



MILLENNIUM MEN

A WORKBOOK FOR BIBLICAL MANHOOD

Discovering *Your Purpose*

*A scriptural foundation for the journey to become who
God designed you to be.*

WEEK ONE · SAMPLE

M2 · THE MILLENNIUM MEN SERIES

PART ONE

Introduction

A foreword from the author, and the scriptural foundation to read before you begin the journey.

INTRODUCTION

Foreword

I wrote this manual — for that is what it is, a manual for men to live an abundant, fulfilled, meaningful life. It is a step-by-step guide to becoming, at the highest level Maslow or Stephen Covey ever thought possible, aligned as men with our Creator and His wishes and dreams for our lives. This is a manual to step out into the great adventure, as Bilbo Baggins stepped from the safety of the Shire into the unknown that changed him forever — so that upon his return to the familiarity of the Shire, he could no longer stand living there. He had attained his higher purpose, his calling, and his destiny. This is a manual to help men discover their God-given purpose.

I'm a business consultant by trade. I've sat across the table from hundreds of men throughout my years as a consultant and asked the question, "Why are you here? What is your purpose in life?" Through this rudimentary survey, I've seen the vast majority of them — almost all, save for the few — hang their heads and whisper, as if half lost, "I wish I knew." These are not the indigent or the sloven. These are not men drifting from job to job, woman to woman. Some of these men are anchors in their churches, solid husbands and fathers, politicians, multi-millionaires, and what society would call "winners." Many times they would ask if I knew mine, to which I would shake my head and say, "I am in the same boat as you, my friend."

For years I searched and longed for the answer to one of the great questions — perhaps the greatest question: "Why am I here?" I began to pray and seek. I read psychology books, books about manhood, spiritual books, and I read my Bible. And it was there that God revealed to me my purpose, and the purpose of every man. For we are all born into the same human condition; we are all men, built of the same stuff. Our souls long for the same things. We are all made by One Creator. He designed us all.

I am no more qualified to write this manual than any other man who has walked the face of this earth. Perhaps I am less so, for I am no scholar, philosopher, or esteemed thinker. I accepted a job with just six semester hours left before I would have graduated with an English degree, and I never went back for the sheepskin. I have made so many mistakes and blunders that I cannot count them all. It is by the grace of God that I'm still in business; in fact, it is by His mercy that I am still alive.

But when I tell men that I know the purpose of their life, they perk up and say, "What is it? How can I know my purpose?" I tell them my story, for that is the one I know best. I tell them how I grew up, how broken I was until I found Christ. I tell them how I searched out the answer not as an Existentialist, with myself at the center of the question, but as a follower of Christ, with Christ at the center — and I found a deep and satisfying answer. I found the illumination of God's Truth resonate with my spirit, and I hold these Truths to be self-evident. When you read them, I believe you will have the same "Aha" moment I did, and it will change your life. It will give you purpose and direction. That is my ultimate prayer.

A WORD ON THE TIMES WE LIVE IN

There is another reason to spell out these words. There is a deep heresy being fed to an unwitting world, and perhaps an unwitting church. Like most evils, it is disguised as good — even the good of equality — yet men are being diminished for the sake of "the goodness of all." The world has coined a phrase, "toxic masculinity," which casts all masculinity that is strong, competitive, competent, and powerful as dangerous. Regardless of the protection it has provided or the freedoms it has won, it is now deemed unnecessary.

If I were the enemy of this world, I would attack men. I would deem them worthless and lump all of them into the category of "dangerous" or "outdated." I would emasculate them and disenfranchise them from the rest of the world. Men no longer know how to be men. Are we to be the stoic, dutiful, honorable man — or are we supposed to weep at our daughter's dance recital and let the woman lead, for it is her time? The advice "Happy wife, happy life" gets twisted into a worldview that relinquishes us from decision-making and siphons our God-given spiritual authority in the home.

Like many of the enemy's lies, it is a half-truth.

1 PETER 3:7 • NIV

Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

Here, the Holy Spirit through Peter tells us how to treat our wives — and even puts a condition upon it: "so that nothing will hinder your prayers." This isn't a suggestion; it is a commandment. In most marriage vows we promise to "honor" our wives, as if we still know what that means. We must define honor. We must define respect and consideration in order to fulfill the commandment — otherwise our prayers will be hindered. There is a direct correlation between how we treat our wives and how God hears us. That is profound, and something to pontificate.

I believe our manhood lies somewhere between the stoic John Wayne caricature and the effeminate creature the world is trying to cast as "modern man." We should be dutiful, sometimes stoic, yet there is nothing shameful about the beauty of a father's love for his daughter displayed in tears at a recital. We are to be respectful and courteous — but that does not mean always acquiescent. Our houses aren't democracies; we are the leaders. Good leaders take advice, listen to their teams, and move forward with every piece of data they can muster within the proper time. But good leaders don't always submit. Jesus didn't say, "Blessed are the peacekeepers." He said, "Blessed are the peacemakers."

There is no better contrast than between Chamberlain and Churchill. One refused to engage Hitler no matter how shredded the Treaty of Versailles became; the other understood that to stop a bully you

sometimes have to go to war. Meekness isn't weakness. Meekness is having the strength to engage, but exhausting all peaceful solutions before engaging in battle. That is our job as servant-leaders. That is part of the character of Christ, and therefore should be ours as well.

My hope is that this manual will help define manhood as God sees it — your role within your family, and the reason God made you. That is my prayer. Enjoy the journey.

INTRODUCTION

Scriptural References

I refer to the following scriptures throughout the course. They are placed here for your reference — take a moment to read through them before you begin the workbook journey.

YOU ARE CALLED

John 15:16

¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit — fruit that will last — and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.

2 Peter 1:10–11

¹⁰Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, ¹¹and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

YOU WERE DESIGNED
FOR A PURPOSE

Proverbs 20:5

The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out.

It takes insight to draw out your purpose.

1 Peter 2:9

⁹But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

GOD HAS A TASK
FOR YOU

Ephesians 2:10

¹⁰For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

2 Timothy 1:9

⁹He has saved us and called us to a holy life — not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.

GOD HAS A PLAN
FOR YOU

Jeremiah 29:11

¹¹"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

**SATAN HAS A PLAN
FOR YOU**

Job 1:7

The Lord said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the Lord, "From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it."

John 10:10

¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

**YOU ARE A WARRIOR ·
YOU ARE IN A WAR**

Ephesians 6:12

¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

2 Corinthians 2:10–11

¹⁰ Anyone you forgive, I also forgive... ¹¹in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

Forgiveness is essential to thwarting the schemes of the enemy.

CALLED TO VICTORY

Hebrews 12:1

Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

Matthew 16:18–19 · ESV

¹⁸You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven...

Matthew 11:12 · Joel 3:9–10

From the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. Prepare for war! Rouse the warriors! Beat your plowshares into swords.

**THE MAN IS ESSENTIAL
TO THE SALVATION OF
HIS HOME**

Acts 16:29–31

The jailer fell down before Paul and Silas and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household."

**WHY WE BUILD NEW
NEURAL PATHWAYS**

Proverbs 23:7 · KJV

For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.

**THE NEED FOR
ACCOUNTABILITY**

James 5:16

Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

Matthew 28:19–20

Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all I have commanded you.

**MY GIFTS & THE
ASSURANCE OF
VICTORY****2 Timothy 1:6–7**

⁶Fan into flame the gift of God which is in you... ⁷For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love, and self-discipline.

Romans 8:37–39

³⁷In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

³⁸For I am convinced that neither death nor life... ³⁹nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

M 2 · W E E K O N E

Biblical Manhood

Discovering our purpose — who, when, and why we exist.

QUESTION 1 · BEFORE YOU BEGIN

What does it mean to be a man?

WEEK ONE

God's first command to Adam

The first thing God ever told Adam is found in Genesis.

GENESIS 1:28 • NIV

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

God expects man to be fruitful, to multiply, and to subdue the earth. God designed Adam to be a multiplier and a subduer! And if that was Adam's design, then it is also your design. To prove it, consider two scriptures. First, **Isaiah 55:11** tells us God's Word never returns void: "It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." Which words that come out of God's mouth will not return void? *Every* word. So the very first command God gave Adam is a command still echoing throughout eternity.

And as God commanded Adam, so God commands us. God is not a respecter of persons — **Acts 10:34** — He shows no favoritism. Therefore what God spoke to Adam, He is speaking to you: "Be fruitful and multiply. Subdue the earth." Your first calling as a man is to be fruitful with *everything* God has given you. You can't be fruitful with something He didn't give you, nor can you multiply zero. Therefore God has given you gifts, abilities, talents, attributes, and people around you that He wants you to multiply. Furthermore, there are beasts of the field — and of the spiritual realm — that God wants you to subdue.

This is quite contrary to what the world is trying to make of men. We can hardly turn on the television without seeing a commercial where the man is portrayed as bumbling, aimless, and clumsy. But God doesn't see us that way. He sees us as men who subdue, men who multiply, and men who are fruitful. How do we engage? How do we fight? We raise up men and train them to be the spiritual warriors they are called by God to be.

MILLENNIUM MEN IS DESIGNED TO HELP YOU...

- ◆ Understand who, when, and why we exist
- ◆ Deal with past personal pain and issues
- ◆ Resolve issues with authority and our fathers
- ◆ Know the tools we have for warfare
- ◆ Understand the role of the Holy Spirit
- ◆ Learn how to share your testimony
- ◆ Build accountability relationships
- ◆ Understand your specific, God-given purpose

Let's cast off fear. Let's be action-based, not just talk.

Let's commit to being the spiritual leaders of our homes.

WEEK ONE

Men, you were designed to conquer

ROMANS 8:37 · NIV

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

This might be my favorite verse in the whole Bible. Men, you were designed to conquer! And the good news is that Jesus has already beaten the enemy. He has won, and He has all authority on earth and in heaven — **Matthew 28:18**: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

Do you feel like a conqueror? Do you feel like you could literally battle the forces of evil and come out victorious? If you don't, then you need to go through bootcamp. You need to discover the warrior within and get yourself ready, because the world is turning and the enemy is active. Jesus may have won the war, but there are still battles to be fought. Every person, every single life, is worth fighting for — the addicted, the poor, the depressed, the broken, the forsaken, the orphan, the disabled, the heartbroken, the listless, the cowardly, and all who are affected by every scheme the enemy has designed against them and us.

Our fight is for souls, and the stakes are eternal. This is part of your purpose. **Part one of your purpose is to enter the battle.** The problem is, most men have never engaged. My brothers, it's time to engage. There is so much at stake, and we need you in the fight.

WEEK ONE

What is a Millennium Man?

DEFINITION

A surrendered Christ-follower engaged in the spiritual battle for his family, his church, and his friends. A man who is a good steward of all his resources and is actively advancing the Kingdom of God by fulfilling his purpose through spiritual warfare and making disciples.

QUESTION 2

What is man's purpose? What is *my* purpose?

YOU ARE MADE WITH PURPOSE IN MIND

EPHESIANS 2:10 · NKJV

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

You were designed to do good works. Another way to say that is: you have a destiny. Have you ever felt a deep yearning inside you for a destiny you were certain was there, but uncertain how to attain? That's because your true purpose is only found when you are completely submitted to the will of the One who made you.

Imagine you were an alien who landed on earth, had never seen a riding lawnmower, and had no owner's manual. You might fire it up and use it to get to work or run errands — but you'd be completely missing its purpose. Eventually you'd find a Subaru and abandon the lawnmower, thinking it wasn't nearly as effective for transportation, and you'd be right. How frustrating that would be, if you were the lawnmower!

WEEK ONE

Your design reveals your destiny

I believe most men aren't being used for the exact purpose God designed for them. Many men diminish themselves with self-talk like, "I'm worthless," or "I'm not good enough." This isn't true. You must stop diminishing the creation God so carefully made — you.

Maybe you're not a Ferrari; maybe you're the finest John Deere tractor ever built. All of us were designed *with* a purpose and *for* a purpose. **1 Corinthians 12:12** says there are many parts of the body — some we can see and some behind the scenes — but all are worthy, useful, and important. Paul was

writing about usefulness and purpose within the church, and churches are made of people with different sets of gifts. You were created for a purpose, and your design reveals your destiny.

God made the earth in six days and rested on the seventh. He made the Grand Canyon, the rivers and lakes, the mountains and beaches, all the wonderful places people flock to year after year just to envision the artistry of our God. But He didn't make *you* in six days. He took His time.

PSALM 139:13–14

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

My mom went through a crocheting phase in the early '80s, and she would crochet for hours. It took her almost a whole year to make each of us a blanket. I didn't appreciate it then, but she carefully chose the colors each of my brothers would receive. She put her heart into it — and so did God when He made you. He carefully chose every detail, from your eye color to your sense of humor. None of it was haphazard. God didn't leave out anything you need, and He didn't give you anything you don't.

Let me clarify something: your purpose isn't your vocation. It's not your job. God's purpose for you is much larger than your nine-to-five. **Ecclesiastes 3:11** says He has made everything beautiful in its time, and He has set eternity in the human heart. Somewhere deep inside, you *know* your place in history is an eternal one. I think often about how people desire to be famous, even for a moment. I believe that carnal desire stems from a deeper one God placed within us — only misguided in its search. Nothing the world gives — not fame, not fortune, not money or power — will ever fulfill the desire for eternity within your heart. God made you for a purpose, and that purpose is eternal.

WEEK ONE

What lasts forever

QUESTION 3

What am I willing to die for? Perhaps that is what is worth living for.

You may be asking, what purpose of mine could possibly last for eternity? In one thousand years, no one will remember who won the Super Bowl in 2020. Even the most famous players will barely be a footnote, and probably not even a vapor of thought a million years from now. So there is nothing you can accomplish that makes an eternal impact — except to invest in the one thing that lasts forever: people. Our souls are eternal. God made us in His image. Your body is breaking down every day no matter your age; even the greatest athlete grows old and dies. But our souls live forever, and each soul will spend eternity either in Heaven with God or separated from Him. No one decides that but ourselves.

Most of you taking this class probably already know Jesus as your personal Savior. You're here because you want a closer walk with Him and to discover your purpose in Him. But I would be remiss if I didn't share the miracle that God freely gave us — His Son, Jesus. Jesus was a real man who walked this earth; there is more historical evidence for Him than for many figures we never question. He was fully human, yet He performed many miracles. His final miracle was rising from the grave after being crucified, proving He was God. Over five hundred people saw Him alive after the crucifixion, and many gave their lives rather than recant their testimony.

Jesus came because He wants to reconcile you to Himself. Since Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, God has been preparing to reconcile Himself to mankind. Why? Because He loves you and wants a personal relationship with you. Every man since Adam has chosen to sin; at some point, so have you. I once heard that if everyone stood on the shore in San Diego and had to swim to Hawaii, whoever swam farthest would still fall short and drown. None of man's righteousness can reach God. Only Jesus is the bridge. **John 14:6** says, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

THE INVITATION TO RESPOND

No one gets to Heaven through Mary or John or Peter. No one gets there because of their mom or grandpa. We are each responsible for our own relationship with Jesus. The Bible says many will think they are saved, but in the end Jesus will say, "Depart from me, I never knew you" — because, though they did many good works, they didn't truly *know* Him. Most of the world knows the President's name, but only his child can call him at any hour and get a response.

I often hear, "I couldn't believe in a God who would send people to Hell." My answer usually surprises them: God doesn't send anyone to Hell. He lets people make the choice. You can choose Jesus, who has paid the price for your sin, or you can pay for your own sins. Please don't make the mistake of trying to pay for your own. The cost is eternity, separated from the God who loves you and made you. Everything good in you comes from Him — even the breath in your lungs. God is love, and He loves you.

THE DECISION TO SURRENDER

Right now, I'm praying that God would reveal to you that you are a sinner — just like me — and that you need a Savior, just like me, just like everyone on earth. We all need the saving grace of Jesus. His love is waiting. **Revelation 3:20** says He is standing at your heart's door, knocking. If you open the door, He will come in and sup with you. What a meal! The One who made everything desires to share a meal of peace, joy, and love with you. Do you feel anxious, or broken, or sad? Jesus is the answer, and you will feel a peace you cannot explain.

Don't enter this moment lightly. Some say salvation is free, but it isn't — it will cost you the life you wanted; it will cost you everything. When we give our lives to Christ, we say, "You are Lord." We cannot call Him Savior without calling Him Lord. There are many who think they're saved but have never truly made Him Lord. Would you like to do that now? If you pray these simple words and believe them in your heart, you will be saved.

A PRAYER OF SURRENDER

God, I know that I'm a sinner and that I need a Savior. I am turning away from my sin and my own will, and I accept Jesus Christ as my Savior and the Lord of my life. Please send your Holy Spirit to dwell in me, change me, and mold me into the man you desire. I ask this in Jesus's name. Amen.

A WITNESS OF GRACE

Thank you for praying that prayer. Whether it's your first time or your thousandth, there is something wonderful about calibrating your soul to the King of Kings. He is a good and faithful God. He is love —

that's not one of His attributes, that is who He is. You may have felt judgment from other Christians, or people pretending to be Christians, but the Bible says God doesn't judge you until the end. **Romans 2** says it is the kindness of God that draws men. His grace, His kindness, and His love for you do not diminish, no matter where you are or what you've done.

I've had men tell me God could never forgive them. That's a lie the enemy wants you to believe. One of the most prolific serial killers in U.S. history was radically saved in prison and is now a prolific evangelist — David Berkowitz, known in the summer of 1976 as the "Son of Sam."

In 1987, ten years into his sentence, a stranger approached Berkowitz in the prison yard and said, "David, Jesus Christ loves you. He wants to forgive you, and he sent me to this prison to tell you this." At first, Berkowitz refused to believe Jesus would save a man like him. But one day, reading Psalm 34:6 — "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles" — David knelt on the hard prison floor and wept. At that moment, the Son of Sam died. The Son of Hope was born.

— THE PRISON ALLIANCE, [CLI.WORLD](http://cli.world)

No matter what you've done, God can forgive you. The Prison Alliance estimates Berkowitz's testimony has since brought over 200,000 inmates to faith in Jesus Christ. God can use your past, no matter what it is. So welcome to the Kingdom — today, we are brothers in Christ. That's why I greet most men as "brother," because if they're not my brother in Christ yet, my goal is that one day they will be.

WEEK ONE

A new creation

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

When we make Jesus the Lord of our lives, we become a new creation. The old man dies and a new one is born, spiritually. So right now — whether this is the first time you've prayed that prayer or you're rededicating your life — you are made new. You were dead in spirit, and now you are alive. Hallelujah! Mark the calendar: today is your new birthday, your true birthday.

I remember the day I stopped pretending. My life was falling apart, and I dropped to my knees and gave Jesus my life. I had prayed the prayer of salvation dozens of times, but on July 12, 1998, I truly surrendered. I knew the truth — I had grown up in church — but I always wanted what the world

offered first. That was the day I knew what the world offered was worthless, and all I wanted was what God had for me. Ever since, God has been refining me like a silversmith refines his masterpiece, gently removing the dross until He can see His reflection in His creation.

OUT OF EGYPT

There is a correlation between our walk with Christ and the Israelites' walk out of Egypt, across the Red Sea, into the wilderness. Egypt is a life of bondage and sin; the Red Sea is the redeeming blood of Christ. The moment we cross over, a miracle happens — God makes a way where there was no way. A powerful army, the army of Satan and his minions, was set on your destruction. But no human could have parted the Red Sea, and no human born in sin was ever going to provide a way for your salvation.

Only Jesus lived a perfect life — born of a virgin, without the lineage of sin passed through manhood. He was the spotless, unblemished sacrifice for our sins, both past and yet to come. Every sin you will ever commit, Jesus paid for on the cross.

The same thing that happened to the Israelites will happen to you. When you accept Christ, those who don't regard the things of God as precious will attack you. You will be tempted. You will wish you were back in the safety of Egypt. That is why it is essential to have a covering, like Moses. What is a covering? Your covering is your church, your pastor, and your Christian teachers and leaders. This is very important: plug into your church. Get connected, so that when the attack comes, someone can cover you in prayer and help destroy the schemes of the enemy.

We'll return to this analogy throughout the journey. Just know you are in good company, my brother. Many men have walked through what you're about to study, and you do not have to carry it alone. The important thing now, no matter where you are in your walk, is to *connect* with Christian brothers. The enemy wants to keep us apart because he knows how powerful two men living life together can be — and Ecclesiastes says a strand of three is not easily broken. Millennium Men is a brotherhood. We have each other's backs. We pray for one another. We are motivated by love and unashamed of Truth. Welcome to the brotherhood.

WEEK ONE

Week One summary

God made Adam and told him to be fruitful, to multiply, and to subdue the earth. What God said to Adam, He is saying to you. You are called to be a conqueror.

The first step in conquering is to align ourselves with God's will. To do that, we must accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior. Once we do, we begin to understand that our design and our destiny are eternal. The things that are eternal, and important to God, are other people. God doesn't want anyone to spend eternity away from Him, because He is Love. Therefore our purpose, whatever it is, is tied to our

interaction with other people. Lastly, our design reveals our destiny. How we are made determines our specific purpose. We were created with that purpose in mind.

YOUR ONE THING

Write down **one thing** you could start doing — or stop doing — that would make the most difference in your life over the next 30 days.

WHAT'S MY ONE THING?

NOW TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO ANSWER THESE IN YOUR NOTEBOOK:

What is a man?

What is my purpose?

What am I willing to die for? Perhaps these are the things I should be living for.

M 2 · W E E K T W O

Design Reveals Destiny

Who we are — discovering the unique design God built into you, and the gifts He gave you to fulfill it.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Why am I here?

WEEK TWO

Why am I here?

EPHESIANS 2:10 · NIV

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Last week we learned that God made man to be fruitful, to multiply, and to subdue the earth. We are "more than conquerors," as Paul wrote in Romans 8:37. Yet for some reason, many men I know don't feel like conquerors. I know seemingly successful men — titans of industry, even faithful, Kingdom-minded men — who still ask, "Why am I here? I still feel like I'm not fulfilling my calling."

The two greatest days in a man's life are the day he's born, and the day he finds out why.

MARK TWAIN

Let's ask the question, "Why am I here?" It is the first question of existentialism. Though that philosophy places man at the center of the universe, we know man is under the authority and loving care of a God who pursues us, loves us, and knows the number of hairs on our heads. Still, it is a great question. The God who knows everything about you — your Designer — is calling you to something greater than yourself. Many men live to become famous, rich, and powerful, only to find those things satisfy a hunger for a season but ultimately leave us empty. **Ecclesiastes 3:11** says He has planted eternity in the human heart. The desire for eternity is within us; we long to leave a legacy.

All men die, but few men ever live.

WILLIAM WALLACE

What is eternal? What in this world will last more than a few decades, or centuries, or even a millennium? Nothing — not championships or money or power or accolades. Nothing survives the fire of eternity except the souls of those around us. If we are to draw out the deep waters of purpose, we must understand that our destiny is found only through others. You were called to make a difference in other people's lives. Everything else is ancillary.

WEEK TWO

You are unique

There has never been another *you* in the annals of history. God uniquely designed you, and there will never be another person like you. Even an identical twin — genetically the same — is uniquely made in every other way. When God made you, He broke the mold.

He carefully made you, studying every aspect, knowing full well what you would experience and what to equip you with, before one minute of your life had passed. Your unique design reveals your destiny. God made you for a journey, and being a good God, He gave you everything you will need before you embark.

- He gave you everything you need to be fruitful.
- He gave you everything you need to multiply.
- He gave you everything you need to subdue the earth.
- He gave you everything you need to be a conqueror.

When we analyze how we're made, we can begin to determine what good works God has prepared for us. **Proverbs 20:5** says, "The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out." Insight comes through analysis. So let's put ourselves under the microscope and ask the great existential question — *why am I here?* We know it is for a good work God has prepared; learning who we are will help us find it. This acrostic will help you remember the aspects of your design:

S — Spiritual Gifts — what God equips you with to build His Kingdom.

H — Heart — what you are most passionate about.

A — Abilities — the natural talents you were born with.

P — Personality — the way God wired you to engage the world.

E — Experience — all you have lived through, good and bad.

WEEK TWO

What are spiritual gifts?

GENESIS 1:26 · NIV

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

Spiritual gifts are gifts God gave you to equip you to help build His Kingdom. You were made in God's image. That doesn't mean you have the jawline of Christ or His gait — you resemble Him *spiritually*, in the eternal ways. You have a spirit, a soul, and a body; you are an eternal being. Jesus had an earthly body that died and was buried, but His spirit went to paradise that very day. He told the thief in **Luke 23:43**, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." This spiritual makeup is essential to understanding our purpose — and spiritual gifts are different from physical gifts like music or intelligence.

WEEK TWO

Knowing the Father

If we are made in His image, then the more we understand about our Father, the better we understand ourselves. The best way to understand Him is to spend time with Him — to read the gift of His Word, and to seek Him. **Jeremiah 29:13** promises, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."

We can also understand who we are by looking at the personality of God Himself. God presented Himself as a male figure for a reason. He could have presented Himself as female, but He chose to be male for a purpose. Part of the answer lies in how we described the role of a father last week:

- Protector
- Teacher
- Courageous
- Loving
- Counselor
- Provider
- Strong
- Just
- Honorable
- Peacemaker

We know what a good father is because God placed it in our hearts. **Romans 2:15** says God's law is written on our hearts, so that our conscience and thoughts either accuse us or tell us we are doing right. As societies formed, they shared a similar moral code, because God wrote that code deep within us. Something rises in us at injustice; we love stories of triumph, and we long to see the innocent set free, no matter our affiliation. God places that hunger for righteousness within us — the good father is within you, but only Christ can draw him out.

WEEK TWO

Men are different than women

Why did God present Himself as a male figurehead? I believe it is because our design and role as men is an important one. If you are a man, you are a leader. God made you to be the

spiritual head of your home — with Jesus as your covering, and God the covering of Christ. That is the spiritual order God designed; when we depart from it, we find confusion and, ultimately, chaos.

EPHESIANS 5:23–25 · NKJV

For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.

Your role as the leader of your home is yours — but you must step into it. It is an active role, not a passive one. It requires diligence, vision, and direction. God has a vision for your life; do you have a vision for your family? Do you pray over your wife, standing in the gap for her weakness? Do you pray over your children as they grow into young adults? Do you create a spiritual action plan for them? If you don't, who will? Seize your role as the spiritual leader and provide spiritual food for your family.

THE SPIRITUAL ORDER

God

Jesus

Man · Husband

Woman · Wife

Children

WEEK TWO

A man's needs

Men have different needs than women — physical, emotional, and spiritual. God presented Himself as male for a reason; His design is similar to ours. He demonstrates His own needs through the Ten Commandments. The first four are about Him and our relationship with Him. Here is a summary of the first four, found in Exodus 20:

- ① Do not have any other gods before Me.
- ② Do not make an image of anything and worship it.

- ③ Do not take My name in vain.
- ④ Honor My day.

God says in verse 5, "For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God." What is He jealous of? *You* — your heart and your worship. I don't know many men who would be glad if their wife came home talking about a great-looking man she met at work. You'd be jealous, and rightfully so. We need to be honored as God needs to be honored; we need to be the only one for our wives, as God needs to be the only one in our lives. We are made like God. We desire honor.

REFLECT

What is honor? What does it mean to you?

WEEK TWO

The gifts we receive

Remember, you were called to be a warrior. When Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he told us to put on the armor of God — the very armor a Roman soldier wore. He wasn't describing a passive life; the daily task is to take up the weapons of warfare and get ready for a fight. You won't feel useful until you are engaged in the battle. Our primary battle is spiritual.

You may think your battle is your boss, or your bills, or your kids acting up. But **Ephesians 6:12** says our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, the authorities, and the powers of this dark world. If our battle is in the spiritual realm, then it is time we engage there. First, we must understand our role on the battlefield. In a normal battle you might be a gunner, a pilot, or a drone operator. In **Ephesians 4:11**, Paul names the roles God gave His army: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers.

Apostle — sent on a mission from God.

Prophet — a messenger from God.

Evangelist — one who shares the Gospel with the lost.

Pastor — a shepherd of God's people.

Teacher — an instructor in the truth.

These are the main roles of a church, and every Christian should operate in their gifts. Gifts can be nurtured and grown. You may not have the gift of teaching, but you can still teach a small group; you may not be a pastor, but you can still guide a friend through a divorce. The gifts of the Spirit aren't to be confused with the offices of the church — as a father you'll pastor and teach your children; as a friend to the lost, you may be just the evangelist he needs. Ask God to lead you in how to use your gifts. He will. Scripture lists many more:

- Serving, encouraging, giving, leadership, mercy (**Romans 12**)
- Wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, discernment, tongues (**1 Corinthians 12**)
- Helps and government

WEEK TWO

Week Two summary

After you've taken the Spiritual Gifts Test, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal how you should use the gifts God has given you. God wants you to start now.

There is a task for you to do today. He has a plan. Put one foot in front of the other, ask God to lead you, and keep putting your own will in the back seat every time it tries to drive. You are uniquely you. You were made to do good works — and those good works start now. Ask God what His plan is for you, daily. You don't have to wait; your purpose begins right where you are, and as you grow and nurture the gifts God has given you, He will expand your territory.

◆ HOMEWORK

Take the Spiritual Gifts Test

Set aside some quiet, honest time and take the spiritual gifts inventory at the link below. Bring your results to next week's gathering so we can go through them together.
spiritualgiftstest.com

M 2 · WEEKS THREE & FOUR

SHAPE

Going over your Spiritual Gifts and Personality — discovering the unique design God built into you, so you can find the work He prepared for you to do.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

How did God shape me — and for what?

WEEKS 3 & 4

Recap of last week

Last week we learned that God has created us for good works (**Ephesians 2:10**). We are designed to do, to function, and not to just live our lives aimlessly.

God made each one of us with unique gifts designed to perform the tasks He knew would need to be done, before we were even born. Psalm 139 says that He knit us together in our mother's womb. We are fearfully and wonderfully made. Nothing about you is a mistake. You are destined to make a difference.

PSALM 139:1-16 · NIV

¹You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. ²You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. ³You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.

⁴Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely.

¹³For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. ¹⁶Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

When we analyze how we're made, we can start determining what good works God has prepared for us. If design truly reveals destiny, then diving into our SHAPE will help us understand our purpose. This acrostic gives us five places to look:

S — Spiritual Gifts — what God equips you with to build His Kingdom (covered last week).

H — Heart — what you are most passionate about.

A — Abilities — the natural talents God gave you.

P — Personality — the way God wired you to engage the world.

E — Experiences — all you have lived through, good and bad.

WEEKS 3 & 4

Heart

Your heart is what you're passionate about. Your heart may be your biggest need, or a place of learning that was particularly impactful for you. Many times, your heart is tender around the biggest pain in your life.

A great example is the film *Lorenzo's Oil*, the true-life drama of Augusto and Michaela Odone, whose five-year-old son Lorenzo was diagnosed with a rare and incurable disease. Their struggle fueled their passion, and they ultimately found a cure and rewrote medical history. Many times, before healing someone, the Bible says that Jesus was filled with compassion for the person He was healing. Our heart

— our compassion — will help direct and define our mission in life.

REFLECT

What was, or is, your biggest hurt in life — and how do you think God can use it?

You may be going through that pain right now. If you are, it's difficult to see that you could find your ministry within it — but it's often true. A godly compassion will rise up within you, and you'll want to help those you see in need. Your heart is where your deepest compassion resides, and God is likely moving you toward a people connected to it. It could be a compassion for orphans, though you had two great parents. He may break your heart for a people somewhere across the globe. Be open to the mission before you.

PRAY THIS NOW

God, use me. Break my heart for a people. Give me compassion for the lost. In Jesus's precious name, Amen.

WEEKS 3 & 4**Abilities**

Your abilities are going to be used by God. We often think of the outward abilities, since they seem to be on display, but they're clearly not the only gifts God gives.

Are you a concert pianist? God can use you. Are you a physician? There is a need for godly physicians. Are you a police officer? God can use your vocation and giftings right now. We are all part of the body of Christ. Many have abilities that are seen, and many of us have abilities that aren't celebrated on a stage. **1 Corinthians 12:12** says there is one body, but it has many parts, and all its many parts make up one body — it is the same with Christ.

REFLECT

What are some of your abilities that God can use to build His Kingdom?

A PRAYER TO START EACH DAY

God, use me today. Put people in my path that could use whatever I have to give.

WEEKS 3 & 4

Personality

Are you an extrovert or an introvert? There are several personality profiles and different tests used to measure them. It's fun to take one with a close friend and then ask their honest opinion of its accuracy.

Not all tests are foolproof, and you may not agree with every assessment — personality profile tests are blunt instruments. But finding out the basics of your personality can absolutely help you find your purpose. God designed you. Danny DeVito is a great actor, but he was probably never going to be an NBA center. Just as physical characteristics help determine our outward gifts, our personality helps us understand how God might want to use us.

THE ENNEAGRAM

The Enneagram is a system of personality that describes people in terms of nine types, each with their own motivations, fears, and internal dynamics. It is an emotionally focused system — honing in on a person's core emotional motivations and fears. The nine types are divided among three centers:

Heart types — depend on emotional intelligence to understand their reactions and connect with others.

Head types — depend on intellectual intelligence to make sense of things and navigate the world.

Body types — depend on instinctual intelligence to follow their "gut" and respond to threats and opportunities.

WEEKS 3 & 4

Experiences

Much like your heart, your experiences will help define your direction. Life is so much better with a guide.

If you've been to a city several times, you know the best routes to avoid traffic, the best places to eat, the best places to stay. Your experience can be valuable to someone else if you're willing to share it. If you've successfully raised teenage girls, share your experience. If you're a veteran who battled PTSD and found hope on the other side, reach out a helping hand to your fellow veterans. God will use everything you've been through for His glory. If you hold onto a past pain and can't seem to get over it, try helping someone going through the exact same thing — your burden will be lightened, and you'll find joy in sharing.

GENESIS 50:20 · NKJV

But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.

That was Joseph's response to the brothers who sold him into slavery, and it is exactly how we should respond. If you'll allow your past pain to be used by God, part of your purpose will be found through it. You'll develop a godly compassion for those walking through what you've already walked through, and you'll desire to lead them through the pain and to Jesus. When people go through hard times, they need a counselor — Jesus is the Counselor. When men go through turbulent times, they need peace — Jesus is the Prince of Peace.

WEEKS 3 & 4

Other factors that shaped you

ENVIRONMENT

We could insert the "nature vs. nurture" argument here, but the bottom line is that both play a role in who you are. God wasn't surprised when your parents got pregnant with you. He never scratched His head and said, "Oh man, that wasn't supposed to happen." Your parents, siblings, grandparents, cousins, and even your next-door neighbor were all put there by God. Were you raised in the big city or a small town? On a farm or in the suburbs? **Psalm 37:23** says the steps of a man are established by the Lord, and He delights in his way. Your past environment will not determine your purpose, but it will play a crucial role in it.

MOM

One of the best assessments is what other people say about you. What does your mom — or someone who loves you unconditionally — say about you? Are your friends constantly saying, "You should open a restaurant, you're the best chef I know," or "You should write a book"? Sometimes those things are confirmations of what God has placed in our hearts. You might be the best mentor of young people, but your title is bus driver. You might have the gift of encouragement, but your job is crossing guard. Your little gift can change the world if you give it to God.

DAD

We'll have a whole lesson on the relationship we have with our fathers. For now, here are a few statistics that show the role a father plays in a child's life:

7×	more likely to become pregnant as a teen, to be abused or neglected, or to abuse drugs or alcohol
4×	more likely to live in poverty, or to have behavioral problems
2×	more likely to be obese, or to commit a crime
80%	of incarcerated inmates in the U.S. come from fatherless homes

SOURCE · FATHERHOOD.ORG

THOSE WE ADMIRE

There's a great line in the old Paul Newman movie *Hud*: "A nation will come to resemble those whom it admires." We tend to adopt the traits and customs of those we admire — which is why it's so important to guard our hearts. We admire characteristics in people where we are lacking, and that's healthy and part of your design. But when the people we admire have character flaws, we subconsciously tell ourselves it must be okay to have them too. That's why the One we should admire and pattern our life after is Christ alone.

DREAMS

God may have already planted a vision in your heart for your life. You may have always known you'd go to college, even if no one in your family ever has. You may have always known you'd be a pilot, a physician, or that one day you'd help raise foster children. **Acts 2:17** says that in the last days God will pour out His Spirit on all people — your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. God has more than likely already given you a vision for your life. He plants things in your spirit that you should pay attention to.

REFLECT

God's vision for my life is...

WEEKS 3 & 4

What is my calling?

Many people ask me, "What is my calling?" — to which I ask them to open their hand and look within it. What's in your hand right now? I'm not talking about things; I'm asking what people God has placed in your path.

God wants you to be a good steward of those around you. Are you honoring your parents and your elders? Are you serving in your church, even if it's not the perfect church? Are you praying over your wife? Are you fasting for your children? I don't say these things to indict you, but to encourage you to

begin being a good steward of the relationships God has already placed around you. His Kingdom is people — not buildings or castles or crowns. Start intentionally having coffee with your lost neighbor, putting your phone down at dinner, or grasping your wife's hand and praying over her before you both fall asleep. When you seek His Kingdom first (**Matthew 6:33**), all the things you need will be added unto you. I call it the Great Adventure, and I hope you'll go on this journey with me.

WEEKS 3 & 4

Emotional intelligence

One of the best books I've ever read is a secular book by Travis Bradberry called *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*. The beauty of emotional intelligence is that no matter where you start, you can improve your EQ.

- Assess a person's emotions before engaging.
- Respond instead of reacting to conflict.
- Practice self-awareness of your emotions.
- Empathize with others.
- Count your blessings.
- Read the emotional feel of a room.
- Use active listening skills.
- Learn to take criticism well.
- Be approachable and be sociable.

WEEKS 3 & 4

Summary

You are an amazing creation, and your SHAPE will determine how God is going to use you. Remember that design reveals destiny.

The key to living the Great Adventure and becoming "more than a conqueror" is to give your gifts to God. We can despise our beginnings, or we can learn from them. **Zechariah 4:10** says, "Do not despise these small beginnings, for the Lord rejoices to see the work begin." Give your today to God. Give your SHAPE, and all that you are, to Him — and you'll find delight in being used for your specific purpose.

Homework

◆ HOMEWORK · PART ONE

Take a Personality Profile Test

Take both profiles below, then ask a close friend whether they agree with the results. You may need to take each one a few times to get an accurate picture. Bring your results to the next gathering.

truity.com — Enneagram & DISC

◆ HOMEWORK · PART TWO

Write 100 things you like about yourself

This one is harder than it sounds — and that's the point. Fill in all one hundred. It is an act of receiving how "fearfully and wonderfully" God made you.

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M 2 · W E E K F I V E

Zeitgeist

Understanding our place in history — the spirit of the age, the foundations of truth, and the hope we are called to carry into it.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

What is truth?

WEEK FIVE

The battle for truth

ZEITGEIST · GERMAN

The spirit or mood of a particular culture as defined by their ideas and beliefs of the time.

ESTHER 4:14 · NIV

For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?

2 CORINTHIANS 4:4 · ESV

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

There is a battle for truth today. Pilate asked, "What is truth?" in **John 18:38**. That question still resonates. The John Thomas Scopes trial ran from July 10 to July 21, 1925, and though Scopes was found guilty of teaching evolution — which was against the law at the time — and ordered to pay a \$100 fine, the trial was more of a stage. What was really on trial was the fundamental Christian belief in Creation versus Science. Attorneys argued that there should be a separation of Church and State, and since schools are funded by the State, then they shouldn't be teaching fundamental Christian beliefs.

The consequence of that trial has been that evolution has been taught in our school systems and colleges for nearly 100 years. The predominant curriculums today teach that evolution is a fact, and not just an alternative belief to Creation.

WEEK FIVE

Cultural norms

We tell our children that Santa, the Easter Bunny, and the Tooth Fairy are real, and then expect them to decipher the difference between the Gospel and fairy tales. We've created a

paradox within our culture that now questions everything and lacks a foundational truth spectrum through which to accurately view God, Creation, and our world.

I'm not condemning anyone who plays the Santa game; I did it with my children when they were young. But looking back, I wish I hadn't. Santa has godlike qualities — he's benevolent and magically travels to every child's home across the world in one night. He also judges between "naughty" and "nice" children. Personally, I wish I had taught my children that Santa was a "game" we play, and not tried to convince them that he was real. I should have read the Word to them more. That should have been the priority in my home, not the American tradition of Santa or other "traditions."

DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9 · NIV

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is One. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

These words I am commanding you today are to be upon your hearts. And you shall teach them diligently to your children and speak of them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as reminders on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates.

Our job as men is to hold fast to the Word of God and pass it on to our children. There are plenty of competing voices for "truth" in the world today. The world will tell you that there are more than two binary sexes; the world denies that there is a God; or if it admits to His existence, it diminishes Him, His Creation, and denies the deity of Jesus. You must decide what you believe. You must decide what truth you pass on to your children. After taking inventory, I decided that what I knew about God was truth.

WEEK FIVE

Foundations of truth

There are many truths you could list out if you took the time. The list below is short, but a firm foundation to build a life upon. If we use these truths and use the Word of God as the litmus test for every motive, action, directive, and pursuit, then our lives will be calibrated to the will of God.

- There is one God, and He loves me.
- God is holy. He cannot lie. He cannot sin.
- Every word of the Bible is true.
- The Gospel of Jesus is true.
- Jesus is the only way to heaven. There is no other way.
- Heaven and Hell are real places.
- We are eternal creations, and we will spend eternity in either Heaven or Hell.

- We wrestle not against flesh and blood (**Ephesians 6:12**).
- God and Jesus are more powerful than all the powers of evil. Jesus has all authority on earth and in heaven.
- God desires good things for me.
- God is love. He loves me right where I am.
- Jesus died for all my sin. There is nothing He left undone when He gave His life for me. *All* my sins are forgiven — past, present, and future.
- There is a purpose to my life. My existence isn't by accident.
- The paramount purpose of my life is to help build God's eternal Kingdom.
- God has equipped me with talent and skills to help me fulfill that purpose.
- Everything bad that has ever happened to me wasn't God's design. Anger at God is misdirected anger.
- The fulcrum of the Gospel of Christ is forgiveness. I play a part in that, in that I must ask for and receive forgiveness from God.
- My required response to the forgiveness God has given me is to forgive others.
- What others may have meant for harm, God can use for good.
- The Holy Spirit is my teacher, my guide, my counselor, and my friend.

We will not fall for the deception the world sets forth as truth. We will not pursue worthless things that will pass away. Our hearts will pant for eternity. Our lives will have purpose and meaning. We aren't called to argue a person into heaven, but we are called to know the truth and be ready to share the good news that we have found in Christ (**1 Peter 3:15**).

WEEK FIVE

Zeitgeist beliefs

Here is a set of modern belief systems of which we must be cognizant. **Postmodernism** says: *I define truth. Each has his own truth. Your truth may not be my truth. Since I define truth, I therefore define God.*

17%

of adult Christians in the U.S. believe that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God.

28%

of Christians believe in the "New Spirituality" — that all people pray to the same god or spirit, no matter what name they use for that spiritual being.

27%

believe that meaning and purpose come from becoming one with all that is (pantheism).

32%

believe that if you do good, you will receive good; if you do bad, you will receive bad.

SOURCE · BARNA GROUP, 2018

The world is full of false religions, systems, ideologies, and beliefs. It is the plan of the enemy of our souls to confuse, to dilute, and to turn people away from God. Why? Because Lucifer has denied God, rejecting Him and His goodness and mercy. The enemy cannot love because he has no part of God in him, for God is love. When we think about the attributes of God, we can easily see that a creation that opposed God and has lost everything good God originally gave him is a depraved, hateful, scorned, and jealous creation. Lucifer is the opposite of God because God left him to his own depravity.

When the gates finally close and Hell is sealed for eternity, all hope, all love, all joy, all peace, and every good and perfect gift that God has given will be removed from those in Hell, and they'll be there for eternity without a trace of God. Not because God wants it that way — for it is His will that none should perish (**2 Peter 3:9**). People will spend eternity in Hell because they've rejected God's grace, rejected the Gospel and Jesus, and have decided to pay for their own sin.

We tend to resemble our parents physically, but our personality and our traits tend to resemble those around us. If we adopt an infant from India and bring her to America, she won't speak Hindi unless you speak it. She won't dress the way they do in India; she will dress the way you do. She will acclimate to her surroundings and become a part of her culture. As the world denies God and moves away from Him, it will come to resemble Him less and less. As that occurs, people will be drawn to our salt and light. God's goodness should shine through His people. Our job is to be the hands and feet of Jesus and to be His reflection in a world that needs Him.

WEEK FIVE

Zeitgeist fear

There is a pervasive undercurrent of fear in the world today. Fear seems to be a driver of a great deal of human behavior. According to the National Institute of Health, 31.1% of Americans will have an anxiety episode sometime in their lives. Yet Americans have a better per-capita standard of living than most people in the world, and there hasn't been a war fought on our soil since the Civil War.

What is the driving force behind the fear and anxiety that seems so pervasive in our society today? It's the lack of trust in God. Even Christians suffer from fear, but this shouldn't be the case. The words "Do not fear" appear 365 times in the Bible — one for every day of the year.

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.

The Bible addresses fear and tells us not to be afraid. As Christians, we know how the world ends. We should take comfort in knowing the endgame, while we're still living it out. Here are some of the current pervasive fears of the age:

- Famine
- Nuclear threat
- Global warming
- Crime
- Ozone depletion
- Natural disasters
- End of America
- Asteroids hitting the earth
- Global overpopulation
- Natural-resource depletion
- Terrorism
- Wars
- Economic crash
- End of the world

You may read this list and think, "Gee, thanks — I forgot what I was supposed to be worried about until you mentioned them." We have a good Father who loves us, cares for us, and provides for us. When we're in His will, nothing on this list should bother you. In fact, for God's children, there are promises we can run to.

PSALM 37:18–19 · NKJV

The Lord knows the days of the upright, and their inheritance shall be forever. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.

Furthermore, in **Psalm 138:8** the Bible says, "The LORD will work out his plans for my life — for your faithful love, O LORD, endures forever." God has a plan. Does that mean we won't suffer? Absolutely not. But it does mean that our suffering will not be in vain. Our suffering will be used to fulfill His purposes. Recall what we learned last week in **Proverbs 12:21**, which says that "no harm befalls the righteous" (Berean Study Bible). The original Hebrew word for "harm" is *aven*, which means "no meaningless, purposeless affliction." God's purposes are going to be fulfilled, and when we decide that we trust Him enough to allow His purpose to be fulfilled in our lives, we step into an eternal perspective. We understand that bad things will happen because we live in a fallen world, but these momentary and light troubles — as Paul describes them — aren't as painful, because our hope and our focus are on eternal things.

However, we shouldn't condemn or judge others for being afraid. It would be incredibly scary to live in a world where we had no hope. I can't imagine what they go through, not knowing or believing in God.

QUESTION

Do I trust God with my future?

WEEK FIVE

Anti-Zeitgeist perspective

We have a foundation of truth that we can build a life upon.

PSALM 1:1-3 · BSB

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, or set foot on the path of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the Law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, yielding its fruit in season, whose leaf does not wither, and who prospers in all he does.

We shouldn't be afraid of the future. We shouldn't be afraid of the times in which we live, for we were made for "such a time as this." Each and every one of us was specifically made for these days. God has a purpose for you, and one of them is to share the hope that you have. So many people are afraid today,

and you have the opportunity to share with them why you're at peace.

1 PETER 3:15 · NIV

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

The only way someone would ask you why we have hope is if we demonstrate hope.

WEEK FIVE

The prophesy

I know when Jesus is coming back. He told us in His Word. Many people say they know, but I know for certain. We all actually play a part in *when* Jesus will return. Here it is:

MATTHEW 24:14 · NIV

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Sorry to disappoint you if you thought I was going to toss a date out there. I don't know the date or the time. No one does. I only know that my job — and your job, if you'll take it on — is to spread the good news.

JOHN 3:16 · NKJV

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

God placed the desire to spread good news within you. We don't have to be coaxed to tell people about a great restaurant or movie; we shouldn't be ashamed to tell others about the hope that we have in Jesus.

WEEK FIVE

Week Five summary

The world's foundational beliefs aren't based in the Word. We have a foundational truth that guides us. We have a hope that the world does not have. We have not been given a spirit of fear.

Regardless of the economy or the geopolitical landscape, God is still sovereign. About 2,000 years ago, Pilate asked, "What is truth?" That question is more poignant than ever. We should be ready to give the world the good news — the hope that we have in the Gospel. We should live in such a way that others see hope in us.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

1. God did not give us a spirit of fear.
2. We are more than conquerors.
3. We are sons of the King.
4. The word "Gospel" means "good news" — the war is won.
5. We have a place in history.
6. Do not worry about the one who can kill the body (**Matthew 10:28**).
7. God wants to prosper us, not harm us (**Jeremiah 29:11**). There was the land of Goshen in the Exodus during the plagues of Egypt — the Israelites didn't feel the wrath of God, and Revelation states that the elect won't either.
8. The wealth of the wicked will be laid up for the righteous (**Proverbs 13:22**).
9. God appointed our leaders just as He appointed Caesar and Pilate (**John 19:11**).
10. We should be ready to share the hope that we have (**1 Peter 3:15**).

M 2 · W E E K S I X

Death, Forgiveness and Love

Three quintessential topics that shape every paradigm — and the only way out of the spiritual hospital bed.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Do I love like this?

WEEK SIX

Recap

DEUTERONOMY 26:9 · NIV*He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.*

Last week we discovered that we are not anachronistic. God made us for "such a time as this." We are created for a purpose, and that purpose is manifested in the advancement of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom is people. God's new temple resides in every person who accepts Him as Lord and Savior.

Your design reveals your destiny. You are not a mistake. The sum of all that has happened to you, both good and bad, can be used to help others. Sometimes, God uses our greatest hurts to set the trajectory of our lives. Our makeup may determine how we accomplish our purpose, but our heart determines our course. God will give you an affinity for a people, and there you will find your destiny. You may be called to help guide young people, or sit with the elderly in their last days. You may be called to walk with men through addiction or divorce, or you may be called to build a well in Rwanda. God will use your passions to help others if you'll allow Him.

Your purpose is to help build the Kingdom. The Kingdom is people. God didn't send His Son to die for a building. He sent Jesus to die for everyone because He loves us all, and it is His will that *none* should perish (2 Peter 3:9).

It is difficult to be a Kingdom builder while we are still in a spiritual hospital. The first four weeks, we discovered more about ourselves and asked the great existential question, "Why do we exist?" We looked introspectively, discovering our spiritual gifts and learning about our design. This week we will focus on three important topics: *death, forgiveness, and love*. Our view of these quintessential topics will shape our paradigm and chart our course. We need to have a healthy view of all three in order to move out of the spiritual hospital bed and start helping others.

WEEK SIX

Death

ROMANS 6:23 · NIV*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

We have sterilized death in our society. Since Abraham Lincoln was embalmed in 1865, Americans have embraced the embalming process, and today most Americans will be viewed in a casket looking more youthful and well-groomed than most of us are in our everyday lives. Furthermore, most Americans live in cities, far away from their food sources. We do not see the violence that occurs when something gives its life for our sustenance.

Hunters understand the process of death, and most of the hunters I know honor their kill by using every part of the animal that's possible and letting scavengers feed on the rest. I have looked into the eyes of an animal that I was about to kill for food and felt the mixed emotions of exhilaration, gratitude, and remorse. I have seen its light pass from it, while its blood slowly dripped into the soil. When you process meat for yourself, you understand that we eat food because something had to die. Even wheat is cut down, crushed, and ground into bread. Death is all around us. If you've ever farmed, you've seen the hundreds and thousands of rodents, snakes, birds, and reptiles that are killed in the cultivation of potatoes, corn, beets, soybeans, and fruit. Much of our sustenance is derived from death.

Death by violence, death by cold, death by starvation — these are the normal endings of the stately and beautiful creatures of the wilderness; ... life is hard and cruel for all the lower creatures, and for man also in what the sentimentalists call a "state of nature."

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

For many, getting back to nature is idealistic and lacks the veracity of its cruelty. But God promised us a land flowing with milk and honey. These two food items are the only two that stem from life. Nothing dies in the cultivation of milk and — if done correctly — honey. God's promised land is a land without death.

Yet we are conjoined to death. Our very baptism is a symbolic ritual of our old selves dying and the raising up of a new creation. Life and abundance happen on the side of obedience, but sin has a cost. The Old Testament demonstrated that sin must be paid for by blood. The priest put his hand on the head of the sacrificial animal, symbolically transferring his sin to the animal and then slaughtering it, sprinkling its blood on the altar. We no longer sacrifice animals for our sin, because Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice when He died on the cross. We weren't there to witness it. We did not see the cost of our sin.

Our society has pushed death into a well-manicured corner. Instead of embracing death as part of life, we do our best to ignore it. Psychology has shown that those who embrace death as part of life are better adapted to life and are even happier people. The Bhutanese are some of the happiest people on earth, yet their GDP is in the bottom third of the world. Making money isn't their focus; the focus for Bhutan over the past 40 years has been on the happiness of its citizens, the meaning of life, and their own human frailty. Their word for human frailty is *mitakpa*, which means "impermanent." Embracing the impermanence of life — understanding that it can end at any moment — helps them live with more

purpose. How would we live if we lived every day as if it were our last?

Stephen Covey said we should begin with the end in mind. We should think about the narrative of those standing around our coffin and live accordingly. We must receive the finality of death to understand that our sins have a cost. Jesus died because of our sin. Adamic sin altered the world, where once lion and lamb lived in harmony. Sin changed all of creation. A proper view of death will help us grieve appropriately for our sin.

GRIEVING CONSEQUENCES VS. SIN

Grieving our sin isn't grieving the consequence. If the banker gets caught embezzling and is facing prison time, he may feel regret — not necessarily because he has sorrow for his behavior, but because he longs for freedom. Grieving the sin means that you have sorrow for the way you once were, but that you've seen the goodness of God and that His way is what you desire.

TWO PATHS OF GRIEF

There are two ways we can grieve our sin. **2 Corinthians 7:10** says, "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death." Both Peter and Judas had sorrow for their sin. Judas threw the money he received back into the temple and then hanged himself. Peter went fishing and was restored by Jesus on the beach. Jesus broke the curse of the words Peter spoke; Judas snuffed out all chances of being restored. We can choose which path we take with our sin. It is good to see the consequence of our sin, to fear it, to understand it — but to be sorrowful for the sin itself is a matter of the heart.

WEEK SIX

Forgiveness

There is an ancient elixir in mythology called Nepenthe that helps a man forget his pain. But Nepenthe doesn't exist. There's nothing short of a lobotomy that can make you forget your pain. Our natural response to pain is to avoid it. God gave us the ability to feel all types of pain in order to protect us. He gave us our memories to help us gain wisdom. Pain is essential to our growth and to keeping us from repeating mistakes.

Forgiveness is not forgetting. Forgiveness is not condoning injustice. Forgiveness is not reconciliation. Forgiveness is letting go.

To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.

LEWIS B. SMEDES

That is freedom. **John 8:36** says, "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." You've been set free by the only One who can set you free.

The fulcrum of the Gospel is forgiveness. Christ paid the price for our sin through His death and resurrection. We cannot approach a holy God unless we are righteous — and none of us are righteous. **Romans 3:23** says, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Yet His blood covers us, so that God can look upon us, love us, and see us as righteous. **Hebrews 10:19** says, "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus..." God has freely forgiven us of our sins. The death required has been satisfied. Jesus paid the price. Our debt is paid. We are forgiven — not only for the sins we committed up until the moment of salvation, but for every sin we have ever committed, ever will commit, and even ever thought of committing. God's grace is sufficient. He has paid it in full. When you die, there will be nothing for you to do except to saunter through the gates of Heaven knowing that Jesus paid the price.

However, we share in the responsibility of forgiveness. When Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, He said this line in what has become known as the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (**Matthew 6:12**). Clearly, Jesus is placing the responsibility of forgiving others on us. He further clarifies it in the following story:

MATTHEW 18:21–27 • NIV

²¹Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" ²²Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

²³Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. ²⁵Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

²⁶At this the servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' ²⁷The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt, and let him go.

MATTHEW 18:28–31 • NIV

²⁸But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. ²⁹His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.'

³⁰But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.

³¹When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

MATTHEW 18:32–35 · NIV

³²Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. ³³Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' ³⁴In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

³⁵This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

You play a role in your own forgiveness. It is essential for us to take inventory of all those we have wronged and those who have wronged us. We should constantly be self-assessing whether we harbor unforgiveness toward anyone.

A good litmus test for our hearts is found in the writings of King David:

PSALM 35:11–15 · NIV

Ruthless witnesses come forward; they question me on things I know nothing about. ¹²They repay me evil for good and leave me like one bereaved. ¹³Yet when they were ill, I put on sackcloth and humbled myself with fasting. When my prayers returned to me unanswered, ¹⁴I went about mourning as though for my friend or brother. I bowed my head in grief as though weeping for my mother. ¹⁵But when I stumbled, they gathered in glee; assailants gathered against me without my knowledge. They slandered me without ceasing.

David ran from Saul for sixteen years, yet never lifted his hand against the anointed of God. Saul was delivered twice into David's hands, yet David refused to kill Saul. When David went to live in the land of the Philistines — the very people who sent forth Goliath — the Philistine general said these words about him: "Is this not David, who was an officer of Saul king of Israel? He has already been with me for over a year, and from the day he left Saul until now, I have found no fault in him" (1 Samuel 29:3). David's own enemies could find no fault in him. He lived in a way that was beyond reproach. David was a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). David's life should be studied in order for us to become men after God's heart.

David was quick to forgive. He was quick to admit his wrongs. Like David, we must set down our unforgiveness — even that directed at ourselves. Do we mourn when bad things happen to those who belittle us, gossip about us, or hate us? Do we fast for our enemies? What a powerful concept. According to Psalm 35, we should. We are called to be light and to love our enemies, even as we love ourselves. What a difficult thing. I believe it's impossible without one key ingredient.

WEEK SIX

Love

I used to end the forgiveness lesson by asking the men in my small group to take inventory of those they need to forgive. We still need to do that — but there's one thing we must have in order to forgive others. *Love*.

Love may be the most misused word in our vocabulary. We say we "love" chocolate or that we "loved" a movie. We even say we love one another, but is our love limitless, or does it have boundaries? Do we really have an authentic love for others — the kind that God has for us? In Romans 12:9–21 we find thirty love commandments. These commandments are impossible to uphold without authentic, God-authored love:

ROMANS 12:9–13 · BSB

Love must be sincere. Detest what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Outdo yourselves in honoring one another. Do not let your zeal subside; keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, persistent in prayer. Share with the saints who are in need. Practice hospitality.

ROMANS 12:14–21 · BSB

Bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud but enjoy the company of the lowly. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Carefully consider what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible on your part, live at peace with everyone. Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but leave room for God's wrath. For it is written: "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, says the Lord."

On the contrary, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink. For in so doing, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

How does God love us?

ROMANS 8:38–39 · BSB

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ask yourself, "Do I love like this?" Is it possible for me to live out the thirty commandments given to me in Romans 12? I believe it is impossible for man, but with God all things are possible (**Matthew 19:26**). Remember the verse that says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (**John 14:15**)? Part of the "Freedom" curriculum written by Pastor Chris Hodges of Church of the Highlands teaches us that we're probably reading this verse with the wrong emphasis. Many focus on the "keeping" part of the verse and not on the "love" part. If we love God, we find it easy to keep His commandments. Our focus should be on loving God. Why is this important? Because true freedom comes through obedience. We are free in Christ, and we find joy in keeping His commandments when we love Him. Romans 12 becomes easy to accomplish when we focus on loving God.

How do we love God? How do we love at all? The mystery is solved in **1 John 4:19**: "We love because He first loved us."

We love, because. Because. He first loved us.

The revival at Asbury College started after one of their pastors taught on this passage. The message wasn't "turn or burn" or repent, but rather the message focused on receiving the authentic love of God. We can love authentically — as Christ loved us — only when we receive the beautiful, cleansing, edifying, pure, holy, unfettered, complete, and transformative love of Christ. The verse uses the condition "because." We love, *because*. He first loved us.

I ask you this question: Do you feel that God loves you? Do you feel right now the wonderful grace of His love? Can you close your eyes and feel His grace and forgiveness?

ZEPHANIAH 3:17 · NKJV

The LORD your God is among you; He is mighty to save. He will rejoice over you with gladness; He will quiet you with His love; He will rejoice over you with singing.

God loves you very much. He doesn't look upon your sin, nor is He trying to squash you like a bug. Many people believe that God is out to get them, or that He's playing human "Whack-a-Mole" with their lives. That's simply not true. God has a good plan for your life (**Jeremiah 29:11**). God adores you. Our approach to God determines how we love others. It is essential to being able to fulfill His commandments, to love, and to forgive.

Since forgiveness is our part — it is requisite to being forgiven — then we must be diligent in forgiving others. **Matthew 10:8** says, "Freely you have received; freely give." We have been forgiven much; therefore, we should forgive much. Your forgiveness is dependent on how you forgive.

WEEK SIX

Week Six summary

The wage of sin is death. A wage is something we've earned. Our sin — and even our sustenance — has a cost. God's desire is for you to live in a land full of milk and honey, a land where there is no death. However, since sin abounds, creation requires death to fulfill life.

When we focus on death, it helps us live our lives with better vision for what is truly important. The paramount in life, after our relationship with God, is our relationships with one another. Since those relationships are so essential, God wants us to freely forgive one another. We receive His forgiveness, and Jesus made it clear that God will forgive us in the same manner that we forgive others.

Forgiveness is a byproduct of love. We love others *because* Christ loved us first. When we receive His love, then we are able to love others, forgive others, and live with purpose.

M 2 · W E E K S E V E N

The Royal Priesthood

Your first calling is to your home. The duties of both royalty and priesthood are yours — and they are modeled by Christ Himself.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Why am I a husband and a father?

WEEK SEVEN

Recap

1 PETER 2:9 · NIV

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

PROVERBS 18:22 · NIV

He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the LORD.

We've been on a journey of discovery. We discovered that there's a problem with the worldly definition of manhood today, and we have set out to discover true, authentic, biblical manhood — what our role is, our calling, and our purpose in life. We started with our core design and makeup, and with the question "who" we are, understanding that design reveals purpose.

Hopefully we discovered more about "who" we are through our spiritual gifts, personality profile tests, and really being introspective with our hearts. Our heart, or our passions, matter — and what we love will often help determine our purpose.

We learned "when" we are by defining the zeitgeist or culture of the day and our roles within it. We also learned "how" we are to respond to our world, which is found in **1 John 4:19**: "We love because He first loved us." Our response to the world should be motivated and our actions interwoven by love. The thirty commands to love found in Romans 12 are impossible unless we first receive the love of God. It is the foundation of our walk.

This week, we will help discover our *why*. We live to leave a legacy. We live to leave the world a better place. God placed eternity inside of you (**Ecclesiastes 3:11**), and that longing is only fulfilled in the perpetuation of our species — through our families, our children, and discipleship. We have a deep longing to be remembered after we're gone. God placed that longing within you, and the first manifestation of it starts with our family: both the one we're born into and the one we make along our journey.

QUESTION

If your house was on fire and you could bring out one thing, what would it be?

WEEK SEVEN

Why we are

When God made the earth and everything in it, He said it was "good." Yet when He made man, He said it was *not* good for man to be alone (**Genesis 2:18**). We are designed for relationship — specifically, we are designed for covenant relationship. That is a deeper level of relationship, where two are one and are intertwined together with Christ as the head.

The family was the first church, and still is the microcosm church. If you were part of the westward expansion of the U.S. and you packed up your wagon full of supplies along with your family, when the Sabbath came, your church was wherever you were. That old frontiersman was the priest of his home, and you are still called to that priesthood. You're not only the priest — you're also a *royal* priest in covenant relationship with your wife.

Your first calling is to your home. That royal priesthood is a duty bestowed upon you from the moment you said, "I do." Therefore, the duties of both royalty and of priesthood are yours, and they're modeled by Christ Himself. God placed it in you to be the protector, provider, comforter, counselor, teacher, and vacation planner for your home. But have you accepted the duties of the royal priesthood? Let's outline them.

SIDEBAR ABOUT FAMILIES

Today, there are fewer and fewer traditional family units. Pew Research states that four in ten Americans have a stepparent, sibling, or half-sibling. No matter how functional or dysfunctional your family was, when you start your own family you get to choose the template by which your family will live. I hope and pray that you'll choose the foundation that the mighty warrior Joshua chose:

JOSHUA 24:15 · NIV

But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.

The family that raised you might have served the god of alcohol or addiction. They may have served the god of favoritism or pride. But you get to choose your family's spiritual lineage. It's your choice. No matter what happened to you in the past, you get to choose this day whom you will serve. Don't let your parents' failures keep you from the blessing of having your own spiritually thriving family.

WEEK SEVEN

Royal priestly role

As priests, we are to mediate, to pardon, to bless, and to guide our family toward God. We are to pray for and with our families. We are to fast for them, lead them, guide them, and protect them — both away from danger and evil, and toward the light of Christ. We teach the law to our children; we teach them to honor what is holy and what is sacred.

The Levitical priesthood of Aaron had a process of consecration for the altar and all its utensils. They offered sacrifices for their people, and once a year they entered the Holy of Holies to speak to God directly. They established ebezers so that generations would remember the things that God had done for them. Today, we can enter the throne room of heaven and speak to God ourselves. We need no intercessor. **Hebrews 4:16** says, "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

Our role is similar, however, to Aaron's — if not in form, at least in function. We do not sacrifice animals anymore; Jesus was our ultimate sacrifice. We do not have to burn incense night and day; instead we are to pray without ceasing (**1 Thessalonians 5:17**) for our family. We are to lead our family to the cross. Jesus is the only way. There is none other. **John 14:6** says, "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" We are to lead our families to the only One who can save them. Anything short of this is eternal failure. Our fervent, paramount prayer should be for the salvation of our children. Who will pray for your children if not you? Who will fast for our children if we do not fast?

This is our solemn duty. If we say we love our families and lead them to love worldly pleasures and modern culture and to forsake the cross of Christ, we have led our children to the gates of Hell. May it not be so. There is still time to change course. It doesn't matter how old your children are; today, put on the cloak of the royal priesthood and lead your children to the cross. No matter the cost, lead them. If you love them, lead them to Jesus.

DEFINITION · EBENEZER

A stone of help and remembrance.

- Mediator
- Teacher
- Offer sacrifice on behalf of
- Establisher of the ebenezer
- Intercessor
- Offer worship on behalf of
- Reminder of the sacred
- Institution of holiness

QUESTION

Do you have an ebenezer in your family?

WEEK SEVEN

Royal role

We are not just the priest — we are the *royal* priest. Therefore, we take on the role of both priest and king over our home. So if we are royalty of the Kingdom that will never fail, our office, our position, is permanent. Our royalty is irrevocable. Your position as husband and father is irrevocable. You are a royal priest. The only one who can lay that down is you. What does a king do for his people?

- Vision caster
- Provider
- Builder
- Protector
- Leader
- Teacher

The roles of a king are as variant as the roles of the priest. **Proverbs 29:18** says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he" (KJV). We are — and should be — casting a vision for our family. We should have spiritual, financial, relational, educational, health, and recreational goals established for our families. Many of us plan vacations better than we plan our lives.

The weight of our royal priestly role should be setting in by now. Being a husband and a father is serious business and takes planning. We can't do it alone. We need the help of other successful royal priests in our circle, and we need wisdom, endurance, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

16% of the 1979 Harvard graduating class reported having goals.

3% had goals *and* a written plan to reach them.

10× the income earned by that 3% — combined — compared to the remaining 97% of the class.

SOURCE · HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL, 1979–1989 STUDY

Having a written plan or set of goals for your family is essential. Leaders lead with vision. We understand the role of protector, because if anyone broke into your house they'd likely have to go through you to get to your children. We know that we are called to provide because **1 Timothy 5:8** says, "Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." That speaks for itself. We are called to honorable and godly work. I've seen several families where the dad stays home these days, and on the outside things seem okay, but as I counsel these men I find them to be broken inside. Their manhood is in breach, and their wives are the leaders of their homes. This isn't the paradigm God designed for us.*

We are also called to be the leaders, builders, and teachers of our homes. Kings advance the technology of their kingdoms, build new roads, acquire new territories, and establish the educational institutions of a society. Earthly kingdoms throughout history are known for their technological advancements. The Phoenicians invented the alphabet; the Romans built roads; the Greeks established the sophists to rule their land. Kingdoms are known for justice or harshness. We use the word "draconian" because Draco the king established that every law broken required death. You establish the rule of law in your home. You establish what is honored, what is holy, and what is permissible.

** Every situation is different. If you are called to stay at home with your children for a season and you've heard from God, then your duty is to listen to God's voice.*

WEEK SEVEN

The weight

You might be saying to yourself right now, "Wow, I didn't know that my role at home was so heavy or difficult." I'm glad you're seeing that it isn't light and easy — but Jesus modeled the role for us, so that we have a guide.

We don't have to plow the field on our own. Jesus said in **Matthew 11:30**, "My yoke is easy, my burden is light." He doesn't put anything on you that you can't manage, and the verse implies that He's carrying the weight along with you. The weight isn't too heavy when we manage it with Christ — but it is very heavy if we try to pull it with our own ability. Our modeled example is to look at Christ and how He modeled the royal priesthood with His bride, the Church.

WEEK SEVEN

Christ loved the Church

EPHESIANS 5:25 · NIV*Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.***QUESTION****How did Jesus treat His church?**

GIVING OURSELVES

What does it mean that He "gave himself up for her"? I believe Paul is referring to the cross. Jesus loved the Church so much that He went to the cross for her. Why did Jesus go to the cross? So that we may be reconciled to Him. Jesus made the initiative in reconciliation even though man was first sinful. **Romans 5:8** says, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

This is difficult to do in a relationship. This means that *we're the initiators of reconciliation*. When

there's an argument — and there's sure to be arguments — we should be the first to initiate making up.

QUESTION

What does giving yourself mean to you?

FOUR EASY RULES FOR ARGUING

- ① **Never bring up past arguments.** Once a disagreement is behind you, don't bring it up again. There's no keeping score. Let the past be the past. (That also means to watch your tongue and make sure you don't say something that could be damaging to your wife.)
- ② **Don't sleep on it.** Don't give the devil a foothold into your marriage. If you're angry, stay up and work it through until one of you gets tired and decides to make up. Make a commitment to pray before you go to bed every night. It's difficult to sincerely pray for someone while you're angry.
- ③ **The "D" word is off limits.** If you have an old dictionary on the shelf, take a Sharpie and blot out two words that should be out of your vocabulary. *Impossible* — because nothing is impossible with God. *Divorce* — because no matter what, you're making it through. Don't let divorce be an option. If you have divorce in your family, break the curse of divorce by making a covenant with your wife. (Technically, if she's your wife, you are already in covenant.)
- ④ **Listen.** Stop arguing and listen to what your wife is saying. Many arguments continue when one person doesn't feel respected or heard. Stop defending yourself for a moment and really listen to what she's saying. Put yourself in her shoes. Try to understand what she's saying by viewing the argument from her perspective. She will respect you and honor you more if you do this, even if you agree to disagree.

We teach what we know; we duplicate what we are.

JOHN MAXWELL

GUIDE HER SPIRITUALLY

JOHN 17:20–23 · NIV

²⁰My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²²I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one — ²³I in them and you in me — so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Your marriage is a light to others. The family really is the first church. If the outside world were peering into your family, would they see unity? Who is responsible for that unity? Who is responsible for unity within a church — the congregation or the priest? Again, who is responsible for unity in a kingdom — the king or his subjects? Jesus talks about unity within the Church, and there's no unity within the Church if our marriages are fractured.

As men, we must fight for our marriages by having the courage to step out there, be vulnerable to our wives, be humble with them, love them — even more than they love us if necessary — and pray over them. Our role is difficult, and probably impossible by worldly standards. It is not the easiest role. Many will quote that our wives are supposed to submit to us, and that may be true — but a wife will not follow someone who is not spiritually in line with Christ for long. God placed the desire for justice and a right royal priesthood within your wife. She is looking to honor righteousness. She even desires to serve it, but it must be modeled for her to naturally follow her royal priest. If the royal priest is corrupt, she will rebel.

Man has long studied the form of a woman, but has neglected her soul.

ROBERT BLY

SERVE WITH HUMILITY

Philippians 2:8 says, "And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross!" Humility isn't just a good idea, it's a command. After Jesus washed His disciples' feet, He said this:

JOHN 13:12–15 · NIV

¹²When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. ¹³"You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."

When you put your family's needs before yours, honor and love them, they will follow your lead. We defeat the enemy with the opposing spirit. When we see pride, we demonstrate humility. When we see greed, we are generous. When we see anger, we demonstrate peace. Adopt this practice in your home and watch the change occur.

GIVE HER YOUR BODY

Our bodies aren't our own. **1 Corinthians 7:4** says, "The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife." This isn't just about sex, men — it's about the way we take care of ourselves, as well.

- How we eat.
- How we keep our health.
- How we sleep.
- How we honor the Sabbath.

Your body is hers, and vice versa. Do you eat like your body is hers? Are you grooming yourself or taking care of yourself the way she would want? Are you living in a way that you'll be able to take care of her when you're eighty-five and not just when you're fifty-five? Jesus freely gave His body to the Church. If we are to love our wives as Christ loved the Church, then we are also to give our bodies to our wives as Christ gave His body for the Church. **1 Corinthians 11:24** says, "and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you.'"

QUESTION

Jesus gave us His physical body. What does that mean for us?

WEEK SEVEN

The practical game plan

Do you know your wife's love languages? Years ago, Gary Chapman wrote a powerful little book called *The Five Love Languages*, and it outlined the different ways we receive love. The

book is profound and has had a huge impact on marriages across the world. The author submits that we all receive love in five different ways, and there is one way that makes us feel more loved than the others. That is our personal love language.

- ◆ Physical Touch
- ◆ Gifts
- ◆ Words of Affirmation
- ◆ Time
- ◆ Acts of Service

Chapman submits that we all have one or two of the love languages that are dominant. If you don't know your wife's love language, ask her. If she doesn't know, take the test together. It will be a great bonding experience, and I highly recommend you read the book together as a couple. It has helped Sara and me get in tune with each other, and we've laughed a lot about each other's love languages over the years.

TAKE THE ASSESSMENT

Take the Five Love Languages quiz together as a couple.

5lovelanguages.com

If we are to love our wives as Christ loved the Church, let's be intentional about that love. If you were playing defense against a football team that liked to run the ball between the tackles a lot, you'd stack the box and walk those linebackers up closer so that you could win the game. That's a winning strategy for a game; we need a winning strategy for our wife's heart.

PHYSICAL TOUCH

Physical touch is probably easier for most guys than some of the others on this list because it's usually a predominant love language for men. However, there is physical touch that is intimate but doesn't have to be sexual. If your wife's love language is physical touch, initiate contact with her that is non-sexual, at first.

TIME

Go on a date with your wife. I have the hardest time putting my phone down sometimes, but lately we've decided on a digital sunset. That means after 9 p.m., I put my phone down, look over at Sara, and say, "This is your time now." I'm guilty of being so lost in the day, answering calls, texts, and emails, that I hardly ever concentrate on just one thing at a time. We try to say we are multitasking, but science has proven that we can only focus on one thing at a time.

When you spend time with your family, be intentional. Be there in the moment. Don't let distractions invade your space. That's why having a digital sunset or a box to place phones on the table is a healthy

way to say to your family, "You're important." Carve out your time and push away the rest of the world for a little while. Having a meal together is another great way to spend quality time with your wife and family. The table was modeled by Jesus. There is power in breaking bread together and just enjoying each other's company. No matter your family dynamic, be intentional enough with time that you may even put it on the family calendar. Do this consistently. Not just with your wife, but also with your children. **Psalm 90:12** says, "Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." No one wishes they had spent more time on the golf course when they're on their death bed. Spend more time with the ones you love.

GIFTS

Ephesians 4 says that Christ gave gifts to the Church. He gave freely and abundantly. There is nothing lacking in God's economy. Even if your wife's love language isn't gifts, I encourage you to take good notes about the things your wife likes and surprise her as often as your budget allows. Investing in your relationship in this way will demonstrate to your wife that you love her and put her above your own needs. Don't come home with a new set of golf clubs and then complain when your wife buys a new pair of shoes or has a spa day. When you put your wife above your own wants or desires, your marriage will begin to thrive.

ACTS OF SERVICE

One of the most beautiful things you can do is to demonstrate to your family how to serve them. Jesus washed the feet of His disciples. How can you wash the feet of those in your family? Pray about ways you may demonstrate acts of service to your family. You'll be teaching them more than you know when you submit to this principle. You'll also place inside of them a sense of honor for you.

- Wash the dishes.
- Make her favorite dinner.
- Lighten her load.
- Fill up her car with gas.
- Fold her clothes.

WORDS OF AFFIRMATION

Everyone needs encouragement. Your wife longs to hear that she is beautiful. She desires to be desired by you. She has a longing to feel wanted and needed by her husband. This is one reason why pornography is so detrimental to a marriage. When you satisfy your lusts with the images of other women, it diminishes the gift of a wife that you have.

1 PETER 3:7 · NIV

Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

*If you have a problem with pornography, please ask for help. There is no condemnation for those of us who are in Christ Jesus (**Romans 8:1**). Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed; the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective (**James 5:16**). God can heal you of this brokenness. Text HELP to 251.648.7580 — we will pray for you and help you through the process of healing.*

WEEK SEVEN

Litmus tests

Two short self-checks before this week's homework — a measure of how you love what your wife loves, and a measure of the boundaries that protect your marriage.

WIFE-LOVE LITMUS TEST — DO I LOVE WHAT MY WIFE LOVES?

- Her children
- Her dreams
- Her hobbies
- Her family
- Her faith

BOUNDARIES LITMUS TEST

- Do I have one-on-one lunch with other women?
- Do I wear my ring?
- Do I have any of my exes on social media?
- Do I have phone numbers in my phone of anyone I shouldn't?
- Does my wife have all my passwords?
- Do I have an accountability partner (*not* your wife)?

Homework

◆ HOMEWORK

Write a letter to your father

Even if your dad has passed away, even if you and your dad never speak, even if you haven't heard from your dad in years — write the letter.

Let these prompts guide what you say:

- What do you need to forgive?
- What needs to be forgiven?
- What's been left unsaid?
- What would you say to him if this were your last conversation?
- How can you honor him?

Dear Dad,

[illegible]

(continued)

M 2 · W E E K E I G H T

Our Father and Our father

Our approach to God shapes every other relationship — and every personality trait of the Father is the foundation of what an earthly father should be.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

How do I see God?

WEEK EIGHT

Recap

As Millennium Men, we are beginning to understand our makeup better. God made us with unique talents and gifts. Our spiritual design, our personality, our parents, and our genetic makeup weren't an accident. God made them all, and nothing that has happened to you is a surprise to God.

JEREMIAH 1:5 · NIV

Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.

God wasn't surprised that you were born into your family. No matter how functional or dysfunctional your family was, God placed you in them for a reason. It could be that you were made to bring salvation to them. You might be the light in a very dark place. Perhaps you were born into godly, loving parents who modeled Christ in all they did — what a blessing if that is the case.

Unfortunately, today, many families are fractured and the relationships within them are strained. This seems especially true when it comes to the relationships we have with our biological fathers. American society has eschewed the practice of a rite of passage. I believe that practice leaves men searching for significance in unhealthy ways. We long to receive the blessing and approval of our biological fathers because he is the symbol to us of our Heavenly Father. *Every personality trait of God found in Psalm 23, every name of God, is the foundational viewpoint of what a father should be for his children.* Many men are broken today because they have a longing to belong, to be loved, and to be accepted by their biological fathers.

WEEK EIGHT

Part I · Our approach to God

I had approached God, or my idea of God, without love, without awe, even without fear. He was, in my mental picture of this miracle, to appear neither as Savior nor as Judge, but merely as a magician; and when He had done what was required of Him I supposed He would simply — well, go away.

C. S. LEWIS

Our view of God is crucial. Do you view God as a magician, a judge, or a Savior?

◆ Magician

◆ Judge

◆ Savior

MAGICIAN

What do you think of when you think of God? What is God's personality like? Are you like Lewis and approach Him as a magician — someone who should perform at your bequest and then slink away after He has obeyed you? Do you pray to God only when you need Him for a small miracle? Perhaps you pray when you receive an unexpected bill or when your child becomes sick. Do you expect God to jump at the sound of your voice when in need? This is approaching God as a magician. This viewpoint of God is one of idolatry. It places sovereignty in our hands, rather than God's. Jesus said we should pray like this in **Matthew 6:10**: "your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Every prayer we pray should honor the sovereignty of God and the probability that His will may be different from ours. Jesus went to the cross even though He didn't want to. The Christian walk is not an easy one. It is not for the faint of heart; it is for real men. We are called to carry a cross of our own.

JUDGE

Do you approach God as a mighty judge who is waiting for you to get out of line? This was my approach to God for many years. I felt like the woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. I felt surrounded by my accusers with no way out. I knew that I was a sinner, and I know that I am one now. However, today, I know that God's mercy never fails and that He has provided Jesus as my sacrificial Lamb, who has paid for my sins — past, present, and future. There will be a time when God will judge everyone, but at this time, I am like the woman caught in my sin, but with a loving Savior.

JOHN 8:10–11 · NASB

Straightening up, Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more."

SAVIOR

Do you see Him as your Savior? Do you see Him as the only One who could pay the price for your sin? **John 3:16** says, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Just as the Israelites did in the desert, we look to the cross for our salvation. Jesus paid the price for our sins. He said it all when He said, "It is finished" (**John 19:30**), then hung His head and gave up His spirit.

There is no sin that cannot be forgiven. There is nothing in your past that cannot be redeemed. When we view God as our Savior, we accept with humility that our own goodness cannot bring salvation. There is nothing we can *do* to get to God. **Ephesians 2:8** says, "For it is by grace you have been saved,

through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God." God's grace is a gift that you must receive. There is nothing we can do to earn it. The greatest and most righteous man is still far from God, lost and destined for an eternity apart from Him. **Romans 3:10** says, "There is no one righteous, not even one."

If every man, woman, and child who had ever lived was standing on the sand at South Mission Beach in San Diego, and asked to swim to Hawaii, how far would the greatest athlete that ever lived get before he drowned? I don't know — but whoever that is would still drown. None of us can swim to Hawaii from San Diego. Only Jesus made the bridge between us and God. **John 14:6** says, "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" Everyone needs a Savior. And the only Savior is Jesus.

WEEK EIGHT

Why do bad things happen to good people?

God is not the source of our pain. We have an enemy that is bent on destroying us. He hates everything God loves, and he hates you because you bear your Father's image. Unfortunately, many times our suffering comes from those we love and trust the most.

Hurt people hurt people.

We all come from a long lineage of brokenness. Every person has a story of soul-crushing pain, of love, of loss, and of hope. God's love is interwoven into all our stories if we look closely enough. No matter how broken, no matter how painful, God provides comfort, and He reveals Himself through our most trying moments. He was there in the fiery furnace for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He was in the lion's den with Daniel. He was in the belly of the whale with Jonah. And He was with you at your darkest hour.

PSALM 56:8 • NLT

You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book.

We understand that we live in a fallen world. God doesn't plan mass shootings or wars. Those senseless acts are inspired by the enemy. They weren't and aren't God's plan. All injustice is contrary to God's holy nature. Every injustice that has ever happened to you or your family isn't from God, nor was it sanctioned by God. God gave mankind free will, and unfortunately that free will can lead to human actions resulting in tragedy. There is no racism or discrimination that is from God. God made every man in His image. He made different cultures and races because He is creative and loves diversity, just as we

see in nature that not every beach or tree is the same. God is creative, and His creative nature is found in His most precious creation — His people.

QUESTION 1

Is there any pain in my past that I've used to define myself?

QUESTION 2

Does my past pain influence how I see God?

WEEK EIGHT

Who is God?

The Israelites had to completely rely on God and His power to defeat the Egyptians and then eventually take the Promised Land. They learned to call on God in their darkest hour, and God never failed to deliver them as long as they were following Him. Knowing and understanding the Hebrew terms for God can really help us get to know our Heavenly Father.

Psalm 23 contains what is called a *remez* in Scripture. Read in the original Hebrew, Psalm 23 becomes a deep introspection into the personality and traits of our Father.

DEFINITION · REMEZ

A hidden treasure or glorious find below the surface, behind the words.

Read Psalm 23 aloud, using and defining the names of God that King David uses. Feel the names of God resonate with your spirit as you speak them aloud. Own the names of God by saying "my" and then His specific name. **Psalm 46:1** says, "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble." If we view God through His names and allow these names to be our "Bat-Signal" to God, He will listen, heal, comfort, and lead us when we cry out to Him.

God is *not* trying to distance Himself from you, judge you, or make your life harder. He loves you. He sent His own Son to die in your place. What kind of love is that? That is not love with boundaries; that is total and complete love. That is the love of a Father who inspired Paul to write these words:

ROMANS 8:38–39 · NIV

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Proverbs 18:10 says, "The name of the LORD is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe." We can call on the names of our God in times of trouble. David ran for his life from Saul for years. His own men turned on him, and his sons betrayed him. Through the Psalms we can see him battle almost every human emotion, but consistently turn back to God for grace, redemption, and strength. His love for God never wavered, and I believe that attribute was why God called him "a man after my own heart" (**1 Samuel 13:14**).

THE NAMES OF GOD IN PSALM 23

Jehovah-Raah — The LORD, my Shepherd — *"The LORD is my shepherd"* (v. 1).

Jehovah-Jireh — The LORD, my Provider — *"I shall not want"* (v. 1).

Jehovah-Shalom — The LORD, my Peace — *"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters"* (v. 2).

Jehovah-Rophe — The LORD, my Healer — *"He restoreth my soul"* (v. 3).

Jehovah-Tsidkenu — The LORD of Righteousness — *"He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake"* (v. 3).

Jehovah-Shama — The LORD is Present — *"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil: for thou art with me"* (v. 4).

Jehovah-Ezer — The LORD, my Help — *"Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me"* (v. 4).

Jehovah-Nissi — The LORD, my Standard of Victory — *"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies"* (v. 5).

Jehovah-M'Kaddesh — The LORD, my Holiness and Sanctification — *"Thou anointest my head with oil"* (v. 5).

Jehovah-Manah — The LORD, my Portion — *"My cup runneth over"* (v. 5).

Jehovah-Cheleq — The LORD, my Inheritance — *"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever"* (v. 6).

WEEK EIGHT

Healthy view, healthy relationships

To have healthy human relationships, we must have a right view and relationship with God. I'll go even further and say that to have a healthy self-worth, we need to know God and know His nature. To know God, we must study His nature. We can discover God's nature through His creation, through His Word, and through His character.

THROUGH CREATION

Romans 1:20 says, "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse." When we think of the vastness, beauty, detail, artistry, and precision of the universe, we can begin to understand — in its limited way, the created can possibly understand its Creator.

My mind cannot conceive the wonderful being and nature of God, but it can conceive enough of God to know that He is faithful, righteous, holy, and true. I liken my understanding of God to my dog's understanding of the combustion engine. My dog sees me get into my car and drive away almost every day. He understands that a vehicle takes me away and brings me home. But I could never get him to look at the schematics of the engine of my car with any comprehension. He would never understand it, no matter how great the teacher or extensive the class. Likewise, I cannot understand the mind of my Creator. But in my limited capacity, I can understand enough to know that He is for me, that He loves me, and that He made me to worship Him.

GOD STILL SPEAKS THROUGH CREATION**PSALM 19:1-4 · NIV**

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.

This is how the Magi found Jesus lying in a manger, and this is how those who have never heard the name of Jesus find God today. God has not forgotten the lowly or those in the darkest jungles. God speaks to them through His nature because He loves everyone. He has made a path of salvation to all. There are missionaries who have gone to tribes and told them about Jesus, and they have responded, "So that is His name? We knew Him all along, but we never knew His name."

THROUGH HIS WORD

God's Word has been studied for centuries. It is a comfort to me that so many men have studied the Word of God and believe in it. The Bible was written by at least 35 different authors on three separate continents, across at least fifteen centuries. There are many scholars who have tried to find errors and refute the Word of God, but none have been successful. In 1980, Lee Strobel was a writer for the *Chicago Sun*. His wife had recently converted to Christianity, and as an atheist, he set out to disprove Christianity. He concluded that Jesus was either a liar, a lunatic, or He was Lord. Through his research, he converted to Christianity and wrote the book *The Case for Christ*.

When we read the Word of God, it penetrates our soul.

HEBREWS 4:12 · NIV

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

God's Word is unchanging and unfailing because God's nature is unchanging and unfailing. **Mark 13:31** says, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." God doesn't change with the times, nor is He old-fashioned. The times and culture may change — the *New York Times* might have a headline that says, "God is Dead" — but God is very much alive, and He has revealed Himself to us through His Word. If we want to understand more of who our Father is, we just need to study His Word.

THROUGH HIS NATURE

God's nature is love. When Adam broke the law, he was removed from the Garden of Eden and therefore removed from God's presence. The Bible tells the story of God's desire to reconcile with the sons of Adam. He proved to the Israelites that He would forgive them over and over and over, even after they continually grumbled and pursued other gods. In the same way, God desires reconciliation with you. **Romans 5:8** says, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." This is not the nature of a God who wants to play Whack-A-Mole with His creation. This is the nature of a loving God who pursued His people and forgave them, even as they sent Him to the cross. Jesus demonstrated His nature while He was being tortured to death:

LUKE 23:34 · NIV

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

Knowing and understanding the nature of God — His boundless love, His holiness, and the fact that He desires a true, intimate relationship with you — is the key to healthy self-worth and healthy relationships. And the same God that loves you requires you to forgive others, as He has forgiven you.

MATTHEW 5:43–44 · NIV

You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

We can begin by forgiving our fathers.

WEEK EIGHT

Part II · The rite of passage

The only command we have with a promise is the fifth commandment, found in **Exodus 20:12**: "Honor your father and mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you."

There are no contingencies for honoring our father and mother. Whether they are just and righteous, or unjust and wicked, God says that we must honor our father and mother. This is a command, not a suggestion. We must honor our father and mother, no matter the circumstance. How do we honor our parents?

DEFINITION · HONOR

To regard or treat with admiration or respect.

You may find it difficult to honor your parents, but you must. If you don't know how to do that specifically, start by praying for God to show you how. If they have passed away, honor them by forgiving them and try to remember their good qualities instead of focusing on their mistakes.

Forgiving is not reconciliation. It takes two to reconcile, and you should pray about whether you should do so if there is a breach in your relationship. However, you must forgive your father as God has forgiven you. He may have been wrong, but *you* are going to be responsible for *your* response to injustice one day before God. Focus instead on the positive things your biological father gave you. When we shift our focus to gratitude, it helps us forgive.

REFLECT

Write down three things you admire — or are grateful for — about your biological father.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Many of us did not get affirmed by our biological fathers. We are like a loose wire looking for a connection. When we connect with Christ, He replaces our old self with a new creation. We become His children. We are not orphans or fatherless; we belong to Him. However, there remains a longing to hear affirming words from our biological dads. I don't believe this longing ever leaves us. The only way to replace it is to define our lives through the eyes of God, rather than the eyes of man.

Jesus renamed Simon to Peter. He gave Peter the name which means "rock," rather than "reed." It was a father that bestowed a name within their culture. Jesus, in a sense, was taking a fatherly role over Peter. Peter is the foundation of the Church and an example of how God forgives and restores. Jesus, as an act of His Father, while fully God and man, also takes ownership of each one of us. God is now our Father. We no longer have to seek the affirmation of broken, sinful men; we can live for the One who created us. This is fulfillment. Sonship of our Heavenly Father brings peace, puts our spirits and souls in proper order, and restores us to Him.

OBEDIENCE IS THE ANSWER

Just as in a relationship with our parents, we are reconciled to God through obedience. God knows we love Him through our obedience. We love, therefore we obey. **John 14:15** says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." We emphasize the word *love* over *keep*, because it precedes the keeping. We cannot keep the commandments without first loving God. Loving God is the key. When we love God and keep His commandments, we have our longing for affirmation fulfilled. God modeled the kind of affirmation He gives to His children by affirming Jesus at His baptism.

MATTHEW 3:17 · ESV*This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.*

I believe that every man longs to hear these words from his dad. Unfortunately, many of us did not hear these words, and worse, we heard words that were not life-giving. I am sorry if you did not hear the life-giving words that God wanted you to hear from your earthly father. That is why we must forgive and understand that hurt people hurt people. The good news is that the cycle of hurt can end with you. You can start by forgiving your earthly father if there is anything you've held against him.

BAR MITZVAH

The Jewish tradition takes a boy at thirteen and has his elders speak blessings over him, lay hands on him, and endow him with manhood. Westerners do not understand that the Hebrew words "Bar" and "Mitzvah" literally mean "*son under the Law*." A man is no longer lawless, but responsible for God's law on his own accord. There were 613 laws in the first five books of the Bible, most of them found in Deuteronomy and Leviticus. The boy studied the law from childhood, so that he knew what he was responsible for when he became a man.

This is the rite of passage that we all must confer onto our sons and daughters. There is a deep desire for each of us to belong, as God modeled by saying, "This is my Son." There is a deep desire for each of us to be loved, wholly and completely, as God said to Jesus, "whom I love." And we all desire to be honored by our parents, especially our fathers, as God modeled to Jesus when He said, "with whom I am well pleased" (**Matthew 3:17**). Without this endowment ceremony, boys will search for manhood in unhealthy places for much of their lives. They will follow those flawed men and flawed masculinity, seeking something that only God and their father can fulfill.

Teach your sons and daughters the law of God and bless them. Be careful what you speak over them. Pray often over them and draw out of them their God-given giftings. We can decide, right now, to raise up a generation of men under the banner of our Father — with healthy hearts, healthy masculinity, and a sense of belonging, of being loved, and of knowing that we are proud of them. Should we bring a Bar Mitzvah to the Christian community? I believe we should. I believe it would help us all heal and confer a sense of direction upon us.

M 2 · W E E K N I N E

Achilles Heel

The fault or flaw that could cause you to fall — and the way out God has already provided. Seven steps to freedom.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

What is my Achilles heel?

WEEK NINE

Achilles heel

DEFINITION · ACHILLES HEEL

A fault or flaw that causes — or could cause — something or someone to fail.

If we're honest, we all have an Achilles heel. If all the world's temptation was on a table before us, none of us would be able to walk away without the tentacles of temptation wrapping around us. All of us have — or had — an Achilles heel: drugs, alcohol, food, lust, pornography, pride, greed, anger, unforgiveness, cowardice, gossip...

Everyone has sinned. None of us can boast in his own righteousness. Our righteousness comes through grace from Him and Him alone (**Ephesians 2:8–9**). Since we all have sinned and none of us are immune to temptation, we should all be sober and aware that there is a threat in the world today that is destroying men and families. Today, many men I know are enslaved to sin and believe there is no hope to change. Men, this is not true. There is a way out.

Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU

Rousseau was talking about the lack of a social contract through governance, but he had no idea how right he was, spiritually. Hallelujah — Jesus has paid the price for all of us to be free; and yet, everywhere, man is in the bondage of sin and what many call "addiction."

Temptation is not addiction. The term "addiction" implies a powerlessness to change. However, if ISIS had a knife to their throat, would they pick up the bottle and drink it? Would they click on the image? Would they light up and smoke it? Would they pop it? We know people aren't powerless, because they can control their sinfulness *sometimes*. We don't often see people lighting up on an airplane because there are fines and other repercussions. They may have a proclivity to nicotine. They may really like it a lot. Are they powerless? I don't believe so.

I personally have struggled with alcohol and other temptations in my life, and I succumbed to them over and over until God set me free. I want that freedom for you — but the first step in your freedom is to admit this:

I'm not powerless. I have a choice.

WEEK NINE

My body, my choice

God has made us caretakers of our earthly body. The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and should be cared for as we would care for a physical church building. We wouldn't allow vandals to come in and spray-paint the sanctuary, turn over the pews, and desecrate the altar — so why would we allow ourselves to do the same thing to our own bodies? This isn't about being legalistic; it's about being good stewards of what God has given us charge over.

Many are slaves to sin, transgression, and iniquity. *Sin, transgressions, and iniquities rob us of blessing, separate us from God, and keep us from living our best lives.* **Isaiah 59:2** says, "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear." The Hebrew words for *transgressions* and *iniquities* are deeper, habitual, and willful sins. **Isaiah 53:5** says that "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities." Wounds and bruises are deeper than the surface. Iniquities especially are deeper than common sin, because they are a paradigm of living a law twisted from God's law. Transgressions or wounds may require surgery, but iniquities must be healed from within. The good news is that Jesus was wounded for all of them. He paid the price and has given us the gift of healing.

Sin · Chattah — To miss the mark.

Transgression · Pesha — Willful sin.

Iniquity · Awon — Twisting and perversion of the Law.

WEEK NINE

Jesus won the battle

HEBREWS 4:15 · NIV

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet he did not sin.

When Jesus was tempted to turn the stones into bread, His flesh was tempted with very real, physical hunger. He used the Word of God to overcome the temptation. When Jesus was tempted to bow before Satan so that He would be given dominion over all the earth, His soul was tempted — and again, Jesus used the Word of God to overcome the temptation. When Satan tempted Jesus to test God's love for Him by throwing Himself off the temple, His spirit was tempted. Jesus answered the temptation with the Word.

We see the triune being of Jesus being tempted after He had fasted for forty days: body, soul, spirit. Jesus overcame each of them, and He knows how difficult they are. I believe they were very real temptations for Christ, but I also believe that Jesus knew where and when the enemy would attack, and was ready for the attack. Jesus modeled for us how to overcome the enemy: use the Word of God to refute the attack of the enemy. (Interesting point: the enemy waited to attack Jesus when Jesus was likely at one of His weakest moments.)

WEEK NINE

The problem

I don't believe we have a problem with temptation; I believe we have a problem loving God. Remember **John 14:15**: "*If you love me, you will keep my commandments.*" Putting the emphasis on loving God, we automatically begin to desire to obey Him.

Instead, our viewpoint of God is distorted (which is technically iniquity), and we believe that God's nature isn't loving or caring or merciful or holy or mighty — or any of the wonderful, awesome, and indescribable attributes of God that encompass all that He is. When Moses asked Him what His name is, He simply said, "I AM." He is. Everything you need. Everything you've longed for. If you have a sin problem, I just wish you knew Him the way I know Him. He is better than a best friend. His love and grace and mercy are complete and make me whole. I pray that His love rains down on you so that it can reign in your life.

Part of the common iniquity temptation holds is a pervasive belief that *what God has for us isn't better than what the temptation offers*. I'll pick on those who smoke for a moment. We know people who smoke, yet scientists began studying the correlation between smoking and cancer in the 1920s. The American Cancer Society has a litany of studies proving that cancer is directly correlated to smoking cigarettes. So unless you're over 100 years old and you started smoking when you were around three, you've always known that the first cigarette could lead to habitual smoking, which could lead to health problems, cancer, and even death. Yet young people today still light up their first cigarette — even though the risks are well documented. Why? I believe it's for one of three reasons. I'm not saying that smoking is sinful per se, and I don't believe that it is any more wrong than binge eating, but the behavior is interesting to me because I believe it correlates to how and why Christians knowingly sin. Addressing the reasons we sin can help us address the root of our issues.

- ① Do we believe it's really sin?
- ② We trade our future for the *now*.
- ③ We believe we will escape the consequences.

WEEK NINE

Do we believe it's sin?

I'm going to focus on one particular sin for this lesson, but these principles apply to almost every type of sin of the flesh. Pornography usage has grown to epidemic proportions in the U.S. It is hard to believe that three-fourths of Christian men actively engage in pornography usage, but those are the stark statistics.

CHRISTIAN MEN, AGES 18–30

77% look at pornography at least once per month.

36% view pornography daily.

32% admit to being addicted to pornography.

CHRISTIAN MEN, AGES 31–49

77% looked at pornography at least once in three months while at work.

64% view pornography at least once monthly.

18% admit being addicted to pornography (another 8% think they may be).

MARRIED CHRISTIAN MEN

55% look at pornography at least once monthly.

35% have had an extramarital affair.

318% more likely to have an affair than porn-free couples (couples who watch pornography together).

SOURCES · BARNA GROUP (2018); RELEVANT MAGAZINE, "HOW PORN IS REWIRING THE BRAINS OF A GENERATION."

What do we believe about the sin of lust, pornography, and masturbation? Is looking at pornography wrong? Is masturbation really wrong? What is the harm in it? This is what the Bible says about it. Jesus said this about lust:

MATTHEW 5:28 · NIV

But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

The Bible provides a clear answer. If you're looking at pornography, there's probably lust nearby. **Romans 13:14** says, "Instead, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires." Masturbation requires thoughts that indulge lustful desires. This Scripture answers the question of whether masturbation is right or wrong.

Jordan Peterson says that we know intrinsically that an action is wrong when we hide the behavior. **Proverbs 9:17–18** says, "Stolen water is sweet; and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol." It's no mistake that Proverbs — also known as the book of wisdom — dedicates almost three full chapters to sexual sin, and each time states that the fruit of sexual sin is death. We are to judge something by its fruit. *The fruit of pornography leads to neural pathways created in a person's brain that are dangerous and detrimental to the soul.*

WEEK NINE

The future vs. the now

PSALM 65:5 · NIV

*By awesome and wondrous things You answer us in righteousness, O God of our salvation,
You who are the trust and hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest sea.*

God is our trust and our hope. He is our inheritance. God has designated for you a good inheritance. The inheritance from God cannot rust or fade or be destroyed by moths (**Matthew 6:19–21**). **Romans 9:13** says that God hated Esau but loved Jacob. Esau despised and sold his birthright to satiate the flesh, while Jacob wrestled with the angel all night. God despises the part of man that will sell his birthright for a bowl of soup, but God blesses those who will wrestle with Him. God has a wonderful gift and future for you. Don't compromise an abundant life for a fleeting temptation of the flesh.

The word *compromise* has two roots: *comp* — which means to give something away for free — and

promise — which means to guarantee or validate something as true and to uphold it. When we compromise to our fleshly urges, we whittle away our promised inheritance.

WEEK NINE

Will we escape the consequences?

Numbers 32:23 says, "But if you fail to do this, you will be sinning against the LORD; and you may be sure that your sin will find you out." You cannot hide from God.

His Word is forevermore true and unwavering. Either we believe the Word of God or we don't. When we believe it, we apply it; or we reject it. Ask yourself, "*Do I really believe the Word of God?*" This is the quintessential question. Every believer begins by trusting God for salvation in Jesus Christ and placing Him in the authority position over their life. We cannot call Him Savior unless we call Him Lord. Either He is Lord of your life or someone else is. God will not share lordship with anyone or anything else.

WEEK NINE

Truth

Sexual gratification outside of marriage is sin.

1 PETER 2:11 · NIV

Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul.

Pornography, lust, and masturbation satiate a hunger while attempting to circumvent the covenant through which sex was given to us from God. These actions objectify women as objects of pleasure, rather than the helpmates of a covenant relationship that God designed them to be for man.

2.2

divorces per thousand couples in America before 1960.

35–50%

today's divorce rate for first marriages — 60% for second marriages, and above 70% after the second.

4×

more likely to be saved: children growing up in a home with a Christian father, compared to those raised by a Christian mother.

SOURCES · CDC.GOV; BARNA GROUP

The enemy hates marriage because it represents the Church. Your mantle as a father, husband, leader, and man is under attack. Many men have compromised themselves through sin, transgression, and iniquity. These only lead to bondage and eventually death. If you, or a man you know, are in bondage, please take these seven steps to freedom.

WEEK NINE

Seven steps to freedom

There is a way out. The enemy will try to convince you that there isn't — but God has already provided the path. These seven steps are how men have walked into freedom before, and how you can too.

STEP 1 · CONFESSION

The enemy will try to make you ashamed of confessing your sin. He knows that keeping it secret means he keeps you in bondage. It is time to break the cycle of recurring sin. You can't white-knuckle your freedom. **James 5:16** says, "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." The verse doesn't say "could" be healed or "might" be healed. The verse also indicates that the person to whom we confess our sin should be righteous. Now, none of us are righteous — but if you're saved, you are made righteous through the blood of Jesus. We take on His righteousness. **2 Corinthians 5:21** says, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." Therefore, your friend who is walking with God is made righteous. We need one another to get through this life. We need accountability brothers.

STEP 2 · ENGAGE IN BATTLE

1 PETER 5:8 · NIV

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Recognize your role as a warrior in the battle against the enemy. God has already defeated the enemy, so the enemy has taken his battle against *you*. Today, men are bombarded with the images of beautiful women. Why? Because the enemy knows that when you succumb to these lusts, he neutralizes you as a warrior in the Kingdom. You have no idea how important you are. You have no idea how powerful you are. The enemy does, and he's trying to take you out of the battle.

If we were all warriors, sitting around a campfire with our swords, spears, and shields, and our enemy had surrounded our camp, we would all be focused on a strategy for victory. We would look one

another in the eye and accept our positions of responsibility. We would do so with a sober mind and a steady hand, knowing that the alternative is death.

- Warriors do not leave their post.
- Warriors don't wreck their families.
- Warriors don't let the enemy into the camp.

STEP 3 · DESIRE YOUR FREEDOM

King David wrote Psalm 51 after Nathan the prophet revealed the weight of his sin to David. Psalm 51 gives us a rubric for repentance. Clearly David had sorrow for his sin and asked for mercy from the only One who can forgive. He asked God to cleanse him and to create a clean heart within him. Afterward, he tells God that he will teach others not to sin, as he himself did. Then he tells God he will worship Him. David outlines the steps for our repentance:

- ① Ask for forgiveness and mercy from God (v. 1).
- ② Ask God to cleanse you from all unrighteousness (vv. 2–5, 10).
- ③ Acknowledge that God has something better for you (vv. 6–9).
- ④ Ask God to turn your sin into a service (vv. 12–13).
- ⑤ Worship God (vv. 14–19).

PSALM 51:1–6 · BSB

¹Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your loving devotion; according to Your great compassion, blot out my transgressions. ²Wash me clean of my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

³For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. ⁴Against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You may be proved right when You speak and blameless when You judge.

⁵Surely I was brought forth in iniquity; I was sinful when my mother conceived me. ⁶Surely You desire truth in the inmost being; You teach me wisdom in the inmost place.

PSALM 51:7–13 · BSB

⁷Purify me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. ⁸Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones You have crushed rejoice. ⁹Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities.

¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. ¹¹Cast me not away from Your presence; take not Your Holy Spirit from me.

¹²Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and sustain me with a willing spirit. ¹³Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will return to You.

PSALM 51:14–19 · BSB

¹⁴*Deliver me from bloodguilt, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing of Your righteousness.* ¹⁵*O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare Your praise.*

¹⁶*For You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; You take no pleasure in burnt offerings.* ¹⁷*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.*

¹⁸*In Your good pleasure, cause Zion to prosper; build up the walls of Jerusalem.* ¹⁹*Then You will delight in righteous sacrifices, in whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on Your altar.*

STEP 4 · GUARD YOUR HEART

Have a battle plan. No great warrior walks into battle without a plan. Your battle plan should include letting someone know that you are in a battle. There is no shame in needing help. *Create barriers of entry to your sin.* Go get a flip phone with no internet access if you need. Put accountability software on your devices; close your social media accounts. Cut off all avenues to your sin that are possible. There is accountability software you can download that will allow someone you trust to see everything you click on or view. Give someone permission to look at your phone and your browser history. Give someone permission to check your accounts for purchases. Armies don't take their enemies for granted when life and death are at stake.

PROVERBS 4:23 · NLT

Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.

Your battle plan should include creating boundaries for yourself. The Bible says to chop off your hand or gouge out your eye if it causes you to sin (**Matthew 5:30**). That's pretty radical — but it's clear that we should do whatever it takes to keep ourselves from sinning. Billy Graham would have someone check out his hotel room to make sure no woman was hiding in it before he would walk in, because he was aware that the enemy was trying to take him out. He wouldn't even ride alone on an elevator with a woman. I encourage you to share this battle with your wife so that she knows you're willing to get radical in order to keep yourself far from temptation. Why fight a battle tomorrow that we can eliminate today?

STEP 5 · RUN FROM TEMPTATION

Joseph ran from Potiphar's wife (**Genesis 39:11–12**). **James 4:7** says, "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." It doesn't say to stand and fight temptation. It says to resist, to flee, to *run away*. When you see temptation coming, don't trust in your own strength. Philippians 3 says we should put no confidence in the flesh. Part of winning is understanding your own weakness against sin. Many times, the cycle of sin starts with temptation, but becomes manifest when we place

confidence in our own ability to overcome it.

God has provided a pathway for your freedom — and it's not just silent and solo resistance. You have a choice.

1 CORINTHIANS 10:13 · NIV

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

Did you catch that? A way out doesn't mean the strength to fight — a way out means to *run*. No matter how strong you are, realize that the physically strongest man in the Bible was Samson, and he fell because of sexual sin. No matter how smart you are, the wisest man in the Bible was Solomon, and he fell because of sexual sin. No matter how holy you are, the man after God's own heart was David, and he fell because of sexual sin. These three men should serve as a warning to us that we cannot resist on our own. We must flee from temptation. You aren't going to outwit Satan by yourself.

STEP 6 · DO YOUR PART

In 2 Chronicles 20, Jehoshaphat, the king of Israel, was informed that there were several armies assembled and ready to attack. These armies were enormous, and there was no way that Israel could defeat them on their own. Jehoshaphat called for a fast, and the nation fasted. Then they worshipped as they went into battle, and the Lord brought confusion upon the opposing armies so that they killed each other and fled. God defeated the opposing armies before they even stepped on the battlefield.

2 CHRONICLES 20:15 · NIV

He said: "Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem. This is what the LORD says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's.'"

God will fight your battle for you — but you must do your part. Put on the whole armor of God and prepare for battle, but know that the battle is His.

STEP 7 · ACCOUNTABILITY

ECCLESIASTES 4:12 · NIV

Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

We need each other. We need each other without judgment or the religious spirit of guilt and shame. We need each other to embrace our weaknesses, for where you are weak, another has strength. God will place men in your path that can help you along your journey.

WEEK NINE

We need each other

In August of 2021, I had quite a bout with COVID-19 and almost died. About ten days into it, my friend Kelly called me and said that he felt like the enemy was really going after me. He told me he was going to fast until I was healed — and more than that, he was going to call his small group and have them fast for me as well.

That night I took a turn for the worse. About 2 a.m., my wife reached over and couldn't feel a pulse, but she could tell I was breathing. She called the ambulance. When I got to the hospital, my blood pressure was 55/37. I believe that I'm alive today because my friend Kelly prayed and fasted for me. Men, we need friends like that. We need accountability brothers who will catch us when we stumble and pick us up when we fall.

M 2 · W E E K T E N

Stewards of Blessing

Money is a tool, a trial, and a test. How we approach it shapes our marriages, our purpose, and our legacy.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Is money serving me, or am I serving it?

WEEK TEN

Money and the heart

PROVERBS 10:22 · NKJV

The blessing of the LORD makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it.

Money is a tool, a trial, and a test. If you want to expose a man's true character, give him access to large sums of money. Money reveals the heart of a man and the quality of his character. The great King Solomon said, "Money answers all things." In essence, money explains everything. The poor want it, the rich hoard it. It will control those who do not control it, and it destroys those who love it. Yet it is necessary for life and required for living effectively. The average man works for it, but the wise man makes it work for him.

The subject of money is almost taboo for the religious, yet the Bible speaks more about money than prayer and fasting.

DR. MYLES MUNROE

WEEK TEN

Recap

Last week we learned how deliberate sin and lusts of the flesh can deeply affect our walk with God. Like no other, these can put our destiny on hold and rob us of our purpose. Another obstacle we must overcome is how we approach and handle money.

How we approach and handle money will greatly impact our lives. Fifty-nine percent of divorcees say that money played a significant role in their divorce. Money is a blessing, but it can also be dangerous. If the condition of our hearts is right, God will bless us with more — but if money becomes an idol, it can keep us from receiving the fullness that God has in store for us. In this study, we will dive into the paradigms of money, how to break the poverty mindset, and how to live an abundant, prosperous life.

WEEK TEN

There is plenty to go around

You may have heard the phrase "I've got to get my piece of the pie." But the pie is ever-expanding. The more money an economy generates, the more people are blessed because of it. Below are some interesting statistics about the U.S. economy today versus what many consider to be

"America's Golden Age," the postwar boom of the 1950s.

6.98M

individuals in America considered millionaires (2020), not including the value of their real estate — about 8.8% of Americans.

2.67M

millionaires in 2008 — less than 1% of the total U.S. population.

293%

increase in the average American salary from 1959 to 2021 — \$13,971 to \$59,916, adjusted for inflation.

20%

of wealth in America is inherited — the other 80% is built within a generation.

SOURCES · STATISTA; WORLD POPULATION REVIEW; U.S. CENSUS

America has more millionaires than China, Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Australia, Canada, and Italy *combined*. America has more billionaires than any country in the world. The average home in 1955 cost about \$82,098 (adjusted to 2016 dollars) and ran 983 square feet, with 3.37 people living in it. By the 2010s, the average home was 2,392 square feet at \$292,700, with 2.59 people in it.

God has blessed America, and the numbers are clear; we are currently in an age of incredible prosperity. Why has God blessed the U.S.?

GENESIS 12:3 · NIV

I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

The U.S. has been a blessing to Israel since its re-inception as a country in 1948. Furthermore, the U.S. sends out more long-term missionaries (about 135,000 per year) than most of the top ten countries combined. The U.S. has also been number one in giving per capita for many decades. God has blessed the U.S. financially because our nation has followed three principles: we have blessed Israel, we have sent missionaries around the world to spread the Gospel, and we have been the most generous country in modern history.

A common phrase in the world economy says, "When the U.S. sneezes, the whole world gets a cold." The economies around the world are blessed because of the U.S. The more the U.S. economy grows, the more the world economy grows with us. There is not a single economic pie that we are all sharing. There is an infinite amount of wealth that can be created, and that wealth generates more and more wealth.

WEEK TEN

God's part and your part

Jesus died for all mankind, but not all mankind is saved. There are two halves to every blessing: God's part, and yours.

GOD'S PART

John 10:10 says, "I have come that they may have life and have it to the full." God wants you to have a full, abundant life. God blessed Abraham by giving him a land that was beautiful and thriving. Abraham never asked for a blessing. God offered it to him due to his obedience to move out of his homeland.

God put expansion and legacy in our hearts. We desire it. **Proverbs 13:22** says, "A good man leaves an inheritance for his children's children." The only way we can leave an inheritance for our children's children is if we have an abundance. When we first become fathers, we begin to understand the desire to leave a legacy for our children. Our focus shifts from our own centric wants and desires to that of our children. God places that desire in our hearts to bless the generations that come behind us. In Genesis 12, God told Abraham that "he would be blessed so that he could be a blessing." Likewise, we are blessed so that we may bless others — particularly our own future generations.

Psalms 35:27 says, "Let the LORD be magnified, who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant." God takes pleasure in our prosperity. He wants *you* to prosper. **Ephesians 3:20** says, "He is capable of infinitely more than we ask or dream." The God who died for you on the cross wants to give you more. He wants to bless you, and He isn't out to get you. His desire is to prosper you, and He can give you more than you've ever dreamed.

GENESIS 15:5 · NKJV

Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them... So shall your descendants be.

God gave a blessing that was more than Abraham had ever imagined. This blessing is part of the Abrahamic Covenant the Israelites still remember today.

Genesis 17:4 — I will make you the father of many nations.

Genesis 12:2 — I will greatly bless you. (Genesis 13:2 says Abraham was very rich.)

Genesis 12:2 — I will make you a blessing to others.

God fulfilled His part of the Abrahamic Covenant. Abraham did father many nations. After Sarah died, Abraham remarried and had seven other sons (**Genesis 25**). The Messiah came directly from the lineage of Abraham. Truly, all nations are blessed because of the Abrahamic Covenant. **Romans 8:32** asks, "He

who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

YOUR PART

DEUTERONOMY 8:18 · NKJV

And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

Notice that God doesn't give wealth, but gives you the *power* to get wealth. God desires to give you all things, but there is a part for us to do: *remember* the Lord your God. **James 4:2-3** says, "You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures."

- ① We do not have because we do not ask.
- ② We ask with wrong motives.

I'd hate to think of all the blessings I've missed because I failed to ask for them. Asking is the easy part, and easily remedied. How do we make sure that our motives are pure? The only way is to examine the source of our desire. If our desire is pure, then His Word is clear: ask. Make sure your values align with God's.

God wants us to have nice things. Heaven uses gold for pavement. God values people more than pavement, and so should we. His will is that "none should perish" (**2 Peter 3:9**). When we are seeking His will, then God wants to bless you so that the two of you can work together. There is an implication that you are working together when He says in **Matthew 11:30**, "my yoke is easy, my burden is light." The metaphor is that you are both oxen plowing the same field. When you're yoked together, it's impossible to separate your load. The two carry it together, plowing the same furrow and sowing the same seed. (God is so gracious that He uses the ox as a way for us to relate to Him. The ox could plow a field, then be led to the altar later as a sacrifice for sin.)

We must do our part to receive His blessings. **Ephesians 5:17** says, "Therefore, do not be thoughtless and foolish, but understanding and firmly grasping what the will of the Lord is." According to the Lord's Prayer in **Matthew 6:9-13**, Jesus asked us to pray that "His will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." There is no poverty or lack in Heaven. There is no sickness, disease, or death in Heaven. God's will is for you to not only prosper in your finances, but in every aspect of your life. Jesus wouldn't have asked you to pray a prayer if it couldn't be answered. His paramount will is for the lost to be saved. Our part is to align our will with the will of God. When asking for a blessing, examine your motive. It's

healthy to finish every prayer with the phrase "May Your will be done."

QUESTION

Who puts the desire for prosperity in our hearts?

WEEK TEN

A healthy mindset toward money and work

Beliefs determine feelings. What you believe about your circumstances will play a huge role in determining your future. **Proverbs 23:7** says, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Are you an Eeyore or a Tigger? Tigger couldn't have a bad day if he tried, but Eeyore found the gray cloud in every silver lining. When your car needs repairs, do you grumble and complain? Do you say things like, "Bad things come in threes — I wonder what's next?" These statements are powerful and can determine the blessing you receive. **Proverbs 18:21** says, "The power of life and death are in the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit." What fruit are you going to be eating based on your words? What is your mindset toward your finances and money? Below are some dangerous mindsets that Christians should avoid:

Comparison — Be satisfied and grateful for what God has given you.

Cutting corners — Jesus commanded us to carry the stone two miles.

Lack of persistence — How can we be conquerors when we quit the fight?

Complaining — Caused the Israelites to wander in the desert for forty years.

"The deck is stacked" — Gives authority to other entities other than God.

Lack of ambition — A sign of hopelessness, which is not from God.

Procrastination — God said to number our days.

Lack of self-discipline — He who does not labor is akin to one who destroys.

Negative self-talk — There are only two kingdoms. Which do your words serve?

Wanting something for nothing — A man who doesn't work doesn't deserve to eat.

"Grass is greener" — Be a good steward where you are.

Overspending — Several factors here: fear, lack of patience, want.

Inability to cooperate — Rooted in pride. God gives us the spirit of collaboration.

Intentional dishonesty — Who was the first deceiver? Whose native tongue is lies?

Paying bills late — Proverbs says to pay the bill immediately, when you have the means.

Borrowing and not repaying — This is stealing.

Get rich quick, gambling, and lottery — Money earned like this will not last.

WEEK TEN

The money rules

Eight rules to anchor a steward's life — drawn straight from Scripture and proven across generations.

RULE 1 · TITHE

Some say that tithing is Old Testament, and we don't have to do it any longer. I'm not so sure that's true. Jesus said to the Pharisees, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and give to God what is God's" (Mark 12:17). This indicates that God still has some ownership in our finances. Jesus wasn't specific, so I'll let you decide what and how much that is — however, *tithe* is the Hebrew word for "tenth." My personal testimony has been that tithing has brought me tremendous blessing throughout my life.

MALACHI 3:6-10 · NIV

⁶*I the LORD do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. ⁷Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD Almighty.*

But you ask, "How are we to return?" ⁸Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, "How are we robbing you?" In tithes and offerings. ⁹You are under a curse — your whole nation — because you are robbing me.

¹⁰*Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this, says the LORD Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.*

MALACHI 3:11-12 · NIV

¹¹*I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe, says the LORD Almighty. ¹²Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land, says the LORD Almighty.*

RULE 2 · WHERE YOU TITHE MATTERS

Where you sow your tithe matters. Think of the tithe as the seed and the soil is where you sow your seed. **Malachi 3:10** says to "bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house." I believe He is talking about spiritual food, here. Therefore, give your tithes and offerings to houses that offer good, pure, wholesome spiritual food — the kind of food that is life-giving and nurturing.

When babies eat, they grow. When teenagers eat, they grow. When we eat good food, we thrive. Without it, we are unhealthy and sick. So be careful *where* you are sowing your seed. Is the food in that house healthy? Is the congregation thriving, or are they sick? Are new converts coming to Christ, or has the genealogy tree of that church become a straight line?

Like a good farmer, God wants a good harvest. He doesn't just throw His seed on any ground, hoping some of it will grow. God is a good steward of His possessions. Nothing in nature is wasted. He is going to prepare the soil properly for a good harvest. He is going to pull out all the weeds, hoe out the rocks, and till the soil until it's soft and cultivated, ready for the seed so it can produce a good harvest. Where you sow your seed matters. It may even be your part to cultivate the soil.

RULE 3 · GIVE YOUR FIRST FRUITS

The very first murder in the Bible stems from Cain's jealousy of Abel (**Genesis 4**). Abel was blessed by God because he gave God the tithe. He gladly, freely, gave his first fruits, and God blessed him. Cain was jealous of the blessing and killed Abel. Cain gave a tithe, but it wasn't his best and it wasn't his first fruits. If you want the blessings of God, don't adopt the spirit of Cain; give your first fruits generously, freely, and without attachment or expectation. First-fruit giving is essential in receiving the blessings of God.

What does that look like today? Most of us aren't harvesting crops or herds, so first-fruits giving is setting aside and giving your tithe first. Whatever method you use for giving — analog or digital — make sure that the tithe is of the highest priority. When you give your tithe, pray that it goes to build the Kingdom, that it is fruitful, and ask God to bless it. God loves a cheerful giver (**2 Corinthians 9:7**).

RULE 4 · SAVE

I once saw a bumper sticker that said, "Jesus saves; my wife spends." That's a funny way to say that there is a biblical principle to putting some away for a rainy day. **Proverbs 21:20** says, "The wise store up choice food and olive oil, but fools gulp theirs down." Spending every penny we have is foolish. We

must be wise — saving for rainy days and living for tomorrow, not just today.

RULE 5 · DILIGENCE

Proverbs 10:4 says, "He who has a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich." There are no get-rich schemes with God. There is wisdom, hard work, and diligence. **Zechariah 4:10** says, "Do not despise these small beginnings, for the LORD rejoices to see the work begin." No matter where you are, begin and keep going. Your bank account might be humble today, but keep it growing. When we give up, we lose. There is no room for laziness in the Kingdom of God. **Proverbs 24:33–34** says, "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands, and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man."

When God welcomes us into Heaven, we hope He says, "Well done, my good and faithful servant." There is no substitute for faithfulness. Faithfulness is a lifelong journey. Diligence in our faith is also key to the blessing. As Christians, we live by a separate set of rules than the rest of the world. The world may be able to fudge a little here, take a little there, but we can't. As a child of God, we belong to Him. **Hebrews 12:6** says, "because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son." We can no longer live by the rules of the world and prosper. We have to honor God in our dealings. **Proverbs 11:1** says, "The LORD detests dishonest scales, but accurate weights find favor with him." God wants your business dealings to be honorable and above board, because you're His son and you represent His household.

Conversely, lack of diligence — or sin — stops the flow of financial blessings. **2 Chronicles 26:5** says, "As long as he sought the LORD, God made him prosper." However, sin removes us from the flow of blessing in our lives. **Haggai 1:6** says, "You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but do not have enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes." A healthy fear of the Lord is important when we seek out the favor and prosperity that God desires for us.

PSALM 1:1–3 · BSB

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, or set foot on the path of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the Law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, yielding its fruit in season, whose leaf does not wither, and who prospers in all he does.

RULE 6 · THE LAWS OF SOWING AND REAPING

GENESIS 8:22 · NKJV

While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease.

Farmers live by the principles of sowing and reaping. They know that when they plant soybeans, they get soybeans. How ludicrous would it be if they planted peanuts and reaped a harvest of kudzu? Farmers couldn't stay in business for long if that were the case. What happens in the natural world happens in the spiritual world also. Whatever we sow, we reap.

Jesus made this statement to His disciples right after He told the parable of the Sower to a crowd: **Matthew 13:11** — "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given." There's no mistake that He said this right after this parable. God is the Sower. *The currency of His Kingdom is seed.* If we are to follow in His footsteps, then He is telling us to be sowers.

If Elon Musk told you, "Look, I have a secret I want to tell you. I want to teach you how to get rich" — would you listen? God is richer than Elon Musk, and He's giving you a principle: sow. That seems so simple. Ask any farmer if it works. They'll tell you, "If I sow seed into the ground, I get a crop." To receive a substantial financial harvest, we must become sowers.

What is a sower? A sower is someone who plants seed as a lifestyle. A sower can't help but sow because it's his profession. Not every now and then — sowers sow faithfully. When you have an alignment with God's will, you'll realize that there's nothing you can't give away that God can't replace with better and more.

2 CORINTHIANS 9:10 · NKJV

Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness.

Notice He doesn't supply seed to *Christians* or *disciples*. He provides seed to sowers. If you are out of seeds, maybe you're eating your supply. God's abundance on your life isn't for your benefit, it's for the Kingdom. It's for others. God is looking for channels, not dams. He needs the Kingdom financed, and He is looking for people who will do it. If you seize the concept of sowing and reaping, God will use you. God's blessings are ceaseless because we have an infinite God.

A seed can only multiply when planted.

JOHN 12:24 · AMP

I assure you and most solemnly say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone just one grain, never more. But if it dies, it produces much grain and yields a harvest.

Consider a single kernel of corn. If you eat it, can you get full? No. But if you plant it, a stalk of corn will produce, on average, two ears of corn. Each ear produces, on average, 452 kernels of corn at harvest. You could eat them and be satisfied for a day — or you could sow them all again and reap a harvest of 817,216 kernels. Sow that again, and you reap a harvest of over 700 million kernels.

SOWN	REAPED
1 kernel (\$0.00036)	904 kernels (\$0.33)
904 kernels (\$0.33)	817,216 kernels (\$298.32)
817,216 kernels (\$298.32)	738,763,264 kernels (\$269,681.28)

RULE 7 · OUR SOUL TO PROSPER

The key to prosperity isn't a secret: it's a matter of the heart.

3 JOHN 1:2 · NKJV

Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.

Was Mother Teresa prosperous? I submit that she was. She stood before presidents and influenced kings, yet she had little or no possessions of her own. A prosperous soul is amazing to see. The whole world will pause to watch in amazement as a man is using the full capacity of his gifts from God. However, if he's miserable, all the treasures and trophies are worthless. In Ecclesiastes chapters 5 and 6, Solomon reflected on his life and concluded that all his wealth was meaningless.

How can our soul prosper? The only way is through seeking Him first. **Matthew 6:33** says, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you." What are all these things? Prosperity of mind, body, soul, and spirit.

RULE 8 · GRATITUDE

David said that God placed his boundary stones in pleasant places (**Psalms 16:6**). He was, quite literally, pleased with his lot. **Philippians 4:6** says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." God knows what you need before you need it. Just because you're living a prosperous life doesn't mean you won't have moments of need or want. We are able to ask for anything from a good Father who gives good gifts. He loves giving to His children (**Matthew 7:11**) — but He hates grumbling and complaining. **1 Corinthians 10:10** says, "And do not grumble, as some of them did — and were killed by the destroying angel."

M 2 · W E E K T W E L V E

The Holy Spirit

Who is He, and what is His role in our lives? The Helper Jesus promised — and the power we need to take the Promised Land of our lives.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Do I have enough of the Holy Spirit to live on — or enough to change the world?

WEEK TWELVE

Recap

The past three weeks, we have been uncovering the three main areas that cause men to fall: the lusts of the flesh, financial issues, and our approach to authority.

Although each issue stems from good gifts that God gives us, each can be twisted by the enemy and used to rob us of our destiny. These sins will hold us captive and lead us to destruction if they aren't pulled out by the roots. Unfortunately, many men never gain control over their issues, and they live a life of bondage. This is not the will of God. Jesus came to set the captives free.

LUKE 4:18 · NIV

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free.

This week, we will learn who the "Spirit of the Lord" is that Jesus was talking about — and what role the Spirit has in our lives.

WEEK TWELVE

Man's search

Throughout history, man has sought to better understand his world.

Copernicus studied the movement of the stars in the 15th century, and later that century Columbus sought a new path to India. In the 20th century the United States sent men to the moon; in the 21st, a joint group of nations launched the CERN Hadron Collider to better understand antimatter and atomic energies. Each year the U.S. spends over a billion dollars on oceanic research, and NASA's budget was just under \$24 billion in 2022. The search of the unknown is nothing new. Mankind has a hunger for knowledge and truth — and I believe God placed that hunger inside of us.

God wants to be discovered by us (**Jeremiah 29:13**). Just as there are discoveries about the physical world yet to be made, there are spiritual discoveries we should be diligently exploring. The Bible says this world is passing away, but that the next one is eternal (**1 John 2:17**). We should be exploring the spiritual world with the same fervor we bring to peering into deep space. What a blessing it would be if our country had a budget line of \$24 billion to seek God and all that He has for us.

WEEK TWELVE

Controversy

Most Christian denominations agree that the Holy Spirit is part of the triune God. He is named in the Apostles' Creed, written around the 5th century and nearly universally adopted as foundational doctrine to this day.

Yet there seems to be so much controversy regarding who the Holy Spirit is and what His role is in our lives. Some believe that miracles have ceased (Cessationists). Some believe that to have the Holy Spirit you must speak in tongues. Some believe you receive all that God has for you when you get saved; others believe in a second baptism. My prayer is that during this lesson you would keep an open mind. My goal is to help you understand who the Holy Spirit is and His role in your life — and my prayer is that you would desire to receive more of Him.

WEEK TWELVE

The Holy Spirit's role

At the Last Supper, Jesus gave His disciples implicit instructions about what to do after His death. He told them to go to Jerusalem and wait.

JOHN 14:16–17, 26 · NKJV

And I will pray to the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever — the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

Jesus said the Holy Spirit will:

- Be our Helper
- Be the Spirit of Truth
- Dwell *in* you
- Bring to remembrance the words of Jesus
- Abide with us forever
- Dwell *with* you
- Teach you all things

The Holy Spirit wasn't just for the early apostles; He has a role in every Christian's life. The word "Spirit" in the original Greek was *pneuma*. Though some translate it "wind," *pneuma* is more literally the "breath of life" — required for something to live. Just as God breathed life into Adam, He breathes His life into every newborn Christian by giving each of us His breath — His Holy Spirit. We cannot live our best life without Him. If you're still in bondage, you need more of the Holy Spirit, not less of Him.

WEEK TWELVE

A tale of two Peters

The apostle Peter lived with Jesus — the Word (**John 1:1**) — for three years. Peter knew Jesus, and yet he was vastly different before the day of Pentecost than he was afterward.

THE FIRST PETER

Pretend for a moment that you are the apostle Peter, who lived with Jesus for three years. Think about what you saw. You saw blind men and lepers healed. You saw the lame walk. You saw Jesus speak to the wind and the waves and watched them become calm. You took a step of faith out of the boat and walked on water, and when your eyes moved from Jesus you began to sink — but He saved you. You saw Him feed five thousand with a few loaves and fish. You saw Him raise Lazarus from the dead.

All these things you saw — yet when they came to arrest Him, you ran. You were afraid for your own life. You had just spent three years with a man you were certain was more than a man, and you couldn't stand with Him at His darkest hour. You denied Him when a little girl asked if you were with Him.

You didn't see His mother's tears. You didn't see the soldiers gamble over His clothes — you had to hear about His last words, because you ran and hid. You saw the sun darken and felt the earth tremble. Bewildered, lost, and broken, you went back to what you knew best: fishing. Half in a daze over all that had happened, you couldn't help but feel abandoned and empty. Hope was gone. Death had conquered, and perhaps He was really just a man. In your heart, you had to wonder — where was this eternal Kingdom?

Then there He was, on the beach. He was alive! He was who He said He was. Peter's restoration happened in an instant. Jesus broke the curses Peter had spoken over himself when he denied Christ three times, by asking him three times if he loved Him. But Peter still needed a Helper. He had seen Jesus perform so many miracles and yet still ran. Full of doubt and fear, Peter was ineffective at leading even the other disciples — until the Helper came.

THE SECOND PETER

We call the day the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples the day of Pentecost. *Pentecost* simply means fifty; it was fifty days after the Passover. Peter and the rest of the disciples waited for the promised gift, and on the fiftieth day, this happened:

ACTS 2:1-4 · NIV

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Peter made a speech to the crowd, convincing them that Jesus was the Messiah whom they had crucified. Over three thousand were convinced, received the Gospel, and were baptized. The same Peter who ran now stood boldly and preached the Gospel to the very men who had sanctioned the crucifixion of Jesus. The only difference between the first Peter and the second Peter is the Holy Spirit. That same promise — the gift of the Holy Spirit — God freely gives to you and me. The Holy Spirit will give you understanding and boldness.

WEEK TWELVE

The Holy Spirit is your guide

Jesus told His disciples that He couldn't teach them everything at that time because they couldn't handle it — but that the Holy Spirit would teach them what they needed to know.

JOHN 16:12-14 · NKJV

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.

The Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth. How will you know what is true? You must discern His voice and verify everything you hear and learn with the Word. When you hear from the Holy Spirit, make sure what He tells you lines up with God's Word. If it doesn't, then what you heard isn't from God — but more probably from the pizza you ate last night. The Holy *Pneuma* of God wants to fill your sails and take you on a journey of discovery.

WEEK TWELVE

The Holy Spirit convicts

Jesus names three areas in which the Holy Spirit will "convict" the world: sin, righteousness, and judgment. To our modern ears, "convict" makes us think of a trial. But Jesus means it more in the sense of *convince*.

JOHN 16:8-11 · NIV

When He comes, He will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

The judgment the Holy Spirit levies is on the prince of this world — Satan — not on us. **John 3:17** says God did not send His Son to condemn the world, but to save it. Since "sin" means to "miss the mark,"

we could say it this way: the role of the Holy Spirit is to convince us that we're not heading in the right direction. If our goal was to drive from Atlanta to Seattle and we start seeing road signs for Orlando, we need to make a turn, or we won't get to the land of smoked salmon. The same is true spiritually. You can't get free of bondage on your own — you must have the Holy Spirit to help you. Sincerely ask Him, and He will.

WEEK TWELVE

The Holy Spirit is a Person

How do we know the Holy Spirit is a person and not merely a force? A tree is alive, but it is hardly a person. A person is a being with a soul — a mind, a will, and emotions. The Word shows the Holy Spirit has all three.

SOUL

Hebrews 10:38 says, "Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, *My soul* has no pleasure in him." The Word says the Holy Spirit has a soul.

MIND

Romans 8:27 says, "Now He who searches the hearts knows what *the mind of the Spirit* is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God." There it is — the Holy Spirit has a mind. And He prays for you.

WILL

Remember John 16? "He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak." If He didn't have a will, He wouldn't have His own authority. The Holy Spirit has His own will.

EMOTIONS

Most of the fruits of the Spirit are emotions. Can a tree love, or be patient, or show kindness? **Ephesians 4:30** says, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." The Holy Spirit can be grieved; therefore He has emotions.

The Word is clear: the Holy Spirit is a Person, not an inanimate object. He's not a ghost that haunts you or a wind that merely blows. He is a Person with a mind, will, and emotions — One who loves, can be grieved, and should be sought for guidance, truth, help, conviction, and power. And because He is a Person, He can be your friend. He is Emmanuel — our God with us.

WEEK TWELVE

Fruit, power & love

When we spend time with people, it's inevitable that part of them rubs off on us. We come to resemble those we admire. When we spend time with the Holy Spirit, we become more like Him. Paul described what that looks like — the fruit of the Spirit:

- Love
- Peace
- Kindness
- Faithfulness
- Self-control
- Joy
- Patience
- Goodness
- Gentleness

I love the line in **Galatians 5:23** that says, "against such things there is no law." Mankind has never adjudicated against any of God's personality traits — every facet of Him is good. And He gives us more than fruit; He gives us power. **Galatians 5:16** says, "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." If you are white-knuckling your sin, you aren't walking by the Spirit. **Romans 8:11** says the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you. You can use your own strength to walk five hundred miles, or you can get into a car and drive. As Christians, we don't have a car — we have a rocket ship.

The Holy Spirit seemed to go through me, body and soul... it seemed to come in waves of liquid love, for I could not express it in any other way.

CHARLES FINNEY

Romans 5:5 says the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Even the wicked love their families, but we are called to love our enemies — and that kind of love doesn't come naturally. We receive it from the Holy Spirit.

WEEK TWELVE

Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Everyone who is saved has a deposit of the Holy Spirit. But there are degrees and amounts of the Holy Spirit — just as one man has a thousand dollars in his account and another has a hundred million. Both have money, but one has enough to live on for a few weeks, and the other has enough to change the world.

The enemy has made the Baptism of the Holy Spirit into something weird, but it wasn't weird for the apostles or the early Church. You don't have to be baptized in the Holy Spirit to be a Christian, but as Chris Hodges says, "I don't have to kiss my wife to be married either — but it sure is fun." God gave us a picture of two baptisms when Israel crossed the Red Sea (symbolic of the blood of Jesus) and later crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land. We are saved from death by the blood of Christ, but we can't take the Promised Land without the power of the Holy Spirit. We need power to fight the giants in the land.

ACTS 19:1-6 · NIV

Paul...came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" "No," they answered, "we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

Paul — who wrote about two-thirds of the New Testament — taught that there was a second baptism, supplemental to the deposit received at salvation. How do we receive it? It's a gift. We must want it and ask for it. But remember that the Holy Spirit is a Person who can be grieved; don't reject Him before you get to know Him in His fullness. If I were your enemy, I'd do my best to keep you from picking up your weapons — I might let you keep your pocketknife, but I'd keep you away from the fighter jets.

WEEK TWELVE

Tongues

I'm not a scholar. I never attended seminary. My foundation is the Word — I read it, study it, and verify everything I take in against it before receiving it.

There is no statement in the Bible that says everyone *will* speak in tongues. There is also no statement that says anyone *shouldn't*. Let's not get bogged down in this dilemma. The early Christians certainly spoke in tongues, and I know tongues still exist because God has blessed me with the gift of a prayer language. If you want more power to overcome, more wisdom, more boldness — then ask, seek, and knock (**Matthew 7:7**). Seek the answer for yourself, set aside any predisposition, and ask God if it is good for you. He will answer.

Tongues isn't weird; it is a way to communicate directly with God that bypasses our soul — our mind, will, and emotions. God uses it to edify our spirits. **1 Corinthians 14:4** says, "Anyone who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but the one who prophesies edifies the church."

DEFINITION · EDIFY

To instruct; to improve morally or intellectually.

Every one of us needs edification. We all need more instruction. Is it better to prophesy? I believe that's what Paul is saying — but that doesn't negate the need to be edified. The Holy Spirit edifies, convicts, cleanses, teaches, guides, corrects, and loves. He is your personal Friend, your Teacher, your Helper, your Guide, and your source of strength. He is the power that will help you take the Promised Land of your life.

WEEK TWELVE

The Apostles' Creed

The creed the early Church confessed — and the Church still confesses today.

— *I believe* in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

— *I believe* in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.

— *I believe* in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Catholic here means the universal Church — not what is known as the Roman Catholic Church.

M 2 · W E E K S T H I R T E E N & F O U R T E E N

Your Testimony

Every man has a story. It's time to tell yours. These two weeks have no lesson to read — they have something better: your turn to speak.

B E F O R E Y O U B E G I N

What has God done in me — and who needs to hear it?

WEEKS 13 & 14

The story only you can tell

We have come a long way together, brother. We started this journey by asking the oldest question a man can ask — *why am I here?* — and we refused to leave it unanswered. We looked at how God shaped you, and we let design reveal destiny. We faced the past honestly: our fathers, our wounds, our Achilles' heel. We learned to forgive, to steward what we've been given, to live under God's authority, and to receive the Holy Spirit who makes all of it possible.

Somewhere along the way, something happened. The man who started this course is not the man reading these words. That change — that is your testimony. You don't have to be a scholar or a preacher to have one. You only have to have met God and let Him do His work. And He has. You have a story now, and it is the one story in all the world that only you can tell.

For the next two gatherings, we set the teaching aside. There is no lesson to read, because *you* are the lesson. Each man in the group gets the opportunity to stand and share his salvation story — where God found him, how God changed him, and what God is doing in him now. If you are going through this course on your own, your assignment is the same: tell your story to someone. Share it with a friend, with a loved one, or even with someone you've never met. The telling is the point.

WEEKS 13 & 14

Why your story matters

I have watched hardened men weep and strangers come to Christ — not because of a clever argument, but because one man was honest about what God had done for him. Your testimony is not a footnote to the Gospel. Scripture tells us it is a weapon.

REVELATION 12:11 · NIV

They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.

Read that again. We overcome the enemy two ways: by the blood of the Lamb — which is Jesus, and His work, not ours — and by the word of *our* testimony. The blood is His part; the testimony is yours. When you tell what God has done, you are not bragging about yourself. You are bearing witness to Him, and the enemy loses ground every time you do it. That is why he works so hard to keep you quiet, to convince you that your story is too ordinary, too broken, or too late. It is a lie. God can use your past, no matter what it is.

When we accepted Jesus, we were each handed the same assignment: to tell others the good news of what He has done. Our testimony is powerful and effective, and we should not be shy in sharing it. Not all of us are called to stand on a stage — but every one of us has people we love who are still lost, and every one of us can say, simply and truly, "Here is what God did for me."

Maybe you're thinking your story is too ordinary — that you grew up in church, never hit rock bottom, and have no dramatic rescue to describe. Hear me, brother: the quiet testimony is just as powerful as the loud one. A man who was kept by God is as much a miracle as a man who was rescued by Him. Some of the most important words a young believer will ever hear are spoken by an ordinary man who simply stayed faithful. Don't measure your story against anyone else's. Tell the truth about what God has done, and let Him do the rest.

WEEKS 13 & 14

The invitation

So here is your invitation for these two weeks — and it is an invitation to act, not just to read.

If you are part of a Millennium Men chapter group, come ready to share. Each man will have his turn. Listen well to your brothers, because you will learn where one is weak and another is strong, and you will discover how much we need each other. Honor every man's story; some are telling it out loud for the very first time.

If you are going through this course on your own, you are just as invited. Pick one person this week — a friend, a family member, or someone you've never met — and tell them what God has done in your life. If you don't yet feel ready to share alone, use the mentor model: ask a more seasoned believer to go with you, introduce your friend, and let your mentor share first. Once you've seen it done a few times, you'll be ready to do it on your own.

**You have a story. Someone you love is waiting to hear it.
Don't let the enemy talk you out of your own testimony.**

WEEKS 13 & 14

Prepare your testimony

A good testimony is simple and honest. You don't need to tell your whole life — just answer three questions. Use the space below to gather your thoughts before you share.

ONE · WHERE GOD FOUND ME

What was your life like before Christ? Where were you when He found you?

TWO · HOW GOD TRANSFORMED ME

What changed when you gave your life to Him? What did He begin to heal or set free?

THREE · WHAT GOD IS DOING NOW

What is God doing in your life today — and what are you trusting Him for next?

M 2 · WEEK FIFTEEN

Spiritual Warfare

The enemy is real, his schemes are documented, and the armor has already been forged. Victorious living starts here.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Whose Kingdom am I fighting for?

WEEK FIFTEEN

Recap

The last two weeks, we've heard testimonies from our brothers in Christ. We learned where God found us, how God transformed us, and what God is currently doing in our lives. That's incredibly exciting and inspiring to me. For me, it's probably my favorite two weeks of Millennium Men. It's important to hear the stories of our fellow warriors — because where we may be weak, we may find another that is strong in that area, and of course, vice versa.

One predominant theme that I heard through the testimonies was this: we need each other. We need one another to lean on in times of struggle, and all of us — from the strongest to the weakest — will face battles. I heard a pastor once say that there are three different kinds of people: those in the middle of a crisis, those coming out of a crisis, and those poor saps who are about to go into one.

JAMES 1:2-3 · NIV

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, when you encounter trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.

Notice he doesn't say "if you face trials." He says "when." We will face trials, and when we do, we must engage against an enemy that is at war against us. This is a very important lesson for Millennium Men. They must understand how to engage in spiritual warfare in order to live victorious lives. Pay close attention to this chapter, and perhaps use it again as a reference guide. Victorious living starts here.

WEEK FIFTEEN

The spiritual warfare chapter

Ephesians 6 is known as the spiritual warfare chapter. I find that interesting since the first part of the chapter deals with humility and submission — children to parents, servants to masters — before it ever names the armor of God. I don't think that's there by accident.

EPHESIANS 6:1-4 · BSB

¹Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ²"Honor your father and mother" (which is the first commandment with a promise), ³"that it may go well with you and that you may have a long life on the earth." ⁴Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath; instead, bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

EPHESIANS 6:5-9 · BSB

⁵Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear and sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. ⁶And do this not only to please them while they are watching, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. ⁷Serve with good will, as to the Lord and not to men, ⁸because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.

⁹And masters, do the same for your slaves. Give up your use of threats, because you know that He who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with Him.

EPHESIANS 6:10-13 · BSB

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God, so that you can make your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this world's darkness, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

¹³Therefore take up the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you will be able to stand your ground, and having done everything, to stand.

EPHESIANS 6:14-17 · BSB

¹⁴Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness arrayed, ¹⁵and with your feet fitted with the readiness of the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

EPHESIANS 6:18-20 · BSB

¹⁸Pray in the Spirit at all times, with every kind of prayer and petition. To this end, stay alert with all perseverance in your prayers for all the saints. ¹⁹Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will boldly make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it fearlessly, as I should.

WEEK FIFTEEN

What is spiritual warfare?

DEFINITION · SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Any act that counters, cancels, and defeats the plans and actions of the enemy.

Our enemy is very real. He is not make-believe, nor is he a harmless horned devil with a pitchfork up to minor mischief. The enemy of our souls has power. How much power? Read the book of Job and you'll see what power the enemy can have if God allows.

He was able to create storms that destroyed Job's children's homes (**Job 1:19**). He was able to cause death and destruction all around Job. He was able to destroy his cattle — likely his livelihood — cause boils on Job's skin, and lastly, probably inspired Job's "friends" to visit him with accusations. Also, remember what happened in Pharaoh's palace. Moses turned a staff into a snake; so did Pharaoh's magicians (**Exodus 7:11–13**).

You have an enemy that is the author of disease and death. He can cause pestilence and storms to come against you. He can destroy your livelihood and bring discouragement through people you thought you could trust. That's a powerful enemy. But you shouldn't fear him, because the same Spirit that raised Christ Jesus from the dead lives inside of you (**Romans 8:11**). Though the enemy and his angels are a well-organized kingdom who hate you, they cannot touch you unless you let them. Just as God placed a hedge of protection around Job, He has placed the blood of Jesus over you that covers your sin and makes you God's son.

JOHN 1:12 · NIV

Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

A right is something we must choose to accept. Every person may have the right to free speech in the U.S., but you have to speak in order to exercise that right. You may have the right to assemble, but you have to assemble in order to exercise that right. How do we exercise the right to become children of God? We must look and act like our Father by leaving sin. **1 John 3:8** says, "The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work."

It's clear that you cannot be engaged in willful sin and be a part of the Kingdom. There is no salvation without a repentant heart. We cannot be sons of God and engaged in the devil's work. *There are only two Kingdoms, and Switzerland isn't one of them.* You are part of one of the two Kingdoms, whether you realize it or not. God won't turn His back on anyone whose heart is contrite and wants to stop sinning, though may be struggling. That's not God's heart. He loves you and only wants what's best for you. John is speaking of those who are living a willful sinful life. The first step in spiritual warfare is to know which Kingdom you are fighting for. Understand that there are only two, and you cannot remain ambivalent. Choose this day whom you will serve.

2 CORINTHIANS 2:9–11 · BSB

⁹My purpose in writing you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. ¹⁰If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And if I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven it in the presence of Christ for your sake, ¹¹in order that Satan should not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

There are two very interesting points that Paul makes here in his letter to the Corinthians:

- ① Unforgiveness gives power to the enemy.
- ② Satan has a scheme — or plot — against us.

I would imagine, like in any competition, the opposing coach has analyzed his opponent's weaknesses and strengths and develops a game plan that will help his team win. The fact that Paul states the enemy has a scheme against us means just that. He is analyzing you, your weaknesses, and your strengths — and is bent on your destruction. Why? One reason is because you're God's image-bearer, and the other is he wants your inheritance — the earth and all that's in it. He's like the son that's been left out of the will. Worse than getting nothing, Satan knows where he will spend his eternity.

WEEK FIFTEEN

Satan's common schemes

Knowing the enemy's playbook is half the battle. These are the most common attacks he runs against men.

Fear — Fear is expecting the circumstance to move, whereas faith is expecting God to move.

Shame — Satan wants you to believe God is upset with you. Many people don't pray or ask because they don't feel worthy — shame in our finances, shame through our lusts.

Weariness — Satan attacked when Jesus was weary and hungry.

Isolation — Satan attacks when we are alone.

WEEK FIFTEEN

Spiritual battles are more prevalent

We are spiritual creatures with a physical body. Aside from the physical pleasure and instinctual design, sex is so alluring because it is the only human activity, outside of Christ, that can produce eternal fruit. **Ecclesiastes 3:11** says, "God set eternity in the heart of mankind." You're wired for eternity, whether you realize it or not.

The spiritual realm is eternal; our world is passing away. Therefore, the battles that we face are more often spiritual than not.

EPHESIANS 6:12 · NKJV

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Interestingly, Paul says that we aren't even wrestling against flesh and blood. That's not our battlefield. Our battlefield resides in the spiritual realm — which is eternal, and which contains a real enemy who wants to steal, kill, and destroy everything he can from you. Now, are you ready to fight the battle? Don't be afraid. God has defeated the enemy; the only problem is, you haven't. Your battle still exists against Satan, and it's time to put on your armor and go to war.

WEEK FIFTEEN

How do we fight?

The first step to fighting a spiritual battle is to understand that your power and might is useless against the power of the enemy. The only power we have are the weapons that Christ has given to us.

I hear many Christians say, "The battle is already won," which is partially true. God's battle is won. Our battle is ongoing and will be ongoing until Jesus returns, or we die. The first step to becoming "more than a conqueror" — as Paul states that we are in **Romans 8:37** — is to engage in battle. I want to repeat that because it's so imperative: *our battle as Christians is not won. God's battle is won.* We must fight Satan diligently with the weapons that God so graciously gave to us.

RULE 1 · TALK ABOUT FIGHT CLUB

The first rule of fighting a spiritual battle is the opposite of the first rule of Fight Club. We need to talk about our fight with other believers. You're more powerful when you fight alongside other believers. **Deuteronomy 32:30** says one will put a thousand to flight and two will put ten thousand to flight. That's a pretty good return just for adding one to your team. **Ecclesiastes 4:12** says, "Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." The bottom line is this: we need each other. Don't *not* talk about fight club. Do talk about your fight with other brothers so that they can stand firm in the faith and help you fight the battle with you.

RULE 2 · REMEMBER THE LAW OF SOWING AND REAPING

If you're battling in an area, sow into that area. If you've got rebellious-teenager problems, volunteer to help serve the teens at church. If you're battling with authority problems, volunteer to help serve your local police officers. If you're facing a financial battle, sow a financial seed where God places it on your

heart. *Flip the script on the enemy by delivering a blow to his schemes right where he is trying to hurt you.* I was once facing a serious business battle and I began to pray for my adversary. Do you want to know what happened? A few months later, that adversary called me and asked me for a job. This may be the most powerful thing you can do when engaging in a spiritual battle. Sow a seed.

RULE 3 · CLEAN HOUSE

You may not remember the story of Ruth, but it's a beautiful story of redemption. Ruth needed a redeemer. She needed a man to help her and her mother-in-law, or they likely wouldn't have survived. Her situation was very dire after losing her husband. There was no welfare system in those days. Ruth made a plan to go and present herself to a man, in humility, to see if he would marry her. Before she went, Naomi, her mother-in-law, gave her some advice:

RUTH 3:3 · NKJV

Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your best garment and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.

Naomi's advice was simple: *cleanse yourself.* If you want to be close to the bridegroom, be freshly cleansed. **2 Corinthians 7:1** says, "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." We are all on a sanctification journey. Just because you want to do the right thing doesn't mean you always do it. That's part of being human. There's abundant grace for the Christian that is prayerfully walking out his sanctification. But when you sin, it is important to ask for forgiveness from God.

Many times we're seeking a promotion, earnestly asking for healing or reconciliation of a loved one, but our prayers are bouncing off the ceiling. Why?

ISAIAH 1:15-16 · NIV

When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes. Cease to do evil.

Take a spiritual bath. **Isaiah 52:11** says, "Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD." How do we take a spiritual bath? **Ephesians 5:25-26** says, "that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word." When you read the Word of God, it washes you. It washes your hands, your eyes, your heart. **Psalms 119:9** says, "How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your Word." **1 John 1:9** says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

Confess your sins. Read the Word of God over your situation. Repent. Rinse. Repeat.

RULE 4 · ASK WITH PURE MOTIVES

JAMES 4:2-3 · BSB

You crave what you do not have; you kill and covet but are unable to obtain it. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask. And when you do ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may squander it on your pleasures.

I often hear verse 2 quoted in Christian circles and by prosperity teachers, but verse 3 is equally important. How do we weigh our motives? We align our will with that of God's. We must ask for things that are pleasing to Him to give. God loves you and is a good Father — and like any good Father, He takes pleasure in your pleasure. Every parent loves to give good gifts to their children, and our God is even better than the best parent. He gives gifts because He knows the future. When we ask God with pure motives, God is gracious and loving and loves to give us the gifts that will benefit us. So be sure to ask for your gift. Then be sure to check your motive. God knows all things. He knows what's best for us, knows our future and our past. Trust God to give good gifts. I often pray for things, but temper the prayers with these words: "But not my will, God — may Your will be done in my life."

RULE 5 · THE LAW OF REST

We are human and designed to rest. God modeled it after Creation, and then He built it into the Law of Moses. He made the laws for our benefit, not His. The Law was there because He loves us. The maker of the machine asks us to rest, and therefore we should gladly obey what He says about it. Music is made through rhythm, and rhythm, by nature, has pauses. Without the pauses, we'd have just noise. The same is probably true with our lives. Without pauses, we aren't as effective. We need rest, and God commanded us to rest.

I don't debate about which is the true Sabbath — whether it's Saturday or Sunday, or some other day for that matter. I'm not sure it matters which day you choose to set aside as holy unto the Lord, but I believe you should choose one consistent day, whatever day that is. If you're an NFL player and you play on Sundays, you probably won't be able to keep the Sabbath on Sunday. If you're a restaurateur, maybe you can close on Sunday and worship. That policy seems to have worked for Chick-fil-A just fine. Making a day holy just means it's set apart. *Do no profitable work* means that you don't make money on the Sabbath. I don't think it means that you shouldn't work in your garden if that's something you truly enjoy. Pray about your Sabbath. The day was made for you, not God. Be a good steward of it, and I

believe God will bless you with energy, clarity, and strength because you've chosen to honor Him.

ISAIAH 58:13-14 · NIV

If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD's holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the LORD, and I will cause you to ride in triumph on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob.

WEEK FIFTEEN

Weapons of warfare

There are several spiritual warfare weapons. These four are the ones God has put in your hand: the Word, prayer, worship, and fasting.

THE WORD

There are several spiritual warfare weapons, but none is better than the Word of God. Speak His Word over your situation and watch the enemy melt away. Your words are meaningless to the enemy, but God's Word has power and authority. The enemy can't stand against His Word, so use it. If you're sick, read Psalm 91 over your house. If you're discouraged, read Psalm 103 over your situation. If you're looking for wisdom, read Proverbs over your situation. **Luke 1:37** says, "For no word from God will ever fail." How often does it fail? Never. If you need faith for a situation, **Romans 10:17** says that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." The Word is powerful and is useful for every situation. There is not a human condition or problem that the Word didn't address. It is not outdated or anachronistic. It is one hundred percent reliable today, just as it was two thousand years ago.

PRAYER

Get alone and go talk to God. Go for a walk with your Father. Ask Him.

PSALM 5:3 · NIV

In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly.

You don't have to be the most eloquent speaker. Just open your mouth and talk to God as if He were standing right next to you — because He is. He is even inside of you. Talk to God. I think it helps to have the posture of prayer with petitions on my knees, facing Jerusalem, but you can pray however you're led. Some of my best prayers come in the shower. I pray when I'm driving down a long stretch of highway. I pray before meals; before my girls go to school, I pray over them. I pray before I take long

trips. I once ran into a guy that has the same condition I was born with, spina bifida, but was in a wheelchair. It's only by the grace of God — and maybe a millimeter of bone — that I wasn't bound to a wheelchair for life as well. I'm thankful for so many things, and when I see others that aren't as blessed as I am, I make sure I tell God how grateful I am for these things. If God never did another thing for me, He's done enough. How could I be ungrateful about anything? I wasn't born in Rwanda or war-torn Lebanon in the eighties.

We'd make time if King Charles were waiting outside our door to talk to us. Well, the King of Kings is waiting for an appointment with you. Bring your petitions to the King. Pray. Pray often. Pray out loud. Pray the Word. Pray with thanksgiving. Pray with expectation. Remember that if you pray half-hearted prayers, you'll get nothing. God wants you to pray bold prayers. Mark Batterson says in *The Circle Maker* that if you're praying prayers that man can achieve, your prayers aren't bold enough. Pray big, audacious prayers. I believe the tailor of a man's life is the size of his prayers. Pray big, bold prayers and watch God move heaven and earth to show you just who He is.

MATTHEW 17:20 • NIV

He replied, "Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

Pray. Pray often. Pray big prayers. Pray with expectation.

WORSHIP

I'm big on symbols in the Bible. I believe that every word of the Bible is there for a reason. I believe that it's no mistake that the first battle the Israelites fought in the Promised Land was won through worship. The walls of Jericho fell when they marched around the city, and on the seventh time, they blew their horns and shouted to the Lord (**Joshua 6:1–27**). When you are facing walls that are thick, an army that outnumbers you, and a land full of giants — worship the one true God and see what happens. The battle isn't yours. It's His — but you've got to do your part.

Furthermore, we worship with more than just singing. We worship by doing a great job at work and doing our work as if unto the Lord. We worship by honoring our elders, loving our wives, and disciplining our children in a loving way.

FASTING

This one may be last on the list, but it is not least. This is by far the most powerful weapon you have against the enemy. It's so important — so powerful — that I wrote a special lesson on it. Please read it. It will explain the different kinds of fasts, how to fast, why to fast, and what to do before you fast. It's a good guide, and most of my material comes from one of my heroes in the faith, Jentezen Franklin. I often do a summer four-week lesson on fasting, where we break down the book *Fasting* by Jentezen Franklin. I highly recommend the book.

M 2 · W E E K S I X T E E N

Your Purpose

Everything we have learned comes down to this: you were made to make disciples. The Great Adventure begins the moment you step into the harvest.

B E F O R E Y O U B E G I N

Who are my disciples?

WEEK SIXTEEN

The journey so far

Before we name your purpose, let's remember the ground we've covered. Every week was a step toward this one.

Week 1 · Biblical Manhood — there is an attack on manhood, and without godly men the world suffers. Men matter, and the enemy wants to neutralize our influence.

Week 2 · Design Reveals Destiny — we are made in God's image — eternal, with unique gifts — and we carry a strong desire for healthy honor.

Weeks 3 & 4 · SHAPE — our Spiritual gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality, and Experiences reveal how God wants to use us. He gives us a heart for a people.

Week 5 · Zeitgeist — we reject the postmodern culture that makes man the center, and we believe what the Word says about God and our purpose.

Week 6 · Death, Forgiveness & Love — we grieve our sin, we forgive in order to be forgiven, and we receive God's love so that we can give it.

Week 7 · The Royal Priesthood — we are royal sons and responsible priests of our homes. Our first calling is to our own household.

Week 8 · Our Father — we remove the lens of our earthly father to see God as He is. Our view of God determines the depth of our faith.

Week 9 · Achilles Heel — the lusts of the flesh can destroy us. Our job isn't to fight temptation but to flee it, and to trust God to do the rest.

Week 10 · Stewards of Blessing — God desires to bless us as we trust Him with our finances. When we give Him the first fruits, our provision becomes His responsibility.

Week 11 · The Power of Authority — we honor the authority God places over us — unless it asks us to disobey His Word. We humble ourselves so He can raise us up.

Week 12 · The Holy Spirit — the Spirit is a Person who befriends us, lives within us, and gives us help, instruction, and power. He is essential to our purpose.

Weeks 13 & 14 · Testimony — we overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony. We should be telling others the good news of what God has done.

Week 15 · Spiritual Warfare — we take the fight to the enemy through prayer, worship, fasting, and the Word of God. These are our weapons, and they are effective.

WEEK SIXTEEN

Your purpose

If we are disciples of Jesus, then our lives should look like His life looked. And Jesus had twelve disciples — twelve men He poured His life into.

He taught them the Word and explained it to them. He answered their questions, calmed their fears, and stilled their storms. He showed them how to go out and do the things He did. He was faithful to them, patient with them, and loved them. When Peter denied Him, He restored him. Jesus was a good steward of twelve men. So the question this whole course has been building toward is simple:

Who are your disciples?

How do we know we should do the same? Because Jesus commanded it. This is the assignment given to every man who follows Him — the Great Commission:

MATTHEW 28:19–20 · NIV

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

WEEK SIXTEEN

How do we make disciples?

Remember that your SHAPE helps determine what this looks like for you — your gifts, heart, abilities, personality, and experiences shape who you are called to disciple. Here is what disciple-makers do:

- ① **Seek disciples.** Jesus saw Peter and James in a boat and said, "Follow me" (**Matthew 4:18–22**). He went looking.
- ② **No matter where they are.** Jesus called Matthew, a tax collector and an outcast unwelcome in the temple. He met men in their shame (**Matthew 9:9–13**).
- ③ **Even after betrayal.** When Jesus went to the cross, only John remained. Yet after the resurrection, He sought the others out and restored them to the mission.
- ④ **Keep eternity in mind.** His Kingdom is eternal, not earthly. Our job isn't to judge those we disciple — as an old pastor said, "My job is to catch the fish; it's His job to clean them."
- ⑤ **Run their own race.** You're called to do what God asked *you* to do. No one can fill your place — without you, there would be a hole in eternity. The eternal reward is the same for every faithful servant.
- ⑥ **Stay sharp.** Jesus often went away to pray, because time alone with God was His source of strength. God asks you to be faithful, and faithfulness is what He rewards: "Well done, good and faithful servant" (**Matthew 25:21**).

- ⑦ **Are obedient.** Your witness is crucial. We're all on a journey, but the road narrows when you accept the duty of disciple-making. We are the salt and light of the world, and the world is watching.

God's purpose is to advance His Kingdom, and His Kingdom is people. It is His will that none should perish (2 Peter 3:9).

MATTHEW 9:36-38 · NIV

When He saw the crowds, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest."

The purpose of your life as a disciple of Jesus is to join the work of the harvest. You don't have to go to a foreign country to find it — the harvest is just outside your front door. So many people are hurting and broken and need the healing only Jesus offers. You don't have the cure for their problems, but you know the One who does. We can't walk past the broken anymore without pointing them to the Great Physician. For most of us, that happens one relationship at a time.

WEEK SIXTEEN

Who do you know?

Make a list of the people you know who are far from God, or who have confided that they're going through a trial. Pray for them, and pray that God gives you the wisdom to help them. Then become a worker of the harvest.

- ① Pray for an opportunity.
- ② Invite them into your circle — coffee, lunch, a real conversation.
- ③ Tell them a little of what God has done for you.
- ④ Pray with them.

YOUR HARVEST

Name the people God is placing on your heart. Who is in your circle that needs Jesus?

TAKE A MENTOR

If you're not yet comfortable sharing your story, invite a mentor to go with you to meet your friend in need. Introduce them, and let your mentor share first. Once you've seen it done a few times, you'll be ready to do it on your own. This is the model Jesus used:

- ① Model how it's done.
- ② Encourage.
- ③ Go with them and observe.
- ④ Coach what needs improving.
- ⑤ Repeat as often as needed.

WEEK SIXTEEN

Join the movement

Millennium Men is more than a curriculum — it's a movement of men who have eternity in mind. God has called you to disciple-making, and we can't do it alone. We need each other. The movement creates three circles of engagement:

Outer Circle • Events — where men come together to fellowship, break bread, and enjoy one another while building Kingdom relationships.

Middle Circle • Forums — the Millennium Men Bible studies, like the one you've just completed — where we are equipped and trained to fight.

Inner Circle • Outreach — where men serve others through evangelism, teaching, prison ministry, and helping the poor, the widow, and the orphan.

WEEK SIXTEEN

A final word

Brother — thank you for completing the Millennium Men curriculum. You started by asking why you're here, and you didn't quit until you found the answer. That alone sets you apart.

My prayer is that these weeks have stirred you to live a life of eternal purpose — to live as Christ lived, making disciples of Him. I believe your life will be full when you fully embrace that calling. God made you to be "more than a conqueror," and He is not finished with you. He loves you, He is proud of you, and He is calling you off the sidelines and into the game.

If you've walked through this course with a Millennium Men chapter group, your journey isn't quite finished. Next week is the **Endowment Ceremony** — the gathering where you are commissioned and

sent out as a Millennium Man. Come ready. It is the moment everything in this book has been preparing you for.

JOIN THE MOVEMENT

*If you haven't yet, we invite you to join us. Band together with men
who live on purpose, for His purpose. **MillenniumMen.life***

"The two greatest days in a man's life are the day he is born, and the day he finds out
why." — Mark Twain