity to exhibit your own strengths and to teach them to your son. Be it a backyard game of soccer or basketball, playing catch or hitting a baseball in the park, take time to teach basic skills and a sportsmanlike approach to the game. Besides building lasting bonds of companionship, these are moments a son will never forget.

Develop in your son a love of the outdoors, of outdoor activities in the fresh air and sunshine. Help him learn to thrive outdoors, camping, hunting, fishing. This is not only healthy; a boy exposed to such situations often from his youth will gain real joy from such exposure that will help counter the confusion and self-centeredness brought by technology and social media.

Boys have a natural tendency to want to conquer—to storm the backyard and erect a barricade. Encourage that. We *want* our boys to be adventurous, courageous, visionary. After all, they were created to exercise dominion over the Earth and to subdue it (Genesis 1:28). We need to show them how to exert their strength in a godly, constructive way.

Teach the boy to *do things*. Don't let him stand awkwardly by, sitting on the sidelines while his friends or the family engage in an activity. Get him a dog and show him how to train it. Teach him to use things, to make things, to plant things, to manipulate his environment productively. If you can, show him how to change a tire, how to fix the car, how to do home repairs.

Most importantly, *spend time with him*. The father who teaches his son how to change the oil teaches a skill—but the more valuable thing is that he is *with* the boy.

God began the creation of human beings with the man, and immediately gave him *work to do* (Genesis 2:7, 15). God gave man physical things to teach him *good stewardship*—taking care of

the blessings we receive. Further, after Adam sinned, God actually made his workload *harder* (Genesis 3:17-19), knowing that physical labor is crucial to building character. God knows that when everything is handed to us, we just don't do well; He wants man to earn his bread through the sweat of his brow. And He wants men to *work* to provide for their families.

Teach your boy **HOW TO WORK**. Work together and show him how to *enjoy* work. The lessons Adam learned by having to “dress” and “keep” the Garden are lessons all boys need: to appreciate the value in hard work—to be patient and wait for fruits to show—to have realistic expectations of success—to enjoy labor. A boy needs to experience getting worn out and having to push himself when he feels like quitting.

Give him chores. Boys tend to be lazy; it's our duty to help them overcome that. Eventually, your son will need to get and hold a job outside the home. To become self-sufficient, to support a family and ultimately to create more value than he and his family consume, he needs a steady progression of jobs and opportunities that teach responsibility, self-motivation and *hard work*.

Proverbs 21:5-6 show that laziness leads to lying. This is something we especially want to guard our boys from. A young man who begins to lie and deceive rather than earning his pay through honest hard work is in trouble (Proverbs 20:17). Help him avoid this trap by *disciplining dishonesty*.

When your son values hard work, he will know the value of an honest day's pay. That provides another invaluable opportunity: teaching him how to save, how to pay his own way, how to spend wisely, how to be generous to others, how to give back to God. These are crucial skills for a man. Teach them when he is a boy.

Set your expectations high. Then encourage him enthusiastically for every inch he rises in reaching for that bar.

Spend real time with him, so he can watch and emulate you. Time together creates occasions to teach.

A Leader of Women and Children

As we work with our sons, we must keep another end goal in mind based on what else is revealed in the Genesis account: the

fact that a man needs a companion, a helper, and that God placed him in a leadership role within marriage (Genesis 2:18-24).

Your son was created to become a leader of women and children.

Teaching that role begins with the relationship between you and your wife. Give your son a strong example of a godly marriage and proper masculine, loving leadership in action. A boy will be drawn to emulate his father's strong, manly example.

Be the man you want your son to become. He is watching you. Your life is his most powerful model of masculinity.

You must ensure your son treats his mother with respect. God commands a son to *honor* and *obey* Mom (Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:1). This becomes increasingly crucial as he gets bigger. If at any time she does not have his respect and obedience, she should get you involved immediately, and you should put a STOP to it. (You should also ensure that your wife is never fighting your son, getting angry, ugly and shrill with him; this too is unhealthy.) A son who despises his mother is a fool (Proverbs 15:20). If he develops a confrontational relationship with her, he will be more competitive and combative around women.

A boy who honors his mom will grow up to honor his wife (1 Peter 3:7). When a boy learns this early, he begins to appreciate that men must always have a sense of duty toward women. This makes it more natural to later step into the responsibility of leading, protecting and providing for a family of his own.

Teach your son gentlemanly habits that reinforce his duties toward females in general: opening doors for women, standing when a woman enters the room, being attentive to a drink or jacket or something else she might need, walking on the sidewalk between a woman and traffic, not treating her roughly or joking at her expense the way he might with another boy.

In preparing your son to fulfill his role, pay attention to how you discipline him. Do not browbeat him or put him down. Don't instill cowering submission in him. Teach him to have godly confidence—and godly humility. How? With encouragement. Encourage his strengths. Praise his successes and achievements.

Without sacrificing her authority, your wife should also lovingly support your son. She should have sensitivity to his God-given role. As he grows, she should show him respect,

without demeaning and emasculating him—or pampering him. She should not do his work for him, even when he struggles.

One of the Best Things You Can Do

An area to give special consideration to is media. One of the great challenges to today's fathers is to resist the pervasive, overwhelming tendency to become fixated on a video or computer screen for great portions of the day. Technology is a strong drug. It grabs young minds and dominates them. Boys in particular tend to love the stuff—especially video games.

The worst example you can set for your son is to be a couch potato, mesmerized by television and other devices. Image says a lot to a youth, especially a teen. A dad who is a blob of inertia will probably raise a son in the same image. A dad who is fit, athletic and muscle-toned is likely to produce a son in the same image—if he spends the time to help his son develop such a manly frame.

The Kaiser Family Foundation says children ages 8 to 18 spend about six hours a day with media: television, radio, computers (not including schoolwork), music players and so on. That is over 45 hours a week—longer than the average workweek. That is also more time than they spend with their parents (less than 16 hours), in physical activity (10 hours), or doing homework (just over 5 hours). It's not difficult to see a correlation between increased media use and family breakdown, childhood obesity and declining academic performance.

Beyond the mere *time* issue, though, is the *content* of that media. Studies prove it is hurting our boys. It is our duty as parents to intervene. "As a pediatrician I can tell you that disconnecting, or strictly limiting and strictly supervising your son's access to electronic media, is one of the best things you can do for his emotional, mental and physical health," writes Meg Meeker in *Boys Should Be Boys*. Vigilance here can help prevent a multitude of problems from taking root in our sons' lives.

Boys tend to be drawn to media violence far more than girls, and there is plenty out there to inflame that appetite. This violence hurts our children; studies have found that boys who watch violent TV turn more aggressive—even with brief

exposure, but much more with larger doses. Playing violent video games correlates to even worse antisocial aggression.

Video games are increasingly graphic and realistic, and in many of them the object is to kill people. The games strongly parallel military techniques used to prepare men for violent combat. Violent video games desensitize our boys to human suffering and actually condition them to kill.

Media violence tends to be both glamorous and immoral. When a boy is bombarded by these images, he “can easily shift from believing that a man is supposed to be trustworthy and self-controlled (as you, his father, might have taught him) to believing that real men are cruel and aggressive,” Meeker says.

Where media depictions of masculinity are brutal and destructive on the one hand, they are childish and stupid on the other. The almost universally portrayed stereotype is one of a strong, competent female having to deal with a goofy, idiotic male. Roles between the sexes as God intended are flipped upside-down and twisted in knots—then steeped in vulgar, adolescent humor that mostly appeals to childish males.

The greater our sons’ exposure to that nonsense, the more ingrained in their thinking it will become.

Ensuring that our sons’ model of responsible manly behavior remains strong requires limiting those false images and providing a good example and solid instruction in what is true and right.

Safeguard His Purity

One particularly lethal stealth missile from the media aimed at our boys is sex. The Internet makes terrible filth incredibly accessible. Today, the average age of a boy’s first exposure to pornography is 11. *Almost half* of boys in grades 3 through 8 have visited “adult” websites. We must be defenders of our sons’ purity in a world where sexual impurity is everywhere.

“Porn and smut pose an awesome threat to your boys,” writes James Dobson in *Bringing Up Boys*. “A single exposure to it by some 13-to-15-year-olds is all that is required to create an addiction that will hold them in bondage for a lifetime. It is more addictive than cocaine or heroin.” Early exposure to pornography

can distort normal channels of sexual stimulation—which are designed by God and wholesome when used properly—into all manner of perversion. “Many men who have succumbed to these perverse sexual appetites have traced them to the dawn of their adolescence,” Dobson explains.

Pornography is horribly degrading, especially to women. Again, God intends your son to grow up to be a *protector* of and *provider* for women. If he gets ensnared by lust, it handicaps his ability to successfully fulfill that calling.

Talk to your son. “[F]athers must assume that a difficult sexual struggle is occurring in their sons’ lives,” writes Douglas Wilson in *Future Men*. “[A] father must talk to his son and teach him. The teaching must consist of more than, ‘Yeah, I had this problem when I was your age, too.’ The teaching must be grounded in the Word of God—what does the Bible teach about masturbation, lust, fantasy and so forth?

“A father should check with his son and not wait for his son to ask. Further, he should check periodically and regularly. Every son needs guidance and accountability from his father in this area.” Consider how many warnings to young men Solomon put in the book of Proverbs against this sin (Proverbs 2:16-19; 5:3-14, 20-23; 6:24-35; 7:5-27; 9:13-18). He knew of his own father’s struggles and his own; he had seen other men fall. So he was up front about it. Make these subjects easy to discuss with your son. Show the genius of God’s design. Point to the positive, and show why it is worth protecting. Herbert W. Armstrong’s book *The Missing Dimension in Sex* (available at no charge upon request) is an invaluable tool; read it together with him when he is in his early teens.

If we do our part, we can go a long way in giving our sons one of the most priceless gifts he can possess: a clean conscience.

Our sons need a strong moral compass in order to navigate this crucial aspect of life and to make it to manhood as unscathed as possible. We want to facilitate any use of technology and media that is genuinely good for our boys—that builds right knowledge, cognitive development and character—while drawing firm lines on what will hurt them. Knowing where to do this—both in quantity of use and in content—requires educating ourselves and asking God for wisdom and discernment.

Teach him right from wrong. Show him that a real man, like King David, says, “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes ...” (Psalm 101:3). Provide an excellent example yourself, and supplement it with plenty of instruction.

Prepare Him for His Destiny

As your son grows, teach him to accept responsibility for himself. Teach him to own up to his actions and not make excuses. Don’t let him protect his selfish masculine pride. Don’t let him shift responsibility or blame and flee the burdens of leadership. Being a leader requires making difficult, unpopular decisions. We all tend to be people-pleasers. Your son needs people skills, but also the courage to stand alone. Teach him to obey God’s definition of right and wrong, and to stand against the crowd when he has to. This takes *courage*, and you must teach it to him.

Help him overcome self-centeredness. Encourage him to seize opportunities to do things that benefit others at the cost of benefiting himself. Teach him the intelligence, the sensitivity and the magnanimity to identify the needs of others. Teach him to see the big picture. Teach him to see things from God’s perspective.

This world needs strong, masculine boys who will become strong, masculine men. The main way we parents can fill that need is by training our sons to embrace their destiny as leaders. This means giving them a good example, instruction, discipline, rising levels of responsibility—and plenty of encouragement.

The job is difficult—but you don’t have to do it alone. Just give God opportunities to use you to shape your future man.

Of his own father, his model of manhood, Theodore Roosevelt said this: “The thought of him now and always has been a sense of comfort. I could breathe, I could sleep, when he had me in his arms. My father—he got me breath, he got me lungs, strength—life.”

What an incomparable blessing such a strong, reassuring, manly presence is to a boy. Be that presence in the life of your son. Build the relationship that will guide him to godly manhood—and godly fatherhood.

Your boy needs you. Raise him to be a man.

DAVID

Instruct Your Sons

One of the greatest men of the Bible, David, scored prodigious achievements as a poet, musician, warrior, administrator, builder and king that are worthy of study by every man. Here we will consider his legacy as a father.

Because of mistakes in his life—mistakes God recorded for us to learn from—David had terrible problems with his sons. He neglected to raise them properly and failed to train them well. His son Absalom led a revolt to steal his throne. Later his son Adonijah did the same thing.

God laid much of the blame on David. 1 Kings 1:6 reveals that David never restrained Adonijah or held him accountable for his actions. The Moffatt translation reads, “His father had never checked him all his life, by asking what he meant by his conduct.” Surely the same was true of Absalom. Correction from Dad would have been a great blessing to these young men, and their lives suffered for lack of it.

Rearing a prince for God takes real work. You must observe your son closely. You must educate him in right behavior. You must be attuned to his weaknesses and commit to helping him overcome them. And you *must* RESTRAIN HIM AT TIMES. If you don’t, he will end up bringing shame on himself, on your family, and on you.

One of David’s strengths was that he learned from his mistakes. After the disasters with Absalom and Adonijah, David sought to do a much better job fulfilling his responsibility in raising his son Solomon.

David clearly worked to prepare Solomon for the responsibilities of manhood and kingship. He spent time educating him (see Proverbs 4:1-4). He taught Solomon all about God. He instilled within his son a real respect for God’s fantastic promise of a kingly throne (2 Samuel 7:12-16; 1 Kings 3:5-6). He

trained in him a wonderful humility and submissiveness to God (verses 7-9). He shared with Solomon his own passion for building a house for God. He had prepared abundantly for that spectacular construction project, and Solomon dutifully carried it out after his father's death. The way that Solomon prayed at the temple's dedication shows that his father had well conveyed to him its profound spiritual significance (1 Kings 8:22-53).

Just before he died, in the last of what must have been many fatherly training sessions, David sought to give his son the most important wisdom he could, a summary of the deepest lessons of kingship: "I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man; And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself" (1 Kings 2:2-3).

What wonderful instruction. David directed his son to avoid the sins of his brothers and to establish an obedient relationship with God that would enable God to bless and prosper him.

This is how to be a *real man*. If you want to be truly, genuinely masculine, this is how. If you want to teach your son how to be a man, this is the lesson he must learn and apply.

This was David's advice to Solomon. Heed these foundational words, and follow David's fatherly example. Teach your son to show himself a man.

6.5

BE YOUR DAUGHTER'S HERO

*Protect her from a cruel world,
show her what it means to be
cherished, and turn her heart
to her heavenly Father.*

Here is something you may *think* you already know, but the full truth of which is more powerful and exciting than you probably realize.

Our ultimate responsibility is to turn our *children's hearts toward God the Father* (Malachi 4:6). That is a big job. Happily, though, God has implanted within their hearts a natural yearning for the love, stability, protection, guidance and correction of a father. When it is lacking, children wither or crack. When it is present—when a man fulfills his God-given role with strength, authority, compassion, sacrificial generosity and spiritual maturity—they flourish.

You know that, but you may not fully realize just *how potent* your influence is, especially with your daughter.

For her, you are nothing less than the epicenter of her world.

If you have a daughter in your home, pay attention in your interactions with her. She aches for your attention. She yearns to win your affection. She is extremely sensitive to your words, your deeds, your touch. She craves your awareness, your love. She needs your protection, your security. She values your convictions, your stability. Far more than you think.

Even your teenage daughter who is pouting or shouting and pushing you away is actually testing your commitment to her. You must be man enough—your love must be tough enough—to tear down those obstacles and prove that you care.

Wrap your mind around this truth: You are a *wonderful gift from God* to your daughter! You are truly *valuable* in ushering her toward a rich and fulfilling womanhood.

She Needs a Father

“Dads, you are far more powerful than you think you are,” writes Meg Meeker in *Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters*. “Daughters are never lukewarm in the presence of their fathers. They watch you intensely. They hang on your words. They hope for your attention, and they wait for it in frustration—or in despair. They need a gesture of approval, a nod of encouragement, or even simple eye contact to let them know you care and are willing to help.

“When she’s in your company, your daughter tries harder to

excel. When you teach her, she learns more rapidly. When you guide her, she gains confidence. If you fully understood just how profoundly you can influence your daughter's life, you would be terrified, overwhelmed or both."

Your daughter needs your masculinity, your ability to confront and solve problems, your logic, your firmness. "Let me tell you a secret about daughters of all ages," Meeker writes. "[T]hey love to boast about how tough their dads are—not just physically, but how strict and demanding they are. Why? Because this allows daughters to 'show off' how much their fathers love them. If only you could be privy to the private conversations of girlfriends."

A daughter *needs* a Daddy! Her sense of *who she is* depends a lot on *you*. What she thinks about boys and men; how she relates to them; whether she trusts other people, especially males; whether she feels and acts feminine; whether she is glad to be a young woman; whether she feels worthy of other people's love; how confident she is; how independent, how responsible—studies have shown *all these things* are deeply affected by a girl's relationship with her Daddy.

The awesome spiritual reason for this is that *we all need God the Father!* And God gave us physical fathers to help us come to understand and know *Him* better! A girl's physical, emotional and spiritual need for a strong physical father points her in the direction of her heavenly Father.

If you do your job right, then *no one else* can help your daughter more in learning how to relate to God. The more she builds that physical relationship and seeks to please you, the more it will fortify her spiritually.

Teach True Beauty

Our world is full of toxic influences: pressures on our daughters to look and act in ungodly ways; assaults on modesty, decency, virtue. This world is geared to make them self-centered, beauty-obsessed and materialistic.

The pressure on a girl to be pretty can be intense. She naturally tends to want to look lovely, sweet and special, and that inclination must be guided. God is not against outward

beauty—He created it, and it points to the *spiritual* beauty He creates inside of us. God describes women like Sarah, Rebekah and Esther as outwardly beautiful. But He also says beauty is *vain*. He advises women not to get wrapped up in beauty that will soon fade. He wants women to focus on inward beauty: righteous character (e.g. Proverbs 31:30; 1 Peter 3:3-4).

What makes the pressure to be pretty worse is how society often *defines* beauty. It focuses on extremes—unhealthy thinness, masculine muscularity, oversexed voluptuousness. For many girls, the pressure is so strong that they develop eating disorders; some undergo cosmetic surgery before their bodies have finished developing! Unhealthy messages about body image can induce vanity, materialism and other character flaws, as well as a mishmash of health problems.

This trend proves the influence of the god of this world, the prince of the power of the air (2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2). This being was *lifted up with vanity* because of HIS OWN BEAUTY (Ezekiel 28:16-17). He transforms himself as an “angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14), making his twisted thinking look glamorous and attractive.

Take an unblinking look at this ugly reality facing your daughter. “While you want the world to be cautious and gentle with her,” Meeker writes, “it is cruel beyond imagination—even before she is a teen.” A failure to recognize this makes you ill equipped to battle it with sufficient firepower.

You are your daughter’s greatest hope to escape these pressures. *You, with God’s help*, are your daughter’s *number one protection*. You need to stand between her and those satanic poisons, and give her a chance to grow up with her innocence preserved and her dignity intact. Satan would have you believe you don’t stand a chance. That is a lie. The truth is, *she* doesn’t stand a chance *without* you—a shining knight with a lion’s heart, carrying God’s banner.

One can see why God puts such responsibility on practicers of true religion to look after the fatherless (James 1:27).

You have a special role as the first male authority in your daughter’s life to ensure that she not only feels beautiful but that she also knows what *true* beauty is.

Make sure she dresses in a way that pleases God. Teach her that modest clothes make her more beautiful. Immodesty is actually ugly—it arouses lust in males and leads to more ugliness. Ask your daughter: Does she want to be an *object* or *truly* beautiful? She can attain beauty the way God intended, through living a happy life that shines through the face and then adorning her body in a way that highlights her figure but doesn't draw undue attention to it at the expense of her character, mind, sparkle, energy and smile.

And whether or not she understands this deeper truth yet, make sure when she goes out the door she is dressed modestly.

The world's fashion holds two extremes. One is stretchy, clingy clothes that too tightly conform to the female body. The other is baggy, form-hiding clothes that do little to distinguish girls from boys. Teach your daughter to avoid both extremes. God wants her to dress femininely, with modest yet flattering, attractive clothing and hair that reflects her inner character.

Teach her, with the aid of her mother (assuming she is in the picture), that good hygiene and proper health often does more for the appearance than clothing. Exercise helps yield good muscle tone and healthy skin.

Train Her Emotions

Remind your daughter that her most beautiful asset is her SMILE. Many young women are too self-conscious and insecure to smile. And society often discourages it. Many “beautiful” women grace magazine covers with sour looks on their faces; many pop stars and fashion icons look *angry*. Teach your daughter that she exudes beauty when she has a positive attitude and facial expression. When she is in a foul mood, she is acting “ugly.” When she is happy and smiling, tell her how beautiful she is when she behaves that way.

In a world that has trashed the God-ordained role of women, females are miserable as a result. Many are bitter, edgy, brash and mean. Help your daughter learn to get control of and manage her emotions. Express how much you appreciate it when she doesn't allow herself to be moody, grumpy, irritable and self-centered, but rather makes an effort to be a ray of

bright, cheerful sunshine. Encourage her to be *sweet*—sweet-natured. Tell her how much more beautiful she is to you when she has that attitude. Ecclesiastes 8:1 says “wisdom maketh [the] face to shine.” Teach her the truth about eternal, inner beauty and how it will cause her face to shine more than all those who spend thousands of dollars keeping their face “lifted.”

Encourage her to develop feminine mannerisms. Even a plain-looking person can be very attractive with a feminine personality—happy, fun-loving, tender, soft, lovable, innocent and pure. A physically beautiful woman who lacks discretion can really turn others off (Proverbs 11:22).

What your daughter needs most is real, lasting *spiritual* beauty. Study 1 Peter 3:1-6 with her. Though Sarah was outwardly beautiful, it was her trust in God and His government that gave her the most beautiful adorning any woman could desire. Teach your daughter to trust and obey you and her heavenly Father.

Your daughter is a joy when she has a teachable, childlike attitude. God, her ultimate Father, calls “a meek and quiet spirit” an ornament of great price in a woman (verse 4). This doesn’t mean she should be a pushover or shy. Meekness is a fruit that manifests itself in all those (male and female) who have God’s Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). *Quiet* means tranquil or peaceable. Few things are less attractive to a spiritually astute man than a brash or contentious woman (Proverbs 21:9, 19; 25:24; 27:15).

Remember this as you guide this future woman. Recognize when she is falling prey to attitudes of stubbornness, resistance to authority, arrogance—and confront them! Recognize that they make her miserable (and everyone around her). Help your daughter nurture the humility, the meekness, that God values so highly in all of us, and that He praises as being particularly lovely when manifested femininely by a woman or a girl. If your daughter can learn how to submit happily to you today, that lesson will last her whole life and on into eternity.

In 1 Timothy 2:9, the Apostle Paul urges Christian women to “adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing” (NKJV). Verse 10 shows that “good works” are also part of the formula for what makes a Christian woman beautiful.

Teach your daughter how to show respect, how to seek godly humility, and how to develop her mind in the understanding of God's Word. If she seeks these virtues, she will one day possess the beauty of a God being—with a radiant face, shimmering hair and dazzling eyes!

How She Learns Love

Build an *open* relationship with your daughter. Many girls find their fathers difficult to talk with because these men are preoccupied with their own interests and tend to brush their daughters off. Don't be one of those dads! Make time for regular conversation. Build rapport and make sure she is comfortable talking with you. Ask her questions and make sure she can seek your counsel, solicit your help, even be up front with you about her mistakes. Her *spiritual* Father truly loves and desires such communication. "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me," He says (Proverbs 8:17). Such a relationship on the physical level facilitates one on the spiritual level. If your daughter approaches you to talk, recognize what an opportunity God is giving you. Make the most of that moment.

Give her instruction and opportunities to take responsibility for herself, building habits of organization, industry, attentiveness and service. Encourage her to apply herself to her education. Ask yourself whether your daughter is on track to become a capable and industrious helpmeet, homemaker, educator and mother. Now is the time for her to build that mindset. Help her learn to recognize other people's needs and to fill them, to look for ways to help around your house, learning the skills of homemaking. Take notice as she does these things.

Daughters learn from their fathers how to relate to men. They learn to appreciate their own femininity. They learn that they are worthy of a man's love by loving and being loved by their fathers. It is from you that your daughter learns what proper, respectful male attention looks and feels like. It is from her interactions with you that she gains the sense of self-respect that is so crucial to resisting inappropriate male advances.

A daughter who is not cared for by her father will either feel

she is not worthy of a man's love or will seek that attention in misguided, damaging ways. Daughters without fathers have a void in their lives that they often try to fill with sex. A girl who stops living with dad after age 6 is twice as likely to have sex by age 16—and if deprived of dad's presence *before* age 6, *five times* as likely. Often a fatherless girl's ability to remain adjusted sexually and emotionally with one male is notably impaired throughout life.

Think about how much you demonstrate your love to your daughter. Are you teaching her that she is lovable? That she is worthy of being loved and cherished and treated with tender, selfless devotion? She looks to you for support, and to tell her what you find admirable about her. Love and adore her. If you show proper love and attention, she will feel cherished, protected and truly beautiful. You cannot overestimate the value to your daughter of your consistent demonstration of unconditional love.

Tell her how much you love it when she runs up to give you a hug when you arrive home from work. Stay alert. If your daughter makes the effort, show your appreciation.

When your daughter becomes a teenager, it is easy to underestimate just how much she still needs you. She needs you *more* now than when she was younger. She needs your attention, affection, encouragement, concern, counsel, guidance, perspective, correction, firmness, stability—and love.

The window of opportunity to give her these things is small. If she is actively seeking them, then embrace her while you can!

Fan the flames of your devotion to your daughter! *Appreciate* how God designed the female mind to embrace fatherly authority. Take advantage of the limited time you have to exercise this influence for good, to turn your daughter's heart—not to you, but to her heavenly Father.

Your daughter won't live under your roof forever. There is a point when she must "leave and cleave" and she comes under the authority of a different man. But if you have done your job well, then her relationship with you today will have equipped her with the security, humility, emotional balance, godly confidence and joy of life to be able to step into that role wonderfully well, and to fulfill it with her whole heart—for eternity.

Section 7

THE BUILDER

*His manly force,
his benevolent touch,
remain in the world he shared,
even after he is gone.*

300	7.1 Think Big
310	7.2 Share Your Talents
316	7.3 Mentor Others
322	<i>Jonathan—Build Manly Friendships</i>
324	7.4 Live With Purpose
334	7.5 Start Now

7.1

THINK BIG

*You are capable of
far more than you think.*

The city of Chicago is an architectural wonder. Towering, sleek, modern skyscrapers of steel and glass fill the sky. Wedged between them, unapologetic and unintimidated, stand stunning older structures of ornately carved stone. The city silently and powerfully tells thousands of stories: the histories of bold men who dreamed, dared and built great things.

“Make no little plans,” said Daniel Burnham, one of Chicago’s early architects. “They have no magic to stir men’s blood and probably themselves will not be realized. **MAKE BIG PLANS; aim high in hope and work**, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will never die, but long after we are gone will be a living thing, asserting itself with ever growing insistency. ... Let your watchword be order and your beacon beauty. **THINK BIG**” (emphasis added throughout).

This is just the way the ultimate Builder, God, thinks!

Look at the size of the universe! Scientists’ most recent estimates say there are more than 2 *trillion galaxies*. That means there are far more stars in the cosmos than there are grains of sand on Earth. How many of those could support habitable planets with life in the future? God created the universe to be *inhabited* (Isaiah 45:18). He intends to one day “plant the heavens”—to seed them with life! (Isaiah 51:16). Isaiah 9:7 says the increase of God’s government and peace will *never end*—and because God is so *zealous, passionate and determined*, He will make sure of it! He **THINKS BIG**.

Challenge your mental smallness. Train yourself to expand your plans like God does. Don’t just wonder what the world holds for you. Think about what *you* hold for *it*.

There’s a Wider World Out There

Small thinking is everywhere, and for most of us, it comes so naturally we don’t even realize it. Our thoughts remain comfortably confined to the cramped quarters of self-interest.

Many men devote all their spare time to personal amusement and gratification of no value. Others may seem like model citizens, maintaining their property and providing for their families, yet their liberality never extends beyond the

bounds of their closed, immediate circle. This too is a self-focused masculinity.

Yes, developing true biblical masculinity must start with self-improvement and personal character. It must extend to fulfill duties to wife and children. At a fundamental level, a man's most important contribution to society is a solid, successful family. When a man rears children who grow to contribute to society rather than taking from it, he has avoided adding problems and burdens on others. Additionally, a man plagued by headaches at home is in no position to contribute significantly beyond it. And success in other arenas is undermined by a failure in the home.

However, your ultimate aim as a man should extend *beyond*. Ask yourself: What are you contributing to the lives of others? Shaping the future isn't just for other people. It's for you. It's part of your *duty* as a man. As you develop as a man, you must seek to make positive contributions in an increasing sphere of influence.

True biblical manhood is ultimately about becoming a real **BUILDER** of the lives of those around you and of the wider world.

Life, Fire, Wing, Force!

Big thinking inspires—and demands—vigorous action.

Amid a spiritual revival among the early American colonists, a man named George Whitefield bestrode the scene. Here is how another man described him: "HE LIVED. Other men seemed to be only half-alive; but Whitefield was *all life, fire, wing, force*."

That description also applied beautifully to Herbert W. Armstrong. His autobiography hums with vigorous fire and force. "There was always the sense that I had to hurry!" he wrote. "I was learning to plunge into a task with dynamic energy." When he was almost *83 years old*, he wrote, "There is no question I am asked more often, it seems, than 'What is the secret of your long life, youthful vitality, energy and drive?'" (*Plain Truth*, July 12, 1975). Eighty-three!

Evaluate yourself. Are you really *maximizing* the physical life and mental capacity God has given you? Or have you allowed yourself to be trapped—to be small, narrow, timid, dull?

Mr. Armstrong once had a temporary job at a small business journal. He recognized potential for it to grow into a far more important position, so he worked hard at it and exploited that potential. That big thinking led him to establish a successful business of national scope right in bustling Chicago. “This is the quality, rare among people (but *why should it be?*), called VISION,” he wrote in his autobiography. “Most men are never able to see any possibilities of expanding their present jobs. They do merely what they are told—what someone higher up thought out and laid before them. ... [They] never *think* out ways to do the job *better*, or to develop or expand their *own* job into something bigger, or to be preparing themselves for the better jobs ahead and promotions to them [T]he application of some of these principles makes all the difference between employee and employer; between mediocrity or failure and success.”

Consider your roles in life: student, employee, co-worker, husband, father, boss, Church member and so on. Have you settled for mediocre? Could you be doing *more* within each of your roles to achieve something bigger, something nobler, something greater?

For example, Mr. Armstrong said that when God calls someone to support His Work, we are to contribute to furthering His mission on Earth through our “prayers, encouragement, tithes and offerings.” We can do these things like we’re walking a treadmill—or we can *seize* these mighty God-given opportunities and always look for ways to do them bigger and better! A man who keeps in mind the spectacular future God has promised His people—to use those who are called today as Earth-wide king-priests—will more easily recognize the excitement in supporting the Work today. Instead of just “making sure to pray for the Work,” he will zealously, fervently, powerfully *pray for the Work!*

Use *each day* to its potential! What more can you accomplish? What more can you do today to help your family, to help God’s Work, to develop yourself, to train for more future responsibility? Think big! Don’t wait for the future to come to you. Don’t wait for the chance to help others to come seek you out. Go after it!

Among Mr. Armstrong's secrets of youthful vitality, he shared these: Have the *right goal*, one that keeps you looking forward in anticipation. Keep your mind active and s pry through *continual education*. Maintain good health through careful diet, good sleep, exercise, fresh air and water. Keep a determined prod on yourself! "Often, when I feel like letting down, I have to use determination and FORCE myself to keep DRIVING on!" Mr. Armstrong wrote. "Never give up; never just lie down and quit! Many a time I've felt like it. Sometimes I have given up and quit at bedtime, but after a night's sleep it's all a NEW BALL GAME, and next morning I'm plunging into it with renewed vigor and enthusiasm!" (*Plain Truth*, op cit).

A Cause Greater Than Yourself

Being a true *builder* requires VISION. You have to open your eyes to see things as they are—then, *imagine things as they could be*.

Read again Section 1.2 of this book, "Anoint Your Eyes." It is about recognizing the NEEDS in the world around you. This starts with, and should always include, observing needs on a small, intimate scale: seeing, for example, the shaky confidence in a fatherless boy in the local congregation. As a man grows in maturity, perception and insight, his recognition scales up to include major problems within the community or broader society.

A builder sees that need *with compassion*, as a problem that should be addressed. He seeks God's perspective about it, and aims to ascertain how God would solve it. He looks for ways to *take responsibility* to be part of the solution. He is willing to devote his resources, effort and attention to it, making personal sacrifices as required. And he is determined to follow through with the work even over the long term.

The problems in this world are too great to be solved on a broad scale until Jesus Christ returns to Earth to establish His Kingdom. Some men have spent themselves entirely on vain and fruitless efforts to solve insoluble conundrums. In many cases, men make problems worse because of misperceived root causes and reasons, misguided solutions, halfhearted effort, a lack of persistence or poor follow through.

Still, the *need* remains for a man to commit his thoughts and energies toward a cause, or causes, greater than himself.

Every man must exercise wisdom in identifying the problems and causes to which he should dedicate himself. With God's help, a man can make a tremendous impact. Do not minimize the power of one man. Don't underestimate the difference *you* can make in the lives of others and in the world around you.

Fire-Lighting Leadership

Consider one example of a real *builder*, a man who THOUGHT BIG, who recognized needs and was willing to *take action* in order to fill them: Nehemiah.

The Jews were in captivity in Persia, yet Nehemiah had risen to a high position as something of a bodyguard for King Artaxerxes himself. When he received news of the affliction and persecution being suffered by a contingent of Jews who had returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the city, Nehemiah was moved with passionate, godly grief (Nehemiah 1:4).

The Bible has many such examples of strongly emotional, yet extremely manly men. True men of God strive to develop more godly emotion and passion. We should regularly ask God to give us more of His zeal and emotion, including proper *grief* such as Nehemiah demonstrated here.

Proper godly emotion impels us and drives us toward right *actions*. Nehemiah immediately sought a solution, praying and fasting, beseeching God not just to fix the problem supernaturally, but to *open a door for him to act*. God loves to see such desire; He can really use a man who is eager to turn thoughts and feelings into deeds. He answered that prayer, giving Nehemiah extraordinary favor with the king, who granted his request to go to Jerusalem.

Nehemiah immediately traveled to the city. Once there, he wanted to assess Jerusalem's rundown state. Knowing the Jews had many fierce enemies, he recognized the danger and urgency of the situation, and he was highly motivated to get something done—fast. He personally undertook the dangerous reconnaissance mission under cloak of darkness (Nehemiah 2:12-13).

Once he ascertained the requirements of the situation, Nehemiah speedily summoned the Jewish residents. This was not a man who looked around wondering, *Who will fix this?* This was not a man who pondered how to build consensus. This was a man who saw disheartened, fearful people succumbing to pressure from God's enemies and who *took charge*. He was in close partnership with God. He relied on God's authority, God's direction, God's protection. With God behind him, he was *swift, confident and decisive*. He communicated with vigor and power. His words were few and his plan was clear.

Such manly leadership is a dynamic force. Nehemiah inspired hope and courage in those who heard him. His passion, motivation and energy were contagious! The Jews responded enthusiastically. They said: *Here is a man we can follow! Let's get to work!* (verse 18). His example lit a fire in those men!

A Mind to Work

Nehemiah seized the initiative and dove into the details of the work at hand. He directed the people, giving everyone a specific job. The Jews, so harried, so ineffectual before this man came on the scene, rallied mightily now that he was in control of it.

The renewed buzz of activity did not eliminate the threat to the Jews—it intensified it. Their work attracted concern and scorn from their enemies. They arrived on site in person and did all they could to stop the project. But Nehemiah set an extraordinary example of focus and determination. He knew he was on a righteous mission, and he absolutely *refused* to let anyone prevent him from completing this job!

Those who labored under Nehemiah followed his lead and drove themselves even harder in their work (Nehemiah 4:6).

Without one man—Nehemiah—this job would never have gotten done. These were the *very same people* who had been so helpless about the destruction of the city just a short time before. But now, with a spectacular model of godly manliness at their helm, they put the cause above their own comfort and safety. In the face of even greater persecution and peril than that which had stopped them, they summoned tremendous resolve and *built*.

Add just one ingredient—energized, godly leadership—and it is *awesome* how much people accomplish! *One man* committing himself to this job created a whole force of people who “had a mind to work.”

Because of Nehemiah’s leadership, the Jews built the fortification wall—part of which God preserved so we could see it and ponder its lessons to this day—in a lightning-quick 52 days (Nehemiah 6:15).

Dynamic, forceful godly leadership gets things done. And it inspires others. It is literally a force multiplier!

How can God use *you* to stir and to lead others to greater effort? Every man should work to develop the skills and the mindset of driving, energetic leadership—the kind that will inspire others to follow. Prod yourself to become the kind of leader who can rally whole groups of people to take action for God!

God is pushing you to work harder. He has a lot to accomplish, and He wants to do it through you. Ask Him to correct you and to give you His emotions. Cultivate His passion, His urgency. Then use it to drive yourself—and others—to action.

Our Source of Life

Consider how Jesus Christ presented Himself while on Earth. “*In him was LIFE*,” the Apostle John wrote (John 1:4). He could have added, “He lived! Other men seemed to be only half-alive—but Jesus was all LIFE, FIRE, WING, FORCE!” Christ was filled to overflowing with the animating power of the Holy Spirit—the power by which He had created the universe!

You have limitations—physical, mental, psychological. We all do. We all tend to think small. But here is the exciting thing: God offers you the POWER to *break out of that!*

John describes the *tree of LIFE*—and “a pure river of *water of LIFE*” (Revelation 22:1). This spiritual *life* is something God offers to those who repent and are baptized (Acts 2:38). Christ said you can drink those living waters *today* so that within you will be “a well of water springing up into everlasting LIFE”! (John 4:14). Christ *came to Earth* so you can possess this vital, energetic LIFE—*abundantly!* (John 10:10).

Once you have this life, stir it up every day. As you do so, it *will* change you. It is a dynamic force, creating discernible spiritual growth. If you are stagnant, unmotivated, mired in mediocrity, just scraping by, trapped by long-held sins, you are not stirring up the Spirit! *Using* that Spirit will translate into action: overcoming, growth, energy, heartfelt expressions of outgoing love toward your family, other people, God's Work and the wider world.

Small thinking is a trap. God wants you to *think big*, to *DO*, to produce, to act! He wants you to act on the same ambitions He has!

You are never too young or old to think this way. Society entraps young men—and men in general—in small, silly, selfish pursuits. And at the same time, it exalts youth in a way that makes older men feel marginalized and worthless. Don't succumb to those influences. Don't think like the world. Whatever your age, challenge yourself to think more like God!

If you are older, don't act like you have nothing to contribute and just need to wait out your remaining days. Think again about that *83-year-old man* who conducted himself in such a way that inspired others to ask him regularly, "What is the secret of your long life, *youthful vitality, energy and drive?*" Look for ways to make better use of whatever time you have left. Seize opportunities to challenge yourself, to grow, to develop as a leader and as a man. Strive to exemplify more youthful vitality, energy and drive! Ignite your thinking with godly ambition.

The right kind of ambition begins in prayer. Christ taught us to pray, "THY KINGDOM COME. *Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*" (Matthew 6:10). This type of request, uttered from the heart, leads to action. This is a *big-minded* prayer, springing from an understanding of how much this world needs God. It leads to a life devoted to being an instrument that will *hasten* the coming of that Kingdom and working to *do* God's will on Earth today in every way possible!

In this dark world, *God's Work* is the only light. And God commissions His Church to "prophecy again before MANY PEOPLES, and NATIONS, and TONGUES, and KINGS"! (Revelation 10:11). We cannot think small. We *must* think big! God's Work helps us do that. It builds within God's people an outgoing, aspirational,

magnanimous mindset that God will be able to use throughout eternity—and that He will be able to use *right now*.

Are you building this mindset? Can you do it better? Can you express this thinking more in your prayer life? Can you build it more in your family, your marriage, your child rearing? In your dealings with other people? In your job performance? Are you *thinking big* like God wants you to?

Mr. Armstrong said the *most important* key to his youthful energy was his *constant contact with God*. He received God's help and protection countless times. And even more, he claimed God's promise in Isaiah 40:28-31: "[T]he everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary ... *He giveth power to the faint*; and to them that have no might he *increaseth strength*. Even the youths shall faint and be weary ... But *they that wait upon the LORD* shall RENEW THEIR STRENGTH; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall RUN, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

Partake daily of the tree of life. Drink of the "pure river of water of life" daily! God wants you to have *life more abundantly*. He doesn't want you to think small. He doesn't want you half-alive. He wants you to be *full* of the Spirit, so that, like Christ, you can become all life, fire, wing, force. He wants you to *apply* that energy toward action of purpose and consequence.

Ask God to open doors for you to act. When He opens those doors, charge through with confidence. Stay focused on the job at hand, and don't let anything sidetrack you. Have a mind to work, and rally others to do the same!

Think big!

7.2

SHARE YOUR TALENTS

*Gifts are meant to be given.
Put yours to use.*

It is easy to recognize the man with skills, abilities and talents. He's the man who is able to help the incapacitated widow who needs a wheelchair ramp built up to her front door. He's the man people call when heavy furniture needs to be moved. He's the man who can take a young man on his first hunting trip and teach him how to bag a doe. He's the man who can give a stirring public address when the occasion calls for it. Or who plays music or sings in the band for the family dance. Or who can delight a group of children with his gripping stories. Or who always seems to know just the right thing to say to the person going through trial.

He is active. He makes things happen. He is on call, able to help in time of need.

Many people say, "I have no talents." They compare themselves to others so much and so negatively that they feel they have nothing to contribute. Such gloomy thinking is terribly limiting. It causes a man to sit back and let life pass him by.

A godly man is not passive. He is not merely a follower. He is active, alert to ways that he can exert a positive influence on those around him. Whatever abilities he has, he uses them, enhances them and increases them.

Take stock of your own life. What are your skills, abilities and talents? Are you using them to improve the lives of others?

Consider this seriously: The more *skilled* and *able* you are, the greater variety of means you have to help, to give, to serve—yes, to *express love* toward others.

Finding and developing your talents is critical to fulfilling your role as a man.

The Most Important Determinant of Talent

Herbert W. Armstrong described three things that determine your talents. The first two are heredity and environment.

"Is specialized talent God-given?" he asked. "Not necessarily, except by ordinary heredity. ... Some, by natural heredity, have certain aptitudes; some have others. Heredity does play a certain part in one's success or failure in this life. So does environment—by which I mean whatever external influences are exerted" (*Plain Truth*, January 1982).

Then he described the third, most important element: “Yet the biggest factors in determining success or failure in life are *motivation, determination, drive, perseverance.*” In other words, what matters most is *what you do* with what God has given you.

Some things come easier to some people than others. But how much *motivation, determination, drive, perseverance* do you have in developing those areas where there is a need, and where you may have an aptitude? We live in an age of specialization, and tend to want to leave everything up to the experts. It is easy to adopt an attitude of “I’m just not good at that,” and not even try new things.

Nothing worth doing well comes easy. Every expert started as a beginner. And just because you’re not an expert doesn’t necessarily mean you shouldn’t do a thing. Many skills and abilities can be done at a passable level—enough to help other people—with just a bit of motivation, determination, drive and perseverance.

What God Really Wants From You

God will use every ounce of your ability that you let Him.

In the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30), Christ delegated talents to His servants to see *what they would do* with them. You can look at this “talent” in the sense we use that English-language word: a *gift* or *ability*.

Different people are capable of different amounts. Some have a capacity for greater leadership, others for different responsibilities. For one person, five talents would be too many; for another, too little. God will not give you an office you cannot fulfill.

Adam Clarke comments, “The master has an absolute right over his own goods, and the servants cannot find fault with the distribution. *He who has little should not envy him who has received much, for he has the greater labor and the greater account to give. He who has much should not despise him who has little, for the sovereign master has made the distinction; and his little, suited to the ability which God has given him and fitted to the place in which God’s providence has fixed him, is sufficiently calculated to answer the purpose of the master*” (emphasis added throughout).

The other part of the picture is this: If you have a certain capability or potential, do all you can to fulfill it! You don’t want

to give God any less than what He knows your potential to be.

This parable shows that God doesn't evaluate solely on *how much* you produce. He evaluates *how much you do with what you have been given*. You can earn the same position as someone of far greater ability if you grow at the same ratio. The first two servants, given different amounts, grew at the same ratio and received the same reward: They were made "ruler over many things."

When the master in the parable reckoned with his servants, he rewarded *growth*. That is what God wants. Whatever talents He has given you, He wants to see you apply *motivation, determination, drive* and *perseverance* to push yourself to use them!

The parable of the pounds (Luke 19:11-27) teaches a similar lesson. In it, Christ gave each servant a pound and said, *WORK with this until I return*. God wants to see what we will do with what He has given us. We must learn to *build, grow* and *produce*.

In this instance, one man had 1,000 percent growth; another had 500 percent. How pleased do you think God is when He finds a man who gives Him a *1,000 percent return* on His investment? Who *wouldn't* appreciate that? That is a *precious gift* to God!

This parable shows that God rewards us according to our works. *Everything we do* goes on record. And *only God* can measure how much we are pouring our hearts into our prayers, how much love we are showing toward other people. God keeps track of our growth—and He is *measuring precisely*.

Three Keys to Talent Development

You have everything to gain from learning new skills, increasing your abilities and developing your talents. Doing so makes life more exhilarating, it gives you greater means to serve others, and it helps you fulfill your potential as a man.

Here is some priceless advice from Mr. Armstrong on how to develop your talents the right way: "The fact of man's ability and capacity for development reflects, *not the glory of man*, but *the creative might of our Maker* in CREATING MAN TO HAVE such abilities and capacities. ... God gave man talents, mind-power (physical) and abilities that He intended us to use and develop UNDER HIS GUIDANCE, and ALWAYS FOR HIS GLORY, and toward

OUR DEVELOPMENT in the *holy, righteous character* of God.”

Read that again. Develop your talents under God’s guidance. Use them for His glory. Maximize them to build godly character.

Mr. Armstrong continued, “To this end, God intends man to excel and improve—but *never in a way to inflate vanity or detract from reliance on and trust in God*. We must rely on God for guidance even in what we are made able to do for ourselves.”

Wise instruction. Ability without humility is a great liability. It makes you susceptible to pride. 1 Corinthians 4:7 puts it in perspective: “For who sees anything different in you? What have you that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?” (RSV).

Exodus 18:19-21 describe how God wanted “able men” of a certain competency. But first of all, these men needed to be “such as fear God.” If you don’t fear God, your abilities will amount to nothing. In fact, they will work against you.

Consider Lucifer. He had unparalleled talent, yet he became so vain about it that it corrupted him (Ezekiel 28:17). He forgot that *God created him* and he became hopelessly self-obsessed.

Meanwhile, Jesus Christ, who is *far more impressive* than Lucifer, exudes humility and always puts the focus on His Father.

Which example will you follow?

Grow or Else!

God is like a farmer (John 15:1-2). As He labors with us, His great concern is whether or not we are producing *fruit*. Nothing else matters if we don’t produce good fruit.

What kind of fruit? Conversion, a spirit-minded perspective, a vibrant spiritual life, active and selfless prayers and intercessions. He wants to see us growing in spiritual knowledge and wisdom, learning how to apply His law, developing our talents so they can be used. He wants to see a growing passion to serve Him and His Family in any capacity.

We must be concerned about our personal growth. If we are not growing, we will never help God’s Family grow, and eventually we will be cast aside (verse 6). We must grow *or else!* God’s Family will *only* have people who value growth as He does.

By producing fruit, we glorify the Father (verse 8). He loves that. However, in bringing forth fruit for God (verse 16), there is a *much bigger picture* we must see, or we will never attain God's Kingdom.

Your Ultimate Goal

Personal growth is not your ultimate goal. Your goal is to put all of your efforts and abilities toward *growing the Family of God!*

Ask not what God's Family can do for you; ask what you can do for God's Family! The more you share God's goal of making this the most successful family possible, the more you will contribute.

There are countless ways you can grow God's Family. Reach out to others. Encourage them in trials. Seek out the person in the corner of the room. Strengthen the quality of your Christian fellowship; you can produce *much* fruit with that. Pray actively, daily, for others. Visit people if possible. Call them. Have people over, not just to pass time, but to *build the Family*.

Never allow yourself to think you have nothing to contribute. There is *no end* to the opportunity in God's Family. *There is as much need in this Family as you have strength to give!*

Think of all you do in these terms: *Is this just for me, or is this for the Family?* Are you building someone else up in the Family? Are you making it likelier that person will attain the Kingdom?

God is watching and evaluating how much He can accomplish with us. As soon as He sees someone taking off spiritually, He grows in excitement and thinks, *Now, here is someone who will really expand my Family!*

When you volunteer and fulfill jobs, the important thing is not so much that those jobs are getting done, although that is vital. The great thing is that there is another person God can use to accomplish mighty things *in His Kingdom!*

God can use every talent and every skill to further His purpose. More importantly, He can use every individual who is willing to step out and help build the Family.

Overcome your carnality. Focus on growth. Produce real fruit. The more you do, the more God can *use you* to inspire OTHERS to produce greater fruit!

That is when you really become profitable to God!

7.3

MENTOR OTHERS

*As you become a godlier man,
be sure to help develop other men.*

How did Douglas MacArthur become Douglas MacArthur? During World War II, this man was one of only five promoted to the rank of five-star general. He is one of the most recognizable names in American military history.

The answer has to do with another MacArthur: his father, Arthur MacArthur. He too was a well-respected general in the United States Army. And to his son, Douglas, he was a *mentor*.

One of Douglas's classmates at West Point said that he "often wondered if he could ever become as great as his father." And 30 years after the elder MacArthur died, his son said, "Whenever I perform a mission and I think I have done it well, I feel that I can [stand] up squarely to my dad and say, 'Governor, how about it?'"

The connection and the benefit between these two Generals MacArthur is clear. But it encapsulates a responsibility that every Christian man should give serious thought to.

A man must awaken to his duty as a *mentor*.

What Is a Mentor?

A mentor is one who teaches or gives help and advice to a less experienced, often younger person. He is a trusted counselor or guide. Mentoring is a **RELATIONSHIP**—a *partnership* between one man with experience and another with a hunger to learn.

God can *use you* to change the course of a young man's life.

First, though, you have to realize the importance and power of this responsibility. Recognize the dedication it takes to create this powerful connection. Then *embrace* it. Move *beyond* merely developing as a godly man—to **HELP DEVELOP OTHER GODLY MEN**.

The need is great. There are dozens, hundreds of junior partners out there ready to learn but needing mentors. Think not just of your own children, but also of the fatherless and other youths, teenagers and young men who need direction and guidance.

Masculine mentoring is not a matter of just taking charge and teaching everyone who walks by what you think is right or what you think should be done. It comes with time and with maturity. It comes with your own conversion. It comes with submitting to God. It comes with God exerting influence on you, and you exerting that same influence on other young men.

Training young people takes time, energy, investment. Recognize that when a problem arises with your children or someone you are working with, it is not an *imposition*—but an *opportunity*. It is about helping someone through setbacks, learning from mistakes, shepherding someone toward greater maturity.

The Power in Sharing Knowledge

Biblical manhood mandates that you *share your knowledge*—that you teach, counsel and guide.

Regarding Abraham, God said, “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment ...” (Genesis 18:19). A big part of what impressed God so much about Abraham was that *he would teach, guide, counsel, advise, instruct, mentor!*

When God said this, Abraham had only one son. You don’t even have to have children for God to recognize this quality in you.

You see the results of Abraham’s mentoring in the way Isaac conducted himself (e.g. during the trial of Genesis 22). Compare the difference between Isaac, who had the benefit of Abraham’s direct influence, and Ishmael, who did not. You can even see the results of Abraham’s mentoring in his *servants*—for example, the servant who was full of faith when he sought out a bride for Isaac on Abraham’s behalf (Genesis 24).

God learns a lot about you from the way you treat children, especially those of your own household. He notices whether you help them grow in the right way, to do justice and judgment.

This relationship between *mentor* and *student* is extremely important to God. God is helping us all to grow, and He is *using* people like Abraham to do it. God wants us *all* to develop the mindset Abraham had in mentoring others. “The lips of the righteous *feed many*” (Proverbs 10:21). Again, it requires wisdom in knowing *whom* to feed and when—this is certainly not an invitation to proselytize or force unwanted advice on others. But the principles that guide God’s Work can apply on an individual level within our families and congregations. “Buy the truth, and sell it not”—give it away! (Proverbs 23:23). This is a wonderful, practical example of living the *give* way of life.

What a Godly Man Does

Gen. Wilbur Lyman Creech, commander of the U.S. Air Force Tactical Air Command from 1978 to 1984, said: “The *first duty* of a leader is to CREATE MORE LEADERS.”

Moses mentored Joshua. Samuel mentored King David and students at three colleges. David mentored Solomon. Elijah mentored Elisha. Paul mentored Timothy and other elders. You see a pattern: *Godly men have a mind to develop other godly men.*

What did Jesus do when He was a human being? He spent a great deal of time setting an amazing example of mentorship. He was a teacher and guide—especially to His 12 disciples. He developed a close relationship with these men, training, counseling, instructing. He had a special and very close mentoring relationship with the Apostle John, preparing him for an important work. And what great leaders these men became: From Jerusalem to Turkey to Persia to North Africa to Europe to the British Isles, they set the world on fire with the true gospel!

The Bible is loaded with admonitions about and examples of this teaching dynamic. Most of them revolve around teaching our children God’s truth (e.g. Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:7; 11:19; Psalm 78:1-8). Ephesians 6:4 exhorts fathers to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Titus 2 instructs older women to work with not just their own daughters but younger women in general—and not really in spiritual, but in physical matters. The principle certainly applies to older men mentoring younger men. It is a duty and a privilege.

The Mentor’s Mindset

Becoming a mentor starts with *thinking like a mentor*. This has two components: 1) recognizing someone’s potential; and 2) recognizing your capacity to help him achieve it.

Neither of these attributes comes to us naturally. They are contrary to our selfish nature. Both require maturity and big-mindedness. They require *seeing people the way God does* and then *caring enough to actually help them!*

This takes effort, concentration and prayer. It also takes

sacrifice and time—time you may not want to give, frustration you may wish to do without, sacrifice you would prefer not to make. But that is thinking selfishly. Think like God.

Realize that besides benefiting your student, mentoring also benefits *you*. YOU NEED opportunities to think beyond yourself. You need opportunities to think unselfishly, like God. This is the way of the God Family: *the way of sacrifice in order to teach others*.

This is a revolutionary concept at the very heart of God's plan for you: Your life isn't just about bettering *yourself*. It's about bettering yourself *through* bettering others! It's about growing *by helping others to grow*.

Once you have the mindset to see someone's potential and to recognize your own power to teach, then you will see these opportunities all around you.

Two Components of Mentoring

The *act* of mentoring includes two components: 1) providing *guidance*; and 2) providing *opportunities*.

Mentoring means giving counsel, offering advice and delivering instruction. It also means arranging opportunities, opening doors and providing challenges—giving assignments that will help your students' growth.

Young men crave mentors. They *want* guidance from older men. They desire focused attention. They may even have an inkling of how much their lives could change with the right guidance and experience.

If you have a son, **START WITH HIM**. *Double* the amount of time you spend with him. Look for every chance to do things together. Think of every little thing you can teach him to prepare him for manhood. Look for opportunities and challenges to give him.

Once you make headway there, look at other people you can help: people who work for you, your students, other boys and young men in your congregation. Pay attention to them. Show interest. Develop a rapport. Think about whether you can include them in your work or in your plans. Look for opportunities to teach and pass along something of value.

A mentor asks himself these questions: What do I know that

can profit others? Who can benefit from this knowledge? What can I *learn* that will be useful knowledge to teach others? What do I wish someone had taught *me*? What *opportunities* can I provide?

Young people have so many things they *need* to learn: how to stay focused on a task; how to tie a tie; how to build a fire; how to treat a wound; how to change a car's oil; how to fix a leak; how to hunt; how to have meaningful conversation; how to treat a woman; how to date; how to be a man of your word—and so on. What knowledge do you have that you could pass along? Do you know of any young people who could use some helpful instruction from someone with experience and skills?

“I have set before thee an open door,” the ultimate Mentor wrote in Revelation 3, “and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name” (verse 8) These are God's words to His people, and note that He not only provides us with instruction, but He *opens doors*—He supplies opportunities to help us grow.

Building the God Family

Take on this godly attitude toward others, especially those who are younger than you. *Recognize their potential*. See them as the future men and women—the future God beings—that they are! That is what God does.

Then, *recognize your duty*. God gives you the capacity, the experience and the spiritual maturity to make a difference in the lives of young people. Don't squander it.

Take this especially seriously in regards to your office as a father and your relationship with your son. God has placed real *power* in the office you hold in your son's life! Remember hard-core, tough-as-nails five-star general Douglas MacArthur, who held life and death in his hands for thousands of men, and remember who he thought of at the end of a mission: his *dad*.

You have the same manly duty that Arthur MacArthur had. This responsibility in many ways determines your real effectiveness as a leader and the legacy you leave long after you are gone.

So wake up to your critical duty of biblical manhood: BE A MENTOR!

JONATHAN

Build Manly Friendships

We all *want* close friends—at least, in theory. But when it comes to fulfilling the requirements of truly close friendship, few are willing. Studies have shown that friendships among men can be quite shallow. Many men have few close friends; some have none. In a fractured, distracted, isolated world, friendship has become a lost art.

The Bible describes just what a blessing a deep, godly friendship can be. It also has one of the most moving examples of friendship you can find: David and Jonathan.

David's victory over Goliath was an extraordinary event. This teenager had demonstrated exceptional courage and faith in a time of cowardice and doubt. Jonathan, the son and heir of the king, was deeply stirred. He recognized God's presence with David and wanted earnestly to join closely with this godly young man. He stepped out and initiated a friendship. "And it came to pass ... that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (1 Samuel 18:1).

This was an extraordinary choice. Jonathan was 20 years older than David; he was married and raising children; he had royal training and impressive accomplishments. But he also had uncommon humility and perspective. Instead of feeling threatened by David's success, he sought to learn from it and embrace it. This laid the foundation for a spectacular friendship.

Jonathan had a beautifully selfless love for David. He cast vanity aside and gave of himself wholeheartedly (verses 3-4). The greatness of his attitude is clear when contrasted with the carnality in King Saul's. Saul saw David as a threat and wanted him dead (verses 7-9, 12-13, 15, 21, 25, etc). When Jonathan realized this, he remained loyal to his companion (1 Samuel 19:1-2).

God used a series of grievous trials to prepare David for kingship. David's friendship with the king's son proved a life-

saving blessing. Jonathan began to see that God intended his young friend to inherit the throne of Israel—instead of him. But he did not allow vanity or jealousy to corrupt his thinking. Remarkably, the man who had been passed over for kingship *knit himself* to his own replacement!

“Then said Jonathan unto David, Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee. ... So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the LORD even require it at the hand of David’s enemies. And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul” (1 Samuel 20:4, 16-17).

What would you do to have such a friend looking after you, watching your back, helping you in your trials?

“Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10). Companionship is wonderful during good times, but it is *essential* during tough times! It is when we fall that we really need a friend to help us up.

To have such a friend, you must *be* such a friend. Enjoying the unconditional, there-when-you-need-it love of true friendship comes at the cost of *giving* such love. How dependable are you when someone beside you falls? If you are in a relationship for just what you can get out of it, then as soon as your self-interest isn’t being served, you will leave. As your feelings change, your friends change. That isn’t true friendship.

“A friend loveth at ALL TIMES, and a brother is born for adversity” (Proverbs 17:17). The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary* explains, “A true friend loves at all times; but it is in adversity especially that he becomes as a brother born to you It is when put in the fire that the gold is proved. There ought to be no intervals of forgetfulness or alienation in the true friend.” It is in adversity that the test of a true friend comes!

Invest real time into deepening your closest male friendships. Give generously of yourself, and be a man they can rely on in crisis. It will add richness to their lives and yours in ways you cannot anticipate, and it could end up saving you when you are the one in trial!

7.4

LIVE WITH PURPOSE

*Go after the answers to life's
most important questions.*

What would you do if you were told that you had only one year left to live?

Think seriously about this for a minute. How would you spend that year?

Another scenario: What if you somehow learned that you would die *in a week*? If you were given just seven days to think back over your life, what would be your assessment? How satisfied would you be with what you had accomplished?

What would you regret having left undone?

If your eternal judgment were based only on what you had done *to this moment*, what do you think that judgment would be?

Usually we are too immersed in daily concerns to consider such questions. But if you never stop and do this kind of self-examination, you are likely taking your time for granted and failing to fulfill your potential as a man.

Are you really spending your life on something that *makes a difference*? Are the truly important matters getting enough of your attention? What draws you away from those things? How much time are you squandering? What can you trim, push aside or cut out?

Moses was contemplating these types of questions when he wrote Psalm 90: “[W]e spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away” (verses 9-10).

Then he drew this poignant conclusion, beseeching God: “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (verse 12).

Recognize the *brevity* of your life and you gain clarity in your thoughts. Look at yourself. Honestly evaluate how you are using your days, hours and minutes. Are you just marking time—or are you truly *numbering your days* so you can apply your heart to wisdom? Are you devoting enough *energy and effort* to the significant things? Are you prodding yourself, aiming high in order to truly *USE* your life, fulfilling your God-given potential?

When your life is done, what will you be known for? What sort of *LEGACY* will you leave? “The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot” (Proverbs 10:7).

How will you be remembered? How would you *want* to be remembered? Are you living in a way that will get you there?

Examine Yourself

Honest self-examination is essential to the Christian life. You cannot grow without it. And for it to be truly effective, you need God's help.

Self-examination means looking into the mirror and seeing what is wrong. That mirror is God's perfect law of love, and the perfection of Jesus Christ (James 1:22-25). When you examine yourself in that mirror, you can see what needs to change so you can become more like God.

In the first century, the Church members in Corinth had become puffed up, prideful in their knowledge, and judgmental. They even criticized the Apostle Paul for what they perceived as his weak speaking. Paul responded with a challenge: "EXAMINE YOURSELVES, whether ye be in the faith; PROVE YOUR OWN SELVES" (2 Corinthians 13:5). *You've been examining me*, he said; *turn that same examination on yourselves*. It's easy to stand in judgment of others, but God really wants us to *judge ourselves*.

Examine here means to test, prove or scrutinize to see whether a thing is genuine or not. When you take an *examination* in school, you are tested on your knowledge and your progress. In a courtroom, when a witness is *examined*, the lawyer presses him with questions to bring out the truth of a matter. If the witness is lying, the lawyer tries to pin him down and expose that. Sometimes we must do this *with our heart*, which is deceitful above all things (Jeremiah 17:9).

Take a good, hard look at yourself, Paul says. What is going on deep down? How deep does your religion go? Don't be content with a panoramic view, or with looking only at how others perceive you. Look into the recesses of your thoughts that only God knows about. Examine not just your actions but also your motives.

This is work. It's not enjoyable, because generally there is a lot in each of us that is ugly. That is why we shy away from self-examination. It is also why we need to ask for God's guidance in this process (e.g. verse 10; Psalm 26:2).

Consider the poem “Self-Examination” by Isaac Watts:

*Let not soft slumber close your eyes,
Before you’ve collected thrice
The train of action through the day!
Where have my feet chose out their way?
What have I learnt, where’er I’ve been,
From all I’ve heard, from all I’ve seen?
What have I more that’s worth the knowing?
What have I done that’s worth the doing?
What have I sought that I should shun?
What duty have I left undone,
Or into what new follies run?
These self-inquiries are the road
That lead to virtue and to God.*

Honest self-examination helps you remove self-deception and see yourself as you actually are, as God sees you. It reveals flaws that need to change and areas where you need to grow. Though it can be sobering, it should not be discouraging. It is beginning to reveal a path forward. “Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established” (Proverbs 4:26).

Know Your Purpose

Give real thought to the kind of man you want to be. Pray about it, think about it, visualize it. Picture yourself a year from now, then five years from now, then 10 years from now. Picture yourself at the end of your life. Who is that man?

Think of the qualities you would like to build more of. Perhaps you want to become more *positive* and *encouraging* toward others. You may want to be more *wise*, *productive*, *passionate*, *bold*, *decisive*, *generous*, *self-sacrificing* and *kind-hearted*. Make a list.

Now list your characteristics that you want to reduce: perhaps *negative*, *judgmental*, *disorganized*, *lazy*, *selfish*, *petty*, *oversensitive*, *impatient*, *unreliable*—surely there are others.

Talk to God about these things. Write about them in a journal, and get specific. Decide on *practical steps*—even small acts—that will move you in the direction you want to go. Ask for God’s help in following through, and then take action.

Ponder your most important relationships. Are they as strong as they should be? Consider how you could make them stronger, more satisfying and enriching. Think about the qualities you appreciate in your friends and family, or even those you would *like* to see more of in them. Then ask yourself whether you could take the initiative and exhibit more of those qualities *toward them*. Quality relationships require genuine unselfishness and loving concern. Contemplate whether you are giving enough of yourself, dedicating enough time to your relationships.

Think of the legacy you will leave. Think of your role with your friends, in your congregation, within your family. Be sure to have your affairs in order so your loved ones will be taken care of when you are gone. Give thought to how your children will remember you and what more you can do to sweeten those memories. How can you preserve the wisdom or other treasures you would like to bequeath to them? “A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children’s children ...” (Proverbs 13:22). God wants you to think long-term, even to multiple generations.

How strong is your sense of *purpose* in this physical life? What does God want to accomplish with you specifically? Think about your career. Is it challenging you and helping you grow? Does it align with your values? Is it what God wants you to be doing? How well are you fulfilling His purpose for you? You are a unique individual with unique contributions to make, and you have a *duty* to not leave them undone.

Ask yourself: What are you really passionate about? What is it *about* these things that stirs and excites you? How do they benefit *others*? How much could you help others, even change the world, if only a little, if you focused more attention on these things?

These are marvelous questions to contemplate. Failing to consider them can leave a man mired in mediocrity, complacent and stagnant, oblivious to opportunity. Pray about them. Seek counsel from those who know you, and from people you respect.

The better you know yourself, the more alert you will be to doors God may open for you to better fulfill your true potential.

Jesus Christ had a dominating, unwavering *focus* on His purpose: “My MEAT is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work,” He said (John 4:34). He never allowed that

purpose to escape the forefront of His mind. It guided Him absolutely in even His tiniest decisions. *Nothing* could throw Him off course, not even the most excruciating pain of the stake.

A true appreciation of your purpose and calling inspires a determination to use each day to fulfill it, whatever the obstacles.

Prioritize

A successful life demands being *purposeful* and *driven* in your activities. Your time—which is your life—is your most valuable asset. You don’t even know how much or little you have, all you know for certain is that *supply is limited*.

The devil knows your time is limited. He has built modern society to consume your attention with trivialities, swallow your time, and draw you away from what matters. If you just do what comes naturally and what is easiest, you will be buried under a torrent of distraction taking you far from anywhere you want to be.

Herbert W. Armstrong explained how *setting a right goal* is the first law of success. Without goals, you are aimless.

Setting correct priorities in life is *work*. You must establish your priorities and trudge toward them, step by step, against resistance, daily, hourly. Regularly evaluate what you are doing and make sure you are heading in the right direction. Do not let your priorities fade and disappear, then replace them with new priorities that you also let fade and disappear. Once you establish your priorities, led by God, sprint, scrap, crawl, climb and fight toward them until you have achieved them.

Don’t get trapped in trivial, quickly forgotten busyness. Look at your daily tasks and ask yourself tough questions about each one: Is this really important? How will this further a long-term goal? Will this have an impact that will last beyond this week or this month? What will have the most long-term significance? Does this fit with and advance my real purpose in life? Is it diffusing my energy and preventing me from accomplishing what I need to? If so, can I delegate it or cut it?

With your goals and priorities firmly in mind, plan your tasks so you are doing things each day to advance those goals. Then you can far more readily avoid getting caught up in unessential things.

Always aim to devote as much time as possible to work of lasting value. Focus on what is truly important. Focus will determine your success in achieving it more than anything else. If you can't focus on something, you won't accomplish it. If you can, you will.

Prune

For fruit trees to reach maximum yield, they must be regularly pruned. Christ said growth in *your life* also requires constantly pruning what isn't producing. "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He [the Father] takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit HE PRUNES, *that it may bear more fruit*" (John 15:2; NKJV).

Unwanted, unhelpful growth is natural. Extra obligations, diversions, projects and preoccupations bud and blossom all the time. This is why pruning is so critical and why it must be continual. "Our life is frittered away by detail," Henry David Thoreau wrote. "Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand."

At any moment, stop and ask yourself: *What am I doing right now? Is it really what I NEED to be doing?* Busyness is not the same as productivity. And productivity is not the same as effectiveness. Look at the *fruit*. Is your effort producing results? Are they *good* results? Are they building your family? Are they helping others? Is it advancing God's Work and God's cause? Are you putting the resources He has entrusted to you to their best use? God wants to help you answer these questions.

You cannot afford to waste time. You must prune the nonsense—anything that is stealing your minutes and not contributing to what you produce. Set limits on what you consume and do. Eliminate the unessential. Cross off what's not really important. Postpone things that don't need to be done right away. In order to focus on the important things, the less you think about other things, the better. Keep your focus locked on what is really important and *prune everything else*.

This is a continual process. Prune, then prune again, then again. Prune monthly, weekly, even daily.

This is how to maximize your time and energy. If you are doing something important, then you are moving in the right

direction, even if slowly. As Earl Nightingale said, “Never give up on a dream just because of the time it will take to accomplish it. The time will pass anyway.”

Know What You Stand For

People naturally want to live. Some will do just about anything to remain *alive*—undergo chemotherapy to stave off cancer; take on hundreds of thousands of dollars of debt to pay medical expenses; ignore a wounded crime victim to avoid provoking a violent criminal; betray a friend to comply with a dictator’s unjust demands; surrender to a tyrant rather than wage war.

You need to ask yourself what you would be willing to die for.

What are your foundational values? Is your sense of what is right and what is wrong so wholehearted and elemental that you would stake your life on it? To live a truly honorable life, you need to prove and then be guided and governed by unshakable beliefs—principles you refuse to compromise, no matter the cost.

Three young Jews had resolved to remain faithful to God whatever the consequences. As they faced the most powerful, fearsome man on Earth, who was about to kill them for refusing to worship an idol, they spoke with flinty conviction: “O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up” (Daniel 3:16-18). The outraged king then pitched Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego alive into a blazing inferno. Only then, after proving themselves unbreakable, did God deliver them.

If staying true to your beliefs gets you killed, that is an *honorable death*. Many of the prophets did it. Stephen did it (Acts 7:58). John the Baptist did it (Mark 6:27). Most of the apostles did it. These men all await a resurrection to glory and eternal positions of honor in God’s Family. Who among us wouldn’t trade places with any of them?

It was that conviction that motivated Jesus Christ to pray to the point of sweating blood in order to avoid sin (Luke 22:44;

Hebrews 12:3-4)—and to sacrifice His life so that you could live.

You may think you will never be called upon to die for a cause, but that is a foolish assumption. The world is growing more dangerous. Look at global conditions and you see savagery spreading, even unexpectedly besieging seemingly peaceful areas. This trend is not going to improve. The time remaining in this age of man is growing short.

You need to establish and lock down your core beliefs, to prove them beyond doubt, or you will soon find yourself in circumstances where they are tested past their breaking point. As Winston Churchill said, “Virtuous motives, trammelled by inertia and timidity, are no match for armed and resolute wickedness.”

This is worth taking real time to pray and to think earnestly about. Write down your thoughts on the true *guiding principles* by which you can make decisions, establish priorities, evaluate your actions, measure success and failure, and assess your life. Think about what you would consider it an *honor* to die defending. This is not an exercise in morbidity but in clarity.

Consider the physical example of the United States Navy SEALs. They must do this, because they stare down death as a regular part of their job. If they are not absolutely convicted of the cause, they will not perform their duty when called upon. And they cement that conviction in a specific, practical way: by having every SEAL memorize the U.S. Navy SEAL Ethos.

This says, in part, “My loyalty to country and team is beyond reproach. I humbly serve as a guardian to my fellow Americans always ready to defend those who are unable to defend themselves. I do not advertise the nature of my work, nor seek recognition for my actions. I voluntarily accept the inherent hazards of my profession, placing the welfare and security of others before my own. I serve with honor on and off the battlefield. The ability to control my emotions and my actions, regardless of circumstance, sets me apart from other men. Uncompromising integrity is my standard. My character and honor are steadfast. My word is my bond.

“We expect to lead and be led. In the absence of orders I will take charge, lead my teammates, and accomplish the mission. I lead by example in all situations. I will never quit. I persevere

and thrive on adversity. My nation expects me to be physically harder and mentally stronger than my enemies. If knocked down, I will get back up, every time. I will draw on every remaining ounce of strength to protect my teammates and to accomplish our mission. I am never out of the fight.

“We demand discipline. We expect innovation. The lives of my teammates and the success of our mission depend on me—my technical skill, tactical proficiency, and attention to detail. My training is never complete.”

This shows the power of *articulating* and *codifying* such beliefs. These words, burned into a SEAL’s mind, drive him onward in the most grueling conditions. He commits to them, and proves his commitment through the daily grind of drills, training, labor, sweat and pain. Then, when true crisis arises, this guiding ethos is so ingrained into his fiber as a man that he is able to accomplish acts of uncommon valor and grit.

This is the kind of clarity of purpose, and commitment to that purpose, needed for true biblical manhood.

Make a Difference

The world is full of men leading unexamined lives, giving no serious thought to life’s larger questions.

You are not one of those men.

You can devote your life to endeavors of consequence. You can be a hero to your own family. You can lift the lives of those around you. You can make a difference in your corner of the world. You can leave the world better for your having lived in it.

Just *act*, and *act with purpose*, and *act today*. Your time is short. Don’t be a man who will die with regret. Throw yourself into fulfilling your life’s purpose. Then you will be able to stand on the threshold of death, look back, and, like Paul in 2 Timothy 4:6-8, say, “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

7.5

START NOW

*Whatever your hand finds to do,
don't wait until tomorrow
to get after it.*

If you are paying attention, you recognize that the time left in this present age is nearly over. We are living in the final days of the age of man ruling over man. A terrible nightmare is descending on this world—just before the dawn of the Second Coming and a bright new day.

How *urgent* are you?

When something is *urgent*, it is very important and needs immediate attention. What areas of your life require immediate action? What aspects of character development, of family leadership, of work, of service to God require your *urgency*?

If you are like most men, you probably have a long list of things that require immediate action. But Satan wants to infuse you with a mindset that puts things off and that stalls our actions. He hopes that you will be slowed in your progress and eventually fail. Our adversary is striving to build the mindset of *procrastination* in each one of us.

We must overcome that spirit and daily build the habit of taking action RIGHT NOW.

What Will You Leave Undone?

Procrastinating is being slow about doing something that should be done. It is delaying doing something until later for a wrong reason: You don't want to, you are lazy, or some other excuse. Procrastination easily becomes a *habit*.

Here is how Pablo Picasso looked at it: "Only put off until tomorrow what you are willing to die having left undone."

What aspect of character development is worth putting off, to die having left undone? What leadership decisions for your family are you willing to die having left undone? Think of procrastination in those terms and you realize how serious this matter is.

"The lazy man has longings, but gets nothing; the diligent man is amply supplied" (Proverbs 13:4; Moffatt). A person caught in the habit of procrastination may have the desire. He may really *want* to do something. He may even see the need for action and leadership. But he fails to take action.

On the other side, the man who is diligent, who takes immediate action, will accomplish and have success. "He becomes

poor who works with a slack and idle hand, but the hand of the diligent makes rich” (Proverbs 10:4; Amplified Bible).

Never be content to slack off. Don’t give in to that preference for being idle. Your human nature wants to put things off, to sit down and vegetate. But if you are going to submit to God building godly masculinity in you, then you must be a diligent man—a man of immediate action!

Biblical manhood demands that we fight and overcome procrastination. We must be men who do the difficult things we may not want to do.

Take the First Step

To help you overcome procrastination, here is one step: GET STARTED!

When you recognize something that needs to be changed or overcome in your life, don’t put it off.

Recognize this encouraging truth: You can be different *today*. It does not matter what you have done in the past; don’t let that weigh you down. Just *take action!* Be different *today!* Change things *today!*

Life rewards the man who *gets started*. Life rewards action.

It doesn’t matter what you *mean* to do; what matters is what you actually do.

Stand up and be a man. Call on God for courage, and confront problems. That is the only way to drive Satan out. Set your family life on the right path. Swallow your pride and get counsel from one of God’s ministers—a wonderful gift from God (Ephesians 4:11-13). Don’t allow problems to fester. Don’t pretend everything is OK when it isn’t. Take action right now to *change*.

Do your part in driving satanic influences out of your thinking, out of your family, out of your congregation. Do your part in *submitting yourself to God*—in prayer and study, in daily decisions, in counsel—so He can build you into the man He wants, *expects* and needs you to be!

Decide in your mind that you are going to take reasonable, responsible risks. If you don’t try, you will never succeed. And

you almost never succeed on the first try. But to make progress, effort and real *work* are needed.

God asks that whatever we find to do, that we do it with our might (Ecclesiastes 9:10). A man should have real drive and enthusiasm for what he does. He should be driven by high goals and noble purpose. His posture, his voice, his facial expressions, his actions, should demonstrate excitement for life, with its opportunities and challenges. “[W]hatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men” (Colossians 3:23).

Lecturer Millard Bennett once said, “Everything great and noble in the history of man’s achievements is a story of the victory of enthusiasm over indifference, jealousy, fear, hatred and ignorance. Nothing worthwhile has ever been accomplished without it. It has ever been the inspiring force that has motivated man.”

Don’t fear failure. Babe Ruth said, “Never let the fear of striking out get in your way.” Don’t let past failures hinder your resolve. And DO NOT ALLOW SETBACKS TO DISCOURAGE YOU. You will face them—guaranteed. You may find something to be harder than you expected. You may get pessimistic blowback from a friend when you tell him about a change you are making. Your family may resist when you turn off the TV at mealtimes or begin holding family Bible studies. Your own resolve will flag at times. BUT MAINTAIN YOUR BELIEF IN WHAT YOU ARE DOING. It’s not *your goal* that needs to change—it’s your *lazy human nature* that needs to change! It’s your *resistance to change* that needs to change!

Pray for God to fortify your determination, to supply you the will and the strength to keep pressing forward, one step at a time—“For it is God which worketh in you *both to WILL and to do of his good pleasure*” (Philippians 2:13).

Change is hard—extremely hard! That is why taking just one step at a time, and doing it *right now*, is so important!

The Men of Tomorrow’s World

When Jesus Christ returns, He will establish a world where MEN ARE MEN. The world He will found needs true godly men: men who can lead and love, men who can build and provide, men

who can mentor, correct and teach. It needs men who are moral, selfless and cultured. Men who love God and His way of life—who rise early in the morning to pray and study, who build vineyards and tend animals, who work with their sons to train the next generation of men, who guide and teach and love their families. It needs strong, godly men who form the healthy backbone of strong, godly families, communities and nations.

This transformation is about to happen, and you can be a part of it.

This world today is languishing in its final, desperate moments before the return of Jesus Christ! Our families, our society, mankind and God are crying out for **REAL MEN**. God needs you to be a man. He has given you all the tools you need in order to fulfill His purpose in creating you. He wants to use you to prevent the extinction of masculinity as He designed it, and to help seed tomorrow's world with true biblical manhood.

Every step you take to fulfill this purpose is worth the effort. Being a godly man will make **YOU** happy. Truly, serving God and serving your family and others as a man is the most rewarding and satisfying thing you can do!

Satan is trying to get us to put off the return of Christ and fail to build the character needed to help bring mankind out of the wretchedness that surrounds us. We must steadfastly resist that influence. Whatever task you have at hand, fight against the tendency to put it off. Whatever your assignment, your project, your aspect of character you are working on, take advantage of the opportunity to crush the mindset of procrastination. Be diligent! Work on it day by day. But **GET STARTED!**

“You may delay,” Benjamin Franklin wrote, “but time will not.”

You have read an entire book providing a vision of biblical manhood and filled with practical instruction on how to achieve that vision in your own life. Yet it is worthless unless you **ACT!** Do not hesitate—there is *no time to waste!* *Now* is the time to move. Start **RIGHT NOW** taking real, concrete steps toward **YOUR SPLENDID FUTURE AS THE MAN YOU ARE DESTINED TO BECOME!**

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