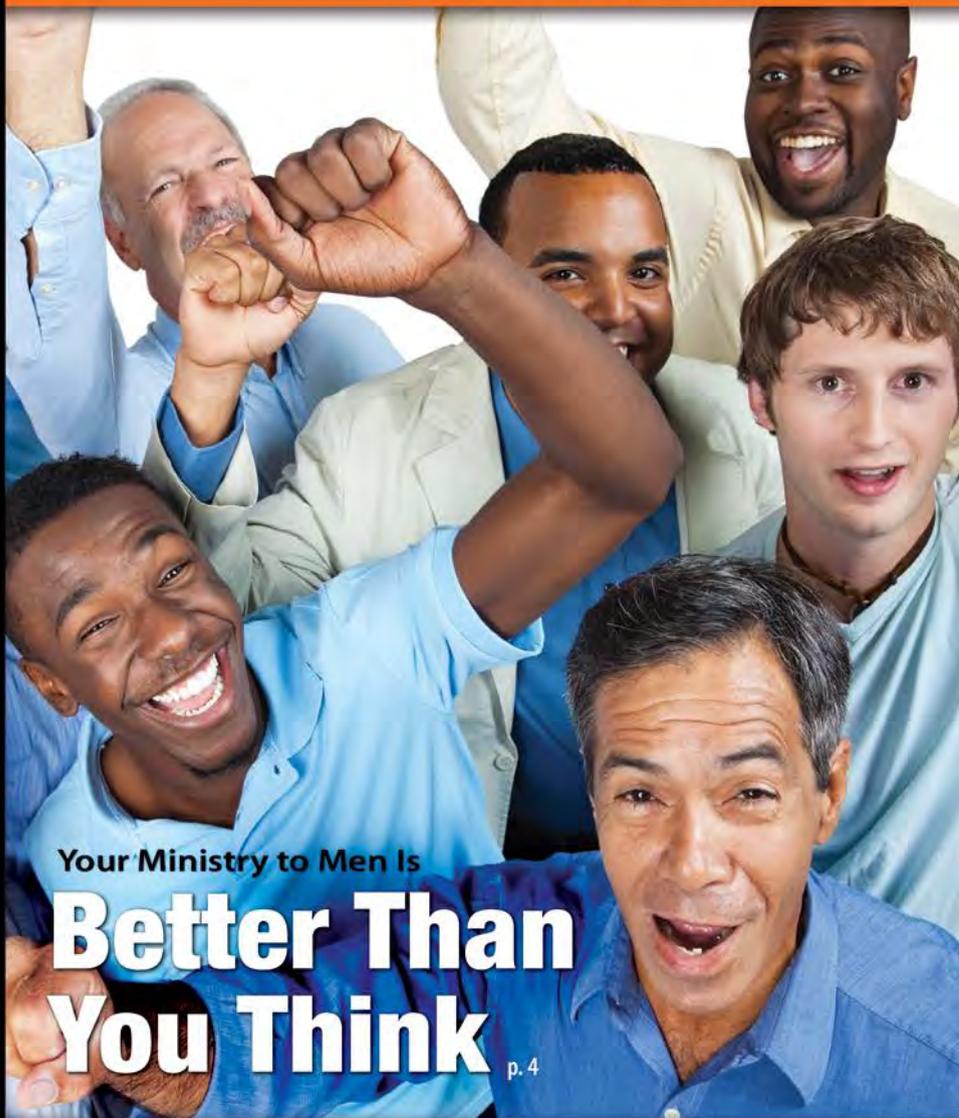


equipping the man in the mirror

daily devotions, helpful articles and more

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Your Ministry to Men Is

Better Than You Think

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All We Have To Offer Is... (p.3)

Easter Makes Christianity Unique (p.9)

FUEL Tools—Find All Three!

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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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WATERBROOK MULTNOMAH PUBLISHING GROUP

What Do We Really Have To Offer Men?

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

Many men become more open to Christianity when parts of their lives stop working. Perhaps their wife has asked them to leave. Maybe their teenage son is out of control and in trouble with the law. Perhaps they got fired from a long-time position and don't have any idea what's next. Or maybe they have gotten a medical diagnosis that changes everything.

What do we have to offer these men? Well, it's natural to want to meet them at their point of need and talk about how the gospel applies to their circumstances. But, if we aren't careful, it can seem like we are primarily offering men a way to stop the pain and make everything better. *Come to church and we will show you how to have a better marriage. We can help you become a better dad, and pretty soon your kids will be back on the right track. We can help you with your work, to get a new job, or even get a better job.*

The problem is that when a man comes to God to get things for himself, he reduces God to a cosmic Santa Claus who meets our needs. While Jesus asked men to come and die, I'm afraid too often men are hearing us asking them to come and get fixed.

It's true that some good things often come when we turn to God, but they don't always. Faithful Christians have spouses who abandon them. They get cancer and die painful deaths. They lose jobs, watch kids make dumb decisions, and get hit by cars.

So if we invite men to come to God so that things will be better, what do we think will happen when things get worse?

The truth is that all we have to offer men is Jesus.

The truth is that all we have to offer men is Jesus. He's the one who triumphed over sin and death. He's the only one who ultimately will satisfy their hearts. The good things we can gain in this world pale in comparison to knowing and loving Him.

So be careful how you interact with men. Jesus is the one we worship and serve. As best you can, don't allow the good things He may bring to be a distraction from truly worshipping Jesus Himself.



Better Than You Think

Brett Clemmer, Vice President of Man in the Mirror

When you're working with churches on men's discipleship, discouraged leaders come with the territory. We've talked to countless leaders who are frustrated that after years of effort, their men's ministry doesn't seem to be impacting very many men in the church.

Their evidence? The men's breakfast still has the same few guys. They can't seem to get new men interested in mission trips, service projects, or even in forming new small groups. For their last retreat, a lot fewer men actually attended than they expected.

The problem, however, may not be the number of men attending the breakfasts, men's groups, mission trips or retreat. It may be the leader's perspective.

When we zoom in on men's-only activities to judge our ministry to men, we're unwittingly falling into a trap.

Imagine you're on the men's ministry leadership team at this church. You're talking about the men in your church, and these five guys come up:

Joe—age 36, married for 12 years, two kids. Upward basketball coach, usher, in a couples group with his wife, went on a men's retreat a couple of years ago.

Frank—68, widowed. Helps lead the grief support group, visits a nursing home at least once a week to visit folks and help with their in-house church service.

Rick—23, trying to finish college. Lives with his folks and comes to church to make them happy. Plays basketball at every open gym night, showed up for the last church work day with his dad.

Pete—45, married with kids in middle school, high school and college. A deacon, he leads Financial Peace with his wife, teaches the 4th grade boys Sunday School class and goes on the men's retreat every year. "Wouldn't miss it!"

Kevin—39, divorced with joint custody of his three kids. In a men's small group. Likes to cook for the monthly men's breakfasts and on the planning team for the annual men's retreat.

Which of these men would you consider a part of your men's ministry? You might say, "Kevin for sure, and Pete, kind of. After all, they are involved in men's activities. Those other guys are great, but they are involved in other ministries, not the men's ministry."

We meet with leaders all the time—primarily at No Man Left Behind training—who answer this same way.

Focusing on the "Problem"

Different lenses help cameras take different kinds of pictures. Zoom lenses help you see minute details or things that are very far away. Wide-angle lenses are good for getting a broad view of things that are closer.

Often we tend to look at men's ministry through a zoom lens. We zoom in on the men's-only activities and focus only on the guys involved in those activities. We see this in our training classes when we ask the following two questions: (1) How many men are in your church? (2) How many men are in your men's ministry?

The responses are often something like:

- ▶ We have 100 men in our church and 35 in our men's ministry.
- ▶ 500 in the church and 150 in our men's ministry.
- ▶ 50 men are in our church, and the three of us sitting here are the only ones involved in the men's ministry.

It's easy for leaders to look around and see marriages falling apart, wayward kids, unhappy wives, young single men who seem to be "stuck"—and then get frustrated because more men don't want to grow in Christ.

Changing the Lens

But that's not the whole picture. When we zoom in on men's-only activities to judge our ministry to men, we're unwittingly falling into a trap: we think the goal of men's discipleship is to engage as many men as possible in our men's ministry program. But that's not the goal at all!

The goal is building disciples, not building a program. Change to the wide-angle lens to look at all the different places in your church where men are growing closer to Christ, and you'd likely be surprised at how many men your church is actually impacting.

We call this having an **All-Inclusive Mindset**. Consider the guys in our list above; we have men involved in a vast array of growth and service opportunities: Upward basketball, couples' small groups, ushering, a grief support group, ministry in a nursing home, open gym, the church work day, financial ministry, deacons and children's Sunday School, the men's retreat, small groups, monthly breakfast and leadership team.



And that's exactly our goal: getting men engaged in activities where they can hear the gospel, grow in their faith and serve the Kingdom (2 Timothy 3:15-17). The All-Inclusive Mindset leads to an All-Inclusive approach to ministry to men:

An All-Inclusive Ministry to Men maximizes the Kingdom impact of every interaction our church has with every man.

It's not about getting a bunch of men to come to our men's activities. Instead, it's being sure that wherever men are involved in the church, they are being disciplined. So we need to think about three specific groups of men and how we can disciple them:

- 1 Men who come to our men's-only groups, events and classes.** As good as you do with these guys, *you'll probably never have more than a third of the men in your church involved in men's-only activities.*
- 2 Men that are involved in the church in other ways.** Guys are in couples' small groups and Sunday School classes, volunteering in the children's program, serving on the A/V team, greeters, ushers, deacons, etc. These men are likely being disciplined by the leaders of the ministries they are participating in. These are primarily Biblical Christians and Servant Leaders (see the No Man Left Behind Model overview at maninthemirror.org/nmlb).
- 3 Men who are connected peripherally to your church.** Their kids come to your preschool or VBS. They show up for the gym nights and Super Bowl parties. They may attend worship services with their wives, or just at Christmas, Easter and Mother's Day, but not much else. These are men who are either Cultural Christians or men who don't know Christ at all—Natural Men.

Practical Tips for the Rest of Your Men

If you want to see men in group two disciplined more effectively, you need to support the leaders who are disciplining them. Acknowledge the great work those leaders and teachers are already doing building into the lives of men, and see how you can come alongside them. Ask those leaders for feedback on what's going on with the men in their ministry areas. Encourage them and appreciate them.

Better Than You Think continues on page 60



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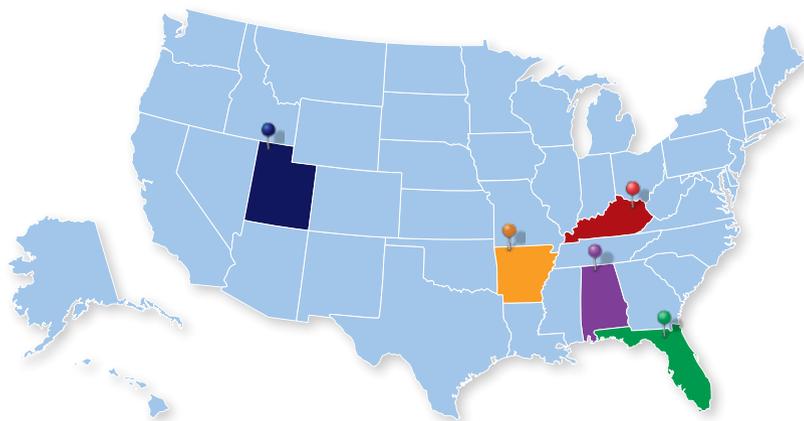
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GO and Make Disciples!

Easter's Justification

by Pete Alwinson

In the last year and a half, Man in the Mirror has been honored to commission over 75 Area Directors (ADs). ADs now serve in 33 states including Alaska. **In 2013, 17 ADs begin working with 214 churches, representing 40,000 men!** Those same ADs are actively cultivating relationships with another 500 churches. Please pray for these men as they raise financial support and invest their lives in helping churches disciple men. We've highlighted five of our new ADs on this page. 



Utah



Noel DeGaetano is the Area Director for the **Utah Coalition for Men's Discipleship**.

Kentucky



Ward Anderson is the Area Director for the **Tri-State Coalition for Men's Discipleship**.

Arkansas



Bob Ryan is the Area Director for the **Northwest Arkansas Coalition for Men's Discipleship**.

Alabama



Tim Smith is the Area Director for the **Central Gulf Coast Coalition for Men's Discipleship**.

Florida



Pat Leupold is the Area Director for the **East Orlando Coalition for Men's Discipleship**.

As Christians celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, there is a crystal clear sense that what we are doing is absolutely unique. No other religion or philosophical movement is founded upon a person they are convinced died and literally rose again, is God, is their savior from sin and the legitimate final authority in all matters of life. No other. Most people considered great are remembered on special days or honored with elaborate tombs. Jesus is too big and alive for that.

For the first Christians, the resurrection of Jesus was unanticipated and shocking even by those who saw Him alive post-death (Matt.28:17). The resurrection was joy producing, life transforming and—along with Spirit-filling—a catalyzing factor that mobilized ordinary people to literally change the world. Easter is not about chocolate bunnies or little baskets filled with candy. I like that stuff, but those are the trivial distractions offered by a culture scandalized by the empty grave.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead justifies so much.

- 1. Easter Justifies Jesus.** It proves that Jesus is everything He said He was: the King of the Kingdom of God; God the Son come in human flesh; the only Savior, Messiah; our superior in every way. Easter compels us to read the Gospels *backward*, in the sense that once we see the empty tomb, we go back and tremble at the power of Jesus' words and acts.
- 2. Easter Justifies Grace.** How can a Holy God forgive people their past sins as well as their future sins, all the while calling them His children? How can He be gracious to people who want nothing to do with Him? The cross *and* the resurrection. Grace is not about a holy and just God sentimentally ignoring the awful sins people commit, but irrationally loving unappealing sinners. No, God inflicts justice on His beloved Son so God could show us His grace. Grace is always supremely costly!
- 3. Easter Justifies Mission.** Read Luke 24:44-49. Christians are on a radical, all-encompassing mission to tell the world about Jesus and to seek to persuade them to embrace Him as Savior and Lord. We do this through word and deed, with an emphasis on verbally clarifying the Gospel, because without words and explanation people simply will not be able to accept our Lord into their minds and hearts.
- 4. Easter Justifies Loyalty.** "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose" said Jim Elliot years ago. This is ever true! We men who follow Jesus are justifiably loyal to Him for there is "no other name under heaven by which a man may be saved."

Brothers, every word of Jesus comes together in the resurrection. Because the tomb is empty, we can never be comforted too little or trust Him too much! *You take it to heart!* 



• PETE ALWINSON

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

To get to know more of our Area Directors, or if you are interested in a career in men's discipleship go to mimareadirectors.org.



Fuel Tool #1: Getting Men Into a Small Group

Do you feel God's call on your heart to lead a small group? Great!

First Steps

- 1 Pray.** As you start and lead a group, make sure to bathe your efforts in prayer.
- 2 Decide what kind of group you want to lead.** Don't wait to make a group decision. Leaders lead—and men like that. There are different types of small groups:
 - ▶ Bible Studies, Discussion Groups and Accountability Groups
 - ▶ Support Groups for specific issues, like addiction, grief or divorce recovery
 - ▶ Fellowship or Affinity Groups, like sports teams or book clubs
 - ▶ Mentoring Groups, typically smaller groups of 2–4 men
 - ▶ Service Projects, like a monthly “help-a-widow” team
- 3 Select Material.** Check out Amazon or Christian Book Distributors (cbd.com), or materials from the National Coalition of Ministries to Men (ncmm.org).
- 4 Schedule a planning meeting.** Call this meeting to decide on the day, location and time and to explain the purpose of the group, gather feedback from the men and ask everyone to consider making this commitment for 4–8 weeks.

Ready, Set, GO!

There is no set agenda for a small group meeting. For a small group Bible Study or Discussion group, here is a sample 90-minute schedule:

- ▶ 30 minutes on the material—reviewing the material and discussion
- ▶ 45 minutes of sharing—what's going on in guys' lives, follow up on previous week's issues if warranted
- ▶ 15 minutes of prayer time—gathering and praying for requests

Leadership Tips

- ▶ Don't talk more than 25% of the time. If there is silence when you ask a question, don't try to fill the space.
- ▶ Allow and encourage all men (quiet and outgoing) to participate.
- ▶ Ask open-ended questions, avoid ones with answers of “Yes” or “No.”
- ▶ Show men the grace and mercy of Christ.

What will make your group last?

Value: Every time a man shows up, he has decided not to do something else. Most men have many choices, so your small group has to meet the “real and felt needs test” or it won't last. Real needs are met through content, felt needs through caring.

Content: Simply put, use good stuff. If you are going to do a Bible study, make sure it is a practical, application-oriented Bible study.

Caring: Men will come if they sense you really care about them. If they don't, they will eventually drift away—but rarely tell you why. Care extends beyond the small group and into the daily lives of your men. It's happens between the meetings—personal phone calls, coffee or lunch, e-mails, social activities.

See the next tool on page 56

Equipping Your Men's Small Group



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



Continued on page 12



4/1–4/6: In this week's devotions, you'll **focus on the importance of living in Jesus and representing Him to others.** **SAS (Suggested Application Step):** In the questions at the end of this week's devotions, you identified an area of your life that might need a bigger demonstration of God's love. Spend some time in prayer asking God to show you ways

to do that. After praying, choose one step to start. Take that step and come back next week with feedback about what God did.

4/7–4/13: These devotions teach you about **the powerful impact discipleship has in the lives of individuals and the church as a body.** **SAS:** Watch the ten-minute video at maninthemirror.org/why-training/nmlb-model-know-it-a-show-it. Discuss what you learned from the video. What did you learn about the process of discipleship? How could your group or your church further the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20)?



4/14–4/20: In this week of devotions your men will **take a fresh look at the Ten Commandments.** **SAS:** How would you explain the Ten Commandments to someone who says, "They are just a bunch of rules for people who lived several thousand years ago and don't mean anything today"? How do the Ten Commandments convey the love that God has for His children? Are you able to frame the Ten Commandments as wise words from your Heavenly Father?

4/21–4/27: Our devotional theme this week is **the simple truth of the Gospel.** **SAS:** From the devotional "The Centrality of the Gospel" (page 24), what are the three simple phrases that summarize the Gospel? What person in your life needs to hear the truth of the Gospel? Instead of being nervous about sharing the Gospel with that person, pray for them. For the next three weeks, ask God to give you an opportunity to share these truths with them. Share what happens with the group.



4/28–5/4: This week your men will learn **the ways that God dealt with David through his sin, repentance and restoration.** **SAS:** In David's life, you got a glimpse of how easily a "man after God's own heart" can make poor choices and go from hero to zero. Think of some poor choices you have made in life. Share what you learned from those choices. If you can look back and can see God's hand on your life during those difficult times, share this with the group. As a group, spend some time in praise, giving glory to God for His loving correction and restoration on your heart and mind.



5/5–5/11: These devotionals remind you of **the meaning of true love in a marriage relationship.** **SAS:** List the words, things or actions that make your wife feel most loved. How can you help one another as you seek to better love your wives? Discuss an activity or event that you, as a group, could plan to let your wives know they are a priority? (Examples: dinner and a movie, Gal's night out, Mother's Day brunch—anything that is completely planned by the guys in the group.)



5/12–5/18: This week you'll look at **the difference between the ambition of man and the calling of God.** **SAS:** Discuss how you might be able to tell the difference between calling and ambition in your life. How can you help one another identify the difference in real-life situations? Are there ways you can help one another pursue the calling of God? (Now look back at your action from three weeks ago, what opportunity did God open up for you?)



5/19–5/25: This week's devotionals address the **unlimited power of God to bring about His purposes.** **SAS:** From the New Living Translation, 2 Corinthians 12:9 reads, "Each time he said, 'My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.' So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me." Read this verse twice a day over the next week until you have it memorized.

5/26–6/1: These devotions remind you of **who you are without God as Lord of your life.** **SAS:** Make an appointment for coffee or lunch with one of the men in your group. During the meeting, ask one another for an honest answer to these questions: 1) Tell me the three most important relationships in your life. 2) How do those people know that they are important to you? 3) If one of those relationships is with God, how do people know of His importance to you? If He is not one of those relationships, why not?



6/2–6/8: This week you'll see what it means to **live a life worthy of your calling.** **SAS:** Think of people who've lived a life worthy of their calling (Examples: Martin Luther, Mother Teresa, Billy Graham, etc.). What do you admire about the way they lived their lives? How can you take that attribute and make it more a part of your own life? This week, learn more about that person and their calling by reading some articles or a book about their life.

6/9–6/15: These devotionals **will teach you about listening to and expressing love to you children.** **SAS:** Set aside some specific time this week to spend with a child or grandchild and make this time all about listening to them. When we meet next week, share one new thing you learned about that child during that time of listening.



6/16–6/22: This week you learn that **God continually calls us to participate in the process of repentance.** **SAS:** What did the story of the Prodigal Son teach you about repentance? What did you learn about being a child of God? Is there someone in your life who needs your open arms of forgiveness? In silent prayer, ask God to search your heart and allow Him to heal the relationship with that person. Do you need to take an action step with that person?

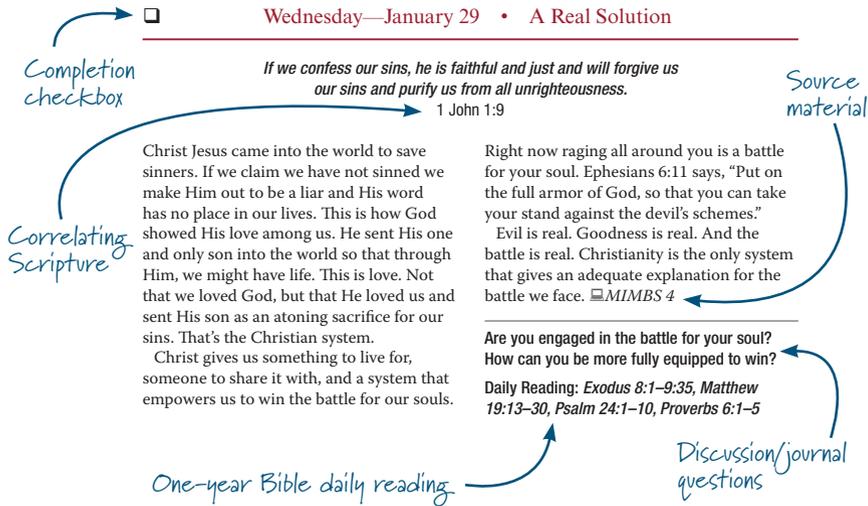


6/24–6/30: The theme of these devotionals reminds you that **God is our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer.** **SAS:** Let's divide our prayer time into three sections of 3-4 minutes. In each of those 3-4 minutes sections, offer specific praise for the ways He has worked in your life or the lives of your loved ones as Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer.



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).



□ Tuesday—April 1 • Defining Discipleship

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

1 Timothy 4:12

Jesus seeks disciples who will live in Him, who will prepare to live like Him, and who will represent Him in the world. Today's Scripture gives Paul's admonition to a young Timothy to "set an example" for others. True discipleship means we will be sent to live for Christ in various environments.

Two major theological errors hinder people from pursuing this goal. Those who pursue cultural Christianity seem to think a decision to follow Jesus is just an item to check off a "to do list," with no lifestyle implications. These men may openly profess Christ, yet see nothing wrong with cheating on their taxes or cohabitating with a woman. On the other side, some people define discipleship in terms of performance, believing

they will avoid God's wrath by eliminating certain behaviors. These two extremes—licentiousness and legalism—do not define discipleship, nor do they really lead to happiness.

A man will feel most happy, most alive and most useful when he learns how to do what disciples do: love God, and love others. **MIMBS 1**

How will you know if your pursuit of Jesus is fully anchored in a biblical definition of discipleship, rather than the theological extremes of licentiousness or legalism? Share your thoughts with another man.

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

□ Wednesday—April 2 • Learning to Live in Jesus

I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.

Psalm 119:14-16

Psalm 119 describes how studying and meditating on Scripture translates into a lifestyle that invites God's blessing. Abiding in God's Word also invites us to abide in God.

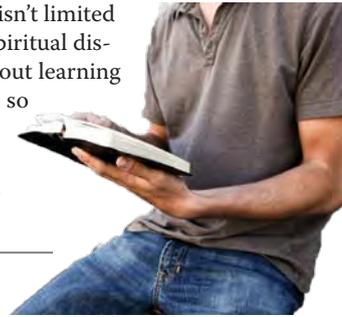
I remember in the days when I worked as a salesman. I would make an appointment with someone, and I'd show up on time, but I'd have to wait 30 minutes or so. I could always tell how important a person thought they were by how long they made me wait to see them. I would be steamed by this power play. But then I started carrying a little Bible with me, and I would sit and read while I waited. It neutralized my anger. I saw in real life how abiding in Christ through studying His Word could change me, and thus change my ability to represent Him well in real life situations outside of church.

Discipleship isn't limited to exercising spiritual disciplines. It's about learning to live in Jesus, so I can also live for Him in the sight of others.

MIMBS 1

Name one habit or trait in your life that doesn't reflect God's character to those around you. When are you most susceptible to falling into that habit? How can Bible study and meditation make you better prepared to represent Christ to those around you?

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



□ Thursday—April 3 • Loving Others

Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

Romans 12:10

Abiding in Christ naturally flows into loving others, because love reflects Jesus' character. If you want to be a disciple, then you must learn to engage people with Jesus' love. Our ongoing relationship with the Holy Spirit bears fruit in the form of love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

I remember a trip from Houston when I missed my connections because of an airline error. Without the Holy Spirit's empowerment, I would have been angry and disgruntled. As it was, I certainly wasn't pleased with the situation, but I was able to express grace to the airline representatives. Then I went to the chapel to calm down, and I left one of my books there with a note

to whomever would pick it up. I was filled with joy, thinking that maybe God allowed me to miss my connection so I could leave a book that would help someone find Jesus.

When we dwell in Christ and allow His Spirit to work within us, any situation can become an opportunity to demonstrate His character to other people. **MIMBS 1**

Describe a recent difficult situation when you had opportunity to express love rather than anger or bitterness. Did your response show that you are a disciple abiding in Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit? Explain your answer.

Daily Reading: *Deuteronomy 23:1-25:19, Luke 10:13-37, Psalm 75:1-10, Proverbs 12:12-14*

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

John 13:34-35

Juan Carlos Ortiz was educated in Argentina and has served as a pastor in South America and in the United States. A sermon I heard in the 1970s still echoes in my memory. Ortiz described preparing to preach on Jesus’ command to “love one another.” He dove into Scripture and did the exegesis and researched illustrations for an incredibly sound sermon. After the choir finished singing, as Ortiz walked to the pulpit, God asked a simple question. “How many times have you preached to your congregation on this topic?” Ortiz answered, “At least a dozen times, Lord.” Then God asked, “What difference has it made?”

With those words ringing in his spirit, Ortiz looked at his congregation and simply said, “Love one another.” Then he sat down. People looked around, wondering what was going on. Ortiz stepped back into the pulpit and said, “Love one another.” Then he sat down again. People began murmuring. Ortiz stepped to the pulpit a third time, saying, “Love one another.” Then he sat down again.

Finally, an elder rose and said, “I think I understand what Pastor Ortiz means.” He turned to a man behind him. “I think he wants me to love you, but I don’t know you.” As they conversed, people throughout the



congregation began imitating what they saw.

They exchanged phone numbers, made dinner appointments. Through this process, several people saw their financial needs met. A homeless family was offered an apartment. An unemployed man was offered a job. True love is the clearest evidence of true discipleship, and it is the natural result of abiding in Christ and allowing the Holy Spirit to change us from the inside out. [MIMBS 1](#)

How could you tangibly show love to another person today? Write down your answer, and then ask God to bring that to fruition. Share the result with your group.

Daily Reading: Deuteronomy 26:1-30:20, Luke 10:38-12:7, Psalm 76:1-78:31, Proverbs 12:15-20



For Your Small Group

☐ **April 1–6: Make a list of five tangible ways you could show love to people in your family, your neighborhood, your workplace or your church.**

- In which of those areas, do you need to demonstrate more love? How do you know that is true?
- What would change with that demonstration of more love?

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

John 10:10

A few years ago, I was in Calgary, Alberta. Dan was my driver to and from the airport.

He was a paramedic for 20 years. He married at a young age and had three children, but his wife had several affairs and eventually infected him with an STD.

After he divorced her, he was engaged four times, but for various reasons, he walked away from all those relationships. The fourth time, as he was removing the woman from his apartment, he literally kicked her and ruptured her spleen. He ended up spending a year in prison, where he met a chaplain who invited him into conversation. She shared



the gospel with Dan, and he surrendered his life to Jesus.

People all over the world are in various kinds of prisons—physical, spiritual, emotional. Jesus described Satan as a thief who comes to “steal and kill and destroy.” By contrast, Jesus offers abundant life. The world needs churches and ministries that are intentional about releasing people from captivity to sin and engaging them in the life that only Jesus can offer. [MIMBS 2](#)

Briefly explain how you came to know Jesus, or why you would like to know Jesus. Share your thoughts with a man from your group.

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

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

Romans 8:29

God has a purpose for every person who ever *has* or ever *will* live on earth. He intends for us to “be conformed to the image of his Son.” In other words, He wants us to look like Jesus. He intends for individual believers and communities of believers to bring that reality to people all over the world. But research indicates this doesn’t happen unless Christians become intentional about pursuing God’s plan. When I was doing my doctoral work at a secular university, I studied the Church from a management perspective.

I researched common factors of churches that successfully disciple men. I found three common factors: 1) a vision to disciple

men rather than simply hold meetings; 2) a determination to disciple men, no matter what it takes; 3) a sustainable system or model. Without a plan, discipleship may happen on a very small scale, through specific individuals. But a ministry that creates and engages a sustainable plan for discipleship will maximize its results in the lives of men in their congregation and beyond. [MIMBS 2](#)

Have you ever been part of a sustainable plan for discipleship? If so, how were you impacted?

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

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

Matthew 28:18-20

Jesus didn’t send out His followers to enlist people to sing in the church choir, or to work in the youth ministry, or to tithe. Those tasks are important, but they weren’t Jesus’ primary target. Jesus commanded His disciples to reproduce themselves by producing more disciples.

A disciple is simply a person who responds to God in love and obedience. A disciple does tasks as an overflow of the rich resources God is continually placing within him. This person has potential to engage others, who will in turn engage others. The natural result is a growing ministry, impacting people at various levels of commitment, and encouraging them to love

God and serve in His Kingdom.

Man in the Mirror has developed a model for this type of ministry, and churches that use it generally see 84 percent more men engaged in discipleship activities within about 30 months, and 48 percent more men attending the fellowship. Discipleship is the portal priority for growing churches.

☐MIMBS 2

Describe someone you’ve seen who “does tasks as an overflow of the rich resources God is continually placing within him.” How has that person’s lifestyle impacted you?

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

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Galatians 6:9-10

Man in the Mirror Ministries has worked with churches all across America. Early on, we noticed ministry leaders spending lots of energy on great events, with no plan for using the momentum to propel additional ministry. That’s kind of like cooling your home to 72 degrees on a hot summer day, and opening your windows so the energy escapes.

Suppose you’ve been praying for a guy at work. Suddenly he faces a life crisis, and you invite him to meet for coffee. Asking him to make a three-year commitment to a weekly Bible study probably is too much of a leap. But it’s also a travesty to walk away without trying to move him to the next step. You might buy a good book that

targets his particular crisis, and suggest that you meet once a week for a month to discuss it.

Always try to capture momentum. Nature requires the greatest amount of energy to put a stationary object in motion. Similarly, it takes a lot of energy to get a man moving toward Jesus. Once he is moving, don’t waste the momentum. ☐MIMBS 2

In your own words, explain how today’s scripture applies to this principle of capturing momentum to propel future ministry.

Daily Reading: *Deuteronomy 34:1–Joshua 2:24, Luke 13:22-14:6, Psalm 79:1-13, Proverbs 12:26*

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant.

Philippians 2:5-7

A disciple-maker must first be a disciple, and that implies that he imitates Jesus, who took “the very nature of a servant.” We all start as slaves, roped together, plundered by our enemy Satan. We become God’s sons through Jesus Christ. Young sons can certainly be selfish, but as we mature in Christ, we should become more and more interested and engaged in serving our Father.

A few days ago I mentioned Dan, my driver in Calgary, Alberta. Dan met Jesus while he was in prison. He floundered for a while, because he didn’t know anyone with an intentional discipleship process. Then he heard me challenge a group about disciple-making. He took that to heart, pulling together a group with four other men and spending eight weeks studying one of our Man in the Mirror books. They and their wives were buoyed by the changes Jesus was making in their lives. So they approached

church leaders about doing a men’s event. Their church of about 130 people hosted a men’s event, attracting 30 participants and

yielding another follow-up group with seven men who wanted to study the same book.

Dan would tell you he’s one of the most unlikely guys to be leading other men in discipleship. But he understands his role. He’s a servant,

helping to create a system that will engage disciples in the process of making more disciples. It’s a great start, with potential to go far beyond his own congregation, impacting their community as they capture momentum to propel future ministry. ☐MIMBS 2

Today’s passage indicates that servanthood is anchored in humility. When was the last time you had a chance to really serve someone? How did you respond? Why?

Daily Reading: *Joshua 3:1-9:2, Luke 14:7-16:18, Psalm 80:1-82:8, Proverbs 12:27-13:3*



For Your Small Group

☐ **April 7–13: Take a few minutes to share about your experience with discipleship or your desire for discipleship.**

- How many in your group have had a discipleship experience with someone? How many wished they had that kind of experience?
- How is your small group or your church providing opportunities for discipleship?

Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.
Psalm 119:18

Several years ago, my wife and I purchased a DVD player. It came with an instruction manual, which I never read.

Now, I have trouble getting the lid off a peanut butter jar, and my wife is even less mechanical than I. Besides that, we had several remote controls, some belonging to appliances that had long since left our home. But we did have three main clickers for the TV and its accompanying equipment.

So, soon after we bought the player, I went away for the weekend, and she wanted to watch a DVD. I tried talking her through the process via telephone. “Patsy,” I said, “you need to get the gray remote...” But, of course, two of the remotes were gray, and she got the wrong one, and soon we both were frustrated.

We never did get her DVD going, and I realized that sometimes guessing just isn’t good enough. Sometimes we need to read the owner’s manual and see how things are supposed to be done. Frankly, that’s what scriptures like the Ten Commandments are all about—they outline guidelines to protect our lives.  **MIMBS 3**

Describe something you’ve learned from the Ten Commandments that protected you and enabled you to live a fruitful life.

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

☐ Tuesday—April 15 • Types of Commandments

Moses summoned all Israel and said: Hear, Israel, the decrees and laws I declare in your hearing today. Learn them and be sure to follow them.
Deuteronomy 5:1

Biblical scholars tell us the Old Testament includes three kinds of laws:

- **Judicial laws** give instructions in situations that, in today’s culture, could lead to lawsuits, etc. For instance, “Your ox gored my ox, and here’s what you need to do about it.” Usually, these laws do not apply in our culture.
- **Ceremonial laws** give instruction for atoning for sin. For instance, “Take some hyssop and dip it in blood and sprinkle it.” Again, these laws applied to specific times and situations.
- **Moral law** applies to all people, at all times, in all places, in all ways. These laws are intuitive—they are not limited to Judeo-Christian systems, because

all people inherently recognize their value.

The Ten Commandments fall into that final category. They are given and repeated in Scripture, as if to underscore their importance. They are not outdated rules from a bygone era, but guidelines for living a life of integrity that honors God today. **MIMBS 3**

Have you ever been confused by the Old Testament laws? Did you realize that there were three categories? What can we learn from judicial and ceremonial laws about God’s character, even though we may not apply those specific laws today?

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

The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him; the cords of his sin hold him fast. He will die for lack of discipline, led astray by his own great folly.
Proverbs 5:22–23

Some people—believers and unbelievers alike—see God as a “control freak,” establishing rules to regulate our lives. They tend to see the Ten Commandments as a huge electrified barbed wire fence—a prison designed to restrain and control our behavior. If they’re truly honest, they probably believe God’s commandments separate them from the things that would really make them happy. They believe the old adage, “The grass is always greener on the other side.”

This same perspective is expressed by a child who says, “Daddy is mean to me. He won’t let me hit my sister!” Generally speaking, two kinds of people entertain this viewpoint: 1) People who link happiness with being able to do whatever they want, whenever they want. 2) People who grew

up in homes with legalistic, controlling parents, so they transpose their feelings into relationship with God.

If you stiffen a bit when you hear the Ten Commandments, you might want to examine your perspective. The Ten Commandments actually reflect God’s grace, protecting us from ourselves so He can provide what we really want. **MIMBS 3**

Discuss with some brother your gut-level emotional reactions to the Ten Commandments. If your reaction is negative, is that because you don’t “like” or agree with the commandments themselves, or because you mistrust their intention? Why?

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

☐ Thursday—April 17 • A Man’s Perspective

When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.
1 Corinthians 13:12

If you stiffen or grimace when you hear the Ten Commandments, you may be clinging to a childish perspective. In writing to the Corinthian believers, the apostle Paul called believers to put away that view and see things like an adult. This means coming to understand that, while God’s commandments do create a “fence,” they’re designed to protect our freedom—not limit it.

If you have children, you set up rules and boundaries to protect them from things they don’t understand. Telling a toddler to never touch the stove isn’t meant to restrict him from eating! It’s meant to keep him from burning himself. A three-year-old simply doesn’t know



how to use a stove safely, so we say “no” to protect him.

When we see God as a loving Father, we understand that everything on the other side of the fence is harmful rather than beneficial. There may be quicksand, or a cliff, or a ferocious lion. You’re protected from those things if you stay inside the barrier. But if you ignore His commands and do the things He declared “off limits,” you’ve moved outside the barbed wire of His protection. **MIMBS 3**

How do the Ten Commandments protect us from things that might be harmful? Have you seen someone not follow a commandment that resulted in them getting hurt?

Daily Reading: *Joshua 15:1-63, Luke 18:18-43, Psalm 86:1-17, Proverbs 13:9-10*

Walk in all the way that the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.

Deuteronomy 5:33

Growing up in God requires us to embrace His perspective, seeing His commandments as our blessing and our protection. Today's featured verse reveals God's heart. Our submission to His protective orders brings the results that we all crave. God gave the Ten Commandments as a grace, so that when people finally persevere in obedience, they experience the full riches of abundant life.

You may know that I love to race cars. I remember one January when my car got really beaten up in a race. Several parts had to be rebuilt. When you first take your car out after you've made a lot of repairs, you usually find some other issues that didn't show up in the shop. The first time I took it out after that massive restoration job, I was watching everything carefully. Sure enough, three times in my first session, the car popped out of gear after I tried to shift up to fourth gear. Here's why that's a



problem—I have a racing flywheel, which allows the revs to spin up very quickly. So this over-revved the engine. One time it went to 10,200 revs.

At first it seemed like everything was going well. I won the pole, and I won the qualifying race. But then we went into the main feature, which was a three-hour endurance race. By that time, the valves were slightly bent from the over-revving, and we were losing compression on two cylinders. The engine became sicker and sicker, and we ended up finishing third. Why? Because I had exceeded the boundary of what the engine would tolerate.

In a similar way, the Ten Commandments set our boundaries, and when we go beyond them, we over-rev ourselves. We will break down. God's commandments keep us running smoothly so we can experience His promised abundant life.  MIMBS 3

Write a brief prayer to thank God for the gracious gift of His protective commandments. Is there an area of your life where you need a course correction to protect from “over-revving”? Add a line to the prayer asking God to work in your heart.

Daily Reading: *Joshua 16:1-22:20, Luke 19:1-20:26, Psalm 87:1-89:13, Proverbs 13:11-16*



For Your Small Group

☐ April 14–20: Read aloud to the group the Ten Commandments from an easy-to-understand version (New Living Translation, New King James, etc.) of Exodus 20.

- As a child or young person, what was your impression of the Ten Commandments? Has that perception changed?
- Do they seem relevant in today's society?
- What do the Ten Commandments tell us about the character of God?

The Lord knows the thoughts of man; he knows that they are futile. Blessed is the man you discipline, O LORD, the man you teach from your law.

Psalm 94:11–12

I didn't realize the cultural popularity of swearing till I started hanging out with race fans. In my circles, people avoid talking like that. So when I'm going to the track, I brace myself for it. Although they may use offensive language, I've met many at the racetrack who really are interested in matters of faith.

One weekend I spent more than an hour with such a man. He had enjoyed considerable business success, serving as CEO in a couple of major corporations. He believed in God and in Jesus Christ. But in our conversation I discovered that, for more than 10 years, he had been trying to fit Jesus into

his own worldview.

Jesus doesn't fit into worldviews. He is a worldview. Every man who truly wants a life-altering faith must quit viewing Jesus as the world does, and start viewing the world as Jesus does.  MIMBS 4

What are you doing to help you move from viewing Jesus as the world does, and start viewing the world as Jesus does? How could you help another man with this transition today?

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

I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.

Philippians 3:8

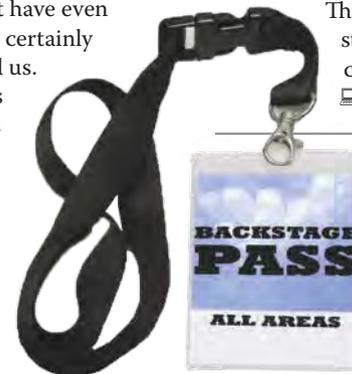
Several years ago my wife and I saw a Broadway musical. We felt almost like we knew the people on stage—like they were our friends. But of course, we had never really talked to them. If we had seen them on the street, we might not have even recognized them, and they certainly would not have recognized us.

As it happened, my wife's sister has a friend who was able to get us backstage after the performance, so we actually met the lead vocalists. We conversed with them, found out about their personal histories and how they came to be on stage in such prominent positions. We went from just knowing who they were to actually knowing them.

In a spiritual sense, I've met a lot of guys who think they know Jesus because they've seen Him like an actor on stage. But they've never gone behind the scenes to establish a personal relationship with Him.

The secret is to get them backstage, engaging in personal conversation with our Lord.

 MIMBS 4



Name one friend or acquaintance who knows about Jesus, but you're not sure if he really knows Him. How can you engage that man in personal conversation with our Lord?

Daily Reading: *Joshua 24:1-33, Luke 21:1-28, Psalm*

89:38-52, Proverbs 13:20-23

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

1 Corinthians 1:18

When I go to the gym, a radio is playing in the background. One day when I was preparing to speak on the above passage, and I went to work out, the dial was set to a talk radio station. The host was using foul language throughout his discourse. I thought about changing the station, because it was offensive to me. But then I decided to listen to the radio voice for a while to better understand those who gain a following in the world because of their supposed wisdom and knowledge. It's amazing how far away from the truth you can get when you surround yourself with sycophants who flatter you.

If I had a chance to talk to the radio host, I would not waste time talking about my denomination, or about moral behavior, or even about his foul language. My best chance to have a meaningful conversation would be to stick to the simple message of the cross. I don't know how he would respond, but I do know that nothing else has the power to bring salvation.

☐ MIMBS 4

How do you respond to and converse with a person whose lifestyle offends you?

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

Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.

1 Corinthians 1:22-25

When you get serious about sharing the Gospel, you will find that some men want a miracle and others are looking for wisdom. They want Jesus to fit into their worldview, rather than forcing their viewpoint to submit to Jesus. They try to reason things out through logic and earthly wisdom.



The apostle Paul reminds us of what they really need—the Gospel. That message can be expressed in many ways, but I often use a memory device that summarizes it in three short lines:

- Adam failed (sin against a holy God).
- Jesus was nailed (paying for sin on the cross).

- Grace prevailed (all those who repent receive new life).

When you offer that message, if the person doesn't respond favorably, don't give up. Keep praying that God will call him.

And when the opportunity

opens, keep sharing. The passage above reminds us that, regardless of whether people are seeking miracles or worldly wisdom, God can effectually call them into His Kingdom. ☐ MIMBS 4

Who was instrumental in bringing you into God's Kingdom? How did they influence you to make that decision?

Daily Reading: *Judges 2:10-3:31, Luke 22:14-34, Psalm 92:1-93:5, Proverbs 14:1-2*

I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

1 Corinthians 2:2-5

If you want to be effective in ministry to men, then pray and prepare for a demonstration of the Holy Spirit's power. Effectiveness does not come through your own wisdom, intellect, or cleverness. You may even negate the Holy Spirit's power if you try to witness and minister in your own strength.

Bill Bright once told me of a pastor who had been using *The Four Spiritual Laws* booklet for a couple of years without ever leading a person to Jesus. He came to ask Dr. Bright why that was happening, and Dr. Bright replied, "Go through it with me. Show me what you're doing."

So the man opened the book and read the first principle: "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." He worked his way through the book, stopping after each simple truth to offer a five-minute theological explanation. The pastor kept describing various nuances of the Scripture verses and the points in the booklet.

Finally Dr. Bright said, "I think I know your problem. Instead of trying to explain

with all those persuasive words, why don't you just read the booklet, word for word, and then let the Holy Spirit do His work?"



The pastor said he would try it. Suddenly his ministry exploded, because he was coming in weakness and trembling rather than relying on his own clever speech. He just gave the simple message of the

Gospel, and people responded! Scripture says if people keep their mouths shut, God can even make stones cry out His praise. But He doesn't want to do that. He wants to use us, which is pretty exciting. But we must be willing to come in weakness, making room for His Spirit to work.

☐ MIMBS 4

Have you been trying to share the Gospel with little or no response? Have you been relying on your own wisdom and strength, or on God's? Discuss this with a brother and agree to pray and encourage each other to share your faith.

Daily Reading: *Judges 4:1-8:17, Luke 22:35-23:43, Psalm 94:1-98:9, Proverbs 14:3-8*



For Your Small Group

☐ **April 21-27: Make two lists: "How the World Views Jesus" and "How Jesus Views the World."**

- What insights can you gain from those two lists?
- How should your view of the world change based on what you know about Jesus' view of the world?

Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but whoever hates correction is stupid.

Proverbs 12:1

Suppose your son knows he's not supposed to hit his sister, but he does it anyway. When you confront him, he says, "I'm sorry." Will you forgive him? Of course, but that probably won't end the discussion, because you will want to tutor his heart so he stops the negative behavior. Based on your level of wisdom, you will do whatever it takes to correct

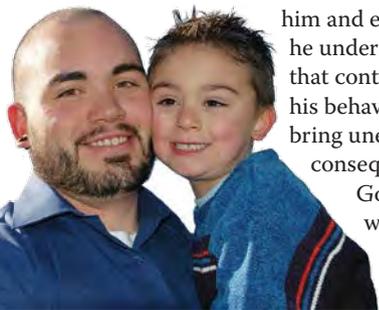
him and ensure he understands that continuing his behavior will bring unenjoyable consequences.

God deals with men in a similar way. Men's

lives obviously are much more complex than this boyish example, and the stakes are higher, but God's objective with us is exactly the same as a parent's. When we stray, He will do whatever is necessary to correct and restore us to a life of obedience. Scripture illustrates that vividly in the life of King David, who knew God's character and His Word, yet fell into sin. The consequences were heavy, but the Old Testament reveals that God corrected and restored him. [MIMBS 5](#)

Today's passage says, "Whoever hates correction is stupid." Why do you think that is true? How do you see men hating correction around you?

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



In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem.

2 Samuel 11:1

Acts 13:22 notes that God called King David "a man after my own heart," saying, "he will do everything I want him to do." So, God had an incredibly high regard for David. Leading up to today's verse in 2 Samuel, David had enjoyed an unparalleled career as a national hero, a decorated general, and a national king.

Then, today's Scripture tells us that David remained in Jerusalem rather than going off to war. During that time he noticed a young lady named Bathsheba, the wife of David's employee named Uriah. David lusted after the woman and committed adultery with her, and she became pregnant. Then to cover himself, he had Uriah murdered.

In terms of obedience to God and His

Word, David went from hero to zero very quickly. We can learn several godly lessons from this account, including the fact that it appears this idea started when David stayed home rather than going to war. **If you're where you shouldn't be, you risk being tempted to do what you shouldn't do.** And just like David, you can quickly slide from hero to zero. [MIMBS 5](#)

In your own words, describe how this example from David's life serves as a warning for anyone who really wants to honor God and His Word.

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

Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.

2 Samuel 12:9-10

David committed adultery with Bathsheba and then had her husband killed to cover the sin. God sent the prophet Nathan to confront David with the fact that he had violated God's commandments. Nathan told a parable about a man who had lots of sheep of his own, but he insisted on stealing someone else's to feed a guest. David was incensed by the story, and then Nathan turned it around and said, "You're the man, David. You took what wasn't yours."

There are no secret sins. Hebrews 4:13 tells us, "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account." God knows

our sin, and He intervenes to correct and discipline, with the intention of rescuing His rebellious children. David's story demonstrates that God will expose a person's sin, and He will allow that individual to endure the consequences of rebellious choices. But God's purpose is to lovingly draw His child to repentance, forgiveness, and restoration. [MIMBS 5](#)

In hindsight, how have you seen God's love and mercy evidenced even when you experienced His correction and discipline? Share your thoughts with another man.

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

Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan replied, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. But because by doing this you have shown utter contempt for the LORD, the son born to you will die."

2 Samuel 12:13-14

I believe the story about David's guilt in coveting, adultery and murder was preserved to help us remember that any sin can be forgiven. Isaiah 53:6 notes that all of us have "gone astray." Because Jesus paid the penalty for our sins, we all can admit our sin and turn away from it.

Regardless of how heinous our sin is, we can repent and receive forgiveness. But that doesn't mean there will be no consequences. David's son died. But the prophet Nathan also warned that, because of David's sin, calamity would come upon his household. History shows the unraveling of David's family, as one son raped David's daughter, then another son murdered the rapist to gain revenge, and the murderous

son eventually tried to steal David's kingdom.

We live in a culture that preaches "tolerance," so much so that sometimes we forget that choices bring consequences. The biblical reality is that sin can be forgiven. Our relationship with God can be restored. But that won't necessarily erase the earthly consequences of our choices and our behavior. [MIMBS 5](#)

Why is it important to understand that God's forgiveness won't necessarily erase earthly consequences for our choices and our behavior?

Daily Reading: *Judges 13:1-14:20, John 1:29-51, Psalm 102:1-28, Proverbs 14:15-16*

Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Hebrews 12:9-11

The Old Testament describes the enormous consequences David endured because of his adultery and murder. God can forgive any sin, but He doesn't necessarily erase the consequences of our poor choices. Yet David eventually wrote, "It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees" (Psalm 119:71).

When I was in real estate development, I knew Proverbs 22:26-27: "Do not be one who ... puts up security for debts; if you lack the means to pay, your very bed will be snatched from under you." Because I refused to take on personal guarantees, I sacrificed a lot of great real estate deals. Finally I encountered a deal that was "too good to pass up." I pledged every asset I had. In spite of what I knew from God's Word, that foolish action became my habit. Debt is fun in a bull market, and I went on a debt orgy. Then the bull market went bear. Within six months, property values plummeted by 50 percent, and I had borrowed at 75 percent of the higher values. I spent

seven years accumulating an unconscionable amount of debt, and suddenly I faced insolvency. God forgave me, and by His grace I remained solvent. But every day for the next seven years, I dealt with the consequences of my greed.

Here's what I learned: When a man gets too big for his britches, the solution is not bigger britches. I was bloated by arrogance, and deceived by the temporary excitement of sin. I'm grateful that God loved me enough to rescue and train me. Even when we stray,

God doesn't abandon us. He does whatever it takes to correct us and restore us to a path of loving obedience. **MIMBS 5**

What consequences have you experienced for your poor choices, and how has God used them to correct and restore you in your relationship with Him? Share your experience with your group.

Daily Reading: Judges 15:1-20:48, John 2:1-4:3, Psalm 103:1-104:35, Proverbs 14:17-24



For Your Small Group

April 28—May 4: Name some people from current events who have gone from Hero to Zero like King David did in the Old Testament.

- What do they have in common?
- Have any of those people gone through a time of restoration?
- How is David's story a comfort to you? What is the caution of David's story?

Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

Genesis 2:22-24

I answered the phone, and the caller asked for my wife Patsy. I said, "She's not here right now, but I'm her husband and best friend. Can I help you with something?" There was silence on the other end, like the caller was baffled by my declaration.

Scripture describes marriage as the highest expression of human relationship. The Book of Genesis describes marriage as a "one flesh" relationship. God's Word does not describe any other human bond in that way. And Revelation, the Bible's final book, shows Jesus Himself as a groom taking His Bride to heaven for a great wedding supper.

A married man who does not clearly honor his wife as his top priority does not recognize the significance that God puts on

that relationship. Periodic self-evaluation is always helpful. Is your relationship with your wife the most important in your life, after your relationship with God? And if it is, how are you communicating that priority to your wife, and to the world? **MIMBS 6**

If you're married, describe one thing you've done in the last week to communicate to your wife the level of priority that you place on your relationship. If you're not married, describe one thing you would try to do on a regular basis to honor your wife above all other human relationships, if you do marry.

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

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

Ephesians 5:25

The great Christian writer C.S. Lewis wrote a book called *The Four Loves* in which he labeled and described four different expressions of love: affection, friendship, eros (physical love), and charity. Those expressions apply to all kinds of relationships, including marriage. Many men who are not "giving themselves up" for their wives concentrate primarily on love's physical aspects. But Lewis gives examples of how all four expressions occur in a healthy marriage. He clearly explains that "not all kisses between lovers are lovers' kisses." These four expressions, when woven together, produce a healthy whole.

Lewis explains that eros goes beyond simple sexuality. It's about being "in love" with someone. In other words, eros makes a man not just want any woman, but one particular woman. In a mysterious but quite

indisputable fashion, the lover desires the beloved herself—not just the pleasure she can give. A man who is truly "in love" will want to be his wife's lover, but he also will want to initiate, to show non-sexual affection, and to be her best friend. **MIMBS 6**

If you're married, how will you show all four expressions of love to your wife in the coming week? If you're not married, how will your understanding of these four expressions help you when you are choosing a wife?

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

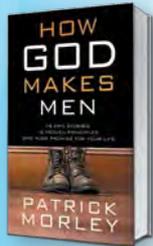


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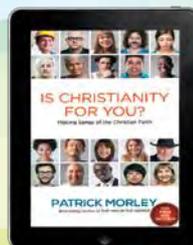
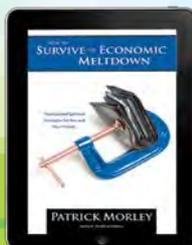
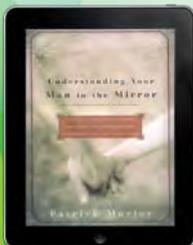
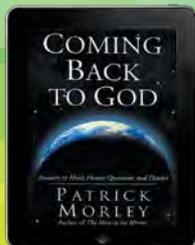
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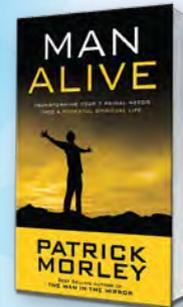
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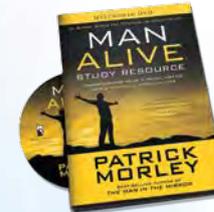
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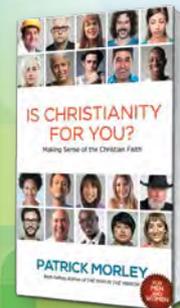


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Wednesday—May 7 • We View Life Differently

In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church.

Ephesians 5:28-29

It's no secret that men and women view most things in life differently, including sexual love. Men tend to see life through the lens of task, while women see through a lens of relationship. For a man, sex often is a mission. It can happen suddenly, and then be over. A woman is not aroused in the same way that a man is. For a woman, satisfying sex is usually the result of many kindnesses done by her husband, all through the week. It's when you've given yourself in little ways, like in helping with chores or in non-sexual touch. It's when you've really conversed and listened that she opens her heart to you. Or as today's Scripture says, it's when you've paid attention to her and loved her with the same care

you would give to your own body.

Scripture clearly requires the husband to be the spiritual leader, initiating in the expression of love. Biblically, a husband has the responsibility to love his wife as he loves his own body, and this releases her to respond with physical and sexual intimacy.

[MIMBS 6](#)

List three ways that a husband can love his wife as he loves his own body, while acknowledging the fact that men and women view life differently. Share your ideas with the group.

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

Thursday—May 8 • Romantic Love

May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer—may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be intoxicated with her love.

Proverbs 5:18-19

Romantic love can be marked by a sense of intoxication. That heady feeling can change with time, but if we are wise and intentional about protecting it, it doesn't have to diminish. In fact, through emotional and physical investments, it can actually grow richer and more satisfying.

Gary Chapman's book *The Five Love Languages* explains that we all feel love in different ways. Most of us tend to express love in the way that we best receive it. For instance, I feel most loved when someone spends time with me. So I thought I was communicating affection to my wife Patsy when I invested time in hanging around with her. After we had been married for 23 years, I realized that Patsy feels most loved when someone does tasks of service for her.

I had been smothering her with time, but she feels loved when I do things to help her. If you really want to preserve the romantic feeling in your marriage, seek to discover what makes your wife feel loved, and then do it. [MIMBS 6](#)

What steps will you take to ensure that you really understand what makes your wife feel loved?

Daily Reading: *1 Samuel 2:22-4:22, John 5:24-47, Psalm 106:1-12, Proverbs 14:30-31*



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

1 Peter 3:7

In previous devotionals we've discussed investments of time and service as expressions of love. Some people also feel love through being touched or receiving gifts.

And for most of us, considerate, attentive listening makes us feel valued and loved. In his book *Understanding Each Other*, Paul Tournier noted two great fears inhibiting true communication: the fear of receiving advice, and the fear of criticism. Possibly you've had a situation where you finally got the courage to approach someone to talk about something that had been bothering you. Perhaps you got about three sentences into your explanation, and the person jumped in and said, "Here's what you should do about that..." Something inside probably withered, and you withdrew.

The same thing happens to our wives. So when I first read Tournier's book, I decided to really listen to my wife. One night after dinner, Patsy began discussing a problem that had been troubling her for several months. She spoke



about three sentences and then paused. I realized this was an intuitively timed pause based on her experience of my butting in to fix her problem. I held my tongue and returned her gaze. She looked puzzled.

After a few moments she spoke another few lines, then paused again. I waited, and she went on. We did this several times, until she finished what she had to say.

As far as I know, this was the first time I intentionally let her talk until she was finished. In the process, she was healed of an emotional pain that had been building for several months. Really listening can "fix" more than advice can. And in the process, your wife will feel loved.

☐ MIMBS 6

Describe a time that someone really listened to you without offering advice or criticism. How did it affect you? How did it affect your relationship with that person?

Daily Reading: 1 Samuel 5:1-11:15, John 6:1-6:71, Psalm 106:13-107:43, Proverbs 14:32-15:3



For Your Small Group

☐ **May 5-11: Make a list of practical ways you've recently demonstrated love to your wife.**

- Do you know which of those was most effective in letting your wife know how much you love her? Were any of those unsuccessful? How do you know?
- What could you do this week to show your wife how much you love her?

When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. Then I said: "O LORD, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night.

Nehemiah 1:4-6a

Nehemiah had a good job which took him before important people. He was physically separated from Israel's ruins. He could have surrendered to complacency, letting his location and limitations keep him from responding to Israel's dilemma. Yet when he heard about the stark realities in Jerusalem, his first response was to humble himself and pray. Nehemiah's dreams grew beyond his own circumstances. (See Nehemiah 2:12.)

That's the difference between ambition and calling. Ambition comes from man, while calling comes from God.

A lot of men pursue temporal goals that apply only to this world, leading primarily to their own benefit. Nehemiah dreamed

about things that would impact a nation. His written account has engaged men and women throughout the generations, motivating them to attempt the "impossible." God alone knows the full result of Nehemiah's willingness to pursue dreams that would take him beyond the limits of what he could accomplish on his own.

☐ MIMBS 7

Has God called you to goals that could impact a nation? Would you be open to that? What are some ideas you've had that might have a huge impact for the Kingdom? Share these with a brother or in your small group.

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

I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you. We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.

Nehemiah 1:6b-7

Nehemiah responded to a crisis report from Jerusalem by praying. He opened by recounting God's character. He noted God's covenant-keeping love and attentiveness to those in relationship with Him. Then he immediately moved into repentance, identifying himself with the sins of his people. "We have acted wickedly," he said, not "They have acted wickedly."

It's impossible for a proud man to repent. True repentance can only come accompanied by humility. That's why Scripture says God "gives grace to the humble" (Proverbs 3:34b), and "He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way" (Psalm 25:9).

If you want to discover God's vision for

your life, then I challenge you to start on your knees. Humble yourself and repent. That's where Nehemiah discovered the vision God had for him, and it was a vision that was bigger than anything Nehemiah could do on his own. It was a vision for rebuilding and restoring his homeland and the people who lived there. ☐ MIMBS 7

Can a proud man truly repent? When you look at your own heart, is there unconfessed pride that is keeping you from true repentance? How does humility lead to seeing God's vision for your life?

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

When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about this, they were very much disturbed that someone had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites.
Nehemiah 2:10

God gave opportunity for Nehemiah to seek the king's help in accomplishing his vision from God. The king actually asked, "What do you want?" Nehemiah asked for a lot: permission to leave the king's household, paperwork for safe passage and resources for the rebuilding project. Nehemiah notes, "Because the gracious hand of my God was on me, the king granted my requests" (Nehemiah 2:8). Nehemiah was on his way. Yet he experienced repeated resistance from two men named Sanballat and Tobiah. They didn't want anyone to rebuild Israel and heaped ridicule on the Jews and even threatened to attack before the walls could be finished. But the people relied on God's strength and finished the walls. Don't assume that resistance means you

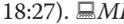
are out of God's will. Return to God in prayer. Seek His wisdom to interpret your circumstances, and His empowerment to resist the opposition.  MIMBS 7



When you start pursuing a God-given vision, why is it important to expect resistance? How should you respond to it? Share your thoughts with a few other men.
Daily Reading: 1 Samuel 15:1-16:23, John 8:1-20, Psalm 110:1-7, Proverbs 15:8-10

Eliashib the high priest and his fellow priests went to work and rebuilt the Sheep Gate. . . The men of Jericho built the adjoining section, and Zakkur son of Imri built next to them.
Nehemiah 3:1-2

Nehemiah goes on to list various groups who engaged in rebuilding Jerusalem's wall. Something like 40 different groups lent their strength and energy to this project. They had a plan, and they worked next to each other, assuming responsibility for various sections. Some had a vision to rebuild a large portion of the wall, and others worked only on the portion right in front of their homes. But they were all working in unity on the same wall. I see this as a picture of Christians working together to restore the church and our culture. It may require Episcopalians to work beside Lutherans, or Baptists to work next to Methodists. People will have

different tasks, but as we work in unity, with one overarching goal, we can do great things. It doesn't really matter how big or small your part is. Just make sure you're engaged in the overall vision of rebuilding the church. Remember, God works through weak men who humbly accept their own limitations, accepting that "what is impossible with man is possible with God" (Luke 18:27).  MIMBS 7

Are you engaged in the overall vision of rebuilding the church? Explain your answer.
Daily Reading: 1 Samuel 17:1-18:4, John 8:21-30, Psalm 111:1-10, Proverbs 15:11

So the wall was completed . . . in fifty-two days.
Nehemiah 6:15

Through God's empowerment, Nehemiah responded to a crisis. He pursued a God-given plan, even in the face of great difficulty. He enlisted the help of other people. These Hebrew people apparently lived in a state of disarray for 100 years. Yet under Nehemiah's leadership, they completely restored the city wall in only 52 days. Nehemiah 7:4 tells us "the city was large and spacious, but there were few people in it." So Nehemiah went on to establish a plan to repopulate Jerusalem, sustaining the work that had already been finished. Nehemiah allowed God to use him as an instrument to bring healing and restoration to an entire nation.

We've listed statistics that indicate our own nation is in a spiritual state of emergency. We see the ruins all around us: broken homes, broken lives and broken people. It's time to ask ourselves, What are we going to do about it? I went to a little African American Methodist Church in Jackson, Mississippi. I was impressed with

their accomplishments, so I asked the pastor, "What's the secret of your success?" He said, "I work with the present and the willing, not the absent and the able." He understood a very important principle. Unexpected leaders are sitting all around you—men you wouldn't normally expect to have the skills necessary for the task at hand. God is looking for men who will stop assessing our crisis in terms of human resources, humbly exchanging their own limitations for God's infinite power and capacity. Having a good heart and wanting to do something great for God simply isn't enough. But if you're present and you're willing, God can use you in His plan to rebuild and restore the broken places in our culture.  MIMBS 7



Have you been among "the present and the willing" or among the "absent and the able"?
Daily Reading: 1 Samuel 18:5-23:29, John 8:31-10:21, Psalm 112:1-115:18, Proverbs 15:12-19



For Your Small Group

- ☐ **May 12 -18: One of the devotions this week tells us "Ambition comes from man, while calling comes from God."**
- What is the difference between ambition and calling?
 - Share a time when you acted out of ambition and a time when you acted out of calling from God.
 - How did the results differ?

The angel of the LORD came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, “The LORD is with you, mighty warrior.”
Judges 6:11-12

Judges 6 explains that the Israelites had abandoned the lifestyle that God desired, so He allowed them to be oppressed by the Midianites. Finally the Israelites cried out for help, and in response, God sent an angel to a man named Gideon. He was hiding from the Midianites, trying to keep them from stealing his family’s food. The angel greeted this cowering man as a “mighty warrior.”

While we generally see ourselves as we are, God sees us as we will be. Gideon responded by asking why all of these horrible things were happening to his family and his nation. He even expressed his belief that God had abandoned them. God didn’t answer Gideon’s questions. He simply said, “Go in the strength



you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand” (Judges 6:14).
In a similar way, God won’t necessarily answer our questions about why things are the way they are. But He does call each of His followers to be His redeeming agent in the culture around us. We are His plan for transforming our world. [MIMBS 8](#)

Today’s devotional says, “While we generally see ourselves as we are, God sees us as we will be.” When has God revealed to you that He sees you in a different way than you see yourself? How?

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

“Pardon me, my lord,” Gideon replied, “but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.” The LORD answered, “I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive.”
Judges 6:15-16

An angel appeared to Gideon, telling the young man that God wanted him to deliver his nation from the oppression of the Midianites. Gideon was understandably hesitant, and he pointed out to the angel that his family was the weakest in Israel, and he was the weakest in his family.

How was he supposed to do what God desired? God didn’t say, “Oops! I guess I’m talking to the wrong guy! I meant to give this message to someone else!” He didn’t accuse Gideon of false modesty. He wasn’t surprised by Gideon’s lack of power or position or status. But He implied that it didn’t matter. Gideon asked, “Given my limitations, how am I supposed to do what You’ve

asked?” God simply replied, “I’ll be with you.”
God says the same thing to every person who follows Him. You may feel you’re the most unlikely person to do the task that God has quickened to your mind. But if God has given you a passion, He also will give you the ability and resources to accomplish His desire. [MIMBS 8](#)

Has God given you a specific passion or desire? Have you seen Him working through you? Why or why not?

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

The LORD said to Gideon, “You have too many men. I cannot deliver Midian into their hands, or Israel would boast against me, ‘My own strength has saved me.’”
Judges 7:2

God called Gideon to wage war against an enemy nation, and He graciously gave Gideon several signs to let the young man know this incredibly difficult assignment was authored by the Lord of the Universe (see Judges 6 and 7).
Gideon assembled 32,000 troops, starting with an army that was about one-fourth the size of the Midianite force, with its 132,000 soldiers. That seems like a daunting enough task. But then God said, “If you go to battle with that many, you’ll be able to say you gained victory yourselves!” So God took the Israelites through a process of elimination, until Gideon finally led only 300 men. The “odds” went from daunting to seemingly impossible. Yet, because of

faithful obedience, God empowered the 300 Israelites to rout the huge enemy force.
God intentionally chose a weak man, then reduced his forces to 300 soldiers. He clearly demonstrated that, when it comes to our obedience, unlikely odds simply don’t matter. Even our personal strength or weakness is immaterial. God’s unlimited power is available to bring about His purpose. [MIMBS 8](#)

What personal calling has God revealed to you? How does today’s devotional encourage you to pursue that calling?
Daily Reading: *1 Samuel 29:1-31:13, John 11:55-12:19, Psalm 118:1-18, Proverbs 15:24-26*

From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands.
Acts 17:26

God wants us to grow exactly where He sets us. Last year I joined a new gym, so I began relating to guys around me. Soon I had engaged about 10 men in meaningful conversations. I chatted for about a month with a guy using equipment beside me. Eventually I asked where he was in his spiritual journey. He tightened up, so I smiled and asked a few more questions. He had prayed for help when he was a young man and got no answer, so he “realized it was a bunch of nonsense.” I just listened to him rant and said, “I’m sorry that happened.”

A few weeks later he asked about my occupation, so I replied, “One thing I do is write books for men.”



He agreed to read my most recent book. I knew God put me in that specific place, so I was looking for His specific purpose. Sometimes He isn’t asking us to change the whole world. He’s just asking us to talk to Joe or Bill or Chase, so they can understand and respond to His offer of abundant life. [MIMBS 8](#)

Describe three environments where you frequently go. Then prayerfully ask God, “What or who is the reason You’ve placed me there?” Record your answers.

Daily Reading: *2 Samuel 1:1-2:11, John 12:20-50, Psalm 118:19-29, Proverbs 15:27-28*

Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29a

When I first left real estate and went into full-time ministry, I was inexperienced and untrained. I started praying and felt that somehow God wanted me to do something in Jackson, Mississippi. I called two guys there whom I knew—a pastor and a layman—and they agreed to meet with me. I guess I thought I was supposed to go up there and be the next Billy Graham or something, because I proposed a city-wide outreach event.

These two men said, “That’s great, but that’s not our problem.” They added, “Our problem is that 50 percent of our community is black, and

50 percent is white, and we don’t know each other. We have a great need for racial reconciliation.” I had a close African American friend named



Tom Skinner who agreed to go with me to see if we could address this issue. We met with a group of pastors, and after the event one of them said to me, “This is exciting. I’ve been praying for years that God would send someone to help us heal our city. I’m just a little surprised that He sent you.”

You see, I was one man with not much to offer, but I offered what I had, and God used it. I haven’t been involved in that program since its inception, but 20 years later it’s still going strong, with about 20 branches throughout the state of Mississippi. God’s plan never depends on our ability. If you’re willing to offer what little you have, God will use it. **MIMBS 8**

How does your experience demonstrate the truth of today’s Scripture passage? If you don’t feel like God is using you, why do you think that is?

Daily Reading: 2 Samuel 2:12-8:18, John 13:1-14:31, Psalm 119:1-48, Proverbs 15:29-33



For Your Small Group

May 19–25: Ask someone in the group to give a recap of how God used Gideon for His purposes.

- What daunting task did Gideon face?
- What daunting tasks did Moses, Daniel, Noah, and Peter face?
- Do you believe God has unlimited power to work in your life?

When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?” On hearing this, Jesus said to them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

Mark 2:16–17

I once had the opportunity to sit in a skybox for a NBA game. There was only one elevator for 26 skyboxes, so on leaving we waited in a long line. Finally we entered the elevator, walked to the back and turned around. A flood of people followed, including a group of over-achievers, mostly 30-somethings, all of them good looking, and carrying the world’s aroma.

As it turned out, the elevator was overloaded, and the attendant said someone had to get off. The ensuing discussion was filled with oversensitivity and hostility until someone finally volunteered to leave the elevator. I remember my heart breaking as I

thought, “What is their God? What are they looking for?” Clearly, they were posing.

That’s the kind of group mentioned in today’s scripture. Oversensitive to their own status, they challenged Jesus on the company He kept. But Jesus’ reply, “I haven’t come to call the righteous, but sinners,” reveals a lot about God’s heart for people.

MIMBS 9



When you’re in “close quarters” with very worldly people, do you respond more like the Pharisees, or more like Jesus? Explain your answer.

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

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.

1 Timothy 1:15

Several years ago, my son helped me set up a home theater. I read an advertisement saying I could purchase a home entertainment center for \$395. That started the quest, but by the time we finished, the system cost a lot more than that. I had lots of wonderful components, and each one came with its own manual. I could turn everything on, but until I read the manuals, I was basically helpless. I had all this equipment and no knowledge how to connect or use it.

In a similar way, people without Christ are helpless because they haven’t read the manual. They don’t know about our God who is bigger and better than anything or

anyone else. They don’t know that He is holy, awesome, sovereign, almighty, infinite, and wise. Yet God is not distant from us or them. He doesn’t hammer them for their ignorance. Instead, He is a personal savior who is always seeking and saving sinners.

MIMBS 9

Has God ever seemed too complicated for you to understand, or too awesome to believe that He cares for you personally? Do you see that in other believers you know? Share these experiences with some brothers.

Daily Reading: 2 Samuel 12:1-31, John 16:1-33, Psalm 119:65-80, Proverbs 16:4-5

By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.
Hebrews 11:3

Albert Einstein was easily the greatest theoretical physicist of the 20th century. His theories of relativity smashed the previous paradigm that had stood for 200 years. But Einstein spent his last 30 years working unsuccessfully to unify two great theories—one explaining gravitation and applying it to large structures in the universe like stars and galaxies, and one explaining how things work in the subatomic world. He called this the Unified Field Theory. Some people call it the Theory of Everything.

In recent years, scientists have furthered this by hypothesizing something called Superstring Theory, which works in a theoretical 10-dimensional world. Our world only has four dimensions—height, width, depth, and the time/space continuum. Steven Hawking has said that within the next two decades or so, he believes

there is a 50/50 chance that someone will accomplish the mathematics necessary to complete this theory.

If so, it may in part explain how creation happened. But so what? The process is not as important as the cause. The “Who caused it?” and “Why was it caused?” questions are much more fundamentally important than “How did it happen?” For those types of answers, you must look to the God who reveals Himself in Scripture. It’s not theory. [MIMBS 9](#)

How would you talk to someone who thought science gave ultimate answers about reality? How has our culture’s faith in science affected you?

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

Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.
Romans 6:3-4

G. K. Chesterton, a prolific English Christian writer of the 19th and 20th centuries, once said, “Whenever a man knocks on the door of a brothel, he is looking for God.” Every single person that has ever lived has given his life to something or someone. God created every individual for the purpose of worship, but some of us simply choose to worship the wrong things.

In their original state, God created Adam and Eve with the ability to sin. After they succumbed to the serpent’s temptation, they took mankind into a state where, on our own, we are not able to avoid sinning, because sin is woven into our nature. It’s only through Christ that we receive the

power to defeat temptation. So when we judge the morality of those who don’t even know Jesus, we are displaying our own arrogance. People don’t bind themselves to strongholds like drugs, alcohol and sex because they want to do that. They’re looking for God—they’re simply looking in the wrong places. [MIMBS 9](#)

If someone was simply looking at your life, would they be able to guess who or what you worship? What would give them that impression?

Daily Reading: *2 Samuel 14:1-15:22, John 18:1-24, Psalm 119:97-112, Proverbs 16:8-9*

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes.
Romans 1:16

In a book on holiness, Ralph Martin tells of an English traveler who came to the U.S. for a visit. While in America, he was accompanied by a Native American who was always talking about Jesus. Finally, the Englishman asked his companion, “Why do you make so much of this Jesus?”

The Native American man didn’t reply immediately. He simply gathered some leaves and moss and arranged them in a small circle. Then he found a worm and put it in the middle of the circle. Then he set fire to the leaves and moss. The Englishman and the Native American watched the worm struggle to escape. The flames grew bigger and more intense, and the worm still could not find a way out, so it crawled to the center of the circle, rolled up in a ball of agony, and waited to die.

At that moment, the Native American reached into the circle, picked up the little worm, and placed it on his chest next to his heart. Looking at the Englishman, he said,

“Stranger, the reason I talk so much about Jesus is that I was that little worm. I was helpless, hopeless, and in certain danger of unquenchable fire. It was Jesus, the arm of His power that reached down. It was the hand of Jesus that plucked me from the unquenchable fire. So, stranger, that is the reason I talk so much about Jesus.

Because of what He has done for me, I love Him, and I am not ashamed.”

Remembering who we were without Jesus helps release us from a hesitancy in sharing the Gospel. It reminds us of who God is, and it also helps us remember the plight of those who don’t yet know our Lord. [MIMBS 9](#)



How has your experience with Jesus prepared you to share His love with others?

Daily Reading: *2 Samuel 15:23-19:10, John 18:25-20:31, Psalm 119:113-176, Proverbs 16:10-15*



For Your Small Group

☐ **May 26–June 1: Read aloud the devotional, “Everyone Worships Something” from page 42.**

- List the things that people worship.
- Have you ever worshipped something or someone else besides God?
- Where did that misplaced worship lead you?

For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

Romans 8:20–21

I left my family when I was 18, and we did not reconnect until I was in my 30s. Then I began taking my father to lunch every year on his birthday. About five years into this, as we were leaving the restaurant, he headed toward his pickup and I toward my car. We happened to be parked side-by-side. I said, “Dad, I want to give you a hug.”

As I hugged him, and he hugged me, he let out this primordial groan, “UhhhhnHHHNNNnnnhhnn!”

I had no idea what was going on, but by the time he stopped, I was bawling, and he was too. Through my tears I said, “I love you, Dad.” He replied, “I love you, too.”



It seemed like my dad released decades of frustration and separation in that one moment. Do you know what it’s like to carry a burden that makes you groan? Romans 8:22, the verse that follows the passage above, says that all of creation groans under a burden of futility, given by God as a tool to bring about liberation. ☐MIMBS 10

Are there burdens you’ve been carrying for a long time? Are you willing to turn those burdens over to God and ask Him to set you free?

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

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward.

Colossians 3:23–24

God sends us into our jobs because He wants us to liberate people from the difficulty and “groaning” that accompany living in a fallen world. In a book co-written with Bill Hendricks called *Your Work Matters to God*, Doug Sherman refers to a friend who owns a pallet company.

Making pallets might not seem like an important job, but all kinds of goods are stacked on pallets for transportation purposes. This company supports the work of other people, including farmers, truck drivers and other transportation workers, grocery store employees, and consumers. “All of these people are doing something that’s extremely important,” the book explains—they’re meeting the needs of

my family and yours. “And by the way,” the book continues, “where are my friend’s pallets in all of this? Well, they’re underneath the boxes of citrus; underneath the cereal boxes; and underneath the dairy products. So my friend is integrally involved in making my world a better place.”

Why does God call some men to be farmers and manufacturers, and others to make pallets? To help make this world a better place. To help take care of His children. ☐MIMBS 10

How does your work make the world a better place for someone else?

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

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

Ephesians 4:1

Whether you are a businessman or a minister, your basic calling from God is to live out the grace you have received, sharing it in the context of the people around you. And so, wherever you work, you are the representation of God’s character in that community.

The 1998 movie *Saving Private Ryan* takes place during the Normandy invasion in World War II. This movie shows the tremendous sacrifice made by nine soldiers to save one man named James Ryan. Only two of the nine men survived. The last one to die, named Miller, uttered these final words: “James, earn this. Earn it.”

At the end of that film, many years

later, Ryan stands with his wife at Miller’s gravesite, asking her to confirm that he’s led a good life, thus demonstrating that he was worthy of the sacrifice. This is what Paul is saying when he calls us to live a worthy life. Jesus died in order to save you. You can never “earn” what Jesus did for you. But, in gratitude, you can endeavor to live a life worthy of the calling made possible through Jesus’ sacrifice on our behalf. ☐MIMBS 10

Describe someone you know who has lived a life worthy of his calling from the Lord.

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

Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them.

Matthew 25:14

This verse opens Jesus’ parable about a wealthy man who prepared for a trip by entrusting various amounts of property to three servants, according to their ability. He basically told them, “You’re in charge till I get back.” When he returned, he checked with the servants to determine how well they had managed his assets. Only one brought no profit, because he took no risks.

In many ways, this reflects God’s expectation of His servants. He wants us to be responsible for His creation. He gives each of us different responsibilities, based on different levels of ability. Based on this parable, I think He’s asked us to take some risk.

Tony Compolo’s book *Who Switched the Price Tags?* relates a sociological study featuring 50 people aged 95 and older. They were asked, “If you could live your life



again, what would you do differently?” A few answers dominated the results. One was “I would risk more,” and another was “I would do more things that would live on after I am dead.”

Are you playing it safe with the gifts God has entrusted to you? What risks might be necessary for you to enhance your contribution to the Kingdom? ☐MIMBS 10

Where have you been “playing it safe” in your Christian experience, or in your workplace? Is that an area where God wants you to allow for some risk? How will you go about that?

Daily Reading: 2 Samuel 23:24-24:25, Acts 3:1-26, Psalm 123:1-4, Proverbs 16:21-23

Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him.
1 Corinthians 7:17

Not everyone in the marketplace will own a business or be a CEO. We all need to find the niche that God has planned for us.

For instance, Michael Novak's book *Business as a Calling* notes that middle managers aren't usually on a fast track up the corporate ladder. He explains that "realistically most middle managers expect some advancement over a lifetime, higher salaries and bonuses, and most of all, the ever-higher respect of their peers." But most will stay middle managers till they retire. Novak explains, "Middle management, many know early, is their calling; they want to be super good at it."



Responding to God's call in the marketplace doesn't necessarily mean you'll be the top guy. Discover your specific calling and get comfortable with it, unless God indicates you should move on. God calls many people to stay

right where they are.

That's what He did with my friend Norm Miller, who went to work at Interstate Batteries almost 50 years ago, when he was just 24. He received Jesus as his Lord and Savior about eight years later, and he said, "God, I will do anything you want me to do."

When I talked to him about that decision he said, "I didn't know anything but batteries, so I just decided to stay there." He did begin to rise in the company. In 1976, his company sold a million batteries for the first time. Thirty years later, they sold 14 million batteries in a single year. When I ran the math on that increase, I found an annual growth rate of 8.5 percent. That's steady plodding over the long haul. You don't have to be a superstar. You just have to stay focused and strive to be worthy of your calling.

☐ MIMBS 10

What is your calling? How do you know that? And are you comfortable with it? Share your thoughts with the men in your group.

Daily Reading: 1 Kings 1:1-4:34, Acts 4:1-6:15, Psalm 124:1-126:6, Proverbs 16:24-27



For Your Small Group

☐ **June 2-8: On a large piece of paper or whiteboard, make a list of the various callings of the members of your group.**

- Did you have trouble determining your calling?
- Have you been able to pursue that calling? Why or why not?
- How is your work part of that calling?

He who answers before listening—that is his folly and his shame.
Proverbs 18:13

Several years ago, when my son was getting married, I heard him say to my wife, "You know, Mom, you've always been my number-one fan." I was a little taken aback, because if you had known my wife and me, and you had heard our conversations, I believe you would have concluded that she and I are equal in our love and appreciation for this fine young man. So why did he characterize his mother as his number-one fan? In his words, "She's the one who listens to me."

One of the biggest areas I've had to address in my desire to nurture my children is my habit of giving advice. I'm a teacher. I have answers. In fact, in my own natural state, usually I don't just know the answers, but I also anticipate the questions. When I follow that natural pattern with children, I know they've felt demeaned.

I've had to learn the skills of listening. Listening without interrupting to give advice communicates respect and honor, regardless of whether the other person is five or fifty.

☐ MIMBS 11

Describe a time when someone didn't listen to you before they gave advice. How did you feel? Ask a few other men about their experience.

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



People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."
Mark 10:13-15

Can you imagine what it would have been like to be one of Jesus' disciples on this day? They thought they were doing the right thing, prioritizing Jesus' time for Him. But Jesus wasn't pleased. In fact, this passage says He was indignant. He honored all children everywhere when He demonstrated how much He cared for them.

Most of us live out our weeks in uncaring environments. In our jobs, the care we receive is normally limited by the extent of the commercial possibilities inherent in the relationship. When we encounter someone who truly cares about who we are, and not just about what we do, we are taken by surprise.

When I was growing up, I knew I could call my mom and dad anytime, but I also knew they would never call me. I believe they thought they were doing the right thing—that they were giving me space. But the message I received was that they didn't really care. Don't give your kids so much space that they think you don't care.

☐ MIMBS 11

How do you express your care to your wife? Or your children? How do you know you are cared for?

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

My son, keep your father’s commands and do not forsake your mother’s teaching. . . . For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way to life.
Proverbs 6:20, 23

Many years ago, I saw a news story that compared the most difficult problems in American schools in 1940 and in 1980. In 1940, teachers noted problems like talking out of turn, chewing gum, and littering. Forty years later, the list was very different: drug and alcohol abuse, pregnancy, suicide, rape, robbery and assault. Thirty years later, most of us would agree that our culture has degraded even more.

I recently showed my wife a *USA Today* article about a new suggestive dancing craze that some called “standing sex.” She simply said, “Our kids would never do that.” And frankly, I hadn’t even considered the possibility.

☐ Thursday—June 12 • Setting Boundaries and Shaping Character

The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother.
Proverbs 29:15

This verse describes what happens to a child that is “left to himself.” Essentially, in the original language, this phrase means to be set off or put away. It can even refer to a divorce. It literally means there is a separation between father and child.

This verse also refers to “the rod of correction.” In the original language, this refers to some sort of check in behavior that comes through discipline. Proper discipline does at least three things for a child:

- It sets positive boundaries.
- It shapes character.
- It nurtures a child, preparing him for a positive future.

If you’ve ever tried to grow a bougainvillea vine, you’ve seen these principles in action. With this vine, you create a structure—maybe a trellis—that supports the plant and trains it to grow properly. That’s like setting boundaries. You also trim the wayward

I was so convinced they wouldn’t, because we were so involved in their lives. You see, if you want your kids to make good choices, you have to invest time in daily discipline and teaching. I am convinced that the solution to many problems kids are facing today would be parents simply spending more time with them. ☐MIMBS 11

How important is it to you to ensure that your child, or a child you care about, will love and honor God? How is that priority revealed in your daily life?

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

shoots and excess growth from the vine. That’s like shaping character. And then you provide water and fertilizer.

That’s like nurturing. All three steps are necessary for growing bougainvillea, and all three are necessary for raising strong children. ☐MIMBS 11

How have you seen these three characteristics of positive discipline—boundaries, character and nurturing—either in how you were raised, or in how you are raising your own children? Talk about this with some other men.

Daily Reading: 1 Kings 9:1-10:29, Acts 8:14-40, Psalm 130:1-8, Proverbs 17:2-3



So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.
Matthew 7:12

Most of us would like to believe we live according to the “Golden Rule”: Treat others as you’d like to be treated. The verse above even says that kind of attitude and behavior summarizes the requirements of Scripture. Jesus basically said, “Everything I’m teaching you is encapsulated in this one statement.”

As adults, we generally try to apply this, at least with our peers. We try to treat other adults in a positive manner. We know that’s what is expected in our culture. But on a regular basis, I see parents violating this principle with their children. I’m sure you know what I mean. Just review a recent visit to a grocery store. Parents talk to their children with a tone of derision and disgust, in a way that would cause embarrassment if they used the same words and tone with another adult. You can count on one thing—at least in that instance, those adults have withered the soul of their children rather than nurturing it.

I remember one acquaintance who latched onto this “Golden Rule” so strongly, he applied it to himself in

a unique way. He was, by his own admission, a pessimistic man. After a seminar several years ago, he came to me and said, “You know, I have six kids. When I walk into a room, within ten minutes, they all leave. I’m such a negative person.” We’ve all been around this kind of “black hole” person. Perhaps you know that a black hole is a place in the universe where gravity is so strong, even light can’t escape from the pull. When a “black hole” person walks into a room, he sucks everything positive out of the environment. This father admitted to being that kind of person, and he also saw the results in his children. In order to truly follow the Golden Rule with his children, he recognized his need to alter his attitude.

As fathers, we should make sure that we apply the Golden Rule with our kids as much (or more) as we apply it to other adults. ☐MIMBS 11



What needs to change in your life, so you can truly say you are following the Golden Rule with your children, or with children who are important to you?

Daily Reading: 1 Kings 11:1-15:24, Acts 9:1-10:23, Psalm 131:1-133:3, Proverbs 17:4-8



For Your Small Group

☐ June 9 –15: Read aloud this definition of listen: “to pay attention to and hear someone or something.”

- Would your children or grandchildren say you are a good listener? How could they tell if you are a good listener?
- How can you improve your listening skills? How could that change your relationship with your children?

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord ...

Acts 3:19



Acts 3 says that Peter and John met a lame beggar at the temple one day, and through God’s power that man received healing. A crowd gathered as the man began walking and praising God. Peter seized the moment, preaching an impromptu sermon encouraging temple-goers to repent.

Several months ago, my son and I were headed to a movie. As we pulled into the parking lot, we saw a young man holding a Bible, dressed in jeans and an untucked shirt. We could hear him preaching, even over the noise of the radio and air conditioner. He was calling for people to repent.

I’m not sure the people listening knew what that word meant. I remember attending a Billy Graham crusade when I was a teen. He explained that repentance simply means that

I’m going one direction, and I decide to turn and go the opposite way. Or as Peter implied in his sermon, it means turning away from whatever we are doing, so that we can turn to God. [MIMBS 12](#)

Describe how you responded the last time you felt God calling you to repentance. What happened?

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

“When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.’ So he got up and went to his father.”

Luke 15:17-20a

One of the most famous Biblical examples of repentance comes in Jesus’ parable about a son who dishonored his father by requesting his share of the inheritance before his father died. Then he squandered all that money and ended up in great need. Today’s passage says that boy “came to his senses” and decided to seek forgiveness from his father.

That story illustrates one of the primary ways that God calls us to repentance. He lets us suffer the consequences of our own sinful choices. God set up the world to work in a way that is intended to bring us to Him. Sometimes God lets us fail and lose everything, like the prodigal son. Sometimes He

lets us succeed and gain everything we ever thought we desired, only to discover we’re still not satisfied. We get everything we want, and only then realize we’re slaves to our accomplishments or our reputations. In those times, God calls us to repent—to turn away from the things that have stolen our attention, so we can turn to Him and experience true restoration. [MIMBS 12](#)

Have you been called to repentance more often in times of failure, or in times of success? Why do you think that is true? Share your thoughts with your group.

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

Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.

Matthew 3:8

True repentance requires a person to honestly appraise how he got to that point, and to reject those choices and then decide to walk a different way. As John the Baptist said, a truly repentant person must “produce fruit” that shows he’s choosing a new direction. That’s not usually a one-time event.

The animated movie character Shrek told us that ogres are like onions with lots of layers. Sin often is like an onion, too. A person with a habit of viewing porn might say, “I’m just going to stop doing that! That’s how I’ll repent!” Then he discovers that’s just the surface problem. Maybe when he peels back that layer, he realizes he’s invested more of himself in his job than in

his marriage, and he repents and decides to change that. And then he understands that, because of what he observed when he was growing up, he has a faulty view of what it means to be a man.

Repentance requires honesty, and over the long-term, it requires a willingness to keep peeling away layers where we’ve chosen our own way rather than God’s. [MIMBS 12](#)

In your own words, explain what Scripture means when it calls us to “produce fruit in keeping with repentance.”

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

So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

Luke 15:20

The young man from today’s passage reflects the attitudes that many of us have demonstrated toward God. We’ve chosen our own way rather than His. And many of us have experienced tremendous consequences as a result. The good news that is the primary point in this wonderful story is that God is totally trustworthy, and His love is always greater than our sin.

A national auto repair chain used to advertise, “You can pay me now, or you can pay me later.” There’s a lot of truth in that statement.

We can repent now, or we can pay later. But the longer we choose our own way, the more we give sin an

opportunity to take root more deeply in our lives. And usually the consequences keep growing as well. There’s never a bad time to repent and return to the Father, but if we turn back early, we save ourselves a lot of grief. [MIMBS 12](#)

Today’s devotional says, “The longer we choose our own way, the more we give sin an opportunity to take root more deeply in our lives.” What’s an area in your life where you need to nip sin in the bud?

Daily Reading: 1 Kings 20:1-21:29, Acts 12:24-13:15, Psalm 137:1-9, Proverbs 17:16

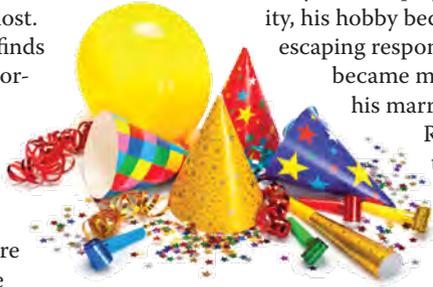


“The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.”

Luke 15:21-24

Why would anyone invest effort in repentance when it can be such a challenging process? Jesus’ parable of the prodigal son is one of three successive stories featuring something that was lost. The stories show that God finds pleasure in finding and restoring lost things, including you and me. The young man in this story went home hoping to be hired as a servant in his father’s household. His dad said, “Are you kidding? I love you! I’ve been longing for you and waiting for you! I’m reinstating you into the family.” The dad hosted a huge celebration in honor of his son’s homecoming. God is pursuing each of us with that same level of passion and commitment. From God’s perspective, repentance and restoration are reasons for a great party.

So, if you feel like your life isn’t working out and you’re just spinning your wheels, ask God if there’s an area in your life that needs attention and repentance. Be tough enough to peel back some layers.



You might be surprised at what you find. I knew a man who had sin in his life that looked innocuous. It just looked like the man really liked to play softball. But in reality, his hobby became an avenue for escaping responsibility. Eventually it became more important than his marriage or his family. Repentance sometimes requires us to walk away from things that seem okay on the surface. Ask God to help you discern His will in all areas of your life. Let

God help you peel back layers and get to the core sin, so you can eliminate its ability to taint every area of your life. [MIMBS 12](#)

Spend some time in prayer, asking God to reveal any areas in your life where you are choosing your own way over His.

Daily Reading: *1 Kings 22:1-2 Kings 4:17, Acts 13:16-14:28, Psalm 138:1-140:13, Proverbs 17:17-22*



For Your Small Group

☐ **June 16-22: Read Luke 15:11-32 aloud to the group.**

- What did you learn about the sons?
- What did you learn about the father?
- What did you learn about God and your relationship with Him?

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

Isaiah 55:8-9

Several years ago, I was working on my motorcycle. While I was hard at work, polishing it and preparing it for Bike Week, a workman came up to me and said, “You know, I’ve been thinking about getting a motorcycle. What’s the big deal about a Harley? What does a Harley do that other motorcycles won’t do?” A wave of pity swept over me, because in the Harley world, we have this saying: “If I have to explain it, you wouldn’t understand.”



When you’re dealing with questions about God, though, it’s a different story. The actions of our daily lives often grow from what we really believe about who God is and what He does. Yet, most of us don’t come to understand who God is through

intuition. Usually it requires explanation, and sometimes it also requires time. In fact, I believe some of the really big ideas about Christianity take 10 to 20 years to really take root in a person’s life. God’s purposes are so much higher and broader than ours; we will never understand them without explanation and revelation. [MIMBS 13](#)

Describe something that God has done in your life that would require explanation to another person. What’s something that has taken you 10 or 20 years to really learn?

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

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

Colossians 1:16-17

The big picture of God’s activity can be summed up in three words: He creates, redeems and sustains. He does this on a large scale for the entire universe. He also does this on a smaller scale, for each of us as individuals.

Many of Jesus’ parables portrayed God as a farmer. In one story, He scatters seed. In another, He waters and tends young plants. Another shows Him deciding how to deal with weeds growing side-by-side with His precious plants. Elsewhere you see Him pruning grapevines to increase the harvest. Then you see Him choosing people to help with the harvest.

In a very personal way, Jesus painted a picture of a personal, hands-on God who is in the business of creating, redeeming and sustaining a harvest of holy people for Himself, and for eternity. And in all of that, He is motivated by love. Not only are we part of the harvest, but we also get to help bring others in as well. [MIMBS 13](#)

How have you seen God as Creator? How have you seen Him as Redeemer? How have you seen Him as Sustainer?

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

Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will you give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

Matthew 7:9–11

Alice Gray relates the story of a bouncy, five-year-old girl named Jenny. While shopping with her mom, Jenny noticed a string of fake pearls. She did extra chores to earn the two dollars to buy them. She loved her “pearls,” and she wore them just about 24/7.

One evening, after he read her a bedtime story, Jenny’s daddy asked, “Jenny, do you love me?” “Oh, Daddy,” she said. “You know I love you!”

“Well, then,” he said, “will you give me your pearls?” Jenny offered other alternatives, but she could



not give up her pearls. This continued for several nights until finally, with tears running down her face, Jenny surrendered her pearls to her daddy. With one hand, he put her old pearls in his pocket. With his other hand, he held out a box with a new string of pearls, only these were real.

That’s a picture of what God desires for us. He wants to give us good gifts, but we sometimes have difficulty surrendering the lesser things we already hold in our hands. **MIMBS 13**

Are you hanging on to something lesser when God wants to give you something greater? Reflect on this with a brother or two.

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

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

James 1:17

The Bible describes God as a great Father who wants to give us good gifts. Often we settle for less than what God wants to give us because we cannot bring ourselves to yield to Him. C. S. Lewis once said, “The problem is not that we desire too much. The problem is that we desire too little.”

Almost 10 years ago, I had an experience that helped me understand God’s motivation for giving gifts. My mom was dying of cancer that had metastasized through her whole body. My brother Bill, a quiet man, had moved in with my mom and dad to help care for her. One day on the phone, Mom told me about the incredible conversations she was having with my brother.

She said, “I always knew Bill loved me, but I never really thought he liked me. You know, I think he really does—he likes me.”

It’s like that with God. Sometimes His love can seem abstract and impersonal. Are you willing to let God grip your heart with that reality? He doesn’t just love you, but He really likes you, too. **MIMBS 13**

I used to work with a woman who said, “God is an optimist about me.” What would it mean if God were an optimist about you?

Daily Reading: 2 Kings 9:14-10:31, Acts 17:1-34, Psalm 144:1-15, Proverbs 17:27-28

The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked advance against me to devour me, it is my enemies and my foes who will stumble and fall. . . . One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.

Psalms 27:1–2, 4

In the movie *We Were Soldiers*, Colonel Moore takes his team into one of the fiercest battles of Vietnam. Intelligence had grossly underestimated the capacity and size of the North Vietnamese Regulars. After a fight lasting several days, the U.S. soldiers are finally overrun. In the movie, Mel Gibson, playing Colonel Moore, turns to his radio operator and tells him, “Call in broken arrow.” The radioman begins broadcasting, “Broken arrow, broken arrow. I repeat, broken arrow.”

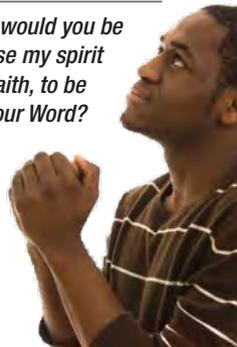
Strategic command is mobilized, and in the movie, you see jet fighters taking off from the decks of aircraft carriers. You see planes and helicopters of all types converging on this one location, responding to the desperate code word. The movie is based on a book called *We Were Soldiers Once and Young*, by Lt. General Harold Moore. The book quotes Joseph Galloway, the radio operator shown in the movie. He explained, “I used the code word broken arrow, and we received all available aircraft in South Vietnam for close air support. We had aircraft stacked at thousand foot intervals from 7,000 feet to 35,000 feet, each waiting to receive a target and deliver their

ordinance.” That was a turning point for them.

In a similar way, God’s resources are available to support you. When you join Him, He doesn’t leave anyone behind. Perhaps this can be a turning point for you as well. What do you need from God today? Do you need a blessing? Do you need relief or deliverance from something? Do you need to surrender and let go? God wants you to grasp how much He loves you, and how much He likes you. Ask Him for the resources you need. **MIMBS 13**

Let’s pray together: Father, would you be kind to me today and release my spirit and mind, my reason and faith, to be able to grasp the truth of Your Word? Would you be kind enough to allow me to believe this, and to experience the joy and freedom that comes from knowing that You love me, and You like me? In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Daily Reading: 2 Kings 10:32-16:20, Acts 18:1-19:41, Psalm 145:1-147:20, Proverbs 18:1-5



For Your Small Group

☐ **June 23–30: From the devotional for Tuesday, June 24, review the three words that sum up God’s activities: Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer**

- What are some examples of these activities in Scripture?
- What are some examples that you have seen in the lives of others?
- What are some examples that you have seen in your own life?

God means what he says. What he says goes. His powerful Word is sharp as a surgeon's scalpel, cutting through everything, whether doubt or defense, laying us open to listen and obey. Nothing and no one is impervious to God's Word. We can't get away from it—no matter what.

Hebrews 4:12 The Message

I have great admiration for C.S. Lewis, so I've spent some time looking for a video of him. Unfortunately, the lack of technology during his lifetime has made that impossible. I did find one audio of him reading his book *The Four Loves*. I have listened to that and heard Lewis' voice; what a thrill!

Think of the times that you've seen or heard speeches from historical figures—King, Kennedy, Roosevelt, and others. What an impact to hear words like, "I have a dream," or "Ask not what you can do for your country," or "A date that will live in infamy!"

Imagine what it would be like to have video or audio of Jesus! God knew that

decades and centuries after Christ's life, death and resurrection, people would need to know Him and read His words. The Bible is a flawless record of exactly what God wanted to say, exactly the way He wanted to say it.

Do you believe that the Bible says exactly what God wanted us to hear? What are some "famous" phrases from Jesus? Why are they so memorable to you? Share your thoughts with another man.

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



Fuel Tool #2: Your 3-Minute Testimony

Would you be ready if you had the opportunity to share the gospel with someone? Be prepared to show them how the gospel has changed your life. Be ready to share your testimony and a simple overview of what it means to accept and follow Him. Here's a way to develop a 3-minute testimony—a "short story" on why you believe in Jesus.

- 1 Begin with an attention-getting sentence.** Example: *One day I realized that my life was completely empty and without purpose.*
- 2 Before I received Christ I lived and thought this way:** Example: *I was living only for myself; my wife and kids were more of a burden than a benefit in my life; success was not bringing fulfillment.*
- 3 How I received Christ:** Example: *A friend of mine was there for me during a tough time. Over time, he explained his faith in Jesus Christ. The more I learned, the more I realized the truth. I decided to commit myself to following Jesus too.*
- 4 After I received Christ these changes took place in my life:** Example: *I feel like I have a purpose; I see my family as a great blessing; people tell me they can see a difference in my attitude and priorities.*

Now what? A man says, "I feel like this is something I've been missing in my life too. How can I have a relationship with God like you? How do I "accept Christ" or "become a Christian"? To be ready to answer these questions and what to say next, read "How to Lead a Man to Christ" at www.maninthemirror.org/ALM92

See the next tool on page 58

- Akron, OH
- Albany, NY
- Anderson, IN
- Baltimore, MD
- Baton Rouge, LA
- Beloit, WI
- Boise, ID
- Buffalo, NY
- Burlington, VT
- Carlisle, PA
- Cedar Rapids, IA
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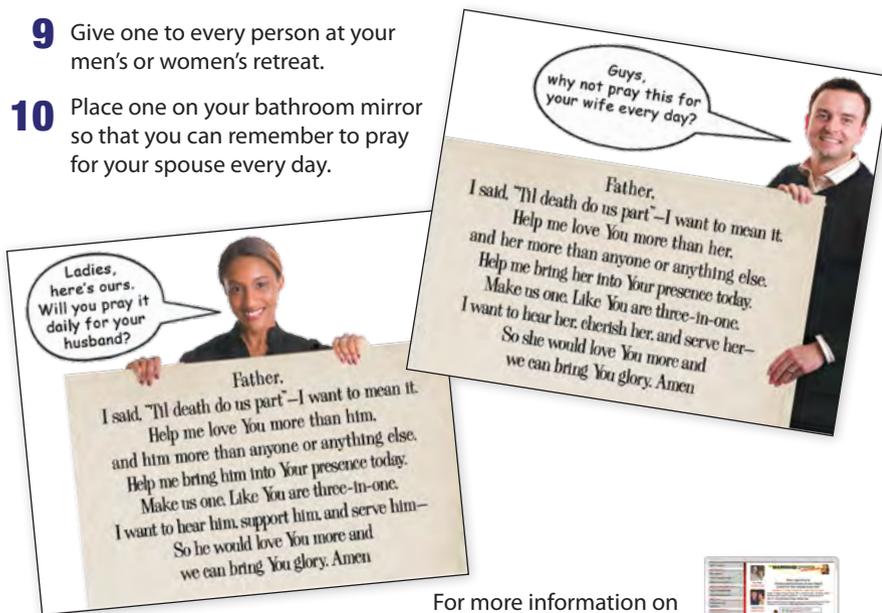


Fuel Tool #3: Do the Marriage Prayer Challenge

What might God do in your church if the couples said a simple prayer every day for their spouses? Encourage everyone you know to take the 21-day Marriage Prayer Challenge. Using the prayers below, agree to pray for your spouses daily for a three-week period. See how God uses those prayers to change people's hearts.

Ten More Ways to Use the Marriage Prayer Cards

- 1 Carry a few with you and pray that God would open doors to offer people hope for their marriages.
- 2 Provide them for your pastor to give one to every couple that they counsel or marry.
- 3 Give one to every member of your Sunday School class or small group.
- 4 Include one in all your Christmas cards.
- 5 Give one to all your neighbors.
- 6 Place them in a card holder on your desk at the office.
- 7 Include the prayer in your wedding ceremony and give a card to every person in attendance.
- 8 Give one to every attendee after your next sermon on marriage.
- 9 Give one to every person at your men's or women's retreat.
- 10 Place one on your bathroom mirror so that you can remember to pray for your spouse every day.



For more information on all the FUEL Tools go to mimsummit.org/tools.

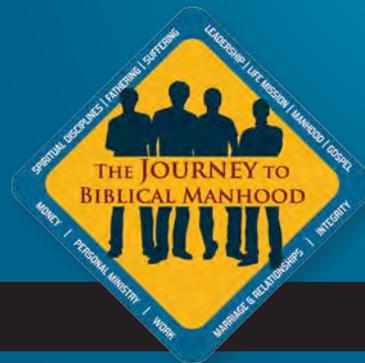


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Be sure also to recognize those men who are serving throughout the church. Men who are working in the nursery, parking lot or sound booth are heroes! Recognize them in the bulletin, host a volunteer recognition dinner or tell them personally how much the men of the church appreciate their efforts.

To reach the men in group three requires intentionality. How can you reach a man who only brushes up against your church? Once again, start by coming alongside the leaders of the ministries that are connecting with these men. For example, ask if you can have a men's activity in the lobby of the VBS

Parents night—a putting green or cornhole toss. Father's Day may be an opportunity to send a gift home to men through their preschoolers.

The key to reaching these men on the fringe is for your current disciples to develop relationships with them. Discipleship often begins with life-on-life interactions.

Help men connect and draw them into low threshold activities: a Super Bowl party, trip to a sporting event or an outdoor activity.



Better Than You Think

If you've been judging your men's ministry based on attendance at your men's small groups, breakfasts and retreats, stop. The good news is this: **You're doing better than you think you are!** All those men participating in growth and service opportunities throughout your church are part of your men's discipleship efforts. Add those to the men in the men's-only activities and there are probably half, two-thirds or even more of your men being disciplined in some way.

One final recommendation: **take the phrase "men's ministry" out of your vocabulary.** When people hear "men's ministry," they think of those classic men's-only activities. The phrase is likely beyond repair. Instead, use a phrase that connotes all the men in your church. (If you are Hillcrest church, you could use "Hillcrest Men.") Talk about men's discipleship, or your "ministry to men." It's a subtle difference, but eventually all the men in your church will believe that you really are in it together. 



• 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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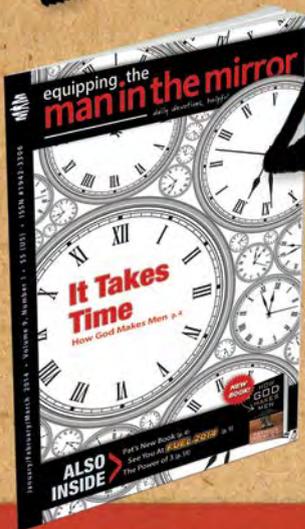
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