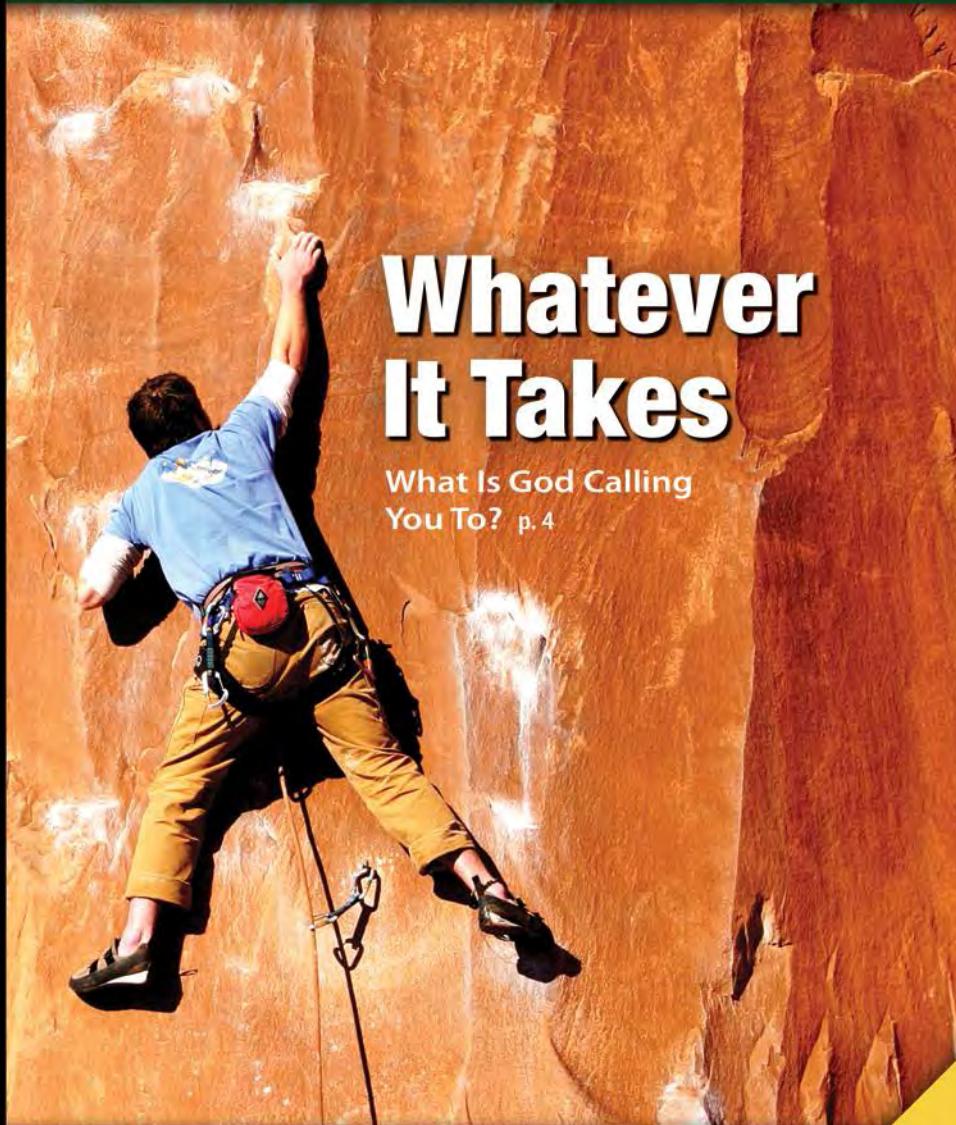


MKM

equipping the man in the mirror

daily devotions, helpful articles and more



Whatever It Takes

What Is God Calling
You To? p. 4

**ALSO
INSIDE >**

Field Staff Speaks Out (p. 7)
Loving Your Children (p. 8)
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Special thanks to Chuck Stecker, President and Founder of **A Chosen Generation** for writing the devotionals on pages 50–52. For more information on the ministry of **A Chosen Generation** go to achosen-generation.org.

Follow the *One-Year Bible* reading plan by reading the daily Scripture at the end of each devotion. To see the complete reading plan, go to oneyearbibleonline.com.

At the end of many of the devotionals you will find an abbreviation for a resource that expands on the devotional material. For more information about the Man in the Mirror Bible Study (MIMBS) go to maninthemirror.org/archives/categories.

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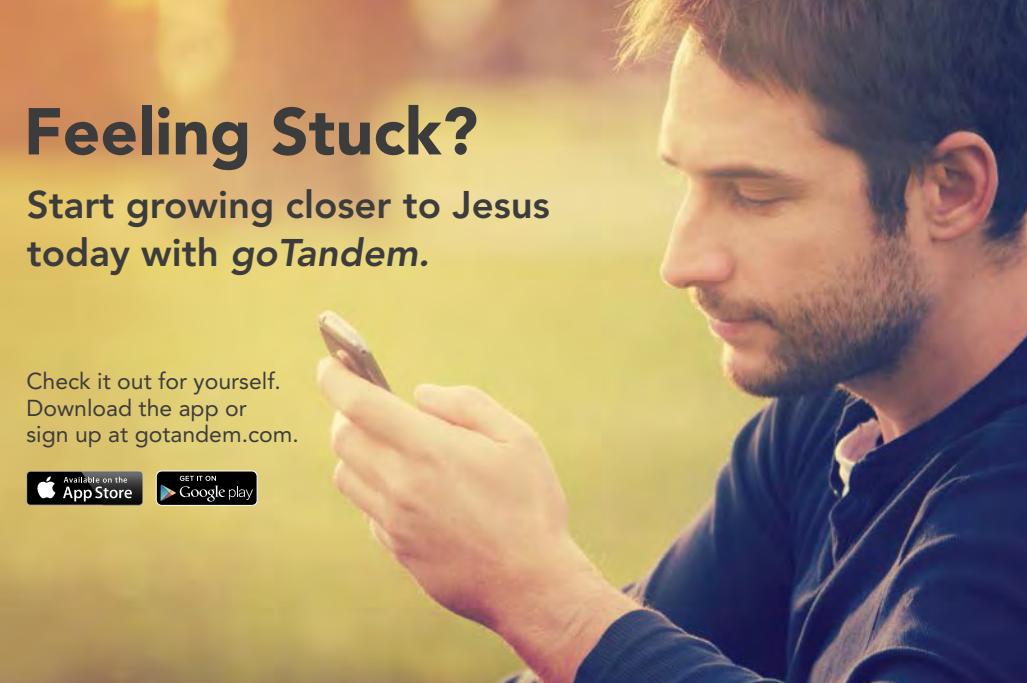
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Phone: 800-929-2536 • **Fax:** 407-331-7839 • **Website:** maninthemirror.org

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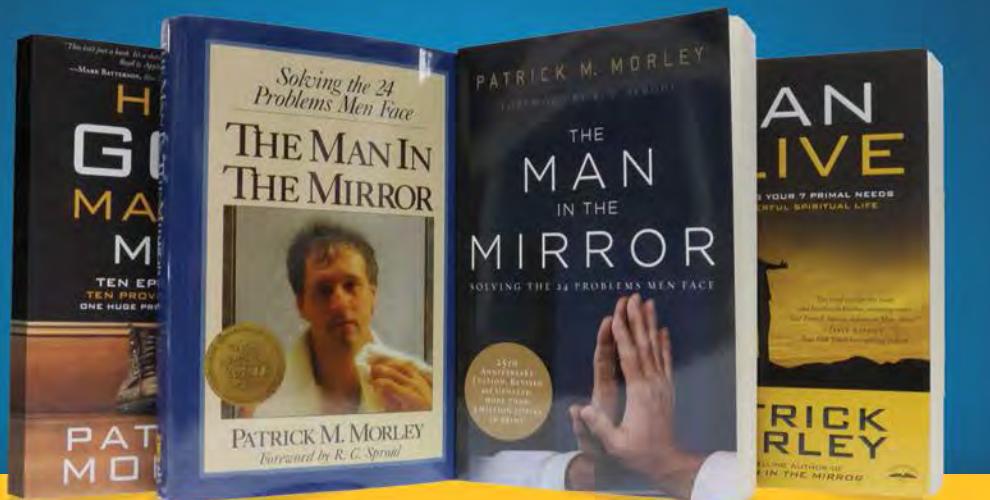
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First Things First

by David Delk, President and Co-CEO of Man in the Mirror

I don't know about you, but most of the time I want to be a man who is willing to do whatever it takes. I say most of the time, because every now and then I find myself in a slump, having a pity party, or just feeling beat up. When I get like that, it's a good reminder that I can't do whatever it takes in my own strength; I can only do whatever it takes because Jesus has done whatever it took for me.

Our culture has two major misguided views about Christianity. One is that Christianity is about doing good deeds and acting a certain way. This is a common theme among those who are not yet followers of Jesus. It also makes its way into the church when we believe that praying, reading our Bible, attending services, or working on committees is what makes us a good man.

The second is that Christianity is primarily a commitment to a set of ideas or beliefs, such as that God exists, He made the world, Jesus is the Son, and He died to pay for the sins of all who would believe in Him. Now obviously, what you believe is important. But a man can believe everything in that list and more and still not be a Christian.

Christianity is first of all about a relationship with a real person who is alive and abides in us through His Spirit. "I am the vine; you are the branches"—when we lose that relational connection we have lost the heart of Christianity and the power to live a Christ-like life.

So don't view these devotionals and your other religious activity as work that shows how spiritual you are. Instead, come to Jesus each day as a weary, broken man who needs healing and truth.

There is no better way to demonstrate that we are relying on Jesus every day than to read and digest God's word. The devotionals in this issue will help you with your work, relationships, marriage, and children/grandchildren. The goal is for us each to be so fully dependent on Jesus that we are willing to lay down our agenda and follow Him into whatever He calls us to do.

How can you be a man who will do whatever it takes? By being absolutely convinced that your friend and brother Jesus is doing whatever it takes for you.

Until every church disciplines every man,



Whatever It Takes What Is God Calling You To?

by Dr. Patrick Morley, Founder and Chairman of Man in the Mirror

By 1985, I was spending more time in ministry than working on my real estate business. One day my pastor, also my weekly lunch buddy, said, "Pat, why don't you just sell your business and go into ministry full time. It's obvious that's what you love the most." I laughed. But it stuck with me.

Then in 1986, I started The Man in the Mirror Bible Study. That led to writing *The Man in the Mirror* which was published in 1989, followed by a growing number of speaking requests.

At the same time, my business spiraled into a severe crisis. During that dark night of the soul, God humbled my heart with refiner's fire. I had caught a bad case of "success sickness"—the disease of always wanting more, but never being happy when you get it. I needed to be broken. I needed God to start over with me. And that's exactly what happened. I couldn't get enough of His Word. My hunger to reach and disciple men just kept getting stronger and stronger.

In January 1991, I stepped into what I thought was a meeting to finalize the annual company budget. But my general manager and controller had met privately beforehand and decided to confront me. They said, "Pat, we both think you need to step back into the business full time if we're going to prosper." I felt like I had been hit with a Taser.

I called Patsy and asked to come home and talk it over. As I was driving, my mind swirled with options and variables. But by the time I arrived home, it was clear we



only had two options: leave ministry, or leave business. Or, to put it in a more positive light: go back into business full time, or answer the call to ministry.

When I shared the news—and the options—with my wife she said, with uncharacteristic boldness, "Let's go for it!" So I decided to "drop my nets." It was a sweet moment. And the next few days of telling everyone—our pastor, attorney, staff, and vendors—was equally sweet. Apparently, they had all seen it coming before I had.

Always Sweet

The calling is always sweet. Usually, when God calls a man, it's only after a long period of preparation, refining by fire, profound humbling, and a deep brokenness that leads to some meteoric growth. The end result? A grateful heart that longs to serve.

Often the call to serve can feel like a reward—an undeserved but deeply appreciated blessing. Other times, as in the case of Isaiah, we're flattened by the holiness of God (Isaiah 6). But in all cases, when it finally comes, the calling is sweet, sweet, sweet, beautifully illustrated in Ezekiel 3:1–3:

And [God] said to me, "Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the house of Israel." So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. Then he said to me, "Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it." So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth.

Any man who has ever married knows how sweet it is at the beginning. Any man who has ever had children knows how sweet it is at the beginning. Any man who has ever been called to serve the Lord knows how sweet it is at the beginning. Nothing can compare to the joy of hearing, "This is what I am calling you to do." There's nothing quite like hearing, "the job is yours."

Never Easy

But if the calling is always sweet, the people never make it easy. Nowhere is this more apparent than men's discipleship. Men are especially rebellious! And the wake of destruction they leave behind is staggering, as illustrated by the following story:

My father-in-law and I had lunch at a favorite spot. Our waitress, Abby (disguised name), seemed a little down so we struck up a conversation.

Abby's car wouldn't start and, not having much money, she was overwhelmed. She was 26 years old, a single mom giving her best to raise six- and eight-year-old boys with no family in Orlando. The father of her children wasn't in the picture—he's a bad actor. So there she was, left to raise two sons—sons with no father figure—by working for tips.

She went on to say that she had a younger brother who, also without a positive father figure, is on the cusp of becoming a bad actor too. So I told her about the work we do with men and gave her a copy of *The Man in the Mirror* for her brother. When we said grace over lunch, I invited her to join us, she did, and I sensed that God encouraged her heart.

(Nothing can compare to joy of hearing, "This is what I am calling you to do.")

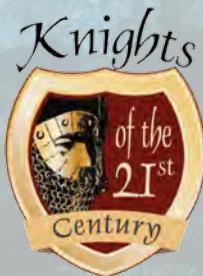


Whatever it takes!

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REAL MOMENTUM



Field Staff Speaks Out:

Making an Impact: "Whatever It Takes"

The theme for FUEL 2015 is "Whatever it takes." We want to be known as men who will go the extra mile to reach and disciple men. We asked our field staff: "Name a person who did "Whatever it takes" to make an impact on you or those around them for the Gospel."



Fred Smith was my Sunday School teacher in Jr. High and a leader in Christian Service Brigade. "Uncle Fudd," as we called him, didn't just teach a Sunday School lesson, he invested time taking us fishing and camping. I must admit I don't remember a single Sunday School lesson he taught! But his Christ-like example and love for the Lord and us kids will long be remembered. Thanks, Uncle Fudd!

—Dave Armstrong, Greater Philadelphia North Coalition for Men's Discipleship



Al Worthington was not only my coach, my boss, and my mentor—he was one of the best examples of living a life sold out for Christ that I've ever seen. As the head baseball coach at Liberty University, Al taught his players that real winning was living a life of Christ-like character. He did whatever it took to show that character in his witness, in his marriage, and in his life. I'm proud to call him friend.

—Ronn Read, Northwest Chicagoland Coalition



Floyd Allred was my mentor and friend. Floyd's passion for God, serving, and making disciples was an inspiration to me and many others. At an advanced age—and even in the face of multiple cancers throughout his body—Floyd never stopped being a disciple. He was always obedient to God, despite how he felt physically or what the world would say about him. Floyd was a mighty child of God!

—Steve Basht, Susquehanna & Delaware Area Coalition (MD)



Dave Kraft was a Navigator who would do whatever it takes to disciple men. Twenty-five years ago Dave would come to my engineering office weekly to pray with me and encourage me. For two and a half years we met; he asked questions about my "walk" with Jesus, my family relationships, my Scripture reading and memorization, and about the men that I was learning to disciple. Dave taught me how to use God's word to solve life's dilemmas. He's my hero of faith.

—Gary Pike, Three Rivers Coalition (IL)

Are You Willing To Do Whatever It Takes To Love Your Children and Grandchildren?

by Dr. Pete Alwinson

Super-smart bad guy Raymond "Red" Reddington (TV's *Blacklist*) in one episode is fully engrossed in watching an old home movie of his vivacious and precious little daughter at a birthday party. His chosen life of crime cut him off from her early on and now he has reached the desperate clarity many men realize all too late: being a good husband and dad are ever more important than any success the world can offer. Will he find his daughter, and will she accept him if he does? Is he willing to do *whatever it takes* to become a dad again? It's only a TV show, but the moment is poignant to me as a dad.

An incredible wife, three awesome grown children, two wonderful daughters-in-law, two grandchildren, and a patient God have been instrumental in teaching me *whatever it takes* to love my kids, and this is what I've learned:

- Honest Self-Evaluation:** How high a priority is it to me to love my family, really? Do I want to love them well more than I want pleasure, status or professional or financial success in life? The starting point for dads is blatant self-honesty. Jesus' coming intended to "*turn the hearts of the fathers to the children*" (Luke 1:17 NIV). Is that your desire?
- Knowing the Mission:** Fathers, being life bringers, are also life builders. The mission of a father in conjunction with the mother is to raise children who know God put them here, that He loves them, redeemed them in Jesus, and wants them to have an abundant life! To love our children well means we are seeking to develop them for life as God defines it (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Ephesians 6:4).
- Experiencing Grace:** Fathers being transformed by the Gospel know they are accepted unconditionally and find their core identity as sons of God (John 1:12). Being loved fully by God enables dads to find their identity in God and not demand their children define them. When we are loved we then find the Divine power to love unconditionally. Grace also transforms men to be the example of what God wants them to become as adults.
- Perpetual On-the-Job Learning:** Dads are always learning the love languages, temperaments and motivations of their children and devising strategies to develop each child. Since our kids are all unique, fathering



To Love Your Children and Grandchildren continues on page 57 ►

There's an App for That: Spiritual Growth and goTandem

by Andy Zawacki

The Center for Bible Engagement, the research arm of Back to the Bible, studied the spiritual lives of more than 150,000 people and found most people feel stuck spiritually at least three to four months a year. These same people desire to move forward in their faith. It has been shown scientifically that the number one way to experience radical life transformation (moving from a life of despair and hopelessness to a life filled with hope and peace) is through engaging your Bible four or more days a week. Bible engagement is not simply reading your Bible, it is receiving what the Bible has to say in your mind, reflecting on it in your heart and responding through daily, real-life application.

That's the mission of Back to the Bible, to lead people closer to Jesus on a daily basis through Bible engagement. To help carry out this mission, we developed an app called *goTandem*. This app gets to know the user's spiritual needs well enough to deliver personalized, biblical content multiple times a day engineered to help them grow.

Users select areas that they are interested in addressing, and *goTandem* sends them verses related to their chosen areas. The result is a positive change in their spiritual lives. For example, 83% of those entering *goTandem* with no weekly Bible engagement are now engaged 4 or more days a week. After engaging the Bible four or more days a week, users reported significant practical improvements in problem areas such as excessive drinking, angry outbursts and temptation of pornography.

goTandem has been a valuable resource for ministry leaders who want to transform lives. Pastor Jim has this to share:

"I gave the app out to my entire church last Sunday. I've already heard from several that they are using the tool and are...not only reading [the Bible] but beginning to engage! I can't tell you how thrilled I am at the possibilities this brings!"

Man in the Mirror and Back to the Bible will be partnering to provide *goTandem* tracks based on the challenges in The Journey to Biblical Manhood. This will be another great tool for churches to use within the Journey to provide an "all-inclusive" approach.

To learn more about how *goTandem* can partner with your ministry, contact the *goTandem* team at (402) 464-7200 or info@gotandem.com.



• ANDY ZAWACKI

Andy Zawacki is a husband, a father of triplet teens, a former pastor and teacher with a passion to help people know and experience the love of God through the power of Scripture engagement. He currently serves as the Director of Ministry Development for *goTandem*, a ministry of Back to the Bible. Andy resides in Fort Mill, SC, with his wife and children.

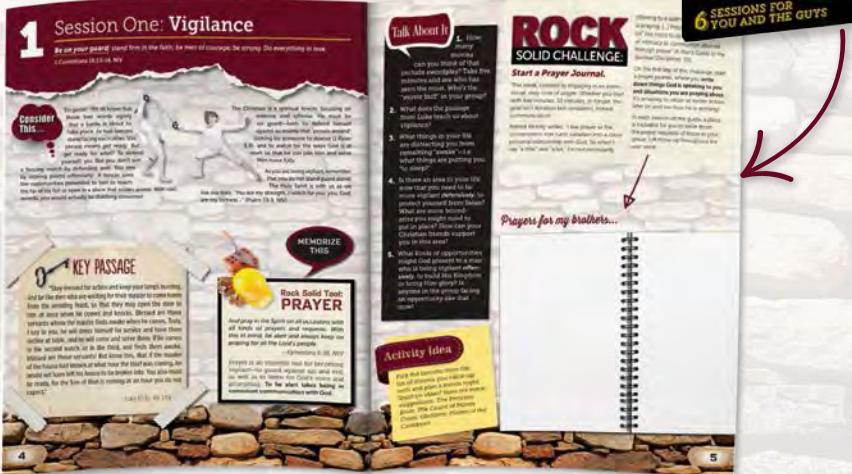
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to lead people
closer to Jesus on
a daily basis.

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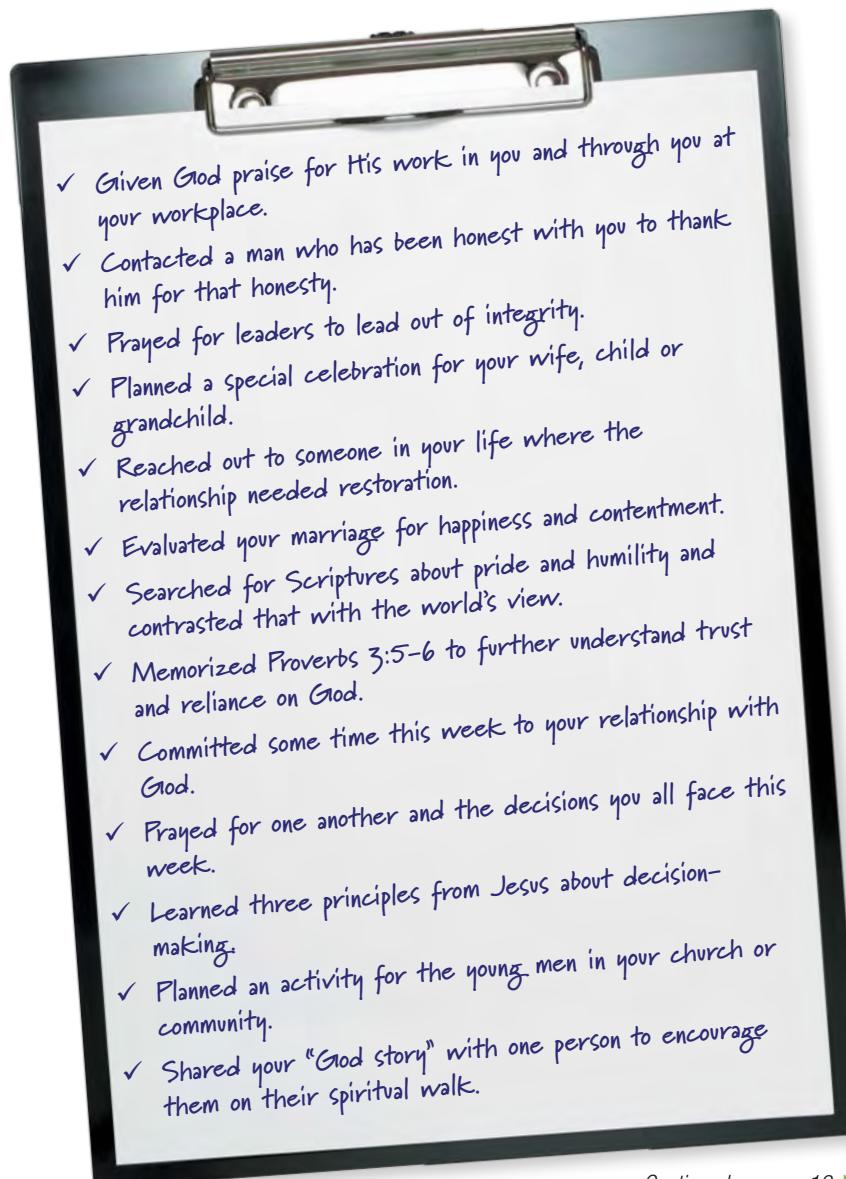
This event is the recommended kick-off event for Challenge 5 of the Journey to Biblical Manhood, centered around the spiritual disciplines.

Visit www.journeytobiblicalmanhood.org for details.

Equipping Your Men's Small Group



Get all your men engaged in the regular study of God's Word by using this magazine as a small group tool. At the end of each week's devotions, you'll see a box containing discussion questions and exercises. These can form the basis of your time together. These pages supplement those questions with additional steps. If you use this magazine with your men this quarter you will have:



Continued on page 12 ▶

4/1–4/5: From the devotionals this week, **you'll focus on God's plans for your work life.** **Suggested Action Step (SAS):** Ask each man to describe a positive or negative experience they have recently faced at work. Then ask them to share what they have learned or are learning through that situation. Spend a few minutes praising God for this learning opportunity and ask Him to continue His work in you through your workplace and colleagues.



4/6–4/12: This week, **your men will learn the value of being an honest man.** **SAS:**

Ask each man to make a list of men who have been honest with them. Allow some time to share what they have learned from those men. In this next week, contact one of those men to thank them for the impact his honesty had your life. Next week, be ready to share how those conversations went for you.

4/13–4/19: In these devotions, **you'll come to a better understanding of what it means to live your life with integrity.** **SAS:**

Think through current events. Have you seen examples of people who are living life with integrity and those who are not? Spend the next few minutes in prayer for local businessmen, pastor, and leaders, and government officials that they might lead a life of integrity.



4/20–4/26: This week **you'll learn insights from Jesus' miracle of turning water into wine at a wedding celebration.** **SAS:** Share with one another how

God has used celebrations in your lives. Ask each man to plan a celebration with his wife, child or grandchild (a special night out, a party, a vacation or some other creative idea). Be prepared to share the result of your experience with the group.

4/27–5/3: These devotions focus on resolving conflicts and restoring relationships. **SAS:**

After a few minutes of prayer, ask each man to examine his heart to see if there is a relationship in his life that needs restoration. Over the next week, reach out to that person who came to mind and allow God to work in your heart toward restoring that relationship.



5/4–5/10: This week **you'll learn what it means to be truly happy in your marriage and in your life.** **SAS:** In silence, think about how happy you are in your marriage. This week, be bold enough to ask your wife how happy she is in your marriage. Is there room for improvement there? How might your obedience or submission to God's authority impact the overall satisfaction of your marriage relationship?



5/11–5/17: This week your men will look at power that pride or humility can have in your life. **SAS:** Have the guys use their concordances or go to www.Biblegateway.com and search "pride" and "humility". Discuss God's view versus the world's view of these two areas.



5/18–5/24: From these devotionals, **your men will see the importance and benefits of full reliance on the Lord.** **SAS:** Read this verse aloud to the men, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5–6). Ask the men to memorize this verse in their favorite translation during the next week.



5/25–5/31: These devotionals will encourage your men to get to know God for who He truly is and then to let go of their illusion of Him. **SAS:** Relationships take time, cultivation and investment. Have you invested in your relationship with God? How do you do that on a consistent basis? Are you willing to commit some time this week toward the next steps in your relationship with God? What will that look like?



6/1–6/7: This week, **you will learn how God can help us with our decision making.** **SAS:** Split into groups of 2–3 and share some of the personal and professional decisions you are facing today. Spend five minutes praying for one another and those decisions. Commit to continue praying for one another throughout the next week.



6/8–6/14: From this week's devotionals, **see how Jesus faced and dealt with difficult decisions.** **SAS:** Give every man a piece of paper to list the three principles you learned about decision-making (from the devotions on pages 47–49). From the decisions you shared last week, are you using any of these principles? Put this piece of paper on your bathroom mirror, dashboard or desk to consider as you face decisions this next week.



6/15–6/21: In the devotions this week, **you'll see the importance of "doing life together" with your sons and other younger men.** **SAS:** Discuss and plan an activity for the younger men in your church or community. Make sure that the purpose of the activity is to be with the younger guys and have fun together.



6/14–6/20: This week **you'll see that God is the true author of the story of our lives.** **SAS:** Discuss what it means to allow God to tell His story through your life. Think of one way that God has worked in your life that you could share with others as an encouragement or witness to others (a "God Story"). Practice sharing these stories with each other and then share your story with someone who might need God's encouragement in their life.

How to Use This Devotional

To make the most of *Equipping the Man in the Mirror*, we have dissected a devotional so you don't miss any aspect of the magazine (see below).

Thursday—May 14 • Reluctant Leaders

Completion checkbox

Correlating Scripture

Moses answered God, "But why me? What makes you think that I could ever go to Pharaoh and lead the children of Israel out of Egypt?" Exodus 3:11 THE MESSAGE

When Moses was called to lead the people of Israel, he wasn't keen on the idea. He offered up some legitimate reasons why it would be hard for him to be their leader. He was reluctant to see himself as the leader of God's chosen people. Moses was a Hebrew slave, he stuttered, and he had murdered a man. God must have made a mistake. There must have been someone better for the job. Surely he was not good enough.

Some might say that Moses had a lack of pride or self-esteem. He offered some good excuses. He did not have a great leadership resume. He could have let his belief in his own incompetence keep him from the challenge. He could have paralyzed himself by thinking he was inadequate. Instead, he chose to trust that God would enable him to lead. Out of obedience, Moses took on the momentous occupation of leading the people of Israel to the Promised Land.

Pride, or the lack of it, was the root of his hesitancy. Whether we think we're too good or not good enough, God can't use us until we're willing to see how He can work through us. ■MIMBS

Has God called you to do something that you've been reluctant to do? How does Moses' story help you in that endeavor?

Daily Reading: 1 Samuel 15:1–16:23, John 8:1–20, Psalm 110:1–7, Proverbs 15:8–10

One-year Bible daily reading

Source material

Discussion/journal questions

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Wednesday—April 1 • In a Rut

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Colossians 3:23–24

My friend Rod said that, while he was visiting Alaska, he saw some dirt roads that were terribly difficult to navigate. In the winter they froze solid, but with the springtime thaw, they became soft. People drove on them, making deep furrows. At the beginning of one of those roads, Rod saw a sign that said, “Choose your rut carefully. You’re going to be in it for a very long time.”



That’s a picture of how some men feel about their work. God says any job can be holy and redemptive in our world. God can use any legitimate place of business to reverse the chaos resulting from the

Fall of Creation. He does that most effectively through Christians who recognize their work can be an act of worship, if it’s done with the right goal and attitude. I see two issues that may hinder a man’s ability to worship through his work. First, a man may need to ask God to help him alter his attitude. If that doesn’t change his viewpoint, a man may need to prayerfully consider changing his vocation. ■MIMBS

What advice would you give to a Christian friend who feels he is in a rut at his job? Share your thoughts with your group.

Daily Reading: Deuteronomy 18:1–20:20, Luke 9:28–50, Psalm 73:1–28, Proverbs 12:10



Thursday—April 2 • Tempted to Overwork

Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves.

Psalm 127:1–2

I’m fascinated by Formula One racing. It’s amazing that it costs as much as \$300 million per year to keep one Formula One racing team on the track. These 850-horsepower motors race around the track at about 18,000 revolutions per minute (rpms). The typical race starts with 22 cars, but it’s not uncommon for up to half of those vehicles to break down in a race that lasts only about two hours.

Imagine spending \$300 million per year to sustain a racing team, and then discover they can’t even keep a car going for two hours. By comparison, you go to just about any car lot and purchase a \$10,000 car that you can easily drive for about 100,000

miles, because it runs at about 3,000 rpms.

There’s a lesson here for guys who are tempted to run full tilt all the time. God made us in a certain way to do our work as an act of worship. If you’re running at maximum rpms all the time, you are not worshiping the Lord. Certainly you’re worshiping something, but it’s not God. ■MIMBS

How does this warning related to running at maximum rpms reflect the reality of today’s Scripture passage?

Daily Reading: Deuteronomy 21:1–22:30, Luke 9:51–10:12, Psalm 74:1–23, Proverbs 12:11

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.
Colossians 3:17

There's a legend handed down to us from medieval days about a superintendent of construction who saw several bricklayers working along a particular street. He stopped next to the first one and asked, "What are you doing?"

The man replied, "I am laying bricks."

He went a little further and asked a second man, "What are you doing?"

The man replied, "I'm earning a living."

He went a little further and asked a third man, "What are you doing?"

The man replied, "I'm building a cathedral."

All three men were engaged in the same work, yet they all saw it differently. I think we could agree that the third man saw his bricklaying as an act of worship.

I don't know what kind of job you have, so let's just say you're a gate agent at the airport. I could ask you, "What are you doing?" You might say, "I'm helping people get on airplanes." You might say, "I'm earning money."



For Your Small Group

□ April 1–5: Ask your men to write one sentence that describes how they feel about their work.

- What are the positive aspects of your work?
- What are negative aspects of your work?
- Do you need God to change some attitudes about your work? What are they?

For the Lord your God detests... anyone who deals dishonestly.
Deuteronomy 25:16

Have you ever gone to the pantry looking for a particular thing—say, peanut butter—only to be frustrated when it's nowhere to be found? You yell, "Where's the peanut butter?" Then your wife walks into the kitchen, reaches to the second shelf, lays hold of the jar of peanut butter, and hands it to you with a "you lose" grin on her face.

Sometimes things are so obviously right before our eyes that we miss them. Dishonesty is like that. It's so apparent that we often miss how wholly and completely it taints every aspect of life. If we take off our rose-colored glasses, however, we see a world painted in a whole different hue—the washed out shades of dishonesty. Watch the headlines:

- "Pentagon probe aims at payoffs."
- "House Ethics Committee issues censure."
- "Twenty percent of GDP goes unreported to Uncle Sam."
- "College cheating ring uncovered."

Frankly, dishonesty is so prevalent that we have accepted it as the norm. We've gotten so used to it, we may have lost sight of the fact that it's cutting men off from God.

□ MIM 25—Chapter 21

Do you agree or disagree with the statement that dishonesty cuts men off from God? Explain your answer.

Daily Reading: Deuteronomy 29:1–30:20, Luke 11:37–12:7, Psalm 78:1–31, Proverbs 12:19–20

Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.

Luke 16:10

A man sitting next to me on a plane ordered a drink—a bourbon and Coke. The busy flight attendant said she would come back to collect his money, which he left lying on his tray table. She passed up and down the aisle until it became obvious she had forgotten about his money. My aisle-mate watched her make a half-dozen trips past us. Then he picked up his money and slipped it back into his coat pocket. He sold his integrity for a six-dollar drink.

Unless we hold onto integrity in every situation, no matter how big or small, we grieve God and cut ourselves off from the larger blessing that we want and that God wants to give. Luke 16:10 records a statement Jesus gave His disciples at the conclusion of a parable. "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much," He said, "and whoever is

dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much." The honesty with which we handle things that seem inconsequential speaks volumes about our overall integrity.



□ MIM 25—Chapter 21

Have you ever been in a situation similar to the one described here, with the man who ordered the drink on the plane? How did you handle it? Would you handle it differently today?

Daily Reading: Deuteronomy 31:1–32:27, Luke 12:8–34, Psalm 78:32–55, Proverbs 12:21–23

Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity and godly sincerity. We have done so, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God's grace.
2 Corinthians 1:12

Today's Scripture, written by the apostle Paul, highlights the importance of integrity. This attribute is a common thread among the Bible's great heroes. Some, like Solomon, were born into royal families and became kings. Others, like Gideon, came from the worst families. Samson was a powerful figure, while timid Moses practically feared his own shadow. Jonah doubted, yet David had unwavering faith. What attracted God to these men of such diversity? What shared trait did they possess, besides their faith in Him? The answer will be painful to some of us: *God knew He could trust these men to do the right thing, even when they were all alone.*

Some of these men immediately and

willingly obeyed God, while others were like pouty children, scoffing and kicking and protesting all the way. In the final analysis, though, after they fussed and fumed for a while, they settled on the honest way. After their faith, this characteristic, more than any other, distinguished the lives of Bible heroes. Honesty was the common thread that attracted God's blessing on their lives.  MIM 25—Chapter 21

Re-read today's Scripture passage. Would you be able to make a similar claim in your own life? Why or why not? Share your experience with other men.

Daily Reading: Deuteronomy 32:28–52, Luke 12:35–59, Psalm 78:56–64, Proverbs 12:24

Thursday—April 9 • The Verdict Is the Same

The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.
Proverbs 11:3

When we think about dishonesty, we usually think of the gross indiscretions, like cheating on taxes, stealing from our company, lying to a prospect, or cheating on our wives. If we limit our thinking to major matters, we miss the point that God pays attention to the issues that we may see as trivial. To God, it's not so much about the size of the indiscretion, but it's about the positive and negative character qualities revealed by our choices. In His eyes, we are just as guilty when we stuff our suitcases with motel towels as we are if we had robbed a bank. To be sure, the *consequences* are different, but the *verdict* is still guilty.

One evening I stopped by the home of a business colleague to drop off some papers. Next to his phone was a notepad embossed

with the company logo. The company policy manual stated that no office supplies were to be consumed for personal use. After that, my confidence in him was not quite the same. For him, that was a costly pad of paper.  MIM 25—Chapter 21

Most men cut corners on little things, like running yellow lights, speeding, taking office supplies home, promising two-day delivery while knowing it will take a week. Do you agree that how a man handles these "little things" reveals something about his character? If someone watched you handle these types of situations, what conclusion would they draw regarding your character?

Daily Reading: Deuteronomy 33:1–29, Luke 13:1–21, Psalm 78:65–72, Proverbs 12:25

So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?
Luke 16:11–12

Today's passage comes right after Jesus told His disciples, "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much" (Luke 16:10). If we apply this passage to our lives, it has tremendous implications for our daily choices.

For instance, a cab driver once offered me a blank receipt. "You fill it in however you want," he said. "No," I replied. "You see, I'm a Christian, and that just wouldn't be right." After a long, blank stare, he just shrugged his shoulders and said, "Okay, buddy, whatever you say."

Scripture calls us to demonstrate our honesty even at the lower end of the integrity spectrum. It even indicates that we must do that before God will let us have greater blessings and responsibilities.

As today's passage from Luke 16 reminds us, God notices when we prove ourselves trustworthy by choosing the way of integrity even in matters considered insignificant



the world around us. In His eyes, little things are a proving ground for our ability to handle bigger things. Furthermore, when we are honest, a surprised world gives a second thought to the possibility that Christ really can make a difference in a person's life.  MIM 25—Chapter 21

In Luke 16:11–12, Jesus asks two rhetorical questions. If you were called on to answer them, how would you reply?

Daily Reading: Deuteronomy 34:1–Joshua 7:15, Luke 13:22–15:32, Psalm 79:1–81:16, Proverbs 12:26–13:1



For Your Small Group

□ April 6–12: Think of an example of a man in the Bible who demonstrated honesty and a man who demonstrated dishonesty.

- Did their honesty or dishonesty have an immediate impact on their lives? Explain.
- Did their honesty or dishonesty reflect their relationship to God? If so, in what ways?

Those who cleanse themselves... will be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.
2 Timothy 2:21

A man became very successful in the real estate brokerage business. He clearly stood out among his peers. A hopeful protégé asked him to reveal how he was able to excel to such heights. “I’m just an average, hardworking broker,” the broker replied. “I’m nothing special. You see, it’s just that so many people in this business cut corners. It makes it so an average man, who also strives to be honest, all of the sudden looks really great!”

God is looking for a few *good* men. You don’t have to be the smartest, best-looking, most articulate man to get a job on God’s team. You just have to be faithful. God is

looking for honest men who have proven they can be trusted, in small matters as well as bigger issues. Most men are so mired in the quicksand of dishonesty that an average, hardworking man looks very good to God, and he usually attracts people as well. After all, would you rather depend on someone you know is reliable, or someone who may not be trustworthy? □MIM 25—Chapter 21

God will use you if He knows He can trust you.
Can He? Share your thoughts with the men in your group.

Daily Reading: Joshua 7:16–9:2, Luke 16:1–18, Psalm 82:1–8, Proverbs 13:2–3

□ Tuesday—April 14 • The Ten Commandments

So be careful to do what the Lord your God has commanded you; do not turn aside to the right or to the left. Walk in obedience to all that the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.

Deuteronomy 5:32–33

After God observed mankind for a while, He decided to set down ten rules for our benefit. Most of us are familiar with these Ten Commandments (see Exodus 20), so we know that lying, cheating and stealing all made this top ten list. Honesty and integrity permeate all of God’s commandments, so anytime we disobey one of them, we commit an act of dishonesty. Depending on the situation, our disobedience may seem like a petty issue.



But the gravity of our obedience to God’s plan is revealed in today’s passage from Deuteronomy 5. Our prosperity has

everything to do with our obedience in being honest.

With that in mind, though, let’s admit that none of us can be honest in our own strength. But as we surrender our will to Christ, He can do it through us. If you’ve surrendered to Christ, why don’t you join me in taking a pledge to let Him work in us, transforming us so we become increasingly like Him. □MIM 25—Chapter 21

Romans 12:2 says, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Why is this verse so important, especially since none of us can really be honest in our own strength, but only through the power of Christ working within us?

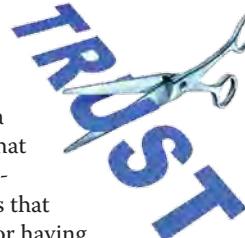
Daily Reading: Joshua 9:3–10:43, Luke 16:19–17:10, Psalm 83:1–18, Proverbs 13:4

The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in people who are trustworthy.
Proverbs 12:22

John told Bill he’d attend the open house for Bill’s new office, but he didn’t come. Later Bill learned his friend kept a previously scheduled appointment at the same time. Bill wondered why his friend didn’t just tell him about the other meeting. That incident put a wedge in their relationship that has never been erased. Relationships are built on trust, and that fragile thread of credibility is easily broken. We often assume a white lie won’t hurt anyone, but that’s simply not true.

Furthermore, we don’t always lie just with our words. The nineteenth-century art critic John Ruskin noted, “The essence of lying is in deception, not in words; a lie may be told by silence, by equivocation, by the accent on a syllable, by a glance of the eye attaching a particular significance to

a sentence; and all these kinds of lies are worse and baser by many degrees than a lie plainly worded, so that no form of blinded conscience is so far sunk as that which comforts itself for having deceived, because the deception was by gesture of silence, instead of utterance.” □MIM 25—Chapter 21



Has someone’s lie fractured one of your relationships? Describe that experience. Do you think it’s possible for the relationship to be restored? Why or why not? Talk about this with another man.

Daily Reading: Joshua 11:1–12:24, Luke 17:11–37, Psalm 84:1–12, Proverbs 13:5–6

□ Thursday—April 16 • The Narrow Road

Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

Matthew 7:13–14

The American comedian and actor George Burns once said, “The most important thing in acting is honesty. If you can fake that, you’ve got it made.” As in so many aspects of the spiritual pilgrimage, God’s way is usually the road least traveled. The street named “Honest” is generally a narrow, uncrowded path. To distinguish yourself before God, you need only differentiate yourself from the mass of men by choosing the way of integrity.

Dishonesty is a wide road paved by moral relativism. The basic ethic goes like this: If no one sees you cheating (or lying or stealing), then you won’t get caught; and if you don’t get caught, then it’s all right, because unless you are caught, you haven’t

technically done anything wrong. Whether your choices involve hotel towels or income taxes, returning change or running a yellow light, leaving work early or coming in late, the guiding principle is this: The narrow road leads to abundant life, but only a few actually are willing to travel on it. □MIM 25—Chapter 21

Describe one specific choice a man might make if he is a moral relativist. If you had an opportunity to talk to that person, in an effort to persuade him to change, what would you say? Share your thoughts with your group.

Daily Reading: Joshua 13:1–14:15, Luke 18:1–17, Psalm 85:1–13, Proverbs 13:7–8

□ Friday, Saturday, Sunday—April 17, 18, 19
Decide Once and for All

*Who, then, are those who fear the Lord?
He will instruct them in the ways they should choose.*
Psalm 25:12

We all face the dilemma of deciding whether or not to be honest on a case-by-case basis. During the course of a normal day, we each have scores of opportunities to lie, cheat and steal. If we must decide each time whether or not we will be honest, we consume a lot of energy and run the risk of making sloppy decisions that compromise our integrity. Instead, why not just go ahead and settle the integrity issue once and for all? Why not simply decide that you'll always do your best to be honest?

That's what God liked so much about Job. After Job lost his family and his business, he still didn't charge God with wrongdoing. Then God said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his *integrity*..." (Job 2:3, emphasis added). Because of Job's integrity, even in the midst of



extreme hardship, God "blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the former part" (Job 42:12).

By settling the issue once and for all and deciding always to choose the way of integrity, as revealed by God, we can liberate ourselves from the bondage of dozens of daily decisions. Like the woman who didn't know how dingy her whites were till she tried a new, improved detergent, we'll see a noticeable difference in the brightness of our souls. **MIM 25—Chapter 21**

Most men make dozens of integrity decisions each day. But we can settle the issue by making a once-and-for-all commitment

to always choose the honest way. Are you willing to make that commitment? If so, express that commitment out loud to God.

Daily Reading: Joshua 15:1–20:9, Luke 18:18–19:48, Psalm 86:1–88:18, Proverbs 13:9–14



For Your Small Group

- April 13–19: On a large piece of paper or white board, ask your men for words that are associated with a man who demonstrates integrity.**
- Are there words on that list that describe men you know? Are there words on that list that describe you?
 - How does a man seek to live with more integrity?

□ Monday—April 20 • Jesus' First Miracle

This miraculous sign at Cana in Galilee was the first time Jesus revealed his glory. And his disciples believed in him.
John 2:11 NLT

I heard about a policeman who saw a man driving erratically and pulled him over. "Have you been drinking?" he asked the driver.

"Oh, no sir," the man replied. "I'm just tired."

The policeman noted that the man was a priest, and then he saw an empty wine bottle on the floor. He asked, "If you're telling me the truth, then what used to be in that bottle?"

The priest said, "Just water." The policeman asked for the bottle and he sniffed it. "No," he said. "It was wine."

The priest looked startled, turned his eyes to heaven and said, "Wow, God! You did it again!"

Jesus' first miracle was turning water into wine at a wedding (see John 2:1–11). In some ways, the magnitude of Jesus' other miracles—healings, dominion over natural phenomena, deliverance from demonic powers—may make this one appear trivial. Yet Scripture says this first miracle revealed Jesus' glory and gave His disciples reason for faith. Jesus' miracles give evidence of His identity as God's Son. **MIMBS 2**

Why do you think witnessing Jesus' first miracle helped His disciples to put their faith in Him?

Daily Reading: Joshua 21:1–22:20, Luke 20:1–26, Psalm 89:1–13, Proverbs 13:15–16

□ Tuesday—April 21

• What Is a Miracle?

Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine.

John 2:7–9a

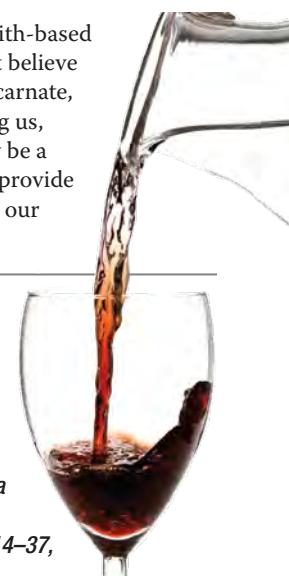
C.S. Lewis defined a miracle as an interference with nature by supernatural power. We see that in a big way in the changing of water into wine. Most of us have lifted a six-gallon can of gasoline. A can that is full of fuel will weigh about 36 pounds. And water is considerably heavier than gasoline. So when Jesus told these servants to fill six jars, each holding 20–30 gallons, He was giving them a sizeable task. If Jesus wanted to change water into wine, why didn't He just do a little bit?

Obviously they needed more wine, because this was a big party. But I think also, such a massive display of power supported the authenticity of Jesus' identity. The large amount of water becoming wine, coupled with the servants and the master of the banquet serving as witnesses, would hinder anyone who wanted to discredit the miracle.

Christianity is a faith-based religion. If you don't believe that Jesus is God incarnate, God dwelling among us, then you can't really be a Christian. Miracles provide evidence to support our faith. **MIMBS 2**

List the primary thing you believe about Jesus. How do His miracles, as recorded in Scripture, support that belief?

Daily Reading: Joshua 22:21–23:16, Luke 20:27–47, Psalm 89:14–37, Proverbs 13:17–19



*Let the light of your face shine on us, fill my heart with joy
when their grain and new wine abound.*

Psalm 4:6–7

On the surface, it seems like Jesus' first miracle—turning water into wine—was really not all that important. With so many other urgent problems to take care of, why would Jesus even bother with this request?

We've already discussed how this event caused His disciples to respond in faith. But it's also important to note that, in the Hebraic culture of biblical times, wine symbolized God's blessing and abundance. You can see the hint of that in today's Scripture passage. In that context, when the wine disappeared, it could be interpreted that God's blessing had disappeared as well.

It's interesting that Jesus' very first miracle focused on a symbol of God's blessing. Eventually Jesus said, "I have come that they

may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10). Some versions say "abundant life." This first miracle says the same thing, but in symbolic language. By changing water into wine at a wedding, Jesus literally communicated that He had come to bless people and give them joy. That's still true. The only reason Jesus came was to bless us with abundant life. ■MIMBS 2

How are you responding to Jesus, in light of the fact that He wants to bless you and give you joy? Share your ideas with your group.

Daily Reading: Joshua 24:1–33, Luke 21:1–28, Psalm 89:38–52, Proverbs 13:20–23

Thursday—April 23 • Holy Marriage

Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.

Revelation 19:7

Jesus' public ministry began with a miracle performed at a wedding. He decided to give the first proof of His deity at a marriage ceremony. We know from watching our own politicians that the settings they choose for speeches and events are incredibly symbolic. News reporters sometimes will discuss the significance of the setting almost as much as they will discuss the content of the speech itself.

Jesus was single. He never married, yet He underscored the dignity and sanctity of marriage by performing His first miracle at a wedding. And in today's verse we see the wedding imagery at the end of Scripture, revealing the celebration

that will occur in heaven to honor the relationship Jesus (the Lamb) has with His followers (the bride).

In today's culture, no institution is under greater assault than marriage. The setting of Jesus' first miracle calls His followers to refuse to give in to societal standards. Instead, this event demonstrates that marriage is a precious relationship, holy and sanctified to reflect God's blessing to the world. ■MIMBS 2

Does the way you are living in your marriage reflect more of the world's view or God's view? Explain your answer.

Daily Reading: Judges 1:1–2:9, Luke 21:29–22:13, Psalm 90:1–91:16, Proverbs 13:24–25



The cheerful heart has a continual feast.

Proverbs 15:15

Throughout the Old Testament, God established various annual feasts and celebrations for the Israelite people. Then, in the New Testament, the Gospels note that Jesus celebrated those very same feasts. But He also performed His first miracle at a celebratory event—a wedding. Jesus turned water into wine to cover a shortage in supplies (see John 2). In doing this, He endorsed the whole concept of joyous celebration for believers.

Many years ago, Andrew Carnegie said, "The older I get, the less I listen to what people say. I just watch what they do."

The record of Jesus' first miracle is only 11 verses long, and records only four sentences from Jesus. Yet He communicated volumes by His actions. His miracle supported His claims of divinity. Beyond that, He salvaged the host family's reputation, thereby communicating kindness and love. As noted yesterday, He underscored the



importance of marriage. And He also communicated that, while He would call His followers to a life set apart from the world, His Kingdom would be primarily characterized by joy rather than sorrow.

Several years ago I attended the dedication of a new building at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, Florida.

I remember telling David Delk, "I needed this."

Celebration is important, because it provides balance for life's daily trivialities, absurdities, banalities and cynicisms. It gives perspective. Two thousand years ago, Jesus endorsed this same spirit of celebration when He attended a wedding and turned water into wine.

■MIMBS 2

What is the connection between celebration and joy in your life? When was the last time you stopped to really celebrate an important blessing God has given?

Daily Reading: Judges 2:10–6:40, Luke 22:14–23:12, Psalm 92:1–96:13, Proverbs 14:1–6



For Your Small Group

□ **April 20–26: Read about the miracle where Jesus turned water into wine in John 2:1–11 aloud.**

- Why do you think Jesus chose this as His first miracle? What does this miracle tell you about Jesus?
- What impact did the miracle have on the bride and groom? On the wedding guests? On the disciples?
- Has Jesus ever done something this unexpected in your life?

□ Monday—April 27 • The High Cost of Unresolved Conflict

*A brother wronged is more unyielding than a fortified city;
disputes are like the barred gates of a citadel.*
Proverbs 18:19

Several years ago during a NASCAR race, Tony Stewart nudged Jeff Gordon's back bumper. Gordon crashed into the wall and was out of the race. In an interview a few minutes later, Gordon said something like, "The next time Tony's holding me up, it'll only take about a half a lap for him to be out of my way." I remember thinking, Now that's escalating a quarrel.

Quarrels and disputes can be quite expensive. Wrecked cars are nothing compared to wrecked relationships. We all offend brothers on occasion—sometimes on purpose! But the practical advice of the Bible leads us



to resolve these conflicts. Jesus even put it in the "top two" when He said, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 19:19).

When you're facing conflict, remember that being a peacemaker requires strength and courage, but it also offers a great reward. □MIMBS 3

From your own experience, describe a quarrel that led to division and separation.

How could the participants have avoided the costly result? Talk about these lessons with your group.

Daily Reading: *Judges 7:1–8:17, Luke 23:13–43, Psalm 97:1–98:9, Proverbs 14:7–8*

□ Tuesday—April 28 • No Divisions

I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.
1 Corinthians 1:10

The apostle Paul addressed a division that occurred in the Corinthian church. Factions were being created in the congregation. Paul used a positive approach with the Corinthians, urging them rather than commanding them. But his language is very strong. If things were not resolved, he saw a split coming.

Paul had invested about 18 months with this congregation. He spoke as a spiritual older brother when he wrote, "You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans?" (1 Corinthians 3:3). Paul basically says, "I'm a little surprised that after all you've

received, you still are behaving like cultural Christians rather than real Christians."

Paul clearly cared for this group of believers, and he also cared about how they represented Jesus to others. Love often requires gracious confrontation, so both parties can avoid the high cost of division and separation. □MIMBS 3

Do you have a spiritual "older brother" who can speak forcefully and lovingly into your life? If so, how has he helped you through difficult situations? If not, how could you find someone to fill that role?

Daily Reading: *Judges 8:18–9:21, Luke 23:44–24:12, Psalm 99:1–9, Proverbs 14:9–10*

□ Wednesday—April 29 • Perfect Theology vs. Perfect Love

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.
John 13:34–35

Jesus said His followers would be noticed because of their love for one another. Jesus did not say, "Everyone will know you are my disciples when you finally establish a perfect theology."

Having correct doctrine is extremely valuable. But when all is said and done, theology is the result of someone trying to see God clearly while looking through warped glass. That's the imperfect result of finite man trying to comprehend an infinite God. You can try to perfect your theology, but at the end of the day you have to surrender to a little mystery.

Jesus said the greatest commandment is

that we should love God, and the second is that we should love our neighbors. So perhaps today, we need to be less concerned about asking who is right and who is wrong on the finer points of theology. And instead, we need to ask ourselves, "How can I love other Christians in a way that others will know I am a disciple of Jesus Christ?" □MIMBS 3

Have you felt pressure to have a "perfect theology"? Have you ever found yourself putting this above loving a brother in Christ?

Daily Reading: *Judges 9:22–10:18, Luke 24:13–53, Psalm 100:1–5, Proverbs 14:11–12*

□ Thursday—April 30

• Restoring a Brother

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:1–2

Every man eventually will face at least one major disagreement with a Christian brother. Several years ago I talked to a man who was on the verge of walking away from one of his friends, because he was embarrassed by the man's behavior. His friend was acting very worldly, doing things like ragging on sales clerks and blowing up at waitresses.

We talked about the situation, and we dealt with this question: What would brotherly love do? We came to the conclusion that he shouldn't terminate the relationship, but neither



should he leave things at status quo. He would confront the friend, like Paul confronted the Corinthians when he noted, "My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you" (1 Corinthians 1:11).

Paul jumped into the middle of the issue that threatened their unity. Very few people really enjoy conflict. But at some point, true love will prayerfully and gently initiate some difficult conversations. □MIMBS 3

Have you ever been confronted "prayerfully and gently"? What was the result? Explain how it might have ended differently if you had been confronted in anger.

Daily Reading: *Judges 11:1–12:15, John 1:1–28, Psalm 101:1–8, Proverbs 14:13–14*

**□ Friday, Saturday, Sunday—May 1, 2, 3
Love Brings Healing and Protects Relationships**

The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.
Proverbs 12:18

About five years ago, my wife Patsy broke her ankle. It never healed correctly, so eventually she had outpatient surgery to put in some screws and a plate. I don't know what the doctors used for her anesthesia, but when we left, she was pretty loopy. On the way home, she asked me if I had called our daughter. I told her yes, I had. Ten minutes later she asked the same question. And ten minutes later she asked again. I was thinking, *Wow! I didn't know foot surgery could affect the brain!* That's how much she was thrown off balance by the medication.

Patsy was supposed to keep her foot elevated for several days, and then she was scheduled for a follow-up appointment. So that first evening, I was doing my best to care for her, but frankly, she just didn't want to accept the limitations required by her doctor. We ended up in one little quarrel, then another little quarrel, and then

I do not enjoy conflict at all, but finally I initiated



a hard conversation. I reached way into our past and said, "Patsy, do you remember that a few years ago you and I made a covenant that if one of us ever got sick, we would do our utmost not to be a difficult person to the caregiver?" Instead of getting mad and letting the situation escalate, I went right at it. I wasn't angry or hostile or reckless. I tried to be gentle and to consider what was best for Patsy. But I didn't ignore the situation either.

Positive confrontation isn't easy or fun. But it is an expression of love. It brings healing and it protects relationships, because it defuses quarrels and heals divisions. □MIMBS 3

How might these lessons apply to a situation you are currently facing in your workplace? How about in your home? Or in your church? Share your thoughts with other men.

Daily Reading:
*Judges 13:1–18:31,
John 1:29–3:21,
Psalm 102:1–
104:23, Proverbs
14:15–21*



For Your Small Group

□ April 27–May 3: Ask someone to read aloud the devotional, "Restoring a Brother" found on page 27.

- Have you experienced an attempt at conflict resolution that ended positively? And one that ended negatively?
- What were the differences in these situations?
- What has to happen for these attempts to have a positive outcome?

□ Monday—May 4 • Living in the Tension

He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord.
Proverbs 18:22

At Man in the Mirror, we find that developing a godly marriage is a man's biggest challenge. Imagine a set of old-fashioned scales with a tray hanging on either side. Suppose you could set your "marriage problems" on one tray, and all other problems on the other tray. Which side do you think would sink lower, demonstrating that it's heavier. For most men, the side laden with "marriage problems" would be much heavier than all the other problems put together.

The wise writer of Proverbs tells us a good wife is a gift from God. But Scripture also notes that marriage requires hard work. The apostle Paul even wrote, "those who marry

will face many troubles" (1 Corinthians 7:28). Marriage isn't perfect. It carries complications. A Christian husband must learn to live in the tension between those two ideas—marriage is good, but it's not easy. All relationships are hard. Since your marriage should be your closest and most intimate human relationship, it stands to reason it would be the hardest to figure out, and the hardest to get right. □MIMBS 4

Name a man whom you believe has a strong marriage. List three evidences you've witnessed which support your choice.

Daily Reading: *Judges 19:1–20:48, John 3:22–4:3, Psalm 104:24–35, Proverbs 14:22–24*

□ Tuesday—May 5 • Keeping God's Commands

Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them... Keeping God's commands is what counts.

1 Corinthians 7:17, 19

When my daughter wanted to get married, we made a list together of four things she wanted in a man. He would have to be passionate and fun loving. He would have to lead her into holiness. And he would have to be laid back. Admittedly, some of those items seem mutually exclusive. After a couple of years I asked her, "Do you think we should shorten the list? It's an overwhelming task to find a guy who can do all of this." She said, "I'm sticking with it."

Then she encountered a guy who actually met all of her criteria, and still she hesitated. He was everything she was looking for, and she felt like they were falling in love, but she didn't know if they would be happy. I remember

saying, "You're going to have to decide whether you want to be imperfectly happy or perfectly unhappy." Striving for perfect happiness through marriage won't yield the desired result. In fact, it will lead to total failure. Whether you're married or single, Scripture clearly says your goal shouldn't be happiness, but obedience. □MIMBS 4



Which is more important in your life—being happy, or keeping God's commandments? Explain your answer to another man.

Daily Reading: *Judges 21:1–Ruth 1:22, John 4:4–42, Psalm 105:1–15, Proverbs 14:25*



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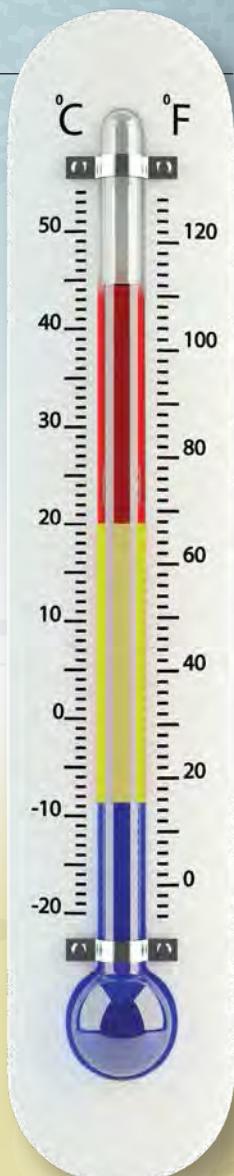
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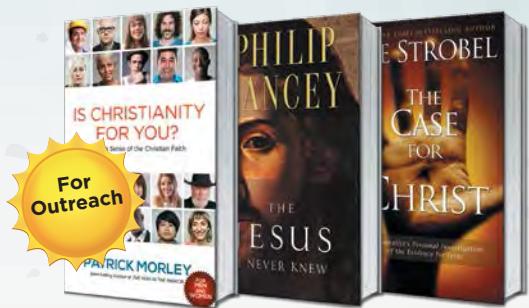
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For Small Groups

For Dads

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□ Wednesday—May 6 • Imperfectly Happy or Perfectly Unhappy?

To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

1 Corinthians 7:12-14

Some men are extremely unhappy in their marriage. They are tired of the little nitpicking and peevishness, the power struggles and finding fault. In fact, it's ironic that, for a lot of men, the very things that irritate them now about their wives are the things that originally attracted them. They thought it was cute back then, but now it's irritating. That kind of silliness is anchored in a cultural lie, leading us to believe the most important thing about marriage is personal happiness.

To combat this, we need to decide whether we'd rather be imperfectly happy, or be perfectly unhappy. We may think we are unhappy now, but the results of not learning how to live in harmony will lead to

greater unhappiness for us, and for the generations that follow.

If you screw up your marriage, you will pay, and your children will pay, and your children's children will pay. Eventually, there will be a guy like me whose family is still reeling from a decision made 80 years before by a grandfather who thought marriage was all about being happy, and so he abandoned his family when things became difficult. □MIMBS 4

Have you decided if you'd rather be imperfectly happy or perfectly unhappy? Talk about this with your group.

Daily Reading: Ruth 2:1-4:22, John 4:43-54, Psalm 105:16-36, Proverbs 14:26-27

□ Thursday—May 7 • The Authority of Scripture

I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

Psalm 119:10-11

God is a redeemer, and He can heal a family line broken by the selfishness of someone who pursues personal happiness at all cost. I'm seeing healing in my own family. But in my opinion, pursuing happiness as a goal can become a curse. What really counts is obeying God's commands.

The issue in marriage, and in almost every other venture, is the issue of authority. Authentic Christians settle this question by saying, "God's Word is the final rule of authority for all matters of faith and life. I will obey God's Word."

That answer won't make us perfectly happy. We live in a fallen world that labors under the curse of sin. Our world, and everything in it, has been corrupted. We

see problems everywhere—even in our marriages. But even in the midst of all that brokenness, obedience brings victory. We can know a joy that the world does not understand. And it begins when we stop wondering if the Bible is true, and we start trying to figure out how it's true—how it applies to the situations we face. □MIMBS 4

How have you settled the question regarding the final authority for all matters of your faith and life? How is that demonstrated in your life?

Daily Reading: 1 Samuel 1:1-2:21, John 5:1-23, Psalm 105:37-45, Proverbs 14:28-29

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

Ephesians 5:25–28

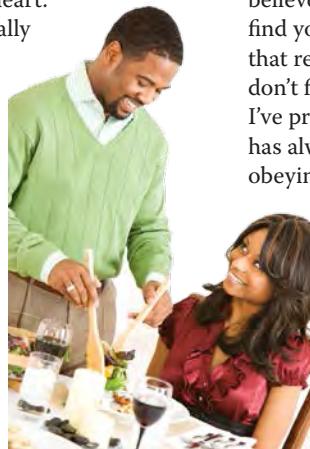
When we decide to obey God's biblical mandates, He usually changes our hearts through a process of repentance. That means we admit that we can be willful and peevish people. We like to have our own way, and we entangle ourselves in power struggles, even with (or perhaps especially with) our wives. We want to be served rather than to serve. We haven't loved our wives in the way that God desires.

If you find yourself in that place, let godly sorrow flow into your heart.

Prostrate yourself, literally or figuratively, before a

Holy God and tell Him, "I've been seeking happiness, but from now on, what will really count in my life is obeying Your commands."

Then, if you really want to move from survival to success in your marriage, I challenge you to consider what it means to love



your wife and give yourself up for her. How can you serve your wife?

A few years ago, I had the opportunity to serve my wife for about a month as she recovered from ankle surgery. For years I had watched her involvement in so many details of life. I had admired her, certainly. But when I got up close and personal, I gained such a deep appreciation for her.

Serve your wife. It might make you perfectly unhappy for a little while, but I believe you will gain a rich reward. You'll find yourself in a place of joyful marriage that really is what God wants for you. You don't find happiness by pursuing happiness. I've proven by experience what the Bible has always promised. You find happiness by obeying God's commands. □MIMBS 4

List three ways in which you can serve your wife within the next week. Ask another man to hold you accountable.

Daily Reading: *1 Samuel 2:22–9:27, John 5:24–6:42, Psalm 106:1–48, Proverbs 14:30–35*



For Your Small Group

□ For May 4–10: What is your first reaction to the word "obedience" (trust, discomfort, dog training, authority, children, etc.)?

- Was your reaction positive or negative? Why do you think you had that reaction?
- Which is more important in your life—being happy, or keeping God's commandments?
- What happiness might come about in your marriage out of your obedience to God?

Follow my advice and save yourself, for you have placed yourself at your friend's mercy. Now swallow your pride; go and beg to have your name erased.

Proverbs 6:3 NLT

C. S. Lewis is an author whose work has spanned generations. He had a great way with words and he proved to be an authority on the nature of man and our relationship with God. Lewis hit the nail on the head on the subject of pride when he said, "Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man."

We have all had those moments when we have thought, *At least I'm better than that guy or I'm glad to have a better car than that or thankfully my marriage isn't that bad.* It is human nature to want to be better than the next guy. But that aspect of

human nature keeps us caught up in our own accomplishments. When we believe we have succeeded on our own or our lives are better off than others or we have attained some spiritual level that others have not, the sin of pride separates us from God.

Pride can be an overt, outward sin or a subtle, quiet sin. But no matter its volume, sin always keeps us from God. □MIMBS 5

Have you faced the issue of pride in your life? In what areas? What has God taught you in those areas?

Daily Reading: *1 Samuel 10:1–11:15, John 6:43–71, Psalm 107:1–43, Proverbs 15:1–3*

Pride leads to disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.

Proverbs 11:2 NLT

One day I was kidding around with one of my colleagues who happens to be about 20 years my junior. I suggested that we have an arm wrestling match. He said, "Okay. You are left-handed; do you want to go left or right?" I thought I was better or stronger than him and chose to wrestle right-handed.

In a quick, but titanic struggle, he won. We switched to left hands and I claimed the quick victory. The truth is I really wanted to win that contest. I wanted to win so badly that I actually injured my shoulder.

Why would someone choose to injure themselves over an arm wrestling championship? What makes a

55-year-old man take on a 35-year-old man in a silly act of power or strength?

It was simply an act of pride. Pride makes us act out to prove that we are not aging, we are not weak, or we are not less than something or someone. God reminds us that He came for the poor, the weak and those that truly need Him. Pride stands in the way of letting God truly be God in our lives. □MIMBS 5



Have you ever acted out and later realized that the true motivation was pride? How does pride limit God's work in your lives?

Daily Reading: *1 Samuel 12:1–13:23, John 7:1–30, Psalm 108:1–13, Proverbs 15:4*

Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

Proverbs 16:18

The president of a company usually gets to that position for good reason. He's made good decisions, he is a leader, he has vision and he gets things done. Those are great characteristics. Countries, organizations and companies need those kinds of leaders.



How easily those characteristics can turn or shift into traps of pride. We've all seen how great athletes, good pastors or high-powered executives start believing their own hype. They don't want to be told they're wrong, that there may be a better way or they are difficult to live with. We regularly read in the news that many have lost marriages, scammed their company or lived a secret life. Their belief that they

knew best or were better than others led to destruction.

God wants to use all of our characteristics for His glory.

That's what we were all created for. Don't

let your puffed up thoughts of yourself stand in the way of being used in great and mighty ways by Him. ■MIMBS 5

When you heard of the fall of a famous leader, athlete, or pastor, what was your reaction? How can you pray for those who have had a public fall?

Daily Reading: 1 Samuel 14:1–52, John 7:31–53, Psalm 109:1–31, Proverbs 15:5–7

Thursday—May 14 • Reluctant Leaders

But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

Exodus 3:11

When Moses was called to lead the people of Israel, he wasn't keen on the idea. He offered up some legitimate reasons why it would be hard for him to be their leader. He was reluctant to see himself as the leader of God's chosen people. Moses was a Hebrew slave, he stuttered, and he had murdered a man. God must have made a mistake. There must have been someone better for the job. Surely he was not good enough.

Some might say that Moses had a lack of pride or self-esteem. He offered some good excuses. He did not have a great leadership resume. He could have let his belief in his own incompetence keep him from the challenge. He could have paralyzed himself

by thinking he was inadequate. Instead, he chose to trust that God would enable him to lead. Out of obedience, Moses took on the momentous occupation of leading the people of Israel to the Promised Land.

Pride, or the lack of it, was the root of his hesitancy. Whether we think we're too good or not good enough, God can't use us until we're willing to see how He can work through us. ■MIMBS 5

Has God called you to do something that you've been reluctant to do? How does Moses' story help you in that endeavor?

Daily Reading: 1 Samuel 15:1–16:23, John 8:1–20, Psalm 110:1–7, Proverbs 15:8–10

For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world.

1 John 2:16 NLT

Recently a television news channel in Denver merged with another company and the newscasters had to "reinterview" for their jobs. Most described the process as humiliating. The news business is based on ratings and is constantly looking for bigger, better and younger.

The lead anchor, Ernie Bjorkman, had been a respected member of the community for over 25 years. He had a fulfilling television career, made a six-figure income, attended all the best social events and enjoyed a wonderful lifestyle.

Ernie gained a lot of media attention in the midst of this upheaval. As he aged, Bjorkman knew that an end to his journalism career was inevitable. So, instead of waiting for the boom to be lowered he had begun to reinvent himself three years earlier. He started thinking of other jobs he'd like to pursue. As an animal lover, Bjorkman started veterinarian technician classes. He looked forward to a new job and new challenges. He would trade his suit and tie for a lab coat, TV cameras for dogs and cats and six figures for a \$35,000 annual income.

Newspapers and television were now contacting Ernie about his personal story. Bjorkman could have "reinterviewed" or gone to a smaller town with a smaller TV market or he could have become angry and

bitter. He did none of those things. He saw what was coming, became proactive and made the best choices for himself. So, why all the attention?

Simple answer: Ernie didn't let pride get in his way. He was definitely taking a "step down" on the success meter and in income. But he displayed a genuine enthusiasm for the next step and an authentic appreciation for his journalism career. His pride wasn't a hurdle and he gave us all a great lesson.

We all have choices to make and sometimes those choices require us to humble ourselves, step outside our comfort zone and embrace something new. ■MIMBS 5



Discuss "pride" with some guys this week. How has pride influenced your lives? How do you need to pray for each other and the issue of pride?

Daily Reading: 1 Samuel 17:1–21:15, John 8:21–9:41, Psalm 111:1–114:8, Proverbs 15:11–17



For Your Small Group

□ **For May 11–17: Ask someone to read aloud the devotion above.**

- How could pride have gotten in Ernie's way to a new life? What would have been the outcome?
- How would you have reacted if you were in Ernie's transition? Would you have tried to hold on to your job, salary and prestige? Would you have embraced your new life?



Monday—May 18 • Trust vs. Rebellion

For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

Romans 8:14–15

Brad wobbled a few feet away from his dad to explore. Suddenly he realized he had crossed the room and, panic-stricken, he turned and raced back, threw his arms around his dad's knee, and squeezed tightly. In a while, his bravery returned, and he teetered and tottered into the next room. Things were pretty quiet for a minute or two, until suddenly Brad burst through the doorway and bolted at full speed toward his dad, threw his arms around him, and almost knocked him down.

Brad was two-years-old then, and he was already beginning to assert his desire to be independent. But his early independence

coexisted with an absolute trust that his dad would always take care of him. In the same way, as children of our Father in heaven, we can choose to trust Him, or we can live in rebellion against Him. MIM 25—Chapter 19

How do you respond to the final statement of this devotional? Are trust and rebellion the only two options, or do you think there is some sort of “middle ground” between the two? Explain your answer to another man.

Daily Reading: *1 Samuel 22:1–23:29, John 10:1–21, Psalm 115:1–18, Proverbs 15:18–19*

Square icon Tuesday—May 19 • Responsibility vs. “Self-Reliance”

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3:5–6

We're raised to be independent. From their earliest homilies, moms and dads teach their children to make their own place. Early on, we learn to believe we can author our own destiny. In the words of William Ernest Henley, we can be master of our fate and captain of our souls. Even if we weren't taught to seek independence, our flawed human nature would pull us in that direction. But in our effort to be self-reliant, we often break ranks with God and go our independent way.

There is an abrupt difference between *taking responsibility* for our lives and trying to *live independently* from God. We are to take responsibility for our lives. No one will go to



work in our place or pay our bills. Here's the difference: Responsibility recognizes our part and God's part. Our part is to trust God and faithfully fulfill our duties. God's part is to provide for our needs and well-being. The fully independent and “self-reliant” man rebels against God, thinking he can meet his own needs. MIM 25—Chapter 19

How does today's Bible passage help you understand the difference between taking responsibility for your life and trying to be fully independent and “self-reliant”?

Daily Reading: *1 Samuel 24:1–25:44, John 10:22–42, Psalm 116:1–19, Proverbs 15:20–21*



Wednesday—May 20 • A Passive Form of Self-Reliance

The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

Romans 8:6–8

Most of us want total independence, but among Christians that desire often disguises itself. We can't be accused of open rebellion against God, but we just don't seek His counsel. We express a passive form of self-reliance by simply doing our own thing—even the right thing, and sometimes we gain affirmation in that decision. To all external appearances, our mate and our friends may think we're on the right track. But the reality is, the man who doesn't trust God is choosing to trust in himself and in the world's philosophies.

Before and after I became a Christian, I was active in the human potential movement. Every book that expounded the merits of “willing your way to success” was

in my library. It would be difficult, indeed, to be in today's marketplace without being influenced to believe “you can have it all.” Christians aren't automatically inoculated against the desire for independence. It's true that in our own strength, we can achieve many worldly successes. The problem is that God doesn't want us to trust in ourselves, but rather in Him. MIM 25—Chapter 19

Describe a time when you pursued a passive form of self-reliance by not seeking God's wisdom in making a decision, but choosing to do it your way. What was the result?

Daily Reading: *1 Samuel 26:1–28:25, John 11:1–54, Psalm 117:1–2, Proverbs 15:22–23*



Thursday—May 21 • The Danger of Trusting in Man

This is what the Lord says: “Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who draws strength from mere flesh and whose heart turns away from the Lord. That person will be like a bush in the wastelands; they will not see prosperity when it comes. They will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives.

Jeremiah 17:5–6

Jeremiah, known as “the weeping prophet,” records a vivid description that describes the fate of a totally independent man who refuses to trust in God. The man who depends on his own strength or trusts in the value system of this world will be miserable.

In Jeremiah 17, God speaks not of some wicked sort of fellow. Rather, the Bible describes a valiant man who is a winner by all external appearances. But in his heart he has turned away from the Lord. What is the fate of that self-reliant man? Like a bush that bears no seed, he tumbles along, producing no fruit and heading nowhere. The independent man is never able to satisfy his thirst for significance and purpose. Couldn't

this “wasteland” be a state of mind just as easily as a physical place?

We all know men who live in opulence, yet in their unguarded moments, their conversation and demeanor betray that they live in the emotional and spiritual equivalent of the “parched places” and “salt land” described in today's passage. MIM 25—Chapter 19

If you were trying to explain to a friend the dangers of living independently from God, how would you summarize Jeremiah 17:5–6? Share your thoughts with your group.

Daily Reading: *1 Samuel 29:1–31:13, John 11:55–12:19, Psalm 118:1–18, Proverbs 15:24–26*

Who is like the wise? Who knows the explanation of things? A person's wisdom brightens their face and changes its hard appearance.
Ecclesiastes 8:1

The Bible indicates that what is inside of people is often written on their faces. It points out what we might consider to be obvious, noting, "A happy heart makes the face cheerful" (Proverbs 15:13). It talks about people who depend on God, noting that their faces "are never covered with shame" (Psalm 34:5). It describes people who resist correction, saying that they "made their faces harder than stone and refused to repent" (Jeremiah 5:3). In fact, today's passage even says that a person's wisdom can alter the hard appearance of his or her face.

Recently I passed a distinguished elderly gentleman as I was walking out of a convenience store. I noticed his soft, gentle face. It occurred to me that every man's face tells his life story. Some men have soft faces, like the kind gentleman I walked by. But many have hard



For Your Small Group

- For May 18–24: Read aloud this statement from one of this week's devotionals, "A man's face betrays whether he has lived a life of self-reliance from God or dependence on God."
- What does that statement mean to you?
 - Do you agree with the statement?
 - What does your reflection in the mirror say about you?

Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.
Jeremiah 17:7–8

Scripture notes that a man living independently from God will be miserable. On the other side, a man who trusts God will be blessed. Jeremiah's simile of a tree close to water brings an image of lush, tropical surroundings, replete with succulent fruit. You may think of this as an oasis. So, a life spent trusting God must be a real cakewalk, right? But when you look more closely at Jeremiah's words, you find that he mentions heat and drought.

The trusting Christian is not exempt from hard times. The difference between the man who trusts in God and the man who trusts in himself is not in the *circumstances*, but in the *response*. Two men may get the same kind of cancer, but they handle it totally

differently. The man who trusts God knows hard times will come, but he doesn't fear them. He doesn't despair when life's inevitable trials strike. That's the difference between the faces of self-reliant men and men who rely on God. The first type of man dreads the future, while the other believes God will take care of him. □MIM 25—Chapter 19

Can you think of two men who went through the exact same circumstances but with different attitudes? How did their responses reveal their hearts? Share your thoughts with another man.

Daily Reading: 2 Samuel 7:1–8:18, John 14:15–31, Psalm 119:33–48, Proverbs 15:33

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.

Psalm 1:1–3

The winds howled and the rain blew sideways. New Orleans had not seen such a storm in 50 years. Mike huddled his family under the staircase, and they listened intently to a portable radio, waiting for some word that the storm was letting up.

Mike had planted two trees in his yard many years ago. One was an oak, and the other was a "hackberry" tree. They grew tall, and their branches spread shade over half the backyard. The next morning the storm had passed, and Mike ventured out to survey the damage. To his surprise, the giant hackberry tree had been uprooted and lay horizontal across his neighbor's fence. It didn't have any deep roots to provide support. By contrast, the oak stood alone, a

solemn reminder that when the storms of life sweep over us, we need deep roots. The roots come as we choose God's way, delighting in Him and His Word.

Today's passage says the person who relies on God will be like a tree planted so its roots always have access to that which sustains life. □MIM 25—Chapter 19

In your own words, describe what is necessary for a person to have deep roots that will sustain him in difficult times. How have you seen this in your own life?

Daily Reading: 2 Samuel 9:1–11:27, John 15:1–27, Psalm 119:49–64, Proverbs 16:1–3

For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Colossians 1:16–17

A totally self-reliant person would need brute strength to overcome life's difficult situations, or political power to influence life. To some degree, money gives power, as it "lubricates the system." And a position of power can qualify a man to be independent of others. But when we think of real power, we usually think of omnipotence.

Genuine power is the exclusive province of God and those to whom He imparts it. He created everything, and He rules everything. Jesus said not even a sparrow could fall to the ground outside of the Father's care (Matthew 10:24). That's the kind of power God has. By contrast, man cannot:

- add a single hour to his own life (Matthew 6:27).

Thursday—May 28

• The Turning Point

Who among the gods is like you, LORD? Who is like you—majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?

Exodus 15:11

Life's turning point comes when we stop seeking the God we *want*, and we start seeking the God who *is*. When we live independently from God, we end up focusing on substitute gods such as money, career, country clubs, influence, prestige, physical appearance, possessions, power, our number of Facebook friends. These other pursuits, however important they may be, often reduce our real time with the one true God.

We Americans tend to individualize God by devising our own compact definition of who God is. As John White explained, "In the past half century he has...been trivialized, packaged for entertainment, presented as a sort of psychological panacea, a heavenly glue to keep happy families together, a celestial slot machine to respond



Are you ready and willing to invest time in relationship with God, so you can get to know Him intimately as He really is? Why or why not? Explain your answer to another man.

Daily Reading: 2 Samuel 13:1–39, John 17:1–26, Psalm 119:81–96, Proverbs 16:6–7

Jesus replied, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God."

Matthew 22:29

Today's Scripture records Jesus' response to a group of men who led in the Jewish Temple. Jesus pointed out an error in their thinking, saying it was linked to their lack of understanding of the Scriptures and of God's power. From His response, we can assume He was saying these men were serving the God they wanted rather than pursuing the God who really is.

Twenty-one centuries later, we still face that same temptation. From our earliest memories, we were raised to take charge of our lives, to chart our own destiny. Yet our puny power is negligible when compared with God's omnipotence. And the simple reality is, God has established moral and spiritual principles and absolutes. The man who trusts in himself and in human institutions, rather than following God, is destined for a miserable life, while the man who trusts in God will be blessed.

God will reveal Himself to any man who sincerely wants to abandon his rebellion and "self-reliance," turning instead to pursue the desire to know God as He really is. You may not know Him at all yet. Or perhaps you are a Christian, but you realize you've been playing games with God. Maybe you've reached a turning point in your life, realizing you'd like to move on to the next level in your relationship with

God. If you're ready to surrender your life and follow Christ and seek the God who is, whether for the first time or as a deeper commitment, God is always ready to help you see Him as He is, and to trust Him with your life.  MIM 25—Chapter 19

We come to Christ by faith. There's no magic in the specific words of a prayer. But if you want to know Him as He is, then perhaps this prayer will help you communicate that:

Lord Jesus, I confess that I have sinned against You by seeking my own independent way, rebelling against You, and trusting in myself. I have not known You as You really are, but, instead I've sought the God I wanted. I am now beginning to realize the difference. Forgive me. I open the door to my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sins. Take control of my life and make me into the man You want me to be. Amen.



Daily Reading: 2 Samuel 14:1–17:29, John 18:1–19:42, Psalm 119:97–152, Proverbs 16:8–13



For Your Small Group

□ For May 25–31: From the prayer above, read aloud one or two sentences at a time and ask the men these questions:

- In what ways are you living independently from the Lord?
- Who is the God you have wanted? What is the difference between the God who is and the God you wanted?
- Are you willing to open the door and let God take control of your life?

□ Monday—June 1 • Daily Decisions

Who, then, are those who fear the Lord? He will instruct them in the ways they should choose.
Psalm 25:12

In my 30s, I became convicted about how I spent my evenings. I wasted precious time watching television, which also forced me to deal with wrong thoughts brought on by my viewing. Attempting to at least partly redeem the time, I rode a stationary bicycle in front of the TV. But even that didn't really suffice. I wanted to spend more time with the Lord, but I was married to the television.

The best time of day for me is in the wee hours of the morning. One evening the big idea finally hit me: why not go to bed one hour earlier! Then I could exercise in the morning, when I was well rested, and by using an optional reading stand, I could read my Bible at the same time! It

all seemed like a great option, but as ingenious and productive as the idea seemed, I just couldn't quite make the adjustment in my life. Twelve years of inertia encumbered me. Months and months passed until one day, finally, I *decided* to make the change.

■ MIM 25—Chapter 13

List one area of your life that you really want to change, but you haven't been able to. Are you willing to ask God to help you make the daily decisions that will enable you to make the change?

Daily Reading: 2 Samuel 18:1–19:10, John 20:1–31, Psalm 119:153–176, Proverbs 16:14–15

□ Tuesday—June 2 • The Sum of Our Decisions

...if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God... Then you will understand what is right and just and fair—every good path.

Proverbs 2:3–5, 9

More than any other aspect of our lives, decision making determines *who* and *what* we are. Even not making a decision is a decision in itself. If your daughter's school play starts at 11:30 a.m., and at 11:35 a.m. you are still on the phone with a business call, then you've made your choice. In many ways, our lives equal the sum of our decisions.

Decision making isn't easy. The chief executive officer of a Fortune 500 company put it this way: "I'll be darned if I understand how we make some of our most important decisions around here." Many men, unable or unwilling to make wise decisions, ruin their lives and fill them with heartache, strife and pain. Problems in



Today's devotional points out that not deciding is a decision in itself. Describe a time when you tried to avoid making a decision, and in the process you found the decision had been made for you. Share your experience with another man.

Daily Reading: 2 Samuel 19:11–20:13, John 21:1–25, Psalm 120:1–7, Proverbs 16:16–17

□ Wednesday—June 3 • The Priority/Moral Distinction

"I, wisdom, dwell together with prudence; I possess knowledge and discretion. To fear the Lord is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech. Counsel and sound judgment are mine; I have insight, I have power... I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me."
Proverbs 8:12–17

Decisions usually fall into two categories. *Priority* decisions are choices between right and right. Choosing between taking your wife out to dinner or playing in a city league basketball game may be a priority decision. Choosing between working on Saturday morning or attending your son's little league game may also fit this category. This kind of decision simply requires wisdom in choosing between good, better and best. *Moral* decisions, on the other hand, require choosing between right and wrong. Being honest on tax forms fits this category, as does mental adultery with a young beauty at the office. The power to make correct moral decisions results from a man's desire to have integrity and from God's enabling

power.

Some decisions may cross both categories. Purchasing a new car is a simple priority decision when transportation is your primary consideration. But the decision to purchase a luxury car, if it robs money from higher priorities like tithing or college savings, takes on the added dimension of a moral issue. It becomes a decision between right and wrong. ■ MIM 25—Chapter 13

Describe a priority decision you've made in the last week. Now describe a moral decision you've made in the last week. How did you make those decisions?

Daily Reading: 2 Samuel 20:14–21:22, Acts 1:1–26, Psalm 121:1–8, Proverbs 16:18

□ Thursday—June 4 • How to Avoid Making the Wrong Decision

So Jesus said, "...I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him."
John 8:28–29

I learned in my PhD studies that a full two-thirds of all decisions affecting organizational change fail outright. Those statistics were consistent in public and private industry, and also in profit or not for profit. Research indicates that most decisions fail. So how can we improve our batting average on our own decision making? The process for making good decisions remains a mystery in many ways, so let's concentrate on how to avoid making the wrong decisions.

History provides hundreds of examples of crucial decision makers. Some have made good choices, and some bad. Some have changed the course of human history. These men include people like the apostle Paul, Martin Luther, Abraham Lincoln,

and on the other side, men like Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini. Or more recently Martin Luther King Jr. versus Osama bin Laden. These people all affected history positively and negatively through their decisions. But no decision-maker was more effective than Jesus. In studying His life, we find a model to help us avoid making wrong decisions. ■ MIM 25—Chapter 13

How can avoiding making the wrong decision actually help you in the process of making the right decision?

Daily Reading: 2 Samuel 22:1–23:23, Acts 2:1–47, Psalm 122:1–9, Proverbs 16:19–20

□ Friday, Saturday, Sunday—June 5, 6, 7 The Magnitude of Jesus' Decisions

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. 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.

Hebrews 4:15–16

The Bible tells us that, right after He was baptized, Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness where He faced temptation for 40 days (see Luke 4). Jesus fasted that entire time, and clearly, He was hungry and probably weary. Satan approached Jesus three times, with three unique temptations. His goal was to defeat Jesus in His mind. If Satan could get Jesus to change sides, he would win the most colossal negotiation in history.

Imagine the consequences hanging in the balance as Jesus considered His response. If Jesus made the wrong decision, He would have ended up being just another sinner like us. No one would believe He is God. He would not be an innocent Lamb, prepared to die as a sacrifice for our sins. We would still be waiting for our Messiah. But Jesus didn't surrender to Satan's onslaught.



He made the right decision *every time*. Because He faced temptation, the writer of Hebrews could point out that He is able “to empathize with our weaknesses.” Because He always made the right decisions, even in the face of incredible temptation, the writer of Hebrews also could point out that He can supply both mercy and grace “to help us in our time of need.” **MIM 25—Chapter 13**

How does the knowledge that Jesus faced temptation give you confidence to approach Him when you need help making a decision? Also, how does the fact that Jesus always made the right decision help you in that process? Share your thoughts with your group.

Daily Reading: *2 Samuel 23:24–24:25, 1 Kings 1:1–3:2, Acts 3:1–5:42 Psalm 123:1–125:5, Proverbs 16:21–25*



For Your Small Group

□ For June 1–7: On a scale of 1 (poor) to 10 (excellent), how good of a decision maker are you?

- What considerations do you take before making a decision?
- What can keep you from making decisions?
- What helps us make good decisions?

□ Monday—June 8 • How Jesus Decided: Step #1

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”

Matthew 4:1–3

The first decision Jesus had to make, whether or not to turn stones into food, was a decision about whether to rebel against God's plan for His life. Satan probably wondered if Jesus would be an easy mark. His first temptation of Jesus was the tried-and-true ruse he used with Adam and Eve. He tried to tempt them with food in the form of fruit from a forbidden tree. Now He tried the same temptation in a different form, tempting Jesus to satisfy His hunger by turning rocks into bread. Satan probably thought, “Why not try it again? It worked before!”

Jesus' response gives the first principle of effective decision making. He answered, “It

is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God’” (Matthew 4:4). Our first step in making good decisions (by not making wrong decisions) is to *live by God's Word*. **MIM 25—Chapter 13**

Describe someone you know who regularly reads his or her Bible. Ask that person how acquiring biblical knowledge and understanding helps guide the decision making process.

Daily Reading: *1 Kings 3:3–4:34, Acts 6:1–15, Psalm 126:1–6, Proverbs 16:26–27*

□ Tuesday—June 9 • How Jesus Decided: Step #2

Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written: ‘He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’” Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

Matthew 4:5–7

After Jesus refused to turn stones into bread in response to Satan's temptation, the devil came a second time. He suggested that Jesus should prove His identity by jumping from the Temple roof. Jesus refused to succumb to Satan's temptation to test God.

We, too, often face choices that could be categorized as testing God. When I was in high school, I was arrested as a minor and held for being intoxicated. My father had to come to the city jail and sign for me. I put him in a position where he had to rescue me from my foolishness. Similarly, we sometimes can put ourselves in foolish positions because we expect Him to rescue us. Satan tempted Jesus to make a decision in which the odds for success were slim,



unless God intervened. Satan even quoted Scripture to Jesus to entice Him. In the same way, Satan sometimes tempts us to cherry-pick the Bible for our own wrong priorities and immoral purposes. *The second principle of effective decision making is to refuse to test God*. Don't put yourself in a position that requires a miracle! **MIM 25—Chapter 13**

Can you remember a situation when you put someone in a position where they had to rescue you? Or perhaps you've had to rescue someone else. How does that situation illustrate how we sometimes make decisions that test God?

Daily Reading: *1 Kings 5:1–6:38, Acts 7:1–29, Psalm 127:1–5, Proverbs 16:28–30*

Wednesday—June 10 • How Jesus Decided: Step #3

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” Jesus said to him, ‘Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”

Matthew 4:8–10

After Satan failed twice to tempt Jesus, he came back one more time. In this third temptation about worshiping Satan, Jesus faced the decision to renounce God’s Fatherhood and serve other gods. How often we men jump the tracks and serve other gods, like money, position and power. As a teenager, I renounced my own dad’s fatherhood, quit school and joined the Army. I abandoned the authority structure of my home and pursued my own plans. Jesus faced a similar decision regarding His relationship to His Father God. We might assume this was an easy choice for Jesus, but it probably wasn’t. Satan, the deceiver, is too crafty to knock on the front door wearing a red suit and carrying a three-pronged spear. Surely he disguised himself somehow.



But Jesus didn’t disappoint us. He resisted Satan and chose to worship and serve God alone. *The third principle of effective decision making is to always worship and serve God alone as you make your choices.* Following Jesus’ example in decision making will give you the greatest probability for not making wrong choices. □MIM 25—Chapter 13

In your experience, how has Satan most effectively camouflaged himself so that you didn’t recognize him and succumbed to his temptation? How can you avoid that in the future? Share your experience with another man.

Daily Reading: 1 Kings 7:1–51, Acts 7:30–50, Psalm 128:1–6, Proverbs 16:31–33

Thursday—June 11 • Consequences

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

1 Timothy 6:10

Today’s Scripture specifically relates to money, but it also serves as a reminder that every decision we make has consequences. These consequences always include at least spiritual and financial dimensions. Christ announced that “you cannot serve both God and money” (Matthew 6:24). While we can’t serve both, we will experience the consequences of both.

So, for instance, if you are in sales, the decision to coach your son’s Little League team will reduce your selling time in the field. Thus, even though it is probably the right choice, it will potentially reduce your income. When we look only at earthly consequences, it’s not always easy to make the right decisions. When you follow Christ in your business practices, you’ll find it

usually costs more to do the right thing. At a personal level, if you seek to follow God’s Word, your saving habits and charitable generosity will often change sharply, and those decisions have financial consequences. But as the apostle Paul reminded Timothy, in the long term, those who make right choices also save themselves from “many griefs.” □MIM 25—Chapter 13

The apostle Paul reminded Timothy that “some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.” What is an example of a “grief” that a person might avoid by choosing God’s way, even when there is a financial cost? Discuss this with your group.

Daily Reading: 1 Kings 8:1–66, Acts 7:51–8:13, Psalm 129:1–8, Proverbs 17:1

Friday, Saturday, Sunday—June 12, 13, 14 A Dead End from Life in the Fast Lane

For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.
Philippians 2:13

Jim was a drug dealer who spent eight years in prison for murder, but he found a second chance in Christ. Now a minister, Jim speaks to high schoolers. “Don’t let anyone kid you,” he says. “Drugs make you feel good. You know the beginning of drugs, and it’s fun. But I know the end of drugs.” Then he describes decisions that nearly ruined his life.

While most of us will never self-destruct like Jim, we all face choices that look fun but will result in overwhelming pain—broken relationships and divorce, financial disaster, illness. Twenty-first century men are over-committed, and their fatigue results from their choices. God has given us 168 hours every week. That doesn’t stretch. So when we choose to be an elder, a businessman, a civic leader and a sports enthusiast, something else suffers. The family usually pays the price. No one really wins the rat race, because the fast lane usually leads to a

dead end at some point.

When we decide to get out of the fast lane, God will bless our new direction, empowering us to notice the “traffic” around us, put on the blinker, ease our way to the outside lane and find an exit. We can decide with or without God’s help, but He promises to always help us if we will trust Him. He works in us, shaping and enabling us to act according to His purposes (Philippians 2:13). Jesus paid the ultimate price, bearing our sins in His death, so that God’s power would be available to help us make right decisions. □MIM 25—Chapter 13



Every man has some priority that competes with putting God first in his life. That priority tends to dominate his schedule. What tempts you to make choices that fill up your schedule and squeeze out God? How are you dealing with that temptation?

Daily Reading: 1 Kings 9:1–13:34, Acts 8:14–9:43, Psalm 130:1–132:18, Proverbs 17:2–6



For Your Small Group

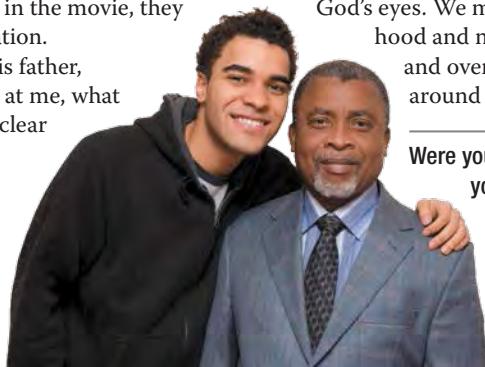
- **For June 8–14: Think back to a good decision that impacted your life in a positive way and back to a decision that impacted your life in a negative way.**
 - What were the differences in the way those decisions were made?
 - How did God use both of those experiences in your life? What did you learn from those experiences?

Monday—June 15 • Affirm Their Manhood

And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."
Matthew 3:17

One of my favorite movies is *Cool Runnings*. The story line follows a young man who desperately needs to be affirmed by his own father as a man instead of a boy. At one significant point in the movie, they have a confrontation.

The son asks his father, "When you look at me, what do you see?" It's clear that the dad still sees his son as a boy. Tragically, the young man knew that until that perception changed, he needed to



separate from his own dad. He was forced to find his manhood on his own.

If as older men we are to really connect with younger men, we must see them with God's eyes. We must affirm their manhood and not make them earn it over and over again every time they are around us. —Chuck Stecker

Were you forced to find manhood on your own? Or were you given that gift from your father?

Daily Reading: 1 Kings 14:1–15:24, Acts 10:1–23, Psalm 133:1–3, Proverbs 17:7–8

Tuesday—June 16 • Do Not Forget Your Past

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

Titus 3:3

Every time I see a young man with his pants "sagging," I want to let him know just how stupid it looks. And it's not just the pants. There are so many things this younger generation of men does that are just so wrong in so many ways.

But before I can get too excited about being the only carrier of truth and the corrector of wrongdoing and wrong-thinking by younger men, I probably need to burn all my high school yearbooks. Do you remember how we wore our jeans back in the 60's? Pulled down over our hips as low as we could get them, and then

we waited for the principal to tell us to "pull 'em up."

Finally, there is that issue of plain old sin. It is essential, as older men, we do not forget all that God has forgiven in our lives. Connecting generations gets easier if we do not start with what is wrong with each other. —Chuck Stecker

What do your children and grandchildren need to hear from you?

Daily Reading: 1 Kings 15:25–17:24, Acts 10:24–48, Psalm 134:1–3, Proverbs 17:9–11



Wednesday—June 17 • Do Something Together

In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.
James 2:17

If you want to connect with a man, younger or older, do something with them. Men are doers and we connect best if we are doing something together. It does not have to be complicated or strenuous.

One of the best times I ever had talking with my oldest son was as we were working on his car together. We simply changed the oil and performed some routine maintenance. Yet in that time, we really talked. In fact, any activity together can be the field in which you plant and grow a relationship. It can be as simple as playing catch.



Any activity done with another man that is not too personal or threatening has the potential of the beginning of a relationship.

If you want to connect with a younger man, ask him to do something—anything—together. As you are engaged in the activity, whatever it is, ask him about himself. —Chuck Stecker

Have your men discuss and plan an activity for the teens or young men in your church. Be sure to make it something they would enjoy.

Daily Reading: 1 Kings 18:1–46, Acts 11:1–30, Psalm 135:1–21, Proverbs 17:12–13

Thursday—June 18 • Doing Life Together

After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him.

Luke 8:1

In the late '60's and '70's, the popularity of the sport of racquetball exploded. Racquetball clubs were built as fast as developers could acquire land and significant numbers of club memberships were often sold before the club was open. Then as fast as day turns to night, clubs ran into financial problems. Most were eventually sold and used for other purposes. Now you can find a few clubs with mostly older players.

Why did the sport fade so quickly? Simple—we older players chose to play with our peers and not with younger men or our children.

Connecting with younger men involves a determination to do life together. It is

a principle that Ken Larson calls, "Life Walking." Jesus modeled this for all of us. He connected with His disciples by intentionally doing life with them.

Don't have a racquetball club faith! Look around at the younger men that God has already brought near you. Which one(s) should you intentionally start doing life with? —Chuck Stecker

Are you willing to "do life together" with the younger men in your life? What would that look like to you?

Daily Reading: 1 Kings 19:1–21, Acts 12:1–23, Psalm 136:1–26, Proverbs 17:14–15

□ Friday, Saturday, Sunday—June 19, 20, 21
We Get What We Look For

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.

1 Timothy 4:12

The words of the apostle Paul to a much younger man are very powerful. Paul sent Timothy into a very difficult situation. It seems that older men were teaching false doctrine and tearing apart a church that Paul had planted. Paul chose to send a young man with very clear instructions. The first instruction was not “seven steps to reestablish proper teaching in the church.” The first instruction was directed at how Timothy was to see himself.

Perhaps the scripture should be read differently by some of us “older guys.” Could it be that we should read the scripture in this manner: “Don’t look down on these young guys. Some of them are doing better than you at being the men they were created to be and are setting the example for others in speech, in life, in love and in purity.”

A person often sees what they are looking for in another person. If you are determined that another person is worthless, you will probably not find



anything of value in them. If you are determined to see the good in others, you will be amazed at how much good you are able to see.

This generation of young guys is really bringing some skills and grit to the game. They are sharp and looking for truth. They are strong and courageous. They are gifted in ways I can only dream about. I see this in my children and their friends. I see this in young men I have the privilege of being around in every area of my life.

Connecting with younger men involves seeing them with God’s eyes. It involves looking for the best in a young man. In the end, you are likely to see what you are looking for. —Chuck Stecker

What are some things you could learn from younger men? What do you admire about the young men in your church or community?

Daily Reading: 1 Kings 20:1–2:25, Acts 12:24–14:7, Psalm 137:1–139:24, Proverbs 17:16–21



For Your Small Group

□ **For June 15–21: Have each man make a list of things that they could teach younger men and then a list of things that they might learn from younger men.**

- Take a few minutes to discuss those lists with one another. Have you found that you are critical of the younger generations? Why?
- Are you willing to teach younger men and learn from them?

□ Monday—June 22 • A Way That Seems Right

There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.

Proverbs 14:12

I heard about a couple celebrating their 25th wedding anniversary and their 50th birthdays with one big event. Sometime during the party, a genie appeared, saying he would grant each partner one wish. The wife said, “I’ve always wanted to travel around the world.” And, poof—the tickets were in her hand. Then, the genie looked at the husband, and he said, “To tell you the truth, I’ve always wanted to know what it would be like to be married to a woman 30 years younger than me.” And, poof—the guy was 80 years old.

That story hopefully



made you smile, maybe even laugh. But it carries a kernel of truth. We have to be very careful when we are trying to write the script for our lives. We can think we’re pursuing things that will make us happy, and in the end, we find we’ve wasted a lot of energy with very little reward. God’s Word assures us that we can trust Him to write the script for our lives, knowing He’ll do a better job than we would. □MIMBS 6

Explain how today’s verse relates to the idea of writing your own script for your life.

Daily Reading: 2 Kings 3:1–4:17, Acts 14:8–28, Psalm 140:1–13, Proverbs 17:22

□ Tuesday—June 23 • Three Options for Living

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit him, and he will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3:5–6

Everyone has three options for how they will plan their lives. The first option is a “me” system, which leads to making “my plans” for “my life.” Then there is God’s system, which leads to allowing Him to set our course. But many of us live between the two extremes in a “we” system, where we mingle some of God’s planning and some of our own. We try to live in this “in-between” system, just like the Israelites who left Egypt but wandered in the wilderness for 40 years before they reached the Promised Land.

I remember talking to a man who was still trying to live in that in-between place. He said, “How would I cope without my possessions? I don’t see how I can give up this

little world that I have built, so I can move fully into God’s system.” This man wanted to live God’s way, but he found himself in bondage, because he wanted to write his own script. He wanted to control his own destiny and dictate his plan for his life. But he was miserable in a wilderness of his own making. □MIMBS 6

Which of the three options listed in this devotional has characterized your life? What evidence can you give to support your answer? Share your thoughts with some other men.

Daily Reading: 2 Kings 4:18–5:27, Acts 15:1–35, Psalm 141:1–10, Proverbs 17:23

Wednesday—June 24

From the Wilderness to the Promised Land

Moses said to the LORD, “... You have said, ‘I know you by name and you have found favor with me.’ If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways.”

Exodus 33:12–13

Before I married Patsy, I bought her a little dirt bike and taught her to ride. I don't think she ever got out of first gear, but she would putt around with a big smile on her face. About two weeks after we got married, I said, "Let's go riding." She replied, "I have a lot of work today. Why don't you go by yourself?" I discovered my assumptions about Patsy's love for motorcycles had been incorrect, to say the least.

It can be that way with God, too. When Moses truly came face-to-face with Him (Exodus 33), he realized he was trying to fit God into his preexisting categories. He had underestimated God. He wasn't sure what the new script for their relationship was supposed to be. So he said, "If I have found favor in your eyes, teach me Your ways."

That is the secret of getting from the wilderness to the Promised Land. You come

to a surrender point in your life where you say, "Lord, I've known that You love me, but I've been trying to write my own script. That was a mistake. Please teach me Your ways." □MIMBS 6



Have you ever asked God to teach you His ways? Have you turned over the script writing responsibilities for your life to Him? If you have, describe the process. If you haven't, explain what would lead you to make that choice.

Daily Reading: 2 Kings 6:1–7:20, Acts 15:36–16:15, Psalm 142:1–7, Proverbs 17:24–25

• So I May Know You

Teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you.

Exodus 33:13

Sometimes we resist total surrender to God, because we think we must alter our behavior in order to be acceptable to God. Yet Moses didn't mention his behavior when he asked God to reveal His ways. He simply said, "Teach me your ways so I may know you."

When the Israelites wandered in the wilderness, the choice to leave Egypt had already been made. This wasn't about leaving Egypt. It was about moving into the Promised Land. Similarly, when we allow God to script our lives, it's not about leaving our sin, but it's about moving on so we really know Christ. When we bring ourselves fully into the presence of the holy and glorious God, the things that distract

us or displease Him suddenly become less interesting.

As we spend time with Him, He writes His desires on our hearts, and so He changes us from the inside to the outside. God's script may include some lifestyle changes, but they don't happen simply through managing our behavior. They happen naturally as God changes our hearts. □MIMBS 6

Describe the difference between trying to manage your behavior vs. lifestyle changes happening naturally as God changes your heart.

Daily Reading: 2 Kings 8:1–9:13, Acts 16:16–40, Psalm 143:1–12, Proverbs 17:26

Friday, Saturday, Sunday—June 26, 27, 28

Resting in God's Presence

Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory." And the LORD said, "I will cause all of my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

Exodus 33:18–19

When we submit and ask God to teach us His ways, He begins by showing us who He is. Notice in today's passage how much of His character He chose to reveal to Moses. He showed His glory, His goodness, His sovereignty, His mercy and His compassion.

Earlier in this chapter, God also promised His presence to accompany Moses. And He says, because of His presence, Moses will have rest.

So, are you experiencing that rest and peace? Most of our culture—even our Christian culture—shows evidence of restlessness and dissatisfaction.

St. Augustine noted, "My heart will be restless until I find my rest in Thee." That rest comes from the confident assurance that God truly is working out all things for your good (see Romans 8:28). Rest comes from knowing the



balance of God's power and His mercy, His greatness and His goodness. And frankly, the process that leads us to a place of rest requires time to unlearn old thought processes and allow God to reprogram our minds, so we can accept His thoughts.

If you are at a place where you're willing to move another step away from your own system for living, and another step closer to God's, then pray with me:

Lord, if I have found favor in Your eyes, then I am at the point of surrender. I want You to write the script for my life. I'm asking You to teach me Your ways. In Jesus' name, amen. □MIMBS 6

Respond to this quote from St. Augustine: "My heart will be restless until I find my rest in Thee." Do you think that is an accurate assessment? Would you say you have found that place of rest, or are you still waiting for it?

Daily Reading: 2 Kings 9:14–14:29, Acts 17:1–19:12, Psalm 144:1–146:10, Proverbs 17:27–18:3



For Your Small Group

□ For June 22–28: How would you categorize the "script" of your life? Comedy? Drama? Action/Adventure?

- Are you living the life you want to live or the life God wants to give you? Explain your answer.
- Are you making your own choices and decisions or are you asking God to lead and guide you?
- Are you in a continual struggle with God over who is in control? Why or why not?

All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

1 Peter 5:5–7

Teresa of Avila, a 16th century nun in Spain, sometimes bore the accusation that her works were of the devil. She complained to God, and He replied, "That is how I treat my friends." Teresa responded, "No wonder you have so few friends!"

God definitely takes His friends through a tough training regimen, and one of His prescribed exercises is waiting. If you're like me, that can be excruciating. When I came to faith, I was bursting with excitement. I wanted to ensure that I would "make a difference." I would tell God I wanted to make an impact, that I was ready to serve Him, and all I heard in return was deafening silence. You may have experienced this in your life. It

might have been when you pursued a ministry, or perhaps with your work. You may be asking God, "When will it be my turn?"

Today's scripture reminds us that, if we humble ourselves and accept God's plan, He will bring about His purpose, when the time is right. □MIMBS 7

Today's scripture cites wisdom found in many areas of Scripture, noting that "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble." Why do you think God chooses to honor people who are humble?

Daily Reading: 2 Kings 15:1–16:20, Acts 19:13–41, Psalm 147:1–20, Proverbs 18:4–5

□ Tuesday—June 30 • Seeking a Bigger Stage

After this, Jesus went around in Galilee. He did not want to go about in Judea because the Jewish leaders there were looking for a way to kill him. But when the Jewish Festival of Tabernacles was near, Jesus' brothers said to him, "Leave Galilee and go to Judea, so that your disciples there may see the works you do. No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world."

John 7:1–4

This passage basically ushers in the last six months of Jesus' life. It records that Jesus' brothers tried to push Him toward seeking a bigger stage. Interestingly enough, they didn't do this because they believed in Him, but because they didn't (see John 7:5).

Is it always wrong to seek a bigger stage? I would say it depends on your motives. When I entered the army, I became a clerk. I wanted to have the achievement of rising to a certain level in the minimum time required, which would have been about 18 months. So in the weeks leading up to that 18-month time, I began pestering the master sergeant about



promotion. The big day came and went, and I became very upset that I wasn't promoted. I went to see him and he said, "If you had stopped pestering me, I would have done it." My interest was purely selfish. I wanted a bigger stage, but not for the right reason. I wanted it because of ambition rather than because of God's calling. □MIMBS 7

Can you think of a time when you sought a bigger stage? Did you want it because of ambition, or because you knew it is God's calling? Explain your answer to your group.

Daily Reading: 2 Kings 17:1–18:12, Acts 20:1–38, Psalm 148:1–14, Proverbs 18:6–7

► Making an Impact: "Whatever It Takes" continued from page 7



David Engle has been my accountability partner for 22 years. He taught me about faith, grace, and love. We both realized we were broken. As we dug deep into each other's lives God healed many of our negative areas. He has a ministry for battered and abused women and children. I watched his faith as he followed God's call. Starting with \$500, 4 kids, and no place, 25 years later the ministry has had a tremendous impact on the area and state.

—Bob Ryan, Northwest Arkansas Coalition

Thank you to all our Area Directors and Field Representatives who wrote in with these great responses—more than we could print! If you would like information on how you can help other churches disciple their men to love Christ (and their wives), go to www.arendirectors.org today.

► To Love Your Children and Grandchildren continued from page 8

is an art more than a science. When we fail, we apologize; when we're at a loss, we get advice. We read, think, pray, and grow as fathers, every day, through each of their phases of life, seeking to stay connected with our children and grandchildren until we leave the planet. Only then is our glorious mission as dads at an end (2 Peter 3:18).

5. **Being Imperfectly But Fully Present:** No perfect human dad has ever existed on planet earth (1 John 3:2). Don't make perfect fathering a goal; you'll surely fail. What's more, our kids know we're not perfect and don't demand perfection. What they want is us; the more of us they can get, the more they like it. Like "Red" Reddington, most dads want their children to love them. If we want love from them, we must give ourselves to them.



What does it take to love your children and grandchildren well? All you have and all the Father can do through you. Be willing to let God work through you to do whatever it takes! □MIMBS



• PETE ALWINSON

Pastor Pete founded and led Willow Creek Presbyterian Church, Winter Springs, Florida for 27 years, and now serves as Vice President of Leadership and Men's Discipleship at Key Life Network as well as the Man in the Mirror board of directors. For information about Pete's ministry, go to www.freedomssedge.org.

As one of our leaders said, "A man is a hard thing to reach!" Jesus spoke extensively about how our callings would never be easy. For example, in the parable of the weeds, He told us that the sons of the devil are growing among us to make it difficult. He told us that people's hearts have grown cold, their ears can barely hear, and their eyes been closed. He told us that many would hate us because of His name. However He also told us to take heart, because even though in this world we will have troubles, He has overcome the world.

Our call to go minister to stiff-necked rebels is beautifully illustrated in Ezekiel 3:4,7:

[God] then said to me: "Son of man, go now to the house of Israel and speak my words to them... But the people of Israel are not willing to listen to you because they are not willing to listen to me, for all the Israelites are hardened and obstinate."

Let's face it. Serving the Lord comes at the end of a long courtship and a short honeymoon. Once we say, "I do," He throws us into the deep end of the pool. Once we say, "Here am I, Lord. Send me!" He immediately thrusts us onto the front lines of the battle. It is not at all unlike God to send us to minister to people who don't see their need.

So how do we survive?

Everything We Need

The calling is always sweet, and the people never make it easy. But when the Lord calls us to a mission, He will also provide everything we need to succeed in our task. Almost always, and especially for men's discipleship, that means we're going to need a thick skin and a hard head. Ezekiel 3:8-9 puts it like this:

"But I will make you as unyielding and hardened as they are. I will make your forehead like the hardest stone, harder than flint. Do not be afraid of them or terrified by them, though they are a rebellious people."

This is especially true when it comes to discipling men. As one of our leaders said, "A man is a hard thing to reach!" Many days, don't you feel like you're trying to break up concrete? That why God needs you to be a tough-minded, unflinching man with a forehead harder than flint and a mindset that says, in faith, "Whatever it takes."

Whatever It Takes

The story of Abby is a perfect example of why God wants us to disciple men. That's why we can never,

and will never, tire or lose our passion to help evangelize and disciple men.

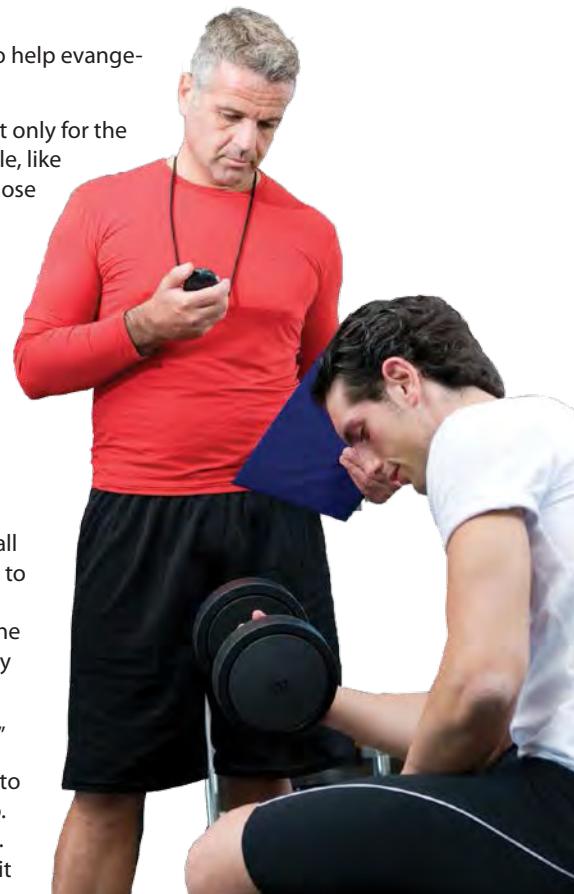
The mission of "men's discipleship" is not only for the men, but also for all of the broken people, like Abby and her sons, left in their wake. Those men have no idea of the destructive cycles they are setting in motion that will potentially and probably devastate multiple generations for many decades to come.

That's why we must urgently do "whatever it takes" to help "every church disciple every man." Here is our charge in the words of Ezekiel 3:10-11:

And he said to me, "Son of man, listen carefully and take to heart all the words I speak to you. Go now to your people in exile and speak to them. Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says,' whether they listen or fail to listen."

This is the essence of "whatever it takes."

Listen carefully to your calling. Take it into your heart. Stiffen your resolve. Then go. Do the work. Whether they listen or not. From God's lips to your ears, "Whatever it takes." 



• PATRICK MORLEY

The author of 20 books, Patrick Morley, PhD, is best known for writing *The Man in the Mirror*, with more than three million copies in print. He is Founder and Chairman of Man in the Mirror and has been teaching a weekly Bible Study to thousands of men for over 25 years. Pat and his wife, Patsy, live in Winter Park, Florida. www.maninthemirror.org

All God's giants have been weak men who did great things for God because they reckoned on God being with them.

—Hudson Taylor



Overcoming Challenges

→ I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

—Jesus (John 16:33)

→ The brick walls are there for a reason. The brick walls are not there to keep us out. The brick walls are there to give us a chance to show how badly we want something. Because the brick walls are there to stop the people who don't want it badly enough. They're there to stop the other people.

—Randy Pausch

→ Battle is the most magnificent competition in which a human being can indulge. It brings out all that is best; it removes all that is base. All men are afraid in battle. The coward is the one who lets his fear overcome his sense of duty. Duty is the essence of manhood.

—George S. Patton

→ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

—God (Joshua 1:9)

→ For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

—Paul (2 Timothy 1:7)

→ The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous: "The LORD's right hand has done mighty things! The LORD's right hand is lifted high; the LORD's right hand has done mighty things!"

—David (Psalm 118:14-16)

→ Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experiences of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired and success achieved.

—Helen Keller

→ Hardships often prepare ordinary people for an extraordinary destiny...

—C.S. Lewis



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