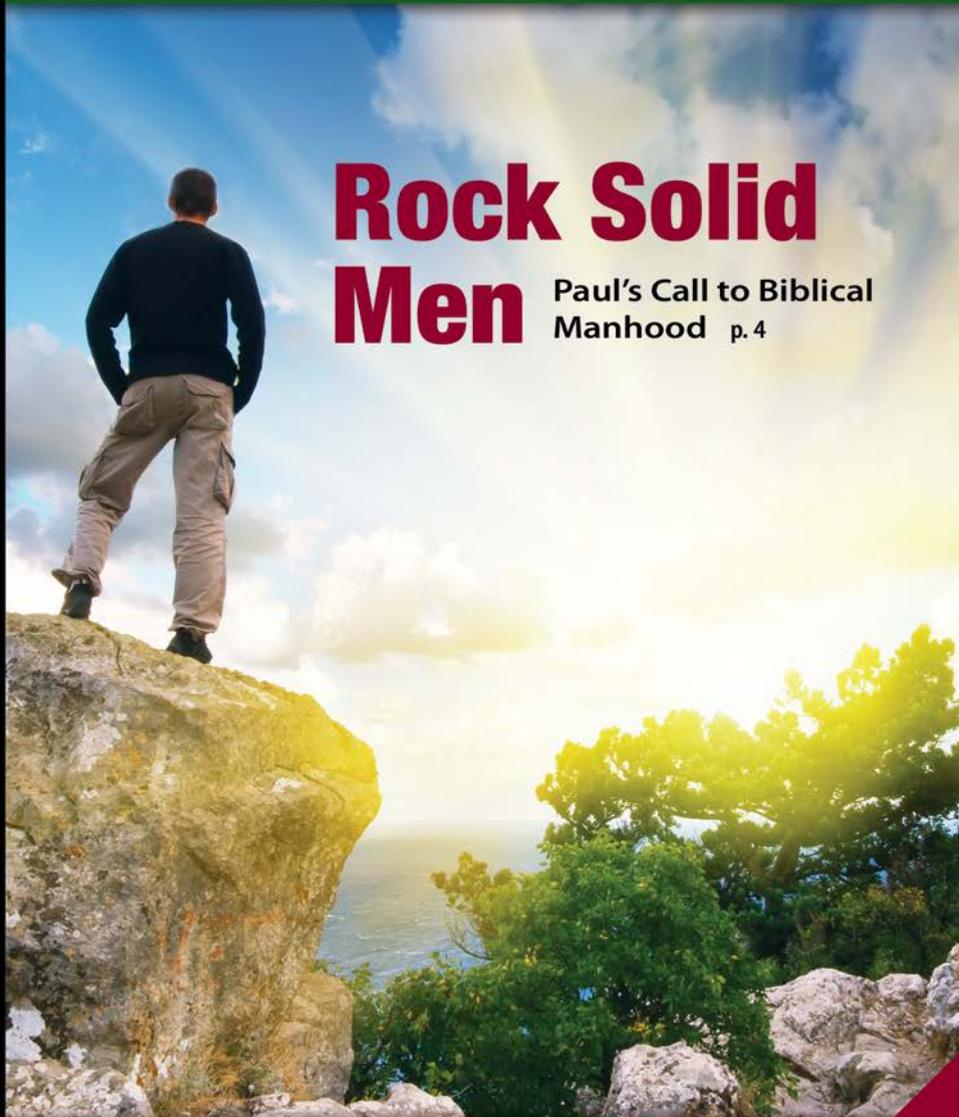


equipping the man in the mirror

daily devotions, helpful articles and more



Rock Solid Men

Paul's Call to Biblical
Manhood p.4

**ALSO
INSIDE**

Do Everything in Love (p. 3)

Whatever It Takes! (p. 8)

Our Worldview (p. 60)

Devotions on
page 14

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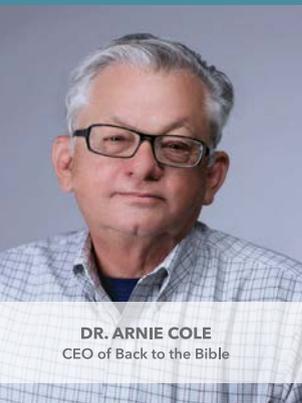
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Follow the *One-Year Bible* reading plan by reading the daily Scripture at the end of each devotion. To see the complete reading plan, go to oneyearbibleonline.com.

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

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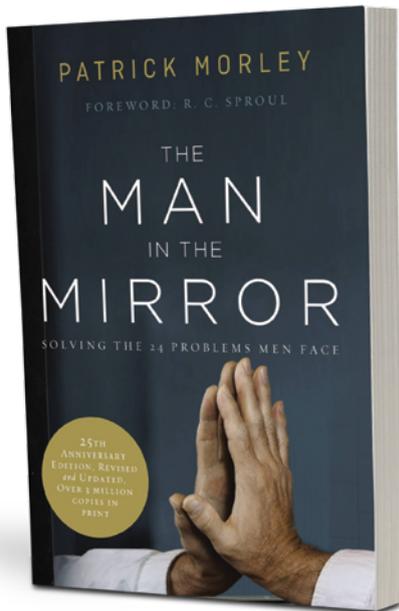
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For more information, or to purchase a copy visit maninthemirror.org.



First Things First Do Everything in Love

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

There are a variety of themes that you can trace through the whole Bible.

For example, you can read the Bible as God's quest to bring His people back into His presence. Or you can see it as a war between the forces of darkness and the forces of light. You can also read it as a story where God is creating a people to live in the place of His blessing.

One of the most powerful themes to consider in scripture is love. Every act of God throughout history has been motivated by His eternal and ferocious love. God's steadfast love for us is almost incomprehensible, especially considering how quickly and easily our hearts turn from loving Him to loving the things around us. Paul says in Romans 5:8 "but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

God's love for us is the basis of our love for others. It's the source of our strength, and the basis of the transformation that brings us to mature manhood. The main article this month, "Rock Solid Men," by Brett Clemmer, focuses on the five attributes of Biblical manhood that Paul shares at the end of 1 Corinthians—vigilance, standing firm, courage, strength and love. We've developed a new event for men based on this verse called Rock Solid Men. We'd love to come to your church and share it with your men (page 6).

Love is also the basis for Valentine's Day, the one day of the year where every guy tries to remember what it means to be romantic! 😊 Whether this comes easily or is a struggle for you, you'll enjoy the quotes and Scriptures on love that we've collected on the inside back cover. We also asked our field staff to tell us what it means to truly love your wife. They came up with some great answers starting on page 7.

Finally, we hope you'll join us in Orlando for our annual FUEL Leaders Conference. There will be lay leaders, pastors and men's discipleship ministries from around the country joining us on February 26–28, 2015. We have a great slate of keynote speakers, workshop presenters and sponsors. You'll find more information in the article on page 8, and we know you will love it.

As we enter 2015, let's remember Paul's admonition to the church in Corinth: "Be on your guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be men of courage. Be strong. Do everything in love."

Until every church discipled every man,



Rock Solid Men

by Brett Clemmer, Vice President of Man in the Mirror

The Apostle Paul had a problem.

He spent a year and a half in the town of Corinth, working, teaching in the synagogue and building the church. But after he left, the culture started to seep into the church in Corinth, and Paul, like a father of a wayward child, was unhappy.

When Paul writes 1 Corinthians, Corinth is dominated by a temple to Apollo, and it's dotted with numerous other pagan temples. It's a major center of commerce, and materialism is rampant.

From Corinth to current events...

The city of Corinth is not unlike the society we live in today. And the problems present in the church then are still present today. Men in particular are struggling. We are under assault in today's culture. We are bombarded by cultural commentary that tells men they are sex-crazed buffoons. Radical feminism masquerades as academic truth and tells men that they are at best a nuisance, and at worst evil and totally unnecessary. But the culture will always give us misinformation about men and our identity.

Paul gives the Corinthians—and us—a “roadmap” to withstand the lies of our culture. Throughout the letter of 1 Corinthians, he is exhorting us to stand up as the men God created us to be. And toward the end of the letter, he says this,

Be on your guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be men of courage. Be strong. Do everything in love (16:13-14, NIV84).

These five phrases give us a firm foundation—solid footing. When confronted with the lies of the culture, the sin that taints our hearts, and the temptations of the evil one, we can stand firm. By relying on Christ, we can be Rock Solid Men.

Be on your guard.

Throughout his letter, we see Paul admonishing the Corinthians to be vigilant about temptation and sin. In 1 Corinthians 10:12-14, he says, “Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.”

Paul makes the Corinthians a promise and teaches a clear strategy for dealing with temptation: God will not let you be tested beyond your ability; He will provide a way of escape—flee! Paul lumps all of the sin he has been talking about into the term “idolatry.” He doesn't say that they need to merely avoid the pagan temples throughout Corinth. He's saying that all sin, at its heart, is worshipping something other than God.

There are some obvious areas of a man's life that can become idols, where he needs to be alert and vigilant, looking for the escape God provides, enduring the hardship it may cause and fleeing. The two biggest areas we have seen are the areas of sexual purity and lust—specifically pornography—and materialism or greed. What are the idols you need to be on guard against?

If you have a family, protecting them is part of being vigilant. As husbands and fathers, we need to shield our wives and children from these attacks. Practically speaking, this might mean putting a filter on all the electronic devices in the house (Don't forget about those phones!), talking with your kids about the shows and movies they watch, and making sure you know their friends—and they know you.

But being vigilant is not just about avoiding sin; it's about pursuing opportunities to build the Kingdom. We need to remain vigilant for openings as well as attacks. The Bible is full of men who relentlessly pursued the opportunities God put in front of them—Abraham, Joseph and Paul, to name a few.

What opportunities has God put in front of you to participate with Him in building the Kingdom? Start with your passions. Are you an avid sports fan? Many boys' lives are changed by coaches who take an interest in them and live out their faith in front of them.

Are you a good businessman? Many young men get caught up in the rat race, putting their careers above the family and faith. They need a mentor to come alongside and show them the path to living a balanced life with Christ at the center.



ROCK

SOLID MEN

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BE ON YOUR GUARD; **STAND FIRM**
IN THE FAITH; BE COURAGEOUS; BE STRONG.
DO EVERYTHING IN LOVE. —1 CORINTHIANS 16:13-14 NIV



Area Directors Speak Out:

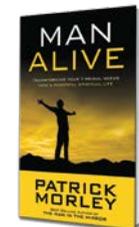
Loving Your Wife Well



February 14 is Valentine's Day! But God calls us to show love to our wives year round. In the *Success That Matters* seminar and Pat's book, *Man Alive*, we find these ten ideas:

10 Practical Ways to Love Your Wife

1. Pray with Your Wife
2. Pray for Your Wife
3. Spend Time with Her Alone
4. Listen to Her Deeply Without Giving an Overly Quick Reply
5. Touch Her
6. Accept Her Unconditionally
7. Encourage Her with Words
8. Take Care of Her Financially
9. Laugh with Her
10. After God but Before All Others, Make Your Wife Your Top Priority



We also asked our Area Directors and Field Representatives for additional ideas to love your wife well. Here are some of their responses:



*Loving my wife well means being the **spiritual leader** of our marriage and our family. Praying daily with her and leading daily bible reading with her. Doing my part of sanctifying and edifying her. Loving her as Jesus would love her.*

—Braden Randall,
Northwest Arkansas Coalition for Men's Discipleship

*Learn her "**Love Language**" and then be creative in following that. Learn to listen to what she is feeling not just what she is saying.*

—Jim Boetjer, Northern California Coalition for Men's Discipleship



Loving Your Wife Well continues on page 59 ►

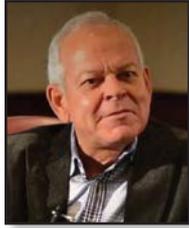
Whatever It Takes!

"God isn't looking for people of great faith, but for individuals ready to follow Him" —Hudson Taylor

In a few short weeks, leaders in men's discipleship from all over the country will gather in Orlando for **FUEL 2015—The Man in the Mirror Leaders Conference**. These leaders are willing to follow God's call to go and make disciples. They are striving towards that goal on a daily, weekly, and yearly basis—often with the valuable support of their wives. Our challenge is to equip them for the battle, encourage them in Christ and inspire them on their journey.



Whatever it takes!



We are thrilled to have **Pastor Johnny Hunt** and **Pastor Bryan Carter** join us as keynote speakers at **FUEL 2015!**

Pastor Hunt is from First Baptist Church, Woodstock, Georgia. The church has experienced significant growth under his leadership, and their ministry sees its best days ahead. He has long had a passion to help men lead powerful, Christ-filled lives through the changing of their hearts.



Pastor Bryan Carter serves as the lead Pastor at Concord Church in Dallas, Texas which serves more than 8500 members. Concord builds all of its efforts around helping people to grow to their full potential in Christ. Preaching, teaching, and leadership are life passions for Pastor Carter, who was recently a keynote speaker at the National Coalition for Ministries to Men Reload conference.



Man in the Mirror's own **Patrick Morley** and **David Delk** will continue to lead and speak at **FUEL 2015**. They will share from a 28-year legacy and wealth of knowledge for reaching and discipling men at Man in the Mirror.



In addition, participants will have a choice of four workshops from more than 20 options, with speakers from Man in the Mirror, national and international ministries joining us. We'll also have powerful worship led by the team from Summit Church in Orlando. You'll be able to connect and network with other leaders who may share similar obstacles and journeys. We hope you will leave the Leaders Conference refreshed and renewed for the ministry set before you. So join us!

February is a fantastic month to be in Florida and attend **FUEL 2015 on February 26-28, 2015!** For more information, go to FUELLeadersConference.org.



Whatever it takes!



EQUIPPING LEADERS TO REACH MORE MEN

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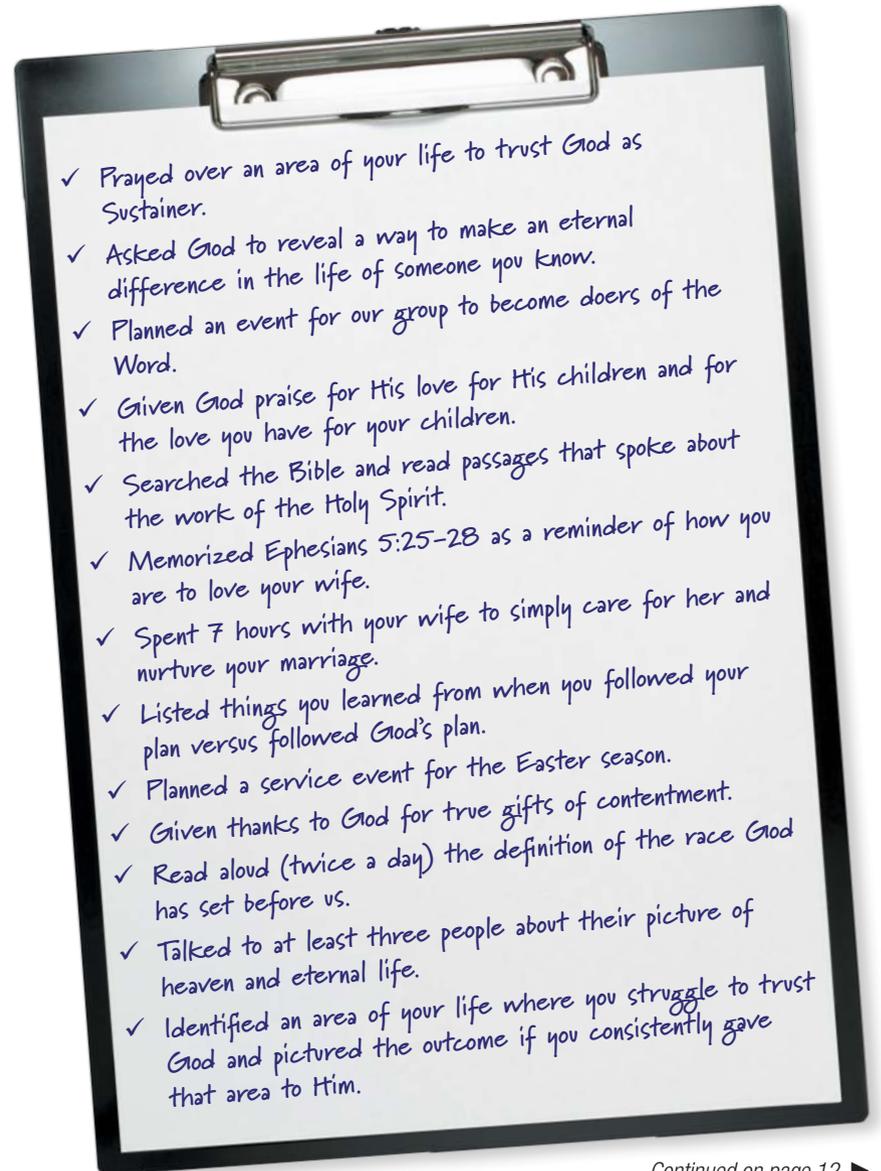
For more information go to: FuelLeadersConference.org

Man in the Mirror Leaders Conference
February 26-28, 2015
Orlando Airport Marriott



Equipping Your Men's Small Group

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



Continued on page 12 ►

Leading in the Footsteps of Jesus

by David Delk

Every man has a leadership influence on someone. And every man is affected by the leadership of others. So today, as we start a new year, all of us are feeling the impact of the leadership crisis that we see in America. Too many dads have abandoned their kids, even if they are still at home. Too many husbands have chosen the safe and easy road over the path of loving sacrifice and service. Too many businessmen, politicians, and celebrities are looking for short-term advantage over long-term impact. In Jeremiah 23:2-6 we read:

Therefore, this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says to these shepherds: "Instead of caring for my flock and leading them to safety, you have deserted them and driven them to destruction.

Now I will pour out judgment on you for the evil you have done to them. But I will gather together the remnant of my flock from the countries where I have driven them. I will bring them back to their own sheepfold, and they will be fruitful and increase in number. Then I will appoint responsible shepherds who will care for them, and they will never be afraid again. Not a single one will be lost or missing. I, the Lord, have spoken!

Lead out of the
humility that comes
from submitting
to Jesus.

"For the time is coming," says the Lord, "when I will raise up a righteous descendant from King David's line. He will be a King who rules with wisdom. He will do what is just and right throughout the land. And this will be his name: 'The Lord Is Our Righteousness.' In that day Judah will be saved, and Israel will live in safety." (NLT).

In these verses we see that God has woven the design of leadership into the very fabric of society. God judged the people for the sins of their leaders. Representation is built into human reality. We were represented by Adam and Eve when they sinned and so reap the consequence. If we put our faith in Jesus, we are represented by Him in His death and resurrection and so receive the benefits.

In an analogous way, the people we lead are affected by our leadership. God has given us a great opportunity for positive impact—but the key lies in being a leader who knows how to follow. We don't lead in our own strength, but lead out of the humility that comes from submitting to Jesus. Who will you impact today and this next year with your leadership? Will those people experience the grace and love of Jesus Christ through your leadership?

Adapted from the Weekly Briefing "Leading in the Footsteps of Jesus" by David Delk.



• DAVID DELK

David Delk serves as President and Co-CEO of Man in the Mirror. He is the author or co-author of five books, including *The Marriage Prayer*, *Dad in the Mirror* and *No Man Left Behind*. David has served as President of the National Coalition of Ministries to Men, and has served as a visiting lecturer in Biblical Studies at Reformed Theological Seminary. David and his wife Ruthie live in Orlando, Florida.

□ **1/1-1/4:** These devotions remind you that **God is truly our Redeemer and Sustainer. Suggested Application Step (SAS):** Take a few minutes to discuss what it means to trust God as your sustainer. Is there an area of your life that you've been trying to sustain on your own? Fill in the blanks of this prayer, "Lord, you know my needs about _____. I'm putting _____ in Your hands."



□ **1/1-11:** Throughout this week, **you'll see what it means to make an eternal difference. SAS:** In groups of 3-4, discuss where your life has made the most impact (work, family, church, community, etc.). Does that impact count for eternity? Why or why not? Ask your men to pray each day this week and ask God to reveal a way to make a change for eternity in the life of his family, friends, neighbors or community. Come back in two weeks, ready to share what God showed you.

□ **1/12-1/18:** From these devotionals you will learn **what it means to be a "doer of the Word."** **SAS:** Read aloud the devotional, "Being a Doer" from page 20. On a white board, list some words that describe Martin Luther. Discuss what made Luther become a doer and what keeps us from becoming "Doers of the Word". How can our group become doers of the Word? Discuss a tangible act (event, fundraiser, etc.) that our group could do. Begin to make plans for the event.



□ **1/19-1/25:** This week's devotionals will help you remember **God loves His children more than we love our own children. SAS:** Spend time with one of your children this week and ask them how they know that you love them. Affirm your love for them and in prayer give God praise for His great love for you and the relationship you have with your children. From two weeks ago, what did God reveal to you?



□ **1/26-2/1:** This week your men will look at **the power of the Holy Spirit. SAS:** Have the guys use their concordances or go to www.Biblegateway.com and search "Holy Spirit". Read aloud some of those verses to one another and be encouraged by the work of the Holy Spirit.



□ **2/2-2/8:** This week, you'll see **what it means to love your wife as Christ loves the church. SAS:** Memorize this Scripture, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself." Ephesians 5:25-28

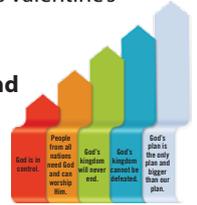


□ **2/9-2/15:** In these devotionals, **men will learn the importance of nurturing the marriage relationship. SAS:** Out of the 168 hours you are given each week, you'll spend approximately 50 hours at work/commuting,



56 hours sleeping, 7 hours in physical activity, and another 30 hours with yard work, kid's activities, meals, bill paying, etc. That leaves you 25 hours. Are you willing to commit 7 of those hours to serving your wife or spending time with your wife? Tip: It's Valentine's Day this week.

□ **2/16-2/22:** This week you'll learn that **God's plan is the only plan and it's always bigger than your plan. SAS:** Think of a time when you tried to make your own plan work and then a time when you sought God's plan and followed it. List three things you learned from both of those choices.



□ **2/23-3/1:** In the devotionals this week, you'll see **the importance of the spiritual discipline of service and making a difference. SAS:** Plan or join a service for the Easter Season. Make a difference in the life or lives of people in your church, community, or around the world. (Serve the homeless, gather the youth for a fun day, pick up some folks from a retirement center and bring them to church.)



□ **3/2-3/8:** The theme for this week is **the importance of learning to be content instead of chasing after money, cars, and things that would only give limited satisfaction. SAS:** On a white board, ask the men to list some things that they thought would bring them contentment. Now list some attitudes and beliefs that will bring true contentment. Spend some time in prayer, giving thanks to God and asking Him to give you a contented heart in Him.



□ **3/9-3/15:** From these devotionals, **you will learn the downsides of the rat race and the benefits of running the race God has set before you. SAS:** Ask each man to write a definition of the race they have been running and a description of the race God may have planned for them. Post that new race definition on your car's dashboard and read it aloud on your commute to and from work.



□ **3/16-3/22:** This week, **you will see the reality and glory that we will all share in heaven. SAS:** Throughout this week, ask at least three people at work or in your neighborhood what they think about heaven. Be ready for discussion that may result from these questions. Come back next week and share the results of these conversations.

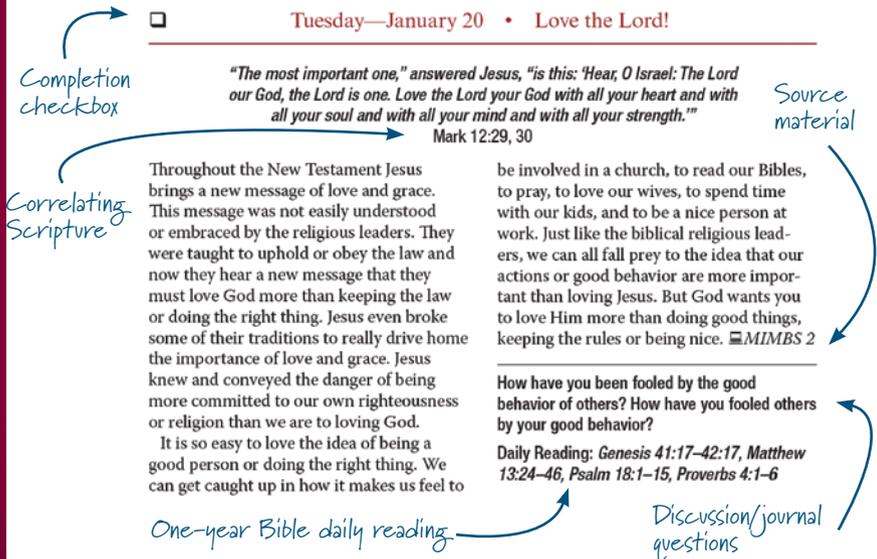


□ **3/23-3/31:** From these devotionals, **your men will see the value of learning to trust God with every aspect of their life. SAS:** Ask each man to identify one area of their life where they struggle to really trust God. Let them share with the group what it would have looked like to give that area over to Him and how that would have made them feel. From last week, share with the group some of the conversations you had with people about heaven.



How to Use This Devotional

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



☐ Thursday—January 1 • Our Sustainer

From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. "For in him we live and move and have our being."
Acts 17:26–28a

There is a parable about a woman who was enduring a difficult time. Entering an old grocery store, she approached the owner, saying, "My husband is sick and can't work. We have seven children. May I get some groceries today? I'll pay you as soon as I can."

The grocer berated her, but she wouldn't give up. Finally he said, "Put your list on this side of the scales. I'll add groceries to the other side, and I'll give you whatever equals the weight of your list."

The woman fumbled in her purse, found a pen, and wrote something on a paper. Then she put it on the scale. The grocer began adding food items to the other side, and he kept adding and kept adding, until the scale was completely full. Still it tipped toward the list. Finally the grocer picked up the paper and found that it simply said, "Lord, you know my needs. I'm putting this in your hands."

Don't believe the illusions of our culture, only God is your sustainer. **MIMBS 1**

Describe a time when you have seen God's sustaining power.

Daily Reading: *Genesis 1:1–2:25, Matthew 1:1–2:12, Psalm 1:1–6, Proverbs 1:1–6*

☐ Friday, Saturday, Sunday—January 2, 3, 4 • Our Redeemer

"You are worthy... because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

Revelation 5:9–10

Every man—regardless of whether he is a believer—has three basic questions about God: Does He know what I'm going through? Does He care? Can He do anything about it?

The answer to all three questions is YES. He knows, He cares, and He already did something about it. The blood of Jesus, poured out at the cross, purchased men for God. He is worthy, because He is our redeemer. The implications of the above passage can be expressed in five words:

- **Purchased**—If you're a Christian, it's because you've been purchased by God. You belong to God.
- **Kingdom**—You've been incorporated into a kingdom, which implies that your king's authority should be reflected in your lifestyle.
- **Priests**—God's kingdom is comprised of priests. That means our lives are holy, and we have responsibility to minister to and pray for others.
- **Serve**—Regardless of where you live or work, your ultimate purpose is to serve God.
- **Worship**—Revelation 4 and 5 show scenes of worship. That word literally means to kiss, the way a dog licks its master's hand. God is looking for that kind of submission.

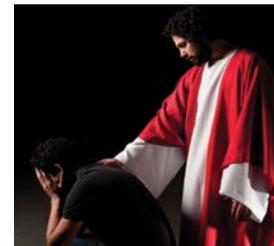
If you are already walking with God, the question you should be asking is, "What difference will this information make in my life?" When you get a phone call from an angry customer, will you remember that you are purchased? Will you remember that you're part of a kingdom of priests, called to serve and worship?

If you're not walking with the Lord right now, the question you should be asking is, "Why not?" Jesus told a story about a boy who left his home and lived in a way that would dishonor his father. But he came to himself and returned home. He admitted he was no longer worthy to be called his son. But the father welcomed him.

If you're not worthy, just tell Him that. The one who already redeemed you will also welcome you. **MIMBS 1**

Which one of the five words is most meaningful to you right now? Share your thoughts with another man.

Daily Reading: *Genesis 3:1–10:32, Matthew 2:13–4:25, Psalm 2:1–4:8, Proverbs 1:7–23*



For Your Small Group

☐ For January 1–4: From the five words in the devotional on this page, which is the most difficult for you to comprehend or embrace? In your small group, discuss what a man's life would look like if he is:

- Purchased
- A Priest
- A Servant

For all can see that the wise die, that the foolish and the senseless also perish, leaving their wealth to others. Their tombs will remain their houses forever, their dwellings for endless generations, though they had named lands after themselves. People, despite their wealth, do not endure; they are like the beasts that perish. This is the fate of those who trust in themselves, and of their followers, who approve their sayings.

Psalm 49:10–13

Shunning public contact for his last 20 years, Howard Hughes lived in self-exile in The Xanadu, a 10-story oceanfront condominium in the Bahamas. When I visited the island, Hughes had been dead for two years, but his estate maintained his home. I was curious. As I approached the imposing front door, I noticed a porthole window covered with reflective film. I was trying to peer inside when an elevator chime startled me. An approaching maid, apparently finding humor in my request to see the interior, shrugged and allowed me to enter.

I had imagined imported opulent chandeliers and expensive rare art. Instead, I found an austere interior, sparsely furnished with

threadbare pieces. The bathroom fixtures looked like something from a cheap motel. Howard Hughes' wealth and fame were unmatched by any other man of his time. Yet his final hideaway was a stark reminder that money is a mortal god. Howard Hughes died a prisoner in the citadel of his own power, betrayed by his fame. His impact began to fade into the dusty pages of history the instant his flesh turned cold.

📖MIM 25—Significance

How does this illustration from a visit to Xanadu echo the truth written above, from Psalm 49?

Daily Reading: *Genesis 11:1–13:4, Matthew 5:1–26, Psalm 5:1–12, Proverbs 1:24–28*

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

John 15:5

Someone recently mentioned he'd like to have his tombstone to read, "He made a difference." Whether we speak of achieving our full potential, or only of surviving to the next paycheck, men invariably talk about their desire to know they are significant. A man's most innate need is to find purpose and meaning. I repeatedly hear men say things like this:

- "I want to make a difference."
- "I want my life to count."
- "I want to do something important with my life."

The difference in men is not in defining their desire, but it's in how they go about satisfying the desire. The need to

be significant can take a man away from God's purposes, or closer to them. Some men, eager for the spoils of this life, pursue significance by gratifying only their own ambitions. Others, trained by Scripture, find it by obeying God. Authentic, lasting significance cannot be found apart from Christ. So, if a man is in Christ, and submitted to God's plan and purpose, then he can satisfy his greatest need in a way that bears enduring fruit. 📖MIM 25—Significance

Has your desire for significance taken you away from God's purposes, or closer to His purposes? Explain your answer to another man.

Daily Reading: *Genesis 13:5–15:21, Matthew 5:27–48, Psalm 6:1–10, Proverbs 1:29–33*

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart.

Ecclesiastes 3:11

Ted is a charmer—his broad smile is contagious. He has attained social stature and financial independence. As chairman of a large enterprise, he has many friends and has contributed greatly to our community's welfare. Ted thinks he has found significance, but has he really? It depends on how you define the term.



ultimately find our significance in Christ, we will not survive the threshold between this world and the next. A man who achieves a national reputation might expect to be remembered with a couple of paragraphs in Wikipedia. But without

Jesus, his highest hopes for making a contribution of eternal value will be fruitless.

📖MIM 25—Significance

Take some time to answer these two questions: Who am I? Why do I exist? What do your answers reveal about whether you are pursuing a lifestyle that will make a contribution of eternal value?

Daily Reading: *Genesis 16:1–18:15, Matthew 6:1–24, Psalm 7:1–17, Proverbs 2:1–5*

... the wise, like the fool, will not be long remembered; the days have already come when both have been forgotten.

Ecclesiastes 2:16

My daughter and I once attended the U.S. Open tennis tournament. Moments before the women's championship final match began, the announcer introduced the great women champions of yesteryear, from the oldest to the youngest. The crowd was made up of enthusiastic New York tennis fans. Yet, the first elderly woman was escorted to center court with only a few polite claps from a handful of fans. This continued, with each former star gaining an increment of more applause. By the time they called Billie Jean King's name, applause turned from polite to robust. And when they called out Chris Evert, the great lady of tennis, the stands went wild with thunderous approval.

I couldn't help but think how the first woman had been the Chris Evert of her

day. Just 50 years later, she was receiving only a few polite claps from a handful of fans. Memories are short. If we seek our significance in terms of fame and worldly accomplishment, we select an identity that will fade like sun-bleached furniture.

📖MIM 25—Significance

Today's devotional talks about the futility of seeking significance in terms of fame and worldly accomplishment. Describe a situation you've observed that shows that pursuing meaning through those types of venues is like selecting "an identity that will fade like sun-bleached furniture."

Daily Reading: *Genesis 18:16–19:38, Matthew 6:25–7:14, Psalm 8:1–9, Proverbs 2:6–15*

Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless.
Ecclesiastes 5:10

For Christmas one year I bought my wife an expensive solid-gold Swiss watch. I didn't do this to honor her. You see, I wanted an expensive, solid gold Swiss watch myself, but I had a problem. Patsy and I had exchanged watches as wedding gifts, and the watch on my wrist was the sentimentally engraved wedding gift. I needed a dignified plan to dispose of the watch I wore. I thought about it for years. Finally I got a break. My wife's thirteen-year-old watch started to die, and a plan began taking shape. If I bought Patsy an expensive new watch, then I could buy the companion watch after a reasonable amount of time had passed. I didn't need the watch, but I wanted a symbol to let people know I had arrived. Many of us use our possessions to send signals that we are significant. The advantage of flashing our stuff is that we don't actually have to be tacky and say



something self-serving. The most fleeting significance comes from things. Once I purchased a new luxury car. The metallic-blue paint glistened in the sun, and the aroma of white leather seats was sweet perfume to a young materialist. About three weeks later, though, I noticed the same car in a different color, and I wished I had bought that one instead.

There is no real satisfaction in tying our identity to transient things that rust and rot, rather than anchoring ourselves in relationship to our loving and wise God. *MIM 25—Significance*

Describe a time when you've been tempted to pursue some possession that you thought would prove your significance. How did the pursuit of that possession affect you? If you managed to obtain it, how long did your sense of satisfaction last?

Daily Reading: *Genesis 20:1–26:16, Matthew 7:15–8:34, Psalm 9:1–10:15, Proverbs 2:16–3:8*



For Your Small Group

For January 5–11: Is “making a difference” or “doing something important” the focus or goal of your life?

- How would your friends or family know what is important to you?
- With another man, discuss some changes that you may need to make in order to reach that goal for your life.

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”
Matthew 18:1–4

As a member of President Reagan's Cabinet, former Secretary of the Interior Donald Hodell reminded his department heads not to get too enamored with their titles. He pointed out that no one remembers former secretaries, let alone the department heads.

A man who achieves a significant position of responsibility and authority runs the risk of anchoring his identity in his position. He faces heartache when he no longer fills the position, and he realizes people were not interested in him for himself, but for the position he held, which had potential to benefit them somehow. The thrill of closing a big deal, the power to allocate resources to a project, the ability to

persuade a prospect to buy your product—these accomplishments are intoxicating and give an aura of power. But it's temporary.

As a retired man told me, “I used to be able to pick up the phone and talk to anybody I wanted to. Enjoy your power while you can, because once you retire, they don't return your calls anymore.”

MIM 25—Significance

How does today's Scripture passage contrast with our culture's view of finding significance through power? Share your thoughts with your group.

Daily Reading: *Genesis 26:17–27:46, Matthew 9:1–17, Psalm 10:16–18, Proverbs 3:9–10*

The life of mortals is like grass, they flourish like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him . . .
Psalm 103:15–17

Our culture suggests that men can find lasting significance through the pursuit of fame, possessions or power. So let me offer a short quiz to test your “significance IQ.” Try your hand at answering these questions:

- Can you name the world's ten wealthiest men?
- Can you name the ten most admired men in America?
- Can you name the top ten corporate executives in America?
- Can you name the last ten presidents of the United States?
- Can you name the last ten winners of the Nobel Peace Prize?
- Can you name the ten members of the President's current Cabinet?

Today's Scripture reminds us that even the highest achievers in our society are “like grass,” flourishing for the moment, but soon gone. Contrast that with the eternal significance of an identity anchored in God's love and mercy. The Game of Tens is a ruthless, heartless illustration of the folly of pursuing lasting significance apart from Jesus Christ.
MIM 25—Significance

James 4:14 compares individuals to “a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.” How does that image match up to what you found through trying to answer the questions in “The Game of Tens”?

Daily Reading: *Genesis 28:1–29:35, Matthew 9:18–38, Psalm 11:1–7, Proverbs 3:11–12*

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?”

Matthew 16:24–26

As the scales in our society have tipped toward individual rights and away from Judeo-Christian values, our culture has immersed itself in pursuit of self-gratifying activity. We’ve ignored the fact that the path to significance is bigger than the individual. Significance is not possible unless what we do contributes to the welfare of others. If what I do is only for my own pleasure, then I’ll never derive a lasting sense of purpose and meaning from it.

Two men can work side-by-side in the same office, fulfilling exactly the same job description, yet have entirely different impacts. One fellow runs on the fast track. It’s an uphill race, always fighting for the next rung on the ladder, climbing higher, and grabbing glory. The other man finds great reward in mentoring

younger associates. He counsels, exhorts and encourages. Everyone knows he’s a Christian, even though he doesn’t smite his colleagues with his biblical knowledge.

The difference in significance doesn’t result from pursuing totally different paths. The difference between self-gratification and true significance is found in the motive and the attitude rather than the task.

📖MIM 25—Significance

Today’s devotional describes two men working side-by-side in the same office. Which of those men most clearly illustrates your motive and attitude? Is the way you are going leading to lasting significance? Explain your answer.

Daily Reading: Genesis 30:1–31:16, Matthew 10:1–23, Psalm 12:1–8, Proverbs 3:13–15

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

James 1:22

The smell of fall was in the air in the small town of Wittenberg, Germany. Over at the university, a young, unassuming scholar was considering how a man could find favor with God. This young monk began recording abuses and injustices he observed in his church.

In 1508, he began teaching his beliefs at the University of Wittenberg. His disgust came to a head when a representative of the Pope came to Germany selling pre-signed certificates offering pardon for all sins to any purchaser. Finally, on October 31, 1517, a trembling Martin Luther posted his famous 95 theses on the front doors of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. As a result, over the next 40 years, half of German’s churches

became Protestant, and social change brought reform to various structures, including the Roman Catholic Church.

Because Martin Luther was willing to study Scripture and *do* the Word, God gave him a purpose for his life. Anyone who wants to satisfy his need to be significant must study Scripture and ask God to reveal His purpose. Then he must faithfully do what God says. 📖MIM 25—Significance

Name one area of life where you’ve been a hearer of the Word, but not a doer. After reading today’s devotional, how will your response change in that one area?

Daily Reading: Genesis 31:17–32:12, Matthew 10:24–11:6, Psalm 13:1–6, Proverbs 3:16–18

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

Luke 16:10

Today’s Europe is a post-Christian continent. The great, ornate churches of the leading cities are museums and tourist attractions. What would have happened if, in each generation, a handful of men had the same courage to be doers of the Word like young Martin Luther, whose actions ushered in the Protestant Reformation? God’s order would have been continually re-established. Why hasn’t it happened? The answer must be, at least in part, that there were not enough faithful men.

Does America have a handful of faithful men who will stand in the gap at work to make sure our nation doesn’t follow the same path as Europe?

At lunch one day, a deeply committed man related his discouragement with his profession, and his belief that God might have a full-time ministry for him. At the time, he led a Bible study and was responsible



for discipling six men. To his own surprise, our discussion revealed he wasn’t being completely faithful in his responsibilities to care for those men. He came to this conclusion on his own: “Why should God give me a greater job when I am not yet a faithful doer of the job He has already given me?” Now he is achieving significance, even without changing his career. What made the difference? His faithfulness to do the job God had already given him.

📖MIM 25—Significance

What lifestyle changes would you make if you decided to be another Martin Luther, one of this generation’s handful of faithful men? Are you faithful with what he has already given you? In what ways?

Daily Reading: Genesis 32:13–38:30, Matthew 11:7–12:45, Psalm 14:1–16:11, Proverbs 3:19–3:32



For Your Small Group

☐ **For January 12–18: Read aloud James 1:22–25.**

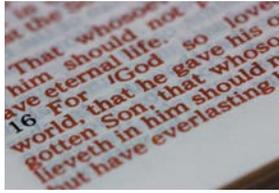
- Discuss the difference between a “hearer of the Word” and a “doer of the Word.”
- Commit to becoming a “doer of the Word” in one area of your life. Write your commitment down.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

When I was a freshman in college, I used to wake up and say, “What do I want to do today? I probably need to go to class, but, besides that, do I want to shoot baskets, play tennis, hang out, or go to a movie?” I would decide whatever I wanted to do, and that’s what I did. That’s the life of most college students.

In my sophomore year, everything changed. I met a girl named Ruthie. As we started dating, instead of thinking about what I wanted to do, I found myself thinking about what Ruthie might want to do. If you’ve been in love, you know what I’m talking about. Instead of being focused on yourself, you begin to focus outwardly on another person. That is an essential quality of love.



God’s love is so focused on us that He sent His Son to die for us. God said, “What is their problem, and how can I fix it?” He sent His Son to die for us because of His great

love for you and me. What an example of sacrificial, unconditional and powerful love He gave us! [MIMBS 2](#)

Name the five people you love most in this world. Can you imagine being loved by God in greater ways than you love your wife, children and family?

Daily Reading: *Genesis 39:1–41:16, Matthew 12:46–13:23, Psalm 17:1–15, Proverbs 3:33–35*

“The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’”

Mark 12:29, 30

Throughout the New Testament Jesus brings a new message of love and grace. This message was not easily understood or embraced by the religious leaders. They were taught to uphold or obey the law and now they hear a new message that they must love God more than keeping the law or doing the right thing. Jesus even broke some of their traditions to really drive home the importance of love and grace. Jesus knew and conveyed the danger of being more committed to our own righteousness or religion than we are to loving God.

It is so easy to love the idea of being a good person or doing the right thing. We can get caught up in how it makes us feel to

be involved in a church, to read our Bibles, to pray, to love our wives, to spend time with our kids, and to be a nice person at work. Just like the biblical religious leaders, we can all fall prey to the idea that our actions or good behavior are more important than loving Jesus. But God wants you to love Him more than doing good things, keeping the rules or being nice. [MIMBS 2](#)

How have you been fooled by the good behavior of others? How have you fooled others by your good behavior?

Daily Reading: *Genesis 41:17–42:17, Matthew 13:24–46, Psalm 18:1–15, Proverbs 4:1–6*

Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

1 John 3:18

One of the things I struggle with is that I want everyone to know how competent I am. I want people to see that I’m smart or well-prepared or good at business, a caring father and loving husband.

In your church, don’t you want to be known to have integrity or a servant’s heart? At work, do you wish to be known by your colleagues as the guy who gets things done? In your family life, do you hope that your wife will say she has a wonderful husband and your kids will acknowledge that you’re the best dad ever? Of course you do! That’s how we all are.

The Bible warns us about “pleasing man.”



It is dangerous to regard other people’s opinions too highly. It begins to trap us into the routine of putting on a face, going through the motions, trying to look good, or trying to posture.

To please God, we must be honest and authentic. To please men, we can act like we are good, productive and caring. God will know the difference. [MIMBS 2](#)

Discuss with your small group whether the actions of your week have been focused on pleasing men or pleasing God.

Daily Reading: *Genesis 42:18–43:34, Matthew 13:47–14:12, Psalm 18:16–36, Proverbs 4:7–10*

Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has given more than all the others who are making contributions. For they gave a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she had to live on.”

Mark 12:43, 44 NLT

Would you be willing to give everything like the widow did? If God wanted you to sell your house, take a large cut in pay, settle for a clunker of a car or give your next paycheck to the poor, how would you react? Now don’t get me wrong, there is nothing wrong with having nice things, an efficient car or a safe home in a nice neighborhood.

The difficulty with “things” is our attitude toward them. Do they define us? Are we unable to part with them? Do we strive to make more money to purchase “bigger and better”? Are things a part of our status? When elevated to these degrees, things get

in the way of our love for God. When we love them more than we love God, our priorities are out of whack.

God desires to richly bless His children, but He also tells us that we are to love Him with all of our heart, mind and soul. Does your life reflect that kind of love for God? [MIMBS 2](#)

Are there material things standing between you and the Lord? Is your life in need of reprioritizing?

Daily Reading: *Genesis 44:1–45:28, Matthew 14:13–36, Psalm 18:37–50, Proverbs 4:11–13*

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.
1 Corinthians 13:13

After a whirlwind week of meetings, proposals, traveling, and a dizzying schedule, I felt beat up and tired. I'm sure you can relate to those times when you just want time off or a rest. In church that weekend, I can remember thinking, "You know, I'm not sure what I am doing here. I don't feel like doing this today, and I'm not going to get anything out of this. I'd rather be home lying in bed."

I don't know whether it was the music, the testimony or encouraging words, but all of a sudden a most profound thought struck me. God loves me! God is not my boss who is pleased with my production or a teacher who is grading my work. God is a delighted dad. Think about the joy you have in your children. It's that spontaneous joy of pure

love that you have for them just for who they are.

What struck me that morning was that God loves me like that. He's saying, "I love you. I'm proud of who you are. I know you've made mistakes. I know it has been a tough road. I know there's a lot of stuff you wish you were doing better, but I love you so much!"

That's what I heard God saying to me that morning. It was powerful because I realized how long it had been since I had thought and felt that.

It's so easy for us to think about our relationship with God in transactional terms. Christianity becomes a philosophical system, a world view, a political agenda, an economic agenda, a set of do's and don'ts. We gravitate toward those things, and we forget that at the very heart of it is a simple truth: God really, really loves us.
☐MIMBS 2

Consider for a few minutes that God loves you like you love your children. How does that impact your love for Him?

Daily Reading: *Genesis 46:1–Exodus 2:10, Matthew 15:1–17:9, Psalm 19:1–21:13, Proverbs 4:14–5:6*



For Your Small Group

- ☐ For January 19–25: On a white board or large piece of paper, write the two headings (below) and ask the guys to give their ideas about them.

How you love your children How God loves you

- Are there things on the lists that are different? Are there things that are the same?
- Have you been able to see God as a loving Father? Did the devotionals this week change that view in any way?

Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.
John 7:37–39

Several years ago, I bought a new computer. It featured much more processing power and a larger hard drive than my previous computer. It booted up so fast, I told people, "I'll bet I have enough power to run the Pentagon." Maybe you can identify with that feeling, when something actually exceeds your expectations. It was a great computer, capable of doing many different tasks. If I had used it only for word processing, that would have been a huge underemployment of my new resource.

A lot of Christians don't understand the Holy Spirit's power, and so they do the spiritual equivalent of using a super computer

for tiny tasks. Jesus said for the person who believes, the Holy Spirit is like a stream of water flowing from within. In another context, he said, "Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst" (John 4:14). Do you want to feel satisfied? Pray that you will better understand the Holy Spirit's ministry in you. ☐MIMBS 3

Jesus said, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink." How thirsty are you? Where do you need to let the Holy Spirit inhabit your life?

Daily Reading: *Exodus 2:11–3:22, Matthew 17:10–27, Psalm 22:1–18, Proverbs 5:7–14*

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.
1 Corinthians 6:19–20

A friend of a friend bought a brand new Harley Davidson motorcycle. The next day, when he wanted to take it out for a ride, it wouldn't start. He checked the gas and the battery cables. He worked up quite a sweat trying to start his new motorcycle. He was so irritated that he called up the dealer and said, "This stupid motorcycle won't start! Something is defective, and I want you to come and get it, because I don't want it anymore."



The serviceman was quite calm, and he started asking some questions. "Did you check the gas? How about the battery cables?" Then finally he asked, "What about the on/off switch?" The buyer said, "What on/

off switch?" The serviceman said, "Well, sir. There is a little on/off switch on the handlebars, because the model you bought has a double ignition system."

A lot of Christians live similarly frustrated, because they've missed one element of God's gracious gift to them. They haven't accessed the power available to them through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. ☐MIMBS 3

Do you feel like your spiritual life is just not working? Or do you see men who are "working up a sweat" with religion, but can't seem to make their Christian life work? How can you help them or yourself hit the "on" switch?

Daily Reading: *Exodus 4:1–5:21, Matthew 18:1–20, Psalm 22:19–31, Proverbs 5:15–21*

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

John 14:16–17

Suppose you attend a certain Bible study. After a few sessions, you discover your group leader is in the same business that you are. In fact, through comments made about him, you discover he has been quite successful for a long time. You are facing difficult business decisions, so you seek his advice, which leads to regular mentoring.

As the relationship deepens, you find yourself asking advice about more and more issues—maybe even questions about marriage or children. But you would only know you could trust his advice if you had invested time in getting to know him.

Hudson Taylor, the great missionary



to China, once noted, “Many Christians estimate difficulties in light of their own resources and thus often attempt little and fail at the little they do attempt. All God’s

giants have been weak men who reckoned on the presence and the power of God to be with them.” That presence and power comes in the gift of the Holy Spirit. The first step in accessing that power is in getting to know the source.

☐ MIMBS 3

How well do you know the Holy Spirit? What would it take for you to know Him better?

Daily Reading: *Exodus 5:22–7:25, Matthew 18:21–19:12, Psalm 23:1–6, Proverbs 5:22–23*

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Galatians 5:25

History records a time when a group of pastors in a particular city were debating whether or not to invite D.L. Moody to speak at evangelistic meetings in their area. D.L. Moody was sort of the Billy Graham of the previous century.

One young pastor was adamantly opposed to the idea. “Why should we invite D.L. Moody?” he asked. “Does he have a monopoly on the Holy Spirit?” The whole group quieted, and in that moment a wiser, older man replied, “No, Moody does not have a monopoly on the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit has a monopoly on Moody.”

I don’t know about you, but I would be extremely pleased if someone made a

similar statement about me. The simple truth is, if I want to experience the power and presence of God, I must allow the Holy Spirit to have a monopoly on my life. Or as today’s verse reminds us, I must have the kind of relationship with God that allows me to live by the Spirit and to keep in step with Him. ☐ MIMBS 3

List three examples of people you believe are under the monopoly of the Holy Spirit. What characteristics in their lives lead you to believe that? How can you pursue those same characteristics?

Daily Reading: *Exodus 8:1–9:35, Matthew 19:13–30, Psalm 24:1–10, Proverbs 6:1–5*

When he [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.

John 16:8

The Holy Spirit is involved in every aspect of our relationship with God, even initiating the conviction that draws us to Him in the first place.

I still remember my first experience with true conviction. I was a young businessman, going to church with my wife because I was convinced she had some problems that really needed to be straightened out. I was trying to be “somebody.” I was spending money I didn’t have, buying things I didn’t need, so I could impress people I didn’t even like. I wore my new expensive suit to church that morning, and I sat with Patsy in a Sunday school class. The teacher read from Ephesians 5:25: “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church . . .”

I wasn’t loving my wife at all. In fact, I was using her. Suddenly I was filled with embarrassment. I flushed red and broke out in a sweat. I kept staring at the floor, because I was afraid if I looked up, everybody in the room would know my secret. Of course, this was all just between God

and me, but I remember staring at a little spot on the floor, convinced that everyone in the room was looking at me with great disdain.

That began the process that led me to surrender my life to Jesus Christ a few weeks later. The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin. But He also leads us to Jesus, so we can be saved and justified. He’s available to counsel us and empower us to live in a way that will give God pleasure, and will make other people interested in developing a relationship with Him as well. In order to access that kind of experience, though, we must invite the Holy Spirit to fill us. We must be intentional about listening to Him and getting to know Him. ☐ MIMBS 3



If you would like to live today in the full presence and power of the Holy Spirit, write a prayer expressing that desire to God.

Share this prayer with your group.

Daily Reading: *Exodus 10:1–15:18, Matthew 20:1–21:46, Psalm 25:1–26:12, Proverbs 6:6–19*



For Your Small Group

☐ **For January 26–February 1: Make a list of people you know who demonstrate that they are filled with the Holy Spirit.**

- What do those people have in common? How are they different?
- Did you include yourself on that list? Why or why not?
- What does a Spirit-filled life have to exemplify?

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."
Genesis 2:18



You've seen them at restaurants. They look strangely similar. His eyes are distant, and she never looks up from her food. The only words they speak are to the waiter. They've been married 30 years. As the children grew up, ball games and school plays kept everyone on the run. Now this couple has time on their hands, but they've never developed a personal relationship.

Martin Luther once noted, "Let the wife make the husband glad to come home, and let him make her sorry to see him leave." That's not the reality for a lot of couples. Most men are not *un*happy with their

marriages, but they've simply never learned to understand and enjoy their wives. They've found marriage to be hard work. The easier road for most men is to throw themselves into their jobs. And so, many couples live more as roommates than as partners. Their social and sexual needs are met, but intimacy as friends never develops. All men need a close friend whom they can trust and enjoy. Too few men ever find that friend. [MIM 25—Wives](#)

How does today's devotional relate to the selected Scripture from Genesis 2:18? Ask another man in your group for his thoughts.

Daily Reading: *Exodus 15:19–17:7, Matthew 22:1–33, Psalm 27:1–6, Proverbs 6:20–26*

Tuesday—February 3 • A Wife's Role

However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.
Ephesians 5:33

Sam intuitively knew his wife held him in low esteem. He had not achieved the same station in life that her father held. Though she never actually said anything, Sam sensed her contemptuous pity. It affected everything, including his self-image.

One of a man's deepest needs is to be respected, and this is reflected in today's Scripture, coming from a larger portion describing how husbands and wives should treat each other. Ephesians 5:22 begins the instruction to the wife by calling her to submit to her husband. Let's be clear—the goal is not to reduce women to servants and doormats, but simply to provide structure in marriage. True submission is the ultimate

expression of respect, because it's impossible to yield apart from respect. You can be forced to *obey* someone, but you cannot be forced to *respect* them. If the wife's role is to express respect by submitting and operating under an authority structure, then the husband's responsibility is to create an environment for a healthy, trusting relationship. [MIM 25—Wives](#)

Describe a couple you know that operates in the structure described in today's devotional. What observations can you make about the "morale" of their family?

Daily Reading: *Exodus 17:8–19:15, Matthew 22:34–23:12, Psalm 27:7–14, Proverbs 6:27–35*

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.
Ephesians 5:25–28

Don hid deep feelings of guilt from his wife. He couldn't tell her he loved her, because he didn't *feel* any love toward her. His integrity was too high to lie, particularly about something so important, so he just kept silent. Don was familiar with today's Scripture, but he didn't really understand how Christ loved the church (God's people), so that made his dilemma even more difficult.

A specific Greek word is used here to describe a husband's role of loving his wife. It's the same word used in the Bible to describe God's own love for the world (see John 3:16). It's also the same kind of love we're to have for God (see Matthew 22:37).

This kind of Scriptural love is volitional rather than emotional. It's a deliberate act of the will. That "loving feeling" may be there, or it may not. But in a Scriptural sense, love is not a feeling. God calls us to love our wives first as an act of our will. biblical love begins as a *decision*, not a *feeling*. [MIM 25—Wives](#)

How is the kind of love described in today's Scriptural reference different from the love we see portrayed on television and in the movies? Share your thoughts with the group.

Daily Reading: *Exodus 19:16–21:21, Matthew 23:13–39, Psalm 28:1–9, Proverbs 7:1–5*

Thursday—February 5 • Four Types of Marriages

Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands... Husbands, love your wives.
Colossians 3:18–19

Scripture calls wives to submit to their husbands, and husbands to love their wives. The opposite is resistance and hatred. In that context, let's look at four helpful categories that won't fit all relationships perfectly, but I've found that most marriages generally can be placed in one of these categories.

- **Hate/Resist:** Generally, both partners are unhappy and aim for their own selfish way.
- **Hate/Submit:** Think of the Bunkers from *All in the Family*. He represents the opinionated, domineering emperor of the house, and she represents the submissive mouse consistently getting run over by his demands.
- **Love/Resist:** In times past we might have pictured a hen-pecked husband.

A professional woman overly devoted to her career may also be a resistant wife. The two-income family puts extra pressure on a marriage.

- **Love/Submit:** I believe this is the optimal marriage that God presents as a goal for us. I've known a handful of men whose marriages are really working. I believe they would tell you it's not easy, but it's worth the effort to create an environment that fosters this type of relationship. [MIM 25—Wives](#)

If you're married, which of these categories best fits your relationship? Explain your answer. What practical steps can you take to improve your marriage?

Daily Reading: *Exodus 21:22–23:13, Matthew 24:1–28, Psalm 29:1–11, Proverbs 7:6–23*

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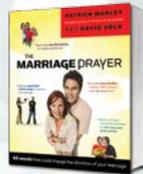
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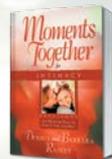


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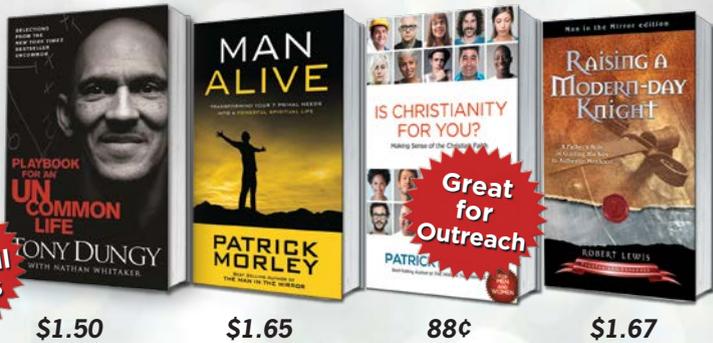
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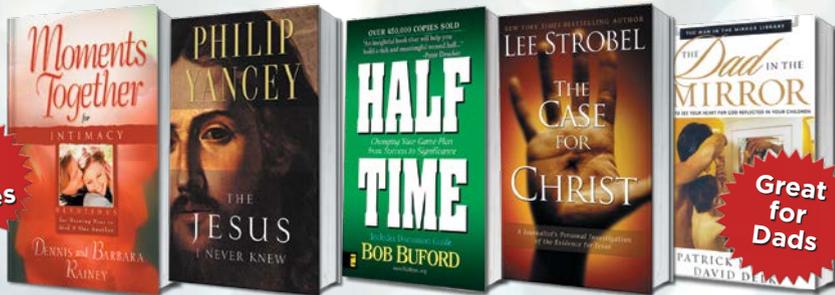
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Friday, Saturday, Sunday—February 6, 7, 8
Marriage That Isn't Working

Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.

1 Peter 3:1–2

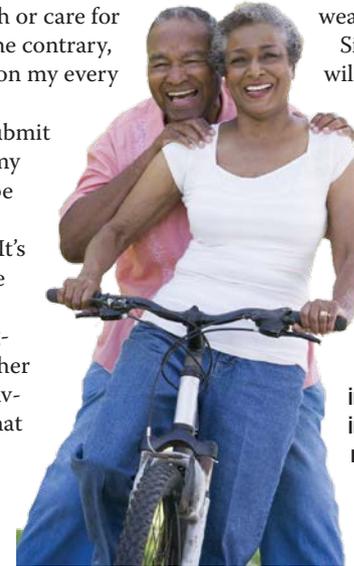
My wife married me because I convinced her I was a Christian. Since early childhood she had always prayed she would marry according to God's will. Within weeks of our wedding day, it was crystal clear that our definitions of what makes a Christian were different. Even though I said I was a Christian, there was no correlation when it came to my thought life, speech or actions. I didn't nourish or care for Patsy in any way. On the contrary, I expected her to wait on my every whim.

Patsy continued to submit to me, irrespective of my response. I call this type of relationship a "hate and submit marriage." It's the most common type of marriage that's not working. The Bible suggests the wife can win her husband by godly behavior, which is exactly what happened in our marriage. She continued to respect me, to manage our home, to

pray for me. Within six months, I surrendered my life to the Lord.

If this sounds like your marriage, you can turn it around by following the biblical commands for husbands. The passage from 1 Peter 3 opens with an encouragement to wives. But later it cautions husbands to "be considerate as you live with your wives," and to "treat them with respect as the weaker partner" (see 1 Peter 3:7).

Simple consideration and respect will go a long way toward creating an environment that encourages a strong, trusting relationship with your wife. [MIM 25—Wives](#)



Describe someone you know who is very good at demonstrating consideration and respect to his wife. How have you seen that communicated in their relationship? How can you incorporate similar habits in your relationship with your wife?

Daily Reading: *Exodus 23:14–28:43, Matthew 24:29–26:13, Psalm 30:1–31:18, Proverbs 7:24–8:13*



For Your Small Group

For February 2–8: Ask someone to read aloud the four types of marriage from the devotional on page 29.

- In silence, try to think a couple you know who might fit each category.
- In groups of two, pray for these couples (first names only) and ask God to show them how to love each other more abundantly.

Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Ephesians 5:1–2

Ephesians 5:25 says husbands should love their wives “as Christ loved the church.” Based on this admonition, it’s fair to say that anyone who wants a biblical marriage must understand how Christ loved the church. Today’s passage provides context, saying that “Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.”

Theologically, Christ occupied the three-fold office of prophet, priest and king. What would those roles look like for a husband?

- **Prophet:** A godly husband helps bring the truth of God to his family. This man may take responsibility for leading family devotions or becoming the arbiter of family values like regular church attendance.
- **Priest:** A godly husband brings his family to God. He may set the spiritual temperature in his home through

activities like remembering his family’s needs and concerns each day in prayer.

- **King:** A godly husband leads and protects his family and takes responsibility for his household’s welfare. He works diligently to provide food and shelter and acts in the home in a manner that is worthy of honor.

This all requires a godly husband to live with an unselfish attitude, prioritizing his family’s needs above his own desires.

📖 *MIM 25—Wives*

Think about these three roles. For each one—prophet, priest and king—describe how a godly husband must live with an unselfish attitude in order to correctly fulfill the role. Consider sharing your thoughts with another man.

Daily Reading: *Exodus 29:1–30:10, Matthew 26:14–46, Psalm 31:19–24, Proverbs 8:14–26*

Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?

Amos 3:3

Harmony about family goals and problems generally comes from spending time talking about them. There can’t be a meeting of the minds if the minds don’t meet.

Several years ago, my wife and I started a tradition of staying at the dinner table for about 20 minutes after dinner. The kids raced off to practice guitar and do homework, and we would spend some time talking about each other’s day. We’ve been doing this for decades. For the last few years, we adjourn to the couch, where I rub her feet with lotion. It’s not a law that we have to do it, but we almost always spend this time together. This time investment tells her I care, and the impact is that we are best friends. We can talk to each

other about things we wouldn’t mention to anyone else.

Every marriage needs a balance between talking and listening. Carving out 20 minutes per day, whether over coffee in the morning or after dinner at night, will develop a personal relationship anchored in a firm desire to walk together.

📖 *MIM 25—Wives*

Why not run a 30-day experiment? Spend 20 minutes each day talking with your wife. Take note of how your relationship changes.

Daily Reading: *Exodus 30:11–31:18, Matthew 26:47–68, Psalm 32:1–11, Proverbs 8:27–32*

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

Galatians 5:13

When I was in college, my roommate and I split the housekeeping duties. As months rolled by, I got really steamed because I felt I was doing most of the work. Finally I couldn’t take it anymore. “Steve!” I exploded. “You’re taking advantage of me! I’m the only one who ever replaces the toilet paper. I always do the vacuuming, and you hardly ever wash the dishes!”

“Me?” came his surprised yelp. “You’re the one who isn’t pulling his fair share of the load. I’m the only one who ever mops the kitchen floor, and you never take out the trash!”

We realized we had both inventoried the other’s shortcomings and our own strengths. We decided if we were going to

be successful roommates, we needed to make the relationship 90/10 both ways. In other words, if we both felt like we were giving 90 percent and only receiving 10 percent, we would probably end up about 50/50. Similarly, our marriages will work much better if we apply, by mutual consent with our wives, the principle of *90/10 both ways*. 📖 *MIM 25—Wives*

Comment on the principle of 90/10 both ways, as it relates to marriage. If you and your wife agreed to try this, how could it change your relationship?

Daily Reading: *Exodus 32:1–33:23, Matthew 26:69–27:14, Psalm 33:1–11, Proverbs 8:33–36*

... if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ... For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

James 3:14–16

Sometimes people marry for the wrong reasons. As one friend put it, “We were two ticks, both thinking the other was a dog.” Usually, though, we marry with the best of intentions, but temptations work on us immediately.

My wife observes that most marriages begin to break down because the partners are critical of one another. When you are criticized, you build defensive walls around your self-image, with the unhappy result that you barricade yourself from your partner. Power struggles over unyielded rights can also doom a marriage. The presumed right to tell the other person what to do shows a lack of respect and sensitivity. The root



problem in each of these situations, and others like them, is self-centeredness.

When I married, I had an image of what marriage should be like. I pictured my wife serving my varied interests with dotting affection. When it dawned on me that she wanted to be a teammate and not a slave, I became angry—both at her for not capitulating, and at myself for being so foolish. 📖 *MIM 25—Wives*

Besides the scenarios described here, list some other ways that self-centeredness and “selfish ambition” (see James 3:14–16) can harm a relationship. Share your ideas with your group.

Daily Reading: *Exodus 34:1–35:9, Matthew 27:15–31, Psalm 33:12–22, Proverbs 9:1–6*

An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.

Titus 1:6

No temptation causes more problems for men than sex. Just when you think you have your lust under control, temptation knocks again. One day I was standing in line to enter the annex to the White House for a briefing. I was chatting with a friend, and somehow we started talking about lust. I boasted, “That’s a temptation the Lord has delivered me from. I just don’t struggle with it anymore.”

After our briefing, I decided to share a taxi with some people. Suddenly I was shoe-horned next to a very lovely, warm lady. Our bodies were as close as a wet suit to bare skin. That was the longest 20-minute cab ride of my life! Within moments of my thinking I had arrived, the Lord reminded me of how weak I am.

Our culture does not prize sexual fidelity, and it doesn’t offer social pressure even to feign sexual purity. We must be committed to our wives without reserve. But for a marriage to survive today, I believe a man and his wife must be at least as committed to the institution of marriage as they are to each other. If marriage is not a highly regarded value, then sooner or later, when one partner starts to feel unloving thoughts

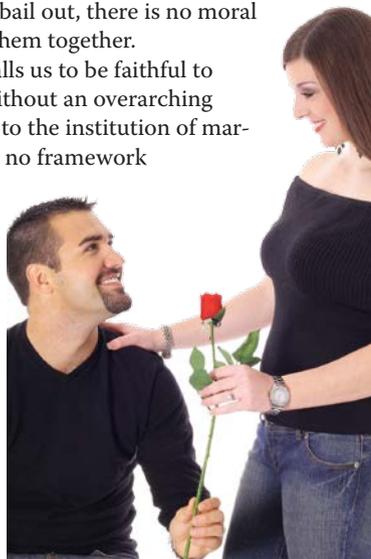
and wants to bail out, there is no moral glue to hold them together.

Scripture calls us to be faithful to our wives. Without an overarching commitment to the institution of marriage, there is no framework to motivate husbands and wives to work through the problems that inevitably arise.

📖MIM
25—Wives

How is our culture attempting to tear down the value of true biblical marriage? How can a true biblical understanding of the institution of marriage help a man resist temptation and remain faithful to his wife?

Daily Reading: Exodus 35:10–40:38, Matthew 27:32–Mark 1:28, Psalm 34:1–35:16, Proverbs 9:7–12



For Your Small Group

☐ **For February 9–15: Read aloud the devotional, “As Christ Loved the Church” found on page 34.**

- What does it mean for a husband to be a Prophet?
- What does it mean for a husband to be a Priest?
- What does it mean for a husband to be a King?

He was given authority, honor, and sovereignty over all the nations of the world, so that people of every race and nation and language would obey him. His rule is eternal—it will never end. His kingdom will never be destroyed.

Daniel 7:14 NLT

What would you say is the greatest issue that the world faces today? A bad economy, breakdown of the family, exclusion of God from everyday life, famine, integrity issues, terrorism, health care—many things come to mind. We live in uncertain times. Daniel also lived in uncertain times. There had been much upheaval in the kingdom and Daniel was in exile. His country was occupied, and he was wondering what in the world was going on. Daniel had a dream that doesn’t exactly clear everything up, but it was a prophecy of a Messiah.

In his vision, Daniel saw the coming of the Son of Man. Daniel prophesied about the coming kingdom of God. Daniel gave

ancient wisdom for his uncertain times, but these words apply to our uncertain times as well. He told us that Jesus, the Son of Man, would be given all authority. That means He is in control no matter the circumstances.

With all the mistakes we make, what a blessing to know that He has authority over everything. In the midst of the world’s chaos, God is in charge. 📖MIMBS 4

Do you believe He is control of your family, our country and the world? Are you thankful? Share your thoughts with your group.

Daily reading: Leviticus 1:1–3:17, Mark 1:29–2:12, Psalm 35:17–28, Proverbs 9:13–18

He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him.

Daniel 7:14a

A few years ago our country elected our first African-American president. Many people felt like this shattered the racial barrier. The division that had extended from slavery through the civil rights movement became invisible when we elected a black man as our leader.

We love to divide the world into categories today—economic, racial, ethnic, countries. But, there is no *us* and *them*. We are all in the same boat. The only category that matters is that there are those who know Christ and have been granted forgiveness in grace and peace because of His love and those who have not.

Once we know Christ as our Savior, we need to understand that our mission is to help others get there as well. This needs to be our first and primary mission. We need to reach out to those who need the love and forgiveness we have received through Christ.



Men from all over the world need Christ. Men of all colors need Christ. Men in all religions need Christ. Share the love of Christ with all men. 📖MIMBS 4

Discuss the needs of men with your small group. Has your group had an “us and them” mentality? How can your group change that to actively reach out to all men?

Daily Reading: Leviticus 4:1–5:19, Mark 2:13–3:6, Psalm 36:1–12, Proverbs 10:1–2

His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

Daniel 7:14b

One of my favorite places is Cumberland Island, a national park off the coast of Georgia. Some ruins are there and one is a beautiful house with an indoor swimming pool—state-of-the-art for its time. Here we are 100 years later, and it is a crumbling shell. The reality is that so many men give their lives to things that will not last. The things of this world are temporary. Very few people will remember our names 50 to 100 years from now.

Many of us spend the majority of our time building a temporary kingdom. We build our homes, our portfolios and our careers. All of those are important, but they will not last.

There is a different kingdom that will last for eternity. If we make investments in that

kingdom we will have investments that will not fade or pass away. God's kingdom never ends. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away.

Eternal investments are in people and their souls. What really matters? Caring for the poor, feeding the hungry, loving others and sharing God's love with them. Invest in God's kingdom by inviting others into His kingdom. [MIMBS 4](#)

Think about your last week. How much time was spent investing in things that will pass away? How much time was spent investing in the kingdom of God?

Daily Reading: *Leviticus 6:1–7:27, Mark 3:7–30, Psalm 37:1–11, Proverbs 10:3–4*

In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.

Daniel 2:44

What is something you have wanted to do, but fear has kept you from doing it? Is there a lifelong dream you would like to accomplish? Perhaps

you thought of skydiving, becoming a famous author, swimming with sharks, or walking on the moon. Those would be exciting.

Maybe fear has kept you from talking to your neighbor about God. Have you thought about a short-term mission trip? Perhaps you have felt that you should start a small group or Bible study? What is holding you back?

God's kingdom can't be

defeated. When we think about being a member of His kingdom, we should have a sense of victory and excitement because we are a member of the winning team.

This allows us to take big risks for God. His kingdom cannot be defeated. When He calls you to speak up, give of yourself or sacrifice—step out in faith. When we truly believe that His kingdom can't be defeated, we will take big risks for God. [MIMBS 4](#)

Is fear holding you back from taking a risk for God? How can the promise of God's certain victory be an encouragement to you today? Talk to a few other men about your ideas.

Daily Reading: *Leviticus 7:28–9:6, Mark 3:31–4:25, Psalm 37:12–29, Proverbs 10:5*

For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

Ephesians 2:10 NLT

As we read through this week's devotions, we learned: 1) God is in control; 2) People from all nations need God and can worship Him; 3) God's kingdom will never end; and 4) God's kingdom cannot be defeated.

What does knowing those truths do for us? How does it change our lives? If we could truly believe the above statements, what would it allow us to do? Reflect on these possibilities:

- If God is in control, that allows me to surrender.
- If people from all races, colors and creeds need and can love Jesus, that allows me to love with abandon.
- If God's kingdom never ends, that allows me to be patient.
- If God's kingdom cannot be defeated, that allows me to take risks for the Lord.

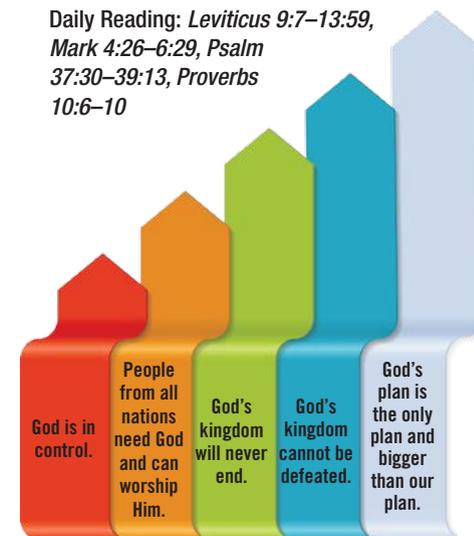
Just as in Bible times and in Daniel's life in particular, our world seems very confusing. We have wars that seem unwinnable, random acts of terrorism, marriages and families that are falling apart, and flu epidemics. What Daniel needed to know and what we need to know is the same thing: **God's plan is the only plan and it is always bigger than our plan.** When we surrender our hearts to His plan, we find

that is what we were made for. We can find the true meaning for our lives in His plan, His love and His kingdom.

Ask God to show you new ways to approach the confusing times of your life. Are there areas that you need to surrender, love with abandon, be patient or take a risk for His sake? [MIMBS 4](#)

How have you reacted to times of confusion in your past? Have those reactions worked well for you? Why or why not?

Daily Reading: *Leviticus 9:7–13:59, Mark 4:26–6:29, Psalm 37:30–39:13, Proverbs 10:6–10*



For Your Small Group

☐ **For February 16–22: As you read through this week's devotions, we learned: 1) God is in control; 2) People from all nations need God and can worship Him; 3) God's kingdom will never end; and 4) God's kingdom cannot be defeated.**

- Do you believe those statements? Do your actions reflect that belief?
- Have your beliefs allowed you to take big risks for God and His plan?

I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me.
Ecclesiastes 2:18

Solomon was the chief executive officer of the world's largest conglomerate, the president of his country, the commander in chief and number one on the Forbes list of billionaires. Here's how he summarized his life:

"I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun." (Ecclesiastes 2:10–11) And then he added, "So I hated life" (v. 17).

So much for the self-focused life! Living for your own enjoyment, survival, or success may seem like the way to go. In the end, it doesn't bring you the fulfillment, the sense of community or the depth of life that we all desire. God had a greater plan for Solomon, and He has a greater plan for us.  *AMGSD, Chapter 11*

Are your life goals designed around your success or happiness? What goals might God have for your life? What adjustments might you need to make as you head into the New Year?

Daily Reading: Leviticus 14:1–57, Mark 6:30–56, Psalm 40:1–10, Proverbs 10:11–12

Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.
John 13:14–15

God's goal in sending His Son to earth was to save us from our sins. That act alone is the ultimate picture of a servant-King. But throughout His ministry, Jesus continued to be a true example of serving others.

If we want to follow Jesus' example, we need to know where He would go and what He would do.

In John 13, Jesus celebrates the Passover with His disciples. As the evening meal was

being served, Jesus took off His outer garments. He wrapped a towel around His waist, poured water into a basin, and began washing His disciples' feet.

Of course, Jesus isn't limiting service to washing each other's feet or, for that matter, suggesting that washing feet is what we should do. It's the attitude that Jesus is concerned about. Instead of waiting to be served, we can choose to take the initiative and serve others.

Follow Jesus' example and look for ways to serve others. Surprise others with an attitude of service.  *AMGSD, Chapter 11*

Can you recall a time when someone served you and how that act impacted you? Look for an opportunity to serve someone this week.

Daily Reading: Leviticus 15:1–16:28, Mark 7:1–23, Psalm 40:11–17, Proverbs 10:13–14

Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.
John 13:16–17

In his book *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard Foster comments on the text from John 13, relating it to the discipline of service. He writes:

"Most of us know that we will never be the greatest, just don't let us be the least, right? Then Jesus took a towel and a basin and redefined greatness. In some ways we would prefer Jesus' call to deny Father and Mother, houses, and land for the sake of the gospel than His word to wash feet. Radical self-denial gives the feel of adventure. If we have the chance to forsake all then we have the chance to glorious martyrdom. But in service we must experience the many little deaths of going beyond ourselves. Service

banishes us to the mundane, the ordinary, the trivial."

Servanthood is not easy. It will involve setting up chairs, driving your car, making the phone call, getting dirty, being tired, washing feet, and making sacrifices. God asks us to be willing to serve where He needs us and to serve with an attitude of love.  *AMGSD, Chapter 11*

On a scale of 1–10, how would you rate your attitude toward service? Are you willing to ask God to change that attitude so that He can use you in big ways and small ways?

Daily Reading: Leviticus 16:29–18:30, Mark 7:24–8:10, Psalm 41:1–13, Proverbs 10:15–16

If you serve Christ with this attitude, you will please God, and others will approve of you, too.
Romans 14:18 NLT

Perhaps you always wanted to lead worship, but you're asked to run the sound. You may daydream about being a world-renowned preacher, but you usher on Sunday morning. You admire those that lead mission trips or spend their entire life on the mission field and yet you count the offering and do kitchen cleanup for your church fellowships.

Donald Whitney, author of *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, reminds us how service is truly viewed:

"Most service, even that which seems the most glamorous, is like an iceberg. Only the eye of God ever sees the larger, hidden part of it."



Most of us will serve in everyday ways to meet very practical needs. We might contribute to a food bank, serve at a homeless shelter, mow the grass of an elderly neighbor, coach a Little League team or fund a trip to Haiti. There may not be applause, fame or adoration. This is why service has to be a discipline and a cultivated habit.  *AMGSD, Chapter 11*

Do you sometimes think that your service is not important or visible enough? Think about the "downstream" effects of the little ways that people serve.

Daily Reading: Leviticus 19:1–20:21, Mark 8:11–38, Psalm 42:1–11, Proverbs 10:17

When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.
John 15:8 NLT

Men want to make a difference. This truth is highlighted in a poignant scene from the movie *Black Hawk Down*. A soldier says, “You really believe in this mission down to your very bones, don’t you, Sergeant?”

The sergeant replies, “These people don’t have jobs, no food, no education, no future. I figure we have two things we can do: We can help, or we can sit back and watch the country destroy itself on CNN. I was trained to fight, how about you? I was trained to make a difference.”

And then there’s the approach of Christian author Gary Smalley. Each day when he awakens he takes his figurative empty cup, gets in line, and goes to meet with Jesus. Then during the day he empties

out his cup serving others. The next day, he gets up, takes his empty cup, once again stands in line, and starts all over again.

Both warrior and cupbearer are powerful metaphors for serving God. Whether God leads you to fight for your country or humbly serve others, one of the greatest proofs that you are a disciple is that you bear much fruit. 📖 *AMGSD, Chapter 11*

What kind of impact do you desire to make with your life? Are you achieving those desires or goals? What might need to change for 2015?

Daily Reading: *Leviticus 20:22–25:46, Mark 9:1–10:12, Psalm 43:1–44:26, Proverbs 10:18–21*

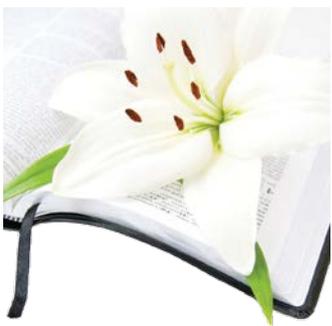


For Your Small Group

☐ **For February 23–March 1: Read the devotional, “Making a Difference” on this page.**

- What do you think about the two ways to serve or make a difference?
- What difference do you want to make in your family? Church? Community? World?
- How do you plan to do that?

Looking for Ways to Serve This Easter?



In your own church or community there are many ways to get involved or serve throughout the Easter Season. In your church there may be a widow who would love an invitation to Easter dinner, a single mom who would welcome a dinner out, or an unemployed couple who really need a grocery store gift card. Ask your pastoral staff for suggestions.

The service agencies in your county greatly appreciate your time, effort and funds to help serve those in need. Foster care agencies, homeless shelters, and food banks accept gifts, items for holiday dinners, and your manual labor to serve meals.

Teach me your way, LORD, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.
Psalm 86:11

Larry’s wife Carol had a day off work, so she slept in. Larry dropped the two younger children at daycare, then drove toward Julie’s school. Twelve-year-old Julie seemed troubled. “Daddy, do you love Mom anymore?” The question seemed to come out of nowhere, but in reality, for several months Julie had been building courage to ask. Julie appeared to be the only family member paying attention and diagnosing family changes. Larry assured his daughter, “I love Mom very much!”

But when he was alone in the car, he thought about his family. Everyone rushed in different directions. He and Carol both worked, straining to keep their household

afloat. They paid bills, picked up kids, met deadlines, beat quotas. There wasn’t much time for relating with family members, nor enjoying the possessions they had worked so hard to accumulate. Larry lived distracted, and he felt like his heart was fractured. He was pulled in so many directions. Julie’s question echoed in his mind, and he asked himself, “How did things get so out of hand?” 📖 *MIM 25—Rat Race*

Has there been a time in your marriage when Larry’s situation mirrored your own? Explain your answer.

Daily Reading: *Leviticus 25:47–27:13, Mark 10:13–52, Psalm 45:1–17, Proverbs 10:22*

But godliness with contentment is great gain.
1 Timothy 6:6

Many years ago, a duo named Simon and Garfunkel sang a song that said, “Like a rat in a maze, the path before me lies. And the pattern never alters, until the rat dies.” Those words summarize the trapped feeling so many men encounter in contemporary culture. No matter how successful we become, questions of purpose and meaning haunt us all.

It’s natural to strive to improve our standard of living, but our culture has its own ideas about how to achieve “the good life,” and those ideas are far removed from God’s order. The world says, “work harder so you can consume more.” The Bible says, “Godliness with contentment is great gain.”



The dichotomy between God’s plan and the world’s plan produces a strain on Christian men who are trying to order their thinking. The simple reality, though, is that most of us don’t know anyone who actually has won “the rat race.” So why do we continue to compete? Why don’t we trust Scripture’s timeless roadmap to help us navigate 21st-century issues? 📖 *MIM 25—Rat Race*

Imagine yourself content. What does that look like?

What does this say about where you are placing your hope?

Daily Reading: *Leviticus 27:14–Numbers 1:54, Mark 11:1–26, Psalm 46:1–11, Proverbs 10:23*

*Whoever loves money never has enough;
whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income.*
Ecclesiastes 5:10

We Americans enjoy unprecedented material success. Yet it's deceptive to measure standard of living in only one dimension. On a plane trip, I sat next to a distinguished couple in their mid-60s. Mr. Silver was the kind, gentle, grandfatherly type with a perpetual smile tracing the creases in his face. As we talked, he reflected how all his financial dreams had been met, yet something bothered him. His financial standard of living was up, but he couldn't ignore an eerie feeling that something wasn't quite right about his life.

I happened to have a graph with me relating to our discussion. It showed two components of our standard of living, which are on sharply different vectors. While our material standard of living has

soared in the last century, our moral/spiritual/relational standard of living has plummeted. Today, men are consumed by desires to buy things they don't need, with money they don't have, to impress people they don't like. In that environment, we may be wealthier, but perhaps it's time to ask if we really are "better off."

📖MIM 25—*Rat Race*

Today's devotional says that "men are consumed by desires to buy things they don't need, with money they don't have, to impress people they don't like." When you feel those kinds of cultural pressures, how do you respond? Ask another man for his perspective.

Daily Reading: *Numbers 2:1–3:51, Mark 11:27–12:17, Psalm 47:1–9, Proverbs 10:24–25*

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have...
Hebrews 13:5

A host of small homes sprang up in our nation immediately after World War II. Television was new. Computers didn't exist. Greyhound buses crisscrossed America. The interstate highway system didn't exist. Madison Avenue was still in its infancy, and a millionaire was an anomaly.

How did our comparative prosperity grow from that? Well, the dominant economic theory in America for the past century or so has been *consumerism*. The dictionary defines this as "the economic theory that a progressively greater consumption of goods is beneficial."

As World War II ended, our industrial machine had production capabilities that exceeded consumption of goods. So the Madison Avenue pin-stripers probed the

question of how to stimulate people to buy more. Have you ever wondered why, after owning a car for two or three years, you suddenly get an itch for a new one? It's because Madison Avenue figured out how to make us feel ashamed to own a slightly used car.

Our culture programs us to consume, but God's Word warns us to be content with what we have. 📖MIM 25—*Rat Race*

Describe a time when our consumer-oriented mind-set made you dissatisfied with something you already had, so that you thought you needed to upgrade or replace it. How did you resolve that?

Daily Reading: *Numbers 4:1–5:31, Mark 12:18–37, Psalm 48:1–14, Proverbs 10:26*

"I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything"—but I will not be mastered by anything.
1 Corinthians 6:12

Nothing impacts our thinking more than media. Unfortunately, the slant of most programming, advertising and news portrays a secular worldview that offers no godly, eternal reference point and no absolute morality. So how do we know if sexual promiscuity is wrong? Why shouldn't we cheat in business? Why should we value family more than a career? Why shouldn't we accumulate huge amounts of debt in pursuit of immediate gratification?



In a prophetic commencement address at Duke University in the 1980s, legendary news reporter Ted Koppel said, "We have reconstructed the Tower of Babel and it is a television antenna. A thousand voices producing a daily parody of democracy in which everyone's opinion is afforded equal weight, regardless of substance or merit. Indeed, it can even be argued that opinions of real weight tend to sink with barely a trace in television's ocean of banalities." Now we could add to that list bloggers and social media.

How do we guard our minds in a culture dominated by "the Tower of Babel"? This is especially crucial in a time when research indicates advertisers have learned to bypass the protections established in our conscious minds, appealing instead to the unconscious level which stores information without evaluating it. Perhaps the only way to overcome is to reevaluate our sources of entertainment and information. Personally, when I was a young

father, I virtually stopped watching television and tried to read more books. First Corinthians 6:12 offered me a credo worth adopting and applying to my media habits. 📖MIM 25—*Rat Race*

If you took today's Scripture passage from 1 Corinthians seriously, how would it alter what you look at, watch, listen to, and read?

Daily Reading: *Numbers 6:1–11:23, Mark 12:38–14:21, Psalm 49:1–51:19, Proverbs 10:27–32*



For Your Small Group

☐ For March 2–8: Go to [Youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com) and watch the video from the musical group NEEDTOBREATHE called "Difference Maker."

- Have you been pursuing things of the world or things of the kingdom of God?
- Ask all the men what it means to be a "difference maker."

But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

1 Timothy 6:8–10

Consumerism and media influence have caused a basic shift in our cultural value system, so that more of us are pursuing a Madison Avenue lifestyle. Researchers point to the American Freshman Survey that has tracked the life goals of first-year college students since 1966. They point out that the number of students who want to be very well off financially increased from 45 percent of Baby Boomers (those born 1946–1961) to 74 percent of Millennials (born after 1982). By contrast, those desiring to develop a meaningful philosophy of life fell from 73 percent of Boomers to 45 percent of Millennials.

Two thousand years ago, the apostle Paul noted that harmful desires can

“plunge people into ruin and destruction” (1 Timothy 6:7–10). Yet our culture increasingly pursues the “beautiful, wrinkle-free life” image created by our media and designed to sell us more stuff. Only a weary few achieve it, and then they face the overwhelming anxiety of maintaining it all. The more we get, the more we want. Anxiety is the natural byproduct of chasing the beautiful, wrinkle-free life. [MIM 25—Rat Race](#)

Do you agree that anxiety is the natural byproduct of pursuing the media image of a beautiful, wrinkle-free life? Explain your answer.

Daily Reading: *Numbers 11:24–13:33, Mark 14:22–52, Psalm 52:1–9, Proverbs 11:1–3*

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.

Romans 13:8

We can meet our desire for a certain standard of living in two ways: income and debt. To the extent that our spending exceeds our income, we accumulate debt. The fundamental method of providing for our families is work. Our productivity has a value, which is the income we earn. The other method is by borrowing money from the future income we expect to earn.

Borrowing has become a national pastime. Easy credit seemed like a good idea, at least until the housing bubble burst and caused the Great Recession of 2008. Mixing easy credit with uncontrolled passions and a consumer lifestyle produces a highly combustible formula. In pursuit of the good life, we are lured to stretch a little further for happiness, made possible by credit.

Our culture has exchanged traditional values for a murky sort of prosperity, financed by a remarkable increase in productivity, and by a suffocating load of consumer, mortgage, student and public debt. The gap between income and spending breeds incredible levels of anxiety, which could be avoided if we would return to the lifestyle of financial responsibility recommended throughout Scripture. [MIM 25—Rat Race](#)

List some ways that debt pressure is affecting our culture. Then list some ways it's affecting you personally.

Daily Reading: *Numbers 14:1–15:16, Mark 14:53–72, Psalm 53:1–6, Proverbs 11:4*

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Philippians 2:3–4

The term *rat race* describes a pointless pursuit, similar to a laboratory rat running on a wheel and getting nowhere. In many ways, our consumer-based culture is a rat race. Since there are no winners in this race, the aftermath of running and losing takes a heavy toll.

We deal with enormous levels of anxiety and depression as we pursue a media-generated standard of living. We are blessed with technological enhancements in our creature comforts, our travel, our communications and our jobs. But as we have run up the score in this contest, we also have injured most of our players.

Men today are tired. Many who chased

their dreams now deal with the fallout of losing their families. Too many children have grown up with absentee fathers. If the pursuit of money and possessions stood alone as an issue, we might be able to rationalize some of our money lust. But every balance sheet has two sides, and the other side of this balance sheet is relationships.

[MIM 25—Rat Race](#)

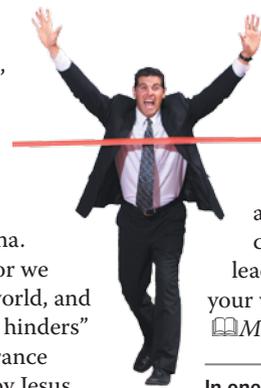
How can a Christian man apply Philippians 2:3–4 to avoid the traps of the “rat race” of our consumer driven culture? Share your thoughts with a group.

Daily Reading: *Numbers 15:17–16:40, Mark 15:1–47, Psalm 54:1–7, Proverbs 11:5–6*

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

Hebrews 12:1–2

When we choose to run in the consumer-driven rat race espoused by our culture, fracture lines soon appear in our relationships. In pursuit of “the good life,” most men leave a trail of broken relationships. The American Christian faces a true dilemma. We can choose the rat race, or we can choose to not love this world, and to “throw off everything that hinders” so we can “run with perseverance the race marked out for us” by Jesus. Scripture repeatedly assures us that life’s greatest satisfaction comes from relationships. So why are we trading them for careers with companies that will drop us like hot potatoes if we miss our quota?



We each must choose our race, but the pressure to make the wrong choice should not be underestimated. We have to understand that in choosing a course, we also choose a set of consequences. Our decisions carry a cause-effect dimension that we cannot avoid. As my first Bible study leader often said, “You can choose your way, but you can’t choose the result.”

[MIM 25—Rat Race](#)

In one sentence, define the race you have chosen to run. What consequences have you seen? What consequences are you expecting to see?

Daily Reading: *Numbers 16:41–18:32, Mark 16:1–20, Psalm 55:1–23, Proverbs 11:7*

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:
The old has gone, the new is here!*
2 Corinthians 5:17

I learned in business school that the number one reason men fail when they are promoted is that they keep doing the old job. In other words, since their previous tasks were comfortable and familiar, they simply continue doing the old job description instead of taking on the new challenges.

The same is true in the spiritual realm. The number one reason men fail when promoted to “follower of Christ” is that they keep doing the old job. Instead of penetrating the issues of their lives and responding biblically, they

continue to live an impotent life as if nothing new had happened. Maybe they clean up their language a bit, but essentially there’s no real change.

Perhaps it’s time for Christian men in America to check out of the rat race. It’s an unwinnable race that generally leads to a life filled with regrets. Many men have been

lulled into mental and spiritual complacency. How have consumerism and media messages impacted your own values and the way you spend your money, your time, your talents, and your energy? Isn’t it time we started doing the job we were promoted to when we first trusted Christ?

Scripture clearly says if we’re in Christ, then we’re completely new. We’re promised a new spiritual nature, but we must be faithful to do our part—to do the new job.
📖MIM 25—Rat Race



Have you decided to “do the new job” as a “follower of Christ”? If yes, how will that decision impact how you spend your money, your time, your talents, and your energy?

Daily Reading: *Numbers 19:1–23:30, Luke 1:1–80, Psalm 56:1–58:11, Proverbs 11:8–13*



For Your Small Group

☐ **March 9–15: Read 1 Timothy 6:6–10 from a variety of translations or versions of that Scripture passage.**

- On a scale of 1–10, rate the level of your contentment with life.
- What has given you the most contentment? Are you pursuing the contentment talked about in 1 Timothy?

Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”
Luke 23:42, 43

As Jesus was on the cross, there were two criminals on either side of Him. One of those men repented and asked Jesus to remember him in His kingdom. “Jesus answered him, ‘I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise’” (Luke 23:43).

Talk about a death-bed conversion! In the last moments of his life, the criminal recognized his need for God, changed his heart and his eternal destiny by repenting of his sins and turning his life over to Christ Jesus. A criminal would share heaven with the King of kings and Lord of lords!

Heaven is going to have a diverse population—criminals, missionaries, politicians, prostitutes, pastors, and tax collectors.



People like Billy Graham and Martin Luther will walk the streets of gold alongside robbers, cheaters and liars. People of every generation will sing the praises of our Lord with Moses, Abraham and Paul.

What a comfort to know we’re all welcome at heaven’s gate and God’s love covers us all! 📖MIMBS 5

Have you thought about the fact that you’ll share heaven with criminals as well as saints? How does that impact your view of eternity? Are there “unlikely” people in your life who need to hear about Christ?

Daily Reading: *Numbers 24:1–25:18, Luke 2:1–35, Psalm 59:1–17, Proverbs 11:14*

But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.
Matthew 13:23

There is a YouTube video posted by the magician, Penn Jillette. Penn, an atheist, recounts the time after a show in Las Vegas, that a Christian man gave him a Gideon Bible. This stranger genuinely wanted to share something of importance with Penn. The magician was quite touched by this man’s respect, authenticity, and care. He also had an appreciation for the man’s fervor in witnessing or as he put it “prose-lytizing.” It was meaningful to Penn that a stranger believed in his own faith and cared about a stranger’s eternal destiny.

In the video, Penn says something like, “If you believe in heaven and hell, how much

do you have to hate somebody NOT to tell them about the way to heaven?” This experience didn’t change Penn’s atheism, but it made a deep impression on him. We don’t know how that might impact his life.

The good news of the gospel has great power—are you willing to share it with others? 📖MIMBS 5

Have you had the opportunity to share the gospel with someone? Is there someone in your life that needs to hear about God’s love from you?

Daily Reading: *Numbers 26:1–51, Luke 2:36–52, Psalm 60:1–12, Proverbs 11:15*

He answered, "Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment."

Luke 16:27, 28

For over 10 years I had shared Christ with a business man I'll call "Bob." A couple of times a year we would have talks about his soul and salvation. Bob was always very polite but would never really show what was on his mind. One day I said, "Bob, don't you have any fear of going to hell?" He said, "No, not really." And I said, "Well, let me help you have one." I read him Luke 16, hoping he would understand the magnitude of his choices about eternity. Bob did not receive Christ that day.

At Bob's funeral a few years later, several friends gave witness to Bob's salvation and his relationship with the Lord. There were dozens of people around town that had a heart for Bob and many of those people shared Christ with him in different ways. I was honored to have been a piece of

the puzzle in Bob's salvation.

Is there someone you've been praying for and sharing the good news of the gospel with? Trust God with that person and pray for others to be used greatly in his life. [MIMBS 5](#)



Spend a few minutes in prayer for the person you've been witnessing to. Ask God to bring others into his/her life to share their testimonies. Pray together with your group for them.

Daily Reading: Numbers 26:52–28:15, Luke 3:1–22, Psalm 61:1–8, Proverbs 11:16–17

When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. And you know the way to where I am going.

John 14:3, 4 NLT

I've never met a United States president, but it would be quite an honor. Imagine being in the presence of one of the world's most powerful people. Think of the privilege it would be to shake his hand in the Oval Office at the White House. We have something even more impressive to look forward to. One day we are going to meet our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and be forever with Him in heaven.

The Christian singing group, *Mercy Me*, wrote a song entitled, "I Can Only Imagine." The lyrics give insight into what it will be like to meet Jesus and experience heaven.

Surrounded by Your glory, what will my heart feel?

Will I dance for you Jesus or in awe of You be still?

Will I stand in your presence or to my knees will I fall?

Will I sing hallelujah? Will I be able to speak at all?

I can only imagine.

What a glorious future we have when we know Christ as our Savior. I, for one, am looking forward to that great day! [MIMBS 5](#)

Have the guys in your group answer this question: What are the two or three things you are most looking forward to about heaven?

Daily Reading: Numbers 28:16–29:40, Luke 3:23–38, Psalm 62:1–12, Proverbs 11:18–19

Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. And you know the way to where I am going.

John 14:1–4 NLT

If you've ever been to the funeral of a child, you know what true mourning looks like. It is gut-wrenching to grieve the loss of a little one or an unborn baby. A life cut so short is hard to understand. A family's dreams and future seem denied by death. It begs the question, "Why?"

Maybe someone you love lives in chronic pain. Pain takes a toll on the body, mind and spirit. You've searched the Web for answers, tried numerous prescriptions and consulted a variety of physicians, and nothing has alleviated the pain. You'd give anything to help that loved one, and nothing has changed.

Perhaps your heart has been broken by a divorce, the abuse of a parent, the betrayal of a friend, or a devastating financial loss. You wake up every morning and feel that pain. Throughout the day you wonder what you could have done differently. You go to

bed trying to turn your thoughts off and find rest. So much of your time and energy have been given to the situation and still it remains broken.

Now, imagine a life without tears, death, mourning or pain. Your burdens are lifted, fears alleviated, and relationships restored. That is heaven's promise. We are told that all things will be made new. What a great day that will be when Jesus wipes away the last of your tears. A new life in heaven with Him and you will never experience those devastating things again! What glory that

will be! [MIMBS 5](#)

What pain or loss has most impacted your life? How have you dealt with it? What would life look like without that stress?

Daily Reading: Numbers 30:1–35:34, Luke 4:1–5:28, Psalm 63:1–65:13, Proverbs 11:20–23



For Your Small Group

□ **March 16–22: Read the lyrics from "I Can Only Imagine" found on page 50.**

- What are you most looking forward to about heaven? Is there anything that makes you uncomfortable about heaven?
- Does the thought of spending eternity in heaven motivate you to share the gospel with others?

Will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly.

Luke 18:7–8

Jesus helps people who are caught in hopeless situations, but sometimes we think we should be able to fix the problem on our own. When we try to do that, we inevitably lose hope—like the man at the pool in John 5 who couldn't get in the water. Jesus said, "Do you want to get better?" And the man basically said, "Of course! Can't you see I'm trying everything I know, but it's not working?" Because he was so focused on his circumstances, he didn't even realize he was having an encounter with Jesus Christ.



Sometimes we don't pray because we think we've already asked too many times. Luke 18 records a parable about a hard-hearted judge. This woman needed him to grant her justice, and he kept delaying.



But she wore him out with her persistence, and he finally ruled on her behalf. Jesus basically said, "If an unjust judge will respond that way, how much more will your heavenly Father respond to you?"

Nothing is too hard for God. You can't ask too many times. Keep praying! [MIMBS 6](#)

Is there a situation that you haven't been praying about? Why? Start or renew your efforts to ask God to heal or help you—be persistent!

Daily Reading: Numbers 36:1–Deuteronomy 1:46, Luke 5:29–6:11, Psalm 66:1–20, Proverbs 11:24–26



Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip.

John 1:45–46

The Gospel of John records that Jesus spent about 30 years in relative obscurity before he showed up at the Jordan River and asked his cousin John to baptize him. Based on John's testimony, two men asked Jesus if they could hang out with Him. Those two men became three, and then four . . . and the fourth man invited Nathanael to hang out as well. Nathanael was suspicious of Jesus' credentials, but he agreed to go, because Philip challenged him. It was as if he said, "Don't make up your mind until you experience this for yourself."

Jesus didn't make people jump through any hoops before they were allowed to hang out with Him. He didn't say, "If you want to follow Me, you have to believe first."

So Nathanael came, and in their very first conversation, Jesus demonstrated how well He already knew this man. Nathanael said, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel" (John 1:49). Hanging out with Jesus is the best way to move from intellectual knowledge to personal belief.

[MIMBS 6](#)

Would you describe yourself as being a person who has intellectual knowledge about Jesus, or a person who believes in Jesus? Are you hanging out with Jesus enough for Him to reveal Himself to you?

Daily Reading: Deuteronomy 2:1–3:29, Luke 6:12–38, Psalm 67:1–7, Proverbs 11:27

This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.

John 2:11

Five men were hanging out with Jesus at this point, and they all went together to a wedding in a place called Cana. A wedding celebration in this culture would go on for several days, and as it happened, the hosts of this party ran out of wine. Jesus' mother was there, and she intervened by asking Jesus to solve their problem. "Do whatever He tells you," she said to the servants. At Jesus' bidding, they filled jars with water, and Jesus told them to pour some out and give it to the master of the banquet. Sometime in that process, the water became wine—in fact, it was the best wine at the whole party.

This was Jesus' first miracle, and the verse

above implies that it caused His disciples to put their faith in Him. That word implies trust, obedience, surrender and confidence. That's a huge difference in attitude. Up to this point, these five disciples had invested time and energy in following Jesus. They knew about Him. But now they believed in Him. [MIMBS 6](#)

Who in your circle of friends clearly has moved from knowing about Jesus to believing in him? Ask that person what led them to a place of trusting and surrendering to Jesus.

Daily Reading: Deuteronomy 4:1–49, Luke 6:39–7:10, Psalm 68:1–18, Proverbs 11:28

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

Proverbs 27:17

Some of us would like to just hang out with Jesus and not bother with other people. That simply isn't the scriptural norm. In fact, one New Testament writer admonished, "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another" (Hebrews 10:25).

I remember when I was about 12, I wanted to know God. I learned all about Him. I could give historical facts about Jesus. I have a vivid recollection of having a book of liturgical prayers, and I sat for long periods in earnest, wanting to experience God.

But I was alone. It's difficult to move from knowing to believing when you hang out with Jesus by yourself. Scripture shows

believers gathering in groups. There is great value in being part of a community of believers who are following Jesus together. The wise Solomon said, "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." That principle affects our following, for it's easier to trust when you've seen how God has been faithful in the lives of other people.

[MIMBS 6](#)

Are you involved in a community of believers? How is your involvement, or lack of involvement, affecting your relationship with Jesus?

Daily Reading: Deuteronomy 5:1–6:25, Luke 7:11–35, Psalm 68:19–35, Proverbs 11:29–31



I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
Galatians 2:20

William Temple, a Church of England priest who became a bishop and finally rose to the position of Archbishop of Canterbury in the early 1940s, defined conversion like this: “Conversion is simply giving as much of yourself as you can to as much of God as you can understand.” That’s all Jesus asks. But ongoing surrender requires trust, which is learned through hanging out with Jesus.

Let’s look at a metaphor that may help us understand this process. Suppose you wanted to take up racing and be my co-driver in my car. The first time you get in my car to do a few test laps, what will it be like? Well, I know from experience—it will be ugly, even if you’ve driven a race car before, because you won’t be used to my car. The more time you spend with my car, the better you’ll get at driving it. Eventually you’ll reach a point where you trust the car. In other words, when you are getting used to a car, you trust yourself rather than the vehicle. But there comes a sweet moment when you pass from knowing that the car should pass in the corner to believing that it will pass in the corner. You’ve learned to trust the car.

It’s the same with being a disciple. As you spend time with Jesus, you’ll learn His ways,

and you’ll find yourself trusting Him more and more. We know the apostle Paul experienced that. Before his conversion, Paul was a Pharisee—a very religious man. I imagine he could quote a lot of Scripture. He knew a lot about God. But his life did not reflect God’s love and grace.

Then he met Jesus, and he started hanging out with Him, in community with other believers. As a result, he was able to completely surrender himself to his Lord’s leading. He made an indelible mark on the world through his missionary journeys and his epistles. And this verse explains why—he had learned to “live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

He had passed from knowing to believing—living by faith—because he spent time with Jesus and found him to be trustworthy.  MIMBS 6

Rate your level of trust in God on a scale of 0–10, with 0 representing no trust at all, and 10 representing total trust. If your goal is to move closer to the “10” on that scale, how do you think that will happen?

Daily Reading: *Deuteronomy 7:1–12:32, Luke 7:36–8:39, Psalm 69:1–70:5, Proverbs 12:1–4*



For Your Small Group

☐ **March 23–31: Share these definitions with the group: Faith—belief that does not solely rest on logical proof or material evidence. Trust—reliance on the integrity, strength, ability, surety, etc., of a person or thing; confidence.**

- How do these definitions translate into your relationship with God?
- Is there a specific area of your life that you struggle with trusting God?
- What does that struggle reveal about your view of God and His care for you?

... They lay their crowns before the throne and say: “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power...”
Revelation 4:10b–11a

Several years ago, I met two men on the same day. These men weren’t just different—they literally stood as complete opposites of each other. One was bitter about how his life had turned out, and his disappointment drove him away from God. The other had equally difficult circumstances, but he expressed a desire to give his life over to God in a way he had never done before. In fact, I walked away with the impression that he was ready to walk on hot coals, if that was what was required to get to God.

These two men illustrated a basic principle to me. You see, one did not see God as worthy, and the other did.



Eventually, every man will have to come to terms with this principle. When I first became a Christian, I understood in my mind that God is worthy. At some point, I began to actually believe and trust it in my heart. And eventually, I learned to live my life as an expression of that belief. Where are you on that journey? The only life worth living is one where God is treated as most worthy.

 MIMBS 1

How worthy is God in your eyes? How is that impacting your life?

Daily Reading: *Deuteronomy 13:1–15:23, Luke 8:40–9:6, Psalm 71:1–24, Proverbs 12:5–7*

In a loud voice they were saying: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”
Revelation 5:12

What do we mean, when we say God is worthy? We mean He has value, and He deserves all of the things listed in the verse above—power, wealth, wisdom, strength, honor, glory and praise. As incredible as it seems, that’s not even an exhaustive list of the things God deserves. It’s just a representative list—a short inventory, if you will, that could end with “etc.,” because God is also worthy of worship and submission, and every other positive response you can imagine.

That’s why the word worthy carries a sense of weightiness and gravity. When I think of God, I almost feel a little pressure

coming down on my shoulders. I feel a little tightness somewhere in the area where my heart is. I know men who get teary-eyed when they talk about God, because they are so enraptured by His worthiness.

And why is He worthy? Because He’s our Creator, our Sustainer, and our Redeemer. He made us, He keeps us, and He works to redeem us from the eternal consequences of our rebellious choices.  MIMBS 1

What one or two qualities could you add to the “representative list” in Revelation 5:12?

Daily Reading: *Deuteronomy 16:1–17:20, Luke 9:7–27, Psalm 72:1–20, Proverbs 12:8–9*

Do you have an empty nest? What will you fill up that time with—golf? TV? Why not invest that time at your church or local ministry? Or—buckle up—maybe He’s calling you to be an overseas missionary in this new phase of life!

Stand firm in the faith.

To Paul, standing firm meant to place your hopes and faith in Christ. He uses the phrase “in Christ” a dozen times in 1 Corinthians, and it’s used almost 100 times in the New Testament.

Standing firm requires us to be certain of what we believe and then holding resolutely to those beliefs. In Ephesians 2:1-2, Paul describes how the world, the flesh and the devil are three forces that pull us toward death. To stand firm against these, we need a firm foundation.

In Matthew 7, Jesus uses the analogy of two builders—one built his house on the sand, the other on the rock. When the storms came, the house on the sand fell, but the house built on the rock stood firm. Being in Christ means building your house on the rock: believe what the Bible has to say about truth, not what the world says about it; make Jesus your top priority, not the things of the world; listen to the leadings of the Holy Spirit in your life and heart, as revealed in Scripture, not the misleading whispers of the evil one.

Stand firm, brothers! Lock arms with other men in the faith, and stand firm!

Be men of courage. Be strong.

In the more literal translations, the phrase “be men of courage” is translated as “act like men.” This phrase, standing in the middle of the passage, is an anchor for the point Paul is making. Where does courage come from?

I enjoy the sport of rock climbing. I’ve been to some wonderful places around the country to climb. At times, you have to make a difficult move on a rock climbing route. The footing is not solid and the hold you want to grasp is out of reach, but the only way to progress is to move up. Every difficult route has at least one situation like this.

To make the move, you must leave the safety of secure hand and footholds and reach beyond your comfort zone—sometimes even jump. Why can I do that with confidence? Because I am on belay, meaning someone has my back down on the ground. With a harness around my waist, a rope connecting me to quickdraws, and a belayer on the ground, I know that even if I fail, I will not fall very far. I can jump because I trust my equipment and my belayer.

In life, we must be willing to dare great things for the Kingdom of God. We can do that knowing that our equipment—the Word of God—is solid. And the person on the other end of the rope? Well, that’s God Himself! You can have great courage when you know Who’s holding the other end of the rope.

But it would be senseless to take risks on a climbing route if I hadn’t trained for it. In order to confront a difficult route, I first spend time building up my strength and technique.

This is why Paul also encourages the Corinthians to be strong. Strength only comes from training. Like a rock climber preparing for a difficult ascent, Christian men must prepare for the difficulties we will face in the world.

The best way to train—to grow strong—is to lock arms with other men who have the same goals. Spend time praying for each other. Confess your sins and exhort each other. Spend time in God’s Word together. Live life in community.

Do everything in love.

Paul concludes with a reminder to the Corinthians to do everything in love. We know this was important to him, as he had just spent an entire section of his letter on this topic (1 Corinthians 13).

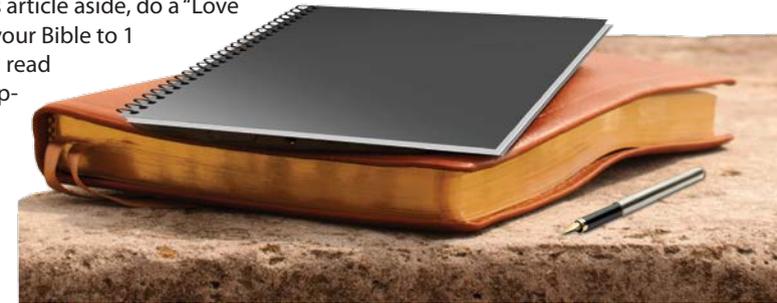
As men, we need to be reminded of this. We might connect better with the ideas of being on guard, standing firm, or being courageous and strong. But doing it all in love is the key to doing these things in Christ.

Look at God: His omniscience makes Him vigilant. His sovereignty means He stands firm. His omnipotence makes Him strong. But His love is what saves us from our own unrighteousness. His love is what makes God different from the Roman and Greek gods the Corinthians were worshipping.

Before you put this article aside, do a “Love Gut Check.” Open your Bible to 1 Corinthians 13 and read through the description of love. Where are the areas that you fall short? Is there one specific attribute of love you need to pray for? Mine is “keeps no record of wrongs.” I like to keep a scorecard of other people’s wrongs to make me feel better when I am frustrated. But that’s not love.

And here’s the key—we will never fully live up to that passage; instead, it describes God and His perfect love for you and me.

So, men of God: Be on your guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be men of courage. Be strong. Do everything in love. 🙏🙏🙏



• BRETT CLEMMER

Brett Clemmer joined Man in the Mirror in 2000 and serves as its Vice President. His passion is to make the church relevant to younger men and men on the fringe. He is the co-author with Patrick Morley and David Delk of *No Man Left Behind: How to Build and Sustain a Thriving Disciple-Making Ministry for Every Man in Your Church*, and various articles and discipleship materials offered by the ministry. Brett and his wife Kimberly live in Casselberry, Florida.

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► Loving Your Wife Well *continued from page 7*

I think loving your wife well means to **become a student** of her. Learn everything you can about her by listening and remembering what she says. Anticipate her needs. Put her feelings and desires before yours and selflessly serve her. When Michelle looks at me every so often with a hint of disbelief in her eyes and says "I don't know how you know me better than I know myself," I know then that I'm doing something right!

—Rob Leonard, Central Indiana Coalition for Men's Discipleship



As men, so often our primary purpose for **communication** is the transfer of information. "Just the facts, ma'am." Give your wife the chance to express how she feels. Affirm that her thoughts and feelings are important and then have your actions reflect that.

—David Hilty, Pittsburgh North Coalition for Men's Discipleship

Honor her in both words and actions in front of others and never speak critically about her to other people.

—Larry Niggli, San Diego County Coalition for Men's Discipleship



Hug more, say less.

—Ken Deitering, Field Representative, Northwest Ohio

Be her **encourager**. Lead as a tender warrior. Have shared values for your marriage and follow them. Take specific time daily to connect with her. Pray daily with her.

—Bob Ryan, Northwest Arkansas Coalition for Men's Discipleship



There is a guy in my community that has been standing at busy intersections for weeks holding up this sign (below). This guy **loves his wife!**

—Chris Staley, Central Chesapeake Coalition for Men's Discipleship



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

Our Worldview

Secular or Christian?

Excerpted from *The Man in the Mirror*, 25th Anniversary Edition
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Archaeologists search the ruins of long-forgotten civilizations looking for, among other things, shards. A shard is a piece of broken pottery that the archaeologist studies. Then he visualizes what the object must have looked like by projecting from the broken pieces.



This is how we should lead our lives. We should look at every shard—every idea and theory we discover flowing through our minds—and see which worldview it represents. Too often we see events and circumstances as unrelated and isolated when, instead, we should try to visualize how they fit into the bigger picture of our worldview.

In his book *The Closing of the American Mind*, Dr. Allan Bloom spoke to the issue of leading an unexamined life. He made a compelling case for replacing the openness of our times, what he termed “the openness of indifference,” with “the openness that invites us to the quest for knowledge and certitude.” Dr. Bloom built the case that our society’s “openness” is not one that pursues the truth with dogged determination, but an openness that presses to be “open to all kinds of men, all kinds of lifestyles, all ideologies.” The only enemy is the man not open to everything. The man who thinks like this is so blind that he can’t tell you whether a daring circus rider is on horses or donkeys, nor could he tell you if one is better than the other—even if he were lucky enough to notice a difference.

This is not openness that examines its beliefs in pursuit of moral truth and good, but openness that finds its virtue in saying yes to everything—anything goes. The Christian’s openness comes from his search for truth and absolutes. The secularist’s openness exists because he makes up the truth in his own “best thinking” and has no absolutes. He thinks it doesn’t matter what you believe, as long as you’re sincere.

This captures one aspect of leading an unexamined life. We can know much, but if we do not use our knowledge to elevate ourselves—our mind, our soul, our spirit—to the highest level of moral good we can attain, then we are poor stewards of that knowledge. And we become Christians in captivity, held captive by the secular worldview, “captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy.” If we are going to live by the Christian worldview, we must recognize, first, that ours is a minority view and, second, that we are responsible for our own lives. Christ aches for us to turn to Him and follow His plan. But we are the ones who must decide to do it.

The Man in the Mirror has helped hundreds of thousands of men over the last twenty-five years. It invites men to take a probing look at their identity and find the means to bring about lasting change. For more information, or to purchase a copy, visit maninthemirror.org.

Love God and Love Others

God **loves** each of us as if there were only one of us. —Augustine

Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who **loves** me. The one who **loves** me will be **loved** by my Father, and I too will **love** them and show myself to them. —John 14:21

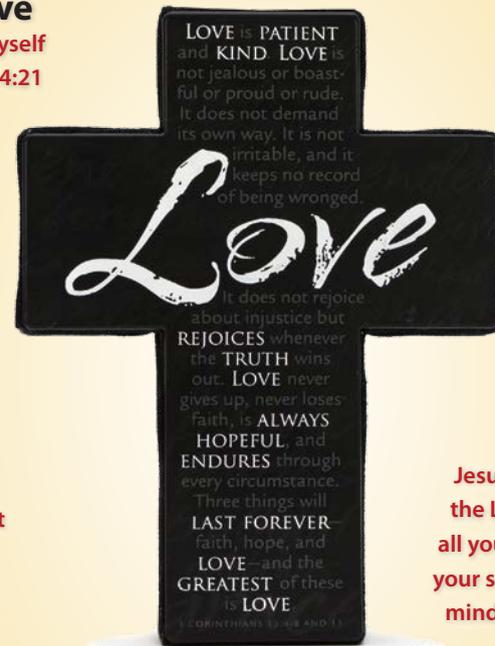
God is **love**. He didn’t need us. But he wanted us. And that is the most amazing thing. —Rick Warren

Whatever a person may be like, we must still **love** them because we **love** God. —John Calvin

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who **loved** me and gave himself for me. —Galatians 2:20

To **love** him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to **love** your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. —Mark 12:33

A successful marriage requires falling in **love** many times, always with the same person. —Mignon McLaughlin



The Bible tells us to **love** our neighbors, and also to **love** our enemies; probably because they are generally the same people. —G.K. Chesterton

But I tell you, **love** your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. —Matthew 5:44

Jesus replied: “**Love** the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” —Matthew 22:37

I pray that you will understand the words of Jesus, “**Love** one another as I have **loved** you.” Ask yourself, “How has he **loved** me? Do I really **love** others in the same way?” Unless this **love** is among us, we can kill ourselves with work and it will only be work, not **love**. Work without **love** is slavery. —Mother Teresa

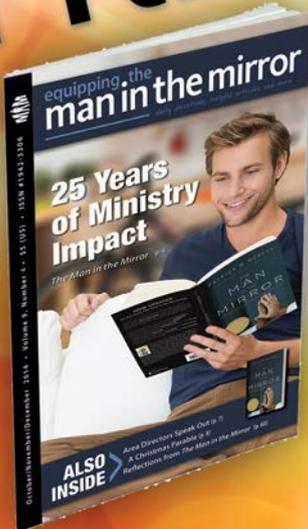
May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the **love** of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. —2 Corinthians 13:14



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