

Real Men

Are

Godly Men

Steve Flatt



BibleWayPublishing

President's Statement

BibleWay Publishing is a non-profit Bible ministry. Its primary focus is on the websites and digital books of the International Bible Knowledge Institute. The objective of IBKI is to make Bible lessons available to anyone interested in learning more about God and His will. Students are NOT required to attend the Institute to earn a certificate or diploma. These lessons can be studied online or in classrooms, by Zoom, downloaded to digital devices, emailed, printed, or used by individuals, groups, or churches in their evangelistic ministry. IBKI is not an accredited institution.

We recommend that you study your Bible to determine the accuracy of what is stated in these lessons or from any other source. The "commentaries" presented in the International Institute of Biblical Knowledge (IBKI) lessons are the opinions of the authors or compilers. Opinions often find their way into audio, video, and print lessons, as well as Bible commentaries; and, in the teachings of preachers, ministers, pastors, priests, and rabbis.

You should always verify all the comments, opinions, and teachings of these since it is YOUR responsibility to seek, know and do the will of God.

To check the truth of any teaching, read different Bible translations, and consult Bible dictionaries and lexicons to learn the meaning of unfamiliar words or phrases. Be careful with any dictionary definitions, as dictionaries give the meaning of words and phrases from the original language to current usage.

The meaning of words and phrases changes over time. Also, multiple Greek words can be translated into one word, which can distort the original meaning.

May you allow God to guide you in your study of His Holy Word, the Bible.

IBKI grants permission to download and reproduce for non-commercial purposes their lessons in their entirety. Feel free to share but not sell, change, or charge books or lessons.

Randolph Dunn, President

Real Men Are Godly Men

Introduction

This series of lessons are designed to help men become the kind of men God is looking for, women want and children need. This in no way minimizes the role God designated for women nor the high esteem in which God holds them and which He demands men to do also. Much of the information presented here applies equally to women such as purity, spirituality, accountable, high integrity, and live lives focused on the right priorities.

A Few Good Men

Men of Relationship

Men of Accountability

Men of Integrity

Men of Purity

Men of Spirituality

Men of Priorities

Men of Leadership

Looking for a Few Good Men

Margaret Mead, who is probably the leading anthropologist and sociologist of this century, has said, "The central problem of every society is to define appropriate roles for the men. If the men don't know what they are supposed to be, the culture is in trouble." She's right. And our culture is in trouble because men are confused.

Men are different. They are! They're different from women. Those of us, who believe the Bible, must resist the current societal rage to make androgyny [having the characteristics or nature of both male and female] a viable option. There are those who are trying to play down and ignore the differences between men and women. Gloria Steinem, one of the early leaders of the feminist movement said, "We are human beings first, with minor differences for men, that apply largely to the act of reproduction. The only functional difference," she says between men and women, "is a woman's ability to give birth. A woman needs a man," she concludes, "like a bicycle needs a fish."

Well, she's wrong, she's dead wrong. The Bible says she's wrong, biology says she's wrong, and experience tells all of us she's wrong. The cover article on the front page of the January 1992 issue of Time Magazine stated in bold letters, Why Are Men and Women Different? And then the sub-title stated New Studies Show They're Born That Way. Yeah, yeah, Genesis 1:27, "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Did he ever!

In the ninth week of pregnancy when the little child is still in the womb and so tiny, God begins the secretion of testosterone in the male brain. And that testosterone coats that little bitty tiny male mind, and from that time forward, that baby, that child, that man, never is the same. He thinks dominantly with the left half of his brain and women think with both halves of their brain.

What about that left half? That left half is given to task orientation, to competition, and to work. Because of this phenomenon, that's as natural as water running downhill, men are less verbal, men are less sensitive, men are more decisive and they are less grudge holding. Other lessons will address how God made men for certain roles, and certain functions. The Bible says, "Maleness and femaleness were designed by the Creator to each uniquely reflect his image." Maleness is God's gift to men, not something to be ashamed of.

Now admittedly, like most of God's gifts, there have been some who perverted maleness, some of them have turned it into a thing called, "macho." Macho is sick, macho is a gross perversion of masculinity. But just because some guys have perverted the gift, doesn't mean we do away with it. We should withstand all attempts to remake men into the image of women as if maleness were a disease. God's ideal is masculinity and femininity living together in unity. That's the plan.

Men are vital. I don't know many Christians who believe the radical, feminist claim that men are no longer necessary. But quite frankly, their influence has rubbed off on us, no question about it. In the church today, we spend a lot more time talking about the role of women than we do teaching young boys about the role of being men.

The Bible affirms the importance of men, of male leadership in the home, and in the church, and in the community. Now, I know that is not politically correct, but I also know the Bible has never been too concerned about political correctness. The role of man is vital. His influence will extend to the third and the fourth generations and beyond. That influence can be a blessing.

I've always been impressed when I've read about the heritage and the history of Jonathan Edwards. Do you remember Jonathan Edwards, the Puritan preacher of the 16th and 17th centuries? He later became the president of Princeton University, and among his descendants, 300 of them became preachers and missionaries. One hundred and twenty became college professors. Sixty became authors. One hundred and ten became attorneys, 30 became judges, 14 of his descendants became presidents of colleges and universities, three took seats in Congress, and one became the vice-president of the United States. Jonathan Edwards studied the Bible 11 to 12 hours every single day of his life, but he always came home and devoted one hour a day, uninterrupted with his children, without exception. He blessed them for generations.

The flip side of that is also true. The influence of men can also be negative. The Bible says, "The sins of the fathers are punishing on the sons even to the third and to the fourth generation." Some of you today, are struggling with the sins of your fathers and your grandfathers, the consequences of which you're still wrestling with today, particularly those of you who are children and grandchildren of alcoholics.

Most of us know how vital men really are. We tend to forget that there is a great spiritual war going on all around us. To remind you of that Paul states in Ephesians 6:11 "Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the whole armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand."

There is a colossal, spiritual battle going on, and strategy number one on Satan's part is to neutralize men. See, Satan's strategy has always been to scatter the sheep by taking out the shepherd. That's what he tried to do to Jesus, take out the shepherd, and scatter the sheep. The family is the fundamental unit of civilization, and God has made the man to be the shepherd of the family. Satan's strategy is simple, it's just, "Divide and conquer." Alienate and sever a husband's relationship from his wife. Alienate and then sever a father's relationship with his children. Satan is no fool. The reason he does it, is because it works. And it's working like crazy.

This is simplistic, but the problem with society is good men are missing. Some are missing because they're tired and confused, others because they bailed out or because of a girlfriend. Some are missing on the golf course, on a boat, under the car, or in their lazy boy, channel surfing, but too many good men are missing.

Dr. James Dobson, leader of Focus on the Family and one of the leading family therapists of our day, stated, "The western world stands at a great crossroads in its history. It's my opinion that our very survival as a people depends upon the presence or absence of masculine leadership in homes."

Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, from the state of New York said: "From the wild Irish slums of the 19th century eastern seaboard to the riot-torn suburbs of Los Angeles, there is one unmistakable lesson of American history. The community that allows a large number of young men and women to grow up in families dominated by women, never acquiring any stable relationship to male authority, asks for and gets chaos."

William Raspberry, African-American columnist, wrote this in the Washington Post not long ago. "If I could offer a single prescription for the survival of America, particularly black America, it would be to restore the family. If you ask me how to do it, my answer obviously over-simplified would be, 'Save the boys.'"

We live now in a culture where boys are not being taught to be family shepherds, where they're not being trained in masculine leadership, where they don't know what it means to be in God's image as the shepherd of that home.

There is a great need in our country, for men to rise up as spiritual warriors. It's easy to get caught up in paying the bills, keeping the car running, making sure the grass is mowed. It's easy to be lulled to sleep by the nearsighted images of life. We forget we're in the middle of a great cosmic battle.

Just imagine it is late one night and you're sleeping at home, there's a noise, you hear a glass break and somebody has come inside. You grab something to defend yourself from the intruder, you tell your wife to "lock the door and dial 911. I'm going to go stop him before he gets to the kids." Well, folks, there is a prowler trying to get into your home, it's the evil one. Who's standing at the door right now saying, "You can't have my home." I don't believe the answer for men is to go off in the woods and beat drums and find your primeval selves. But some of us men just need to beat our chest in repentance and reclaim our God-intended roles as spiritual warriors.

Saul has just died, and Israel is in a morally dismal state, David is in the wilderness, and the Bible says, "Mighty men of God came out to David." ... "Men of Issachar, understood the times and knew what Israel should do---" (I Chronicles 11:3; 12:32) I love that. They understood the times, and they knew what Israel should do. We need some men of Issachar today.

We're at war. The critical shortage of any war has always been good men. E. M. Bounds wrote "Men are always looking for better methods. God is looking for better men."

The Holy Spirit guided Paul to write in Romans 13:11-12: "And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of the light."

There is absolutely no difference in the value between a man and a woman. There is no difference in the value of a preacher and anybody else in the whole world. There is no difference between a child and a parent in terms of the value of the soul. God says, however, there are certain roles I want you to fill. I will give some of you certain gifts, certain talents, use them to my glory. He said, "I will make you men to be the shepherds of the home." Amazing Grace #1206 - Steve Flatt - April 23, 1995

Looking For Real Relationships

There are all kinds of myths about men: "Real men don't eat quiche. Real men don't floss. Real men don't buy flight insurance. Real men don't call for a fair catch." All of those, by the way, are myths; they're not true. But, perhaps the most damaging and devastating myth that's been perpetrated by the John Wayne/Clint Eastwood-type Hollywood characters, is that men can do just fine without any real relationships, that men are born to be loners. The myth that we need most to discard is that real men don't need other people.

For years, our culture has fostered the notion that being a male meant being independent, being isolated, keeping particularly other men at arm's length. We've been told that rugged individualism is what built America. Do you realize that's a culturally fabricated myth? When you go back and look at the history of America, the real history of America, it wasn't built by rugged individualism; it was built by men working together, not men working apart.

So the wise man stated in Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, "Two are better than one, because they have a greater return for their work: If one falls down, there's one to help him up. But pity the man who falls down and has no one to help him up!" The Bible says that it's a myth that man can live without meaningful relationships. And the perfect example that I can show you from the Bible is Jesus, himself.

Do you remember how he spent all night in prayer before coming down the mountain and choosing 12 special men who would be with him, who would walk with him, who would live with him, who would be his closest friends and carry on his work even after he died? Whenever he sent his disciples out, he sent them out at least two by two. You will never find Jesus sending one of his men out to do the work of God alone. Jesus teaches us that God meant for men to live in community, and yet most of the men I know, live their lives with what I call, "deficit relationships." Most of the people that men would call close friends in their lives; women would only call casual acquaintances.

McGinnis, in his best-selling book, *The Friendship Factor*, estimates that only ten percent of all American males have any genuine friends. Patrick Morley said in his book, *Man in the Mirror*, "I think most men could recruit six pallbearers, but hardly anyone has a friend that he can call at 2:00 a.m." If you look across our culture, that's true.

Now some men will retort, "Well, I may not have many close friends, but my wife is my best friend." Good, good, if you're a married man, your wife ought to be your best friend. My wife is my best friend, my most intimate companion. But I honestly think a lot of men use that as a cop-out. Scripture tells us that we don't only need to have somebody that we would die for, our wives, just like Christ died for the church; we need people in our lives that we would die with, that we would go down fighting with.

Alexander the Great conquered the world by using a simple, but revolutionary fighting technique, that came to be known as the Macedonian phalanx. It's very simple. When a man went out into battle in those days, he had the shield in the left hand, and the sword in the right hand. There's a problem with that. His right

side was exposed, the right flank was open. So, Alexander said, "No man ever goes into battle alone." You go in with a man at your side, literally at your back. If you think about it, back-to-back, then this man's shield would cover that right flank. You would have a circle of sword and shield. People, that's how God wants it. He wants men who have faith in him, to cover each other's backsides. He wants men who would say what Jonathan said to David in I Samuel 20:4, "Whatever you want me to do, I'll do for you."

Do you have anybody you can say that to? Or, anybody who would say it to you? I think about David's 30 mighty men, after Saul had died. They were in the wilderness, and the Philistines were hunting them. David was sitting there probably sighed and said, "Oh, what I would give for a drink of water from the well outside the gate of Bethlehem." (I Chronicles 11:17) Three of his 30 men overheard him. These guys weren't sentimental wimps. One of them was a fellow by the name of Jashobeam. The Bible says, he had raised his spear and single-handedly in battle killed 300 men. That's a pretty tough guy. It said with him was a man by the name of Eleazar, who when the Israelites were retreating in the face of the Philistines stopped in the middle of a field and took the Philistines head-on and conquered them there that day. The Bible says those two and one other went all night, went through enemy lines, didn't sleep and risked their lives, and brought back to David a cup of water from that well. When David saw it, he was so sentimental and choked up and couldn't drink it. He poured it on the ground as an offering to God.

Do you have a friend like that? See, I believe that men do want friends like that.

Barriers to men forming real relationships

1. Men tend to value others for utilitarian purposes. The previous lesson pointed out that men are left-brained meaning among other things, that while women tend to be more relationally oriented; men tend to be more task-oriented. Consequently, have you ever noticed how men tend to form relationships around activities, while women tend to form relationships around just each other?

Who are your friends? If I were to ask "Who are your friends?" most men would respond "All the guys that I golf with, the guys I fish with, the guys I hunt with, the guys I bowl with, the guys I work out with." See it's always built around something that we have to do together. Men are so task-oriented, it's like I killed two birds with one stone that way. I do something I want to do, and I go ahead and have a relationship. Plus it makes it easier not to admit that we need the company of other men.

If a woman hadn't seen a friend in a while, one of her female friends, she would call that friend up and say, "Hey, I'd love for us to have lunch." Her friend would say, "Oh, wow, great!" But if a man calls up a friend that he's not seen in a while, a male friend, and say, "Hey, let's get together for lunch." Then his friend would say, "Sure, what's up?" Isn't that right? Have you ever thought about that? See, men have to manufacture non-emotional reasons for getting together. That by the way is why women make friends, and guys tend to settle for buddies. We tend to use people for utilitarian purposes.

2. Men are taught not to show their emotions. We're taught not to get down to the emotional level. I can remember when I was a young boy when "Old Yeller" came on our old black and white television set at home, and I was laying in the floor watching...you remember "Old Yeller" don't you? That loyal dog who saved him from the hogs. Old Yeller was bitten and he got rabies. You know how the movie ended - they had to shoot Old Yeller. Well, I was down there and sniff...sniff...sniff, it was tearing me up. Then I realized I'm in here with my dad, my mom, and my sister. So I crawled out of the room, went into another room, got my composure and came back in. We teach our boys, and we teach our young men that a real man doesn't show emotion. Let me tell you something, if that's true then what do we do with Jesus? A man who demonstrated compassion in public, a man who angered publicly, a man who cried publicly, not just once,

but twice; and that's amazing. When I read about Jesus, I know I want a friend like that. So maybe you and I need to re-think what a man really looks like.

3. Men are so competitive. Women, I don't know if you've noticed this or not, but men will compete at anything. If you lock two boys in a room and don't give them anything in there, they'll find some way to make a game out of it where somebody wins and somebody loses. Men will compete in everything from who can drive the nicest car, who can catch the biggest fish, who can spit a watermelon seed the farthest. See men are wired along the, "I win, you lose," model. For a man, the ultimate catastrophe in life is to be viewed as a loser. So we're constantly jockeying for self-esteem based upon how we compare with other men. Ladies, we compare investment returns, job titles, we compare cars, men compare wives, and kids. I've been in the locker room when men compared scars. "Well, look here, I have a real bad one right here, look at this old surgery I had." Men will even compare themselves spiritually. "An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest," so competitive. (Luke 9:46)

We're wired to be competitive and there are certain arenas in life we need to chisel out and let it go. Be competitive on the ball field. Be competitive on the golf course, but if you live your life with competition dominating it, the irony of it is you're going to be the real loser. Because it feeds ego and pride and it's of Satan. It's exactly why Paul said in Galatians 6:4, he said, "Let each man test his own actions, then he can take pride in himself without comparing himself to somebody else." Competition is not the ultimate in life. It's something that needs to be overcome to establish real relationships.

4. Fear of betrayal. Most of us know how that feels and once we've been burned, we've been slower to trust again. Benjamin Franklin must have felt that sting when he wrote, "Three people can keep a secret as long as two of them are dead." Julius Caesar had his Brutus, didn't he? Jesus had his Judas. Uriah had his David, and David felt the sting of betrayal. I don't even know the setting, but somebody stabbed David in the back. "If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were raising himself against me, I could hide from it. But it is you, a man like me, my companion, and my close friend." (Psalms 55:12) That hurts, that really hurts. So often our fear of betrayal outweighs our willingness to risk trusting another man with our inner thoughts, and so we isolate ourselves.

5. Men want to appear strong. We just want to put on this facade of invincibility. For example, Ladies have you ever been on vacation with your husband and get lost? He'll drive around in circles until supper time, or after, before he stops. Why? He doesn't want to let them know he needs anything.

Another not so humorous example, in a troubled marriage a woman will be 10 times more likely to seek help than the man. He can't admit his weakness.

The price of friendship is personal vulnerability, letting somebody know you need help when you fall down. But you see men, instead of receiving the extended arm; men want to give the stiff arm, like I just don't need that. I'll get out of this by myself. But Jesus said "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit---fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name." He closes by saying, "This is my command: Love each other." (John 15:12) I'll tell you something, a strong man is not a loner, a strong man is a lover. Real men pour their lives into somebody else's life.

Somebody once said that, "A man's measured by his investments." That's right, but not your investments in stocks and bonds. A man is measured by his investments in other people.

What Kind of Man Are You?

1. Who are you sacrificing something for? Jesus said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13) Jesus said, you can't build friends on the, "I win, you lose" mindset. That destroys friendship. You sacrifice for them to move both of you ahead. Men based upon what Jesus said, are you really anybody's friend, or are you more everybody's buddy?

2. Who are you opening up to? Jesus said, "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you." (John 15:15) He said, the reason you're my friends is because I'm open with you. Men, are you so competitive, so fearful of betrayal, that you won't be open to anybody? Jesus said if you want what he had in mind for you, we've got to stop hiding. Folks, we've been hiding since the Garden of Eden, and God didn't like it then, he doesn't like it now. We've got to create some arenas, and the church is the place where there's that arena, where a man can take off his mask, can stop being competitive, can admit his struggles and reveal his hurt. It's a strong man who stands like Jesus and says, "This is who I am, this is where I'm going, and this is why I want you to walk with me."

3. Who are you walking with to do something bigger than yourself? Jesus said, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit---." (John 15:16) In our individualistic mindset, we just take that one on one. He wasn't talking to a one on one. He was talking to them as a group of twelve. He said, "You all," "I've chosen you all," community of men to go out and to bear fruit. Jesus wants us to bear fruit together. If you want to be a real friend, if you want a real friend, link arms with a brother to do something that will last through eternity.

God wants all of his people, called the church, to be strong in community relationships. We should love one another enough that we would die for one another. It's impossible to be intimate friends with everybody, but you sure need to be intimate friends with somebody(ies). Amazing Grace #1207 - - Steve Flatt - April 30, 1995.

Looking for Men of Accountability

I remember when Ethan was six years old, my oldest, and Lee was three and a half. One day I was walking from the kitchen into the den and the two boys were in the den playing church. Have you ever watched your children play church, or did you do it as a child? I used to do it all the time. I was Mom's little preacher.

God is in the process of raising up men to make his church a better church for the generation ahead than it is right now. He is always looking for Men of Accountability.

Basic foundation stone:

1. All men are accountable to God. Christians believe that every human being, male and female, will stand before their Creator and give an account for how they have lived. There are so many verses that verify this, Romans 14:12, "So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God." Jesus said in Matthew 12:36, "But I tell you that men will have to give an account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken." Hebrews 4:13, "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account."

We may want to deny those realities, but the Bible clearly states we will all give an account of our lives before God. So, it's imperative that we live every day making preparation for that moment.

2. Most men don't have a real plan for developing a healthy, vibrant, vital, and spiritual life. Many men are religious, but precious few are spiritual. Men have settled for a mediocrity in their spiritual lives that we wouldn't stand for in other parts of our lives. Men are wired so that we set goals and we chase those goals and we accomplish those things.

If we want financial security, we sit there and determine how much we need to work and how much we need to save and how we need to invest. If we want to get fit, we'll sit there and determine what we need to do and we'll exercise and exercise. A lot of men like to restore old cars and they'll work on it every afternoon and every evening. But when we stand before God, he's not going to ask about our net worth, and he's not going to ask about our percentage of body fat. He's not going to ask about the condition of our Model T. He is going to ask how intently we followed the model of Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:29 gives us our purpose, "For those whom he foreknew he predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son." The real question in life is; **how are you doing fellows on conforming to the image of Jesus Christ?**

3. Every man needs to discover the beauty and the benefits of Biblical accountability. By and large, short of the judgment, men don't have to answer to anybody anymore. We will often openly state that we want to get to the position in life where we don't have to answer to anybody. But the problem is, left to our own direction and our own devices, we deceive ourselves. Scripture is quick to tell us that we're not as smart as we think we are.

Jeremiah, the prophet, said "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9) Like the man who put a quarter into the weight machine and stood on the scales. It gave him a little card, turning to his wife he said, "Look, honey, this card says that I'm intelligent, handsome, and witty." She looked at the card and said, "Yeah, and it got your weight wrong, too." A man's heart will lie to him. Left alone, it will tell him that things are all right when they're not and that he's spiritually healthy, when in fact, he's spiritually sick.

The Bible speaks with disdain about the attitude, "I answer to nobody and I chart my own course and I take care of myself." Instead, Scripture urges us to practice Biblical accountability among brethren. "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." (Philippians 2:4) "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:1-2) "The kisses of an enemy may be profuse, but faithful are the wounds of a friend." (Proverbs 27:6) That's a deep and rich verse.

Then one that really hits the nail on the head, James 5:16, one of the least obeyed verses in all Scripture, "Therefore confess your sins one to another and pray for each other so that you may be healed." People, we can't get around it, the Bible teaches that we pour our lives into each other, and that as God's children, we protect and we guard one another. Accountability is the missing link that's keeping most men from achieving their full potential in Jesus Christ and most of us do not know what it is.

I ran across this definition of accountability "It means to be regularly answerable for the key areas of our lives to qualified people." (Patrick Morley Man in the Mirror) To be regularly answerable; a) to have periodic times where there's a check-up, b) key areas of your life, social, physical, emotional, spiritual and c) to qualified people.

Accountability is deeper than fellowship. Accountability gives somebody permission to ask the hard questions and to help us stay on course.

Do you remember King David in the Old Testament? His courage and his integrity when he was in the company of his mighty men; when he was in their presence he was straight as an arrow, he wouldn't even lift his hand against God's anointed and kill King Saul though Saul was hunting him down like a dog. But when he sent his mighty men off to war, and David stayed home by himself, that's when he got into trouble. That's when he yielded to sin and even betrayed the trust of one of his covenant brothers.

We need men who love the Lord, who love us, who want us to reach the goal of being Christ like and who will recognize the need for accountability in their lives as well. Men who believe "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." (Proverbs 27:17) Who's sharpening you? Who's sharpening you right now, to reach your full potential in Jesus Christ?

Why don't we engage in Biblical accountability?

Why don't we share our lives with just a precious few people the way scripture admonishes? The following are reasons why we tend not to. It's important to understand these because they've got to be overcome if we do.

1. Pride.

To be accountable to others, admits a need for others, and we men consider that a weakness. So rather than confessing sins to each other, we become rather proficient at, "blowing smoke." We put up this smoke screen. Someone once said, "To err is human, and to cover up is human, too." We know that there are areas in life where we struggle and where we fall short, but we don't want others to know that. So instead, we just grit our teeth and determine to fix ourselves even though experience and God's Word teaches us otherwise. Men, we've swallowed a lie. A lie that is covering up and building walls around ourselves and being isolated is strong when the fact is, man is a wimp. Man doesn't have the courage to face himself and the truth. But the brave man can say to a brother that he knows, and that he loves, and that he trusts: This is who I am, this is where I'm weak, and this is where more than anything I need your prayers.

The Bible is right. My heart isn't honest enough to really deal with what I want to cover up. Yours isn't either. If a man could just always fix himself, then that's what the Bible would tell him to do. But the Bible says, "Confess your sins to each other, and pray for each other so that you may be healed."

2. Fear of abuse.

Sex, cults and false religious groups have been formed by the dozens through the improper use of accountability. Even in the Lord's church, unscriptural hierarchies, manipulation, guilt motivation, are just a few of the abuses that have come from an improper application of accountability. Each Christian is to be accountable:

- a) to God, the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ;
- b) to the elders and shepherds of the local church, because those men are going to have to give an account of our souls, and
- c) to other Christians that I love and trust and to whom I've chosen to be accountable - not those who tell me I'm accountable to them - but those I have chosen to be accountable, and that's usually just a small group of people.

There are a lot of people who want to fix what they perceive is wrong with you. You would be foolish to try to correct everything they want to correct. You would also be foolish not to heed the warnings of those closest to you – those who desire the best for you whatever the cost.

Accountability is like any other major theme in Scripture; like grace, discipleship, and spiritual freedom. We simply cannot let abuse by some, distract or intimidate us from implementing the full and good extent of what God's Word tells us.

3. The lack of a plan.

Accountability does not evolve naturally. It will not just show up one day in our lives. It is the result of a purposeful decision to live transparently before someone you trust. You need some structure to give you discipline to what you know you should do.

One of the joys in my life, I've been a part of three different small groups who have met early in the morning, 6:30 a.m., one day a week to study the Bible together and pray. Though none of the three started out to be any kind of accountability structure, but just through reading and studying and getting into each other's lives, we began to make each other accountable to one another in such a way, that in a healthy way, we were iron sharpening iron, keeping one another on track. I urge everybody, but particularly the men; you need to find some brothers who will help you do that.

What to look for in a person to help you be accountable.

1. Unconditional love:

It must be somebody who unconditionally loves you and that you unconditionally love. People have to earn the right to hold someone else accountable. "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." (Proverbs 17:17) I will only be accountable to a brother who will love me at all times and who will stand by me, not patronize me, but stand by me no matter what because he loves me that much, like Jonathan did David.

2. Honesty

Honesty means two things.

- a. Courage to be transparent.
- b. Courage to say what one needs to hear. "Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but the kisses of an enemy are profuse." (Proverbs 27:6) Oh, there are people in your life that will just butter you up and flatter you, and they're trying to use you every way they can. It hurts a genuine friend to tell you the truth more than it hurts you to hear it.

The image from Proverbs 27:17 of iron sharpening iron that gives the picture of two swords clashing against each other, creating friction, literally wearing off each other's rough edges, I need a few brothers in my life who will be like iron, sharpening my sword so that I can live for the Lord.

3. Availability

It is just good common sense that if you're never around those people, how can they help you? Don't make the mistake of trying to get with somebody that you never see or never will arrange a time to be with.

4. Confidentiality

Nothing will destroy relationships more than violated trust. If you ever get a small group together who want to bless one another's life through Bible study and prayer, you'll find that you'll go at least a year before anybody will open up and say, "I've got this problem in my life, would all of you pray with me about it?" Do you know why it will take at least a year? It will take at least that long before you know you can trust those individuals. It's not the kind of thing you hand over easily.

5. Prayer

Cover him with prayer, tons and tons of prayer, somebody who will pray for you. Somebody wrote: I sought my God, but my God I could not see. I sought my soul, but my soul alluded me. I sought my brother, and I found all three. That's what Christians do. That's why accountability is needed. Amazing Grace #1208 - - Steve Flatt - May 7, 1995

Looking For Men of Integrity

Do you know what the only man-made structure that can be observed from the space shuttle is? The wall that took the ancient Chinese years and years to build to hold off invasion from the barbaric hordes from the North. It covers hundreds and hundreds of miles. They built it so thick that you couldn't break through it; so long you couldn't go around it, so high that you couldn't get over it. But did you know that within the first hundred years after it was finished, China was invaded three times by the barbarians to the north. They didn't go over the wall. They didn't go around it, they didn't go under it, and they didn't go through it. Do you know how they got in? All three times they bribed the gatekeeper and they walked in.

So often we put so much emphasis in money on how to govern and defend ourselves, but so little attention to the character of the people who must lead that defense. Whatever a man may build, whether it's a business or a nation or an empire, if he doesn't build his own character, he has failed in life. A lack of integrity has always existed in the world and today is no exception.

If God has fashioned men to lead their families, to lead the church, to lead their communities, he obviously expects them to take the lead in modeling integrity.

1. What is integrity? "The quality or state of being complete," (Webster's Dictionary) and then gives "wholeness" as a synonym. That's a good definition because that's exactly what the Bible says integrity is. In the Old Testament, the word translated "integrity" in the Hebrew is, "*thom*," and it means, whole---complete.

Integrity by its very nature implies consistency. It means being sound, faithful, truthful, through and through, top to bottom. Integrity in one's life means that truth characterizes their whole life.

Do you remember your high math class you learned that an integer was a whole number, like 1 or 2 or 23. It's never a fraction - $1\frac{5}{8}$ is not an integer. An integer is whole and complete, and it comes from the same root word. A man of integrity doesn't live a fractured life. It's not splintered by double-mindedness.

Most men are honest in some things however a few have difficulty telling the truth. But a man of integrity is honest about all things.

Chuck Swindoll, some time ago, told a story, true story. It happened in the southern California area about a man who went through a drive-thru at a chicken restaurant. The man and the woman went through and they ordered chicken, like a four-piece dinner, and it was handed to them and they drove off. Come to find out, the man who was filling their order had taken a box where they had emptied the proceeds from one of the cash registers. There was over \$800 in cash in that. And that was the box handed to the man who went through the drive-thru. The manager was beside himself. He said, "We'll never see that money again."

When the couple stopped for their picnic and opened it up, he realized there had been a mistake. So the man closed the box, drove back to the chicken place, and said, "There's been a mistake, we got a box full of money." The manager was so impressed. He said, "That's fantastic! I never thought I'd see it again." He said, "Let me call the newspaper. I want your picture made, a picture of the most honest man in town." The man said, "No, I can't do that. I can't do that." The manager insisted "No, no, we really need a picture of the

most honest man in town." Finally, the fellow took the manager over to the side and said, "You don't understand. The woman I'm with is not my wife. I don't want my picture made."

Integrity means truth characterizes your whole life. It is to let every area of your life be governed by God's truth. Now Jesus is our perfect example in every regard, isn't he? "They came to him and said, 'Teacher, we know that you are a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are ...'" (Mark 12:14) Jesus didn't let men decide what was going to be true today. Jesus let God decide what was going to be true everyday.

That same Lord taught "The one who is faithful in little, is the one who is going to be faithful in much." (Luke 16) That is the completeness of integrity, and men like that are rare. But the difference they make in this world is awesome.

2. How does one become a man of integrity? Integrity starts in the heart. That's where you go. Jesus taught "The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks." (Luke 6:45) Whatever is on the inside is just going to come to the outside.

Solomon said "As water reflects a face, so a man's heart reflects the man." (Proverbs 27:19) When we fail spiritually or morally, all we want to do is talk about the external. How do we develop the willpower to fix that? How can I stop from doing that next time? But it can only be fixed from the inside. I found that we violate the integrity of the heart, long before we ever violate the command. The heart by itself is easily lured into deceit and sin. Jeremiah said, "A man can't trust his own heart." That's true. But the Christian has living in his heart the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God takes up residence in a Christian for the purpose of making them more Christ like and to bear the fruit we read about in Galatians 5 of love, joy, peace, faithfulness, and self control. Integrity begins in the heart and God equips the Christian to have a heart that can have it. Therefore, we need to guard our hearts. Before guarding what we let in, we must guard what we keep out. Integrity begins in the heart.

Once the heart is quickened [Gk. *zontes* signifies the *living* as opposed to the *dead*; to make alive New Unger's Bible Dictionary] by the spirit, then integrity is born out in our lifestyle. The classic example is Daniel. Remember Daniel, the captive prince? Daniel was a captive prince first under the Babylonians and then under the Persians. "Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so." It goes on to say, "They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. Finally these men said, 'We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.'" (Daniel 6:3)

Now that's integrity. Daniel was genuine, he was honest, he was righteous through and through. He was consistent in his personal life and in his professional life. These men even hired spies to watch him for days on end to see if they could catch him in any breach of his integrity. By the way, I don't know if Daniel knew that he was being spied upon, but I do know that Daniel was not unaccustomed to being watched. For Daniel lived his life knowing that everyday that God was there with me looking at him 24 hours a day whether anybody else was there or not. The spies reported, "there's nothing there and the only way you're ever going to trap this man is if you can find some way to trap him on the basis of his faith." So they set up a trap. They went to Darius the king and they tickled his ears [flattered him]. They said, "Darius, we want to make

you 'a god for a month.'" Darius liked that idea. He had an ego. Therefore for the next 30 days, the only way anybody can pray, was to pray to him.

"Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, **just as he had done before.**" (Daniel 6:10) It didn't stop a thing.

You know the rest of the story. He was caught in the trap and they threw Daniel into the lion's den. "That is a great story," because it was the story of a man who kept his integrity. Integrity begins in the heart, and is borne out in life.

Fruits of integrity

1. Men of integrity keep their promises. Sadly, we live in an age where a man's word doesn't mean much anymore.

Today if it isn't in writing with 500 lawyers behind it, it doesn't mean anything anymore. People that's sad. Because a real man should be the kind of man who brings certainty to the world by the power of his word. In fact, a major facet of that colossal statement in Genesis 1:27 "we are made in the image of God," is a fact that we can make and keep promises, and we alone in all creation can do that. God does that. One thing that God hates, he hates broken promises. "The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity." (Proverbs 11:3) There are seven things listed in Proverbs 6:16-19 that God hates, and one is a lying tongue. The reason God hates duplicity, and the reason he hates lying is because it's so contrary to his nature for above all else, our father is truthful and faithful. You go through the Bible and when God says, "I will do this," you don't find him turning around and saying; "Hey, I don't know what I was thinking; times have changed, and I just don't feel the way I used to feel." God is looking for a few good men who will keep promises, who will be faithful to their wives and faithful to their children, faithful to their bosses, and faithful to Him.

2. Men of integrity maintain their values. They don't let the latest poll or the latest headline determine their values. Job is the great example that I think of from the Old Testament. "Then the Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason.'" (Job 2:3) Remember he lost his wealth, his prestige, and his family. God allowed Satan to take those from him. A man of integrity does not allow a changing environment to change his standards.

Nobody takes your character from you. They may take your money, job, your reputation, your fame, and even take your life, but they cannot take your character. You're the only one who can throw that away. I believe God's man would rather die with conviction than live with compromise. I'll tell you something about real men of God. They don't own the world, but they sure won't sell out to the world.

3. Men of integrity are protected by God. I know as I'm discussing integrity, some of you are thinking, "you don't understand, you must live in some kind of ivory tower. You don't understand how it is when you're out there when it's dog-eat-dog. You just don't understand. You don't know what it's like. You've got to get down and get dirty and get muddy." I don't want to go into this, but I guarantee you that in any profession you can be called upon and tempted to compromise your integrity.

God has made promises through his word that if you will stand tall, and you will stand firm that he will bless you. "The man of integrity walks securely." (Proverbs 10:9) "Righteousness guards the man of

integrity." (Proverbs 13:6) "In my integrity you uphold me and set me in your presence forever." (Psalm 41:12) That's not to say there won't be bumps in the road; or somebody won't give you a hard time or that you won't be fired. But "You have never been thrown into a fiery furnace or a lion's den." Be a person of integrity. God says, "I see, I protect, and I reward." What the Bible is saying is, you protect your integrity, and your integrity will protect you.

David prayed in Psalm 7:8 "Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, according to my integrity, O Most High." Can you pray that prayer? Can you say, "Judge me O Lord according to my integrity, according to my holiness, my consistency?" That's the prayer we all want to be able to pray. Amazing Grace #1209 - - Steve Flatt - May 21, 1995

Looking for Men of Purity

To be pure, means that we are to be clean in our minds and clean in our behavior. The Bible is so very balanced; because the Bible does not deny that all of us have a problem in dealing with the flesh. It also gives us a plan and God has given us the power to be victorious over temptation while all that would have us live unholy and impure lives.

Twelve steps to help get us toward purity.

1. We must truly repent and confess impurity. All of us are sinners, and each one of us no doubt at some point has cherished some impure thoughts, if not engaged in impure activities. Although the title of this lesson refers to men it equally applies to women.

There's not a teenage boy, or a man, who does not have a problem to some degree in dealing impure thoughts. This may be true for some girls and women, perhaps all. If a man tells you he does not have a problem with that, he is either abnormal, lying, or dead. We must admit we have problems in this area and be truly sorry by changing i.e., repenting. Until we do, impurity is going to have a headlock on us that simply will not let go. So, the first step is to repent of it and to confess our impurity to God.

2. Make every effort to keep yourself pure. No one has the power to fight off Satan all by himself, or herself, because Satan is too strong, he's too devious and deceitful. We are far too weak. As we try to conquer impurity in our own lives without relying upon God, we will fail time and time and time again. Only God has the power to help us overcome impurity and evil in our lives. However, God is not going to make us pure without some effort on our part. He is not going to override our lack of effort in trying to be pure people. We must:

- a. "Keep yourself pure." (I Timothy 5:22)
- b. "Train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure so that no-one will malign the word of God." (Titus 2:4-5)
- c. "Every one who has this hope in him, purifies himself, just as God is pure." (I John 3:3)
- d. "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed---not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence---continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe." (Philippians 2:12-15)

So Paul says, God works in you, but he begins that passage by saying, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. God is going to work in us if we're trying, but we've got to make that effort in conjunction with the power of God.

3. Be accountable to another Christian. Most of us don't like to be accountable to anybody. Maybe it's pride or arrogance that makes us want to do things our own way. We really don't like the idea that someone is watching us, or that someone is checking up on us. But Satan knowing that we don't want to be accountable to anybody else is able to exploit that very weakness on our part. The truth is **behavior that is observed, changes.**

People, who voluntarily will give some sense of accountability to another individual who's a trusted friend or group of friends, are people who are really serious about changing their behavior. If you know about my faults, and I have asked you to hold me accountable, and if I have asked you to check with me on a regular basis and to pray with me about that particular weakness in my life, then I am much more likely to monitor my thoughts and to monitor my behavior; and in effect, to end up changing my behavior. "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other that you may be healed." (James 5:16)

4. Pray for yourself. Pray for your spouse if you're married. Pray for your children. Pray for others whom you love. Many Christians underestimate the power of prayer to help us overcome temptations in our lives. Even Jesus taught in the model prayer: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." We will never ever be able to live lives of purity without depending on prayer and asking God to help us.

Consider David, King of Israel. After he had sinned so grievously in his adultery with Bathseba and then murdered Uriah, he finally confessed his sin to God and he prayed "Create in me a pure heart [clean heart (KJV)] O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." (Psalm 51:10) So David is praying for himself, God, create in me a clean and a pure heart and restore me after the sin which I have committed.

But then Paul in many places models for us how we ought to pray for others. Philippians 1, verses 9 and following, Paul says, "And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to" (now listen to this word) "discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ--to the glory and praise of God." So, we pray for ourselves, and others to help us discern the difference between what's right and what's wrong and to be pure and blameless.

5. Avoid even the hint of evil, flee from it. We say we want to be pure, but if we constantly engage in off color jokes, look at the wrong kinds of movies, read the wrong kinds of material, and watch the kind of television. We constantly fill our minds and thoughts with all kinds of impure thoughts and behavior, we're fooling ourselves. We've pulled the wool right over our own eyes. We can't play with fire and not be burned by it. How foolish to think that we can taste just a little bit of evil and not be intoxicated by it.

I'm reminded of the difference between the way that King David and young Joseph in Egypt handled the temptation that came their way. David saw a beautiful woman bathing on her roof, and he lingered, lusted and pursued his desire which led to tremendous sin. Joseph, on the other hand day after day, was tempted by a woman, his master's wife, who kept saying to him, "Come have sex with me." But Joseph fled and found deliverance.

Paul says, "Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." (II Timothy 2:22) "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out..." (I Corinthians 10:13) One of the translations says, "He

will also provide a way of escape so that you can stand up under it." It is up to us to look for in order to find that way of escape and then to take that way.

"Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul." (I Peter 2:11) "But among you there must not even be a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person---such a man is an idolater---has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." [NIV] Don't let sexual sin, perversion of any kind, or greed even be mentioned among you. This is not appropriate behavior for God's holy people. It's not right that dirty stories, foolish talk, or obscene jokes should be mentioned among you either. Instead, give thanks *to God*. You know very well that no person who is involved in sexual sin, perversion, or greed (which means worshiping wealth) can have any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. [GWT] (Ephesians 5:3-5)

So Paul says, don't even let there be a hint of sexual immorality among you.

6. Avoid relationships that tend to pull you down. We all influence other people, and other people influence us. That's just the way society works. Healthy associations with good people always have a way of building up, encouraging, and making it easier to live godly lives. Paul said, the flip side of that coin is, "Evil companions corrupt good morals." If we run with people who engage in all kinds of impurity, then we shouldn't be surprised if somewhere along the line, we don't end up getting corrupted right along with them.

"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?"... "Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God." "Therefore, come out from them and be separate, Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you, I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters." (II Corinthians 6:14... 7:1...17)

Being yoked with unbelievers applies in many areas of life. Why would a Christian want to be yoked with someone whose behavior, attitudes and beliefs are not characteristic of Christ? You're going to get yourself in trouble. Therefore, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates us.

7. Avoid fornication and adultery. Our society has become so preoccupied with sex that it oozes from all the pores of American life. Our society seems to have an insatiable desire for things that are sensual. Every large city, certainly in this country, has its porno shops, its hard-core X-rated films. It's really hard anymore even on the major channels to turn on the television at night and not see some sort of intimate bedroom scene, or to turn on the radio and hear some so-called humor about sexuality. There's so much of it that we're almost made to feel abnormal if we're not engaged in some sort of affair.

God has always desired purity over promiscuity. "Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. It is God's will that you should be holy: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives

you his Holy Spirit." (I Thessalonians 4:1-8) "Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral." (Hebrews 13:4)

8. Say no to ungodliness. Long before Nancy Reagan was telling us to "just say no" to drugs, God has been saying for centuries for us to say no to sin. "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age..." (Titus 2:11-13) So God says, "Say 'No' to ungodliness."

9. Take control of your body. The desire of our bodies can easily lead us off course. It's not that the body in and of itself is evil. It's just that our bodies possess appetites which are all too ready to find satisfaction in many ways that are temporarily satisfying and so appealing, but wrong.

Do you know your body? Are you aware of the things that weaken your control of your body? Have you stopped to consider the danger zones and how to stay clear of those zones, or at least to rush by them as quickly as possible? It's impossible for us to really deal with the whole issue of purity if we don't come to terms with the practical facts related to our bodies. Paul says, "We are to present our bodies as living sacrifices to God" (Romans 12:1); "Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness (Romans 6:13); "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you" (1 Corinthians 6:19); and "each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable." (I Thessalonians 4:4)

10. Draw near to God. If we're not careful we may leave the impression that we by our own efforts can become pure. Make no mistake about it; much does depend upon your efforts to make your own life pure. Purity is not just automatic when you become a Christian, we almost also must say that we must draw near to God if we want to be holy and pure as we seek his face relying upon him then God will give us the strength to live lives of purity.

"Submit [yield to God's authority] yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you." (James 4:7-8)

11. Fill your heart and mind with good things. It's not enough to simply deal with the exteriors of our behavior; it's like putting a Band-Aid on a skin cancer. No healing ever really takes place; it covers the disease for a little while. Living a pure life really is a job from the inside out. Jesus condemned the Pharisees because they tried to look so good on the outside, while on the inside, he said they were full of all kinds of impurity and uncleanness. We will fail if we merely try to deal with the symptoms. Saying: "I will not lust, I will not deal with this temptation..." is like saying over and over again, "I will not think about a pink elephant. I will not think about a pink elephant." That never works. The only way to get rid of evil impurities is to replace them with something that is good.

Set your hearts on things above, not on earthly things. Paul instructs us to put to death whatever belongs to our earthly nature and he mentions specifically: sexually immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. (Colossians 3:5) Then he tells us in verses one and two, how we're supposed to do that. Notice, "...set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God."

Fill your heart and your mind with good things., Paul says, "...brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable---if anything is excellent or praiseworthy---think about such things." (Philippians 4:8)

12. Live up to your calling. Personal purity is an attainable goal. It doesn't mean we're perfect, but it is an attainable goal. In our day of moral decline, it's easy to think that purity is some sort of unachievable, outdated standard of yesteryear, but that's not so. Living a life of purity is a high calling, but it can be attained. "For God did not call us to be impure, but to live holy lives." (I Thessalonians 4:7) "Dear friends, I urge you as aliens and strangers in the world to abstain from sensual desires which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that although they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God." (II Peter 2:11)

The key or foundation to living pure lives is to honor God with your body, your life, and your mind. If that is the motivating foundational factor then these twelve steps will help us to live lives of purity.

The truth is, none of us are absolutely pure. "Who can say, 'I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin?'" (Proverbs 20:9) None of us can say that. . Only God can make us pure, and he does that through the blood of his son Jesus Christ. The fact is: we can be pure through faith, repentance, trust and obedience to God's Word. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (I John 1:9) Amazing Grace #1210 - Dan Dozier May 28, 1995

Looking for Men of Spirituality

Did God just make men to be less interested in spiritual things than women? Did Jehovah just expect men to be sort of ho-hum about worship, prayer, Bible study and ministry? Well that hardly seems consistent with the command of God for a husband to lead and love his wife as Christ leads and loves His church, or to rear their children in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord. It surely doesn't jive with the example of Joshua, who stood before the Hebrew children and demanded, "Choose you this day whom you will serve, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." No, God wants men to be deeply spiritual. He wants them to be spiritual leaders.

Why then do so many men seem to shun spirituality? I want to debunk a couple of myths.

Myths about Spirituality

1. Spiritual is not the same as being religious. A lot of times we use external, superficial standards to determine spirituality.
 - a. Absence of bad activity. I don't smoke, I don't chew, and I don't run with those who do." A spiritual burden. No, a lot of non-spiritual people don't do a number of bad things.
 - b. Presence of good activities. They're involved in things and they're virtuous. Well, that may or may not indicate spirituality.
 - c. Bible knowledge. Bible knowledge is great, but I've known some men who could quote whole books of the Bible and didn't believe a word of what they were quoting. Even Satan quoted scripture to Jesus.
 - d. Giftedness.
 - e. Praise of others.

Always be careful when spirituality turns into a popularity contest.

Now don't misunderstand, those are not bad things that I just named. In fact, they're very good things. They are things that are the fruit of spirituality, associated with but not synonymous with spirituality. A man can

have any or all of those things and not be spiritual. If you don't believe that, consider the rich young ruler in Matthew 19:16. He knew the commandments, he obeyed the commandments, he had a good reputation, he had been blessed with success, and there is not a father who wouldn't want their daughter to find the rich young ruler. But, Jesus said that man couldn't enter the kingdom of God because there was something he had a passion for that was greater than his passion for Christ. He was a religious man, but he was not a spiritual man.

Spirituality is on the inside and it comes out. A spiritual man is the man who right from the start humbles himself before Jesus Christ. A spiritual man is on a journey that little by little empties himself of everything that would keep him from passionately following Jesus. As those obstacles are released, the power of the Holy Spirit goes to work on the inside and it begins to recreate that man or that woman in the image of Jesus Christ. That is what being a spiritual man is all about. It's an inner transformation.

There was a church that was going to invite a well-known, well-respected, and very spiritually-minded preacher to come and hold a gospel meeting for them. As they talked about him, some of the elders who knew him just raved about him. One fellow who didn't know him was just a little bit suspicious and said, "Well, the way you talk about old brother so and so, you'd think he had a monopoly on the Holy Spirit." One of the elders paused and after a short silence said, "No, he doesn't have a monopoly on the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit has a monopoly on him." That is what being spiritual is about. There's a great difference between spirituality and religiosity. Now that leads to the second myth that needs to be debunked.

2. Spirituality demeans masculinity. We don't talk about that much, but I think there's an underlying thing there that gets at men. Years ago, an article called the Feminization of Christianity discussed how organized religion, particularly Christianity, had begun to be feminized in the way we do everything, even the way we dress; how in a lot of churches men wear long robes like a dress and how some even demand celibacy. It's not uncommon among many religious leaders nationwide to be a little bit more on the effeminate side. I've known a lot of men who never really felt comfortable attending a "church service." It's almost like there was an unspoken thing that you had to leave your masculinity at the door. I think a lot of men don't think that church really relates to the world.

You don't have to give up your masculinity to be spiritual. Most men won't act out their faith the same way that women do. Remember God made men and women different. Men are generally less emotional - not the touchy, huggy feely, emotional kind of person. Men are as a general rule, not always, are less relational. Now that doesn't mean men don't need to improve in those areas, but what I'm saying is, God didn't design men to be better at nurturing than women.

3. Men are going to be less verbal. The average woman speaks 25,000 words a day, and the average man 12,000. So, when men go home from work and their wife ask "What happened today?" They probably say "Nothing."

A lot of you men would recognize the name Dan Deerdorf. He was for 10 years an all-pro tackle, and twice a year during that 10-year career, he lined up against Too Tall Jones of the Dallas Cowboys, an all-pro defensive end. So for 20 games they played each other and somebody asked Deerdorf, "What kind of relationship did you have with Too Tall Jones?" Deerdorf just said, "Well, we didn't talk, but we had great respect for each other." It is said that in the last game, in the last quarter, Deerdorf got up from a block as did Too Tall Jones, Deerdorf looked at Too Tall and said, "I'm quitting." Too Tall said, "I know." Deerdorf said, "I'm glad." Jones said, "Me too." Now women wouldn't consider that the least bit of a relationship, but men you can kind of relate to that, can't you? There's some great respect there.

4. Men don't read as much as women. Goals are the common external standards that we often use to measure spirituality like reading, talking, emotions, and relations. Now don't misunderstand, I'm not excusing men from those expressions of faith. I'm not suggesting that men don't need to grow in all of those areas. I am saying is, that if you passionately follow Jesus Christ, there are a myriad of ways to express it, not just the way that we've grown to expect it to be expressed.

How then are men spiritual men? What does Jesus expect of us?

I believe the Lord can take men that everybody else would have thrown away and do incredible things with them. Consider the following from Luke.

"One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, he saw at the water's edge two boats left there by the fishermen who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.' Simon answered, 'Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.' When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So, they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!' For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men.' So, they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him." (Luke 5:1-11)

The men that we just read about in that passage already knew some things about Jesus. They were not indifferent toward spiritual things, but Jesus wanted more. He said, "I want your obedience." He said, "Peter, I want your boat." Then after using that, he said, "Peter, I want you to go out and cast again in deep waters." That didn't make any sense to Peter because Peter was a fisherman, he had fished all night during the best time to fish, and nothing was there. But whether it made sense or not, when Jesus commanded it, Peter did it. Religion goes through the motions whereas spirituality demands genuine obedience. So that when God says something like, "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her..." You obey.

Folks, when a Christian man comes home, snaps at his wife, wastes time on mindless pursuits and expects a wife to wait on him hand and foot while he pays little or no attention to the family needs, his selfish life quickly becomes empty because that's not what God seeks. Not just with regard to that command, but Jesus' number one criterion for spirituality is: Will you do what I say? "If you love me, you will obey what I command." (John 14:15-16) If they love Him, they obey because they want to please Him. However, if they obey because He commanded it they may be just a ritual or an attempt to earn salvation.

It's a lifelong learning process. But as we become obedient Jesus calls us to significance. Every man wants to make his mark on the world. The real difference in men is how we go about filling that need to be significant. Some run after money, some after politics, some after fame, some after fitness, and some want power, but Jesus says, nobody lives a significant life apart from me.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me [does not leave or forsake me] and I in him, he will bear much fruit;" (but listen to the last thing he said) "apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:5) This can be paraphrased to assist you to understand, Jesus said, "If you're with me, guys, you're somebody. If you're apart from me you're nobody."

Do you believe that? Do you really believe that apart from Jesus there's no significance in life? Most of us say we do, and act like we don't. We're with a group of people and in comes somebody the world calls a star or a celebrity who might be the most heathenistic, paganistic, atheistic person, and we say, "Oh, look, look, look at who it is!!!" You fall over, or maybe even run up and get an autograph. Jesus says apart from me there's no significance in life.

If you don't believe that, play a little game called the game of "Tens." Have you ever played the game of "Tens?" It tells you how much the significance the world gives. Let me play it with you right quick. Name the ten wealthiest men in the world; the last ten Nobel Prize winners in any category; ten of the NFL all-pro players ten years ago; ten Oscar winners for best actors/actress over the last ten years or ten members of the President's cabinet? Most of us can't even name the last ten presidents.

The world does not offer any lasting significance, but see men are made for purposeful living. I've never known a man who woke up and said, "I hope I have an average day." Or, "My goal in life is to be mediocre." Men thirst for significance. Men, your job won't give it to you. I don't care if you own your own company, or are the CEO your job won't give it to you. Even your family will not supply your thirst for significance. The only thing that lets your life be genuinely significant is the adventure of following Jesus Christ. I don't know of anything that takes more courage, I don't know of anything that's more challenging than authentic discipleship. I'm not talking about being religious; I'm talking about being passionate for Jesus Christ. It's the only thing that's significant. He calls us to be transformed.

What does take to be transformed?

1. Let go of your boat. Your boat is your world apart from Jesus Christ. It's where you work, play, and pay your bills. See, Jesus is looking to minister to more and more people everyday. So everyday, he says through the word, a sermon, a friend, "Give me your boat. I want to use you. I want right here, right now wherever you are working to be my place to reach out to these people, and brothers, you've got to release your security." That's what the rich young ruler couldn't bring himself to do. You've got to release your security and turn it over to Jesus because Jesus can't live in your heart if he doesn't live your boat.

2. Let go of your fears. Men, I want to get to the bottom line. I believe and there are obviously thousands of exceptions to this, women on the whole are more spiritually inclined than men. They tend to come to church more, pray more, read more, and surrender more than men do is because men are afraid. They are afraid to relinquish control and turn their boat over to Jesus. Letting go of control isn't easy, and it's scary. I know a Christian lady in talking about this very thing, brought out a brilliant observation. "You know releasing control is not an easy thing for a woman either, but we get a lot more practice." I think that's a very astute observation. That may explain in part why women on the whole tend to be more spiritually inclined.

When Jesus caused those nets to be full, Peter fell down before Jesus and said, "Go away from me Lord," Why, because Peter didn't love Jesus, or because he didn't believe in him? No. Peter said go away from me Lord because I am a sinful man. Do you catch what is being said there? Peter is saying to him, "Lord, as I look at those full nets, I see that you're suggesting possibilities in my life that I've never even dreamed of, and Lord you've just got the wrong guy. I don't know what all it is you want me to do, but I just can't do it." Men, that's what we tend to do when Jesus calls us, and we settle for safe lives, but when we do, we settle

for petty lives. Jesus says to us just what he said to Peter, "Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid of what will happen if you really totally turn your life over to me. Because of what I'll do in you, others will want to know me, so trust me." Jesus doesn't call men to be wimps, Jesus calls men to be warriors.

The following poem called "The Fellowship of the Unashamed" sums up this lesson on spirituality.

"I'm a part of the 'Fellowship of the Unashamed.' I have Holy Spirit power, the die has been cast, and I've stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I am a disciple of Jesus Christ. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away or be still, my past is redeemed, my present makes sense, and my future is secure. I am finished and done with low-living, sight walking, smooth needs, small planning, colorless dreams, tame vision, mundane talking, chintzy giving, and dwarf goals. I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I don't have to be right, just, tops, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I now live by presence, lean by faith, love by patience, lift by power, and labor by prayer. My pace is set, my gait is fast, and my goal is heaven. My road is narrow, my way is rough, my companion skew, my guide reliable, and my mission clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, deterred, lured away, turned away, diluted or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the face of adversity, negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander at the gate of mediocrity. I won't give up, back up, let up, or shut up until I'm preached up, prayed up, stored up, and stayed up for the cause of Jesus Christ. I am a disciple of the Lord. I must go until he returns, give until I drop, preach until all I know, and work until he comes. And when he comes to get his own, he will have no problem recognizing me. My colors will be clear." #1211 - - Steve Flatt - June 4, 1995

Looking for Men of Right Priorities

This lesson will be couched around the idea that our culture holds up money as that which is of the greatest value. People who are so obsessed with making money. We say we disapprove of their priorities, and yet inwardly there's something about us that tends to admire their drive and their ambition.

Sixty-four percent of American men define themselves as workaholics. They openly admit: I work too long, too hard in order to get the things that I want. The bad thing is, we live in a culture which endorses this addiction, unlike addictions to chemicals or other substances.

Underlying reasons why are we driven to embrace the very priorities we say that we don't agree with.

1. Identity. For years and years, men worked themselves into an early grave out of economic necessity. Some of you, or your parents, got up and worked from dawn to dusk just to put bread on the table to feed the kids. But millions of men are working themselves into an early grave today and it's not really out of economic necessity. It is not as was the case with our forefathers for stark survival. Oftentimes, it's for the purpose of establishing identity.

It wasn't always that way. Just about a quarter of a century ago, the job that had the highest prestige in all the jobs that when asked on a survey: Parents, what would you like your children most to be? Second on the list was being a teacher. It doesn't appear in the top 20 now. Believe it or not, there was a time about half a century ago when the number one answer was: I'd like to see my child become a minister. Today, that doesn't make the top 25. Nowadays, we want our children to follow a career path that leads to the big bucks. Why? Because we associate money with identity.

Our language even betrays us. Have you ever heard somebody say about the fellow who just passed away over across town? He was worth \$4,000,000. Now listen to that statement. Think about that. That is about as unbiblical a statement as you can utter. A man is worth _____, and fill in that blank with a price tag?

Do you know what that does? That unmasks a major motivation in our quest for prosperity. We've come to seek prosperity to make our mark on the world. Identity is a critical issue in how we establish values.

2, Security. Having money, making money, makes us feel like we're in control. Men who have little have to trust in God for their future, but men who have a lot just call the trust department. When Jesus said, "It's harder for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God," he meant what he said. I've seen us play all kinds of mental gymnastics with that, but the truth is, Jesus said it, he meant it, and the reason is simple. The prerequisite for entering the kingdom of God is relinquishing control of your life, turning it over to God and trusting in nothing else for your future. While most of us say that's what we want to do, sometimes we like to keep a backup in the bank, don't we? Security.

3. Authority and Power. Money brings power. If you have money, the system we live in treats you differently. The world's version of the golden rule kicks in i.e.; the one who has the gold makes the rules. Look around, in politics, 90+ percent of the time, the candidate who wins the election is the candidate who spends the most on his campaign. Sadly, we're living in a time where Abraham Lincoln couldn't run for office anymore, he would be way too poor. You've got to be wealthy to have a chance.

In our legal system today, the rich man will get a better defense with all the lawyers that he can afford, that will string out the courts into a mistrial if need be. The poor man can't afford to do that. The idea of authority resting with power is even true in churches. Before a major decision was made by church leaders, somebody would go to the people who had the bucks to make sure they were generally comfortable with the decision.

Now I'm not even bringing this up to debate the rightness or the wrongness of those situations, I'm just exposing the basic reality that money brings authority, and that's another reason that men are driven to prosperity. Because there are few addictions in life are as powerful to men as the addiction of power.

This lesson is not to indict hard working men, nor to impute motives of those who have gained a great deal of wealth. Understand this, the Bible commends hard work. I applaud and think it's great if God has blessed you financially as he did Abraham, as he did Moses, as he did Job, all were godly men. But listen, as Christian men, we need to regularly and ruthlessly examine our drive and our motivation to make sure it's consistent with our faith. That's important. The fact is, many men are trying to find in their work and in their earnings, a sense of fulfillment that will always remain illusive. But, it's not to be found there.

Jesus set the principal – “Someone in the crowd said to him, ‘Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.’ Jesus replied, ‘Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?’ Then he said to them, ‘Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.’” (Luke 12:13) Jesus just flatly says, prosperity can't provide the things that matter most in life. If you believe that they can, then Satan has sold you a pack of lies and the gold that you're chasing is fool's gold. Jesus said your life is bigger than how rich you are, it goes far beyond what you can amass and control. Following this statement, He illustrated it with the following parable.

“The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ Then he said, ‘This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, ‘You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself? This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.’” (Luke 12:16)

Now examine this parable in relation to the desire for authority, identity, and security.

1. Did prosperity bring this man authority? The answer is yes and no. It brought him authority over the barn builders. He said, I want you to build a barn, I've got money, let's get it done. They got it done. But, it didn't give him any authority over where his final resting place would be, or the place of his eternal destiny, did it?
2. Did the prosperity give the man identity? Did it let him be known for who he was? The answer is still yes and no. The people in town called him the rich man, there's some identity. But God called him the fool, that's identity, too. Whose opinion mattered more?
3. Did the prosperity give the man security? The fact is, his wealth didn't delay his death one second. Regardless how rich you are, you're just one blocked artery, one poorly placed cancer cell, one stray bullet, or one drunk driver, away from judgment day.

Emperor Othello in the year 1000 AD exhumed the body of Charlemagne. Did you study about Charlemagne in school, the conqueror of France and Germany in that era in there? Charlemagne had been buried in 800 AD and Emperor Othello heard that he had a certain request for being buried. It was said that Charlemagne was buried seated on a throne with a gold crown upon his head, a scarlet robe upon his back, and a scepter in his hand, and a book laid open across his lap. Two hundred years later, as his tomb was opened, Othello found out that Charlemagne had been buried just as he had demanded. He was still seated on the throne, but the golden crown had fallen off his head and the purple robe had been eaten away by the maggots and the other creatures that would devour such. The scepter had fallen from his hand and it was across the bony feet, but the book was still open in his lap and the bony finger was pointing to the verse, Matthew 16:26, "For what would it profiteth a man if he were to gain the whole world, but lose his own soul."

Two premises about our work and how we acquire our assets

1. Work is good. I'm not implying that work is not good. The Ten Commandments say that six days shall you labor and do your work. In the Thessalonian letter, Paul said, if you've got a man among you who doesn't work, don't let him eat. I heard people say one time while growing up, that work is the curse that was put upon man. No, if you go back to the Garden of Eden, God assigned man work to do before he ever fell. Work was designed by God for man's benefit in the context of innocence. Work is part of God's plan to prosper us, to take care of us, to take care of our families, and to give us an avenue of having our needs met.

Do you remember in the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus said? "Look at the sparrows of the air, they don't worry, and yet God takes care of them." He does, but they still have to go out and look for worms, don't they? See, we've got to go out and work, too.

Working is the avenue for our needs to be met. The most rewarding work comes only with love as a salary. In fact, money is the weakest of all salaries, but work is good. "Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him---for this is his lot. Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work--this is a gift from God." (Ecclesiastes 5:18) Work is good. Work is a gift from God. But man has a tendency to take the gift and turn it into an idol to be worshipped.

2. Work is good, but work is not God. The reason so many men are stressed out workaholics and disillusioned is because they're trying to find more in their work and their money-making than either are able to provide. God intends for you to work, but he never intended for you to find your source of eternal happiness in your job or your bank account. God, and God alone, is the source of identity, security, and authority. Those are the things that every man and woman seek. God gives them. Therefore, we need to make a choice.

"No one can serve two masters. He will either hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money [mammon]." (Matthew 6:24) You cannot serve God and money. Notice, it does not say,

- a. "A man should not serve God and money," that makes it a question of priority. It's not worded that way
- b. "A man must not serve God and money," that makes it a moral issue - I should or shouldn't do it.

It said:

"You CANNOT serve God and money." It's an issue of impossibility. It's not even an option. Do you know why? Because God will not be a second-place deity, he just can't do it.

Satan incessantly uses money as the false god demanding our allegiance. That is why Jesus talked so much about it. Men we must stand up and say in a world that's extolling this virtue and this value above all others, "I'm not going to let my life be defined by my bank account or my job. I've got a higher calling."

How do you combat the desire for fortune, fame and power (authority)?

1. Regularly contemplate what the Bible says about money. Do you realize that in the Bible there are over 2,000 references to money and assets, how we use them and the eternal reward that's going to come from those choices? Do you know how many verses there are in the Bible about prayer? About 500. There is more said in the Bible about how we use the assets placed in our charge than there is about faith and prayer combined. Do you know where the richest and deepest and most prevalent treatment of the subject is? It's in the words of Jesus. Jesus taught more about how you handle money than he did about any other subject except the kingdom of God. In light of so much teaching on stewardship we should contemplate our handling of this responsibility.

2. Communicate our struggles with these temptations. Start first with our wives if you're married, and then with select others that you've chosen to be accountable to. Of all the things in our lives, we tend to want to make money the most private. It's amazing the number of husbands who don't even share the family's financial situation with their wives or the person you chose to help you be accountable in your life. Satan uses that failed process as the idol to lure us to bow down before him. When we talk about how we use our assets and whether or not we worship the dollar, we're talking about spiritual warfare. It's a tool of the devil, and it's something we need to communicate regularly with those we love and trust.

3. Keep the right perspective by cultivating a thankful spirit. Paul said "But godliness with contentment is great gain." (1 Timothy 6:6) Contentment is not inherited, it's a learned thing. He also said "I know what it is to have plenty, and I know what it is to be in want, but I have learned the secret of being content in any and every circumstance." (Philippians 4:11) Most people don't know the secret of contentment. They are constantly focusing on what they don't have instead of what they do have. Godliness with contentment is great gain.

Hebrews 13:5 says, "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have because God has said, 'Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you.'" If you're breathing right now, there's not a one of you who has lost everything. Even after you die, you won't. That's when you receive your inheritance.

4. Consecrate yourself through faithful giving. Do you know why God declared and decreed that we give to his work? God doesn't need our money. Our God can do anything he wants to the church whether or not anybody ever gave a dime. The reason God's in it, is for the benefit of the givers because he knows it purifies our soul and it keeps our priorities in line. "When you love money, it becomes your master. When you give money, it becomes your servant." Have you ever thought about that? I don't want money to rule me. I want it to serve me. The best way to train for that is by giving it away.

Giving keeps our priorities in line. God is calling us to be men of right values, men with right priorities, and men of real prosperity. Amazing Grace #1212 - - Steve Flatt - June 4, 1995

Looking for Men of Leadership

The best single word description for leadership is the word, "influence." You lead people by influencing them. More specifically, you influence people to do some things that they would not ordinarily do. No group, organization, or collection of people will go very long without some kind of leadership.

Sometimes we confuse leadership with status or position. But those two aren't the same. All too often you run into an individual who has got a lofty position, but he's just a number one bureaucrat. How many times have you run into a vice president of this or that organization that couldn't lead a dog in from the rain with a T-bone steak? Leadership is influence. As one sage put it, "If you think you're leading and nobody is following, then all you're doing is taking a walk."

Leadership comes in many forms, various styles and qualities, but a person who is truly a leader will have influence at his disposal and that influence brings authority and power.

God calls on men to accept leadership roles in their homes and in the church.

Now I realize this is out of step with our culture, but the Bible has never been all that concerned about political correctness. The principle of male leadership in the home goes all the way back to creation. God made man first. The woman was made for the man, from the man, she was brought to the man, and she was named by the man. Even though it is significant that Eve sinned first. When God came down to earth to see what had happened to his paradise He went to Adam, because, Adam was the leader. He was the one with spiritual responsibility and held accountable.

We are not talking about values, work, who's more important, or who's more cherished by God. Paul stated it this way "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female..." (Galatians 3:28) A man is not worth one whit more than a woman. We are addressing function, and roles that create order. God has created three basic groupings of people:

- a. Society - he grants authority to governments and has told us we need to pray for leaders of governments.
- b. Church - he has granted authority to elders, or to shepherds, or pastors or overseers.
- c. Home - he grants authority to husbands and fathers.

Paul said, "Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God." (I Corinthians 11:3) If you read that in its context and also compare it with everything else said in this Scripture, you will see that Paul is talking about within the home context. He's not saying that just any man who walks down the street has a right to tell any woman what to do and become her authority. But the head of every woman within that home context is her husband.

Some people find that offensive, and I've always wondered why. Ladies, does it offend any of you that the head of man is Christ. It doesn't offend me. He's my head. Does it offend any of us that the head of Christ is God? Then why should we be offended that God also designated the head of woman to be the husband, the man?

The Holy Spirit through Paul stated in Ephesians 5:22: "Wives, submit [place yourselves under your husbands' authority GWT] to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church." I need to stop there and say some things.

There are some folks who are doing some funny linguistic gymnastics with this word, "head." One of the common theories right now is the use of the word, "head," in Ephesians 5:23 and I Corinthians 11:3, that it doesn't mean authority, it doesn't mean leadership. It means origin, like the head of a river is up there where the first little stream comes together. That's the head, it's the origin. There are a myriad of problems with that interpretation. Go back to I Corinthians 11:3, the same word is used when it said that God is the head of Christ. Well, if that means he is the origin of Christ, if he is the creator of Christ, that goes against all the Scriptures in the Bible that teach us about the nature of the Godhead. John I and Colossians 1:15 and all the passages that would say that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit are uniquely all deity in the godhead and have always existed with each other.

The word, "head," doesn't mean origin, it means exactly what we tend to think it would mean. It means a source of authority. It means the same thing that it means in Ephesians 1:22. "And God placed all things under his feet..." (talking about Christ) "and appointed him to be head over everything for the church." It implies authority. Going back to Ephesians 5:23-24, "For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything."

In my earlier years I believed women would resent teaching on male leadership in the home and a few may. But I found that most women resent not the teaching about male leadership in the home, but the refusal by their husband to accept that leadership. For every one woman I have seen who has said a word to me about resenting male leadership, I've talked to twenty who just wished they could see some genuine, biblical, spiritual male leadership in the home.

Misuses of Leadership

There are at least two major ways that leadership and authority are misused in the home.

1. Dominate and control. You may remember the name, Nikita Khrushchev, he was the leader of Russia back during the Cold War days, when he made his first visit to the United States and Washington in the early '60s, and he was taken to the Washington Press Club. There, 500 reporters interviewed Khrushchev in a room. He couldn't speak any English, so through a translator the very first question that came to him was, "In your speech today, Mr. Khrushchev, you talked of all the hideous evils committed under Stalin, but you, sir, was his closest colleague. What were you doing during all those years?" And when Khrushchev heard that question through the translator, he jerked the headphones off and in broken English stood up and said, "Who asked that?!?!?" Silence fell over the room. He barked out again, "I said, who asked that?" You

could have heard a pin drop as nobody moved. After waiting a good 30 seconds with glaring eyes, Khrushchev said, "That's what I was doing."

You see there is a kind of leadership that gets its way by threatening, by bullying, by intimidating, even by hurting. Sadly, there are millions of men today who think this is the kind of behavior that makes a real man in the home. Now that thinking is nurtured by a false media that tells us that the real man is the one who can shoot and kill and karate the most people. It's fed in the sports arena today. A guy can't in a football game on television, he can't just make a tackle anymore, can he? He's got to make a tackle, get up and do a dance, shake a finger, and trash talk his opponent to show that you're a real man by dominating the competition.

Domination is the chief use of power by the world. It is the tool of Satan. There's not a time where Jesus Christ says that a man, or anybody else, should ever exert power by domination. Sometimes, Christians, get the wrong idea. We think if we just have enough force, we could just take over the world for the right. No, we can't. That's not Jesus' way. The world may think domination makes you a real man and a real leader, but it's not Biblical.

In Matthew 20:25-22 Jesus' disciples were arguing about who would be dominate, who would be in control. Jesus said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant. (NIV) "The rulers of nations have absolute power over people and their officials have absolute authority over people. But that's not the way it's going to be among you. Whoever wants to become great among you will be your servant." (GWT)

Domination and control are not God's way. When people are regularly overpowered, there wells up within them resentment and hatred. Sometime, someday, somehow, they will rebel.

I've had to deal with things that I never even wanted to know - wives being subjected to verbal, emotional, physical, sexual abuse in the home, by the very people that God charged to protect them. These dominated his victims cowering before him, beaten and intimidated, and the scars are inestimable. The man, who leads his wife and his children that way, is the epitome of a coward. While he may make his family tremble today, I guarantee you that one of these days, in the judgment day; he will be the one trembling before God. It's never a right way through domination and control.

2. Abdication. Forty percent of all the children in America don't have their fathers around. They're not with them at all. Many of the other 60 percent have fathers who are workaholics, or are interested in a dozen other things. Men not accepting leadership and authority is as bad as abusing it. Now oftentimes, a husband is not there because they never were there. They impregnated a woman and never showed up. Other times it's through abandonment. Sometimes it's through divorce. But if the man isn't there, then his leadership isn't there either.

Tony Evans is a very well-known black minister in the Dallas area, and he was sharing this speech before a large group. Let me read a paragraph or so. He said: "I am convinced that the primary cause of the national crisis is the feminization of the American male. When I say feminization, I'm not talking about sexual preference; I'm trying to describe a misunderstanding of manhood that has produced a nation of sissified men who abdicated their role of spiritually pure leaders, forcing women to fill the vacuum. As reason gives way to fear, people look for a place to pin the blame in our society. In a Ted Koppel special on juvenile delinquency, accusing fingers were pointed at the criminal justice system, an unfair economy, and persistent racism." Evans went on to say: "While each of those issues is worthy of our attention they are all symptoms

of a more serious disease. Basic economics is no excuse for promiscuity and racism doesn't get teenage girls pregnant, the fact is, if dad doesn't provide spiritually responsible leadership in the home, baby is in big trouble."

Men need to be in the home. But sometimes, leadership is abdicated when man still is there in the home, because his attention is elsewhere. Steve Farrar in his excellent book, *Standing Tall*, said, "It's my conviction that children all over America are dying emotionally, physically, and spiritually because the men in their lives are just standing around." That's an interesting expression.

Dr. Robert Schuller told a story to Paul Harvey, it really hits home with me. He had just put out a book, it had been a best-seller and he had been on a tour to promote that book. He had gone to eight cities in four days, and he called into his office. His secretary reminded him, "Now when you get back, you need to go to the luncheon that was raffled off for a charity." Somebody had paid \$500 to have lunch with Dr. Schuller. When he got home and he went to the lunch, he was surprised to find out that the person had spent had spent their entire life savings to have lunch with him. The reason he knew it was their entire life savings was because it was his own teenage daughter. He said he began to weep at the lunch and he said, "I knew from that moment, some things had to change."

Men, what price would you pay, or rather, what price would your wife and kids pay to see you become the spiritual leader of your home? An even better question is: What price will they pay if you don't.

Practical ways to demonstrate spiritual leadership

1. Follow the model of Jesus Christ. As quoted above Ephesians 5 stated that wives are to submit or place themselves under their husbands' authority in everything. But the very next verse, states "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her," and three verses later it states "In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself." Jesus Christ didn't lead by domination; he didn't lead by abdication. He was the ideal leader and he's the model of what God desires a man to be. Perhaps the best single counsel to a man struggling to be a better leader in the home is just read some of the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John every single day.

2. Model by service. Scripture teaches authority counter-culturally. The culture says dominate, but in the Bible, the ministry of the power is the ministry of the towel (service). Biblically, the way of greatness isn't through power and domination, Jesus taught "Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant." (Mark 10:43) Real authority comes through service.

Jesus accurately said, "I came not to be served, I came to serve." Now husbands practically that means that we get to be the first to serve in the family unit. We set the tone. We take the lead just as Jesus did when he walked in that Upper Room in John 13 and nobody wanted to take a towel and a basin, and the leader took it and went and served and they never forgot it. It changed their lives.

3. Focus on encouragement. Focus on encouragement for your family. Encouragement is a great word. Do you know what the word, "encouragement," means? It means to put encourage in. That's what we do for our families. We put courage in our families. We empower our children to have the courage to do the right thing when everybody else around them offers a different counsel.

4. Teach your children to respect their mother. Start teaching by your example, while your children are very young. Later it may include some pretty straight and tough instructions as your children reach early adolescence and want to stretch their wings and gain their independence. Often, they exercise some rebellion, particularly toward the one that they see as the weaker vessel, and that would be the

mother...Dads, this is a critical time for male leadership. After one husband who stood up and straightened out a teenage son's attitude toward his mother, the wife came to him and said, "Honey, in all our years of marriage, you've done some wonderful things for me. You've given me wonderful gifts. We've been on great trips. But nothing you've ever done has meant more to me than the way you demanded respect for me from our son. You'll never know how much that lets me know the way you value me."

Dads, beyond how it makes your wife feel, this is the solution to the sexual harassment problem. This is the solution to the rape problem. This is the solution to the spousal abuse problem. Boys, who love and respect their mother, don't abuse women. It's just that simple.

5. Demonstrate that you are under authority. That's the key. Demonstrate that you are under authority. A man has to be a good soldier before he can be a good general. No one can be the real spiritual, decisive leader of his family until he is a worthy follower of Christ. Amazing Grace #1214 - - Steve Flatt - June 18, 1995