

CHRISTIAN VOL. 28 NO. 1
counseling
TODAY

Reclaiming Masculinity

**Paths from Fatherlessness
to Father-fullness**
Ken Canfield

**Reclaiming Masculinity:
Helping Broken Boys Become
Mended Men**
Patrick Morley

**The Boy Crisis: The Evidence,
Causes, and Solutions**
Warren Farrell

**Toxic Masculinity: Reclaiming
What it Means to be a Man**
Jim Ramos

**Men, Porn, and Sexual Addiction:
Winning the Internal Battle**
Jim Cress

**The Manhood Crisis: Debunking
the Myth of "Toxic Masculinity"**
Chad Robichaux





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- 16 Reclaiming Masculinity: Helping Broken Boys Become Mended Men** by *Patrick Morley*. Helping men process the pain from childhood wounds and overcome the poor behavior that damages their adult relationships is essential to reclaiming their masculinity. Patrick Morley, best-selling author and founder of the global *Man in the Mirror* movement, guides caregivers on how God calls you to instruct, encourage, correct, challenge, and inspire men toward authentic manhood, seeing men not for what they are but for who they can become.
- 22 The Boy Crisis: The Evidence, Causes, and Solutions** by *Warren Farrell*. The boy crisis is global, and the causes are multifaceted, with each facet magnifying the others. Best-selling author and prominent thought leader, Warren Farrell, shares how a wide range of crises negatively affect boys, the causes of these crises, and how the absence of dads compounds this failure. He offers some practical solutions to enhance dad involvement, which, in turn, mitigates the boy crisis.
- 28 Toxic Masculinity: Reclaiming What it Means to Be a Man** by *Jim Ramos*. The founder of Men in the Arena, speaker, and author, Jim Ramos, speaks truth on the biblical, experiential, and empirical differences between males and females. Although men and women are not the same, they are both equally loved by God and His salvation through Jesus; however, He uniquely crafts us to reflect various aspects of His nature and provide distinct types of good. Jim presents five empirical ways that God designs men to offer their masculine gift to the world.
- 34 Men, Porn, and Sexual Addiction: Winning the Internal Battle** by *Jim Cress*. Men who are trapped in the bondage of pornography are physically, emotionally, and spiritually “bonding” with these evil strongholds. Licensed Professional Counselor, Certified Sex Addiction Therapist, and Certified Multiple Addictions Therapist, Jim Cress, explains why we must treat this problem with a biblical battle plan, not just from a psychological or addiction model approach.

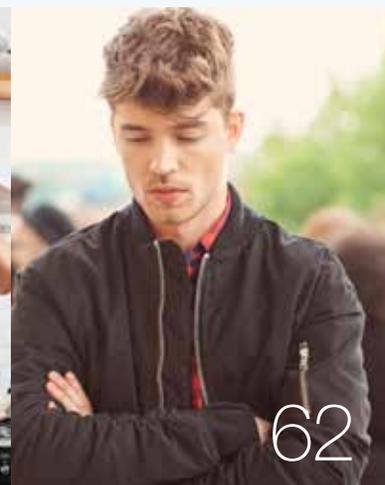


46 Make Your Life Count: Being a Man Who is Found Faithful by Zach Clinton. Although the habits and ways of men are often rooted in “what I do” and “what others think of me,” they must also remember where their identities are ultimately found. Zach Clinton, vice president of AACC, host of The Built Different Podcast, and president and host of the Ignite Men’s Impact Weekend, reminds men that their internal drive for greatness cannot overshadow living a life that honors God by proposing three challenges to help them fulfill their mission to serve Him and feel worthy of His call.



50 Broken Bonds: Why Healing Men’s Emotional Wounds Matters for Ending Abuse by Mike Vaughn. Executive Director of Bethesda Workshops, therapist, and author, Mike Vaughn, conveys how the cultural deficits around vulnerability, emotional regulation, and masculinity often hinder critical conversations about men’s roles in the cycle of violence and obscure the deeper reasons behind abuse. Abuse is a complex issue that does not have a single solution, but through God’s grace and the pursuit of meaningful connection with Him and others, healing is not just possible but transformative.

38 The Manhood Crisis: Debunking the Myth of “Toxic Masculinity” by Chad Robichaux. Former Force Recon Marine, DoD contractor, Afghanistan veteran, author, and founder of the Mighty Oaks Foundation, Chad Robichaux, debunks the characterization of “toxic masculinity” and the notion that men are somehow inherently dangerous. This narrative has created a manhood crisis that is destroying the nuclear family and destabilizing our society. However, a balanced view of manhood can be restored by advocating for masculinity that mirrors Christ’s examples of strength, service, sacrifice, leadership, and courage.



42 Overcoming the Hopelessness that Holds Us Back by Tim Timberlake. Depression and loneliness are real, and they are robbing too many men of the peace, joy, and purpose that God has promised. Tim Timberlake, senior pastor, respected author, and dynamic leader, expresses how essential it is to confront our struggles and pain. He provides four steps men can take to overcome depression and loneliness by accepting God’s invitation to partner with Him in healing.

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Shannae Anderson, Ph.D., is a Clinical and Forensic Psychologist and the Director of Psychology and Co-director of Ethics and Advocacy at AACC. She has been in private practice for more than 25 years, where she specializes in complex trauma, addictions, and borderline personality disorder. Dr. Anderson is the Clinical Director of two drug and alcohol treatment centers in Southern California and adjunct faculty at Liberty University in the Psy.D. program.

Ken Canfield, Ph.D., is the founder of the National Center for Fathering, @ fathers.com. He has published both scientifically and popularly. Ken is the father of five children and granddad of 16. He also provides leadership to www.grandkidsmatter.org.

Tim Clinton, Ed.D., LPC, LMFT, is president of AACC, the world's largest and most diverse Christian counseling association. He is also Executive Director of the Global Center for Mental Health, Addiction, and Recovery and Professor Emeritus at Liberty University. For seven years, Dr. Clinton served as co-host of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, heard on more than 1,400 radio outlets daily, and now hosts a weekend television program, The Road Forward, seen on Real America's Voice News streaming service and numerous platforms. He and his son, Zach, also co-host a national daily radio broadcast, Life, Love, Faith, and Family, focusing on mental health and relationships.

Zach Clinton, M.A., serves as the Vice President of the American Association of Christian Counselors, host of the renowned Built Different Podcast, and President & Host of Ignite Men's Impact Weekend, which gathers nearly 10,000 men annually. A Licensed Resident Counselor and former Division I college baseball player, Zach is a recognized growing authority and voice on performance, motivational psychology, and mental health for today's generations. His mission is to remind people they are never out of the fight!

Jim Cress, M.A., LPC, CSAT, CPTT, CMAT, is a Licensed Professional Counselor, Certified Sex Addiction Therapist, and Certified Multiple Addictions Therapist. He is a group leader for Onsite Workshops near Nashville, a national conference speaker with the American Association of Christian Counselors, and a 34-year veteran broadcaster. Jim cohosts the "Therapy & Theology Podcast."

Ted Cunningham, MACE, is the founding pastor of Woodland Hills Family Church in Branson, Missouri. He is a graduate of Liberty University and Dallas Theological Seminary.

Warren Farrell, Ph.D., is the author of *The Boy Crisis* and *Role Mate to Soul Mate*, plus *The New York Times* bestseller, *Why Men Are the Way They Are*. He was chosen by *The Financial Times of London* as one of the world's top 100 thought leaders. Dr. Farrell chairs The Coalition for a White House Council on Boys and Men.

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D., is a professor at Regent University in the School of Psychology and Counseling. His research interests focus on investigating spiritual interventions in therapy, multicultural issues, and evaluating psychologist/counselor education practices in spirituality. Dr. Garzon's professional experiences include private practice as a clinical psychologist, serving as an associate pastor for a Latino church, and fulfilling a role in pastoral care ministry.

Gregory L. Jantz, Ph.D., is the founder of The Center • A Place of HOPE, a healthcare facility in Edmonds, Washington, which emphasizes whole-person care, addressing the emotional, relational, physical, and spiritual aspects of recovery. He is the best-selling author of multiple books and a sought-after speaker in person, on television, and radio.

Michael R. Lyles, M.D., is a board-certified psychiatrist and has a private practice with Lyles & Crawford Clinical Consulting in Roswell, Georgia.

Jeanneane Maxon, J.D., Esq., has many years of executive-level, non-profit leadership experience. She is an attorney and nationally recognized speaker. Jeanneane formerly served as the Vice President of External Affairs and Corporate Counsel for Americans United for Life and as the General Counsel of Care Net.

Gary W. Moon, M.Div., Ph.D., served as the founding Executive Director of the Martin Institute for Christianity and Culture and the Dallas Willard Center for Christian Spiritual Formation at Westmont College and continues to direct their resource development initiatives through serving as the director of *Conversatio Divina: A Center for Spiritual Formation*.

Patrick Morley, Ph.D., is a best-selling author and one of the leading voices in men's discipleship, with over seven million books in print. His groundbreaking book, *The Man in the Mirror*, was named one of the 100 most influential Christian books of the 20th century. Patrick's 23rd and latest work, *From Broken Boy to Mended Man: A Positive Plan to Heal Your Childhood Wounds and Break the Cycle*, offers practical hope and healing for men facing emotional and spiritual struggles. Through his 40+ years of ministry, including founding the global *Man in the Mirror* movement, Patrick has equipped millions of men to live with purpose, integrity, and faith.

Jim Ramos is the *USA TODAY* and Evangelical Christian Publishers Association best-selling author of *DIALED IN: Reaching Your Full Capacity as A Man of God*. He is also a speaker and the founder of Men in the Arena, a ministry focused on equipping men to honor God in the leadership of their families, churches, and communities. Called "a pioneer of digital men's ministry," Jim leads an army of nearly half a million men on social media. He guides men weekly through the Men in the Arena Podcast, Spotify's #1 podcast for Christian men and the top 75 of all Christian podcasts on iTunes.

Chad Robichaux is a former Force Recon Marine, DoD contractor, and Afghanistan veteran. He is the founder of the Mighty Oaks Foundation (mightyoaksprograms.org), the best-selling author of *Saving Aziz: How the Mission to Help One Became a Calling to Rescue Thousands from the Taliban and A Mission Without Borders: Why a Father and Son Risked it All for the People of Ukraine*, and hosts The Resilient Show (theresilientshow.com).

Tim Timberlake is the Senior Pastor at Celebration Church in Jacksonville, Florida. He is well-known for his dynamic leadership and profound insights. His unique blend of humor and deep biblical wisdom empowers audiences to create transformative change in their lives. Tim graduated from the Pistis School of Ministry in Detroit, Michigan. In addition to his ministry work, Tim is a respected author, having written impactful books such as *The Power of 1440* and *The Art of Overcoming*.

Mike Vaughn, M.A., CSAT, leads Bethesda Workshops as its Executive Director. He specializes in sex addiction recovery, intensive therapy, marriage therapy, and trauma. Mike shares his work nationwide for conferences, podcasts, and resources like Covenant Eyes. He has had more than 100 television appearances and is the author of an eBook for therapists on providing intensive therapy.

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The Things He Can't Talk About: Understanding the Hidden Struggles of the Masculine Soul



As a son, brother, husband, dad, and counselor for many years, I have seen firsthand the silent battles men face daily. Dreams lost, relationships strained, fears hidden, and grief bottled up.

There's been a relentless attack on masculinity... on what it means to be a man from a radical agenda that seeks to redefine manhood as toxic and diminish anything distinctly masculine. As a result, men have been left to silently question their identity and purpose. Chances are, you have seen this impact on someone you know and love.

Maybe you have known him for years. Perhaps you live with him, sleep in the same bed, and may have even raised children together. He is a good man, a caring father, a supporter, and a protector—when things get rough, he is there to take the brunt. Perhaps he is even a compassionate and attentive husband who rarely misses an opportunity to show his love through word or action. Maybe you have found something mysterious

behind the steely demeanor and those eyes of strength or brokenness. A man thing: I have learned that men struggle to talk about several issues.

As a son, brother, husband, dad, and counselor for many years, I have seen firsthand the silent battles men face daily. Dreams lost, relationships strained, fears hidden, and grief bottled up. These unspoken struggles define much of a man's journey. However, what is it about men that lock us up? Why do we feel the need to pull away and go silent? Why do we sometimes struggle with saying how we actually feel, what we think, or sharing our dreams, especially with the ones we love? Fish, yes. Hunt, yes. Work on cars, yes. Talk about what's inside? No... *or not often.*

But do we communicate? Yes, we do. Every day of a man's life, he screams, in some way, messages of

love or brokenness to those around him. It does not matter if he is 20, 80, or dead. These unspoken struggles define much of a man's journey. In doing so, we not only discover the profound impact these struggles have on men themselves but also their families, communities, and society at large. Regardless of personality or circumstance, all men battle with several "universal life issues." And too often, they battle these issues alone.

Addictions

A dark side, a carefully hidden pocket of "secret stuff," afflicts every man's soul. Most of us hear the word addiction and think of somebody sticking a needle in their arm... or of pornography, hidden thoughts of lust, alcohol addiction, or some other type of substance abuse. However, addiction is an adaptable foe—it will work with any habit, behavior, or appetite likely to divert love, attention, and obedience from our relationship with God (as well as the vital relationships we have with those we love).

Past Pain

The pain of the past can sit heavy on a man's soul, often buried so deep that it stays hidden for years. They try to push it down, cover it up with work, distractions, or anything that keeps them busy. However, no matter how much they try to ignore it, that hurt does not just disappear. It lingers, quietly affecting their lives, relationships, and how they see themselves.

Relationships

Whether they say it or not, men desire meaningful relationships with their spouses, friends, and families. I asked a man recently how he was doing as a dad, and his response caught me by surprise: "I think about it every day." But many struggle with what it takes to develop and strengthen a friendship or relationship, as



well as safety and trust. It is easier to talk about surface-level matters with our loved ones instead of what could actually be on their hearts and still be seen as the "strong one." This does not stop with the people men know and love.

God

Many men wrestle with where they stand with God but rarely talk about it. Most think that if God knows me like we are told He does, there is no way He could truly love me. As a result, they carry doubts, questions, and even guilt deep inside, unsure of how to approach God or if they even can. Life gets busy, and it is easy to let faith take a back seat, but that leaves a void that success, possessions, or distractions can never fill. Deep down, most men long for something more—a real connection with God.

In this issue, we jump headfirst into the soul of a man. Our mission is to help you help him live free in Christ as a man. Real strength begins when a man has the courage to open up, confront what is holding him back, and lean into the relationships and faith that bring healing.

As you uncover these "things men can't talk about" in your work and

daily life, remember that every man is on a journey to rediscover who he is, reconnect with the ones he loves, and step into the fullness of who God created him to be. While the road may not be easy, it is not one that men need to walk alone. With support, faith, and intentional steps forward, men can break the silence, find freedom, and embrace the life they were always meant to live—believing it is *good* to be a man. ✝



TIM CLINTON, ED.D., LPC, LMFT, BCPCC, is president of AACC, the world's largest and most diverse Christian counseling association. He is also

Executive Director of the Global Center for Mental Health, Addiction, and Recovery and Professor Emeritus at Liberty University. For seven years, Dr. Clinton served as co-host of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, heard on more than 1,400 radio outlets daily, and now hosts a weekend television program, The Road Forward, seen on Real America's Voice News streaming service and numerous platforms. He and his son, Zach, also co-host a national daily radio broadcast, Life, Love, Faith, and Family, focusing on mental health and relationships.

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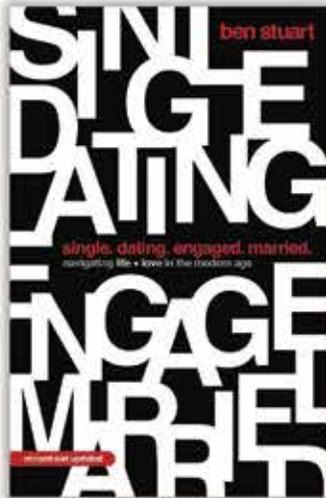
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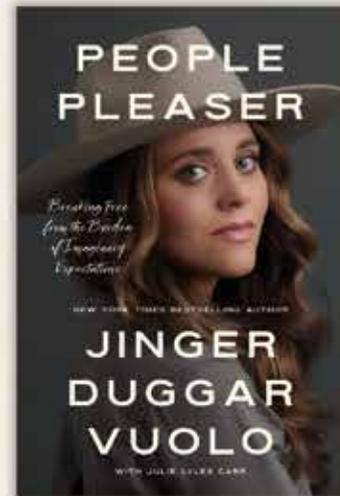
From building strong foundations to navigating life's unexpected challenges, these resources offer faith-based insights for healthier relationships.

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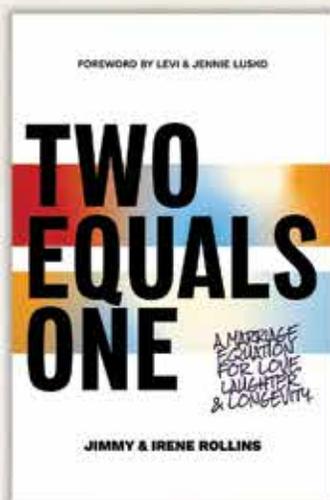
God gives us purpose in each relational season. Discover how to thrive in each one in the updated edition of the bestselling *Single, Dating, Engaged, Married*, now with a new chapter on how to break up.

JingerAndJeremy.com



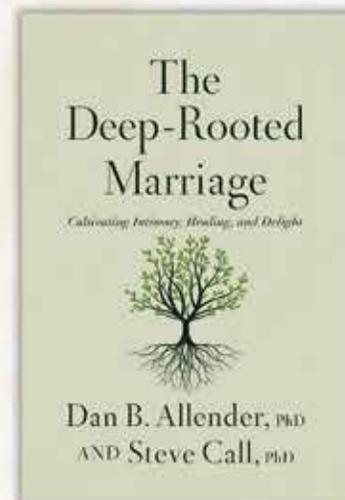
In her latest memoir, Jinger Duggar Vuolo shares how she is finding the strength to break free from the burden of imaginary expectations to live a life of freedom in who she was made to be.

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Jimmy and Irene Rollins share honest stories, prayers, and practical exercises to help couples heal and thrive through love and faith.

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PATHS FROM FATHERLESSNESS TO FATHER-FULLNESS

Every culture faces an irrefutable challenge: the angst of fatherlessness. The stifling impact of fatherlessness and its corresponding consequences for children and culture are well documented.¹ There is nowhere this is more evident and painful than in urban America,² and yet we know fatherlessness is also wreaking havoc in the “safe suburbs.”

So, our task as leaders is to combat and process the broad, negative social sequelae of fatherlessness and discover hope through father-fullness. This starts with recognizing an essential and strategic truth: all men are fathers or father figures. Men who express a positive father-fullness attitude become generational leaders and make a decisive difference in their homes, churches, and communities. They are characterized by a desire to grow in their commitment to their children and reach out to fatherless youth in their spheres of influence.³

There is no simple solution. Sincere and motivated men will still fall short. All dads are vulnerable to some degree and need to process their issues—both past and present,⁴ in an open and heartfelt way—to be authentic and effective fathers.

Horizontal and Vertical Connections

As men seek to father with excellence, there are multiple ways to encourage and equip them to sustain their commitment as dads, but two stand out:

1. Horizontal connections: genuine, positive relational experiences with his child. A dad is motivated when he can make positive contributions to his child's well-being—investing in their heart, life, and future. In addition, other horizontal relationships also complement a father's success, which usually involve those who know his child and have a positive impact, such as the child's mother, siblings, extended family members, friends, teachers, coaches, ministers, neighbors, etc.

2. A father's vertical connections. These include a man's experiences with his father, father figures, mentors, and others who have shaped his fathering. In many cases, these are people he has looked up to and considered as role models. The vertical connection can also be *spiritual* as he seeks to fulfill his generational responsibility and leave a positive legacy.

When pursued earnestly, these two axes, the horizontal and vertical, yield high fathering satisfaction.

Dads and Unresolved Issues

Data from two random polls commissioned by the National Center for Fathering show that 60% of Americans agree with the statement, "Most people have unresolved issues with their father."⁵ This is a discouraging sign and helps explain the fatherhood crisis. Unresolved issues a man has with his father will impact his fathering. If there was abandonment, abuse, or addictive behaviors, he may repeat those with his children. The ultimate result can be positive in some situations, as those issues may motivate him to do better.

Unresolved issues may also open a window to probe further and potentially ask a client, colleague, or friend, "Are there unresolved issues that you would like to explore and resolve with your father?" And, "What support and affirmation do you wish you had received from your father?" Processing these questions often leads to a greater understanding of the vertical and generational aspects of fathering. My friend, Gordon Dalbey, a respected author, speaker, and leader on men's issues, reminds me that anyone who seeks to be a healed and hope-filled father must first probe the depths of his history with his father or lack of a father, and find healing for any losses he experienced as a son. Processing those issues as a son will enhance his fathering.⁶

KEN CANFIELD

A DAD IS
MOTIVATED
WHEN HE CAN
MAKE POSITIVE
CONTRIBUTIONS
TO HIS CHILD'S
WELL-BEING—
INVESTING IN
THEIR HEART,
LIFE, AND FUTURE



C.S. Lewis is an unexpected pioneer in this process. Lewis's early life was characterized by his mother's death when he was nine and then a challenging relationship with his father. Beginning when he was quite young, Lewis was shipped off to boarding schools where he experienced loneliness and sadness. However, his love of books and reading prompted his writings and brought solace to his heart.

In his book, *George MacDonald: An Anthology*, Lewis wrote about a significant person in his life whom he had never met: "All that I know of George MacDonald I have learned from his own books.... The most important thing we can know about MacDonald is, he had an almost perfect relationship with his father. From his own father, he said, he first learned that *fatherhood must be at the core of the universe*" (emphasis added). Lewis continued, "I have never concealed the fact that I regarded him as my master; indeed, I fancy I have never written a book in which I did not quote from him."⁷ Although Lewis never had biological children (later in life, he became the stepfather through marriage), the concept and vision for father-fullness were reflected deeply in his spiritual journey and influence on millions through his writing.

Overcomer Fathers

Current research syncs with Lewis's experience: When men resolve issues in their past, they experience healing and hope.

In a broad study of fathering types⁸ (n=2006 fathers) and using cluster analysis, researchers at the National Center for Fathering classified 22% of fathers surveyed as **overcomer fathers**. These dads grew up without a father or with a father who had pervasive negative traits like uncontrolled anger or addiction to unhealthy substances. Despite those difficult challenges, these overcomer fathers found healing and hope in a relationship with another Father, a heavenly one, as in Psalm 68:5-6. They were able to process the wreckage of their childhood experiences with that Father, and they became highly motivated to become involved, consistent, aware, and nurturing dads.

Two Case Studies

To illustrate these principles, let's look at a few dads who have lived them out. My friend, David, is a successful business leader and an overcomer father. He lived through the pain of his parents' divorce at age six and then had very little contact with his father until he was 13. His father had remarried, leaving David to ponder questions like, "Why did my dad move away and become a father to someone else's kids?"

David's grandfather filled in as best he could during those years. Eventually, David met his wife, and they had five children. Something clicked in David's heart as he quickly grew to love being a dad, and he continues to experience horizontal, relational healing as he cares for and encourages his children and works as a team with his wife.⁹

Overcomer fathers often want to share what they have experienced

and find ways to invest in others through ministry or another helping profession. David founded several fatherhood organizations in his spare time while still being a professional and highly devoted to his family.

Further, David has embraced the vertical/spiritual connection to fatherhood. After the death of a colleague who was an exemplary model of a faith-focused, Christian father, David realized that he wanted that, too. As he said, he was born a Jew but is now a neophyte Christian.¹⁰

Another case study: A nine-year-old boy was traumatized by his father's suicide. At the funeral, the minister told the congregation that although this death was tragic, God cares deeply for widows and the fatherless. Those words from Psalm 65 weighed heavily on this young, grieving son. Later that night, the boy was in emotional despair over what his father had done. Then he remembered the minister's words. *If God cares for widows and the fatherless, he reasoned, then I need to ask God to be my father.* He voiced that simple prayer and then fell fast asleep.

Fast-forward 69 years... I was talking to this same boy as a 78-year-old man. He said that not only did God answer his boyhood prayer, but He also helped him avoid many of the common pitfalls of adolescence because he had asked God to be his father. As a result, God led him to live responsibly and righteously through those years and beyond. He later married and helped raise four sons who followed in their father's footsteps, raising godly children and serving the Lord faithfully.

Faithful Fathers Emerging

When men acknowledge and process their fathers' influence, whether negative or positive, and unite that with the vertical power and wisdom of another Father, the best of the natural and spiritual worlds come together. Fathers of faith need to recognize the challenges in both worlds and live vibrantly, using the power of the Spirit to leave a legacy of faith that continues for generations. Suffering and conflict in the horizontal world can be overcome with hope and peace in the vertical world.

Our most current research in a stratified sample of American fathers notes that the number one concern and priority of fathers is their children's moral and spiritual development, followed by having good communication with their children, having a positive relationship with their children's mother, and helping their children succeed educationally.

I see a new group of fathers emerging who allow those top priorities to guide their everyday decisions and actions. These men integrate the horizontal and vertical dimensions of fathering with passion and vulnerability.

They rise early and diligently pray and provide for their families. They celebrate other influences in their children's lives who set good examples. Although there are no perfect fathers except one, these "ordinary" faithful fathers know the true test of manhood is expressed in their commitment to serve and prepare their children to live in a world they may never see.

For any man who wants to meet one of these dads, I suggest you look in the mirror. You will get a glimpse of one who may be in the process but has great potential to build strong relationships with his kids and leave a legacy of faith. ✕



KEN CANFIELD, PH.D., is the founder of the National Center for Fathering, @fathers.com. He has published both scientifically and popularly. Ken is the father of five children and granddad of 16. He also provides leadership to www.grandkidsmatter.org. Ken is married to Michelle, and they reside in Fayetteville, Arkansas.

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RECLAIMING MASCULINITY: Helping Broken Boys Become Mended Men

When I was 53 years old, my mother died. I didn't feel anything. I wasn't sad. I didn't cry. I didn't miss her. Realizing something was off, I made an appointment with a Christian counselor. Over eight sessions, she helped me articulate the father and mother wounds I had never been able to put into words.

There are millions of us. We carry around leftover pain from childhood wounds. This unprocessed pain causes us to act out in ways that damage our relationships. We are easily offended, fragile, lash out, or withdraw. We are baffled by our behavior and unsure of what normal male behavior looks like. The collateral damage to our wives and children is staggering.

Helping men like this reclaim masculinity is a massively big idea—one of the great redemptive opportunities of our time. And no one has more influence with these men than today’s caregivers. You are the “community of care” God has called to instruct, encourage, correct, challenge, and inspire men toward authentic manhood. You see men not for what they are but for who they can become. You give them hope.

Masculinity Begins with a Question

Every young man eventually faces this primal, foundational question: *Who am I, and what is my life about?* These are the issues of identity, meaning, and purpose. The divine order is for parents to help their sons answer these questions with a cocktail of love, structure, roots, and wings—the essentials of positive parenting.

Pastors, teachers, coaches, and community leaders have guided boys for generations. Elders transferred their wisdom and values through shared meals, rites of passage, sports, and discipleship. Young men were taught to be loving husbands, fathers, protectors, providers, and leaders. They watched the men they admired live out virtues such as courage, humility, and kindness.

However, answering this lofty question has become increasingly difficult in today’s culture. Many young men grow up without fathers or spiritual mentors, left to navigate identity and purpose alone. Many older men would like to help, but not enough to give up their “tee times.” Young men often turn to the wrong sources for guidance. The “manosphere”—blogs, podcasts, forums, and influencers—offers distorted advice. While some promote personal improvement, much of the content feeds anger, frustration, and cultural confusion, perpetuating brokenness. Reclaiming masculinity requires addressing past pain, healing wounds, and rediscovering a God-centered vision of manhood. Let’s look at two ways that can happen.

Young men often turn to the wrong sources for guidance. The “manosphere”—blogs, podcasts, forums, and influencers—offers distorted advice. While some promote personal improvement, much of the content feeds anger, frustration, and cultural confusion, perpetuating brokenness.

PATRICK MORLEY



Helping Broken Boys Become Mended Men

My favorite thing is meeting with men one-on-one. Because they know I work with men as a vocation, they tend to open up about their struggles. Whether 18 or 80, they inevitably mention one or more of the following seven inner aches and pains:

- “I just feel like I am in this alone.”
- “I don’t feel like God cares about me personally—not really.”
- “I don’t feel like my life has a purpose—it feels random.”
- “No matter how hard I try, I can’t overcome the destructive behaviors that keep dragging me down.”
- “My soul feels dry.”
- “My most important relationships are not healthy.”
- “I don’t feel like I’m doing anything that will make a difference and leave the world a better place.”

Christian men are not exempt.

No matter how much a man loves or *wants* to love God, it is difficult to move forward when he is stuck in the past. The “men problem” is deeply tied to the reality that 70% or more of men are growing up in dysfunctional families.¹

What You Can Do

Let’s tell men: “Your wounds may *describe* you, but they don’t have to *define* you.” We can also tell them: “To discover healthy male behavior, you need to heal and break the cycle. To break free, you must go *through* your pain, not *around* it.”

As a counselor, pastor, or friend, say: “I’m going to help you unravel what happened to you and why. I’ll help you face the truth, grieve what should have been, and find rest for your soul. When the time is right,

***Be his guide, mentor, confidant, intercessor, and friend.
No man fails on purpose, but no man succeeds by accident either.***

I'll help you rebuild relationships or set boundaries. You can *unilaterally* forgive those who have caused you pain and seek forgiveness from those you have harmed." Once a man addresses his past, it is equally important that we disciple him into a better future.

Helping Mended Men Become Strong Disciples

I quit high school during my senior year and joined the Army. What causes so much pain that a boy on the threshold of manhood would spiral that far out of control? No one ever took me under their wing to show me the ropes. I was left to "guess" what it meant to be a man.

Evangelism without discipleship is cruel. When we do not disciple men, it is like enlisting them in the Army and issuing them a rifle they never learn to clean or shoot. They will not be helpful to themselves or anyone else on the day of battle.

The root cause of virtually every problem is a man who is failing. Let's test that:

- Can you picture getting the world right if we don't get the Church right?
- Can we get the Church right if we don't get families right?
- Can we get families right if we don't get marriages right?
- And can we get marriages right if we don't get men right?

It truly is about the men. Yet, no man fails on purpose. Men do not wake up thinking, *How can I neglect my kids, irritate my wife, or fail my friends today?*

How does God provide to solve this problem? Making disciples is God's plan A to release the power of His Gospel on every problem men face. There is no plan B. Regardless of how any man got into his current situation, God's solution is to disciple him out of that setting. Men's discipleship is one man taking another man under his wing and showing him the ropes. When God puts a man who is stuck in your path, discipleship means finding out why and helping him solve that problem.

The single best hope for men is the Gospel of Jesus Christ and His body—the Church. The greatest support we can offer women and children is to disciple their husbands and fathers. Discipleship is the process by which men become civilized.

How You Can Help

To restore healthy men, take a man under your wing and show him the ropes—like Jesus did. If you are a man, start by inviting a man for coffee. Or, if you are a woman, task a man with a passion for making disciples to ask another man for coffee. Then, ask him to share his story: "What was it like growing up? Where are you on your spiritual journey?" One cup of coffee can change the world.

Next, watch over him—like the Spirit watches over you. Be his guide, mentor, confidant, intercessor, and friend. No man fails on purpose, but no man succeeds by accident either. We must be intentional. Show men Christ; don't just try to fix their behavior. Jesus is the perfect example of manhood. The more a man knows about Jesus, the more he will understand himself and how to be a man.

We can help men know Jesus by showing them how to read the Bible for themselves, join a small group to do life together, and find a place to serve others. I love to tell men, "A Bible, a small group, and serving someone else will solve 90% of your problems."

Reclaiming masculinity is a battle we can win. We cannot, we must not, and by God's grace, we will not fail. The first step to every great outcome is to imagine its possibility. ✦



PATRICK MORLEY, PH.D., is a best-selling author and one of the leading voices in men's discipleship, with over seven million books in print. His groundbreaking book, *The Man in the Mirror*, was named one of the 100 most influential Christian books of the 20th century. Patrick's 23rd and latest work, *From Broken Boy to Mended Man: A Positive Plan to Heal Your Childhood Wounds and Break the Cycle*, offers practical hope and healing for men facing emotional and spiritual struggles. Through his 40+ years of ministry, including founding the global Man in the Mirror movement, Patrick has equipped millions of men to live with purpose, integrity, and faith.

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“I HAVE NEVER READ A BOOK THAT I HAVE FOUND MORE HELPFUL FOR HEALING MEN’S CHILDHOOD WOUNDS.”

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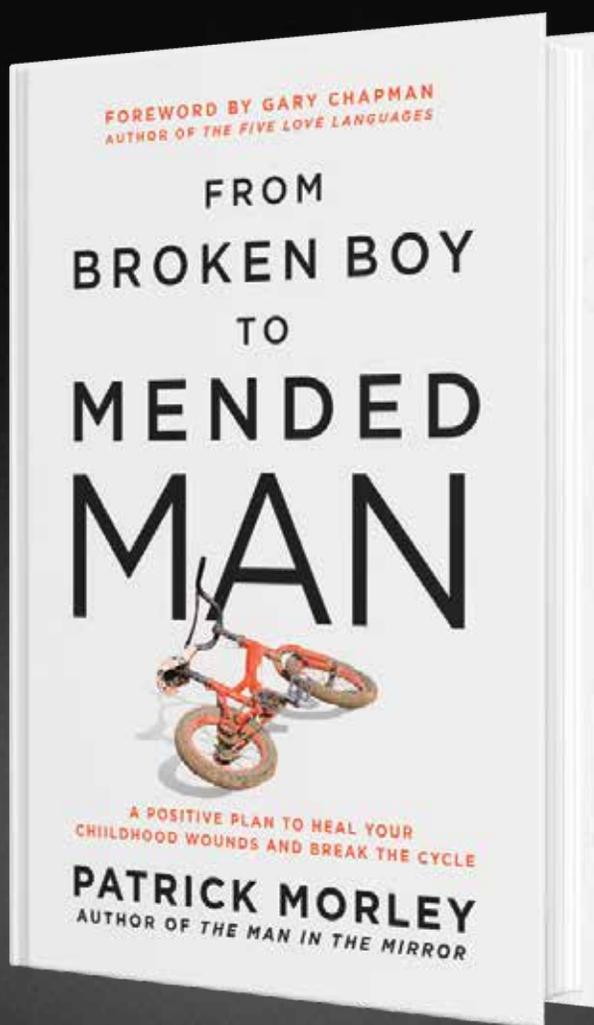
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The Boy Crisis:

THE EVIDENCE, CAUSES, AND SOLUTIONS

What is the boy crisis? The boy crisis is global, predominantly in developed nations. It is a crisis of:

Mental health. As boys become young men, their suicide rate goes from equal to girls to five times greater.¹ Boys are much more likely to be addicted to drugs, porn, and video games² and to die from opioid overdose. They are also more likely to be in prison or to be on the street homeless. Even their IQs are dropping.³

Education. In the 53 largest developed nations, boys fall behind girls in almost every academic subject, especially reading and writing—the most significant predictors of success or failure. Boys are much less likely than girls to graduate from high school or college.^{4,5}

Physical health. Boys and men die sooner than females from 14 out of 15 of the leading causes of death. And their sperm counts are dropping, leading to less healthy children of both sexes.⁶

Purpose. Boys' old sense of purpose—risking their lives in war, the most hazardous jobs, or being the sole breadwinner—has been replaced by a “purpose void.”

Shame. When boys in elementary school are already hearing phrases like “toxic masculinity” and seeing TV shows like *Homer Simpson* where dads are bumbling fools, they begin to feel ashamed they are male. By junior high, as they hear that they are part of the patriarchy that develops rules to benefit men at the expense of women and that fathers are often “deadbeat dads,” many feel ashamed they were born male.

Fertility. Female college graduates do not wish to marry and have children with male college dropouts, nor with males in unemployment lines or who live in their parents’ basements.

National Security. Federal Reserve Chairman, Jerome Powell, revealed on CBS’ “60 Minutes” in 2019 that the peril posed by young males not looking for work, being addicted to drugs, and being unprepared for the transition to technology is not just an economic problem but also one of the top two national security problems.⁷

What are the primary causes?

The causes are multifaceted, and each facet magnifies the others. However, more than any other, the boy crisis resides where dads do not.

Boys who are dad-deprived are predominantly in developed or wealthier nations.⁸ Why? In more prosperous countries, the need to survive is low, allowing for a greater luxury of choice—the choice to divorce—which often means minimal dad involvement and the choice for a mom to have children without being married to the dad. Thus, 40% of U.S. women who have children do so without marriage.⁹

When the government in wealthier nations plays the role of substitute husband by subsidizing the single mom, this can reinforce dad

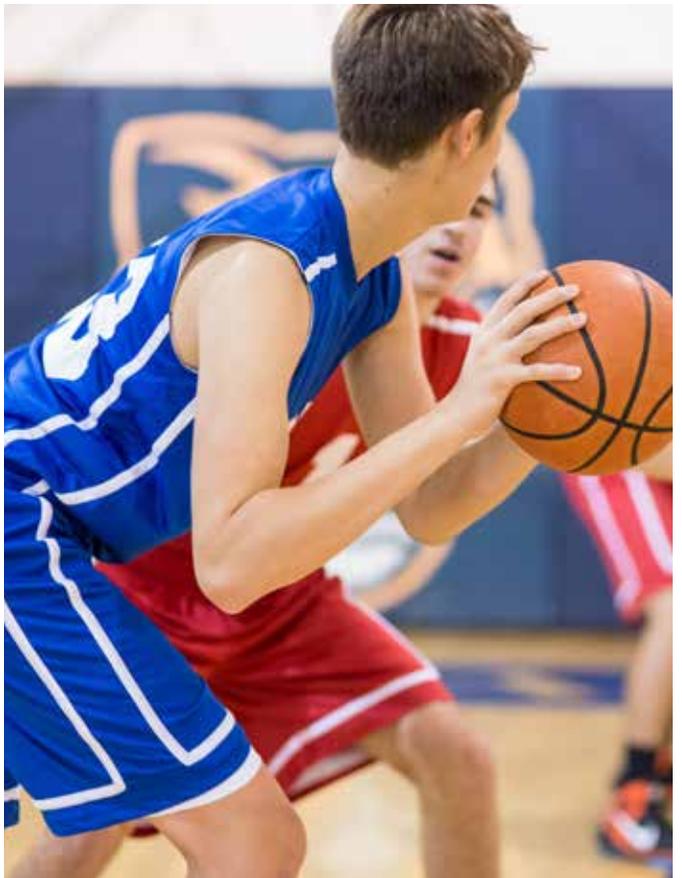
deprivation. In all these cases, sons are less likely to have a same-sex role model and, as boys, have less propensity to express their feelings, especially to dads they seldom or never see or who abandoned them. The result is a weaker nuclear family without the three crucial contributors to children’s emotional security: moms, dads, and faith.

When I did the research for *The Boy Crisis*, I discovered that both boys and girls who are dad-deprived suffer on more than 50 metrics, but boys, without a same-sex role model, experience the deprivation more intensely. For example, by age nine, dad-deprived children have shorter telomeres (specific DNA-protein structures), which predicts a 14% shorter life expectancy; however, the telomeres of the dad-deprived boys are yet again 40% shorter for the boys than the girls.¹⁰

Boys without the boundary enforcement of a dad often fail to develop the resilience they need to succeed. They are more likely to be high school dropouts and unemployed, to bully and be bullied, and to lack both trust and empathy.¹¹ Also, they are five times as likely to do drugs.¹² These boys are rejected by girls, disrespected by boys, feel like failures, and experience isolation. They are hurt boys.

Boys who hurt us are hurt boys. Almost all school shooters are dad-deprived boys and/or have suffered from extremely high-conflict families or divorces.¹³ About 85% of our prisoners are dad-deprived.¹⁴

The young man who recently used his car to kill 14 people in New Orleans had been isolated and angry at his divorced parents, his own three divorces, and the resulting debts he could not pay.¹⁵ He was hurt, and he was outraged. Anger is vulnerability’s mask.



Some Solutions?

If dad deprivation is the primary problem, dad involvement is the primary solution. The best way to assure dad involvement is to keep the family strong and together—not by the need to survive but by choice. How?

While conducting the 30 years of couples' workshops that led to *Role Mate to Soul Mate*, I was able to identify and help couples practice seven "love enhancements" that made their relationships strong and kept them together. The result of stronger families and fewer divorces is more dad involvement, which, in turn, mitigates the boy crisis.

The most important of the seven love enhancements is developing the ability to handle personal criticism from a loved one without being defensive. Almost as important is "filling the reservoir of love" by knowing how to appreciate your loved one with at least five levels of specificity and developing the discipline to do that consistently.

These love enhancements also lead to fewer "minimum security prison marriages" in which the parents stay together "for the children" but not for their love. Parents with "minimum security prison marriages" do not inspire their children to marry and have children.

Schools can also offer multiple solutions for all boys—especially dad-deprived boys. The following are four examples.

First, teachers. There should be an approximately equal number of male and female elementary school teachers so boys do not go from mother-only families to female-only elementary schools.

Second, vocational education. Instead of non-academically inclined boys dropping out of high school and experiencing a more than 20% unemployment rate in their early 20s, vocational education can give them a skill set that provides pride and purpose. Japan has extensive vocational education programs, with 99.6% of their graduates receiving jobs.¹⁶

A non-academically inclined boy is more likely to be motivated by concrete goals. He may be bored by physics and chemistry until he learns that he needs them to be a highly paid welder.

The economy is transitioning from muscle to microchip, with 1.7 million truck drivers predicted to be largely replaced by self-driving trucks.¹⁷ Vocational education is needed to facilitate the transition of young men.

Third, recess. Physically active boys can more easily be mentally focused. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) find that a minute of recess improves students' test scores more than a minute of studying.¹⁸ Recess is especially important for boys who are not academically inclined.

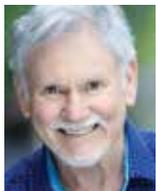
Fourth, sports. Varsity sports need to be supplemented by intramural sports that include every boy. Tackle football needs to be replaced by flag football so taxpayer money is not used to send the message to boys that they can only be loved and honored by risking their bodies and brains. Coaches need to be informed of dad-deprived boys so they can be aware of how important they may be as role models.

Legislation can also help. Florida's legislation contributed \$70 million to encourage dad involvement.¹⁹ One way is to let dads know precisely how and why they are needed, and dads need to hear this from moms. Men can then replace being needed as warriors in combat with being "Father Warriors." It is easier to love and be loved than to kill and be killed. States are increasingly replacing current laws—laws that give mothers of divorce

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) find that a minute of recess improves students' test scores more than a minute of studying.

the right to their children while fathers are left to fight for them—with laws giving priority to equal shared parenting.

President Trump, with an executive order, can create a White House Council on Boys and Men to make the boy crisis a national priority so millions of parents and sons do not feel isolated and ashamed—but instead supported to address a solution toward stronger families, more boy-friendly schools, and a greater economic and psychologically secure America. ✨



WARREN FARRELL, PH.D., is the author of *The Boy Crisis and Role Mate to Soul Mate*, plus *The New York Times* bestseller, *Why Men Are the Way They Are*. He was chosen by *The Financial Times* of London as one of the world's top 100 thought leaders. Dr. Farrell chairs *The Coalition for a White House Council on Boys and Men*.

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MASCULINITY:

RECLAIMING WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A MAN

When God made males and females, He did so separately, distinctly, and definitively. He did so on purpose and with a purpose, “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male **AND** (my emphasis) female He created them” (Genesis 1:27, NASB).

The way I understand it, males (notice I did not say men) and females are different in at least three distinct ways—biblically, experientially, and empirically. First, when I say our amazing genders are different *biblically*, I mean biologically. God made them “male and female.” To quote the innocent kindergartener in the Arnold Schwarzenegger hit movie, Kindergarten Cop, “Boys have a penis. Girls have a vagina.” Enough said.

Second, we differ *experientially*. Generally, we are different in our approach to life, relationships, and the human experience. Men and women, again generally, are filled with vastly different experiences. Recently, my bride, Shanna, was asked what filled my tank; she rolled her eyes and said, “If Jim is cold, wet, and suffering with nothing but his pack, gun, and a Jetboil™ (stove), he is happy.” The women in the room affirmed Shanna’s disdain with rolled eyes and a verbal “ugh” while the men nodded their heads in silent agreement with my suffering-equals-joy scenario. “Male and female, He created them.”

Finally, and most controversially, we are different *empirically*. No one wants to talk about this in our males-and-females-are-equal masquerade—but it is true, nonetheless. All things being equal (and they are more equal than ever), we are created with unique, gender-specific, inherent passions that manifest in our career choices.

You may remember the recent Benedictine College commencement ceremony, when Kansas City Chiefs kicker Harrison Butker’s speech exploded over the news, causing an uproar that surprised many. Not me. I have served in full-time ministry for 35 years and in the Christian men’s space for a decade and a half. During that time, I have watched the cultural understanding of how men and women differ become increasingly warped to unfathomable degrees.

Thus, when Harrison Butker made comments about the necessity of men in the family, implied that women might value their children over careers, and praised his “wife who leans into her vocation [as a wife and mother],” it struck a nerve of a false narrative that has been taking a deeper hold of the mindset of our anti-biblical culture.

Of course, his words of praise for his wife were misinterpreted as misogynistic (thank you, misandrists, for pointing that out) and another example of “toxic masculinity.” You do not know me, but can I share how sick and tired I am of the ignorant overuse of this oxymoronic phrase? The Oxford English Dictionary’s (Oxford Languages) definition of masculinity is a set of “qualities or attributes regarded as characteristic of men and boys,”¹ which begs the question, “What is an attribute?” According to Oxford, an attribute is simply a “quality or feature regarded as a characteristic or *inherent* part of someone or something.”²

JIM RAMOS



In my *USA TODAY* and Evangelical Christian Publishers Association Top 25 bestseller, *DIALED IN: Reaching Your Full Capacity as a Man of God*, I argue that masculinity is not toxic. Instead, it is a gift to a world that has men broken by toxic males masquerading as men. Biblical masculinity is a quality and attribute—a gift from God to the world. Let me explain it this way: “... *male and female, He created them*” (Genesis 1:27, NASB). Males are born. Men are made. Males genetically. Men habitually. Male in form. Man in function. Males are the problem. Men are the solution. A male and a man are genetically identical but dissimilar in virtually every other area. When a male fails, a man is usually compelled to replace him.

Just as males and men are dissimilar, men and women are vastly different, and we should, as a society, celebrate those differences instead of encouraging a homogenous attitude toward our two genders—male and female. As a culture, we have spent decades encouraging women to be strong and capable, which I love. Our world needs *strong* women. However, we have simultaneously told men that they are toxic, useless, and unnecessary. Women do not need men. Right? Wrong. Tragically, the irony is that none of the statistics actually support these opinions. Fatherless families are four times more likely to live in poverty. Fatherless children are more likely to abuse drugs. Seventy percent of children in juvenile facilities come from fatherless homes. And the absence of a father is a consistent predictor of violent behavior.³

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the nuclear family has declined since at least 2000, when 40% of children were not expected to live with both parents through age 18. In 2010, that number increased to 44%. And 48% as of 2020!⁴ The American family is in crisis. No, it is under attack, a direct assault against biblical masculinity. Not only is this false narrative untrue, but its consequences for the family are also devastating.

OVER MY YEARS WORKING WITH MEN AND STUDYING EDUCATION AND CAREER PATHWAYS OF BOTH GENDERS, I HAVE NOTED FIVE ROLES THAT A MAN IS UNIQUELY MADE TO OFFER HIS GIFT OF MASCULINITY TO A WORLD BEGGING TO EXPERIENCE THE FULL WEIGHT OF WHO GOD CREATED HIM TO BE.

Men and women are not the same. Yes, both are equally loved by God and His salvation through Jesus; however, that Creator uniquely crafts us to reflect various aspects of His nature and provide distinct types of good in the world. The diversity that God has handcrafted in each of us is beautiful and does not need to be manufactured, counterfeited, or replaced.

Over my years working with men and studying education and career pathways of both genders, I have noted five roles that a man is uniquely made to offer his gift of masculinity to a world begging to experience the full weight of who God created him to be. In a world where 58% of college graduates are now women,⁵ never before have women had the opportunity to choose whatever career they desire. Both men and women continue to choose career paths based on who God inherently created them to be. The following are five empirical ways God designs men to offer their masculine gift to the world.

1. The Protector: A People to Defend. Men are made to defend those they love. They are designed for physical action. Look at the average man—he typically carries less body fat, is taller, heavier, and has more muscle than his female counterpart. The Bible acknowledges these physical differences when admonishing husbands to “... live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel...” (1 Peter 3:7, ESV).

God uniquely enabled men to: “Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed” and “Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked” (Psalm 82:3-4, NIV). Man is made to jump into action. His body is designed to function as a wall for those he loves.

2. The Adventurer: A Dream to Pursue. Men consistently opt into the physically demanding and action-oriented roles in society. According to Zippia, 93.8% of U.S. construction workers are men,⁶ 77.5% are U.S. soldiers,⁷ 81.9% are U.S. firefighters,⁸ and 83.2% of U.S. police officers are men.⁹ These differences begin

in childhood, with boys preferring more active, outdoor-oriented play that includes competition and aggression.

We see this in biblical heroes who set out for distant lands, taking families and herds with them—from Abraham to Moses to Jesus to Paul. God started movements by placing a dream in the heart of a man, often one that required physical endurance and sacrifice.

3. The Provider: A Tribe to Lead. Men are wired to provide. In more than half of marriages today (55%), the husband is the primary breadwinner, whereas in 29% of cases, both partners earn the same.¹⁰

In my book *DIALED IN*, I unpack Paul’s words in 1 Timothy 3:4-5 and the concept of provision when speaking of a man who “manages” his household well, transliterating the Greek word, *proistemi*, which means to provide, preside, and protect. A man’s role as a provider implies both management of, and provision for, the family’s needs, both tangible (the heart) and intangible (physical needs).

4. The Sacrificer: A Hill to Die On. History decisively proves a point. Did you know that of the 58,220 casualties of the Vietnam War, 58,212 were men?¹¹ In fact, 98% of all U.S. military troops who have died in war have been men.¹²

Looking at the Titanic tragedy, which was portrayed in the fictional movie of the same name, Hollywood left out a critical detail. The film failed to note that out of the 1,517 souls that died that night, an overwhelming 1,349 were men.¹³ Why? Men went down with the ship to sacrifice for those they loved.

Who steps up when it is time to die? Men. The bigger question is, “Why?” The answer is that God baked the desire to do so into the masculine heart. God made men to gladly die on a hill that they care deeply about—to fall on the sword. The Bible lauds this sacrifice in John 15:13 (NASB 1995), “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.” A man’s desire to sacrifice for his loved ones reflects the sacrifice of our Savior on the cross.

5. The Conqueror: A Line to Cross. Men are problem-solvers. How many men have had their wives tell them they did not want them to solve their problems but to shut up and listen? I know mine has. A lot! Likewise, how many wives have complained that their husbands pursued them while dating but then moved on to focus on conquering the next career or achievement once the ring was on their finger? Both are examples of a man's inherent desire to tackle and conquer problems.

We see this design in Genesis (2:15) when God created man in the wilderness but then moved him into the garden to "subdue" it. From day one, God gave man a role that involved conquest.

Conclusion

The five roles are *inherently* ingrained in the hearts of men. Man's masculinity is a gift from God to the world, not a curse. When a man gets it, everyone wins.

In this article, I propose that more significant forces are at play than cultural norms, glass ceilings, and gender inequality. While those dynamics can explain some of these statistical disparities, I have seen these ingrained differences play out over and over in the families and lives of the thousands of men I have worked with over the years.

Harrison Butker's speech touched on an uncomfortable truth. Women cannot do it all... and asking them to is hurting the world. Men have a role and a job that is God-given and noble. Telling them otherwise causes the problems we see today in families, the Church, and the culture at large. ✕



JIM RAMOS is the USA TODAY and Evangelical Christian Publishers Association best-selling author of his most recent book, DIALED IN: Reaching Your Full Capacity as A Man of God. He is also a speaker and the founder of Men in the Arena, a ministry focused on equipping men to honor God in the leadership of their families, churches, and communities. Called "a pioneer of digital men's ministry," Jim leads an army of nearly half a million men on social media. He guides men weekly through the Men in the Arena Podcast, Spotify's #1 podcast for Christian men and the top 75 of all Christian podcasts on iTunes. Jim loves to hunt with his three adult sons and listen to men share their stories over a Café Americano with a splash of heavy cream. He lives in McMinnville, Oregon, with Shanna, his flight attendant bride of more than 32 years.

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MEN, PORN, and SEXUAL ADDICTION: Winning the Internal Battle



Our world is in the intense battle of a porndemic in the middle of a global mental health pandemic. King Solomon declared in Ecclesiastes 1:9 (NIV), “... *there is nothing new under the sun.*” I ponder, amid all the sexual brokenness recorded in the Bible, could the great, wise king have ever imagined a day when men and women would be under such an all-encompassing, ever-present assault by the instantaneous availability of pornography and a virtual smorgasbord of sexual images on the Internet, apps, social media, television, and movies?

While the foundational internal sexual lusts of men may be relatable to Solomon’s day, there is no comparison to the non-stop, “on demand” access to literally thousands of sexual images carried on a mobile device functioning as an endless supply of “sexual crack cocaine” in one’s pocket or hand at all times.

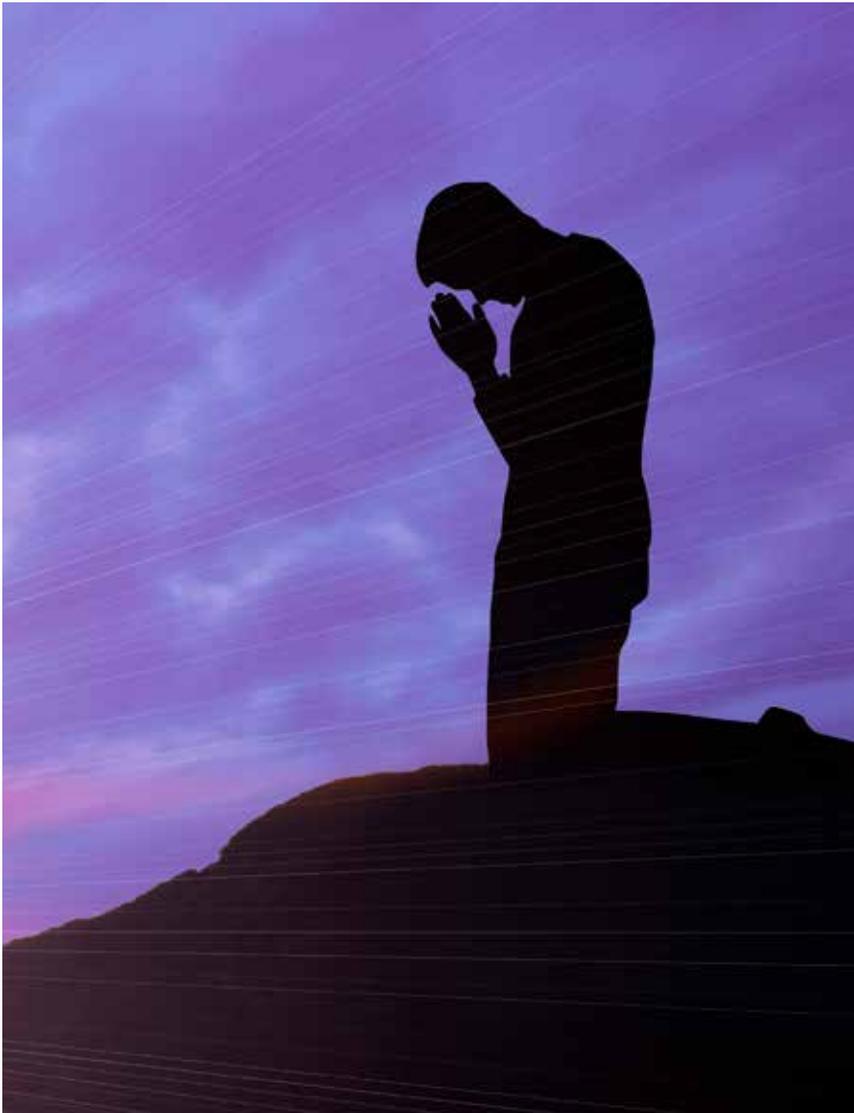
I equate this current porndemic to the rampant polygamy of the Old Testament. I describe today’s pornography problem as “Current Day Polygamy.” Men today are able to sexually act out with hundreds or thousands of women through the virtual high-speed avenues of pornography and sexual images. When a man is participating in virtual sexual activity with pornography, his body and brain believe he is actually having sex with those images. I am sobered by the Apostle Paul’s wake-up call in 1 Corinthians 6:16 (ESV). Paul warns, “*Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, ‘The two will become one flesh.’*”

I have found in my many years of counseling

men who are trapped in the bondage of pornography what I believe to be an evil stronghold. They are physically, emotionally, and spiritually “bonding” with these pornographic images. This is why we must treat this problem with a biblical battle plan, not just from a psychological or addiction model approach. Second Corinthians 10:5 (LSB) commands us to “... *take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.*”

As I explore what I call the interior world or “geography of a man’s heart and soul,” I always have as a biblical foundation the perspective of Proverbs 20:5 (ESV): “*The purpose in a man’s heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.*” Pornography struggles are not merely a choice problem, nor is this battle merely about sin. A myopic view of the origin or etiology of pornography and sexual acting out, as well as a simplistic behavior modification treatment plan, merely addresses the problem as an “above the waterline” issue. Always remember, this is a multifaceted problem that needs to be addressed with a multifaceted treatment plan.

JIM CRESS



There is a strong correlation between trauma, shame, and pornography usage. I spell “s-h-a-m-e” as “Self-Hatred-at-My-Expense.” I explore the various shame scripts in the inner world of men and help them work through their life stories to speak healing truth over these toxic messages. Pornography usage is often an attempt to address an internal problem with a faulty external solution.

Let’s look at a biblical foundation of the very real struggle with pornography. I regularly share this quote from my mentor and friend, the late Dr. Larry Crabb, from his book, *The Silence of Adam* (now retitled *Men of Courage: God’s Call to Move Beyond the Silence of Adam*). Larry warns, “Unless men honestly face their stubborn delight in forgetting and their commitment to passions stronger than their desire for God, lasting change will never occur.”¹

What does the statement “their stubborn delight in forgetting” mean? The fantasy of pornography is always a bypass of God and an attempt to anesthetize the deepest longings of our souls. Sexual temptation and lust seductively call us to forget about the painful realities of living in this fallen world. God told Adam and all men in Genesis chapter 3 that our world would be filled with “*thorns and thistles*.” No longer would we be walking in the lush, peaceful paradise of the Garden of Eden.

I believe the seduction of pornography is a futile, dead-end invitation by Satan and our own internal lusts to get us as close as possible to the “Eden Experience.” Jeremiah 2:13 (NIV) reveals God’s clear diagnosis of our struggle with sin, compulsivity, and addiction. God states, “*My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.*” Pornography is such a vivid picture of a “broken cistern.” Psychiatrist and best-selling author, the late M. Scott Peck, reminded us, “Truth or reality is avoided when it is painful.... Conversely, we must always

consider our personal discomfort relatively unimportant and, indeed, even welcome it in the service of the search for truth. Mental health is an ongoing process of dedication to reality at all costs.”²

As Larry Crabb has stated, men will often have a “... commitment to passions stronger than their desire for God...” We live in an “on-demand” society. We want what we want, and we want it immediately! I remind people regularly that “G-O-D” does not stand for “God On Demand!” Our awesome, omnipotent God will not be our ever-present, on-call servant or genie to grant us our every wish the moment we demand it. The renowned devotional writer, Oswald Chambers, describes our inner struggle this way, “The root of all sin is the suspicion that God is not good.”³

We must invite men who are struggling with pornography to experience a spiritual heart catheterization to clear anything that is blocking the flow of God’s healing love to them and hindering their loving worship of God. One of the main blockages I have often found between men and God is the unconscious struggle of viewing God as a heavenly version of their earthly father or mother. I have frequently invited men to write on index cards various attributes of their earthly parents and place these cards in an empty chair in front of them. Next, I help them discern which of these painful descriptions they may have knowingly or unknowingly placed onto God. I then tenderly invite these men to slowly remove the cards they believe do not belong to God and write some new cards that reflect a clearer picture of who God really is. This experiential exercise often concludes in a moment of tears, repentance, connection, and healing of the ultimate “Father-son” relationship.

Yes, the battle men face today with pornography is real. However, I remind men daily that we have more help, hope, and healing than they have problems. God’s Word always calls us to be alert, mindful, present, and sober. 1 Peter 5:8 (NKJV) instructs us, “*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*” When temptation seduces us to forget, God calls us to remember Him and His truth, as found in 1 John 4:4 (NASB), “... *greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.*” ✦



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The Manhood Crisis: Debunking the Myth of “Toxic Masculinity”

We have probably all heard the term “toxic masculinity,” or the idea that men are somehow inherently dangerous. This carefully crafted narrative attacks the very essence of what it means to be a man, creating a manhood crisis specifically to destroy the family and destabilize our society and nation. However, “toxic masculinity” is a lie that must be debunked. The truth is that good men who stand up and speak the truth and confront evil are essential to any healthy society, and we are called to be those men.

Men were created in the image of God to be protectors, providers, and selfless leaders in our communities. They embody roles that are not just culturally significant but also biblically ordained. The nuclear family, a cornerstone of both Christian values and wholesome societies, thrives when there is a loving father whose strength is measured in physical capacity, moral fortitude, courage to uphold truth, and resolution to protect.

I recently interviewed Pastor Joby Martin on my podcast, *The Resilient Show*.¹ He addressed the topic perfectly, saying, “Every single one of us dads and husbands will stand before the Lord, and we will give an account to the Lord of this incredible gift that He gave us, called a wife and a family, that we were called to steward.” This is our calling.

However, the narrative of “toxic masculinity” has been weaponized to vilify our masculine roles, painting the associated character traits as inherently undesirable. This not only undercuts men’s right to engage in social discourse but also disregards our contributions. Unfortunately, there are many public examples of this mindset.

When men speak out against immoral practices like abortion, we are told we get no say. Yet, we have a moral obligation to stand in defense of innocent lives and protect vulnerable women from those who would exploit radical abortion laws to abdicate their own responsibilities in the lives of these women and children. These masculine dispositions are not toxic; they are commendable.

Consider the men who have bravely stood up at school board meetings to protect children from the moral corruption of inappropriate literature or the invasion of males in girls’ sports and private spaces. These men—like Pastor John Amanchukwu, Sr.² in North Carolina, Texas fathers, Jeremy Story and Dustin Clark,³ and Virginia father, Scott Smith⁴—are often labeled aggressive or combative and sometimes face arrest.⁵

Truth be told, yes, we should aggressively combat practices that endanger the vulnerable. Such actions are rooted in the very essence of what it means to protect and lead with strength and goodness—godly qualities that should be celebrated, not vilified.

The case of Daniel Penny⁶ in New York is a frightening example of the “toxic masculinity” narrative achieving its aim. A physically powerful man put his life at risk to bravely intervene and protect vulnerable subway passengers, including a mother and her child, from a violent criminal intent on doing them harm. Then, he was prosecuted for his efforts and subjected to months in jail with the risk of life imprisonment, serving as a warning to other men who might be inclined to step in and protect the vulnerable.

The nuclear family, a cornerstone of both Christian values and wholesome societies, thrives when there is a loving father whose strength is measured in physical capacity, moral fortitude, courage to uphold truth, and resolution to protect.

CHAD ROBICHAUX



Horrifyingly, that warning seems to have worked. Recently, another violent criminal lit a sleeping woman on fire and watched her burn alive on a subway.⁷ Not a single bystander stepped up to protect her from harm, perhaps because such protective actions have been so thoroughly vilified as “toxic.”

By discouraging masculinity, we not only physically endanger society but also erode it from within. Fatherlessness is a serious issue with well-documented negative impacts on children’s behavioral, educational, mental, emotional, physical, criminal, and socioeconomic well-being.⁸ As Pastor Martin told me, “If we could solve [fatherlessness] in America, we solve everything.... When men lead and love well, everybody flourishes.”⁹

Conversely, he explained that communities and families suffer when men abandon their God-given responsibilities to protect, provide, and lead. “When men don’t do their job, everybody suffers. Almost every non-profit in our country was created because men didn’t do what they were supposed to do.”¹⁰

We must boldly advocate for masculinity that mirrors Christ’s example: strength, service, sacrifice, leadership, and the moral courage to stand up to evil. Beginning with ourselves, we can restore a balanced view of manhood that both highlights and celebrates men’s essential roles. Let us work toward a culture where men are encouraged to be the stalwarts our communities desperately need, thereby strengthening our families and society as a whole. ✦

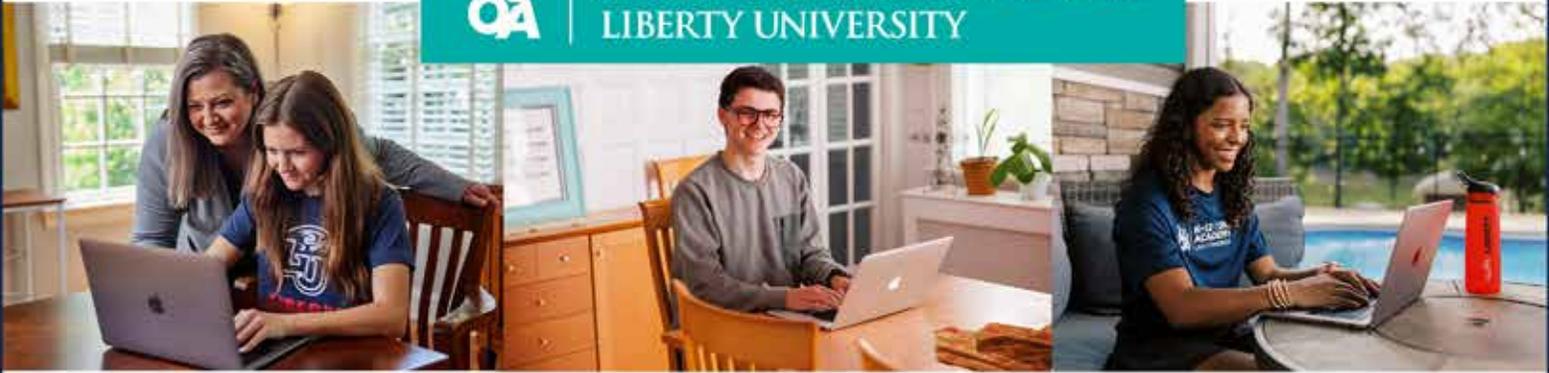


CHAD ROBICHAUX is a former Force Recon Marine, DoD contractor, and Afghanistan veteran. He is the founder of the Mighty Oaks Foundation (mightyoaksprograms.org), the best-selling author of *Saving Aziz: How the Mission to Help One*

Became a Calling to Rescue Thousands from the Taliban and *A Mission Without Borders: Why a Father and Son Risked it All for the People of Ukraine*, and hosts *The Resilient Show* (theresilientshow.com).

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OVERCOMING THE HOPELESSNESS THAT HOLDS US BACK

Brothers, let's talk about it. Depression and loneliness are real, and they are robbing too many men of the peace, joy, and purpose that God has promised. The problem is, we don't talk about it—not in our homes, not in our circles, not even in our prayers. We hide our struggles behind busy schedules, tough exteriors, and silent pain. But hear me when I say this: you cannot conquer what you refuse to confront.

The Silent Struggle

Statistics do not lie—men are significantly less likely to seek help for mental health challenges. And let's be honest, society hasn't exactly made it easy for us to open up. We have been told to “man up,” to push through pain, to equate strength with silence. However, that silence is costing us. It leaves us battling depression, loneliness, and hopelessness in isolation.

Even in the Bible, we see this struggle. King David, a mighty warrior, cried out in Psalm 42:11 (NIV): *“Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.”* David's transparency reminds us that even the strongest men wrestle with their souls. And if David could admit his pain and still trust God for deliverance, so can we.

Dealing with Depression

Let's break it down. Depression is not just feeling sad; it is a heavy weight that affects your thoughts, emotions, and body. Clinically, it can come from a mix of factors—hormonal imbalances, trauma, or relentless stress. Symptoms like fatigue, irritability, and feelings of worthlessness create a vicious cycle that is difficult to escape.

And guess what? Depression is not a new problem. Elijah, one of God's greatest prophets, dealt with it, too. In 1 Kings 19:4 (NIV), after one of his most significant victories, he prayed: *“... I have had enough, Lord.... Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.”*

Elijah was exhausted, isolated, and overwhelmed, but God did not rebuke him. Instead, He provided rest, nourishment, and a renewed mission. That's the God we serve—a God who meets us in our lowest moments and leads us toward healing.

The Hidden Epidemic

Let's not overlook loneliness—it is often the gateway to depression. And here is the tricky part: loneliness in men does not always look like sadness. It can look like overworking, withdrawing, or reckless behavior. But at its core, loneliness is disconnection—from others, from ourselves, and, ultimately, from God.

Scripture warns us about isolation in Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 (NIV): *“Two are better than one.... If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.”* We were created for connection. From Adam and Eve in Genesis to Jesus and His disciples, God's design for humanity has always been rooted in relationship.

We have been told to “man up,” to push through pain, to equate strength with silence. However, that silence is costing us. It leaves us battling depression, loneliness, and hopelessness in isolation.

TIM TIMBERLAKE



Faith Has to Meet Action

Here's the truth—overcoming depression and loneliness requires both faith and action. It is not enough to pray and hope it goes away. God invites us to partner with Him in the process of healing.

Jesus said in Matthew 11:28 (NIV): *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”* That's an invitation to vulnerability. However, after we come to Him, we have to move. James 2:17 reminds us that faith without works is dead. So, what steps can we take?

1. Seek Professional Help. There is no shame in therapy. Just like you would see a doctor for a broken bone, a mental health professional can help you heal emotionally. Therapy is not a weakness but a wise investment in your well-being.

2. Build Authentic Community. Brothers, we need each other. Join a men's group, a Bible study, or find a mentor. Proverbs 27:17 (NIV) says, *“As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.”* Real relationships can help you carry the weight of life's burdens.

3. Engage and Apply the Word of God. Prayer, worship, and meditation on God's Word are essential. Psalm 34:18 (NIV) assures us, *“The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”* Even when it feels like God is far away, He is right there with you.

4. Serve Others. When you are feeling down, shift your focus outward. Serving others can reignite your sense of purpose. Proverbs 11:25 (NIV) says, *“A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.”*

The Antidote to Hopelessness

Hopelessness thrives in isolation, but hope flourishes in connection—with God, with others, and with ourselves. Romans 15:13 (NIV) declares: *“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”*

Let that sink in. The God of hope wants to fill you up and overflow your life with joy and peace. Clinically, hope is also a game-changer. It motivates you to set small, achievable goals and take steps toward healing.

The Way Forward

Men, the enemy wants you to stay silent, stuck, and hopeless, but God wants to set you free, step into the light, speak up, and reach out. Invite God into your struggle and trust Him to bring healing. Remember 2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV): *“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”*

You are not alone. Your story is not over. And with God, you can overcome. Let's walk this journey together—one step, one prayer, and one act of faith at a time. ✘



TIM TIMBERLAKE is the Senior Pastor at Celebration Church in Jacksonville, Florida. He is well-known for his dynamic leadership and profound insights. His unique blend of humor and deep biblical wisdom empowers audiences to create transformative change in their lives. Tim graduated from the Pistis School of Ministry in Detroit, Michigan. In addition to his ministry work, Tim is a respected author, having written impactful books such as *The Power of 1440* and *The Art of Overcoming*.

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MAKE YOUR LIFE COUNT:

Being a Man Who is Found Faithful

There are few more bone-chilling words than the famous statement in the opening scene of the 2000 historical epic film, *Gladiator*. While leading his men into battle against what appeared to be a seemingly insurmountable enemy, the Roman general, Maximus Meridius, resounded the courageous and clarion call to *“Hold the line.... Brothers, what we do in life echoes in eternity.”*¹

You see, there’s something fierce in the heart of every man... something that fuels a deep level of competitiveness that pushes us to plow past our limits and drives us to persevere no matter the cost. Men want to step up. Men want to step in. Men want to succeed. I have never met a man who dreamt of “sitting on the bench” in life. Every man dreams of slaying the giant, rushing into the burning house, belting the walk-off grand slam, stepping down the lunar module’s ladder onto the moon’s surface, or being at the bottom of the celebratory championship dog pile. Although many men may settle for average, I have never met one who dreamt of it.²

However, in my work as a counselor and coach in the mental health space, I have quickly become aware that this internal drive for greatness meant to inspire us can sadly *imprison* us as well. If we aren’t careful and do not have our priorities, perspective, and purpose in order, our competitive nature can become a comparison trap. The habits and ways of men are often rooted in “what I do” and “what others think of me.” While I believe effective ministry to

men considers motivators and elements deeply rooted or connected to performance and motivation as men serve out their roles of protector, provider, and more, I also believe we must help men remember where their identities are ultimately found. Too often, men get lost in equating what we do with who we are, and in our never-ending pursuit to pad our resumes and puff up our reputations, we sometimes wind up sacrificing what truly matters—our relationships, integrity, and legacy along the way.

Yet, I am reminded of a particular passage in Scripture located in Matthew 3:16-17 (NIV) where Christ, the Son of God, was being baptized. It says, *“As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am **well pleased.**’”*

This passage has always struck me because up to this point, Jesus had not turned water into wine, walked on water, healed the sick, or made blind eyes see. He had not performed any miracles but had remained persistent in His mission. He was not flashy... He was faithful. I believe Jesus understood something that many of us have difficulty grasping—that God’s love for us is not contingent upon what we do or do not do. He doesn’t even love us because of who we are—God loves us because of who He is (1 John 4:8). For this reason, I believe with confidence that Romans 8:38-39 reminds us that there is nothing we could do that would make God love us any *less* or any *more* than He already does. Therefore, our goal in this life should not be to earn His love but to steward what He has already given.

ZACH CLINTON

One of the best ways I believe we can honor the Lord and allow Him to look down with pleasure in His heart toward us is through living a life on mission.

Living Life on Mission

One of the best ways I believe we can honor the Lord and allow Him to look down with pleasure in His heart toward us is through living a life on mission. Years ago, I will never forget watching the movie *Saving Private Ryan*, which depicts the journey of eight American soldiers who were dispatched to “save” Private James Francis Ryan during World War II.

The background to the story is that all three of James’ brothers had been killed in combat, so in an attempt to prevent his mother from losing all of her sons in battle, the Army determined they were going to bring her only surviving son home safely. However, during this rescue mission, many lives were lost, ultimately leading to the death of the revered Captain John Miller. Then, at the end of the movie, there is a scene forever etched in my mind where a much older Private Ryan, accompanied by his wife, visits the gravesite of Captain Miller, and he asks the question so many men wonder, “Have I led a good life?” In essence, did I earn the sacrifice that was made for me?

I want to leave you with three simple challenges that I believe can help us all live a life worthy of the call:

1. Stay Focused. Philippians 3:13 (NLT) says, “*No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead...*” Do not allow the distractions of this world to deter you from the mission God has you on or the momentum you have created.

2. Keep Fighting. 1 Timothy 6:12 (NIV) says, “*Fight the good fight of the faith...*” No matter how dark, difficult, or discouraging life may be, remember you are never out of the fight, and if God still allows breath in your lungs, He still has an incredible plan and purpose for your life. Prepare, compete, and never give up!

3. Remain Faithful. 1 Corinthians 4:2 (ESV) says, “*Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.*” Remember, this life is not about being first; it is about being faithful! When our time here on earth ends, our goal is not to hear God say, “Well done, my good and famous or important husband, father, pastor, business owner, coach, counselor, etc.” Our goal is to hear Him say, “*Well done, good and faithful servant...*” (Matthew 25:23).

If you can do these things, when your time comes, I believe you can be sure in your heart that you, too, have lived a purposeful, meaningful, and missional life. Remember, you are loved, you matter, and you are the son God looks at with love and pleasure in His heart. So, let us forever seek to know Him more and to make His name known! ✠



ZACH CLINTON, M.A., serves as the Vice President of the American Association of Christian Counselors, host of the renowned *Built Different Podcast*, and President & Host of *Ignite Men’s Impact Weekend*, which gathers nearly 10,000 men annually. A Licensed Resident Counselor and former Division I college baseball player, Zach is a recognized growing authority and voice on performance, motivational psychology, and mental health for today’s generations. His mission is to remind people they are never out of the fight! Zach is the proud husband to his lovely wife, Evelyn, and they make their home in Lynchburg, Virginia.

Endnotes

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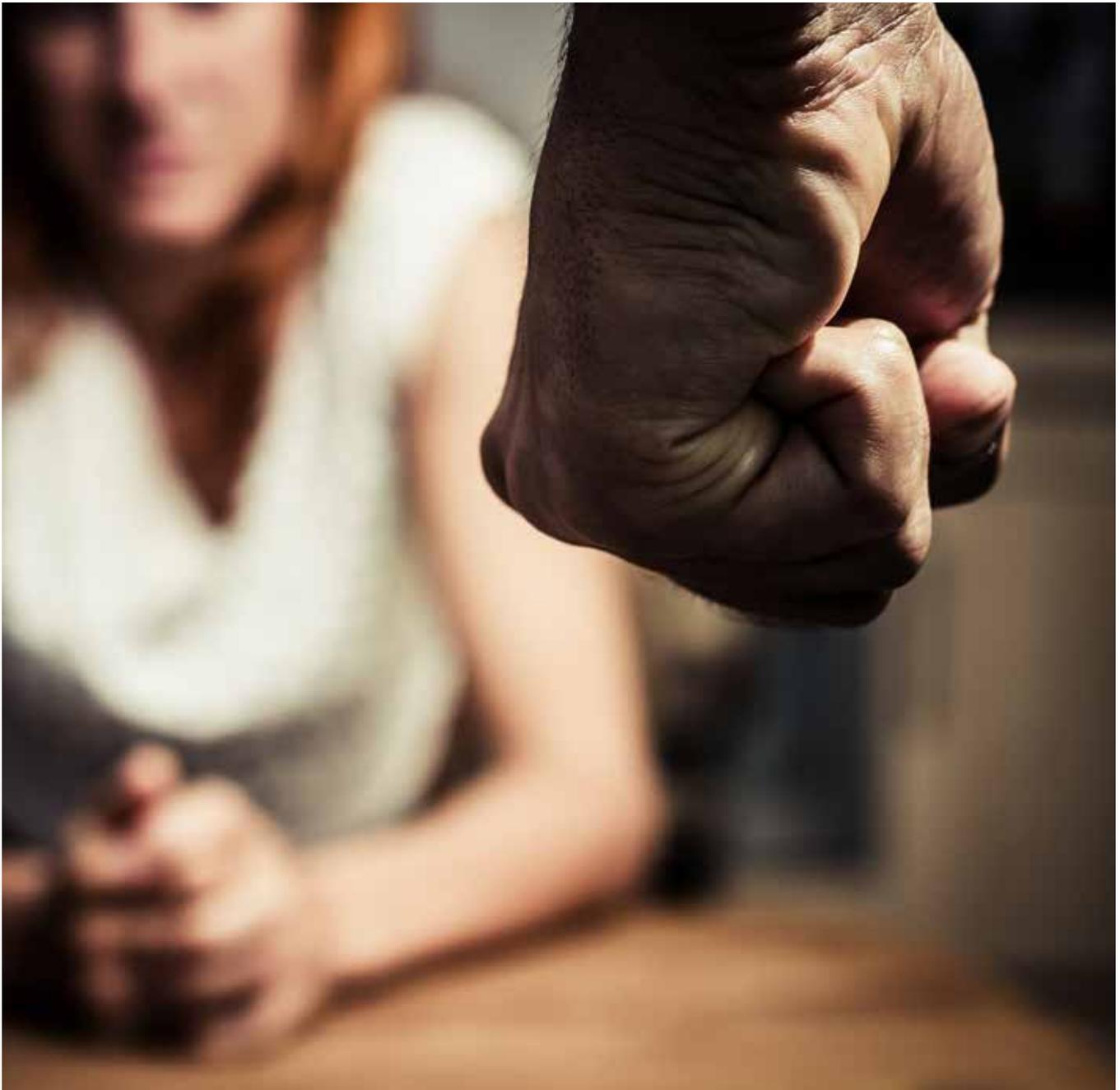
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BROKEN BONDS:

*Why Healing Men's Emotional Wounds
Matters for Ending Abuse*

There are few corners of society where the effects of abuse and violence do not reverberate, leaving wounds on individuals, families, and communities that create cycles that sadly perpetuate future abuse. Often, men are at the center of this complex issue—not just as perpetrators but also as victims. Yet, cultural deficits around vulnerability, emotional regulation, and masculinity often hinder critical conversations about men's roles in the cycle of violence and obscure the deeper reasons behind it.

It is no secret that we are all walking wounded. God created us to thrive in Eden, but because of the fall, we carry the scars that come with it. That is to say, there is “no life without trauma.” As such, emotional, spiritual, and physical scars impact all of us, men and women alike. It is estimated that at least 60% of adults in the U.S. have experienced at least one adverse childhood experience.¹ Adverse childhood experiences (ACE) are potentially traumatic events suffered in childhood that have impacts lasting into adulthood. In my 20 years as a therapist and now as the executive director of Bethesda Workshops, I believe all adults have experienced at least one ACE. The reason is both theological and psychological. God created us (even neurologically) to attach to one another. We are designed to be acutely aware when disconnected from others, especially our closest relationships. The wounds that occur form the foundation for the cycles of abuse and violence that plague many segments of our country.

Unfortunately, these cycles are particularly damaging to women. In most categories, women are more likely to be victims of abuse than men, with men being more likely than women to be victims of violence from strangers. In a recent study, men who had perpetrated partner violence endorsed self-defense, communication difficulties, and expression of negative emotions as the top three reasons they had been abusive.² This research highlights one of the chief causes of violence and abuse among men—a lack of examples of how to deal with wounds and emotions. We understand our lives are oriented around rituals, yet many men have had no ritual to become a man. Instead, they are left to define masculinity for themselves from whatever resources are available. This often comes with unhealthy tenets, especially relating to vulnerability and attitudes toward women. Further, research shows that due to social shaping and gender, men are more likely to suppress their emotional experiences, but when they do, they are more likely to express anger/aggression than women.³ As the generations pass and fathers are unable to model and teach this critical concept (because they did not receive it), the abuse cycle continues.

Through research and experience, it is clear that as men encounter trauma and incur wounds, they struggle with the familial/societal modeling for how to deal with them, resulting in “acting out” in anger/aggression, often toward women. It should be noted here that women are more likely to internalize negative emotions like sadness.⁴ As women are often the victims of abuse by men, their woundedness is exacerbated by societal pressure not to express outwardly the effects of their experience of abuse.

MIKE VAUGHN

To break the cycle and reduce the violence/abuse from men, I believe we need to begin by turning the cultural conversation toward an understanding and acceptance of wounds and emotions. Men need to embrace vulnerability and look inward as well as outward. When asked to identify their core wound(s), it has been my experience that most men are unable. While certainly no excuse, without a broad approach to emotional regulation, there is little wonder that the combination leads to destructive behavior. On the other hand, if wounds and broader emotional expression were accepted, men would be healthier individuals and fathers.

As a therapist, I have found the combination of core wound identification and physiological soothing very effective in helping emotional regulation. Core wounds often start with “I am...” For example, I am unworthy, invaluable, incompetent, a failure, and so forth. The easiest way to identify this is to take an example from a time when there was a strong emotional reaction and then go deeper to see how the “I am” statement ends. Understanding that our bodies hold the key to healthy living is also important. I like to teach my clients (men especially) the box breathing method to help with the powerful physiological experience of emotions. When we can calm down, we are much more unlikely to act outward in unhealthy ways.

Many forces cause cycles of abuse and violence. This is indeed a complex issue that does not have a single solution. That said, part of the solution is understanding that the monster within is no monster but a wound longing to be healed. Through God’s grace and our pursuit of meaningful connection with Him and others, healing is not just possible but transformative, offering hope for individuals, families, and communities alike. ✚



MIKE VAUGHN, M.A., CSAT, *leads Bethesda Workshops as its Executive Director. He specializes in sex addiction recovery, intensive therapy, marriage therapy, and trauma. Mike shares his work nationwide for conferences, podcasts, and resources like Covenant Eyes. He has had more than 100 television appearances and is the author of an eBook for therapists on providing intensive therapy.*

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Celebrating Created Differences in the Home

Call me old-fashioned, but I want chivalry to make a comeback. I think men should open doors for women, and a husband should offer his coat to his wife when she is cold. The man should be the first to investigate strange noises around the house at night and the last one to bed after ensuring all the windows and doors are locked.

My parents taught me chivalry, and I passed it on to my children. We taught our son how to treat women and our daughter how a woman should be treated. Our home honors and celebrates the gender differences as created by Almighty God. We raised our children to embrace their biological sex and marry the opposite sex.

There is a great deal of confusion today about gender, sex, and sexuality. From men competing in women's sports to people choosing their preferred pronouns, many have abandoned God's design for men and women. In doing so, we dishonor God, men, and women.

As parents, we must stand against the devil's evil schemes and teach our children the incredible worth of men and women and their differences as part of your family discipleship plan. Jesus clears up any confusion we might have on gender in His answer to the Pharisees' question about marriage and divorce: *"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female'"* (Matthew 19:4, NIV). In quoting Genesis 1:27 (NIV) and the imago Dei, Jesus declared that *"... male and female He (God) created them."* God created two genders. He doesn't need our help establishing or defining them.



I am a pastor, husband, and father who refuses to blur the line between male and female. Celebrating the created differences between men and women honors the image of God. As a man, I am wired to express facts and solutions. My wife is better at understanding and expressing emotions. These differences make us a great team. She wants me to take the lead at the airport when our flight cancels. I

need her to help me better understand my children when they have a bad day. As teammates, we help each other win. Our differences unite us.

Some marriage experts believe it is unhealthy to stereotype men and women when we speak about our differences. While that may be true in some cases, let's not let the pendulum swing too far and stop celebrating our differences altogether.

My wife and I learned early on in marriage that honoring and enjoying gender differences is the fast track to marital satisfaction. We can waste time trying to change each other, or we can have fun with each other's quirks. When I appreciate our differences, I see my wife as personally autographed by God.

Celebrating the differences between men and women grows curiosity and fascination between a husband and wife. These differences are meant to build up a marriage. We are equal, yet different. Our differences bond us and create oneness. Perhaps you have heard it said, "If your spouse was just like you, one of you would not be needed."

One of my favorite pictures of marriage is found in Genesis 2. In the Creation story, God paints a beautiful picture of a man and woman walking side by side through the garden together. Genesis 2:18 (NIV) reads, *"The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'"* The word *helper* implies that the man needs someone to come alongside him where he is lacking. The Hebrew word for *helper* in Genesis 2:18 is *ezer*, which means *one who helps*. It refers to someone who comes alongside to offer assistance.

In Genesis 2:20-22 (NIV), God creates the woman and brings her to the man. This is the first wedding: *"So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man."*

God did not take a bone from Adam's head, implying that the

woman should rule over man. He did not take a bone from Adam's foot, suggesting that the man should rule over the woman. He took the bone from Adam's side. Husband and wife walk side by side through the garden and life together.

You have your spouse by your side through every blessing, challenge, opportunity, and storm. God gave you a spouse to come alongside you and offer assistance. He did not give you a spouse as a replacement for Himself. Your spouse is not your source of life. We get to be *helpers*. We love, honor, encourage, and support one another. God's plan for your marriage is to spend your lifetime helping and serving one another, side by side.

As a pastor, I regularly honor men in our congregation. We must cheer on every husband and father as they step up to the plate to lead in the home. I want to give a standing ovation to every man who loves his wife well and remains faithful to the end. I am grateful for men who get up early, work hard, and provide for their families. I celebrate fathers who lovingly lead their children and do so without exasperation. I applaud fathers who teach their boys to be young men who regard women as highly valuable and teach their daughters how women should be treated.

Homes of honor esteem men and women as highly valuable. Let's praise our Father in Heaven for His wonderful design of male and female. ✠



TED CUNNINGHAM, MACE, is the founding pastor of Woodland Hills Family Church in Branson, Missouri. He is a graduate of Liberty University and

Dallas Theological Seminary.

He did not give you a spouse as a replacement for Himself. Your spouse is not your source of life. We get to be *helpers*.

Rebellion of a Different Sort: How Trauma History Affects Our View of God



We are living in a world where the definition of womanhood is debated, and men are branded with the label of toxic masculinity. We have strayed far from the biblical definitions of male and female, and our culture is collapsing as a result. It is time to reclaim the true meaning of masculinity as described in God's Word.

When God created man, He made

him in His own image. He then placed man in the garden to work and watch over it, fashioning him to perform such duties. God made man strong enough to tend to the garden and powerful enough to rule over all other creatures. He then formed a woman from Adam as his perfect helpmate.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, sin entered

the world, and the assault on masculinity began. Adam abdicated his leadership role to Eve by complying with her enticement to sin. As a result, she was cursed with a desire to rule over and dominate her husband. The sin that caused the fall and has attempted to destroy the roles of men and women is one of rebellion against the supreme order of the universe and the One who created it. As my pastor often notes, "There is a God, and you are not Him."

Submission recognizes that another has headship over you. The enemy of our souls has twisted this definition to emphasize power, control, and dominance over another. We see this frequently in trauma. When someone experiences a traumatic event, something or someone inflicts distress and suffering on them that is out of your control. Whether it is a natural disaster, a mass shooting, or years of child abuse, the experience is one of powerlessness.

Statistically, since most perpetrators of violence are men, this has caused an onslaught of attacks on a core trait of masculinity: strength and power. In a poor attempt to equalize the power differential inherent in trauma, the enemy has attempted to flip this power dynamic and usurp man's intrinsic nature by labeling masculinity as toxic. In so doing, instead of leveling the power structure, it has labeled men as perpetrators in a trauma-based narrative, leaving women and those who are less masculine as victims. This has created a culture that is rooted in victimization, where masculinity is viewed as dangerous. That was never God's intention.

Power and strength without meekness and humility is an authoritarian rule that places others at risk for victimization and trauma. There are many examples of this abuse of power in the Bible.

For a picture of the biblical prototype of masculinity, we need to look at Jesus. He is all power and strength. He is the “Mighty God” (Isaiah 9:6), the “Lion of Judah” (Revelation 5:5), the “Righteous Judge” (John 5:30), the “Chief Shepherd” (1 Peter 5:4), the “Rock” (1 Corinthians 10:4), the “Head of the Church” (Ephesians 1:22), and the “Lord of All” (Philippians 2:9-11). However, He is also all meekness and humility. Meekness is not weak—it is strength under control. Humility is not thinking less of yourself. Instead, it is thinking of yourself less. Jesus demonstrated both power and strength as well as meekness and humility. This is biblical masculinity.

Power and strength without meekness and humility is an authoritarian rule that places others at risk for victimization and trauma. There are many examples of this abuse of power in the Bible. For instance, Pharaoh’s refusal to let the Israelites leave Egypt in the book of Exodus. Likewise, King Herod, seeking to kill all male children under two years old in Bethlehem to prevent the ascension of the King of the Jews, reveals a heart bent on using his power to maintain his throne. To lead with both power and strength, with meekness and humility, one must submit to God as the higher authority.

Sadly, many individuals who have endured abuse and trauma at the hands of men struggle with such submission. If an aggressive and domineering father figure raised you, it may be challenging to trust a God who is powerful, omnipotent, and male. Submitting and surrendering to this masculine, almighty being may be too much to bear. The potential threat of dropping your guard, letting go of control, and surrendering may feel reminiscent of early experiences with a powerful and abusive father that were encoded with feelings of

helplessness and powerlessness. When you are raised feeling like a victim of power and control, you will fight to never relinquish both. This dynamic is then projected onto God and all His masculine qualities, and a lack of submission to Him will ensue.

To heal from this dysfunctional pattern, it is essential that trauma survivors own and accept the powerlessness of their trauma. Only then can they move beyond what was done to them and stop re-enacting power struggles with God. When we can see and understand that while we did not have power or control during our traumatic experiences, we can now release what happened to us to an all-powerful and all-loving God. The answer is to have an accurate and balanced perspective on God. He is both strong and powerful but also meek and humble. That is the model of masculinity we need to understand and emulate. When our relationships with Christ are based on who He truly is, in all His masculinity, and not on our distorted, trauma-infused projections of Him, we can begin to trust and surrender. As former victims, we can rely on Jesus as our strong rescuer who will meet our needs. ✦



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Four Examples of Masculine Goodness: My Train Ride with George, Paul, “Ringo” and John



My favorite southern humorist, the late Lewis Grizzard, explained the popularity of his books this way: “Writing is easy. I just remember stuff that never happened.” I am invoking Grizzard’s wit because what I’m about to write is so unbelievable that you might be tempted to think I made it up. But it actually happened.

Recently, I checked off a bucket list item, which means I only have 141 more to go before I do. The adventure was a train trip from the mountains of northeast Georgia to Manhattan and then along the Hudson to Montreal. It began on a surprisingly crowded midnight train from Georgia. The conductor directed me to the last open seat. It was

next to a man who had surrounded himself with a fortress of bags.

I was taking this trip solo, treating AMTRAK® as a rolling monastery for a time of blessed introversion. It almost worked. However, trying to sleep in the seat next to a loud food mainstay proved to be a more uncomfortable experience than most Trappist beds I’ve endured.

Then things got worse. As the sun began its day, I “awoke” from the few hours of tortured “rest” to discover something devastating. My seatmate was an extravert who apparently had never met a wannabe monk. However, it wasn’t long until my disappointment turned into fascination. George was a short, round man in the fourth quarter of life. With his initial sentences, I began the first of

four provocative conversations. Each interaction was with an amazingly good man who had encountered remarkably bad possessors of power.

The names of my story partners? Well, that is the first thing you might not believe. After George, I met Paul, “Ringo,” and John—each with the lyrics and tunes the world needs to hear. George had finished two full careers. For about a quarter of a century, he had worked his way to Master Sergeant in the Air Force. His job was ensuring massive C-5s were loaded with enough fuel to carry their cargo. After his military retirement, he began a second career as a conductor for AMTRAK.

George had more stories than Boston has beans. For the sake of word count, I’ll only share one,

which started with his question, “Do you know why the rails on these tracks are always four feet, eight and one-half inches apart? I did not. So, he told me with glee. Apparently, the reason for this factoid runs all the way back to the time Conestoga wagons were bouncing on the Oregon Trail and back to the era of Roman chariots. Early railroad builders decided to use the existing ruts of wagon and chariot wheels. Evidently, four feet, eight and one-half inches happen to be the optimal distance between the exhaust systems of two horses if they are properly yoked together.

George was a fountain of fun facts and had the kind eyes of a loving husband and father. For example, one Christmas, he paid for a taxi to drive a grandmother more than 100 miles so she could spend Christmas night with her grandchildren instead of being stranded in a nearly deserted train station. But George was no stranger to bad people who had abused their positions of authority, like the commanding officer who required George to take on a big part of his responsibilities because the Colonel enjoyed playing golf more than doing math.

George began keeping the battalion’s books with only one “must do:” “No matter how many hundreds of thousands of dollars you have saved us over the year, don’t ever report left-over funds!” So, George was commanded to go on a spending spree at the end of each fiscal year. Now, I have a better idea about those \$500.00 hammers the military is known for purchasing.

However, the badness apparently went further up the chain of command. During his second career, George became the conductor for the NYC to Washington, DC route. Oh, the stories he had about congressional conversations and the favorite

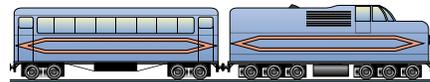
locations for their three-martini lunches. His favorite story was about a former senator showing him a letter from a major car insurance company. “Look at this,” he said to George. “These folks will contribute \$80,000 to my campaign funds every time I vote ‘No’ for whatever AMTRAK requests.” Hmmm.

My second conversation partner was Paul, a middle-aged African-American man I sat with in the Café car. We began talking over breakfast but kept the sentences flying all the way through lunch.

Paul lives in Delaware but recently drove a U-Haul to Georgia to help his friend move to the Peach State. Unfortunately, a mechanical problem required him to hop on AMTRAK for his return home. Like George, Paul seemed to be a genuinely good man. His warm relationship with his wife was evident through a few phone conversations I heard across the table. His two sons made the trip with Paul, and they clearly loved their father.

As it turns out, Paul is very musical and a platinum recording artist. Well, he wrote the song, but his son, 12 at the time, did the singing. Paul showed me the song on my iTunes account. We listened. It was remarkably good and had been the title track for a film. In case I had any lingering doubts about the veracity of his story, he showed me a photo of himself and his son standing next to a well-known musical artist. All three had glowing smiles on their faces.

I then realized that the third person in the picture was someone later accused of gross misconduct. I asked if the famous producer was who I thought he was. Paul said, “Yes,” and his countenance seemed to change to the extent that I could not help but wonder if he, like George, had also been too close to a person possessing great power and willing



... I could not help but wonder if he, like George, had also been too close to a person possessing great power and willing to abuse the imbalance he held over another.



to abuse the imbalance he held over another. I followed by sheepishly asking if he and his son were making any more music these days. His one-syllable response, delivered with a stoic face, was, “No.”

“Ringo” was not the given name of the third person I encountered. But it seems like a fair moniker. After all, the original “Ringo’s” name is Richard Starkey, and he picked up his nickname because he liked to wear rings while pounding on drums. The given name of the “Ringo” I met will remain anonymous, but the origin of his nickname has a similar “ring.” He told me: “I love to wear earrings. But I have to take them out when I go home to the Dominican Republic or my Catholic grandfather will rip them out of my ears. I’m not kidding!”

Fair enough. I’m going with “Ringo.” Ringo was a young Hispanic cab driver with a shy smile and a sleeve of tattoos on both arms. Once in the cab, he told me a traffic jam would add at least 40 minutes to our 10-minute drive to Central Station. After about five minutes passed,

Ringo began to share his thoughts about the upcoming (now past) election. Along the way, I learned he was a very engaged father and compassionate husband, working 60 hours a week to provide for his family.

Ringo was driving a cab because he had invested more than \$200,000.00 to get into the truck driving business just before “diesel fuel jumped to \$6.00 a gallon.” Then, the government began telling him that he would soon need to trade in his truck for a \$500,000.00 electric version. “Can you imagine that?” Ringo asked. “As a businessman, you have to wonder: ‘Who would be able to afford to buy what I’m hauling?’”

Before I could answer, he began telling me about his wife’s frustrations at school. She had recently decided to pursue a college degree to help the family. “She is taking these business classes,” he began. “And now, she is in her fourth class where the professor has not yet talked about what is in the syllabus—business and accounting. Each of her professors is part of the LGBTQ community, and all they

ever talk about is their sex lives.”

I didn’t know how to respond to that statement in any way that resembled political correctness, so I let some silence fill the cab. Ringo continued: “Don’t get me wrong. My wife and I aren’t ‘for’ one group over another. And we don’t care what a person does in the privacy of their home. But, please, just teach what she is paying to learn.”

Later in the conversation, I asked Ringo which was his preferred description—Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish—the word he had been using. He smiled back over the front seat before putting his eyes back on the street and responding. “Oh, we don’t give a (insert expletive here) about that. We just want to be around good people who treat us with respect, like you are doing. That’s what matters. That, and being allowed to pursue common-sense solutions to what is best for our families.” I think Ringo gave me some insight into the country’s political pulse, which most commentators and pundits missed by a mile.

After another 12 hours on a train, I arrived in Montreal. The next day, I began a seven-kilometer walk from my hotel to the top of Mount Royal (Mont-real, get it?). I took this walk with the final destination being the 103-foot cross that crowns the top of the mountain overlooking Montreal. By that point, I was ready for the silence of a slow, reflective, labyrinth-inspired walk.

The day was sunny and beautiful. The winding trail wove through a forest filled with trees waving at the hikers with bright yellow and red leaves. At the top, the trail ended at a building featuring a café and restrooms. I took a seat in one of the two unoccupied Adirondack chairs to rest and enjoy the continued solitude. But within a few minutes, it was broken. A man who looked much like a

60-year-old Jesus sat down next to me.

When he announced that he was fulfilling the life's mission he had been given several decades ago by "God, my guiding angel, a higher power, whatever you want to call the real voice from an invisible source," well, he had my attention. I turned my chair to hear his story better. It was riveting. The "Voice" had charged him to help churches return from internal politics and power grabs to doing the two things most important. "To become again," the Voice said, "places where people can learn to be genuinely good and celebrate the joy of life with others."

His story should be a book. His character was not unlike Francis of Assisi. And he had apparently achieved some measure of success with the help of a few cooperative churches. When our two-hour

conversation ended, he asked me if he could take a "selfie" of the two of us. As he stood up, I began to think how much I hoped his name would be John and how our conversation had occurred within the shadow of the giant Mount Royal cross I had set out to see.

As he turned back around, I said, "Uh, I don't even know your name." He responded, "Jeanne Pierre. You know, John Peter." Of course, I thought. But then, he took off his heavy coat, and I saw the words "Santa Cruz" on his T-shirt, which translates to "Sacred Cross."

Walking back down the mountain, I began to reflect on the lyrics of the four "Beatles" I had met. Life tunes from four ordinary men who "sang" quietly of their own goodness but also, indirectly, of the badness of others in positions of power. Four

songs about the human heart.

Goodness, I mused, is not found in gender, culture, political party, or pigmentation, nor is evil. Each destination begins with the orientation of the will. Evil is imposing one's will on others or institutions for selfish gain. And the only solution is found at the top of a mountain. At the Santa Cruz. ✝



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Lessons on Managing Suffering



Mental suffering tempts us to isolate ourselves from sources of support out of stigma and fear of rejection. We are tempted to put on masks of wellness that distract from the struggle that is real.

We are taught in medical school that there is a difference between disease and suffering.

Disease is the physiological abnormality to which we attach diagnostic labels. Suffering encompasses how the disease affects the lives of the patient and their family physically, spiritually, and psychologically.

Suffering from mental illness can be incredibly impactful as we struggle to understand the meaning and purpose of emotional trauma. Mental suffering tempts us to isolate ourselves from sources of support out of stigma and fear of rejection. We are

tempted to put on masks of wellness that distract from the struggle that is real. Only a few will often see the true extent of the masked suffering. The journey of the biblical character Job closely resembles the process of suffering in my patients. The following are some lessons for managing suffering learned from the life of Job.

1. Accept that suffering is an unavoidable part of life. It is a “we,” not “they,” experience. Job was not a special or unique person. He was just a guy who loved God and his family and had the respect of his community—like many of us. Yet, he suffered immense emotional anguish—like

the 23% of American adults who have a mental illness.¹ Job could be any of us, for we all go through varying degrees of suffering (Job 5:6-7; John 16:33; Philippians 3:10). However, suffering can tempt us to isolate in silence when strength is found in sharing our stories with others—as Job’s story has been shared with us.

2. Know what you can know. In clinical situations, physicians often have more questions than answers. However, focusing on the unknown can keep us from knowing everything we can know. Medicine is an exercise in making good decisions to help patients without all the data—until we can gather more data. Suffering is the same process. Do not let what we do not understand distract us from what we can learn about our situations. Spend time in prayer and meditation on the Word. Talk to a trusted counselor. Go to a support group. Follow the doctor’s advice. Solicit prayer from trusted friends. Find out as much as possible while trusting God with the unanswered questions. Job eventually got better despite never getting an answer as to why he was suffering.

3. Choose your close friends carefully. Most people have three to five close, supportive relationships that can be crucial during suffering. People who are experiencing mental trauma often have fewer and poorer quality relationships.² Job had relationships, like his wife, that were toxic (Job 2:9). He had friends who cared deeply about him but tried to reduce his suffering to simplistic answers that made him feel worse (Job 16:1-2). Elihu was an honest friend who did not claim to know the answers but pointed Job in the right direction—to God (Job 32-37).

4. Learn to lament well. The expression of strong emotions about suffering can be healing. God endorses lamenting by having a whole book,

Lamentations, as an example. Job spent much time lamenting (chapters 4-31) and was not criticized by God for doing so. Talking about our pain can be therapeutic (James 5:16), along with prayer, journaling, musical expression, or art. God challenged Job to balance his lamenting with gratitude and reflective awe at who God was and what God was doing in his life (chapters 38-39). As we lament, remember what we have (Him) and do not focus on what we do not have or have lost.

5. Learn to wait well. Getting well from any illness takes time. Job waited alone and with others—just as we may wait alone or with a therapist, pastor, or friend. When waiting, we can derive hope from focusing on how God has sustained us through challenging times in the past (Psalm 27:13-14). We can meditate and journal on what we can learn from these past experiences that will encourage and guide us as we wait. Suffering was a season in Job’s life, as he had a life before and after his anguish. He had good days and difficult days as he waited. However, Job’s story declares that God is consistently involved and in control—even as we suffer. He knows us (Job 1:8; Psalm 139:1-10) and never leaves us, especially when our hearts are broken (Psalm 34:18). Looking for ways that God is currently demonstrating His care for us is an excellent activity while waiting.

6. Look at God. Our granddaughter was born at the height of COVID-19 social restrictions and was unable to spend much time with my wife and me. When she was two, we began to babysit her. In the beginning, she was terrified and screamed in horror when she was left with us. I learned to hold her and say, “Look at Papi. You are going to be all right.” At the height of Job’s lament, God said to him, “Look at me” in

a similar fashion (chapters 38-41). Reflecting on God changed Job’s perspective about his suffering, even though his suffering continued (Job 42:1-5; Habakkuk 3:17-19). Reflect on God’s character and seek Him while suffering.

7. Ask the right questions. The worst question is, “Why?” Often, the answer does not satisfy or decrease the pain. Better questions are “What, Who, How, and When.” What can I learn? Who do I need to treat differently? How will God help me through this? When has God helped me in similar situations?

8. Make the next right decision. Suffering may tempt us to take out our pain on others (Romans 12:17). Good suffering involves making decisions that reflect spiritual growth (Galatians 5:22-23) in our behavior toward others, especially while suffering. Job prayed for others—even while he was still suffering—leading to an end to this season of suffering in his life (Job 42:10-17).

I trust these lessons from Job’s life will encourage you as you face and manage life’s suffering. ✕

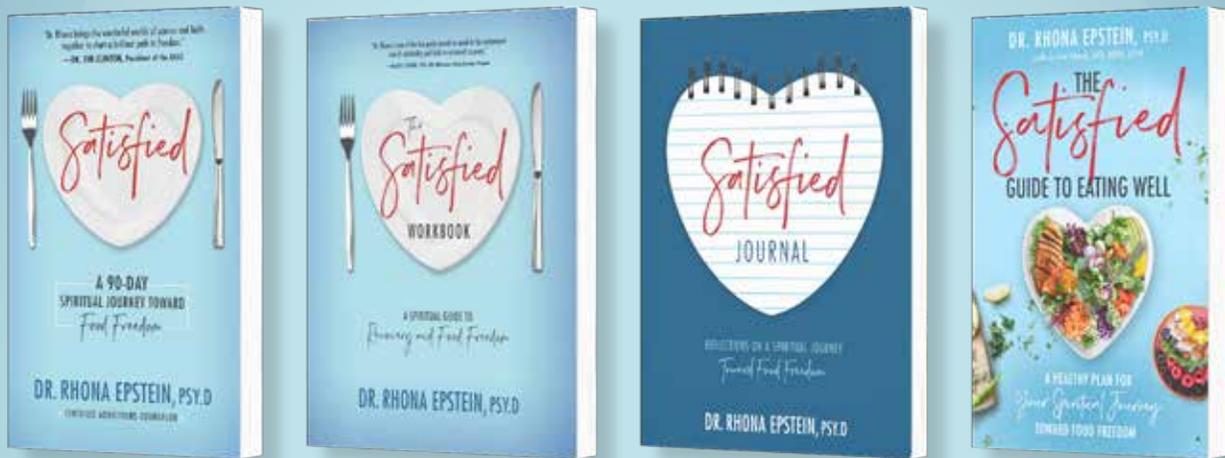


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Endnotes

- ¹ 2022 NSDUH Annual National Report. SAMHSA.gov. (2023, November 13). <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/report/2022-nsduh-annual-national-report>.
- ² Abrams, Z. (2023, June 1). The science of friendship. *Monitor on Psychology*, 54(4), 42. <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2023/06/cover-story-science-friendship>.

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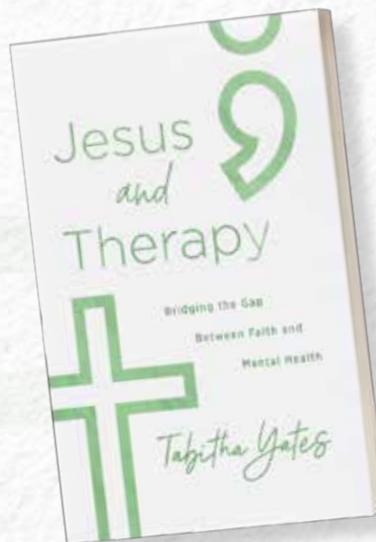
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United States v. Skrmetti: One of the Most Important Legal Cases of Our Decade



While under-reported, the United States recently heard oral arguments in the *United States v. Skrmetti* case. At issue is Tennessee’s Senate Bill 1 (SB1),¹ which prohibits health-care providers from administering puberty blockers, hormone therapies, and gender-transitioning surgeries to anyone under 18. Passed in March 2023, the law asserts the state’s responsibility to protect children from making irreversible medical decisions with long-term

consequences. As of December 2024, 26 states have similar laws in place.² Under the law, minors who were already receiving hormone therapy before July 1, 2023, could continue treatment temporarily, but no new patients could begin gender-affirming care.

These laws have been supported by adults who regret transitioning their gender while they were minors, including Chloe Cole, who testified in favor of such bans before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution and Limited

Government on July 27, 2023.³ At age 12, she started early puberty and was uncomfortable with changes in her body and unwanted male attention. This led her parents to consult with doctors who “... immediately set our entire family down a path of ideologically motivated deceit and coercion.” Now 19 and having taken puberty blockers and testosterone and undergoing a double mastectomy, she testified, “I look in the mirror sometimes, and I feel like a monster.” She also stated, “When my specialists first told my parents they could have

a dead daughter or a live transgender son, I wasn't suicidal. I was a happy child who struggled because she was different. However, at 16, after my (mastectomy) surgery, I did become suicidal."

As I write this column, I see that the Biden administration's Department of Justice (DOJ) was arguing against SB1. The DOJ sued Tennessee officials, including Attorney General, Jonathan Skrmetti, who argued in defense of SB1.

The debate surrounding Tennessee's SB1 involves two main legal arguments:

1. Child Welfare. Tennessee argued that the state has a compelling interest in protecting minors from irreversible medical procedures. Just as states restrict minors from buying alcohol and tobacco, they have a duty to protect children from experimental medical interventions.

2. Equal Protection Clause. The DOJ argued that SB1 discriminates based on sex and transgender status. However, Tennessee contends that the law applies equally to all minors. Under SB1, no minor—regardless of gender—can access puberty blockers or cross-sex hormones. This makes the law facially neutral and not a violation of the Equal Protection Clause.

It is well recognized that children and adolescents are not equipped to make fully informed decisions about medical matters. Governments must be very cautious when it comes to life-altering decisions such as gender transition. Medical evidence suggests that the human brain continues to develop well into the early 20s, particularly in areas related to judgment, risk assessment, and long-term planning.⁴ The use of puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, and gender-affirming surgeries has profound—and in some cases irreversible—effects on the body, including infertility, reduced bone



density, and loss of sexual function.⁵

Others argue that “gender-affirming care” is “lifesaving” for transgender youth, claiming it reduces depression and suicidality. However, evidence on this point is contested. For example, a study in Sweden—the first country to broadly adopt gender-affirming care—found that individuals who underwent gender reassignment surgeries continued to experience high rates of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation.⁶

The Supreme Court's review of *United States v. Skrmetti* will have national implications. If the Court upholds Tennessee's law, it could

embolden other states to pass similar legislation. Conversely, if the Court strikes down SB1, it could undermine states' authority to protect minors from dangerous gender transitioning procedures.

At stake is not only the legality of gender transitioning procedures but also broader questions, including the role of Christian counselors in providing medically safe and ethically based guidance to children and families. If the Court rules against Tennessee, it may limit Christian counselors' right to conscientiously object to providing referrals or services related to gender-transitioning procedures.

... the American Association of Christian Counselors' Code of Ethics recognizes that Christian counselors should affirm the human worth and dignity of all people, including children.

Rooted in a biblical understanding of human nature and dignity, Christian counselors view gender identity issues as part of a larger conversation about God's design for human beings. From a biblical perspective, gender is considered a gift from God, and any attempt to alter it should be put in context with what the Bible says about gender.

- “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27, NIV).
- “For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made...” (Psalm 139:13-14, ESV).
- “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20, ESV).
- “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...” (Romans 12:2, NIV).

Christian counselors, therefore, have a responsibility to resist cultural trends that conflict with biblical teachings on gender and sexuality.

Likewise, the American Association of Christian Counselors' Code of Ethics recognizes that Christian counselors should affirm the human worth and dignity of all people, including children. It states: “Christian counselors recognize and

uphold the inherent, God-given worth and dignity of every human person, *from the preborn to those on death’s bed*. Human beings are God’s creation...”⁷

United States v. Skremetti is not merely a legal battle but a cultural and moral crossroads for our nation. The Court’s decision will shape not only state policy but also the ability of Christian counselors to practice their faith in their profession. ✕

The legal information contained in this article is for educational purposes only. Nothing in this article should substitute for legal or medical advice. For specific questions in your practice, you should consult with attorneys and medical experts licensed in your state.



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Endnotes

- ¹ Text available at <https://www.capitol.tn.gov/Bills/113/Bill/SB0001.pdf> (accessed 15 Dec. 2024).
- ² These states include Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South

Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

- ³ Ms. Cole's testimony can be viewed at the House Judiciary Committee's website here: https://judiciary.house.gov/committee-activity/hearings/dangers-and-due-process-violations-gender-affirming-care?utm_source=chatgpt.com (accessed 15 Dec. 2024).
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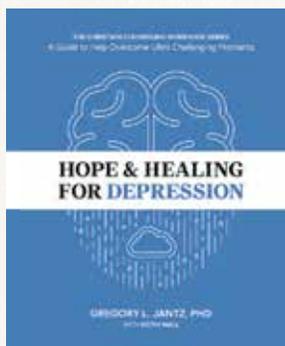
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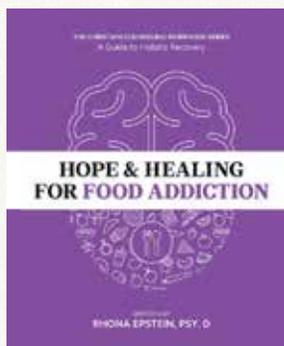
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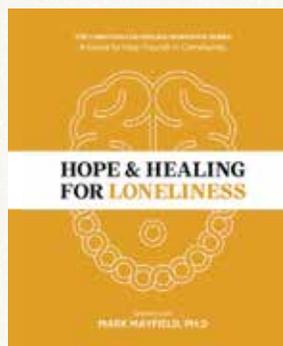
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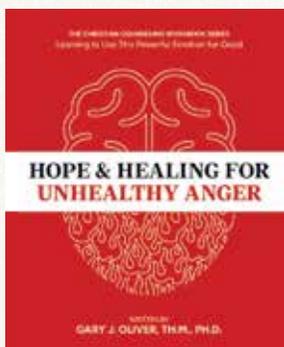
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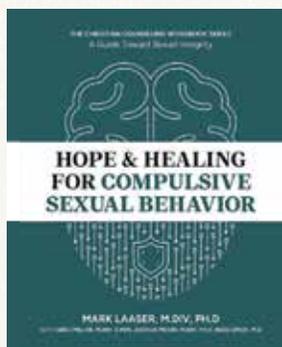
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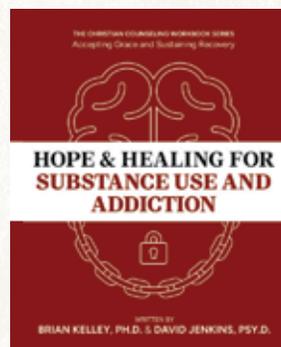
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Reclaiming Biblical Norms in the Workplace



***“There is neither Jew
nor Greek, there is
neither slave nor free,
there is neither male
nor female; for you are
all one in Christ Jesus.”***

– Galatians 3:28, NASB

A 2022 Pew Research study found that 60% agreed America was founded as a Christian nation, while only 45% agreed that America should be a Christian nation.¹ A third felt America was currently a Christian nation. The study “found that the large numbers of people in the U.S who practice Christianity are declining. The religion’s demographic has been dwindling since the 1990s... as many adults transition to an identity of atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular.”²

The majority of workers in 2023 came from three generational groups: Baby Boomers at 21.6%, Gen X at 19.83%, and Millennials at 21.75%.³ The percentage identifying as Christian within those three generational

groups has been dropping: Baby Boomers at 76%, Gen X at 67%, and Millennials at 49% (though the upcoming Gen Z’s are currently slightly higher at 55%).⁴

As the percentage of Americans who identify as Christians fluctuates (and declines), more people will enter the workforce without a Judeo-Christian outlook. The workplace will become even more of a mission field as Christian leaders, understanding this vital reality, position themselves to speak for spiritual truths, concepts, and perspectives, including modeling and/or encouraging healthy, biblical norms of masculinity and gender.

Society has much to say about the role and value of males and females, and it is not always good. “In 2017, Pew Research Center asked 4,573



Americans these questions: ‘What traits does society value most in men and in women? What traits does society say men and women should not have?’ The respondents answered with more than 1,500 unique words describing traits that they thought society does and doesn’t value for each gender.” “Powerful” was used to describe men in a positive way (67%) but in a negative way to describe women (92%). “Honest” was used to describe men twice as often as women. “Beautiful” was only used for women, while “provider” was only used for men.... They also saw “leadership” and “ambition” as traits that society values more in men than in women, while “compassion” and “caring” were seen as positive traits for women but more negatively for men, thereby revealing the widespread societal culture of “toxic masculinity.”⁵

Societal norms have been at war with biblical norms for millennia; current misperceptions about masculinity, in general, and biblical masculinity, in particular, are no different. Toxic masculinity has been allowed to define biblical masculinity falsely. Sadly, toxic masculinity still has a presence in the American workplace. “A study conducted recently... showed that

there is an implicit bias that women are ‘intellectually inferior to men.’ From two experiments with more than 1,800 participants of both genders across more than 30 disciplines, the researchers found that when a job requires someone of intellect, women had 25.3 percent lower probability of being appointed. Genius, brilliance and innate intellectuality are seen as ‘masculine’ traits, and if a discipline is perceived to require this, then women are under-represented.”⁶

The workplace landscape has changed, is changing, and will continue to change. In 2022, women comprised 58.4% of the workforce but only 35% of senior leadership positions.⁷ However, a 2024 Zippia.com study shows that 50.2% of leaders at all levels are women.⁸

An October 2024 Pew Research report stated, “The status of men in American society has been at the center of recent national political conversations. Some people have spoken out about what they perceive to be attacks on traditional manhood, while others have warned about what they see as ‘toxic masculinity.’ More broadly, many have expressed concern about how men are doing socially and economically.”⁹

A 2023 *New Yorker* article reported, “... women earn roughly three-fifths of all bachelor’s and master’s degrees awarded. They are the majority of current medical and law students. And they’ve made extraordinary gains in subjects where they had once been highly underrepresented; they now constitute a third of current graduates in STEM fields and more than forty percent of students in business schools.”¹⁰ At the end of 2023, a *Fortune* study found only 44% of young college students were men.¹¹

How, then, should Christian men and women in leadership positions respond to this changing, confusing, cultural, and workplace landscape? Christians can only react by modeling and encouraging the servant leadership of Jesus Christ, who, while clearly male, set a standard for His followers where there was “*neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*” I need to view my workers by vigorously filtering my perceptions through Scripture, being attentive to any implicit bias toward or against males or females, and remembering God, who created the genders, engages neither in partiality nor favoritism (Deuteronomy 16:19 and Romans 2:11). In this way, we *proclaim* the wisdom of God’s sexual design and *reclaim* biblical norms in this mission field known as work. ✚



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Traditional Men and Psychotherapy



This Research Digest explores recent studies on traditional masculine beliefs and attitudes (traditional masculine ideology, TMI). TMI includes several features: restrictive emotionality, high self-reliance, avoidance of femininity, a tendency toward dominance, and toughness/risk-taking. In particular, we will learn about how depression influences when men high in TMI seek therapy and how features of TMI impact whether men drop out of therapy. We also see how TMI features affect treatment outcomes for male veterans.

Men's Endorsement of Traditional Masculine Ideology and Intentions to Seek Psychotherapy

Levant, R.F., McCurdy, E.R., Keum, B.T.H., Cox, D.W., Halter, M.J., Stefanov, D.G., & Borden, K.A. (2022). Mediation and moderation of the relationship between men's endorsement of traditional masculinity ideology and intentions to seek psychotherapy. *Professional Psychology, Research and Practice*, 53(3), 234-243.

Levant and colleagues examined how traditional masculine ideology (TMI) and a variety of factors influenced men's intentions to seek therapy.

Outside of the TMI features, they found intriguing results for the role of one key factor, depression, as to when men seek therapy.

Through an online survey of 1,602 participants from a combination of university psychology courses and Craigslist, researchers discovered that depression moderates the relationship between TMI features and seeking therapy. Typically, as masculine attitudes rise in men, they become more reluctant to seek treatment; however, when men experience high enough levels of depression, this effect does not occur. The opposite did. Race, ethnicity, and sexual partner preference did not influence depression's moderating influence on TMI features and help-seeking attitudes toward therapy.

"Depression appears to play a key role in limiting or even reversing the negative relationships between TMI and intentions to seek therapy, and... this role applies broadly across the male population, irrespective of race, ethnicity, and sexual partner preferences" (p. 234). These intriguing preliminary findings need to be repeated with higher quality surveys and longitudinal studies.

Men's Psychotherapy Dropout and Conformity to Traditional Masculinity Ideologies

Schneeberger, M., Ehler, U., Eggenberger, L., Seidler, Z.E., Wilson, M.J., Fisher, K., & Walther, A. (2024). Men's psychotherapy dropout is associated with conformity to traditional masculinity ideologies. *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration*, 34(4), 420-433.

Schneeberger and fellow researchers wanted to investigate the relationship between a man's traditional masculine

When men believe they should handle their problems on their own, they are more likely to drop out of treatment.

ideology (TMI) and the propensity to drop out of psychotherapy treatment. Using an online survey and recruiting from various German-speaking social media websites, the researchers recruited 266 male participants who had experienced therapy. Forty-seven of these had dropped out of treatment.

What were the main reasons the men gave for dropping out of treatment? Over half simply endorsed that therapy was not helpful. Just under half reported that the therapist's methods did not fit them well. Not surprisingly, "... men who dropped out of psychotherapy showed stronger conformity to TMI... than men who reported no previous dropout" (p. 426). No significant sociodemographic differences were found between non-dropouts and dropouts.

One TMI feature stood out between men who dropped out and those who did not drop out of therapy—a high need for self-reliance. When men believe they should handle their problems on their own, they are more likely to drop out of treatment. The researchers recommended that therapists should acknowledge and directly address this and other TMI aspects in ways that will help traditional men engage in the therapeutic process. The authors further noted that the high percentage of men dissatisfied with psychotherapy is a significant cause of concern. More surveys and longitudinal studies will be informative.

Traditional Masculinity Ideology and Therapy Outcome for Veteran Men

O'Loughlin, J.I., Cox, D.W., Ogrodniczuk, J.S., Castro, C.A., & Wong, Y.J. (2023). Traditional masculinity ideology and psychotherapy treatment outcome for military service veteran men. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 24(1), 16-25.

O'Loughlin and colleagues recognized that research has explored how men with traditional masculine ideology (TMI) engage in therapy and the treatment process, but less is known about TMI's effect on treatment outcomes. In particular, the researchers wanted to understand how different facets of TMI might impact psychosocial functioning in veterans seeking therapy.

One hundred seventy-eight veterans began the investigators' longitudinal group therapy study. The veterans were assessed before therapy started, at its end, three months later, 12 months later, and 18 months later. The findings for distinct aspects of TMI produced fascinating results.

Of all the TMI facets examined, a high need for self-reliance had the most negative influence on therapy outcomes post-treatment. Like the first study reviewed, this feature appears important to address directly in treatment. Another TMI dimension was positive for promoting good therapy outcomes. Veterans high in toughness/risk-taking at treatment outset had "... greater gains in psychosocial functioning at 18 months posttreatment" (p. 21). The researchers acknowledged that the dropout rate over time in this longitudinal study limits their findings.

Concluding Thoughts

These recent preliminary studies have produced intriguing findings. Men with traditional masculine ideology (TMI) may need to be in extreme

emotional pain before they seek therapy. Men with a high belief in self-reliance are more prone to drop out of treatment, and when male veterans stress the importance of self-reliance, their therapeutic outcomes tend to be worse. The belief in self-reliance, accordingly, should be addressed directly in therapy.

These recent research findings suggest that psychotherapy does not serve traditionally masculine men well. Treatments are not attractive to these men in the first place, and when men do engage in therapy because of significant depression, they are prone to drop out if they strongly believe in self-reliance. As psychotherapists, we could console ourselves through victim-blaming here and simply state, "They are not ready." However, Jesus reminds us that such a judgmental attitude misses a sizeable log in our own eyes (Matthew 7:1-5). The biblical emphasis on the importance of the body of Christ (i.e., we lean on each other when appropriate and benefit from one another's gifts) provides an essential Christian integration point for working with Christian men high in TMI. Indeed, we have much work to do to make psychotherapy culturally sensitive to traditional men rather than stigmatizing them. ✦



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Answer the following questions from this issue of *Christian Counseling Today* by marking the appropriate circle. Once completed, you may send in this entire page or a photocopy with your payment to the address below. Please do not send cash. The quiz is open-book and you will need a minimum score of 70% to receive a letter of completion.

Broken Bonds: Why Healing Men’s Emotional Wounds...

– Mike Vaughn

- The author states, Core wounds often start with
 - a. blaming the victim of abuse
 - b. an emotional denial of any wrongdoing
 - c. statements like “I am a failure”
 - d. unhealthy peer relationships

The Manhood Crisis: Debunking the Myth of “Toxic Masculinity” – Chad Robichaux

- Robichaux says, Truth be told, we (men) should aggressively combat
 - a. practices that endanger the vulnerable
 - b. radical political sex policies
 - c. LGBTQ+ groups and supporters
 - d. transsexuals in the military

Men, Porn, and Sexual Addiction: Winning the Internal Battle

– Jim Cress

- Cress says that a simplistic behavior modification treatment plan
 - a. is a proven addiction treatment modality
 - b. generally resolves the etiology of pornography use
 - c. merely addresses the problem “above the waterline”
 - d. primarily focuses on the reduction of sexual fantasy

Overcoming the Hopelessness that Holds Us Back

– Tim Timberlake

- The article says that at its core, loneliness is
 - a. primarily unresolved childhood issues
 - b. disconnection from others, self, and God
 - c. exacerbated by cognitive distortions of thinking
 - d. caused by rejection from others

Paths from Fatherlessness to Father-fullness – Ken Canfield

- David is a case study of a man who
 - a. is a role model for businessmen
 - b. is an “overcomer father”
 - c. was overcome by the death of his father
 - d. struggled with being a dad

Reclaiming Masculinity: Helping Broken Boys Become...

– Patrick Morley

- God’s plan A for solving the masculinity problem is
 - a. intensive Christian family therapy
 - b. biblical cognitive/behavioral therapy
 - c. confession and repentance of past sins
 - d. discipleship by another believer

Lessons on Managing Suffering – Michael R. Lyles

- Lyles says we can learn to wait well by
 - a. focusing on how God sustained us in the past
 - b. meditating and journaling on past experiences
 - c. looking for ways God is demonstrating His care
 - d. all of the above

The Boy Crisis: The Evidence, Causes, and Solutions

– Warren Farrell

- Almost all school shooters are
 - a. dad-deprived boys
 - b. suffering from high conflict families
 - c. in families experiencing divorce
 - d. all of the above

Celebrating Created Differences in the Home

– Ted Cunningham

- The author says that God does not need our help in
 - a. defining how many genders there are
 - b. celebrating our male/female differences
 - c. teaching our boys to be young men
 - d. lovingly leading our children

Toxic Masculinity: Reclaiming What it Means to Be a Man

– Jim Ramos

- Regarding children in 2020, the U.S Census Bureau says that
 - a. 40% did not live with both parents by age 18
 - b. 48% did not live with both parents by age 18
 - c. 44% lived in homes with both parents
 - d. 40% lived in homes with both parents

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 - Be able to integrate spirituality and faith-based constructs into the delivery of care.

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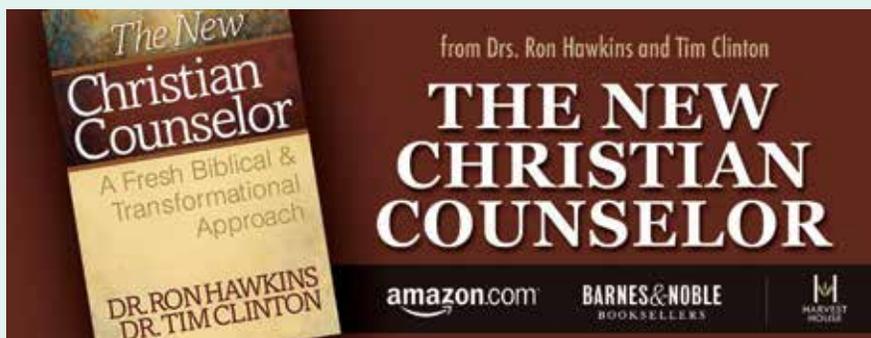
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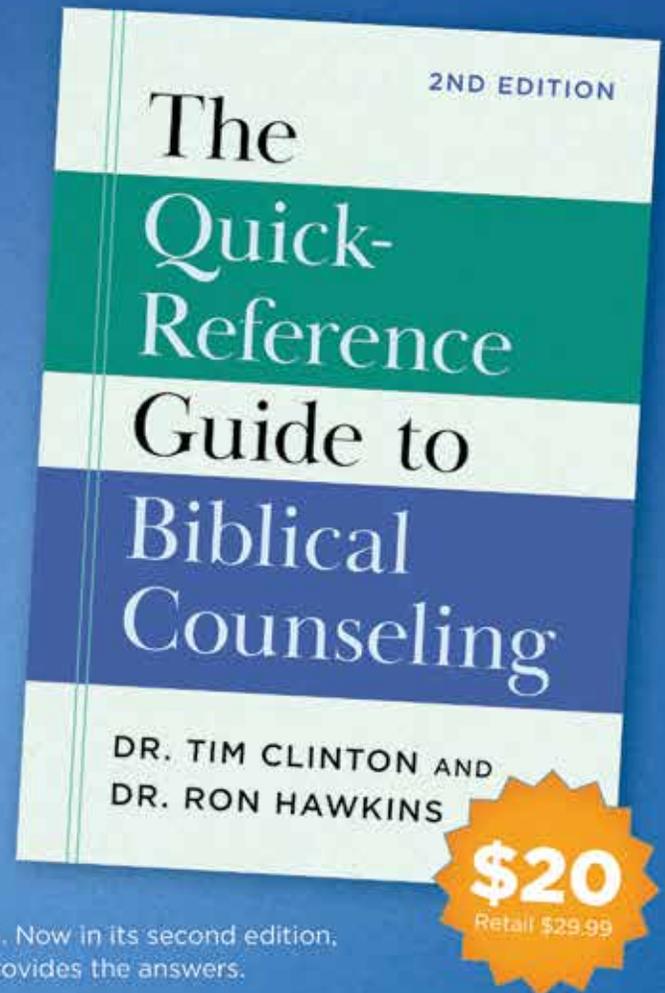
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