

EQUIPPING THE MAN IN THE MIRROR

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**ALSO
INSIDE**

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Self-Made or Father-Forged page 9
The Reason for My Hope page 7
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EQUIPPING THE MAN IN THE MIRROR

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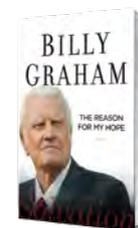
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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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.

NEW IN THE BOOKS BY THE BOX PROGRAM! BILLY GRAHAM

See excerpt from the new book for men, *The Reason for My Hope* by Billy Graham on page 7.



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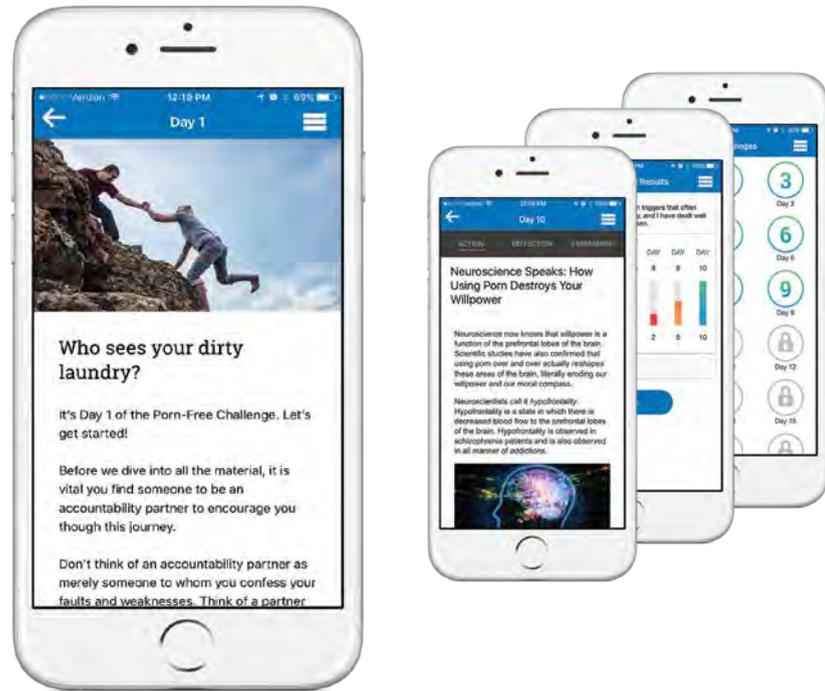
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Find Freedom. Find Hope. Take the Challenge.

FIRST THINGS FIRST CAN WE REACH EVERY MAN?

by Brett Clemmer

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Can we really reach every man? It is easy today for visionary statements to become mere slogans. Ad campaigns come and go. *Where's the beef?* Political slogans captivate for a moment, then fade. *Compassionate conservatism. Hope and change.* But one visionary statement has stood the test of time. Three sentences spoken by Jesus 2,000 years ago has, as Pat Morley says, “mobilized more millions of people and billions of dollars” than any three sentences in history:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

—Matthew 28:18–20

All authority. All nations. I am with you always. We are commanded to go by the sovereign Creator of the universe. The *effectiveness* of our actions are His responsibility. Our job is to be faithful.

If you haven't experienced discouragement in pursuing your cause, you're not a leader. Men's discipleship is no different. We are in a constant struggle with the world, the flesh and the devil (Ephesians 2:2-3). Not just

in our own hearts, but in the hearts and minds of the men we are trying to reach.

One way we battle the world and the flesh is overcoming the idea of the “self-made man.” Pete Alwinson, Man in the Mirror's new *Pastor Emeritus*, brings us insight into the deception the world presents with this idea, and invites us to become “Father-forged men.” The Father-forged man is fueled by grace and love, not compelled by performance and accomplishment.

Every men's discipleship leader faces obstacles that can lead to frustration and even burnout. We present three case studies in this issue from church leaders that ran into roadblocks in their ministry, but found solutions based on principles from *No Man Left Behind*. These leaders are seeing that, in the context of their church, they can truly *reach every man*.

Reaching every man isn't about numbers, it's about faithfulness. The disciples, having received their marching orders, dispersed across the known world, adding to their number, growing the church, expanding the influence of the gospel.

What about you? Are you reaching every man? You don't need to stand on the sidewalk with a sandwich board. Just be faithful. Start with a prayer and then invite that guy you know out for a cup of coffee. Let us know how it goes. 🙌

FROM THE FRONT LINES REACHING EVERY MAN

Edited by Brett Clemmer

Simple tweaks to your men's discipleship approach can give some amazing results.

This month we're bringing you three case studies from real leaders in real churches. Each leader faced a dilemma in their men's discipleship efforts—roadblocks that often led to frustration and burnout. But these leaders experienced a breakthrough. Each case study includes the stories and the principles from the No Man Left Behind Model (NMLB) that made the difference.

Taking a Big Weight off the Pastor

Leadership transitions can be tough on a ministry to men—especially when the senior pastor changes. If the new pastor has never had strong men's leaders to rely on, he may be intimidated by a well-functioning men's discipleship ministry in his new church. Larry Niggli, Area Director of the San Diego Coalition, shares how one church got their pastor on board.

I recently connected with Jeff, a men's leader. Their church had a robust ministry to men, with a committed leader and an effective leadership team. However, they had lost their lead pastor and had gone through a transition to a new lead pastor. The new lead pastor met with Jeff to discuss his vision for the church moving

forward. The pastor seemed concerned about how to connect his vision with the men of the church, especially considering the high levels of camaraderie amongst the men already.

So Jeff talked with his team about how to show the pastor they were "for" him. They brought a weight-lifting bench into the lobby of their church with about 300 pounds of weight on it. They invited the pastor to the lobby and asked him to lay on the bench and lift the weight! Of course, he couldn't do it.

So the men all surrounded him, prayed for strength for the pastor and asked him to do it again. This time they all grabbed the bar and helped him lift the weight. The pastor was so inspired he had all the men sign one of the weights and he has it in his office as a reminder of their commitment to him!

Principles: When a pastor genuinely feels like the men of the church are "for" him, they will be more likely to enthusiastically support men's discipleship in

the church. Jeff realized that his pastor had a vision for the church and needed to know the men were behind him. Make sure your pastor knows that the men of the church "have his back" as he seeks to shepherd and lead. Remember, reaching every man means reaching the pastor too!

No Man Left Behind (NMLB)
Concepts: 3 Strands/Pastor's Support

Leadership for the Long Haul

Sustainability is probably the biggest issue in men's discipleship. Northwest Chicagoland Area Director Ronn Read helped this Chicago church identify one big reason for this struggle—not building on a strong foundation of leadership.

Ministry to men at this Chicago church was up and down. A few men would find a renewed vision for men's ministry, go strong for a season, but then lose

enthusiasm. When they learned the "three strands of leadership," they realized two mistakes—they had not gotten the "buy in" of their senior pastor and they had built a "doing" team instead of a vision-casting team—leading to several cycles of burnout.

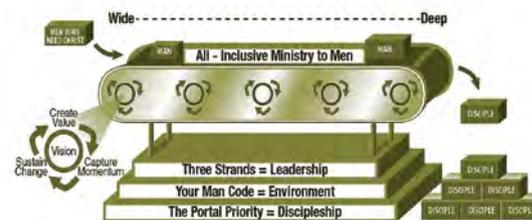
Wanting to support the pastor's vision, they asked for a meeting with him where they first apologized, then assured him they wanted to work with him to accomplish his vision for discipling men. They started praying for him, as well as serving him in some very practical ways—including working on his car.

Then they began the process of recruiting some key men for their leadership team, practicing the "ARTT" of recruiting: appointment, relationship, trust, and then task.

The leadership team has now been meeting every other week for the past five months to go through the *No Man Left Behind* courseware. They are preparing to start the *Journey to Biblical Manhood, Challenge 1*, working toward hosting a *Success That Matters* seminar this spring, followed by the *Life Plan* workbook.

The No Man Left Behind Model

helping churches create an atmosphere where the Holy Spirit inspires men to engage in life-on-life discipleship



Model © Patrick Morley, David Delk, Brett Clemmer—www.NoManLeftBehind.org

The No Man Left Behind Model is a strategic approach to men's discipleship. In a 2010 survey of churches using the model, they reported a 48% increase in male attendance and an 84% increase in men's discipleship involvement in a 2½-year period. Additional information, videos, training and more are available at www.nomanleftbehind.org.



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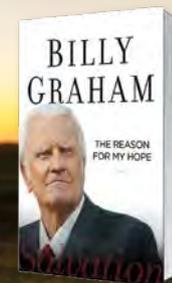
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FROM THE PAGES OF **THE REASON** FOR MY HOPE

by Billy Graham



Do you have enough faith to accept a pardon?

Many say, "This is too hard to comprehend." May I say to you that it cannot be understood without believing by faith? Faith is the key that unlocks this great and wonderful truth of God's bountiful grace. The world is blinded to the fact that God's redemption of humanity through His Son is limited. It is only as we accept Christ as our personal Savior by faith that we are born again—given new life in Christ and are thus brought into the family of God. Scripture teaches that "all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith" (Romans 3:24–25 NIV).

"All" is a wonderful truth—don't miss it. The Bible's message is inclusive—for all. God's message is also exclusive—only those who call upon His name can be saved. But God's Word makes it clear that He desires that all be saved. E. Stanley Jones, the Methodist evangelist and missionary who was twice nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for his reconciling work around the world, wrote, "At the cross God wrapped his heart in flesh and

blood and let it be nailed to the cross for our redemption."

The notion of sin and the nature of sin have been debated from the beginning of time, and that debate continues in our present culture. Sin presents itself in the mind, manifests itself in word and deed, and is hidden in the heart of all of us. It will overtake the man and woman who refuse to believe it will conquer them.

The Bible says that the whole world is a prisoner of sin. Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. (Galatians 3:23–25 NIV)

Sin has crippled human nature, but God has provided the cure. There is no sin that the blood of Jesus Christ cannot cleanse. And that's good news indeed for a culture that still doesn't know what to do with sin.

Why would anyone refuse such a pardon?

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men...denying ungodliness...looking for the blessed hope (Titus 2:11–13 NKJV). 

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SELF-MADE VS. FATHER-FORGED

by Pete Alwinson

S*elf-made men inevitably self-destruct.* This is my deep conviction after a life time of personal experience with my own attempts at growth as well as from thousands of interactions with guys as a pastor and speaker. Life is so broken and challenging that it takes its toll on all of us.

Where does this drive to become self-made men come from? The motivational coding which prompts this nearly inevitable masculine tendency rests far below our consciousness, barely discernable to us. Its narrative goes something like this:

“Today I have to make it happen. Again. I have to deliver, I have to succeed, I have to prove my worth and thus prove I’m a man. It’s up to me. Get up man, and get going!”

Unlike women, most men believe they have to prove their manhood *every day*. This view of what drives us as men is the conviction of sociologist Michael Kimmel in his well-researched volume, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*. Every day is a “relentless test” to prove I’m really a man and worthy of being called a man. Yesterday’s worth is gone; it’s history. Each day we start with a *tabula rasa* of value, a blank slate of worth.

This attitude creates a great deal of “chronic anxiety and insecurity,” and for us

this “relentless retesting of an unprovable ambition.” It’s with us from the earliest days. Ultimately, this male self-made man force within us comes from our fallen nature and dysfunctional world.

But in the Gospel we find the really good news that because of what Jesus accomplished for us, we can become *Father-forged men* instead of self-made men. Grace scripts for us a different narrative of life. At the beginning of each day we can say:



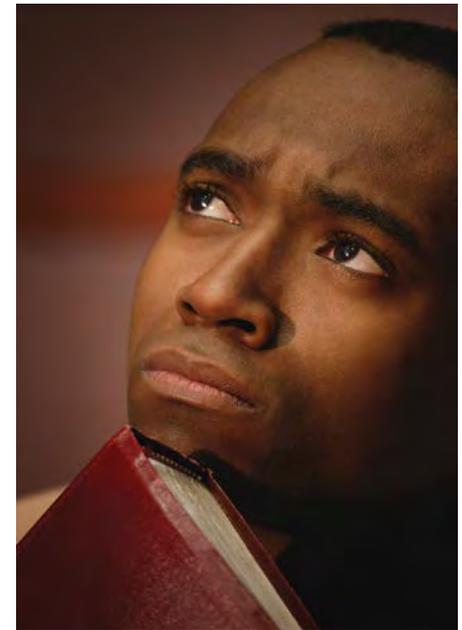
“It’s good to be alive! I am the redeemed and deeply loved son of the Most High God and I can’t wait to spend time with my Father in His Word. It doesn’t get any better than being who I am. The best part of my day is meeting Abba and my Lord Jesus Christ. It gets me filled up for the adventure ahead of me today!”

The grace of God in Christ enables us to truly face our sins and deficiencies as men without despairing or groveling endlessly over our unworthiness and inability to be good men. Time no longer wasted in stressing over our failings or trying to “be the man” can now be spent in resting in His great love for us and in our high identity as the Father’s sons. We can allow our privileged position to leverage us in interacting with the Father on the very areas where we need to grow.

God forges His sons into great men through the fire of our failings with the quiet but transformative Spirit-shaping and sometimes hammering of His Word, reshaping our masculine souls—always undergirded by His deep and abiding love.

The Father-forged man is fueled by grace and love, and connects that love and grace to concrete areas of growth.

Grace enables us to see with extreme clarity the areas we need to change without the accompanying clouding of shame. We can discern the character that needs to be



added, as well as the different behavior we may need to implement in a particular situation. The Father-forged man is fueled by grace and love, and connects that love and grace to concrete areas of growth.

How does this work? Let’s say I have to lead and make a decision for my work team or family that I am insecure or fearful about. First, I make an appointment with the Father. I start that time out by focusing on what Christ has done for me out of love. Reading the Word with the Spirit’s power helps here! Resting in and ruminating on the Father’s great, steadfast love and Christ’s accomplishments through His life, death and resurrection, my thinking begins to change. “I’m not a nobody. I’m the Father’s son.”

It’s easy when I’m freed up emotionally in the context of God’s unconditional commitment to confess and repent of my fear, insecurity and failings from the past. I can look my Father full in the face and ask for boldness and wisdom in leading well.

Self-Made vs. Father Forged continues on page 57 ►

WOULD YOU GIVE A SQUARE FOOT TO...



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EQUIPPING YOUR MEN'S SMALL GROUP

What Your Men Can Accomplish

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:

- { } Memorized Hebrews 10:24-25 as a reminder of the importance of meaningful relationships.
- { } Discussed steps of accountability the group could take with its members.
- { } Prayed for one another as you seek to fulfill God's purposes in your lives.
- { } Read at least two weeks of the daily Bible reading plan from the One Year Bible.
- { } Shared some ways your life has been influenced by behavior modification and heart transformation.
- { } Evaluated finances from a cultural view and from a biblical view.
- { } Planned some ways to help a friend or family member eliminate their debt.
- { } Recognized the difference between a grace-based relationship and a legalistic relationship.
- { } Made a change (time, attitude, finances, etc.) to reflect God's priority in your life.
- { } Planned a community service project to serve a group in need.
- { } Prayed for those in the group experiencing success and failure.
- { } Written an honest letter to God about the condition of your heart and your relationship with Him.



EQUIPPING YOUR MEN'S SMALL GROUP

Suggested Applications Steps

April 1-10

Throughout this week, you'll learn **the importance of relationships for encouragement and accountability.** **SAS (Suggested Action Steps):** Memorize the following verse "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24-25). Next week, be ready to share what you have learned from the verse.

April 11-17

From these devotionals you will learn **the difference between fellowship and accountability.** **SAS:** Read aloud the devotional, "Accountability and Fellowship" from page 20. Discuss if your group is participating in fellowship, accountability or both. Is there a desire of the members for accountability? If so, what are some steps your group can take to help in that process? From last week, what did you learn from Hebrews 10:24-25?

April 18-24

This week's devotionals will help you remember **there are universal purposes that God gives to all men.** **SAS:** The universal purposes are: to love God with the totality of our being, to love one another as Christ loved us, to build Christ's kingdom, and to tend to our jobs, families and culture. Divide into pairs and discuss the one that is most difficult for you right now. Spend a few minutes praying for one another.

April 25-May 1

This week your men will look at a few of the **ways to become a disciple and then to disciple others.** **SAS:** One of the ways to become a disciple of God is to spend time in His Word (the Bible) every day. Included in every issue of *Equipping the Man in the Mirror*, is a *daily reading plan from the One Year Bible*. As a group, commit to using that plan (found at the end of each daily devotional) over the next weeks.

May 2-8

This week, you'll see **the difference between a relationship with God that involves behavior modification vs. heart transformation.** **SAS:** List some of the ways that people try to change themselves through behavior modification. List some of the ways God changes people through heart transformation. Share some ways you have experienced both of these models of Christianity.

May 9-15

In these devotions, **men will learn the importance of God's plan for the way you earn, use, save and share your money.** **SAS:** On a large sheet of paper or a white board, write these two headings: Cultural View and Biblical View. Now ask the men to list the different views of these areas of finances: income, spending, saving, investing, and retirement.

May 16-22

This week you'll learn **the pitfall of accumulating and maintaining debt.** **SAS:** Read aloud this statement from one of the weekly devotionals, "...debt can be addictive." What does that statement mean to you? Why do you think people become addicted to debt? If a friend or family member is in debt, how could you help? This week, pray about ways to help that person pursue eliminating their debt.

May 23-29

In the devotions this week, you'll read about **the difference between relationships based on grace and relationships based on legalism.** **SAS:** If you recognized the need to change any of your relationships to a grace-filled model, how are you going to do that? What changes need to be made? Decide on one grace-based change you want to make and ask God to help you make that change.

May 30-June 5

The theme for this week is **the importance of making your relationship with God your top priority in life.** **SAS:** Read John 14:15-24 aloud to the group from several different translations or versions (*New Living Translation, The Message, Amplified Bible* or others). From that passage, if your relationship with God is your top priority, how is that revealed in your life? What changes may need to be made to make Him your top priority?

June 6-12

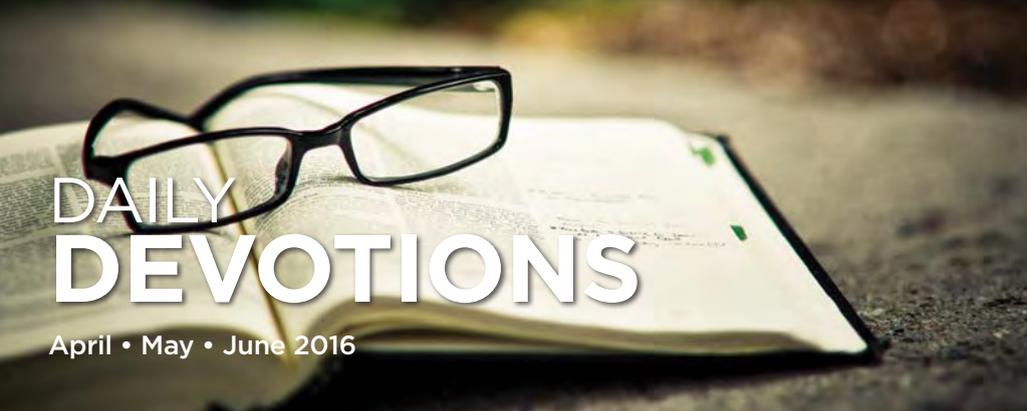
From these devotionals, **you will learn that God asks us to make certain priorities in life such as: loving others, work, rest, good works, etc.** **SAS:** Good works are one of the priorities that God asks us to do as service to Him. Spend some time discussing the needs of under-served people in your community (homeless, unemployed, seniors, foster children, etc.). Plan a community service project to help meet the needs of one of those groups.

June 13-19

This week, **you will be reminded that all of your failures and successes work together for your good.** **SAS:** Have you faced both failure and success in your life? When you look back to a time of failure, can you see that good came of it? What do you consider your greatest success? Spend some time in prayer, praising God for the successes that some are experiencing and praying for those experiencing difficult times.

June 20-26

From these devotionals, **you will focus on allowing God to deal with sin in His way as He did with King David.** **SAS:** From the devotionals, what did you learn about the heart of King David? What did you learn about his relationship with God? Describe David's feelings after his sin was revealed. Using David's example in Psalm 139, write a letter to God and be honest with Him about your heart.



DAILY DEVOTIONS

April • May • June 2016

But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. (Titus 3:4-5)

Early in my Christian walk I absorbed the idea that, if I wanted to be a good Christian, I needed to obey rules, and I needed to work hard—work, work, work, work. If I did that, I thought, I would earn merit. No one ever expressed it exactly that way, but I definitely had the impression that if I wanted to be a “good boy,” I would perform.

At the 14-year mark in my spiritual pilgrimage, I was in the middle of a terrible business crisis. I was writing a psalm—kind of a letter to God. Here’s what it said:

“God, You know my heart. You know how I desire to love You with all my heart, soul, mind and strength. I’m trying to be faithful with the money You’ve entrusted to me. I’m trying to be a good father to my children, and spend the right amount of time with them. You know all of the things I’m doing for the employees of our company. So, Lord, I’m asking for some help here.”

Do you see what’s wrapped up in that thought process? It carries the idea that I have performed, and now God owes me something. That’s the gospel of work. That’s the gospel that says you earn points and then trade them in for benefits. Thank God, He doesn’t think like I do. Instead of spanking me that morning, He said something very special to me: “Nothing you do will ever make you good enough for Me to love you. I love you because I made you.”

Why not pray this prayer today? *Father, please release me from any hint of a gospel of performance. Help me understand and obey Your commands, through the power that You provide. Help me to understand deeply in my heart that nothing I do will ever make me good enough for You to love me. You love me because You made me. Amen.* MIMBS 1

Have you been trying to earn points with God, so you can trade them for benefits? Explain your answer.

Daily Reading: Deuteronomy 18:1-25:19, Luke 9:28-10:37, Psalm 73:1-75:10, Proverbs 12:10-14

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).

Correlating Scripture

Source material

Thursday—April 7 ■ Meeting Regularly

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

I believe Christian men have the greatest potential to live effectively for Jesus when they meet frequently and systematically with accountability partners. For 32 years, until his death, I met weekly with a friend 30 years my senior. We held each other accountable for our relationships with the Lord and our families. Men who don’t have a “standing meeting” eventually tend to stop meeting altogether. I recommend weekly appointments.

I also recommend that accountability partners ask questions related to a man’s spiritual life, home life and work life, and that they address critical concerns that are specific to each individual. At *Man in the Mirror*, we offer a wallet-sized card detailing questions related to these categories. I showed it to a friend. He read it slowly, then stated, “Isn’t it interesting that everything a man needs to know to keep his life on track will fit on the front and back of a wallet-sized card?” You can get these accountability check-up cards by calling *Man in the Mirror*, or by visiting our website.

MIM 25, Chapter 23

Today’s devotional says, “I believe Christian men have the greatest potential to live effectively for Jesus when they meet frequently and systematically with accountability partners.” Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer.

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

One-year Bible daily reading

Discussion/journal questions

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.

- 25th Anniversary *Man in the Mirror*, Chapter, The Four Pillars of Financial Strength
- 25th Anniversary *Man in the Mirror*, Chapter, Priorities: How to Decide What’s Important
- 25th Anniversary *Man in the Mirror*, Chapter, Accountability: the Missing Link
- MIMBS 1—Fed Up With Having to Perform
- MIMBS 2—Man in the Mirror Remix: Purpose
- MIMBS 3—Discipling Men’s Hearts
- MIMBS 4—How Do you Make Disciples?
- MIMBS 5—Grace Legalism
- MIMBS 6—Being Found Out
- MIMBS 7—Can I Be Happy Without My Sin?
- MIMBS 8—What Do These Rocks Mean?

FOR YOUR SMALL GROUP

April 1-3

Read about the prayer from the above devotional.

- How have you experienced love that you required you to work for it?
- How have you experienced unconditional or unmerited love?



Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses. (Proverbs 27:6)

I played men's doubles tennis with a partner who always fumed when I netted the ball. Finally I said, "Give me a break! I would never intentionally hit the ball into the net!" In a similar way, nobody who truly trusts Christ intentionally disobeys the Scriptures. Men don't purposely fail, yet every day we see men falling short of their full potential.

My friend Howard Ball once said, "Sometimes people remark that living a faithful Christian life is difficult. That's not true at all. It's not difficult—it's humanly impossible." No man has the strength of will to always choose correctly. Many men falter because they don't develop relationships that force them to answer for their decisions. Accountability is Christianity's missing link. Every day men fail morally, spiritually, relationally, financially—not because they don't want to succeed, but because they have blind spots and weak spots which they believe they can handle on their own. They lose their families, their businesses, their jobs, their savings, and they damage their relationship with God, because no one challenges them to pursue regular accountability.  *MIM 25, Chapter 23*

How many men do you know who have regularly scheduled time with Christian brothers for accountability? Why do you think so few men are accountable to anyone?

Daily Reading: Deuteronomy 26:1–27:26, Luke 10:38–11:13, Psalm 76:1–12, Proverbs 12:15–17

Tuesday—April 5 ■ Challenge and Encourage

Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, 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)

In commerce, every man is accountable to someone. I owned my own business, but still I gave financial and management accountings to limited partners and lenders. The most successful formula for business accountability I've ever known calls for monthly meetings providing a forum to agree on goals for the next 30 to 60 days. The subordinate has freedom to run with those goals and make things happen. But the price of freedom is accurate reporting, also known as accountability. At the next monthly meeting, the subordinate must report results achieved for the past month before new goals are set for the future.

Similarly, Scripture repeatedly calls Christians to be answerable to someone regarding their personal lives. Accountability relationships help us examine the goals we set and the standards we live by. They help us accomplish God's purpose and priorities for our lives. The Bible delineates general guidelines for our character and conduct that apply to all Christians. We all need people in our lives who challenge and encourage us to live up to those standards.  *MIM 25, Chapter 23*

Everyone wants to be independent. While we desire to live like a Christian, we often want to keep it "just between me and Jesus." Look up Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 and Proverbs 27:17. Compare them to today's passage from Galatians 6:1-2. Based on these Scriptures, how do you think God would respond to the "just between me and Jesus" mentality?

Daily Reading: Deuteronomy 28:1–68, Luke 11:14–36, Psalm 77:1–20, Proverbs 12:18

My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins. (James 5:19-20)

Experts considered the British steamer *Titanic* to be unsinkable. Yet one of history's largest disasters occurred when the *Titanic* struck an iceberg on its maiden voyage during the night of April 14, 1912. More than 1,500 people perished as the submerged part of a mountain of ice ripped a 300-foot gash in the hull of the world's greatest ocean liner. The visible part of an iceberg is beautiful, like the "best foot" each of us puts forward with our friends. But only one-eighth to one-tenth of an iceberg is visible. The rest lurks dangerously below the water's surface.

Like an iceberg, the beautiful part of our lives is the 10 percent or so that we let people see. The part below the surface is where we live the majority of our real lives, usually hidden from the scrutiny of other Christians. The jagged, subsurface edges of our secret lives often rip open our relationships and damage our spiritual lives. What is unseen and not carefully examined can sink us when we are unaccountable in those areas.  *MIM 25, Chapter 23*

Is there a part of your life that would surprise friends if they knew about it? This could involve your relationship with God, your relationship with your wife or your children, your use of money and time, a moral issue, or some area of personal struggle. How could true accountability help you?

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

Thursday—April 7 ■ Meeting Regularly

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

I believe Christian men have the greatest potential to live effectively for Jesus when they meet frequently and systematically with accountability partners. For 32 years, until his death, I met weekly with a friend 30 years my senior. We held each other accountable for our relationships with the Lord and our families. Men who don't have a "standing meeting" eventually tend to stop meeting altogether. I recommend weekly appointments.

I also recommend that accountability partners ask questions related to a man's spiritual life, home life and work life, and that they address critical concerns that are specific to each individual. At Man in the Mirror, we offer a wallet-sized card detailing questions related to these categories. I showed it to a friend. He read it slowly, then stated, "Isn't it interesting that everything a man needs to know to keep his life on track will fit on the front and back of a wallet-sized card?" You can get these accountability check-up cards by calling Man in the Mirror, or by visiting our website.  *MIM 25, Chapter 23*

Today's devotional says, "I believe Christian men have the greatest potential to live effectively for Jesus when they meet frequently and systematically with accountability partners." Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer.

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

The righteous choose their friends carefully, but the way of the wicked leads them astray. (Proverbs 12:26)

This will take place on the day when God judges people's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares. (Romans 2:16)

A successful county commissioner asked me to join an accountability group. As we discussed the group's role, we realized he needed a *spiritual* accountability group, rather than a *political* one. Most of the men participating would concede they were unqualified to help him politically, but everyone was vitally interested in helping him stand for Christ in the public square.

Overarching qualifications for accountability partners require them to love Christ, want you to succeed, and also sense a need for accountability. Answering to the right person can dramatically change your spiritual life. I encourage men to choose accountability partners with skill and wisdom. Pick men you respect. You may want different men holding you accountable in different areas—moral, spiritual, financial and relational. A man who can help you with your relationship with God may not be able to help with finances. An existing friend is a good candidate for an accountability partner. But I do offer a word of caution: don't pursue accountability relationships with any woman other than your wife. That's an invitation to disaster.

Sadly, we've all been stung by leaks of confidential information. The fear of betrayal keeps many of us from risking accountability. Talk over this aspect of the accountability relationship with any prospective partner. And look for someone you can go into partnership with. In other words, instead of looking for a "boss," look for a fellow struggler so you can help each other.  *MIM 25, Chapter 23*

Proverbs 13:20 says, "Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm." How does this statement apply to choosing an accountability partner? Ask another man for his thoughts on accountability.

Daily Reading: Deuteronomy 32:28–Joshua 2:24, Luke 12:35–14:6, Psalm 78:56–79:13, Proverbs 12:24–26

One day we all will be accountable to Jesus Christ. Accountability relationships can help us pursue a faithful walk here, so we can experience God's reward when we stand before Christ.

Senator Bill Nelson from Melbourne, Florida, home of the Kennedy Space Center, flew on the *Columbia* space shuttle mission just prior to the ill-fated *Challenger* disaster. In his book *Mission*, he explained how the lack of resistance in space makes maintaining a proper orbit is a delicate affair. On-board computers constantly track course and altitude, firing small rockets to make minor adjustments. Larger jets burn to make major changes. I've heard that space shuttles were actually "off course" 90 percent of the time. If those rockets didn't fire, or if they overcompensated, the space vehicle would tumble into space. I think as men we are probably off course a lot of the time too. To keep our lives on a proper orbit, we need to constantly make corrections. Accountability partners can act as small rockets and thrusters and jets to help us make the course corrections that keep us in the right orbit.  *MIM 25, Chapter 23*

In your own words, explain how pursuing accountability can help a man make corrections that keep him "in the right orbit," preparing him to experience God's reward in eternity.

Daily Reading: Joshua 3:1–4:24, Luke 14:7–35, Psalm 80:1–19, Proverbs 12:27–28

Tuesday—April 12 ■ Accountability and Counsel

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9)

Seeking counsel adds value to our decisions, but it does not replace accountability. When I seek counsel, I rarely give all the details, facts and background. Usually I only give my counselor what is, in my own estimation, enough information for them to produce an answer. I can tailor and shape the information to lead my counselor to my preconceived conclusion. Unless our counselors have the right to ask hard questions, we haven't gone far enough. Without some people loving us enough to hold us accountable in key areas, we *will* lead secret lives that defy Jesus' teachings.

Let there be no error in our thinking. No man can live the Christian life alone. Left to our own devices, we all succumb to our deceitful hearts. Seeking counsel happens by our own initiative. Accountability gives another person the right and responsibility to take the initiative. Seeking counsel allows us to ask questions. Accountability requires that we honestly answer the questions we are asked—even the hard ones.  *MIM 25, Chapter 23*

Why is accountability deeper than counsel? In your life, who has the right and responsibility to ask you life's hard questions?

Daily Reading: Joshua 5:1–7:15, Luke 15:1–32, Psalm 81:1–16, Proverbs 13:1

FOR YOUR SMALL GROUP



April 1–10

Read the following quote aloud to the group, "I believe Christian men have the greatest potential to live effectively for Jesus when they meet frequently and systematically with accountability partners."

- Do you believe that statement?
- How have you found that to be true in your life?

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. (James 5:16)

One of my most disturbing experiences as a Christian came early in my spiritual pilgrimage. Six of us committed to meet weekly. We discussed a wide range of subjects, but we mostly met for fellowship. We hung out together. Out of the blue, we learned that a group member had quit his job, divorced his wife, abandoned his three children and married his secretary. All of this came as a total surprise. How could we possibly not know? We simply didn't ask each other "accountability" questions.

That experience taught me that fellowship without accountability has very limited value. Fellowship doesn't necessarily presume to have permission to intrude into the private areas of another man's life. Rarely will a Christian brother ask a hard question without an invitation. Accountability doesn't evolve naturally in a relationship. It results from a purposed decision to live in a "goldfish bowl" before a few men we learn to trust. Accountability gives someone permission to ask hard questions, and it requires that we refuse to allow the friendship side of the relationship to mute the accountability role.  *MIM 25, Chapter 23*

In your own words, describe the difference between fellowship and accountability. Explain your answer to your group.

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

Thursday—April 14 ■ Managing Life

My soul is weary with sorrow; strengthen me according to your word. Keep me from deceitful ways... (Psalm 119:28–29)

Professional sports leagues regularly suspend players for violating substance-abuse policies. From Lance Armstrong to Roger Clemens, these men generally tried to manage their lives without help from others. The great Lawrence Taylor, perennial All-Pro linebacker with the New York Giants, was suspended in 1988. He said, "I didn't mean for it to happen. I wish it hadn't, but I did make a bad decision and I'll pay the price for it... I really wasn't allowing the Giants to help me. I wasn't allowing my wife to help me. I was doing it by myself and trying to make it happen by myself because I wanted to say I could do it on my own. It doesn't work like that. Boy, I found that out."

Any of us can fall victim to a self-deceit that blocks our victory, because it refuses to acknowledge a weakness. Unless we face our own propensity for sin and self-deceit, and admit that we need help, we won't stick with a program of accountability. We may start one, but after a few testy moments, we will abandon those nosy, uncomfortable questions.  *MIM 25, Chapter 23*

What is the link between pride and self-deception? What is the link between humility and accountability?

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

No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. (Hebrews 12:11)

Generally, men don't get into trouble because they don't know what to do. Rather, they get into trouble because they lack the structure that supports the discipline to do what they already know is right. One day I asked a group of men about the frequency of their golf game. The few who said they played regularly also said they have a standing game—a structure. Among the majority who didn't play regularly, not one had a standing game.

If we are going to beat the "old man" in each of us, we're going to have to organize to do it. The men who are consistently having accountability relationships have planned and committed themselves to a specific structure or program. In golf terms, they have a "standing game." Our accountability checkups need to have the priority and consistency of a weekly allergy shot. Meet at the same time and place for convenience. And when you put it on your calendar, schedule it as a recurring weekly appointment.

I invite you to take advantage of Man in the Mirror resources to help you create your "standing game" for accountability. If it sounds simple, don't be fooled. Where accountability has been promoted, no more than 15 percent of men have taken the action step and stuck with it. Accountability requires hard work and commitment. The payoff, though, is worth the price.

 *MIM 25, Chapter 23*

Are you ready to establish an accountability relationship? Why or why not? Share your thoughts with another man.

Daily Reading: Joshua 11:1–15:63, Luke 17:11–18:43, Psalm 84:1–86:17, Proverbs 13:5–10

FOR YOUR SMALL GROUP

April 11–17

Discuss ways you have experienced fellowship and accountability.

- Which have you experienced on a regular basis?
- What fears do you have about a relationship of accountability? What fears do you have about not having any relationships of accountability?



“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” The second is this: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Mark 12:30–31)

There are two things to keep in mind when trying to figure out your life’s purpose. We have a universal purpose and a personal life purpose. God calls all men to the same universal purposes:

1. The great commandment to love God with the totality of our being.
2. The new commandment to love one another, as Christ loved us.
3. The great commission to build Christ’s kingdom.
4. The cultural mandate to tend to our jobs, families and culture.

Knowing our universal purposes is the foundation for eventually discovering our particular life purpose.

Each of us is unique. God will call each of us to different tasks and use us in diverse ways. With prayer and the Holy Spirit we can discern what that unique purpose is. This becomes our “marching orders” for the way we live our lives for Christ.  MIMBS 2

How would you evaluate your life in each of these universal purposes? How far down the road are you in discovering your particular purpose? Share your thoughts with a few other men.

Daily Reading: Joshua 16:1–18:28, Luke 19:1–27, Psalm 87:1–7, Proverbs 13:11

For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)

Charlie, a truck driver, was very sensitive to the desire to use his truck driving to witness to other truckers. I told him a story about a young man, who all his life dreamed of one day being a high school math teacher. As he started teaching math he quickly realized that two things were going on at his school: his students were coming to class with problems that math can’t solve and none of the Christian teachers knew each other.

God formed the desire in him, as part of his purpose, to develop a mentoring ministry to the kids and help the Christian teachers get to know each other. Although not a professional minister, this man was an ordained math teacher—ordained to minister to kids and teachers.

I told this story to Charlie and said, “Charlie you are an ordained truck driver. God has a purpose for your life. You have been ordained to do what you do.”  MIMBS 2

Do you feel ordained in your profession? How can you minister to others through your work? Share your thoughts with your group.

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

Many are the plans in a person’s heart, but it is the LORD’s purpose that prevails. (Proverbs 19:21)

Having a life purpose helps me know why I exist. Anytime I find myself derailed, I come back to what my purpose is. It helps me find the will of God in whatever it is that is confusing and figure out what I need to do next.

The only purpose for a Christian that is large enough to satisfy will be one that is linked to God. According to the Scriptures, God has a purpose for us. Proverbs 19:21 says, “Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the LORD’s purpose that prevails.” And in Philippians 2:13 we see this: “For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.” He gives you the desire and power to do His good purpose.

Is God really paying that much personal attention to each of us? Acts 17:26 says that God “determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.” He has sovereignly determined your beginning and your end and the exact place for you in life. “He is not far from each one of us” (v. 27). God the Father is very much involved in why you exist.  MIMBS 2

How does it make you feel to know that God has a specific purpose for your life? How can you discern that purpose?

Daily Reading: Joshua 19:1–20:9, Luke 19:28–48, Psalm 88:1–18, Proverbs 13:12–14

But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed. (2 Timothy 4:17)

I recently went through a spiritual crisis and I found I was not living contentedly or joyously in the present moment. I was always looking ahead to when things would be done to experience the joy. Often that time never comes and we are left continually waiting for that perfect moment to be happy.

As Francis of Assisi was working in his garden one day, someone asked him, “Francis if you knew that Jesus Christ was going to come back tomorrow, what would you do?” He said, “I would finish hoeing.” He was so sure that he knew what God’s purpose was in his life that he was content in who he was. That was his real life; right here, right now. He was doing what he was supposed to be doing.

We should live our lives confident that what we are doing *right now* is in God’s purpose. With this perspective, we can be content where God has us and experience joy in the moment.  MIMBS 2

Do you have complete assurance that what you do is what you are supposed to be doing? Get with your group and share your life purpose statements, or come up with Bible verses that express those purposes.

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

If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4:11)

The Westminster Shorter Catechism (a teaching tool that asks and answers theological questions) is one of the great doctrinal statements that has ever been produced in the Christian church. The first question in the catechism is: “What is the chief end of man?” In modern language that means “what is the purpose of man?” The answer: to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

No matter what your profession is—whether a plumber or truck driver, salesman or doctor—the tasks you complete are not a big enough purpose to keep you animated over the long haul. We need something more; we need something bigger to live for.

Ultimately, we do what we do to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.

I heard Chick-fil-A president Dan Cathy speak about 1 Peter 4:10, one of the verses they built the business around. He said, “We have the gift of selling chicken. We want to do as well as we can for the glory of God. Tonight we have 600 new recruits coming in for training. I am going to tell them about how we have the gift of selling chicken. That means that we treat our customers with kindness. We are selling chicken for the glory of God.”

We will feel most alive, useful and significant when we are doing what God created us to do. This is one way we can bring glory to God. And the good news is, when we do what God wired us to do, we will enjoy it—and Him—as we do it.  MIMBS 2

Are you certain of why you exist? How does your life reflect enjoying and glorifying God?

Daily Reading : Joshua 24:1–Judges 3:31, Luke 21:1–22:34, Psalm 89:38–93:5, Proverbs 13:20–14:4

Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven. (Matthew 5:12)

Why is it so hard to make disciples? One reason is that very rarely do you find a group of people trying to accomplish a common goal in the same way. Often in the church, you find one group making missionaries, one group making tithers, another group making worshippers, etc. They lose their focus. That is why it’s so difficult.

Jesus never said it would be easy. He just said it would be worth it. There really is no possibility of reaching the world unless we reach the church. We can’t make the world right because the church is not right. We can’t make the church right because families are not right. We can’t make families right because marriages are not right. We can’t make marriages right because men are not right, and men are not right because they’re not disciples of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Making men into disciples is worth the effort because to reach the world for Jesus we need to reach men.

That’s the importance of making disciples. And yes, it is worth the effort.  MIMBS 3

Have you ever wondered if making disciples was really worth it? Discuss with your group.

Daily Reading: Judges 4:1–5:31, Luke 22:35–53, Psalm 94:1–23, Proverbs 14:3–4

Tuesday—April 26 ■ Becoming a Disciple

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (Acts 2:42)

Everything and anything that moves you toward Christian maturity is discipleship. Some of the most often noted means for making disciples include preaching, teaching, Bible study, and prayer. There are many ways to become a disciple, but here are my top three picks:

First, be actively involved in a disciple-making church. A disciple-making church will have a plan to immerse you in the Gospel at your own pace.

Second, set aside 10 to 60 minutes a day to read, study, and apply God’s Word for yourself. Every year since 1988 I have read *The One Year Bible*. I memorize meaningful verses, meditate and pray. I have never known a single man whose life has changed in any significant way apart from the regular study of God’s Word.

Third, become part of a small group, preferably men only, and do life together. A small group is a dynamic way to become a disciple. The most meaningful changes take place in the context of small group relationships.  MIMBS 3

How are you becoming a disciple? What else can you add to this list?

Daily Reading: Judges 6:1–40, Luke 22:54–23:12, Psalm 95:1–96:13, Proverbs 14:5–6

FOR YOUR SMALL GROUP



April 18–24

From page 22, what are the universal purposes God gives to all men?

- Do you see those purposes as the desires of your own life?
- Is there one of those purposes that seems more difficult for you to accomplish in your life?
- What gets in the way of fulfilling those purposes?

I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them. (Isaiah 42:16a)

As the stories began to emerge from the survivors of the South Tower of the World Trade Center on 9/11, several referred to a mysterious, young man who wore a red bandana around his mouth and nose. He came to one group of people on the 78th floor and said, “I’ve found the stairs, follow me.” He carried one woman down 15 flights of stairs on his back, put her down, and encouraged the group to keep going. Then he went back up. It’s been determined he made three trips up and down the stairs and at least 18 people have documented that they were personally saved by this guy in the red bandana. Upstairs a badly injured woman was waiting for help when the man with the red bandana over his face, said, “Follow me, I know the way out.” Then he led her and several other survivors over to a stairwell.

This young man was ready and willing to face death to lead others to safety. He was ready to lose his life for the sake of others.  MIMBS 3

Are you ready to help others save their spiritual lives? Are you confident enough in your own belief to show others the way? In what ways do you need to be more prepared?

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

Thursday—April 28 ■ Willing to Face Danger?

I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them. (Isaiah 42:16b)

If you missed yesterday, read that devotion first. On March 19, 2002, the body of the man in the red bandana was discovered alongside firefighters in the makeshift command center in the lobby of the second tower under the rubble. The young man’s name was Wells Crowther. He had attended Boston College where he was on the lacrosse team. He could always be seen carrying his trademark red bandana; his father had carried a blue one. Wells was the kind of kid on his high school hockey team who would always send the puck to the lowest-scoring player so the kid would be able to score his first goal. He carried change in his pocket at all times so he could give it to street people.

Wells worked on the 104th floor of the World Trade Center for O’Neal Sandler and Partners, but his dream had always been to be a firefighter, a public servant. When his mom and dad went through his apartment, they found an application to the New York Fire Department. On September 11 he became both and a hero. He was a man who was willing to go up while everyone else was coming down.  MIMBS 3

Are you willing to go against popular trends to lead others in the truth? What would it look like for you to lay down your own life for the sake of others this week? Get more ideas from another man in your group.

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

But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. (2 Corinthians 12:9)

Why do men commit, perform, fail and fall away? Why is there such little power to stay committed? Because men are tapped into a different system than God offers. God sent Paul, me, you and others to “turn them [men] from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins” (Acts 26:18). Paul did not send us to teach men how to be moral—how *not* to drink beer and smoke cigarettes, or how to read the Bible every day for 15 minutes and pray for 15 minutes. Paul said, “I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified [or made holy] by faith in me” (Acts 26:17b–18).

A man is always going to revert back to that which he already knows. When a man comes to Christ, in the absence of any spiritual training he will revert to what he already knows. And he knows how to perform; because in our culture, if you don’t perform, you lose your job, you get cut from the team, or you don’t get the sale. Men commit, perform, fail, and fall away because we are immersed in a performance-based culture, without the training to live power-filled lives.

Men bring that mind-set with them into the kingdom of God until they are disciplined. They have to let their hearts be transformed by the power of the Gospel. You and I have a responsibility to show these men what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.  MIMBS 3

Was there a time in your life when you were caught in the commit-perform-fail cycle? How can you help other men receive God’s power in their lives to break out of that cycle?

Daily Reading: Judges 9:22–Judges 14, Luke 24:13–John 1:51, Psalm 100:1–102:28, Proverbs 14:11–16

FOR YOUR SMALL GROUP

April 25–May 1

From the devotional “Becoming a Disciple” on page 25, list the three ways to become a disciple.

- What is a disciple-making church?
- Have you ever memorized any Scripture verses?
- Are you doing life together with your small group?



You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:11)

The Gospel of Jesus is the only pathway for making disciples.

Daily faith and repentance are the keys to true manhood and true dependence. The Gospel of Jesus calls us to respond in faith. To paraphrase Paul, “I preach that they should repent and turn to God, then demonstrate that they have this faith and repentance by deeds.”

Justification is our being accepted by God. Justification means being declared acceptable—accepted by Jesus and accepted by God. Sanctification is being made holy. It is the process by which we are changed and become more Christlike. We become justified in an instant the moment we sincerely and earnestly repent of our sins and put our faith in Jesus. We are saved. Then for the rest of our lives we work out that salvation. And the power of the Gospel works in us helping us to become more and more like Jesus.  MIMBS 4

Define in your own words “justification” and “sanctification.” What does “working out your salvation” mean to you?

Daily Reading: Judges 15:1–16:31, John 2:1–25, Psalm 103:1–22, Proverbs 14:17–19

I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing! (Galatians 2:21)

Why do so many people who receive Christ fall away? Perhaps because they’ve never really understood their sinfulness. At some point we should all be overwhelmed with what is called godly sorrow. It is an error to underemphasize what God has done for us. You end up with cheap grace: a faith in a loving God that didn’t really have to do much to overcome our sin.

But we also have to be careful what we focus on. If you overemphasize doing good works, you end up with a performance mind-set. If you overemphasize sinfulness, you can end up with men who can’t believe that God really loves and forgives them. So, to over- or underemphasize any of these things can corrupt a person’s understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

So what does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus? It means to daily embrace the Gospel of Jesus. To remind yourself daily that faith and repentance equals justification and sanctification.  MIMBS 4

Have you known someone who didn’t really acknowledge their own sinfulness? Did this have an impact on the depth or durability of their faith? How?

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

Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2)

Basically, there are two models of Christianity. One is behavior modification: you follow a set of rules, and if you are a good boy and obey, that is evidence that you are a good Christian.

The other is heart transformation. Our job is to repent and have faith in Jesus. Out of that overflow will come justification and sanctification.

Paul said in Hebrews 12, Jesus is the “pioneer and perfecter of our faith.” You don’t have to perfect your faith. He does that in you. He’s the one who gives you the desire through His spirit, so you don’t have to perfect yourself. In fact, you cannot get a man to do the right thing by *trying* to get him to do the right thing. The only way you can get a man to do the right thing is to bring him to a place where he worships God, sees his need to repent of his sins, and then puts his faith in Jesus. That’s the Gospel.  MIMBS 4

Are you “doing your job” in repenting and having faith in Jesus? Do you see the overflow of sanctification in your life? Ask another man for his thoughts.

Daily Reading: Judges 17:1–18:31, John 3:1–21, Psalm 104:1–23, Proverbs 14:20–21

Search me, God, and know my heart. (Psalm 139:23)

If you’re a leader, help your men grasp the Gospel of Jesus. How simple! How profound! If you want to change the world, teach men the Gospel of Jesus. Many men have little power in their lives because they do not grasp the simple Gospel of repentance and faith.

Every day ask the Lord to examine your heart, confess your sins, repent and put your faith in Christ. Stop saying, “I have to read my Bible for 15 minutes, then pray for 15 minutes.” Make your first priority, “Lord, search my heart, Oh God, know my sin, point out any sinful way in me, and lead me in your everlasting way.”

Whether you have been a Christian for a long time or are just starting to know the Lord, make it your priority to talk to the Lord and ask Him to search your heart and lead you in His paths.

 MIMBS 4

In your life, are you emphasizing a rigid Bible study schedule more than personal one-on-one time with God? Are you focusing on changing your behavior or letting God change your heart?

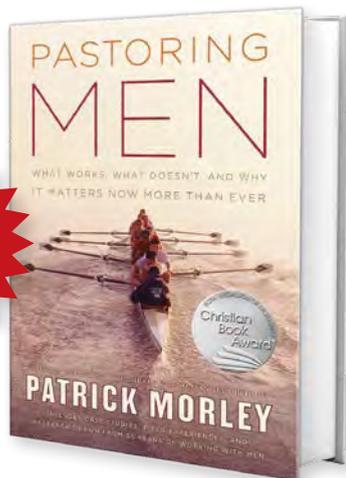
Daily Reading: Judges 21:1–Ruth 1:22, John 4:4–42, Psalm 105:1–15, Proverbs 14:25

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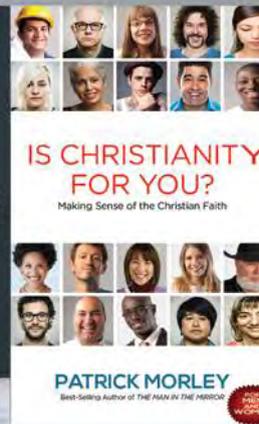
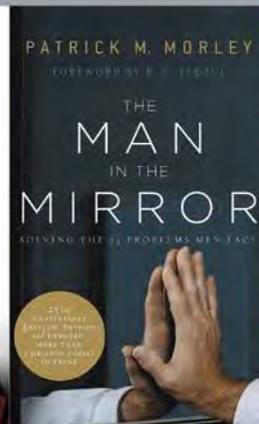
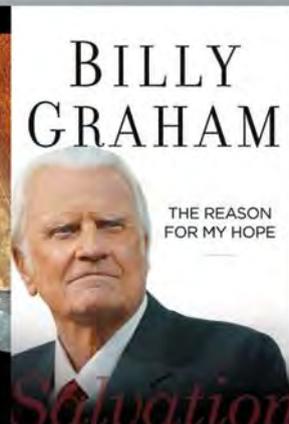
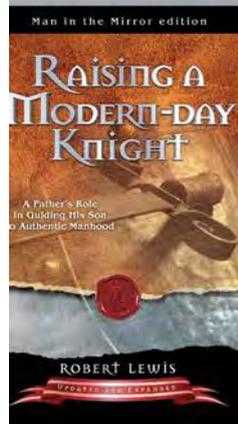
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Fri/Sat/Sun—May 6, 7, 8 ■ Gifted and Fully Equipped

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up. (Ephesians 4:11-12)

Ephesians 4:1 says, “Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ” (NLT).

Why does He give different gifts to different people? It is so that God’s people will be equipped to do better work for Him by building up the church, the body of Christ, to a position of strength and maturity. That’s what the Lord is trying to accomplish by raising up diverse pastors, teachers, evangelists and apostles.

If the world was filled with evangelists, we might have a great amount of Christians, but they could remain immature because of a lack of teaching. People with that gift have a heart and passion for reaching people, but may want to leave the training and teaching to those who have those gifts. If we only had saints gifted in teaching, unbelievers might not hear the Word in a way that touches their heart and demonstrates God’s loving plan of salvation.

God’s great plan for His church was perfectly balanced to meet the needs of seekers, new believers, mature believers, children, the sick and the needy. He uses the gifts of every believer to complete His plan. By raising up these leaders, He is equipping the church to go and make disciples.

 MIMBS 4

How is your church making disciples? Give specific examples. Share with your group specific ways that you have been discipled or are discipling another person.

Daily Reading: Ruth 2:1-4:22, 1 Samuel 1:1-4:22, John 4:43-5:47, Psalm 105:16-106:12, Proverbs 14:26-31

FOR YOUR SMALL GROUP

May 2-8

Read this aloud to the group—basically, there are two models of Christianity. One is behavior modification and the other is heart transformation.

- Explain that concept in your own words.
- Which model were you taught as a child or a new Christian?



Dishonest money dwindles away, but whoever gathers money little by little makes it grow. (Proverbs 13:11)

Devon asked his Bible study group to pray. He needed to sell five boats that month to avoid going out of business. Later he reported: “We didn’t sell any boats, but we sold enough batteries, anchors and other accessories to give us a pretty good month. Now boat shoppers are coming into the showroom. God answered prayer, but He did it little by little.”

Brian wanted to own enough rental property to provide a comfortable annual income. He bought houses that would earn \$50 to \$200 each month. By contrast, my ambition was to make it big by selling large properties. I expected to earn huge commissions that would make his rent checks look like chump change. Five years later, I was still pursuing that elusive big deal, while Brian earned income while he slept.

Devon and Brian implemented a scriptural principle listed above, gathering money little by little and watching it grow. Our rat race culture pushes us to pursue quick money. But as this tortoise-hare experience demonstrates, slow and steady wins. Biblical wisdom does not leave us short-changed.  *MIM 25, Chapter 12*

Are you following the “little by little” principle? Or have you succumbed to the cultural view of pursuing quick money? Explain your answer, and outline the results you are seeing in your personal financial picture.

Daily Reading: 1 Samuel 5:1–7:17, John 6:1–21, Psalm 106:13–31, Proverbs 14:32–33

Tuesday—May 10 ■ Saving Little by Little

The wise store up choice food and olive oil, but fools gulp theirs down. (Proverbs 21:20)

Contentment will be a stranger in a home that saves no reserves for emergencies and financial security. When we spend to the limit of our income (and beyond), we dare our car to break down or the water heater to leak and ruin the carpet. Men in their fifties often realize they were so busy taking care of their company’s affairs that they never took time to put their own financial house in order. Then they must try to do in ten years what they should have done in forty—the normal career length. That raises the pressure to make high-risk investments. Inevitably, a few investments go sour, which only adds to the stress of trying to provide for retirement.

If you’re still young, I challenge you to commit to the Scriptural wisdom of saving for the future. If you’re older, struggling to make up for a failure to prepare when you were younger, teach your children and grandchildren the principle of saving. True Christianity calls us to resist our consumer culture, and to live differently from the world around us.  *MIM 25, Chapter 12*

Does your financial plan and picture show that you are choosing to live in a way that is different from our consumer culture? Explain your answer to the men of your group.

Daily Reading: 1 Samuel 8:1–9:27, John 6:22–42, Psalm 106:32–48, Proverbs 14:34–35

Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. (1 Timothy 5:8)

The biblical requirement for a Christian man to provide for his family does not cease at retirement. A man can pick a desired annual retirement income by following a simple plan. Over the course of a 40-year career, make an annual choice to save 10 percent of your desired retirement income and put it into a qualified retirement plan. For instance, to produce a desired retirement income of \$40,000 per year, save \$4,000 annually over a period of 40 years. Invest that growing amount at an earnings rate of 6.2 percent. You’ll accumulate a nest egg capital of \$651,000. Keeping that nest egg invested at 6.2 percent will produce an annual income of \$40,000. (This does not consider tax and inflation consequences. Part or all of the money saved can be sheltered through proper tax planning.)

If you’re getting a late start, you can catch up by saving more, or by earning a higher interest rate, or some of each. A competent financial adviser can help you accumulate a nest egg to provide a predictable retirement income.  *MIM 25, Chapter 12*

The Nest Egg Principle shows how simple it would be for all people to retire in financial security. Why do most people end up financially strapped?

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

Thursday—May 12 ■ Resisting the Pull of Social Pressure

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. (1 Timothy 6:6–9)

Because of a good economy, early in my career we began earning more money than needed to live in the manner to which we were accustomed. We lived in a neighborhood where our children felt happy, secure and settled. My wife liked the convenient location and the neighbors. One of my daughter’s best friends lived nearby. No dogs barked at night, and no highway noise interrupted conversation when we grilled in our backyard.

Still, since we could afford to live in a bigger, more expensive house, I began planning to move. That’s what people do when they have money, right? We can generally slot a person’s income level by their house, because most people keep trading up to the most expensive home their income will allow. The image of having money and making sure everyone else noticed it pulled like a tug-of-war against the Christian worldview. The social pressure to buy a bigger house preoccupied me.

Finally I noticed I was the only family member pushing for the move. I yielded my ambition and asked God to change my heart.  *MIM 25, Chapter 12*

Describe a time when you faced the pull of social pressure, specifically as it relates to a financial choice. How did you respond? What were the long-term results of your choice?

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

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:19-21)

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. (Matthew 23:23)

Over the years we were convinced that God wanted us to reject our culture’s consumer mentality. Over time, we felt a desire to put a cap on our standard of living. However He blessed us over and above that standard, He wanted us to help fulfill His purposes. That decision evolved. We didn’t actually sit down and write it out on a piece of paper. Rather, over time, by our lifestyle and our actions, it became part of our values.

So now we live by a predetermined standard of living, and everything God entrusts to us above what we need to live on and save for retirement, we give to help build His kingdom. The sense of usefulness and the impact we are having leaves us with a deep confidence that we are truly significant, not for our own self-gratification, but in a way that will last forever.

Today’s Scripture reminds us that investing in God’s kingdom sets a direction that our hearts will follow. If we want to live more for God, one way is to give more of our resources to Him. The opposite is just as true: when we don’t give money to God’s work, our hearts will not be fixed on Him.

MIM 25, Chapter 12

*How much money is enough for you? Why?
Are you willing to put a cap on your standard of living?*

Daily Reading: 1 Samuel 14:1-18:4, John 7:31-8:30, Psalm 109:1-111:10, Proverbs 15:5-11

challenge every Christian to give to the Lord an amount proportional to the way God has blessed him with income, with a 10 percent minimum, as confirmed in the verse above. The Bible calls this 10-percent amount a tithe. Set aside this amount as it is earned. This money is to be used in the work of the church. The church is both the congregation you belong to and the larger work of the body of Christ worldwide. Each local church has its own recommendations, and you should follow them if they agree with your conscience. Many worthwhile organizations without church affiliations exist, and they should receive support as God directs you through prayer.

Give your gifts as an offering to God rather than to men. Don’t seek praise or approval of men, and don’t look for a blessing from specific people or churches or organizations to whom you give. God will bless you for your cheerful giving, although the blessings may be more spiritual than material. *MIM 25, Chapter 12*

2 Corinthians 9:7-8 reminds us, “Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.” Are you a cheerful giver? Why or why not? Share your thoughts with your group.

Daily Reading: 1 Samuel 18:5-19:24, John 8:31-59, Psalm 112:1-10, Proverbs 15:12-14

Tuesday—May 17 ■ The Lure of Debt

Better to be a nobody and yet have a servant than pretend to be somebody and have no food. (Proverbs 12:9)

Consumerism, the dominant economic theory of our culture, suggests that a progressively greater consumption of goods is beneficial. Those who embrace this theory must constantly spark our desires to buy things, because the goal is greater consumption. The strategy is to keep the image of the beautiful, wrinkle-free life always before us, unconsciously marketing to our hidden needs for love, approval, companionship, relief from anxieties, and significance. In this landscape there are two ways to acquire and accumulate: income and debt. If the lure of the Madison Avenue lifestyle is larger than our income, then we can finance our way to prosperity by accumulating debt.

Debt beckons like a sweet siren song luring a mariner to destruction against rocky shoals. Her lyrics deceive us into believing that borrowing can help us achieve the beautiful life we desire. Debt enables a man to pretend he’s something that he’s not. A man who measures himself by possessions feels pressure to go into debt to enhance his feeling of significance. *MIM 25, Chapter 12*

Prayerfully consider the foundation on which you’ve built your personal sense of significance. How does that affect your financial choices, particularly as you navigate the temptations of a consumer culture? Are you using debt to prop up an image that doesn’t reflect who you really are?

Daily Reading: 1 Samuel 20:1-21:15, John 9:1-41, Psalm 113:1-114:8, Proverbs 15:15-17

FOR YOUR SMALL GROUP



May 9-15

Read aloud the following Scripture from Matthew 6:21, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

- Explain that verse in your own words.
- Where would you say your heart and treasure abide? What are the outwards sign that would indicate that fact?

The wicked borrow and do not repay, but the righteous give generously. (Psalm 37:21)

Debt is the opposite of savings, because men either earn or pay interest. Just as our savings earn a wage, debt has the associated expense of interest. Charles Lamb said, “The human species, according to the best theory I can form of it, is composed of two distinct races, the men who borrow, and the men who lend.”

It’s easy enough to run up debt, but it’s difficult to raise the money to pay it off. Sadly, in spite of that reality, debt can be addictive. Once we discover how to get things with it, we drink more and more of it, as if it were sweet wine. The taste of the things debt enables us to buy delights our palates. But the frustration of how to repay the debt produces an acid that eats at the lining of our gut like a welder’s torch cutting steel. Long after the novelty of the possession or the vacation has worn off, we still have to pay back the money. The façade we created doesn’t fool any bill collector.

MIM 25, Chapter 12

Have you or someone close to you experienced the difficulty of paying off a debt that was accumulated to finance a temporary desire? Describe to your group how that stress affected relationship with God and with others.

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

Thursday—May 19 ■ National Debt

For the LORD your God will bless you as he has promised, and you will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. You will rule over many nations but none will rule over you. (Deuteronomy 15:6)

These last few decades have been tumultuous, with deregulation, tax reform, bursting bubbles, stock market crashes, Wall Street corruption, out-of-control federal spending, a staggering deficit, dependency on foreign debt, and a constantly changing economy.

Financial author Howard Dayton first alerted me to the fact that the United States had no foreign debt before 1985. Since then, the U.S. Treasury has borrowed more than five trillion dollars from foreign entities. America was a net lender nation until 1984, but we have steadily increased our foreign debt to an unconscionable level. In Deuteronomy we are told that a country that is obedient to God will lend to many nations but borrow from none. But if a nation is disobedient, the aliens among them will rise higher and higher, and eventually they will achieve the superiority that allows them to become the lenders rather than the borrowers. (In addition to today’s passage listed above, see also Deuteronomy 28:43–46). America’s precarious dependence on the continued good will of other countries provides ample reason for any wise person to steer clear of personal debt.

MIM 25, Chapter 12

Do you think there is a correlation between our nation’s disobedience to God’s Word and our growing debtor status? What risks do we face as a nation because of this change in our status? How does this affect us as individuals?

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

Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer. (2 Timothy 2:3–4)

Quarterback Tim Tebow’s father Bob, a family man with five children, visited the Philippine Islands. He sensed God leading him to return and share Christ with the peasants in the hill country. One day several of his friends received a letter that simply said, “God has called me to the Philippines to share Christ with the people there. By the time you get this letter, we will be in Seattle, where we plan to sell our car. Here’s a list of the things I’m going to need. Please take care of it.”

Four years later, Bob returned for a furlough and visited our Bible study group. In his first four years, he had introduced 10,000 people to a saving faith in Jesus and had started 27 churches. He has since shared the Gospel with millions. Picture the loss for God’s Kingdom if Bob had been unable to go, if his debts had forced him to say, “I want to go, but I can’t.”

Today’s Scripture passage features the apostle Paul’s admonition to his spiritual son. He warned young Timothy to avoid entanglements that would prevent his obedience to Jesus as his supreme commander. Debt epitomizes entanglement in the world’s affairs. All of us need to ask ourselves a simple question: If God called me to a ministry, could I go? Or would my debts prevent my obedience? *MIM 25, Chapter 12*

If God called you to a ministry, could you go? Or would your debts prevent your obedience? Share your thoughts with your group.

Daily Reading: 1 Samuel 26:1–2 Samuel 2:11, John 11:1–12:50, Psalm 117:1–118:29, Proverbs 15:22–28

FOR YOUR SMALL GROUP

May 16–22

On a large piece of paper or whiteboard, make a list of the reasons people go into debt.

- Are there some good reasons to go into debt?
- What freedom do you experience from being debt-free?
- If you have debt, do you have a plan to become debt-free?



Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me. (John 12:26)

In a basketball game where Larry Bird was heavily guarded, the coach came up with a plan for another player to get the ball for the game's final basket. Then Larry said, "Listen guys, why don't you forget that and just give me the ball and then everybody get out of the way?" The coach said, "Larry, I'm the coach and I will call the plays." Larry said, "Okay, coach." And then the coach turned to the players and said, "Here is what we are going to do, give the ball to Larry and everybody just get out of the way!"

On the court, Larry went to the player who was guarding him and said, "I am going to get the ball, dribble twice, step back behind the three-point line, then I am going to stick it and there is nothing you can do about it." That is exactly what happened and they won the game. Larry Bird knew how to engage and how to lead.

Jesus does the same for us. He says, "Give me the ball. Don't try to make your own plan, just follow Me and I will have the final victory."  MIMBS 5

Do you trust God to "take the ball and win the game"? In what ways have you tried to make your own plan instead of following God's plan?

Daily Reading: 2 Samuel 2:12–3:39, John 13:1–30, Psalm 119:1–16, Proverbs 15:29–30

If you had known what these words mean, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice," you would not have condemned the innocent. (Matthew 12:7)

A ministry executive was traveling and saw a Christian recording artist sitting up in first-class, enjoying a glass of wine. After his trip, the leader proclaimed to others that this recording artist would never be welcome in one of their ministry events. He had decided that this artist did not follow his rules and was unworthy to minister.

In the World English Dictionary, legalism is defined as "strict adherence to the law, especially of the letter of the law rather than its spirit." We see this all the time when people are zealous for God but they do not know the Scriptures. They don't understand the meaning of the Scriptures and they come up with rules and regulations on how you ought to behave. Their vocabulary becomes filled with many "shoulds" and "should nots."

Perhaps legalism has crept into your life. It can be subtle and even seem righteous. A great test is to ask yourself how you feel when you do well, and how you feel when you mess up. If we're not careful, we can become modern-day Pharisees.  MIMBS 5

Are there certain behaviors that you believe differentiate Christians from non-Christians? Are those your rules or biblical mandates?

Daily Reading: 2 Samuel 4:1–6:23, John 13:31–14:14, Psalm 119:17–32, Proverbs 15:31–32

He said to them, "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." (Matthew 12:11–12)

Christ faced a religious world of law when He came to minister on earth. The laws of the Old Testament showed people their need for God and their inability to achieve righteousness on their own. The law was not established to make people good; it was designed to lead them to Jesus Christ. But the leaders of the day were not using the law as a guide but as a measuring stick for spirituality.

With Jesus, came a new law—the law of grace. Grace has the same purpose of the Old Testament law—to show us our need for God.

Our human nature prefers rules and regulations. We like to have milestones and measurements to compare ourselves to others or track our accomplishments or to control others. The law of grace does not allow for that. The only accomplishment that has bearing on our acceptability to God is what Jesus accomplished on the cross.  MIMBS 5

What does the word "grace" mean to you? How have you experienced grace from God or His followers? Discuss this with another man.

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

For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. (Ephesians 5:25–26 NLT)

I have a confession; in the first half of my marriage, I didn't give my wife a voice. I understood, in the marriage relationship, that I was the head of the house, my wife was to respect me, and I was to love her. I made the decisions and did not consider her opinion. I had rules of conduct for our home that I made up. After a while, she just got tired of it. She began to detach and mourn the fact that she did not have a voice.

This is just another form of legalism. It is not a grace-based relationship. Jesus does not want us to just follow the rules. He wants to love us and be loved by us. Husbands and wives don't need lists of rules to follow. They need love, care, value and respect to have a growing, thriving relationship.

My legalist ways hurt my wife and our marriage. I did not understand the needs of my wife and what defines the marriage relationship. Rebuilding that relationship required grace on both of our parts.  MIMBS 5

How does a biblical definition of marriage reflect the love that God has for each of us?

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

But the Lord said to Samuel, “Don’t judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The LORD doesn’t see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7 NLT)

When my son was in high school, his nickname was “The Mop”—a reference to his long, curly head of hair. One day, he decided to bleach the mop. It didn’t work right and instead of turning his hair blonde, it was bright orange—and he loved it! I wasn’t thrilled about the clown-like look. But Patsy and I decided that our children could do anything with their appearance, as long as it was not permanent. As a dad, I was embarrassed and I thought about what others would think of him and of me. But I was watching his heart, and I knew it was good and that he was walking with the Lord; so I kept my mouth shut about the orange mop of hair.

I know how hard it is to raise children. There is the temptation to lay down the law, to focus on getting them to do the right things. Many men have been parented or are parenting for performance. But the outcome of that kind of parenting is devastating. You can alienate your child over small, surface issues, or create a world where they can never live up to your expectations.

If your father had this approach or if this has been your parenting style, you may need to deal with that. Do you need to forgive your dad for that kind of fathering? Do you need to show him love through the law of grace? Do you need to let your children know that you love them no matter how they behave or misbehave? Your children need to know that you are most concerned about the condition of their heart.  MIMBS 5

*Why is it more difficult to father by grace instead of rules and regulations?
How can grace-based fathering show the love of God to your children?*

Daily Reading: 2 Samuel 12:1–15:22, John 16:1–18:24, Psalm 119:65–112, Proverbs 16:4–9

A discerning person keeps wisdom in view, but a fool’s eyes wander to the ends of the earth. (Proverbs 17:24)

Almost everyone has gone grocery shopping on an empty stomach and without a list of necessary items. The cart fills quickly, and when the cashier rings up the final total, you fall into a state of shock. The worst part may not be the cost—it may be explaining to your wife how you spent so much money and still didn’t get what the family needed. The object of grocery shopping is to purchase a nutritionally balanced diet for the family. Shopping without a list allows you to wander, risking your time and money on inadequate purchases.

In a similar way, life’s many options compete for our attention. Too often we choose our priorities with the same foresight as our trip to the grocery store, and so we wander through life, giving priority to things that simply are not what our family needs, nor what God wants. A discerning person wisely focuses on a list of biblical priorities, using them to allocate limited amounts of time and money as God directs.  MIM 25, Chapter 14

How would you explain the need for biblical priorities to a friend who seems to be wandering through life rather than following a pre-decided course?

Daily Reading: 2 Samuel 15:23–16:23, John 18:25–19:22, Psalm 119:113–128, Proverbs 16:10–11

Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. (Matthew 12:33)

Today’s Scripture applies both to trees and people. It reminds us that our outer behavior reflects what’s happening inside of us. Our internal priorities bear “fruit” in our choices and behavior. We don’t need to look any further than our own neighborhoods on Saturday mornings to see the array of priorities that men set for themselves. One man gets up early, while another sleeps till noon. One man plays golf every week, while another watches his son’s soccer games. One man washes his car, while another plays basketball with a bunch of neighborhood kids.

In many ways, we reveal our priorities more on Saturday than on any other day of the week. Generally, we discharge our work on Mondays through Fridays. For many of us, Sunday is the Lord’s day. But Saturday is like the discretionary income in our paycheck—the unbudgeted amount that we get to spend however we want. Saturday is the discretionary part of the calendar. Generally, we get to decide how we’ll spend it, and our choices reveal our true priorities.  MIM 25, Chapter 14

What does your typical Saturday look like? Are you surprised by what you discovered when you actually listed your activities? What do your activities reveal about your true priorities?

Daily Reading: 2 Samuel 17:1–29, John 19:23–42, Psalm 119:129–152, Proverbs 16:12–13

FOR YOUR SMALL GROUP



May 23–29

Discuss what it means to have a grace-based relationship or a relationship based on rules and regulations.

- What do those kinds of relationships look like in a marriage, a friendship or in a parental relationship?
- Were you raised in a family with rules? Were those rules carried out in grace or legalism?
- How would you describe the way you are raising your family?

So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (Matthew 6:31-33)

What is important to God? The answer reveals the priorities we should adopt, allowing them to narrow our focus for our daily decisions. At the risk of stating the obvious, secular values lead to secular priorities, and biblical values lead to biblical priorities. So in our self-examination, let's ask ourselves if our value system really follows the Christian worldview. Biblical priorities are like a flashlight in a dark world, illuminating the way for how we spend our time and money. They point out the areas where we should give precedence.

Gertrude Stein, the American writer, owned two Picassos. She always used to tell her friend, "If the house were on fire and I could only take one picture, it would be those two." Choosing between two or more competing priorities is tough work, but it's where we see tangible evidence of the direction our interior life is headed. Today's passage reminds us that, while the secular world calls us to prioritize the temporal world, God calls us to seek things of eternal consequence above everything else. *MIM 25, Chapter 14*

Describe a recent time when you had to choose between two or more competing priorities. How did you choose? What does your decision reveal about the current direction of your interior life? Share your thoughts with your group.

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

Thursday—June 2 ■ Our Top Priority

One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." (Matthew 22:35-37)

The Bible is completely clear on the subject of our top priority. If we penetrate Jesus' statement listed above, we absorb the weightiness of its importance. If we saturate our minds with God's Word and devote every ounce of our strength to loving God, then frankly, our lives take on a new dimension. The Bible describes a God who pursues relationship, noting: "He will take great delight in you; in his love he will... rejoice over you with singing" (Zephaniah 3:17).

A man who understands how deeply God longs for a personal relationship with him will respond to God's overwhelming love. This is the essence of our being. Of course, we won't sit around all day and merely think loving thoughts. Rather, we will set our hands to the task God has given or will give. But that task will be anchored in the understanding that our most important work is to respond to God in love. Whatever task He gives will provide opportunity for a tangible demonstration of our adoration and gratitude. *MIM 25, Chapter 14*

Can you picture God taking great delight in you? Can you picture Him rejoicing over you with singing? How does that affect your desire to respond to Him?

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

If you love me, keep my commands. (John 14:15)

If I knew I had only 24 hours left to live, my conversations with my loved ones would show a clear focus. I'd share the things that were most important to me. In John's Gospel, chapters 13-17 record Jesus' remarks to His disciples in the last 24 hours before His death. Repeatedly He mentioned a link between loving Him and obeying Him (see verse above, also John 14:21 and 23).

One practical way to show the priority of our love for God is by obeying His instruction to study Scripture. I started with 15 minutes each day, which soon became 30, and so on. The Bible also tells us to "pray continually" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). At first, that seems impossible. Yet, we all carry on running dialogue each day. When you are mulling over a problem, or expressing joy, just include God in the conversation. Also, I encourage you to set aside time before or after Bible study for focused prayer. And I don't really think a man demonstrates much love for God if he's not in church regularly. Do you remember how you used to "hang out" at your wife's place when you were still dating? Mortar fire wouldn't have kept you away. That's what love does. I challenge men to invest time, resources and energy in a church where Christ is honored and the Bible is held in high regard.

MIM 25, Chapter 14

Read John 14:15, 21 and 23. What is the relationship between loving God and obeying Him? Describe to another man a time when your love for God propelled you to obey Him, even in an unpleasant situation.

Daily Reading: 2 Samuel 20:14-23:23, Acts 1:1-3:26, Psalm 121:1-123:4, Proverbs 16:18-23

FOR YOUR SMALL GROUP

May 30–June 5

Ask each group member to make a list of the top five priorities in their life.

- Share those priorities with the group. Are everyone's priorities the same or different?
- For day-to-day decisions, how do you make decisions about what is your highest priority?



Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:36)

Biblically speaking, both the first and second priorities of life revolve around relationships. After God, the highest relational priority is your spouse, followed by other family members. Our children depend on us to meet their needs in the same way we look to our heavenly Father to provide for us. Beyond that, God so esteems our relationship with our parents, He lists it among the Ten Commandments: Honor your father and mother.

Scripture offers guidelines for all types of relationships, from family and friends to enemies, strangers, the poor, employers and employees. Our relationship priorities distill to these two great truths: Love God and love others. Too often we see someone else’s faults, but we don’t pay enough attention to our own need for change. Leo Tolstoy put it well when he said, “Everybody thinks of changing humanity, and nobody thinks of changing himself.” If we could change ourselves in these two areas alone, loving God and loving others, we would have demonstrated more of the Gospel of Christ than any preceding generation.  MIM 25, Chapter 14

John 15:12-13 records Jesus’ words: “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” Describe someone you’d be willing to die for, and explain why.

Daily Reading: 1 Kings 1:1-53, Acts 4:1-37, Psalm 124:1-8, Proverbs 16:24

Tuesday—June 7 ■ The Priority of Rest

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

As a young Christian, I didn’t have a clue about God’s priorities. I lacked the self-confidence to say no to anything, because I honestly didn’t know where the boundaries were. So I said yes to everything, and I wore myself out. Some people do too much out of guilt, but mine was out of ignorance of biblical priorities. I knew just enough to be dangerous.

The simple reality is, Jesus didn’t say, “Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I’ll give you more work to do.” Instead, He offers rest. And His offer isn’t limited to a physical relaxation. Some of us worry so hard we get no rest, even when we’re taking a day off. This “worry tired” may be the worst kind of exhaustion. Jesus offers rest for our bodies, but also for our souls—our minds and emotions. Our human emphasis always seems to be on doing. But God is interested in our rest. If it’s a priority for Him, it should be for anyone who claims to follow Him.  MIM 25, Chapter 14

Does your lifestyle demonstrate that rest is one of your priorities? Does your rest include your soul as well as your body? Explain your answer to your group, and list any places where you believe God might call you to make some schedule changes.

Daily Reading: 1 Kings 2:1-3:2, Acts 5:1-42, Psalm 125:1-5, Proverbs 16:25

For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone’s food without paying for it . . . We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate. For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: “The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.” (2 Thessalonians 3:7-10)

Men need a forum in which to find their significance and make a contribution to their families and to the broader community. For most of us, that forum is work. Our propensity for work finds its origins at the very beginning of creation, when God prescribed work as the manner in which we would occupy our days. The purpose of work is to use the abilities God has given us to glorify Him before others. Our world is weary of Christian talky-talk. By pursuing excellence and by settling for nothing less than our personal best, we demonstrate that Christ can make a difference in a man’s life, not just in eternity, but in the present. And that difference can even benefit others and enhance the culture in which we live.

Paul places such a high emphasis on work that he says a man who doesn’t work (if he is able) should not be allowed to eat. Paul himself earned income as a tentmaker, demonstrating the importance of work in his own life, and providing a model for others to follow.  MIM 25, Chapter 14

Genesis 2:15 explains that, from the very beginning of time, “The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” Does that imply that vocation can be a holy pursuit? In what ways can your vocation contribute to God’s agenda?

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

Thursday—June 9 ■ Good Works

For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)

Faith leads us into relationship with God—not our good works. But God didn’t give us salvation for our benefit alone. He has a will and a purpose for every man, and His plan includes some good works. He had this in mind before we even knew Him. Jesus called us to be and to make disciples. That’s a word we don’t use much, so let’s look at what Scripture says about a disciple:

- Called to live *in* Christ. This includes our own salvation, but it also includes introducing others to Him (see John 1:12, Acts 1:8).
- Equipped to live *like* Christ. This includes personal transformation, as well as helping others learn about and become like Him (see 2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- Sent to live *for* Christ. This includes serving and loving others and caring for the poor and needy (see Matthew 25:37-40).

Making disciples is God’s agenda. We try to make it more complicated, but these are the three facets God wants us to realize in our own lives and teach to others.  MIM 25, Chapter 14

What “good work” do you think God may be calling you to perform?

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

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever. (1 John 2:15-17)

Trying to keep up with all your responsibilities, like an old farmer said, is like trying to put two tons of fertilizer on a one-ton truck. The world system will always compete directly with biblical priorities. The slave master “money” indentures men into a bankrupt set of priorities. Scripture reminds us that you can’t serve both God and money (see Matthew 6:24). For example an acquaintance of mine named Joe wanted to be a Christian, but he also wanted to be rich. Bible study interfered with selling time, and church services were scheduled for the hours when Joe needed to recover from the exhaustion of the week. In the end, being rich was more important, and Joe walked away from God.

This competition of the world and money must be part of our lives. However, we must be their masters rather than their slaves. God knows we face choices more numerous than our time and money resources. That’s why He so clearly outlined His agenda and showed what our priorities should be. Men frequently pine for God’s direction, saying, “If I only knew God’s will for my life.” We don’t need to look any further than the Bible. Ultimately, it answers every question.  MIMBS 25, Chapter 14

How does “the world” compete with your biblical priorities? How does “money” compete with your biblical priorities? Give examples and share your thoughts with your group.

Daily Reading: 1 Kings 7:1-10:29, Acts 7:30-8:40, Psalm 128:1-130:8, Proverbs 16:31-17:3

And you may be sure that your sin will find you out. (Numbers 32:23b)

I recall getting into a conversation with a man on a plane. Six years previously, he’d been involved in a small group of men, including his pastor. He said he had been a vibrant Christian, growing in his faith, until his pastor’s sin was exposed. His pastor was leading a double life, with women, alcohol, and everything that goes with it.

This vulnerable Christian’s faith was shattered. He dropped out of his church and took his family with him. His children’s ages at the time were 16, 14, and 7. That reminded me of my own life, since my dad pulled me out of church when I was sixteen years old.

Scripture clearly warns that sin will be exposed—it’s inevitable. And it often brings great pain to everyone around. But even in the midst of that, God is good. And even when He allows or causes us to be “found out,” He’s working to bring about good for us, and for His kingdom.  MIMBS 6

What negative or positive results have you seen when your sin or someone else’s was exposed?

Daily Reading: 1 Kings 11:1-12:19, Acts 9:1-25, Psalm 131:1-3, Proverbs 17:4-5

Tuesday—June 14 ■ Hidden Sin Can Devastate

But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. (Malachi 3:2)

When I was in high school, I was preparing to participate in the long jump at a track meet. I was using my hand to brush off the little wooden slab at the beginning of the jump, and a giant splinter punctured my palm. I thought I got the whole thing out. About three months later, this big fragment erupted out of my hand, along with all the infection that had been surrounding it.

If you leave a splinter in your hand, it continues to fester, and it gets worse and worse. In a similar way, if you leave sin in your life, the consequences will be devastating. God knows that, and so today’s passage reveals Him as One who judges and cleanses us from sin. His purpose in exposing our hidden sins is to bring them to the surface, so we will allow Him to deal with them. Ultimately, He desires our spiritual well-being, but He also desires the well-being of those around us, who have the opportunity to learn from our example rather than going through the same painful experience themselves.  MIMBS 6

Do you have any hidden sins in your own life? What do you need to do to confront and repent of that sin? Pray that God will give you a brother you can trust to hold you lovingly accountable.

Daily Reading: 1 Kings 12:20-13:34, Acts 9:26-43, Psalm 132:1-18, Proverbs 17:6

FOR YOUR SMALL GROUP



June 6-12

Read aloud the devotional, “Good Works” from page 47.

- What does “called to live in Christ” mean to you?
- What does “equipped to live like Christ” mean to you?
- What does “sent to live for Christ” mean to you?

He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. (Malachi 3:3)

I heard about a woman who wanted to better understand this passage, so she made an appointment with a silversmith. As she watched him work, he explained that it was important to put the silver at the hottest point of the fire, in order to burn off the impurities. She watched for a while. Then she asked, “Do you have to sit here the whole time?” He nodded, explaining, “I have to keep an eye on the silver, because if I leave it too long, it will be destroyed.”

The woman watched a little longer, and then she asked, “How do you know when the silver has been properly refined?”

The artisan replied, “As soon as I can see my image in the silver, I know it’s finished.”

God refines us in a similar way. He stays with us while we’re in the fire, and He’s attentive and watchful. He burns off all the impurities until He can see His own image in us.  MIMBS 6

Does this passage frighten you, knowing that refining is inevitable? Or does it comfort you, knowing that God will stay with you through the process, and that He has a purpose for the process? Share your thoughts with a few other men.

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

Thursday—June 16 ■ Skating Close to the Edge?

Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy: without holiness no one will see the Lord. (Hebrews 12:14)

Scripture shows us that when God’s people succumb to wicked behaviors, He works to purge the evil from their midst. Picture a circle with God in the center. Imagine that the outer limit of this circle is the boundary of God’s will. The boundary line is formed by things Scripture specifically commands or prohibits. Inside the circle, there are other attitudes and behaviors that are permissible, but they may or may not be beneficial.

When you pursue things that are permissible but not beneficial, they lead you away from the center of the circle and closer to the edge. Doesn’t it make sense that, if you’re consistently skating close to the line, eventually you’ll face greater temptation to move completely out of God’s will? Today’s Scripture reminds us of the need for us to strive to imitate God. It calls us to stay as close as we can to the center of the circle. We need to know God’s heart and live out the beliefs, attitudes and behaviors that most reflect His character.  MIMBS 6

Are you staying close to the center of God’s circle, or are you skating close to the edge? How would the people closest to you answer this question about your life?

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

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)

Most men who are familiar with Man in the Mirror know my history. My family is more than eight decades down the road from the time when my grandfather abandoned my dad. My father was two years old when that happened. Eighty-plus years later, we are still trying to sort everything out. The effect of one man’s failure has been profound. Yet God is working in each of our lives to bring about His good purpose for us as individuals, and for us as a family.

I do not believe the sovereign, omnipotent, holy, eternal God will allow the eternal destiny of a person’s soul to turn on the failing of one Christian. We might not see or understand what God is doing in that process, but He is doing something.

God is always working to bring about His will and His purpose. God is good, so when we harbor sin in our lives, we will be found out. His purpose is to lead us to deal with the sin and move to a place of purity. When our sin is exposed, or when we are affected because someone else’s sin is exposed, we can choose to rest in the eternal character of our Lord.

Don’t make the situation worse by running from God. He can use even failure to bring about good in your life, and in the lives of those around you. Repent and run toward God, rather than away from Him. If you’re in a habitual pattern, then please take the next step. Get counseling, or do what’s needed to get unstuck. Moral failure, when it is exposed, does have a profound effect. But it doesn’t have to be fatal if we allow God to purify us and restore us to usefulness in His kingdom.  MIMBS 6

What steps are you taking to avoid moral failure, or to recover from it? Discuss your steps with another man.

Daily Reading: 1 Kings 18:1–21:29, Acts 11:1–13:15, Psalm 135:1–137:9, Proverbs 17:12–16

FOR YOUR SMALL GROUP

June 13–19

Think of a person who has been in the news due to a moral failure.

- Was that person confessing or was that person caught or found out?
- Did the person take responsibility for their actions? Did the person blame other or the media?
- How can the moral failure of a public person be used for good in that person’s life?



Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit. (Psalm 32:1-2)

The writer of this psalm, King David, had committed adultery with Bathsheba, and then committed murder when he ordered her husband Uriah to be abandoned in battle. David knew about big sins. Of course he also had all the normal failings of every man. So this psalm reflects the pain that David felt after laboring for a long time under the pressure of sin.

Many men toil under a load of sin, day after day—even year after year. You know people who have not been able to escape a specific sin. You may find yourself in that place today. Perhaps you’ve done the same thing for years, believing it would make you happy. Perhaps you’ve lied on your income tax return, or padded your expense account. Maybe it’s sexual fantasies. Perhaps you abuse your authority, because it feels good to have power over people.

Sin is like a drug. It promises to make you happy, but the pleasure fades. Then you feel more miserable than before. The path to happiness is not in harboring our sin. It’s in confessing and letting Jesus deal with it.  MIMBS 7

The path to happiness is in confessing and letting Jesus deal with sin. In your own words, explain what confession means. How can you make it more a part of your life?

Daily Reading: 1 Kings 22:1-53, Acts 13:16-41, Psalm 138:1-8, Proverbs 17:17-18

Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD.” And you forgave the guilt of my sin. (Psalm 32:5)

Don’t think many people consciously go around saying, “I can’t be happy without my sin.” And yet, anyone who refuses to confess and give up a transgression ultimately believes Satan’s lie that sin will somehow bring fulfillment and happiness. Today’s passage reveals that David did not experience relief and peace until he acknowledged his sin and quit trying to cover it up. Because he humbly confessed his sin before his heavenly Father, David experienced forgiveness and restoration. As a result, he said, God became his “hiding place,” his protector, and his deliverer.

You might think you can’t be happy if you give up your sin, but it’s actually just the opposite. After he confessed, God gave him every reason to be happy. David summarized his advice like this: “Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you. Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD’s unfailing love surrounds the one who trusts in him” (Psalm 32:9-10).  MIMBS 7

Explain how a person who hangs onto his sin is like a horse or mule that must be controlled by a bit or bridle and won’t come when called.

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

When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. (Psalm 32:3, 4)

Do you know someone who has harbored a sinful attitude or behavior until it has become habitual? He might think he’s hiding his obsession, but you know something is wrong. Your acquaintance simply doesn’t look well.

From this psalm, it seems like David sank to that level also. In today’s passage he basically said, “When I refused to confess my sin, my body started wasting away.” Once sin’s immediate gratification eroded, David found himself groaning under the weight of his transgression. Like a good dad, God disciplined David for his disobedience.

Imagine yourself as the father of a three-year-old boy who willfully decides he cannot be happy without playing in the middle of a busy street. Because you love that child, you would restrain him and teach him the proper place to play. God’s long-term purpose in discipline is not to *break* us, but rather to *make* us into wise and mature men. When a man refuses to confess his sin, God will allow sin’s consequences to make that man groan. God doesn’t do this to shame us. Rather, He wants to train us.  MIMBS 7

What is the difference between shaming and training? Share with another man how you have seen this in your own life.

Daily Reading: 2 Kings 1:1-2:25, Acts 13:42-14:7, Psalm 139:1-24, Proverbs 17:19-21

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:23-24)

After he sinned with Bathsheba and had her husband murdered, David went quite a while without confessing and getting his relationship with God back on track. We don’t really know how he managed to ignore his sin for so long. But after God’s prophet confronted him, David wrote Psalm 51, requesting God’s mercy and saying, “I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me” (Psalm 51:3). With God’s help, David dealt with the sins he knew about.

In Psalm 139, though, David seems to go deeper, asking God to reveal the sins that had escaped his attention. David admitted that, without God’s help, he could not even understand his own ability to be offensive to God. He basically said, “I’ve confessed the sins I know about. Now, please reveal the ones I don’t know about, so You and I can deal with them together.”

David wanted to eradicate from his life anything that did not please God. Do you share his desire? Are you ready to ask God to reveal the sins you haven’t yet recognized?  MIMBS 7

On a scale of 1-10, how serious are you about your relationship with God? Do you share David’s desire to eradicate anything in your life that does not please God? Explain your answer.

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

When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. (James 1:13-15)

Several years ago, I wanted to get rid of one car so I could buy another. I wanted to list my car on a website that targets people who want to buy cars like mine. I sent an email on a Tuesday afternoon, and when I awoke the next morning, I found no one had answered me. I had a strong desire to get that car on the market, so I could use the money from the sale to purchase the one I wanted to buy. I searched until I found another website, and by 6 a.m., I had the car listed elsewhere.

Desire will find a way for fulfillment. James wrote that temptation happens when people are dragged away by their evil desire. But desire can be a powerful force for good as well. The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah told us that God would make a new covenant. This one would be different from the old covenant, because God would put it in our minds and write it on our hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-33). In other words, God promised to mold our desires so they become like His, and that naturally will alter our actions.

That’s an important point, because it is possible to clean up your behavior without actually changing what’s in your heart. Religious people can be very self-righteous. We can look down on others who don’t live up to our behavioral “standard.” Jesus regularly confronted the most religious people of His day about this tendency. Pride always stands opposed to true confession of sin. And without confession, we will never truly be in agreement with God about our failure and our need.

 MIMBS 7

List your five strongest desires. Are they in alignment with God’s Word? Will they lead you to sin, or to confession?

Daily Reading: 2 Kings 6:1-7:10:31, Acts 15:36-17:34, Psalm 142:1-144:15, Proverbs 17:24-28

To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me. (Colossians 1:27-29)

The U.S. is home to about 113 million men aged 15-years-old and older, and 69 million of those men make absolutely no profession of faith in Christ. Only about six million men in the U.S. are involved in any type of ministry that helps them to mature in their relationship with Christ. That’s just one of every 18 American men, engaging in a ministry that intentionally helps them learn about Jesus and become more like Him.

Today’s passage records the apostle Paul’s vision for helping people grow and become “fully mature in Christ.” Another word for this is “discipling”—introducing people to relationship with Jesus, and helping them become more and more like Him. Frankly, this type of ministry is hard work. Yet it imitates Jesus’ example while He lived on earth. Jesus selected 12 men, into whom He poured the majority of His energy and time, reproducing His own character and priorities in the lives of His followers. Jesus never said this type of ministry would be easy, but He did promise it would be worthwhile, because it would yield tremendous results.  MIMBS 8

In your own words, define what it means to be “fully mature in Christ.”

Daily Reading: 2 Kings 10:32-12:21, Acts 18:1-22, Psalm 145:1-21, Proverbs 18:1

Tuesday—June 28 ■ Go and Make Disciples

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:18-19)

Today’s passage is traditionally called “The Great Commission.” It capsulizes Jesus’ final instructions to His followers just before He returned to heaven. Sometimes in Christian groups, we hear this passage so often that we get immune to it. We lose sight of its weight and grandeur. Occasionally we need to revisit this event and realize what Jesus was really saying.

Jesus started with a significant statement declaring His place in the universe. He rules everything. He truly is the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the President of presidents, the CEO of CEOs. He basically says, “Everyone in the world eventually will report to me, because I have all authority.” Based on that understanding, He tells His followers to “go and make disciples.” He did not say we should sit in our churches and wait for people to come to us. He said we should go to where the people are, and introduce them to the incredible fact that the Lord of the universe wants to be in relationship with them.  MIMBS 8

Are you living daily with the realization that you are in relationship with the ultimate authority in the entire universe? How does that affect your motivation to “go and make disciples”?

Daily Reading: 2 Kings 13:1-14:29, Acts 18:23-19:12, Psalm 146:1-10, Proverbs 18:2-3

FOR YOUR SMALL GROUP

June 20-26

On a scale of 1-10, how serious are you about your relationship with God?

- Do your family and friends know how serious you are about your relationship with God?
- Are you willing to let God “search your heart” to see if there are things that keep you from having a close relationship with Him?



To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. (1 Peter 2:21)

People have different mental pictures of what it means to be a disciple. Some people believe a disciple is someone whose behavior fits a certain standard. They may believe, for instance, that a disciple is someone who does not smoke or drink or attend R-rated movies. Other people define discipleship in terms of spiritual disciplines. To them, a disciple is someone who reads his Bible every day and prays. And still others believe a disciple is defined by his contribution in service to a church body or ministry organization. This group concentrates on recruiting men to be ushers or deacons, filling various responsibilities.

In reality though, a disciple is someone in the process of discovering who Jesus is. This person doesn't just want to *know more about Jesus*—he wants to *know Jesus*. He doesn't pursue information for the sake of greater knowledge, but he seeks to imitate our Lord's attitudes and actions. A disciple is simply a person who spends time with Jesus and learns to imitate His example. 🖥️

MIMBS 8

Compare the various definitions of discipleship listed above. What differs in the true biblical definition of discipleship from the three views explained in the first paragraph?

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

Thursday—June 30 ■ Justification and Sanctification

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)

Jesus said that making disciples boils down to two activities: baptizing people in the name of the Trinity, and teaching them to obey all of Jesus' commands.

In theological circles, we describe those two processes as: justification and sanctification. Justification describes God's activity of making sinners righteous through Christ's sacrificial death on our behalf. Sanctification describes the process of surrendering our lives to God in an ongoing relationship, so that we become more and more like Him by following His example and obeying His commands.

When Jesus gave the command found in today's Scripture, He was talking to people who already were His disciples. He simply said, "Go and make more people who are like you. Introduce them to Me through salvation, and then teach them to obey the things I've already explained to you." Clearly, Jesus expects His followers to pursue relationship with God, through Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. He also expects His followers to engage in some way in teaching others to do the same. 🖥️ MIMBS 8

How are you helping others to pursue a relationship with God? Take one practical step to help another man this week.

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

Self-made manhood becomes a thing of the past because it is a relic of an identity that is being replaced by my true identity as a beloved son.

The reality is that during the process I've just described, specific wisdom and new strength is already beginning to flow even before I ask for specifics. What I've found is that subtle but unbelievable power flows when we first engage God as Father. Self-made manhood becomes a thing of the past because it is a relic of an identity that is being replaced by my true identity as a beloved son.

Pick any subject where we need and want to grow as men—lust, addiction, fear, anxiety, inferiority or leadership. Where grace is mediated from Father to son, sons grow and are forged into the greatness for

which they were designed, and for which they long.

But there's more! This new way of life and manhood is transferrable! With the grace of God in Christ we become more relaxed, authentic and open to other people. No longer needing to play the "I have it all together" game, we move into the lives of other men, helping them to see that they too can abandon the self-made man strategy. They realize the self-made mindset will inevitably cause them to self-destruct, and move into the more exhilarating and motivating life of a Father-forged son. Imagine how simple and powerful it would be to leave no man left behind on the battlefield of life.

So abandon the ultimately self-destructive mindset of self-made manhood. Lean into the grace and honor of being a Father-forged men. When we do, common men like us can help other men become Father-forged men living uncommon lives, promoting the flourishing of men, women, children, churches and culture, for the glory of God. **MIMBS**



■ PETE ALWINSON

Pete was a pastor for 30 years. He planted and led Willow Creek Presbyterian Church in Winter Springs, Florida for 26 years. He has now joined Man in the Mirror as Pastor Emeritus and Executive Director of Men's Studies. He teaches the weekly Bible Study FORGE in the Orlando area and is a regular on *Key Life Radio* with Steve Brown.

They are now committed to each other as a leadership team, as well as to the process of building relationships with the men of their church, and building a ministry to men that will be around for a long, long time.

Principles: When you don't have all three strands of leadership—the support of the senior pastor, a passionate leader and a committed team—it's hard to build a sustainable ministry. Add in that the team was *doing* the work, instead of planning and recruiting men to be involved, and the recipe for burnout was complete. With a renewed focus on connecting to the pastor's vision and and a well-thought-out strategy to disciple men instead of just doing events, this church is on its way to reaching every man!

NMLB Concepts: Vision, 3 Strands/Committed Team

From Bible Studies to Baseball Games

In an effort to give their men's discipleship strategy an identity, this church realized they may have gone a little too far, actually making some men feel like outsiders in their own church! They also recognized they needed to reach the men through more than just men's-only events. A pastor from a church in Area Director Dale Redder's Grand Valley Coalition (Michigan) shares their new approach.

We named our ministry to men and promoted every men's events, class, and ministry as being sponsored by "EveryMan." Unfortunately, we created a situation in the congregation where men not actively involved with everything we were doing began to feel alienated or detached.

We are now using the All-Inclusive Ministry mindset. We initiated our Matthew 28 Ministry. The idea is to recognize where our people are already coming in contact with "church" and disciple them right there.

For example, the combined men's and women's ministry teams will be hosting a marriage conference. We hosted a family movie night at a local theater and followed up by creating 15 small groups. The "Read through the Bible in a Year Challenge" is designed to engage every member of the congregation, not just the men. All of our teachers, partners, coaches, and leaders use what they do as an opportunity to grow the people in their group, and also to help the individuals in their group reach out to others.

After a leadership seminar here last summer from Man in the Mirror, we became aware that we were not providing enough "on ramp" opportunities for men early in their spiritual journey.

So in the next year, in partnership with several ministries in the church, we're hosting a family bowling night, training at an adventure camp, a sports challenge against the pastors, ballroom dancing lessons, a Detroit Tigers game, and more!

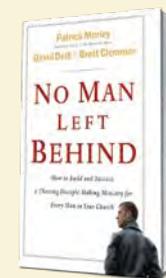
At every opportunity, we ALWAYS attempt to capture the momentum by providing

a next step for the attendees, connecting them to upcoming opportunities throughout the church.

Principles: In an effort to communicate the vision of men's discipleship with a strong identity, this church inadvertently made some men feel excluded. They regrouped, found allies throughout the church leadership and took on a new All-Inclusive approach. Using the audit process, they then recognized they were reaching men mostly on the deep side of the continuum. Realizing that they wanted to reach every man, including men who need Christ and cultural Christians, they are adding activities for guys on the wide side of the continuum. Finally, in order to capture the momentum that they are creating, they make sure that every activity has a suitable next step.

NMLB Concepts: All-Inclusive, Wide-to-Deep

What's your story? Are you facing obstacles in your ministry to men? The principles of *No Man Left Behind* are helping thousands of leaders in hundreds of churches build a sustainable ministry to every man in their church. Go to www.nomanleftbehind.org for more help. 



No Man Left Behind training has helped thousands of leaders in churches **JUST LIKE YOURS.**



For more information go to
nomanleftbehind.org



QUOTES ON DISCIPLESHIP

“Only a disciple can make a disciple.”
—A.W. Tozer

“If you want a better leader, help him become a better disciple.”
—No Man Left Behind

“One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”
—Proverbs 18:24

“We have never known a man whose life has been changed in any significant way apart from the regular study of God’s Word.”
—No Man Left Behind

“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.”
—1 John 3:16

“Jesus disciplined these men and they changed the world. If you will disciple the men of your church to follow Christ, what will happen? Marriages will improve, then families, then the church, and finally the world.”
—No Man Left Behind

“There is no brotherhood of man without the fatherhood of God.”
—H. M. Field

“Jesus promised His disciples three things—that they would be completely fearless, absurdly happy, and in constant trouble.”
—G.K. Chesterton

“The one indispensable requirement for producing godly, mature Christians is godly, mature Christians.”
—Kevin DeYoung

“Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble.”
—1 John 2:10

“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command.”
—John 15:13, 14

“It is impossible to live the life of a disciple without definite times of secret prayer. You will find that the place to enter in is in your business, as you walk along the streets, in the ordinary ways of life, when no one dreams you are praying, and the reward comes openly, a revival here, a blessing there.”
—Oswald Chambers

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