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A Transformational Journey for Men Through the Sermon on the Mount at Community Covenant Church

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This ministry focus paper entitled

A TRANSFORMATIONAL JOURNEY FOR MEN THROUGH
THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT AT COMMUNITY COVENANT CHURCH

Written by

MARK MEREDITH

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

has been accepted by the Faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary

upon the recommendation of the undersigned readers:

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A TRANSFORMATIONAL JOURNEY FOR MEN THROUGH THE SERMON ON
THE MOUNT AT COMMUNITY COVENANT CHURCH

A TRAINING MANUAL PROJECT
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

MARK MEREDITH
APRIL 2012
ABSTRACT

A Transformational Journey for Men through the Sermon on the Mount at Community Covenant Church
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2012

The purpose of this paper and the attached training manual is to provide a transformational men’s ministry experience at Community Covenant Church in Eagle River, Alaska. A two-year journey through the Sermon on the Mount is used as the vehicle for this transformation. The thesis is that the cultural confusion regarding what it means to be male needs to be addressed in the discipleship of men. It is further argued that a lack of clear emphasis on discipleship in churches can be overcome by employing the Sermon on the Mount as a curriculum for making male disciples.

This discussion is presented in three sections. Part One explores the historical context of male discipleship in churches in North America and pays particular attention to the confusion of male identity and roles in both church and home. The cultural context of men at Community Covenant Church then is examined in light of this and how they are similar to men in North America in general. Five struggles for these men are identified which are similar to the struggles of most men in North American culture.

The discussion then transitions into theology. It is argued that “essential masculinity” is beyond social construction and is modeled in the person of Jesus Christ. Four callings of manhood are identified, and a three-part model for transformation is presented. Finally, the Sermon on the Mount is examined as a vehicle for male discipleship and transformation.

Part Two is concerned with transformational goals, learning environments for men, an effective learning template, pedagogy, and assessment. This is followed by a sample of the Mountain Men material in the appendix. It is hoped that this guide will be transferrable to the broader North American Church.

Content Reader: John Hull, DMin
Words: 285
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INTRODUCTION

Many in today’s culture are confused about what masculinity is. Author Leanne Payne begins her book, *Crisis in Masculinity*, by quoting someone who says, “I don’t think anyone knows what masculinity is.”¹ No one seems to have a definition that functions in culture, and few have clarity for themselves. British social commentator Roy McCloughry agrees. He states that while women have found a way to talk about themselves with the advent of 1960s’ feminism, men are often at a loss to know how to self-identify. Consequently, they resort to stereotypes which do not describe who they are as men.²

At the same time, according to Christian philosopher Dallas Willard—who has written broadly on spiritual transformation—most Christians today are confused about their identity as well. Many do not know what it means to be a disciple. Discipleship is seen as an option for the Christian rather than as what it means to be a Christian.³ In this confusion, Willard says that there is a lack of intention and method regarding the making of disciples.⁴ Christians often settle for non-transforming substitutes, such as external conformity of behavior or accurate profession of doctrine.⁵

⁴ Ibid., 297-299, 313-316.
⁵ Ibid., 320.
In light of these two trends, male discipleship is elusive. For this reason, the purpose of this project and the accompanying training manual is to explore and answer the question of what masculine discipleship is with a clarity that can become the basis for transformation in men’s lives today. In particular, this paper addresses the question of male discipleship in the context of Community Covenant Church in Eagle River, Alaska. The men of this congregation are and will be using the attached training manual, which is a two-year discipleship journey through the Sermon on the Mount called “Mountain Men.” As the senior pastor of Community Covenant Church, I have been leading the men through this two-year discipleship journey. It is my hope that by addressing the question of masculine discipleship in a local context, this will prove to be helpful in other settings.

The questions Payne raises about masculinity and those that Willard poses about discipleship have led me to the Sermon on the Mount as a potentially rich resource for the discipleship of men. The topics of gender clarity and discipleship are extremely relevant to men today. Men need to know what it means to be masculine and also what it means to follow Christ as a man. The Sermon is also for women, but men can experience it differently. Even research shows that men and women often relate to and experience the first three topics of the Sermon (anger, lust, and marriage) in different ways.6

This paper will address the confusion regarding masculinity and discipleship. The sources of confusion on gender are ancient and diverse. Genesis 1 through 3 shows that from the beginning, the identities and roles of men and women were defined in

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relationship to each other, both before and after the fall. The Industrial Revolution brought gender role shifts to Western culture, as men left home for factories. The movement known as second-wave feminism, a reaction against patriarchal assumptions and norms in culture, which began in the 1960s, continues to leave masculinity in confusion today. Feminist Susan Faludi writes: “If my travels have taught me anything about the two sexes, it is that each of our struggles depends on the success of the other’s.” It is not surprising that as women’s identities and roles have shifted, it has affected men’s understanding of who they are.

Complicating this confusion is postmodern culture, which resists providing clear answers that are true for everyone. This is the social milieu in which the question of masculinity is being asked. As a result, gender definitions compete from every perspective with little more than the politics of power and persuasion employed in defining them. The question of nature versus nurture has been decided firmly in favor of

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7 Tom Smail, Like Father, Like Son: The Trinity Imaged in Our Humanity (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 50-56.

8 Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, My Brother’s Keeper: What the Social Sciences Do (and Don’t) Tell Us About Masculinity (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 152-53.

9 Ibid., 161-163. Van Leeuwen’s definition roughly states that first-wave feminism was in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and focused on legal rights for women. Second-wave feminism began in the mid-1960s and focused on politics, commerce, and higher education.


nurture, as meaning is culturally determined. Masculinity and femininity are being
viewed as social constructs only, without any essential underlying meaning.\textsuperscript{12}

In addition to this confusion from outside the Christian faith, there has been a
contentious conversation going on inside the evangelical Christian world since the 1970s.
This debate is about the interpretation and application of biblical texts relating to gender.
Both sides have their verses and play what theologian Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen calls
“proof-text poker,” meaning that each side has a group of biblical texts in hand and play
those texts against those of the opposing side. The assumption has been that the one with
the fullest hand will win the argument.\textsuperscript{13} The feminist side has come dangerously close at
times to collapsing all differences between male and female into the category of
degendered or androgynous humanity. On the other hand, the more traditional side has
not been careful in reflecting on these differences and at times has seemed to validate
gender fallenness as normative, even for those in Christ.

These two sides are known by the names “egalitarian” and “complementarian.”\textsuperscript{14}
While exploring both sides, it is the position of this paper that there are essential
differences in male and female genders but that these differences need not lead to limiting
roles, based on gender alone. There can be a clear masculine identity without rigidly
fixed masculine roles and without hierarchy and patriarchy.

\textsuperscript{12} For more information, see Craig M. Gay, “Gender and the Idea of the Social Construction of Reality,”
in \textit{Christian Perspectives on Gender, Sexuality, and Community}, ed. Maxine Hancock (Vancouver: Regent
College, 2003), 167-180.

\textsuperscript{13} Van Leeuwen, \textit{My Brother’s Keeper}, 36.

\textsuperscript{14} The complementarian view is represented by John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., \textit{Recovering Biblical
Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism} (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991). The egalitarian
view is offered by Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothius, and Gordon D. Fee, eds. \textit{Discovering Biblical
In addition, though in many times and places its meaning has been assumed, masculinity for the most part has gone largely undefined. Both James B. Nelson\textsuperscript{15} and McCloughry,\textsuperscript{16} who are Christian and egalitarian, point out that in the patriarchal model of traditional masculinity it was assumed that to be truly human was to be masculine. This assumption not only has done an injustice to women, they argue, but has not allowed masculinity to be understood or defined by men or women. Now, as feminism has changed the perspective that to be human is to be masculine, masculinity is in desperate need of being redefined, perhaps for the first time since the Industrial Revolution.

Jesus’ life and teachings move through the confusion. From a Christian perspective, McCloughry represents much of the literature by giving names to the types of men who are part of today’s world: “old men” (traditionalist and patriarchal), “new men” (sometimes called “soft” for their embrace of feminism), and “wild men” (championed by Robert Bly).\textsuperscript{17} McCloughry adds a fourth type of male to this list, the man whose life goal is to become more like Jesus Christ:

Wholeness cannot be found in the reaction to feminism of the new man nor in the recognition of the presence of the wild man. It can only be found in the redemption of the God who is man, Jesus Christ. . . . Christ is the key to the

\textsuperscript{15} According to James B. Nelson, \textit{The Intimate Connection: Male Sexuality, Male Spirituality} (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988), 18, “Because traditional scholarship and theology made men into pseudo-universal human beings, it excluded from consideration whatever was specific to men \textit{as men}. Our task, then, is to try to understand the experiences of masculinity as specific male phenomena rather than as phenomena assumed to be universally human.”

\textsuperscript{16} McCloughry, \textit{Men and Masculinity}, 7. McCloughry argues that men are invisible to themselves as men; they live out of a non-reflective view of what it means to be masculine.

\textsuperscript{17} Robert Bly, \textit{Iron John: A Book about Men} (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1990). Bly is considered the greatest voice of what is called the mythopoetic movement, which uses story-telling, music, and Jungian categories to recover an essential and lost masculinity.
understanding of what it means to be a man. This whole debate revolves around Jesus Christ in a way in which few other debates do.\textsuperscript{18}

Ultimately, this project establishes that the best definition of what it means to be a man, to be masculine, is to become more like Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{19}

Regarding the confusion towards discipleship, Willard has argued that older models were rooted in an overly narrow view of atonement theory (which ignores the teachings of Jesus), a reduced view of grace, and a lack of appreciation or understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{20} In addition, Gordon T. Smith sees a movement away from “bounded-set” discipleship models, where a disciple is defined by a list of things to do. He argues for “centered-set” models, which are defined by what lies at the core or center and the person’s relationship to this goal or target.\textsuperscript{21} This has shifted the emphasis from cognitive and behavioral changes to character or heart transformation.\textsuperscript{22} In the centered-set model, Jesus Christ—his life and teaching—is at the center and is the goal of the disciple’s transformation.

\textsuperscript{18} McCloughry, \textit{Men and Masculinity}, 112-113, 131.

\textsuperscript{19} The question of what this means for women, who also are called to become like Christ, is important. In short, the character of Christ is the target for both men and women. Christ came, however, not in an androgynous mode but as a male. He demonstrates what it means to be human but also what it means to be a man. In addition, Gordon Dalbey, \textit{Healing the Masculine Soul: How God Restores Men to Real Manhood} (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 2005), 192, makes this comment: “[Churches] have not sought and portrayed Christ-centered ways to pursue masculine virtues.”

\textsuperscript{20} Willard, \textit{The Divine Conspiracy}, 1-50.

\textsuperscript{21} Gordon T. Smith, \textit{Beginning Well: Christian Conversion and Authentic Transformation} (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 36-37. Bounded-set models are defined by a list of requirements or activities which determine whether one is in or out of a “set” or group. Centered-set models are concerned with the essential center that defines the group. For Christians, Jesus is the center.

\textsuperscript{22} Willard, \textit{The Divine Conspiracy}, 315.
For discipleship to work, it must be intentional. According to Willard, no one drifts into discipleship; intentionality and method are essential for discipleship to occur.\textsuperscript{23} Clear methods and goals are needed. Likewise, Smith remarks:

Transformation never just happens. While it is the work of the Spirit, it is also, as mentioned above, the fruit of three distinct factors. First, transformation is the fruit of a full and complete conversion. Second, it is also the fruit of clarity in our spiritual aspirations. That is, we need to clearly identify what it means to be transformed—mature in Christ. Third, transformation is the fruit of an intentional program of spiritual formation.\textsuperscript{24}

His second and third points are the concern here. “To clearly identify what it means to be transformed” is to identify Christ as the goal for disciples. The human Christ is the goal for male and female, in terms of his character and fruit of the Spirit. As a male human, there is something else seen in Jesus. He is the model for what it means to be a man in this world. With Christ as the goal, Smith’s third point on transformation is possible. The thesis of this paper is that male discipleship based on the person of Christ and his teachings in the Sermon on the Mount leads to real transformation in men.

These are the contextual and theological concerns of Part One of this paper and the reflective analysis that lies behind the attached training manual. Chapter 1 addresses the question of masculinity.\textsuperscript{25} It will look at issues which make the answer to this

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 297.

\textsuperscript{24} Smith, \textit{Beginning Well}, 27.

\textsuperscript{25} For the purposes of this paper, the terms “male” and “masculine” will be used interchangeably unless noted otherwise. I am aware that this is a hot issue in the gender-relations debate where maleness usually is seen to be something “essential,” often simply a biological difference. Masculinity, on the other hand, is seen to be constructed totally from societal norms. This paper will argue for an essential masculinity. For more information see Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, \textit{Gender and Grace: Love, Work and Parenting in a Changing World} (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 53-71.
question complicated in the Western world in general today and also demonstrate why the question is so important.

Chapter 2 will look at the questions facing men at Community Covenant Church. The first section will identify the demographics of these men, both in the community at large and in the church. These observations are based on survey questions and other sources. The second section of this chapter will look at a number of the real issues these men face as male disciples in everyday life.

Chapter 3 returns to the question of masculinity. First, it gives a brief overview of where the debate is currently, particularly within Protestant evangelicalism. Then, it interprets this to spell out what the most vital concerns for men are in the debate. The next section gives a working definition of masculinity that is used in this project and the training manual. Finally, the position of this paper on masculinity is stated in summary fashion.

Chapter 4 begins by defining male spirituality. It presents a theological model for transformation and four principles behind it. Building upon these ideas, it establishes the reasons for employing the Sermon on the Mount as the basis for discipling men today.

With this context and theology stated, the task that surfaces is how to design a curriculum to disciple men. This will be dealt with in Part Two of this paper. Chapter 5 explores the goals and desired outcomes for men going through the two-year Mountain Men journey. This examines some of the unique dimensions of male learning and then looks at four specific goals of desired growth for men.

Chapter 6 presents the model or template used and explains why the various pieces were chosen. This portion of the discussion covers the overall structure of the two-year
journey as well as the particular learning template that is utilized in a given unit of the curriculum. There will be an alignment among the overall structure, the learning template, and the desired outcomes of Chapter 5. This chapter also will present the learning environments that work best with the template.

Chapter 7 describes how Mountain Men was developed and implemented and the reason for the strategies employed. This includes the various steps that were required before beginning Mountain Men at Community Covenant Church. It also addresses how energy and momentum were maintained over the two years. The last part of this chapter addresses ways goals were assessed for participants.

The final part of this paper is encapsulated in the Appendix, which contains the first part of the training manual. This will include materials for the information night and the first session of the discipleship journey. An outline of the remainder of the two-year journey also is included. It is my hope that a clearer understanding of a redeemed and essential masculinity can be the foundation for male discipleship.
PART ONE

CONTEXT AND THEOLOGY
CHAPTER 1

THE NORTH AMERICAN CONTEXT: HISTORY AND ISSUES

Men and women define themselves in relationship to each other. Stanley Grenz writes: “Man and woman are as mirrors to each other; their differences reveal to each other who he is or she is. These permit each one to be himself or herself in his masculinity or her femininity.”¹ The purpose of this chapter is to show how this claim can be validated first in historical terms and then in contemporary reality in North America, especially as gender roles have shifted since the 1960s. The particular aim here is to show how this assertion explains the confusion about what it means to be male, both in terms of identity and roles. After a brief overview of gender history in North America since the Industrial Revolution, this chapter will examine three issues that stem from history which shed light on why there is confusion regarding what it means to be male today and the need for clarity.

Historical Overview

Gender roles have been in a state of flux since the founding of the United States. The understanding of what it means to be male and female has shifted numerous times as

well as the roles that each gender is expected to play in culture. The history of these shifts explains why there is confusion today regarding what it means to be male.

Van Leeuwen locates the beginning point of the modern confusion of men in the coming of the Industrial Revolution. Prior to that, men and women were “organically unified” in their work and home life in small, stable communities, where “gender roles did not exist.” With the Industrial Revolution came separation of roles. She goes to comment:

Men’s increasing withdrawal from the domestic sphere and women’s increased specialization in it—often seen by later evangelicals as “biblical” and “natural”—were at first rightly recognized as causes of concern. “Paternal neglect at the present time is one of the most abundant sources of domestic sorrow,” wrote the Rev. John S.C. Abbot in the mid-nineteenth century. “The father. . . . eager in his pursuit of business, toils early and late, and finds no time to fulfill his duties to children.”

The father in the marketplace and the woman at home, which came to be seen later as an ideal, was a cause for concern as the Industrial Revolution set in.

The results of this were seen in masculine identity and roles. Men found their identity in the public sector, in the marketplace, and with facts and technology. This is where they could achieve in the sphere in which they felt well suited. In contrast, women were in the private sphere. Traditionally, this was viewed as the home and the place of values rather than facts. For example, Robert N. Bellah et al. say that “women were no

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2 Van Leeuwen, My Brother’s Keeper, 150-152.

3 Ibid., 152. Here she cites the Reverend John S. C. Abbot in Parents Magazine, 1842.

longer simply subordinate. To a certain degree, they were ‘separate but equal’ in their own sphere—‘women’s sphere.’” Van Leeuwen emphasizes that the Church, or religion, was seen as part of the feminine world, which was the private world of values rather than the public world of facts. She argues that religion became part of the private world, the subjective world, which also included the home. This was the world of emotionality and faith, thus considered feminine. The public world, in contrast, was viewed as the world of rationality and completion in the marketplace, academy, and politics. This was seen as the world of facts and thus masculine. As a result, men no longer modeled masculinity in the home, particularly what it meant to be a father.

This division of life into two spheres led to what Van Leeuwen calls “asymmetrical parenting.” Asymmetrical parenting is used to mean the mother, who now was the parent associated with the home and who became the primary parent. Fathers were marginalized in parenting. Consequently, boys were left with greatly diminished exposure to male role models in the home. As a result, boys now were being reared in a world of feminine sentiment which often defined masculinity as “becoming as unlike a woman as possible.” Without a definition or model for what it meant to be masculine, defining masculinity as not feminine easily led to a negative view of femininity and undervaluing of women.

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6 “The power of the father over the children was greatly curtailed.” Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart*, 86.


8 Ibid.
The role of the father changed to something more distant. Margaret L. Bendroth writes: “[The Christian father was] often physically absent from the home . . . [but] expressed his love through discipline and sacrifice. Like God the Father, he exercised daily care for his children only indirectly, by the threat of punishment and the presence of mutual provision.”\(^9\) The change from an agrarian to industrial society created a distance between father and children.

In the last half of the nineteenth century, the Church became more and more feminized. This meant that religion came to be seen as a feminine pursuit. Men who were churchgoing were subject to having their masculinity held suspect.\(^10\) The Church was seen as a place for emotionality and faith but not the world of facts that dominated the public domain.

This led to a reaction and to what some call “muscular Christianity.” Muscular Christianity was a movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in reaction to feminized Christianity. The YMCA was at the center of this movement, which stressed the need for physical exercise and gospel testimonies of famous athletes. The primary target was young middle-class males. In the Church, this led to a re-entry of men into Christian leadership and a narrowing of the roles of women, who had taken on significant roles in the Church in the nineteenth century; once again, they were confined mostly to the home.\(^11\)

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\(^9\) Margaret L. Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender: 1875 to the Present* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 104.


\(^11\) Ibid., 159-161.
At the same time that muscular Christianity became a movement in American culture, in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century, the first wave of feminism began to improve women’s condition in society and especially granted women’s suffrage. It is second-wave feminism, beginning in the 1960s, that is the focus in this paper. This was a movement for equality in all spheres of life, which was seen to be controlled by male power structures.12 Women wanted equal access to the public sphere that men entered into amidst the Industrial Revolution. They also wanted men to reengage in the private sphere with help in the home.

Men reacted to second-wave feminism in a number of ways, but mostly with confusion relating to their identity and roles. It was much less clear what it meant to be a man. When women’s identities and roles shifted, the mirror effect mentioned by Grenz was evidenced in men as a confused response. Jack Balswick speaks for men today when he says, “These are hard times for men. American society is short-changing males. We are being encouraged to discard the male script that was given to us at birth and has been our guide through life.”13 Here he stresses the uncertainty about what it means to be male.

This confusion forced men to ask what being a man meant. McCloughry states that “as a gender, we do not have a clue about how to develop an appreciation for what it means to be a man or what masculinity is.”14 Prior to this time, men never had to think about masculinity. There were assumptions that were made regarding what it meant to be

12 Ibid., 162-163.


14 McCloughry, Men and Masculinity, 129.
a man and which were reflected in the structures of society; however, these structures now were being challenged and changed by second-wave feminism. According to McCloughry, “Men began to ask, ‘What does it mean to be a man, except not being a woman?’ Men had lived for too long in a world defined by the twin certainties of men in employment and women in the home. When these two things shifted the effect was startling.” If being a man meant not being a woman, and women now were doing the same things as men, confusion could only be the result. To find ways out of the confusion, men gravitated toward three well-identified types of masculinity: the traditional man, the new man, and the wild man.

The traditional man is defined by patriarchy and hierarchy. Gender identity and roles are clear. Nelson says, “Traditionally, males have been expected to be physically strong, instrumental, goal-oriented, focused on achievement, lacking in emotional and interpersonal skills, and relating to women in a dominant manner.” This is the overarching description of men shaped in the public sphere by the Industrial Revolution. Traditional man assumes masculine dominance in the structures of society, which are important to pass on to the next generation. Deborah S. David and Robert Brannon associate four imperatives boys need to learn to stay on a trajectory toward becoming a traditional man. These include “no sissy stuff” (do not be like a girl), “a sturdy oak” (be strong and self-sufficient), “a big wheel”

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15 Van Leeuwen, My Brother’s Keeper, 164-168.

16 McCloughry, Men and Masculinity, 86.

17 Nelson, The Intimate Connection, 19.
(cultivate success and status), and “give ‘em hell” (do not let anyone run over you). This is a young man’s way out of the confusion, which maintains patriarchy and hierarchy.

In contrast to the traditional man, the new man is sensitive and friendly toward feminism and defines himself in reaction to the change in what it means to be feminine. He does not seem to have a strong conviction of what it means to be masculine. He views this as purely a social construct. He is often a man who is uncomfortable with the traditional man. McCloughry writes this about him:

Many men view the possibility of getting rid of the stranglehold of masculinity with relief and respond to feminism through adaptation and accommodation. Such men are willing to negotiate masculinity with women. In particular they are willing to add virtues previously considered “feminine” into the masculine world-view. . . . New men are nice men, but it is only a matter of time before another change comes, trends and fashions will drift away to other interpretations of masculinity leaving new men in the cold again.

In defining masculinity only as socially constructed, masculinity continually is negotiated and the definition will be subject to continual change. The new man’s answer to the masculinity question is to not answer it clearly. This leads to more confusion and not less.

The third type of masculinity is the wild man. The wild man is an attempt to give real definition to what it means to be male by going back—through story-telling, music, and ritual—to rediscover something lost: the masculine soul. The “wild man” movement brings awareness to the wounds that have been passed down from a generation of under-fathered men to their sons.


19 McCloughry, Men and Masculinity, 92-93.
Unlike the traditional man, vulnerability is seen as positive. Reacting against the new man, the wild man believes there is something essentially masculine that is not just a social construct. Bly says the reason it has been difficult to clearly define and experience masculinity is that modern men have become passive and have lost their inner wild man. Masculinity, therefore, only can be found by getting in touch with this wild man. What are needed are fathers or other men who initiate sons or young men into adulthood, something common in almost all traditional cultures.\(^\text{20}\)

The “wild man” movement advances toward spirituality and community. Though categorized as spiritual, the “wild man” movement is more a part of the New Age movement than Christian.\(^\text{21}\) Instead of seeking God’s revelation, the movement advocates going deeper into the male self to find answers to the confusion. Where the essential masculinity comes from remains unclear. It also seems to have an imbalance in the equation between being a victim and being responsible. The focus is on the wounds of men and not the sin.\(^\text{22}\) Both certainly are needed. However, real masculinity, as this paper will argue, involves a delicate balance of recognizing male vulnerability and a greater call to responsibility.

### Three Contemporary Issues of North American Men

This brief history of modern gender relationships before and after second-wave feminism of the 1960s sets the stage for the exploration of three contemporary issues

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\(^\text{22}\) Ibid., 100.
facing men today. They are the feminization of the Church, muscular Christianity, and the role of fathers. They form part of the current debate over male identity and roles in society and in the Church. These issues have deep implications for men, women, and children in North America. Discussion of the first issue, the feminization of the Church, will be followed by the second issue of muscular Christianity, since they are related. The third issue concerns questions related to fathering in the current era. These three issues are behind the need for a clarified path for masculine discipleship that is centered in Jesus and his teachings.

The Feminization of the Church

For the Church to disciple men, men must see the Church as a valid place for them to be discipled. The Church must present itself as a legitimate sphere for men to be themselves, where masculinity can be expressed in ways that are consistent with the Christian life. One of the barriers to this is that the Church, since long before the Industrial Revolution, has tended to be viewed as more feminine than masculine.

In 1999, Leon J. Podles published The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity. In this work, he sets forth the thesis that of all the world religions Christianity in particular has become feminized over time. The roots of this, according to Podles, are in twelfth-century “bridal mysticism,” especially that associated with Bernard of Clairvaux. Bridal mysticism was a movement that emphasized the mystical marriage of the Christian

23 Leon J. Podles, The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity (Dallas: Spence Publishing Co., 1999), 102-112. Bernard of Clairvaux was a twelfth-century monastic leader who had great influence in theology and prayer in the Church. He also influenced all of Europe in giving motivation for the Crusades.
to God, often using feminine language and metaphors. Podles sees a combining of the sensual and spiritual in this movement, where the individual Christian—not just the Church—has the identity as the bride of Christ. Men were to relate to God as a bride. Passivity and receptivity were valued. Podles, who is Catholic, goes on to argue that feminized spiritual language and imagery was also part of what the Protestant reformers employed.\textsuperscript{24}

For many conservative Protestant churches in North America, there is an ironic hybrid of a feminized Church led by men. The public image of evangelical churches is that they are hierarchal and patriarchal, dominated by men. David Murrow says that churches seem to be dominated by men, with 95 percent of senior pastors in America being men. However, according to Murrow, there is much evidence that they are feminized.\textsuperscript{25} He argues that, other than senior pastors, “almost every other area of church life is dominated by women.”\textsuperscript{26} This is why men tend to see the Church as a feminine place. Podles agrees and is disparagingly critical of the situation. He says, “Modern churches are women’s clubs with a few male officers.”\textsuperscript{27} Though this is an inflammatory caricature, there are reasons to think there is something true in his assertion.

It is statistically clear that there are more women attending church than men. Most surveys across denominations reveal a roughly 60 to 40 percent split of women over men.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 152-53.

\textsuperscript{25} David Murrow, \textit{Why Men Hate Going to Church} (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 4, 25.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 4.

\textsuperscript{27} Podles, \textit{The Church Impotent}, ix.
in churches. Evangelical churches tend to do a little better, while non-denominational churches had the most men. The question is “Why?” and the answers offered are many. Gordon Dalbey anchors the answer in recovering and appreciating an essential masculinity that is from God and then finding ways to celebrate this in church settings. He writes:

The church has done much over the centuries to encourage men to pursue feminine virtues. But we have not sought and portrayed Christ-centered ways to pursue masculine virtues. It is not enough for Christians to portray weakness and tenderness as acceptable in a man. We also must portray the manly strength and firmness that God gives us. We must demonstrate that weakness, confessed and submitted to the Living God through Jesus Christ, ultimately brings the very masculine strength for which men hunger: toughness in the face of opposition, decisiveness in the face of uncertainty, and saving power in the face of danger.

There is an essential masculinity, something that is given from God that has been not been recognized well or validated in churches.

There is an internal and external dimension to the message of Dalbey, Murrow, and Podles. The assumption is that there is an internal, God-breathed, essential masculinity built into men that experiences a cognitive and emotive dissonance in the exterior trappings of modern churches. Churches seem feminine to men. Richard Rohr, a Catholic priest who is decidedly non-patriarchal but masculine-affirming, comments:

The church became a women’s thing in most countries, and the men who want to operate in a sanctuary and sacristy notion of religion are few and far between. Around age twelve, boys want to stop dressing up and being altar boys. . . . Since Protestants don’t go in for all that, they make up for it with sentimental art, music, and jargon that do not feed the mind of the ordinary male. For the man on the street and the working man in general, church ritual and sanctuary stuff is foreign.

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29 Dalbey, *Healing the Masculine Soul*, 192.
Masculine discipleship needs to take into account this criticism to be effective. Men want something more concrete, particularly more risk and challenge.

Frederica Mathewes-Green finds in the Eastern Orthodox Church a more male-friendly exterior. Based on her survey of one hundred men in that tradition, she asked what made it more male-friendly. The most common finding was that it was challenging. Men want to be part of something that is risky and dangerous.

The spiritual warfare theme in particular is part of the challenge that appealed to the men surveyed. Fortitude and heroism, characteristics men more easily identify with and desire in their spiritual journey, are necessary components of the spiritual life. This is because they require rigor and great personal sacrifice.

Mathewes-Green also found that Orthodoxy is clear in what it demands. She says that men have a “just tell me what you want” approach to church. She says the exterior forms provide clear understanding of what is expected. By external forms she means the liturgy, sacraments, and icons that are geared toward the senses. There is a clear goal: *theosis*, meaning to become like God. In her podcast, she makes reference to what one priest in particular told her: “Men need a challenge, a goal, perhaps an adventure—in primitive terms, a hunt. Western Christianity has lost the ascetic, that is the athletic,

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aspect of the Christian life. This was the purpose of monasticism, which arose in the East largely as a men’s movement. By this she means that Christianity has become too easy, and this does not appeal to men.

Besides the focus on challenge, Mathewes-Green’s other male-friendly findings in Orthodoxy include a Christ-centered focus and non-sentimentality. In other words, there is something in Christianity that fits well with masculinity. She agrees with Podles and Murrow when they say that Western Christianity, for the most part, has not been a place where masculinity feels at home.

Likewise, sociologist David D. Gilmore has found that the one ubiquitous and pervasive feature of masculinity across cultures is that manhood is a test that is proven through stress and adventure. He writes: “Manhood is a test in most societies, and there is no doubt that the statistical frequency means something.” From a sociologist who is not speaking from a faith perspective, this points toward something universal in masculinity. He is modest in drawing sharp conclusions but alludes to an essential masculinity that involves challenge. The implications of this for men and Church are that men need to see a sense of adventure and testing in a church in order to see it as a place where masculinity is welcomed.

In conclusion, what Dalbey, Podles, Murrow, Rohr, and Mathewes-Green are saying is that the Church, in spite having the image of being a place where males dominate, has done a very poor job of reaching out to appreciate the truly masculine. The

32 Ibid.
external dimensions of the Church, its symbols and forms, have not matched up well with the interior and essential masculinity with which men live. This has caused males to feel marginalized from the Church.

**A New Muscular Christianity**

There is a new movement of muscular Christianity today in response to what is perceived to be a feminized Church. The new movement employs a masculinized Jesus as the image to which men are called to emulate. This movement also is causing concern for those who fear a new wave of male dominance.

Van Leeuwen has shown that the original movement of muscular Christianity began in the late nineteenth century, lasting into the 1920s. The end result was not a more masculine Church but a more masculine-led church. When men did come back into the Church, bringing with them a new way of doing things from corporate culture, Van Leeuwen says, “Women were now told their area of influence should be even more narrowly confined to domesticity.” Women were told that their place was in the home.

In the new muscular Christianity movement, there is a fear of those who detect a call to hierarchy and patriarchy. Murrow is quick to point out that “the answer is not a male-dominated church. . . . The answer is a balanced approach: teaching, practices, and opportunities that allow for both masculine and feminine expression in church.”

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“Balance” is certainly an important word in this conversation, as fears abound due to past abuses. Rohr says, “Many people are so angry at patriarchy, or false male power, that it makes them afraid to recognize the good power and passion of men.” These fears come from the pain of male dominance, which has made femininity into a second-class gender.

There are fears on both sides. Though women have fears about male dominance, there are many who are just as fearful of what the feminized Church is doing to men. Mark Driscoll, one who calls for a new muscular Christianity, says that “the church has produced a bunch of nice, soft, tender, chickified church boys. . . . Sixty percent of Christians are chicks, and the forty percent that are dudes are still sort of chicks.” Driscoll’s provocative language is an example of the kind of imbalance that is entering into the debate over muscular Christianity.

Much of the imbalance in the conversation about feminization and masculinization of the Church can be attributed to the picture of Jesus that has been presented to the Church. For many, that picture has been feminized. Jesus is portrayed in art, music, or Sunday School as tame, nice, and effeminate. Paul Coughlin writes:

We promote a dangerous caricature of “gentle Jesus meek and mild,” an infamous and ludicrous term penned by the late John Wesley. This dangerous caricature is as fictitious as anything you’ll find in Dan Brown’s Da Vinci Code. We can’t blame Hollywood or the mainstream media. We can blame ourselves. This caricature has encouraged Christian men to be nice to a fault, damaging their lives and those who are under their timid care.

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37 Rohr, Adam’s Return, 108.


This picture of Jesus as nice, mild, and meek has not inspired the male imagination. This caricature then is used by those who want a more muscular faith to speak of the “real Jesus,” who is tough, strong, and masculine.40 This Jesus is seen in the turning over of the money changer’s tables in righteous anger (Luke 19:45-46).41 John Eldridge, author of *Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Man’s Soul*, puts it this way: “When all is said and done, I think most men in the church believe that God put them on earth to be a good boy.”42

In responding to what they see as feminization of the Church, contemporary proponents of muscular Christianity are dangerously close to male abuses of the past in their call for men to be real men. In their *Christianity Today* interview with Brandon O’Brien, Eldridge and Driscoll seem to assume that all masculine instincts are good, without questioning whether these instincts are part of fallen humanity.43 Much of what Eldridge, Driscoll, Coughlin, and others call for is a Christian version of the “wild man,” with the roots of essential masculinity being theologically defined rather than biologically or vaguely spiritually defined. This trades an over-feminized caricature of Jesus for an over-masculinized opposite. To argue with theological conviction for feral males raises red flags for me with respect to the task of masculine discipleship.


41 All Scripture has been taken from *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002) unless otherwise noted.


In the modern “quests” for the “real and historical Jesus,” it has been said that every culture is tempted to remake Jesus in its own image.\textsuperscript{44} This remaking him into what culture calls “masculine” is not helpful. He is found in neither the over-feminized nor over-masculinized caricatures. While he is not an androgynous human, Jesus does embody aspects of what culture has come to call “masculine” and “feminine.” He is cool under fire from his enemies, never being outflanked, as in the confrontation narratives of Mark 11 and 12. He is also capable of deep weeping, as he experiences emotional pain. Luke tells the same story as Mark but in the midst of it mentions how Jesus weeps over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41). Jesus is focused on the challenge of the task before him and is deeply involved in the relationships around him. The muscular, strong Jesus is real but so is the vulnerable, weeping Jesus.

It is the position of this paper and the training manual that men need to be conformed to the entirety of his image. Due to this, a more balanced reaction to the feminization of the Church is needed. Men do need to see the strong Jesus in the entirety of his identity. As an example, Mathewes-Green has stated that men need a challenge and a goal. The life of Jesus embodies that.

If Jesus is the model for men, this raises a concern about how Jesus is the model for women. He is first of all fully human, the image of the invisible God to which both male and female are to be conformed (2 Corinthians 3:18). He lived out his humanity as a

\textsuperscript{44} Michael J. McClymond, \textit{Familiar Stranger: An Introduction to Jesus of Nazareth} (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 139.
male, but he is the essential human. Women, too, are to become like him, in his humanity, as it works into the feminine. Balswick provides clarity here:

I believe that more than anything else, modern men need a Christian model of manhood . . . Jesus provided us with a perfect model of Christian manhood. Although he was totally God, he was also totally man. And he lived a life of perfection, totally submitted to the Father’s will. It could be argued that Jesus’ humanity could also be the basis for building an authentic image of womanhood; yet this would not make it wrong to use Jesus as a model for authentic manhood. That will be our goal.45

This project will use Jesus as the perfect model for what it means to be a man, yet in a way that does not diminish his being a model for women.

Many of those writing on gender use Jungian categories to define true masculinity. This approach sees the muscular masculine being the masculine side and sees the soft and emotional as feminine. Thus men have a feminine side. Balswick also argues against the need to use Jungian categories of explanation in defining masculinity and femininity. There is no need, Balswick says, to develop the shadow side. The need is to become like Christ. The Jungian approach has been used by many in this conversation, including the “wild man” movement but also a number of Christians—even Payne and Rohr.46 In response to this, Balswick argues:

I appreciate the desire within the new men’s movement to illuminate an image of a fuller masculinity—a masculinity that allows men to be both strong and vulnerable, hard and soft, rational and emotional. But I don’t want to give half of what I consider true masculinity away by calling it femininity. I claim

45 Balswick, Men at the Crossroads, 54-55.

vulnerability, softness and emotionality as masculine characteristics and not just the feminine side of a male’s personhood.\textsuperscript{47}

One further practical point against using Jungian categories is that they are not as easily understood by the average Christian male nor is he as likely to be open to “getting in touch with his feminine side” as he is to the more scriptural imperative “to become like Christ,” the whole man.

To summarize these two issues of the feminization of the Church and muscular Christianity, there are legitimate points raised by those who argue for a more masculine sense of church and faith. These points are transcended by focusing on Jesus as the goal for what it means to be male. This also works hand in hand with what it means to be a disciple. The answer to the masculinity question and the disciple question is to become like Christ.

\textbf{Father Questions}

Fathers are critical for families and for society. Since the 1960s, fatherhood in America has been and continues to be redefined. Writing in the 1990s, David Blankenhorn says, “The fatherless family in the United States in the late twentieth century is a social invention of the most daring and untested design. It represents a radical departure from virtually all of human history and experience.”\textsuperscript{48} The result of this is that around 40 percent of children live in homes without their fathers present, and there is

\textsuperscript{47} Balswick, \textit{Men at the Crossroads}, 51-52.

growing evidence of the cost of this fatherlessness to society.⁴⁹ For example, the American Academy of Pediatrics reports that “fatherless children are 5 times as likely to live in poverty, repeat a grade, and have emotional problems.”⁵⁰

Blankenhorn is aware that fathering is more than being physically present. It is a role that helps men become “good men.” He defines good men as fathers who are responsible to their family and their community. Fatherhood “bends maleness—in particular male aggression—toward pro-social purposes.” It also privileges children in four ways:

First, it provides them with a father’s physical protection. Second, it provides them with a father’s money and other material resources. Third, and probably most importantly, it provides them with what might be termed paternal cultural transmission: a father’s distinctive capacity to contribute to the identity, character, and competence of his children. Fourth, and most obviously, paternal investment provides children with day-to-day nurturing—feeding them, playing with them, telling them a story—that they want and need from both parents. In virtually all human societies, children’s well-being depends decisively upon a relatively high level of paternal investment.⁵¹

It is his third point, what he calls the most important role of fatherhood, which is an underlying concern of this paper and the training manual. Particularly, there is an essential and redeemed masculinity that is absolutely critical to model and pass on to the next generation. Rohr says, “It is Dad’s job, however, to lead us into the outer world and give security and confidence beyond the nest. He needs to choose us—from the other

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⁴⁹ Ibid., 14-16.


⁵¹ Blankenhorn, Fatherless America, 25.
children—and lead us into bigger worlds with him. For a child to have to enter the larger world unsupported by his father is a life-long and gnawing sadness.” Women can give some protection and provision, and they can certainly provide day-to-day nurturing. However, giving identity, character, and competence is something fathers are uniquely positioned to do. Payne adds, “A man is never a man until his father tells him he is a man.” He needs a father to help instill identity. Dalbey also argues that it is the father who calls out his daughter’s femininity. This is the unique role of fathers and is part of essential masculinity, meaning it is part of what God intended for masculine gender.

Blankenhorn identifies the culturally iconic moment in this debate as September 21, 1992 when the Murphy Brown season premier celebrated fatherlessness in a new way. The culture officially was saying, “Fathers are just not all that important.” Though fathers might still be good, they are not necessary for the healthy functioning of a family. The “new father,” according to Blankenhorn, does not see the importance of Blankenhorn’s third point: transmitting something to his children that only he can transmit. He is considered good and endorsed by society’s new norm for fathering, which is the day-to-day nurturing of children. Day-to-day nurturing is a part of parenting that is more androgynous and therefore more acceptable. It does not require the unique contribution only fathers can make.

52 Rohr, Adam’s Return, 88.
53 Payne, Masculinity in Crisis, 77.
54 Dalbey, Healing the Masculine Soul, 156-157.
55 Rohr, Adam’s Return, 69-83.
Part of the contribution fathers can make is affirming gender differences in their children. Gender differences must be recognized as going deeper than mere social construction. Alice S. Rossi, in her presidential address to the American Sociological Association made this comment:

Gender differentiation is not simply a function of socialization, capitalist production, or patriarchy. It is grounded in sex dimorphism that serves the fundamental purpose of reproducing the species. . . . Theories that neglect these characteristics of sex and gender carry a high risk of eventual irrelevance against mounting evidence of sexual dimorphism from the biological and neurosciences.  

From a non-theological perspective, Rossi asserts that science agrees that gender differences are not purely socially constructed. Once again, the debate turns to whether or not there is an essential masculinity (and femininity). What Blankenhorn, Rohr, Payne, and Dalbey argue is that fathers exercise a critical role in recognizing and affirming these essential differences in their sons and daughters.

Blankenhorn argues against the “new father” (a parallel to the “new man”) in favor of what he calls “the good family man,” who is still very much alive in culture but goes unnoticed, uncelebrated, and culturally undervalued. Though still formidable, he is becoming fewer in number. Blankenhorn describes him this way:

As a father, the Good Family Man is not perfect, but he is good enough to be irreplaceable. He is married. He stays around. He is a father on the premises. His children need him and he strives to give them what they need, every day. He knows that nothing can substitute for him. Either he is a father or his children are fatherless. He would never consider himself “not that important” to his children.  

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57 Ibid., 201.
The “good family man” offers his children all four dimensions of what he says it means to be a father: protection, provision, moral and identity formation, and nurturing.

There is a paradox involved in a father’s affirming gender differences. Van Leeuwen, though she is more careful regarding the differences between masculine and feminine, concludes, “So the bottom line appears to be this: children of both sexes need to grow up with stable, nurturant adult role models of both sexes to better develop a secure gender identity that then, paradoxically, allows them to relate to each other primarily as human beings, rather than as gender role characters.” Clear gender identity allows male and female to see each other as truly human and not just a person with a gender role. In order to be truly human there is a need for children to understand and experience what it means to be masculine and feminine. Fathers have a critical role to play in this.

This chapter has given a brief historical context for many of the issues facing men in North America today. Men continue to struggle with this fundamental question: “What does it mean to be a man?” If they cannot answer, they are not going to be able to model and transmit the answer to the next generation. Without answering it, Christian men will not be fathers who teach their sons what it means to be a true male disciple of Jesus, nor will they be able to model a healthy kind of man their daughter might choose to marry.

58 Van Leeuwen, My Brother’s Keeper, 208.
CHAPTER 2

THE CONTEXT OF MEN AT COMMUNITY COVENANT CHURCH

Developing a curriculum for masculine discipleship requires understanding the context of the men being targeted for this project. Consequently, this chapter will look at the questions and issues of masculine discipleship facing men at Community Covenant Church. The first section will identify the demographics of these men in the state of Alaska and the Eagle River community. A brief picture of the church in this context will be given. The second section uses survey data from men at Community Covenant Church to identify five core issues these men currently face.

The Context of the Ministry in Eagle River, Alaska, and North America

The prerequisite to ministering effectively to men is to understand them. Part of understanding men is to understand what the demographic statistics say about the area and state. This section presents a profile of the community of Eagle River and how the Church has attempted to minister in this context.

The men being targeted have much in common with other men across North America who live in suburban settings. Community Covenant Church is located in Eagle
River, Alaska, a bedroom community within the municipality of Anchorage.¹ About 87 percent of the people who attend Community Covenant live in Eagle River, whose population is approximately 35,000. Eagle River is characterized by higher levels of education, income, home ownership, families, and marriage and contains more mon-ethnicity than the rest of Alaska.²

Eagle River also has many distinctive characteristics that make it unique. One of these is the influence of military bases. It is separated geographically from Anchorage by Fort Richardson and Elmendorf Air Force Base, which means there is a strong military presence in the community. This is reflected in the significantly higher level of veterans in Eagle River than in the United States in general.³

People who live in Eagle River tend to be from somewhere else. Fewer people who live in Eagle River were born in Alaska (compared to the rest of the state) but have moved to Eagle River for reasons of employment (federal, military, oil, and gas) or lifestyle concerns. The largest geographical region represented in Eagle River consists of

¹ Since Eagle River is not incorporated but is part of the greater Anchorage borough, some statistics are difficult to obtain.

² Neal Fried, A Partial Portrait of Chugiak/Eagle River (Eagle River, AK: Chugiak/Eagle River Chamber of Commerce, April 20, 2011). Fried is an economist who compiled this comparative report with statistics from State of Alaska: Department of Labor and Workforce Development, http://almis.labor.state.ak.us/(accessed November 26, 2010). Eagle River has more college graduates than Alaska, 38 percent to 27 percent (U.S. 28 percent). Average household income is $101,725 in Eagle River and $79,907 in Alaska ($70,096 in U.S.). Eagle River has a lower rate of poverty, 3 percent versus 10 percent for Alaska (14 percent for U.S.). Home ownership is 82 percent for Eagle River and 64 percent for Alaska (67 percent for U.S.). More are married, 65 percent to 51 percent for Alaska (U.S. 52 percent). Eagle River’s population is 84.5 percent Caucasian, compared with 66 percent for Anchorage.

³ Ibid. Fewer were born in the state, 26 percent compared to 40 percent for Alaska. Eagle River has more veterans, 21 percent compared to 15 percent for Alaska (12.7 for U.S.).
people born in the Western United States. The schools have a good reputation, and recreational opportunities abound.

Politically, Alaska as a whole has a libertarian bent in social and moral issues. The government often is seen to be at odds with people’s independent desires to do what they want. Alaska tends to be more Republican than Democrat. Eagle River is strongly Republican. Alaska is considered a red state nationally, and Eagle River is part of this portrait.

Economically, Alaska is dominated by natural resources. Alaska’s economy has been described as “a three-legged stool.” It is estimated that 31 percent of Alaskan jobs are generated by the oil and gas industry, 35 percent by the federal government (including military), and 34 percent by “other basic sectors.” This latter category includes tourism, fisheries, health care, mining, and air cargo. These sectors are a large part of the Eagle River economy. Eagle River is growing but at a slower rate than it was between 1980 and 2000.

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7 Ibid.

8 The growth rate was 97 percent between 1980 and 1990, and 18 percent between 1990 and 2000. It is estimated to be about 12 percent between 2000 and 2010, according to Fried, A Partial Portrait of Chugiak/Eagle River.
There are other characteristics of Alaska that make it sociologically unique. There is an image of the Alaskan male as rugged and independent. Karen King captures a common stereotype:

And what of men in Alaska? Well, many (not all) fulfill the Alaska man stereotype—rugged, self-reliant, adventurous—toughened by a life spent outdoors. With spectacular opportunities for recreation, a sometimes-challenging climate and plethora of resource-based jobs (fishing, mining, oil), Alaska tends to raise and attract that sort of man.  

This portrait of the Alaskan male is part of the ethos of Alaskan masculinity. The nickname for Alaska is “the Last Frontier.” This goes along with the masculine stereotype of ruggedness and self-reliance.

In Alaska, there are forty-eight women for every fifty-two men. The national average for women is 50.8 of a total population of one hundred. In the 2000 census, the men-to-women ratio was higher in Alaska than any other state. Men, more than women, have moved to Alaska to find work in the natural resource economy. Alaska also is listed consistently as one of the youngest states with 33.8 years as the average median age.

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According to Pew Research, Alaska is the least religious state, judged by its church attendance. The Pew study also says that almost half of Alaskans (47 percent) seldom or never attend worship services, compared to the national average of 27 percent. There is no current information on worship attendance in Eagle River. Other measures of religion point in the same direction. Whereas the majority of American adults (56 percent) say that religion is very important in their lives, only 37 percent of Alaskans report this of themselves. This information is useful in knowing that churches cannot make assumptions that there is a surrounding culture that is friendly or open to the Christian message. It also fits with some of the stereotypes mentioned of Alaska being a place where people tend to do what they want.

Overall, the demographics point to a community that is not substantially different from many bedroom communities in terms of income, education, and family structures. The distinctive characteristics include high populations working in areas of natural resources and military, which also make for a more transitional population. There are more men than women in the community. Essentially, Alaska is a young state with a “last frontier” mentality. The population tends to be conservative but mixed with libertarian views. Although there are no local statistics available on weekly worship attendance, the fact that Alaska is last in weekly worship attendance of all states implies a lower rate for Eagle River.


\[15\] Ibid.
Community Covenant Church

Community Covenant Church is part of the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC), a small denomination with roots in revival movements in the Lutheran Church of Sweden in the nineteenth century. The denomination is intentionally non-creedal and is not tightly defined by a statement of faith. The emphasis is on relational life with God and people. This has allowed the Covenant to move beyond its ethnic church identity to become one of the fastest growing denominations in North America over the last twenty years. As a denomination, the ECC officially has been egalitarian in its position toward women in ministry since 1976. However, thirty-four years later, there are few women serving as senior pastors in ECC congregations. This has been a source of conversation and grief for many.

Community Covenant Church was planted in 1995 by a group of thirty people who wanted to reach their neighbors for Christ. The church has grown in average attendance to between eight hundred and nine hundred, with 45 percent of members being men. They have helped plant one other church and currently are planting a second.

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16 The Covenant Church is defined by six essential beliefs or affirmations of faith: the centrality of the Word of God, the necessity of new birth, a commitment to the whole mission of the Church, the Church as a fellowship of believers, a conscious dependence on the Holy Spirit, the reality of freedom in Christ. The Evangelical Covenant Church, “Affirmations,” http://covchurch.org/who-we-are/beliefs/affirmations/ (accessed November 25, 2010).


The church tends to reflect the make-up of the Eagle River community but with a greater percentage of military. Approximately 40 percent of those who attend are active military, Guard, Reserve, or retired military families. Active military are usually in Alaska for three years. This makes up approximately 25 percent of the congregation. This makes for a high rate of transition. Of the military population at the church, almost 70 percent are Air Force (30 percent Army), and approximately 60 percent of these are officers. This implies higher education, income, and families.

There are other ways the church reflects the community. The church is young, with many young families. Approximately 33 percent of the average attendance is made up of children, age twelve and younger. People are often from somewhere else and find meaningful friendship connections with others who are also far from their families.

Though Eagle River tends to be politically conservative, the congregation is not uniform in its political loyalties. There are a number of registered Democrats, and the leadership is intentional about keeping party politics out of the church. Nevertheless, people are encouraged to be involved in changing the world for Christ, including in the political realm. There is an emphasis on integrating faith into all areas of life.

The worship is blended with an emphasis on a contemporary style. The church has defined its mission as “reaching out” and “sending out,” attempting to strike a healthy

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20 The official percentage of military population in Eagle River is 7 percent. Fried, A Partial Portrait of Chugiak/Eagle River.

balance between evangelism and discipleship. Therefore, as people transition out each year (through transfers and moves), there is an intentional sending of disciples into other parts of the world.

Due to theological conviction, and also reflecting the age diversity in the congregation, there is an emphasis on inter-generational learning and worship at Community Covenant Church. The children are in the Sunday services for the first twenty minutes as a way of emphasizing the value of children and families worshipping together. Then, they are dismissed to a curriculum which is driven by discipleship. Teens also have a mix of discipleship, which involves constant encouragement in living for Christ and a youth group to which friends often are invited.

Adults primarily are discipled through small groups. There is no adult Sunday School. Instead, there are multiple small group opportunities, including groups for couples. Both men’s and women’s ministries are emphasized, mostly through small group discipleship, of which Mountain Men is a major part. Women have come to adapt the Sermon on the Mount curriculum for themselves, calling it “Women at the Well.”

The staff of Community Covenant Church is comprised of seven full-time pastors or ministry directors. Two of these are women. There are six other part-time ministry staff. This has formed the framework and background for the development of the men’s discipleship training curriculum.

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22 Community Covenant Church, *Explore Class* (Eagle River, AK: Community Covenant Church, n.d.), 16-17.
Survey Data: Five Core Issues Men Face at Community Covenant Church

For Community Covenant Church to be effective in reaching men, it was necessary to listen to their voices. This was done in three different ways. First, there was an original one-year pilot program in which the Mountain Men curriculum was developed. This consisted of twelve men who gave comments and feedback during twelve months, which helped to provide the foundation for the two-year Mountain Men journey. This was very useful in shaping the initial curriculum, but a more formal survey of a larger group was needed.

Second, in the fall of 2010, a survey was conducted of forty-three men at Community Covenant Church. The survey consisted of thirty-four men who were currently going through the Mountain Men Journey and nine men who had graduated. The purpose of the survey was threefold. The initial section was designed to gather basic demographic data in order to compare this group with other groups of men, including local, state, and national data. The next portion was designed to discern the real and underlying issues men are facing as male disciples. The third part was designed to see if the topics covered in the Mountain Men curriculum are relevant to these men. In this discussion, only the first two sections will serve as the focus for this discussion.

Finally, the survey questions were created with input from ten men who were part of the small group leadership in Mountain Men. These leaders influenced the questions.

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23 Each small group has six to eight men with a leader and co-leader. These leaders are trained and relied upon for overall leadership of Mountain Men, as will be discussed in Part Two of this project.
based on what they perceived to be the most important concerns on men’s hearts and minds. These same men also were asked to help interpret the results. Their interpretation was influenced by their own personal experiences and their observation of others in their groups. It is the process of going through the formation of questions and the interpretation of results that provides qualitative research for this project.24 The small group leaders were asked to identify the issues most foundational to men.25 They named five core issues: father issues, emotional and spiritual passivity, loneliness and community, desire management, and clarity on what it means to be a man.

The purpose of exploring survey data is to identify and examine the issues men are facing at Community Covenant Church. One of the arguments of this paper is that there is an “essential” masculinity beneath the cultural expressions. Patrick Morley writes:

Demographically, men are different. . . . In another sense all men are similar. Each man’s wiring diagram is not so different from any other of the male “species”. Whether I am speaking with men from Alabama or Alaska, at the Pentagon or in prison, executives in New York City or Mennonite farmers in Pennsylvania, cowboys in Texas or Chinese businessmen in Malaysia, I have found that, as men, our similarities dwarf our differences.26

Given that Community Covenant Church has a broad representation of men from all over the United States, particular characteristics of the church may tilt toward national averages rather than anything particular to Alaska or Eagle River. These five issues,

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25 “Foundational” was described as “that which is the root cause, beyond simple behavior.”

however, have been identified as the most important discipleship issues these men face, which will be discussed in this section. They are consistent with issues that are identified in research and literature for men in North America in general.

Each concern will be identified and processed in terms of comments made and its importance to ministry to men at Community Covenant Church. Comments men made are synthesized into each section. Many of the footnotes in this section are provided to show that what men were saying is being communicated by writers on men’s issues in North America.

Relating to Fathers

Most men surveyed had relational issues with their fathers. The healthiest responses were along the lines of “my father wasn’t perfect but he showed me what it means to live as a man in this world.” There are three concerns that surfaced in this discussion that relate specifically to masculine discipleship. The first is how men have related to their fathers. The second is how they relate to their sons (and daughters27), and the third is how their experience with their father has influenced their view of God as Father.

Due to the inability of fathers to affirm their sons, masculinity has not been understood well or passed on effectively to the next generation. Rohr and Joseph Martos say, “Most men grow up with emptiness inside them. Call it father hunger, call it male deprivation, call it personal insecurity, it’s the same emptiness. When positive masculine

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27 The primary concern here is the father-son relationship and how men struggle because they have not had masculinity modeled and passed on to them. There is also much evidence to support the importance of the father’s role in calling a daughter into her womanhood and affirming her femininity. See Dalbey, *Healing the Masculine Soul*, 154-70; Balswick, *Men at the Crossroads*, 165; Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America*, 72.
energy, a male mode of feeling, is not modeled from father to son, it creates a vacuum in
the souls of men. And into that vacuum demons pour.”

Men, in general, feel under-affirmed in their masculinity which the father is uniquely positioned to do. This sentiment
is echoed by others. Men at Community Covenant, to one degree or another, struggle
with their fathers. The most common emotion expressed is anger, unless there has been
intentional forgiveness. The most common comments were either that fathers were too
passive or too hard on them. Many men never heard their father say that he loved them or
was proud of them. Men felt that this often led to a sense that they had to prove
themselves, both to their father and to the world.

As men reflected on issues they experienced with their fathers, it brought awareness.
If they were fathers themselves—as most of those surveyed were—they came to connect
these issues with their own inadequacy and failures, particularly as a father. Men confirmed
this had two effects. First, it fueled their motivation to forgive their fathers, because they
imagined their sons talking about them at some future point in time. Dalbey explains:

The man who confesses [father pain] by bringing it to Jesus at the cross will begin
to see that his father was not called out by his own father, so that he didn’t know
how call out his own son. Your father is not the oppressor, but a fellow victim, a
brother in the mutual need of manly affirmation. When a man allows Jesus to
carry his tears for his own loss into tears for his father’s loss when the latter was a
boy, he’s begun to become a man of God at last.

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28 Rohr and Martos, From Wild Man to Wise Man, 81.

29 See also Payne, Masculinity in Crisis, 11; Dalbey, Healing the Masculine Soul, xvii, Van
Leeuwen, Gender and Grace, 137. In secular literature, see Dan Kindlon and Michael Thompson, Raising
Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999), 95; Samuel Osherson,

30 Dalbey, Healing the Masculine Soul, 35.
Second, this reflection made them realize that they can take responsibility for a pattern that may be generational sin. In their own healing and responsible action, they realized they could greatly impact their children. In this, at least some men experienced a realization of the gospel, both in its power to forgive and in the power to change. The raised awareness has led some men to apologize to their children.

Finally, most of these men had not realized how their relationship with their father had impacted their image of God as Father.\(^{31}\) It was a radical concept to almost all of the men to think that they should derive understanding of what an earthly father is based on, God the Father, and that the ideal template for a father-son relationship is between the Father and the Son.\(^{32}\) As a result, many men expressed a strong interest in wanting to experience and learn more about God the Father.

### Emotional and Spiritual Passivity

In the survey and interview, the men admitted they struggle to be emotionally and spiritually engaged, especially at home. Much of this relates to father issues. Some said they expect their wives to run the home while they provide income, since that is what their fathers modeled for them. This implied that the men’s emotional involvement in the home was not at the same level as that of their wives. However, research shows that

\(^{31}\) “I usually find that 80 percent of people’s operative God image is a combination of their mother and their father images—for good and for ill. If the dad was distant, you will first assume that God is distant; if Mom operated by manipulation, you will assume God does the same and will put up the same defenses; if your family was judgmental, your God will be judgmental, too.” Rohr and Martos, *From Wild Man to Wise Man*, 99.

\(^{32}\) McCloughry, *Men and Masculinity*, 159; Smail, *Like Father, Like Son*, 35-36.
providing income is no longer the main marker that defines a husband. 33 What wives say is more important, according to surveys, is emotional engagement from their husbands. 34 McCloughry captures this emotional and spiritual connection:

[Statistics showed] men were still inarticulate about their own personal emotions. Many men were not even aware that they were needy or lonely or depressed. Ninety eight percent of women surveyed said that if they could improve their marriages it would be that their husbands would talk to them more. . . . If men are not talking to their wives, whom they can love and see with their eyes, can we assume that they are talking to God whom they cannot see? . . . very few men I talked to spent regular time in prayer with God. They feel guilty about that and wish they did. 35

This implies that men not only struggle with emotional intimacy with their wives but spiritual intimacy with God. Community Covenant men said this seemed true for them. They had not seen either modeled well by their fathers. They also realized that the inability to express their emotions and spirituality is something they presently model to their sons.

Some men mentioned that they had been told they were supposed to be the “spiritual leader” but admitted they had no role model or clear definition of what that meant. 36 They

33 Until the late 1960s, being a real man meant being a good provider for the family. No other conception of what it means to be a real man came even close. Concepts of sexual potency, or physical strength, or strength of character (manliness), or even being handy around the house were relegated to the bottom of the list of traits associated with masculinity. By the late 1970s, however, the definition of a real man as a good provider had slipped from its number one spot (86 percent in 1968) to the number three position, at 67 percent. It has continued to erode.” Daniel Yankelovich, “How Changes in the Economy Are Reshaping American Values,” in Values and Public Policy, eds. Henry J. Aaron, Thomas A. Mann, and Timothy Taylor (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1994), 34. See also Hanna Rosin, “The End of Men”, Atlantic Monthly, July/August 2010, http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2010/07/the-end-of-men/8135/ (accessed August 15, 2010).

34 Shaunti Feldhahn and Jeffrey Feldhahn, For Men Only: A Straightforward Guide to the Inner Lives of Women (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2006), 77. Their research shows that “70 percent of married women would prefer to be financially insecure than endure a lack of closeness with their husbands.”

35 McCloughry, Men and Masculinity, 252.

36 Charles H. Lippy, Do Real Men Pray? Images of the Christian Man and Male Spirituality in White Protestant America (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2005), 222. Lippy says that throughout American history Christian men have received images to live up to without training or resources to become that man.
shared how they struggle under the weight of what it means to be a spiritual leader, using energy to try to look like one rather than actually being mentored or discipled by other men who are spiritual leaders. Some of this is the result of simply not knowing how to ask for help.

**Loneliness and Community**

Another concern men raised was loneliness or lack of real male friends. A common theme in the literature according to Balswick, *Men at the Crossroads*, 172-186; McCloughry, *Men and Masculinity*, 115-132; and Nelson, *The Intimate Connection*, 47-66.

Most of the men said that their wives had the kind of friendships they did not have, and they were not sure how to get them. They talked about having other men that they know and with whom they can talk about certain things (such as business, sports, hunting, and fishing), but most did not have significant and deep friendships. On the surface, it seemed these men did not want deep friendships. However, when probed further, they all agreed that they do but just did not know how to have them. There was agreement that if men were to have deep and long-term friendships, they would have to change something fundamental in the way they are as men.

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37 This is a common theme in the literature according to Balswick, *Men at the Crossroads*, 172-186; McCloughry, *Men and Masculinity*, 115-132; and Nelson, *The Intimate Connection*, 47-66.

38 “Women are far more likely than men to agree that they have a best friend in their faith community (51 percent to 35 percent) . . . . Apparently it is easier for women to develop close friendships within their faith communities than it is for men. Leaders need to be aware of this and work to expand opportunities for men to create and deepen friendships,” says Albert L. Winseman, “Religion and Gender: A Congregation Divided, Part II,” December 10, 2002, Gallup, http://gallup.com/poll/7390/Religion-Gender-Congregation-Divided-Part.aspx (accessed November 12, 2010).

39 Robert A. Strikwerda and Larry May, “Male Friendship and Intimacy,” in *Rethinking Masculinity: Philosophical Explorations in Light of Feminism*, eds. Larry May, Robert Strikwerda, and Patrick Hopkins (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996), 79-94, emphasize the male proclivity to share activities rather than disclose feelings or vulnerability. They call this “comradeship without friendship.”

40 Ibid., 87. “In our culture, men may disclose fewer feelings than do women simply because they have been socialized to be less aware of the few feelings they do have. . . . This socialization helps many men avoid dealing with the emotional consequences for others of their acts, at least for the short term.”
As men discussed the reason for why this was so hard, they talked about what Dietrich Bonhoeffer identifies as that which separates men: “Confession in the presence of a brother is the profoundest kind of humiliation. It hurts, it cuts a man down, it is a dreadful blow to his pride. . . . Because this humiliation is so hard we will continually scheme to evade confessing to a brother.”\textsuperscript{41} The men agreed that pride or fear of being exposed in the eyes of other men was a large inhibitor to real friendship.\textsuperscript{42} Men said they tend to avoid anything that makes them feel vulnerable, especially in front of other men. They said they wanted friendship but were not sure how to get past their fears in order to get it. They were uncertain as to why they felt this way but agreed that pride was probably a part of the reason.

Managing Desire

The interior struggle men have to manage their desires was another prominent theme.\textsuperscript{43} This surfaced in a number of ways, but two in particular were in the area of sexuality and spirituality. Most men felt that if they “could just get these two areas of their lives under control,” they would move from feeling defeated to feeling good about their spiritual journeys. The first area was how to manage sexual feelings, particularly


\textsuperscript{42} “Underneath all explanations for men’s difficulty in friendship I believe there lies one pervasive and haunting theme: fear. Fear of vulnerability. Fear of emotions. Fear of being uncovered, found out. So my fear leads to my desire to control,” says Nelson, \textit{The Intimate Connection}, 50. Balswick, \textit{Men at the Crossroads}, 173, also lists competition and homophobia as the two main reasons men struggle with friendships.

\textsuperscript{43} “The primary source of our entanglement is our desires—really, not just our desires themselves, but the enslavement to them and the confusion about them,” says Dallas Willard, \textit{Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ} (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002), 154.
lust and pornography. They expressed a lot of guilt and shame around this topic and how it affects their relationship with God. They reported difficulty in feeling like a real follower of Christ when they struggle so much with sexual temptation. They fear God will not hear their prayers, if they cannot control lust.

The men also felt guilt towards their wives. They realized that their inability to control their temptation was painful to their wives. This tended to add to the inability to speak at an emotional level. They mentioned a paradox. Their wives complained that their husbands did not talk about their feelings. At the same time, sexual feelings were the strongest feelings they had and they felt they often could not talk with their wives about this. Some who did say they talked with their wives said it hurt them. The only real encouragement the men felt was in the degree to which they realized they were not alone and that other men struggle as well.

The second topic regarding the area of desire, or lack of desire, was in regard to prayer. The men expressed that prayer was a significant struggle for them. They said they felt they have a responsibility to pray, but the desire to pray is not at the same level as the obligation they feel. They said they want to learn how to pray better but feel inadequate. Most of the men said that their wives were better at prayer than they were.

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45 “Very few men that I have talked to spend regular time in prayer with God. They feel guilty about that and wish they did. They aspire to and never get around to it,” says McCloughry, *Men and Masculinity*, 255.
They also felt like most of the ways of praying to which they have been introduced have been more comfortable for their wives than for them.

**Clarity on What Manhood Is**

The men surveyed and interviewed conveyed the sense that most men cannot readily identify what masculinity is or what it means to be a man. Almost all said that no one ever told them that they had moved from boyhood to manhood. McCloughry echoes this sentiment. He writes: “The problem is that nobody taught these things to men, they were not initiated into manhood but grew up breathing these ideas in through the culture. At no time were men asked to critically reflect on what it meant to be a man.” Consequently, many grew up thinking that being masculine means being human beings who “are not feminine.”

The men interviewed agreed that, as a boy, it was important to not be like a girl. Though some of this is natural gender differentiation, some admitted it did not help them appreciate women as equals.

Instead of being clearly affirmed as a man, men found their initiation into manhood through things like sports, various achievements, obtaining a driver’s license, joining the military, or “doing adult things” (such as drinking, smoking, and having

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46 McCloughry, *Men and Masculinity*, 249.

47 Kindlon and Thompson, *Raising Cain*, 79, state: “Boys not only feel the pressure to appear masculine, but they feel that, in doing so, they must clearly be not feminine—perhaps even anti-feminine—and so they consciously and deliberately attack in others and in themselves traits that might possibly be defined as feminine.” Also Balswick, *Men at the Crossroads*, 174, adds: “By the time the boy reaches adulthood, he has learned to define his masculinity negatively—as that which is not feminine. He becomes skilled in repressing and denying his gentle, nurturing side.”
Michael Kimmel describes young males as wanting to be “real men” but not knowing how to come of age.

In an effort to prove their masculinity, with little guidance and no real understanding of what manhood is, they engage in behaviors and activities that are ill-conceived and irresponsibly carried out. These guys are so desperate to be accepted by their peers that they do all sorts of things they secretly know to be not quite right. They lie about sexual experiences to seem more manly; they drink more than they know they can handle because they don’t want to seem weak or immature; they sheepishly engage in locker-room talk about young women they actually like and respect.

When asked if when they were growing up they wanted to know they had become a man, everyone said it was one of the most important things in life for them to know. When asked why they did not know, the answer was generally because no one had told them. They had to figure it out for themselves. Most men were not initiated into manhood or formally affirmed as men. If the father was emotionless and remote, if that was his image of what it meant to be a man, then the son felt unaffirmed as a man. Men said that their grandfathers were much the same way and from that developed some empathy for their fathers. Some said they tried to act like their dad, while dying inside with feelings. These feelings ranged from emptiness to anger. Some reacted by saying they did not ever want to be like their fathers.

Additionally, most were confused and overwhelmed by all the sexual messages and feelings they experienced as teens and commensurate lack of communication on this from their fathers or any other males. Balswick explains:

When the boy cannot manage to pull all his identities together into one integrated whole, a crisis of “identity diffusion” can result. An adolescent boy’s sense of

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personal identity needs to include appropriate identification of an adult gender role. . . . Failure to achieve a clear, appropriate sexual identity can adversely affect a male’s overall ego identity. 49

The men expressed the sentiment that they wished their fathers had done a better job of helping them navigate the teenage years. Overall, it was agreed that this was the time when the greatest confusion was felt as to what it meant to be a man.

There is another point revealed by this survey. Despite certain differences, the men of Community Covenant Church seem to struggle with the same issues men face nearly everywhere. Morley’s earlier comment that “demographically men are different. . . . [and] as men, our similarities seem to dwarf our differences” seems to ring true with the results of this survey data. 50 The five core issues that were explored are not unique to Eagle River. Ultimately, this statement points toward and implies a common male experience that is not bound by culture but rather by gender. This is the topic of Chapter 3.

49 Balswick, Men at the Crossroads, 141.

50 Morley, Pastoring Men, 83.
CHAPTER 3

A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON BIBLICAL MASCULINITY

From a theological perspective, the debate over the relationship between the genders has its roots in the Genesis 3 story of the fall. The act of disobedience brought about a death of harmony in the relationship of the man and woman found in the first two chapters. The question of how they can relate to each other in a fallen world is still a topic of much conversation in both culture and the Church. Maxine Hancock comments, “The debate within the church is an intense one, because the question that biblical scholars must address is whether or not patriarchy is rooted in the creational order—or even deeper, within the Godhead itself.”¹ The terms “feminism” and “patriarchy” are acutely felt and highly charged. Similarly, words like “headship,” “hierarchy,” “egalitarian,” and “gender roles” can bring fierce debate.² The debate is both intensely felt and profoundly complex.

¹ Maxine Hancock, Christian Perspectives on Gender, Sexuality, and Community (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2003), 18.
The purpose of this chapter is not to solve all the questions relating to gender but to work toward a modest definition of what it means to be masculine. 3 Due to the emotion and complexity of the debate, this will need to be done with great care. For this reason, the first section of this chapter offers a brief overview of the current debate. The second interprets this debate in light of discipling men. The third presents a rationale for a definition of masculinity, which is employed for the Mountain Men curriculum. The final section will give the position of this paper as it relates to this greater debate.

The State of the Debate

The present debate within Protestant evangelical churches has two axis points. On the one side are complementarians, who rally around the Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. On the other side are egalitarians, those who have joined to form Christians for Biblical Equality. 4 Much of the debate centers on the question of whether the Bible allows for women to serve in church leadership roles and, if so, which roles. 5 This has caused both sides to engage in biblical and theological arguments over what it means to be gendered humans. The debate is framed here by two questions: first, “Are

3 “Modest” is used intentionally. It would seem that in this debate there is much on both sides that is overstated or infringes upon healthy ambiguity.

4 “Since the late 80’s [sic] . . . two Bible-believing movements—the egalitarian Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE) and the complementarian Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW)—have given us a language for the gender debate. Complementarians talk about headship of husbands as well as submission of wives. Egalitarians speak of biblical equality and mutual submission of spouses,” according to Tennant, “Nuptial Agreements.”

men and women different?” and second, “If they are different, how are they different?” The intent is to arrive at a workable position from which to teach the Mountain Men curriculum.

In the broadest sense, the debate has to do with whether men and women are different. In the cultural debate, Van Leeuwen says sex has come to mean biological differences, the essential distinctions between male and female bodies. Gender, she says, has to do with roles ascribed within a given culture. 6 This logic leads to the conclusion that while biological differences are universal, gender distinctions are constructs of particular culture. This ignores the question of whether God had an intention and design for male and female in creation.

Both complementarian and egalitarian Christians ultimately are concerned with origins and theological framework. The Genesis 1 account of creation emphasizes the commonly shared identity of man and woman created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). Tom Smail points out they that they were made simultaneously and that they were inseparably together, bound by mutual dependence and complementarity. 7 They were to share two tasks, not specified in the text by gender: to have dominion over the earth and to be fruitful and multiply. 8 In this way, Genesis 1 points toward the egalitarian position. This position reads New Testament texts, such as Galatians 3:28 (neither male nor

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7 Smail, *Like Father, Like Son*, 51.

female) and Ephesians 5:21 (submit to one another), as reclaiming an egalitarian position which was lost in the fall of Genesis 3.

On the other hand, Genesis 2 gives greater emphasis to the differences between the man and the woman. He is prior to her (Genesis 2:15). He is given the first commandment (Genesis 2:16-17). He is lonely (Genesis 2:18-20). She comes out of him and is a gift to him (Genesis 2:21-24). She is a helper to him (Genesis 2:18). Genesis 2 seems to point toward the differences in gender, the complementarian position. Thus when the complementarian comes to New Testament passages such as 1 Corinthians 11:3 (“the head of every woman is man”) and 1 Timothy 2:12 (“I do not permit a woman to have authority over a man; she must be silent”), they are seen as reflecting not something resulting from the fall but as something that is part of the created order.

In light of this difference between Genesis 1 and 2, Smail, a complementarian, says that whichever is right answer must contain an emphasis on both equality of gender and differences between the genders—in other words, differentiation with equality. Dale S. Kuehne argues similarly that men and women are not designed to be the same but are equal. They are equal in that they both bear the image of God; and they complement each other, in

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10 Smail, *Like Father, Like Son*, 50-52.
that men and women need each other in order to be whole.\textsuperscript{11} It is important to note that these conclusions do not necessarily imply hierarchy or fixed roles between male and female.

Regarding the second question of how genders differ, Van Leeuwen asserts that “power asymmetries—always to men’s greater net benefit—[have] plagued gender relations for centuries.”\textsuperscript{12} The implication of this is that whenever differences have been assumed in male-female relationship, the power has not been shared equally. Although there is growing acknowledgement of real differences in gender among feminists,\textsuperscript{13} there is distrust of putting any of the differences in the category of “nature” (suggesting an essential difference) rather than “nurture” (suggesting a culturally constructed difference). The reason for fear of male power is based on a long history. Rohr says, “As men, we have a lot of work to do. First, we need to recognize the long-term damage that patriarchy—the misuse of male power—has done to the world.”\textsuperscript{14} Men often have used the differences between men and women, whether essential or constructed, to gain power over women. It is the negative legacy of patriarchy which breeds this fear.

Therefore, the attempts to identify differences must be humble and careful. Regarding the differences themselves, it proves difficult to reach a consensus. Grenz

\textsuperscript{11} Dale S. Kuehne, \textit{Sex and the iWorld: Rethinking Relationship beyond an Age of Individualism} (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009), 117-121.

\textsuperscript{12} Van Leeuwen, \textit{My Brother’s Keeper}, 169.

\textsuperscript{13} Balswick, \textit{Men at the Crossroads}, 15. Writing in the early 1990s, Balswick argues that both the men’s movement, along with many feminists, is ushering in the “differentiation” stage, where differences (beyond biological) are recognized by all.

\textsuperscript{14} Richard Rohr, \textit{On the Threshold of Transformation: Daily Meditations for Men} (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2010), 82.
writes: “One widely held suggestion asserts that man is equipped to lead, whereas woman is created to support; man is equipped to initiate, woman to enable; man is to take responsibility for the well-being of the woman, woman to take responsibility for helping the man. In short, godly relationships emerge as woman serves as man’s assistant.” This traditional view sees strict gender roles as rooted in creation. In reaction against this is a movement towards androgyny, which claims there are no fundamental distinctions between male and female other than the physical differences. This implies all gender is socially constructed and there should be no connection between gender and roles.

One of the key debates between complementarians and egalitarians is over the definition of the word “headship.” “Headship” (Greek kephale) can range in meaning from “beginning” or “source” to “authority.” This is the word used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:3, which reads: “Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of every woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.” If it means “authority,” then hierarchy is implied, thus favoring the complementarian side. It is argued that since God and Christ are mentioned in the illustration, this must transcend culture and be part of the order of creation. If it means “source,” then no hierarchy is implied. Egalitarians also note the non-hierarchical order of Paul’s logic, from Christ to man, from man to woman, and from God to Christ. This order does not suggest hierarchy.

15 Grenz, “Theological Approaches to Male-Female Relationships,” 95.

16 Ibid., 96.

17 Sarah Sumner, Men and Women in the Church: Building Consensus on Christian Leadership (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 144.
but rather source. For this reason, Van Leeuwen, an egalitarian, argues that hierarchy between men and women is the result of the fall and not part of the order of creation.\(^\text{18}\)

There is also ambiguity over what the word “headship” actually means in practice as it is lived out. The range of interpretation runs from meaning the husband has ultimate responsibility for all major family decisions to the view that implies the husband is a servant leader to his family.\(^\text{19}\) The labels “complementarian” and “egalitarian,” Agnieszka Tennant observes, do not always clear up this ambiguity. She says, “Some wonder if it matters if they belong to either camp. We’ve all seen marriages on both sides of the fence that look puzzlingly alike. Both complementarian and egalitarian marriages are capable of the kind of love that does not demand power or respect—regardless of the language used to describe the marriage.” She also says that egalitarians increasingly see the value in complementary differences and complementarians increasingly admit the importance of equal value.\(^\text{20}\)

There is much agreement between egalitarians and complementarians. Both sides fundamentally are committed to the authority of Scripture and salvation in Christ. Both sides agree that an essential gender identity is something humans are given and that people are created in the image of God, rather than having to create their own image.


\(^{19}\) Ja. Balswick and Ju. Balswick, “Adam and Eve in America.”

Both sides want an equality of value for both genders. Both want to see healthy marriages and churches. Nevertheless, they fundamentally disagree on how to interpret the Bible.  

The debate into which egalitarians and complementarians have entered revolves around biblical texts. Both sides in the debate have their favorite texts from which they try to prove their argument. The complementarians have Genesis 3:16, 1 Corinthians 11:3-10, Ephesians 5:22, and 2 Timothy 2:11-15. The egalitarians emphasize Genesis 1:26-28, Job 42:15, Acts 2:17-18, and Galatians 3:26-28.  

The debate over biblical passages in many ways has reached an impasse. Van Leeuwen argues that the proof-text approach to this debate, while claiming a high view of Scripture, is actually a reflection of a cultural preoccupation with facts instead of allowing the cumulative biblical story, from creation to the new creation, to inform the debate. If this were done, she argues, there would be more emphasis put upon God’s intentions in creation, the overall narrative themes of the Bible, and his ultimate purpose in the eschatological age. Grenz also says that the debate needs to “move beyond isolated passages of Scripture to speak about broader theological themes.”

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21 Ibid.


23 Tennant, “Nuptial Agreements”

24 Van Leeuwen, My Brother’s Keeper, 35-42.

One example of getting beyond arguing over texts and allowing theology to inform the conversation is the doctrine of the Trinity. David Komline says, “While the debate was originally focused on specific biblical texts, it has increasingly shifted to theology, and it has narrowed in on one of the doctrines most critical to Christianity: the Trinity.”26 Grenz says that the twentieth century has seen “a renewal of interest in the doctrine of the Trinity and its implications for human relationships.”27 Smail asserts that the different emphases in Genesis 1 (equality) and 2 (differentiation) are not there only to remind people that they are equal and distinct in their maleness and femaleness but that this reflects the nature of the Trinity. He puts the emphasis on the differentiated ways the Father and Son relate to each other. The Father is the one who initiates, and the Son is the one who responds. As a complementarian, he sees this parallel in man as the initiator and woman as the responder, implying male headship and hierarchy. Part of what it means to image God is to be equal in but different in relational posture.28 Males image God as initiators and females as responders. There is a differentiated equality. The members of the Trinity are equal but not the same, ontologically the same but functionally different.

Grenz, who is egalitarian, on the other hand argues that the fundamental dynamic within the triune God is mutuality. He states, “The Son is not the Son without the Father. But in the same way, the Father—being the eternal Father of the eternal Son—is not the Father


28 Smail, Like Father, Like Son, 241-242.
without the Son.”

There is a mutuality of relationship and a dependence on the other for identity. Men and women also depend on each other for identity that comes through mutuality of relationship. He argues against an emphasis on hierarchy but rather for Christ as the model for what it means for both men and women to be in submission. For this reason, Ephesians 5:21 (“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”) is directed to both men and women. He concludes that it is the mutuality, not a hierarchy, of the Godhead that is a model for male-female relationship. This discussion on the doctrine of the Trinity has practical implications for male discipleship that will be explored later in this project chapter.

In addition to theology, attempts have been made to identify gender differences from many disciplines, all of which have theological implications. These include biology, developmental psychology, cultural anthropology, and evolutionary psychology. Recent research on differences in male and female brains may shed light on the theological debate. Neuropsychologist Simon Baron-Cohen presents evidence that the male brain is “systemizing” (emphasizing task) and the female brain is “empathizing” (emphasizing relationship). He finds the causes for the differences to be both nature and nurture.

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29 Grenz, “Theological Approaches to Male-Female Relationship,” 87.

30 Ibid., 86.

31 Van Leeuwen, My Brother’s Keeper, 69-147.

32 Simon Baron-Cohen, The Essential Difference: The Truth about the Male and Female Brain (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 21-84. He defines systemizing as the drive to analyze, explore, and construct a system. Empathizing is the drive to identify another person’s emotions and thoughts, and to respond with appropriate action. He sees these as tendencies, meaning men in general statistically have more of the first women more of the second. He warns against stereotyping and basing fixed roles on these observations, which is his explanation as to why this is a combination of biological evolution and culture.

33 Ibid., 117.
Though his findings point to differences in the male and female brains, there is nothing in his research that would suggest hierarchical differences between male and female.

Finally, researchers are careful to point out that the differences between men and women are real but care is needed in processing the knowledge of those differences. Van Leeuwen comments:

> In general, the traits attributed to men cluster around a factor variously termed *agency, power* or *achievement*: among other things, men are rated as more aggressive, ambitious, direct, logical and independent than women. By contrast, women’s ascribed traits focus on a core of features often labeled *receptivity, niceness,* or *warmth-expressiveness*: for example, they are rated as more tactful, nurturing, cooperative and emotional than men. But these differences, while they continue to be statistically significant, are far from absolute.  

“Far from absolute” is explained further as “statistical tendencies.” This is found in the work of Baron-Cohen mentioned above as well as the popular work of Shaunti Feldhahn. It would be helpful to think in terms of “tendencies” rather than in terms of “stereotypes.” Using the language of “tendencies” rather than “stereotypes” allows for role flexibility without losing sight of the deeper essential theological concerns regarding differences between male and female.

**Interpreting the Debate for Male Discipleship**

To summarize the debate, there would seem to be a general consensus among both—evangelical complementarians and egalitarians—that there are real gender differences, beyond what are either physical (including sexual) or only a product of cultural

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34 Van Leeuwen, *My Brother’s Keeper*, 33-34.

35 Feldhahn, *For Women Only*. This very popular book uses survey results from eight hundred men. In asking every question, what is seen are tendencies men have but not absolutes upon which to build stereotypes.
conditioning. There is also growing consensus that there exists real gender distinctions that are essential for a theological understanding of humanity. Both egalitarians and complementarians agree that “equal” and “different” are words that need to be held together in tension, yet they hold them together in different ways. The complementarian translates this into hierarchy and role differentiation, while the egalitarian does not. There is still much disagreement and ambiguity regarding the actual differences. Since the concern of this paper is male discipleship, here are two reflective observations that will allow for a functional definition of biblical masculinity to be presented in the following section of this discussion.

First, it is important to recognize the importance that fear plays in this debate. These fears lie beneath the labels “complementarian” and “egalitarian” and stem from sincere concern for God’s revelation, the value and dignity of persons, and for society as a whole. Complementarians experience fear that comes from not answering or under-answering the question of gender differentiation. This alarm is great for complementarians, because they see gender confusion and under-affirmed gender in young people (and people of all ages) as a reason for many of society’s ills. Ultimately, this is a discipleship concern for families and all followers of Christ. According to Weldon M. Hardenbrook, for men these ills include decreased life span due to disease or suicide, all of which he statistically supports. Rohr identifies these ills as “patterns of failure” in young men and says, “The

36 For example, Dalbey, Healing the Masculine Soul, xxv, writes: “Why are so many men in prison and so few in church? Clearly, the answer lies within the tear in the masculine soul, which churches have ignored and prisons can house but not heal. . . . Could this tear be traced to efforts—both our own and those of society—to tear us away from the traditional macho image of manhood without providing a male-affirming alternative?”

patterns of failure among our young men are frightening; the levels of depression, suicide, drug abuse, alcoholism, and violence among young males today are exponential.”

He sees gender confusion as a major contributor to these ills.

This fear is behind the thesis of this paper, which attempts to show gender at its foundation as essential (from God) and not merely a construct of culture. If gender is only a social construct and not an essential gift from God, then as society changes its views of gender, the result will be gender confusion and chaos. It is a hopeful sign that there are a growing number of feminists and egalitarians who are becoming aware of this confusion and what it is doing to both men and women as well as to children.

Egalitarians have real fears as well. Due to the Church’s long history of answering the question of gender differences in a way that favors the male, egalitarians fear differences always will be explained in hierarchical and patriarchal terms that are ultimately hurtful to women. They fear that gender, throughout most of history, has been a social construction that has favored powered males and that what is needed is a biblically based correction that sees gender defined with greater emphasis on equality.

Rohr identifies and confesses this misuse of power but suggests hope:

Power is largely out of control (loved or hated) and universally mistrusted in western society. Our sisters are often convinced that patriarchy (the rule of fathers) is identical with maleness, and maleness is always about domination, war, greed and control. We have to show them and ourselves that maleness is indeed about power, but power for good, power for others, power for life and creativity.

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Power cannot be inherently evil. One word for the Holy Spirit in the New Testament is *dynamis*, meaning “power.”40 Rohr is not calling for the end of power but for males to use their power to empower women. This misuse of male power is the fear of egalitarians and feminists, but it is also becoming more recognized by complementarians.41 On the other hand, mistrust of any use of male power can blind men and women to the consequences associated with lack of differentiation and with gender confusion, the fear of complementarians mentioned above.

The concern over fixed gender roles has obscured what may be a more important concern: gender confusion and lack of gender identity. The essentialist position is that there is a key identity to male gender and female gender that is underneath all that is culturally derived. The constructivist position is that male and female genders are not part of human nature but are nurtured into people by culture, being purely socially constructed.42 Both egalitarians and complementarians are essentialist in that they look to God’s revelation for purpose and identity for male and female. Complementarians, when looking into Scripture, find evidence for fixed gender roles while egalitarians do not.

Due to the fears mentioned above and the diversity within each gender,43 there is good reason to use caution in identifying differences between the male and female gender. At the same time, these fears should not preclude freedom to speak of tendencies, do

40 Rohr and Martos, *From Wild Men to Wise Men*, 149.

41 Tennant, “A Different Kind of Women’s Lib.”


43 Van Leeuwen claims that the amount of variability within each sex still exceeds the small average differences between them. She argues, therefore, that the metaphor for gender is a canoe, with man and woman working together, adjusting roles to gifts and needs. This is over and against the metaphor of separate railroad tracks moving in parallel. Van Leeuwen, *My Brother’s Keeper*, 25-28.
research, and observe statistics that may point toward either a culturally conditioned
difference or an essential difference in masculinity and femininity. 44 Freedom from fear in
this regard can lead to less confusion in identifying essential masculinity and femininity.

Beyond the role that fear plays in the gender debate, a second observation regarding the dispute between egalitarians and complementarians is that the arguments for and against their positions often seem largely academic and abstract in the face of the reality most people experience. Theologian Roger Olson, speaking of the academic debate, explains:

[There] is a failure to say what it means to be masculine as a Christian. Boys are growing up in our culture and our churches are confused about masculine identity. Let’s find out what’s right for male gender in church life. How can we affirm essential goodness of being male without in any way demeaning females or deifying maleness? So far I haven’t heard or read a good answer to that from any Christian thinker. 45

Olson, an egalitarian, is saying that people want clear, practical answers for themselves and their children on questions of gender. The academic impasse on Bible passages is not helpful to the real-life questions many have. Everyday questions dealing with ethics and discipleship often have gotten lost in the debate. Michael Gurian, a secular writer who has much to say about raising boys into manhood, makes a similar point:

Our popular and academic cultures may argue over words like “masculine” or “men,” but no matter the politics, everyone raising boys has confronted the “how to” questions of raising them into adult men. . . . girls don’t want to marry men

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who are still adolescent boys suffering despair in nether worlds between “boy,” “male adult,” and “man.”

Gurian and Olson both assert that the debate—whether in society, academy, or Church—often misses the key questions that people have about raising boys into men. There is a need to have a simple and workable definition of masculinity both in culture and in the Church.

However, there are those who risk addressing the fears mentioned above for the sake of bringing clearer answers to the practical questions families have. These include many of the authors already mentioned in this paper: Balswick, Dalbey, Kuehne, Rohr, Sumner, and Van Leeuwen. Though they are a mix of egalitarian and complementarian voices, they often are saying the same thing. Non-Christian voices include Farell and Fuladi. Another is W. Bradford Wilcox, a Catholic sociologist who has observed the trends in gender relationships at the grassroots level in conservative Protestant homes. He has noticed a tendency toward what he calls “soft patriarchs”:

[Though my research does not suggest] that a majority of conservative Protestants have adopted a thorough going gender-role egalitarianism, a shift in their understanding of patriarchy appears to be under way. My findings indicate that conservative Protestants are increasingly likely to express egalitarian attitudes about the public, economic and political roles of women, as well as greater openness to mothers working outside the home. As a consequence, conservative Protestant patriarchy is moving in the direction of being more symbolic than practical.

Wilcox’ findings seem to confirm the observations of Olson and Gurian. Labels such as “egalitarian” or “complementarian” do not translate well into the realities of life. Those

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who identify with the label “complementarian” are becoming more egalitarian in the way they live their lives. The labels are becoming more symbolic than practical. Likewise, theologian David P. Gushee, who identifies on the academic level with the label “egalitarian” in the debate, explains how he and his wife actually live out what looks like more of a complementarian marriage in real life simply because it works better for them.48

For those who are only concerned with the academic debate this “practical shift” may not seem like good news, since it blurs the distinctions often used. It is, however, good news for families as they struggle on a daily basis.49 The practical concerns of how to live as a Christian male or female in real life are finding their way into the debate. This is a helpful step as it leads to more focus on discipleship, on how to live as an engaged person today, and on expanding beyond simple abstract concepts of theology.

A Definition of Masculinity

The intent here is to draw together briefly strands developed in the first three chapters to give an employable definition of masculinity to be used in the Mountain Men curriculum. This “centered-set” discipleship curriculum has Jesus Christ in the center. All else relates to him. This entails his life, both what he taught and how he lived. His teachings provide the way to live in truth. His life, especially his death on the cross, provides a way for his disciples to live even when they fail.


The New Testament makes it clear that humans are to become like Christ. Jesus images God perfectly. “He is the exact representation of his [God’s] being” (Hebrews 1:3). “He is the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15). Furthermore, 2 Corinthians 3:18 says that Christians “are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory.” Likewise, Romans 8:29 reminds Christians “to be conformed to the likeness of his Son.” The image or likeness of God,50 first mentioned in Scripture in Genesis 1:26 but which greatly was diminished in the fall mentioned Genesis 3, now is being restored in Christians through the work of the Holy Spirit (Philippians 1:6). This is the foundational theology both for the curriculum and for the definition of masculinity.

With Christ at the center of a definition for masculinity, there are four callings for men that are found and modeled in Christ. These four callings are the basis for the goals presented in Part Two. Below, these four callings are shown to be anchored in Christ’s life and death and then shown to be relevant to men’s discipleship.

The first calling is for men to be real. “Real” is used here to mean a willingness to enter into relational life that requires dependence, vulnerability, and receptivity. Jesus Christ authentically presents himself as a real man. Dalbey sums it up by saying, “A real man is a man who is real.”51 Being “real” here is used in a counter-intuitive way from which the world talks about a real man as someone who is strong and confident in himself. Christ models this definition of real first of all in the incarnation, in “emptying himself” to become human (Philippians 2:7). By doing so, he makes himself dependent

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50 Most theologians agree the terms “image” and “likeness” are essentially the same in meaning. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, rev. ed., s.v. “image.”

on the Father (Philippians 2:6), vulnerable to the weakness of human existence (Philippians 2:8), and receptive to provision that only God could bring (Philippians 2:9).

In his life and death, Jesus modeled these same qualities. In his baptism, Jesus receives the Spirit through a posture of humble submission (Mathew 3:12-17). Jesus shows dependence and receptivity in allowing women to support the financial his needs and those of the twelve (Luke 8:3). He readily admits to something that he does not know (Mark 13:32), showing vulnerability in a way that is often difficult for men. He models continual dependency on the Father (John 8:28). He weeps over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41), showing emotional vulnerability. He exemplifies dependence in the garden of Gethsemane as he takes Peter, James, and John with him, revealing to them his need and crying out to his Father (Matthew 26:36-46). Ultimately, vulnerability is exposed in the crucifixion and in the “seven last words” from the cross. In Revelation 5:5-6, Jesus is revealed as both the lion and the lamb. Being real in this way is captured through the metaphor of the lamb.

Being real, as defined in this way, also provides the foundation for male discipleship. Vulnerability is part of the softness of manhood. Both Nelson and Balswick argue against a Jungian interpretation of this softness being part of the “female side” of men and for softness, receptivity, and vulnerability to be seen as part of authentic masculinity. Balswick says, “I claim vulnerability, softness, and emotionality as masculine characteristics and not just the feminine side of a male’s personhood.”

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52 Particularly: “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me.” (Mathew 27:46); “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” (Luke 23:46); “I am thirsty.” (John 19:28).

this relates to male discipleship, what is most foundational for spiritual formation James C. Wilhoit says is “receiving.” He defines receiving as being vulnerable with God and others in a way that allows grace to bring growth to the disciple.\(^{54}\) The reason that “real” is the first of the four callings to Christ-centered masculinity, explored further in Part Two of this project, is due to the primacy of grace in discipleship.

The second Christ-centered calling is for men to be responsible. Jesus demonstrates what it means to be responsible to both God and people. This takes the form of obedience to the Father (John 14:31). Jesus acts responsibly by hearing and taking into consideration the real needs of people around him (Mark 5:22-43). Responsibility, Jesus teaches, also entails being a man of one’s word (Matthew 5:33-37).

In Christ, responsible leadership is defined in terms of serving others. Rohr says, “He never rejected or abdicated leadership; he simply grounded it in servanthood and community rather than domination (John 13:12-15, Luke 22:24-27).”\(^{55}\) Luke says, “Jesus resolutely set his face for Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51), showing his followers what it means to respond in obedience to the revelation of God. Ultimately, he is responsible for taking the sins of the world upon himself and dying for the world (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Christ’s demonstration of what it means to be responsible is linked to the traditional male activities “to provide and protect.” Men are called to do the right thing for others, regardless of the cost (Psalm 15:4). Responsibility also is related to the phrase

\(^{54}\) James C. Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered*: Growing in Christ through Community (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 89, 102.

\(^{55}\) Rohr, *Adam’s Return*, 74.
“mutual submission.” Men are responsible and accountable to others, including their wives and other men, for their actions. This calling is against the tendency of men to become relationally passive, to resist community, and not to be responsible to others for the management of desires.\footnote{Described at length in Chapter 2 of this discussion.}

The third Christ-centered calling for men involves empowerment. Jesus, in his baptism, is empowered by the Father in the Spirit (Matthew 3:13-17). A central part of Jesus’ ministry is empowering women and men. His empowerment of the woman at the well to be the first evangelist in John’s gospel is an example (John 4). His calling of twelve men who, in and of themselves, would have no chance of impacting history, is another example. The ultimate instance of Christ’s redemptive empowerment is his death and resurrection: through him humanity is not only rescued from death but allows and empowers them unto eternal life. After his ascension, he sends the Spirit, who provides his people with everything they need for acts of faith and love (Acts 2:5-41; Galatians 5:5-6).

Men are called to empower others, especially spouses and those who are disempowered, disenfranchised, or marginalized. Men, though often feeling unaffirmed and disempowered,\footnote{Payne, Masculinity in Crisis, 13.} have been entrusted with power by Christ (Acts 1:8). Balswick says that “Jesus modeled a power of strength for serving, rather than controlling, others. Christian manhood involves using power for others. . . . In the hands of a true Christian warrior, power will be used for the benefit of others—and the power will spread.”\footnote{Balswick, Men at the Crossroads, 99.}
is also what Rohr and Martos mean when they say that true masculinity “uses power for good.” Ultimately, men embrace their essential masculinity and become more like Christ when they use their power to empower others.

The fourth Christ-centered calling on men is to be on a quest. Jesus begins his ministry with a type of quest, which takes the form of an enormous test or temptation in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11). This venture took much courage over an extended period of time. Jerome H. Neyrey has much to say about Jesus as the exemplar of courage, particularly in his quest for the cross. He points to Jesus as one who fills or exceeds the requirements for the male honor code of his first-century world yet with a life that ends in the shame of the cross. Neyrey illuminates Matthew’s framing of Jesus’ death as honorable in that it was voluntary, altruistic, and victorious. Neyrey believes Matthew was giving an apologetic for Jesus as a man of honor and great courage, “especially in facing his arrest, trial, and death.”

Jesus shows what it means to be a man through his courageous quest for the kingdom of God, especially as he brings the kingdom through the cross. Scholars point out how Mark develops the theme of hodos (Greek) or “way” (Mark 8:14 – 10:52). There is a continual use of hodos which implies both the way to the cross geographically (toward

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59 Rohr and Martos, *From Wild Men to Wise Men*, 149.


62 Ibid., 115-116.
Jerusalem) and also the way of the cross in self-sacrifice. Jesus keeps his focus on his quest through many distractions. Capturing the same emphasis, Luke says Jesus “resolutely set out for Jerusalem” (Luke 8:51). All of Jesus’ life was an example of resolute courage and quest, which ultimately finds its fulfillment in his death on the cross.

Much has been written about the concept of the male quest in Christian men’s literature, often using the imagery of “warrior” and “battle.” Of these four callings, “quest” is the one which has the most universal recognition in terms of being part of the “nature” of men. The male journey is a precarious journey into the outer world of risk, uncertainty, and almost certain failure. This is the appeal of “muscular Christianity” and Bly’s work, which is absolutely valid when centered in Christ and held together with the other callings listed. Dalbey captures it well:

> It’s not enough for Christians to portray weakness and tenderness as acceptable in a man. We also must portray the manly strength and firmness that God gives us. We must demonstrate that weakness, confessed and submitted to the living God through Jesus Christ, ultimately brings the very masculine strength for which men hunger: toughness in the face of opposition, decisiveness in the face of uncertainty, and saving power in the face of danger.

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64 It is not only the cross that exhibits Jesus’ courage. Dalbey says, “The gospel accounts reveal Jesus’ courage in: . . . His righteousness in turning from Satan’s temptations; His fellowship with his disciples; His discipline in early morning prayer; His strength in casting out demons; His energy in calling forth Lazarus from the tomb; His glory, in being baptized with the Father’s blessing; His anger against the temple money-changers. . . . And Jesus never killed anyone. In fact he is the authentic warrior, in who God has given us power to battle victoriously the struggles of this world.” Dalbey, Healing the Masculine Soul, 122-23.

65 Eldridge, Wild at Heart, 20-38; Dalbey, Healing the Masculine Soul, 113-26.

66 Rohr and Martos, From Wild Man to Wise Man, 4.

67 Dalbey, Healing the Masculine Soul, 192.
To keep Christ in the center, and avoid over-emphasizing this particular calling to men, Mathewes-Green gives a good reminder: “A dangerous life is not the goal, Christ is the goal. A free spirit is not the goal, Christ is the goal. He is the towering figure of history, around whom all men and women will eventually gather, to whom every knee will bow and whom every tongue will confess.”

This is the definition for masculinity used in this paper. Therefore, Christ-centered male discipleship is a four-part calling to be real, responsible, empowering, and questing. This is a definition that fits well with the revelation of Christ, with the revelation from other disciplines, and also with the voices of both women and men.

**The Essential Crux of Mountain Men**

The position of this paper and the attached curriculum is substantially egalitarian: men and women are intended to complement each other but in non-hierarchical ways. Furthermore, the emphasis is placed on concern for a differentiated and essential identity for men and women and not on fixed gender roles. Since the key issue is discipleship, there is also openness toward those who practice hierarchy when defined as servant leadership.

This position is forged from concerns for both fears mentioned in this chapter, the fear of gender confusion and the fear of dominance, and recognizes that these terrifying dynamics dehumanize both men and women. It is in keeping these two concerns in creative tension that trust can be rebuilt in a way that allows for both genders to heal and grow their God-designed humanity, a humanity that is in the image of God, exemplified in

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68 Mathewes-Green, “Men and Church.”
Christ, and revealed to humans as unity within diversity in the Trinity. Finally, the position stems from concern for discipleship that has been lost in the battle over Bible verses.
CHAPTER 4
A THEOLOGY OF SPIRITUAL FORMATION FOR MEN

If gender differentiation is accepted as essential to being human, it is then possible to accept that male and female spirituality may differ in some ways. Balswick says that “God allows spirituality to be expressed through the created distinctiveness of maleness and femaleness.”¹ In creating humans as male and female (Genesis 1:26), the distinctiveness of engendered humans affects every aspect of being human, including spirituality. Kuehne makes the point even more emphatically:

There is a spiritual dimension to gender that the social scientists have understandably missed and theologians shouldn’t have missed but did. . . . Regardless of whether I know how to resolve the psychobiological debate or the theological variation of it, I don’t need to resolve it to know that the biblical text tells us that aside from the biological, genetic, and psychological dimensions, gender also has a spiritual dimension. Hence men and women are not the same nor were they designed to be the same. Rather they are equal in the fact that they each bear the image of God, and they complement each other in the sense that we need each other to be whole. . . . If we are beings with a spiritual dimension, it would be extremely surprising if gender didn’t have a spiritual dimension as well.²

¹ Balswick, Men at the Crossroads, 120.

² Kuehne, Sex in the iWorld, 119-120. The theological debate referenced here is that between the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood and Christians for Biblical Equality.
With this statement, Kuehne affirms the assertion of this paper that men and women are equal as image bearers of God yet differentiated by gender. In essence, differentiation finds one of its expressions in the spirituality of each gender.

With Christ as the goal for male discipleship, this chapter examines the principles of spiritual formation and the process of how this transformation actually works in men. The first section presents the characteristics of male spirituality and explores the unique challenges men encounter with respect to spiritual formation. The second establishes a model for spiritual growth and transformation for men. The third section shows why the Sermon on the Mount is a good fit for male transformational ministry.

**Defining Male Spirituality**

Male spirituality cannot be narrowly defined but neither is it a total mystery. This section will examine the work of various authors who have helped define the characteristics of male spirituality, especially the work of Charles H. Lippy. Since discipleship is the concern, the purpose is not only to identify male spirituality but to see how it functions in both its fallen and redeemed forms.

Sociologist Rodney Stark says, “In every single society of which we have any evidence at all, women are more religious than men. We are not sure why.” The evidence, according to Stark, points toward a universal claim that crosses all cultures. John L. Allen writes: “How to explain this gender gap is one of the great debates in

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religious sociology, and so far there is no consensus, but the underlying reality seems a fact of life."\(^4\) Answers to why this is so range from biochemical differences in men and women\(^5\) to the environmental bias of churches toward the feminine.\(^6\)

As a social historian, Lippy describes four characteristics of male spirituality in the United States that he finds to be true across two hundred years of history. First, male spirituality is characterized by action more than contemplation.\(^7\) American men, he says, have shown a preference for what is practical over what is theoretical. They want results and need to see how what they do connects with outcomes. This means that men have a tendency to value what is clearly useful to them. When men have devotional time, they want to see it as useful moments spent.

The second characteristic is that male spirituality focuses more on morality than doctrine.\(^8\) Lippy says, “In theory, ethics may have its roots in theology, but those connections are of little import in the presentation of spiritual images and models of the Christian life for American Protestant men. Ethical principles have value primarily because living by them and working by them brings practical results.” The value placed on ethics and morality is connected to the first characteristic: valuing action over


\(^6\) Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, 29-35. See Chapter 1 of this project for details regarding this discussion.

\(^7\) Lippy, *Do Real Men Pray?* 212-215.

\(^8\) Ibid., 215.
contemplation. Doctrine and creed have not been as highly esteemed by American men because they do not seem to produce results.

The third characteristic of male spirituality is that men place value on external relations more than internal musing. Lippy specifically refers to relationships (traditionally with other men) that are useful and bring results, especially to business and career. Many of these male relationships have had a powerful and positive impact on men, especially older men modeling what it means to be a faithful and responsible Christian man to younger men. However useful the connections were, they tended not to be deep and intimate.

The fourth characteristic of male spirituality Lippy identifies is that men tend to be spiritual more than religious. “Since the early nineteenth century, when American culture first began to fix gender roles that would remain in place for nearly two centuries, religious institutions such as Protestant churches, were seen as feminine and the practice of religion [and] spirituality [were] located primarily in the domain of women.” Lippy goes on to say this is one reason for the rise of all-male fraternal lodges, which provided space where men could be real men. Muscular Christianity in parachurch groups, especially the YMCA, was also a response to this. Presently, he sees Promise Keepers as a more recent response. According to Lippy, men really are and want to be spiritual but have viewed the Church, the main religious option available to them, as a feminine environment.

9 Ibid., 215-217.
10 Ibid., 217-220.
11 Ibid., 217.
Overall, there is a gap between the clear image of what it means to be a Christian man and the reality of healthy male spirituality. Lippy believes that men have an externalized expression of faith without the connection to inner spirituality. Essentially, there is a lack of alignment between the inner and outer life. He argues that the four characteristics of male spirituality, in their positive expression, do not find a ready home in traditional spiritual disciplines and ways of being religious, such as prayer and meditation.

For example, he observes that there is an assumption that the Christian man will be a man of prayer and notes:

All of those models [have] presumed that men knew what prayer was all about and how its practice could be incorporated into a life of action. . . . American Protestantism has offered a host of images of what it means to be a Christian man. . . . But . . . by and large has not offered the resources that would allow men to bind those images to the spiritual disciplines, like prayer. . . . the challenge [today] is to offer a model of the Christian man and an understanding of male spirituality that will bring together the spiritual disciplines and habits that have emerged within the Christian tradition with the lived experience of men as males.\(^\text{12}\)

Men have been shown images or goals that are considered ideal by Christian culture but have not been given the tools or training to actualize those images or goals. Energy is spent trying to look like the image rather than being trained to work toward the goal. The images or goals Lippy mentions are not related to becoming like Christ but rather are cultural ideals of what ideal Christian manhood looks like, and these continue to

\(^{12}\) Ibid., 216, 222.
change. He argues that training in spiritual disciplines is needed, but it is important for gender differences to be taken into account.

Besides the lack of training, Lippy sees two potential causes of this gap in men between image and reality. He wonders if there is something in male biology or psychology that makes men more interested in the outward life than the inner-spiritual life. Additionally, he sees it as a result of men not fitting into a feminized Church. He hopes that male spirituality can be trained and resourced by the Church in a way that is consistent with “the lived experience of men as males.” If women are more religious, for whatever reason, and the Church numerically is dominated by women who have a distinct and feminine spirituality, then Lippy is correct in calling this a challenge. If training in prayer is done in a way consistent with masculine spirituality, the first concern regards what masculine spirituality actually looks like.

Other writers seem to confirm the observations made by Lippy. Rohr writes: “For starters, a masculine spirituality would emphasize movement over stillness, action over theory, service to the world over religious discussions, speaking the truth over social

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13 Lippy develops a chronological list of the image of an ideal Christian man that has evolved over two hundred years: “dutiful patriarch,” “gentleman entrepreneur,” “courageous adventurer,” “efficient businessman,” “positive thinker,” and “faithful leader.” Lippy, Do Real Men Pray? 207-212.

14 Lippy hints at but does not develop a third reason for this gap, which is “fear of intimacy.” Dalbey says that we as men are “most anxious to control what we most fear,” and what we most fear most is relational intimacy. For this reason, men put their efforts into that which they can control (religion, meaning outward forms) rather than spirituality (the life of intimate relationship with God), which they cannot control. Dalbey, Healing the Masculine Soul, 210.

15 Lippy, Do Real Men Pray? 222.
niceties, and doing justice instead of a self-serving charity.” Rohr describes a similar emphasis on action over contemplation as well as external behavior over doctrine, which are the first two characteristics of male spirituality Lippy mentions.

Lippy’s third characteristic is valuing external relationships more than internal musing. Balswick also recognizes this emphasis on practical relationships:

For men, spirituality is experienced more in terms of holding to and acting upon right values and beliefs. Men will gauge their spirituality on the basis of spiritual understanding and knowledge, accomplishments and activities. . . . In relationships, men will place a greater emphasis on doing—serving God and others—than on merely being in relationship. This means that spirituality is not measured or gauged on the basis of inner feelings as much as on external accomplishments. Relationships are not in themselves valued as much as the practical implications of the relationship.

Lippy’s fourth characteristic is that men are more spiritual than religious. He supports this conclusion by showing men to be not at home in feminized Protestant churches, though they still exhibit spirituality in other venues and would do so in church settings if there were a more male-affirming atmosphere. Mathewes-Green describes what a male-friendly atmosphere would encourage for male spirituality. She says male spirituality is active, challenging, with a “just tell me what to do” attitude as well as practical, purposeful, Christ-centered, historically connected; it is not sentimental, weird,


or unbalanced; it is intellectually renewing with men modeling leadership.\(^{18}\) A male-friendly church will encourage this kind of spirituality in men.

Another word that comes up often in those writing about male spirituality is man as “warrior.” This is found in both Christian and non-Christian authors.\(^{19}\) In the New Testament, Jesus identifies the true cosmic enemy as Satan. As was shown in the section on questing in Chapter 3 of this project, Jesus exhibits the courage of a warrior in both his life and death. Dalbey says that although Jesus never killed anyone, “Jesus is the authentic warrior, in whom God has given us power to battle victoriously the struggles of this world.”\(^{20}\) Paul appeals to the Christian in terms of warfare in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 and Ephesians 6:10-18. The Christian is called to battle; but it is the male who has historically been the warrior, for both good and evil. The redeemed warrior is an important part of male spirituality.\(^{21}\)

In addition, all of these characteristics of male spirituality have a dark side and all need to be discipled in the teachings of Christ. For example, the warrior impulse in men has been the source of great violence and harm. Dalbey identifies male anger as part of the sin-tainted warrior. However, the righteous anger of the warrior brings energy and removes men

\(^{18}\) Mathewes-Green, “Men and Church.”


\(^{20}\) Dalbey, *Healing the Masculine Soul*, 122-123.

\(^{21}\) Ibid., 113-126.
from patterns of passivity, all of which is essential for masculinity. Therefore, the warrior image is subject to the effects of both sin and redemption, needing to be discipled in Christ.

Finally, intimacy, or the male avoidance of intimacy, is another important aspect of male spirituality identified by those writing on the topic. Balswick says males generally develop a greater degree of individuation than females and have a stronger sense of self. This stronger sense of self gives them a firmer basis to build a right relationship with God. Men, Balswick argues, are better able to avoid enmeshment in relating to God and others. Similarly, Van Leeuwen says that women live out of a positive value on intimacy, the negative side of which is enmeshment. Men live out of a positive value of dominion, stemming from a strong self. The negative side is domination, she argues, but also an aversion to intimacy. Balswick offers this example: “In informal surveys, I’ve found that many Christian women desire times when they can pray with their husbands, but most Christian husbands find it hard to pray with their wives. . . . And men more than women, have difficulty with intimacy, including spiritual intimacy.”

This aversion to intimacy is a tendency of masculinity in a fallen world that is a barrier to spiritual formation in men. McCloughry says, “The masculine world-view sees prayer as foolishness because it is not efficient or functional and is dangerously near to

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22 Ibid., 116-117.

23 Balswick, *Men at the Crossroads*, 92; see also Nelson, *The Intimate Connection*, 39, who says, “Boys define their male gender identities principally through separation and individuation, whereas girls define theirs through attachment and identification.”


being emotive, but it is this foolishness which men must give way to if the Church is to become full of men who are warm in their humanity and have integrity in their spirituality.\textsuperscript{26} As hard as this is for men, if they are to become like Jesus, men will have to learn to pray in ways that are consistent with true masculinity.\textsuperscript{27} Balswick gives hope, suggesting, “It is good to recognize that men may have distinctive spiritual strengths and vulnerabilities, but we shouldn’t fatalistically accept any masculine stereotype. Rather, because we know that men have difficulty in becoming intimately connected in relationships, we need to intentionally create situations that will facilitate connection.”\textsuperscript{28}

One of the dilemmas of male discipleship is how to facilitate intimacy in men who are averse to it. Leading men toward intimacy with God and into relationships with other men is essential to one of the key goals of the Mountain Men discipleship curriculum.

Taking all these tendencies into account, male spirituality (in contrast to female spirituality) tends to be more active, practical, purposeful, energetic, challenging, rational, warrior-like, and intimacy-avoiding. Male spirituality is distinct from female spirituality. Those differences include inclinations and tendencies, all of which either can be distorted or redeemed in Christ. Two points in particular need to be addressed in approaching male spirituality. The first is the aversion to intimacy that men struggle with

\textsuperscript{26} McCloughry, \textit{Men and Masculinity}, 255.

\textsuperscript{27} “Most men struggle in using the traditional prayer vocabulary. The words commonly used in most acceptable prayers are simply not spoken in everyday language. Beyond that, men are reluctant to pray for fear that it opens up parts of the inner self that one wants to keep closed.” Gordon McDonald, \textit{The Resilient Life: You Can Move Ahead No Matter What} (Nashville: Nelson, 2005), 237.

\textsuperscript{28} Balswick, \textit{Men at the Crossroads}, 133.
in all relationships. The second is the inclination to separate the inner and outer lives, creating a divide between spirituality and ethics.

A Model for Transformation in Men

This section will present a model of spiritual formation or transformation that is both consistent with who men are and at the same time is able to grow them in intimacy with God and one another. It will be argued that this relational intimacy or vulnerability to God and other men is also the basis for bridging the gap between the inner and outer lives of men. The model presented here is portrayed as a triangle, with the three points being the Spirit of God, the Word of God, and the community of God.

Men are challenged to locate their lives inside the triangle. To have any one or two without the other one or two points of the triangle will not lead to Christ-centered discipleship. Peter V. Dieson writes on the transformative balance of these three points:

This process [transformation] takes place through three primary means. First, we Christians cooperate with the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 18; Eph. 5:18) who in turn works with us through God’s Word (Heb. 4:12; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Second, as we expose ourselves and respond to God’s Word, we grow and are formed spiritually. Third, the Holy Spirit cooperates with us through God’s people (Heb. 10:24-25; Gal. 6:10; Eph. 4:15-16) whom He uses to build up one another in faith and life. Virtually all the New Testament commands are plural. God has given them to the body of Christ, the community of saints. We need the community of God just as much as we do the Word of God and the Spirit of God. . . . Spiritual formation, therefore, requires all three major parts—the Word of Truth, the work of the Spirit, and the warmth of community.  

It is the dynamic of the Spirit of God, the Word of God, and the people of God interacting that reveal grace which is responded to in the human heart in a way that brings about transformation into the image of Christ. This is the definition used in this project for spiritual formation. The three parts of the triangle are described below.

The Spirit of God

The Spirit of God is the first point of the triangle and the one who creatively works in lives to empower transformation to Christ (Philippians 1:6; 1 John 3:2). He is the one who empowers the immediacy and intimacy of God to the believer. The Spirit is the active agent of relationship for the Christian with God. Willard explains this dynamic: “The Spirit makes Christ present to us and draws us toward his likeness.” Ultimately, it is the Spirit who provides the only real basis or source for spirituality and spiritual formation. As Gordon D. Fee says, “Spirituality without the Holy Spirit becomes a feeble human project.” The Spirit of God is the access to the power of God. Says Willard, “Jesus is actually looking for people he can trust with his power.” The Spirit is looking for people to lead who are faithful in the exercise of his power. Human effort alone, without the empowering Spirit, will not lead to spiritual formation into the image of Christ.

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33 Ibid., 16.
Not only is the Spirit a source of empowerment, but he is also the source of transforming grace. Willard again emphasizes the balance of human will and the Spirit’s work. He writes: “Well-informed human effort is necessary, for spiritual formation is not a passive process. But Christ-likeness of the inner-being is not a merely human attainment. It is, finally, a gift of grace. The resources for it are not human, but come from the interactive presence of the Holy Spirit.”\(^{34}\) Willard makes a helpful distinction between discipleship and spiritual formation. He says discipleship is the intention and decision to follow Jesus. Through this decision disciples put themselves in a position to grow. Spiritual formation, on the other hand, is the direct action of the Holy Spirit upon the person.\(^{35}\) The disciple’s faith (discipleship obedience) must meet God’s grace (the transforming Spirit) to achieve conformity in Christ.\(^{36}\)

Participation with the Spirit in faith is required. For the disciple, this means a necessary posture of activity rather than passivity. Ruth Haley Barton says, “In the end, this is the most hopeful thing any of us can say about spiritual transformation: I cannot transform myself, or anyone else for that matter. What I can do is create the conditions in which spiritual transformation can take place, by developing and maintaining a rhythm of spiritual practices that keep me open and available to God.”\(^{37}\) Active discipleship means

\(^{34}\) Ibid., 105.


disciples put themselves in a place which allows the Spirit to bring his transforming work of grace.\textsuperscript{38} Entailed in this principle is the belief that the Spirit of God is ready and willing to mold the disciple into the image of Christ (Philippians 1:6).

Relating this more specifically to men, in Chapter 2 of this project, emotional and spiritual passivity was identified as a major struggle by men of Community Covenant Church. The irony is that men by definition tend toward activity rather than passivity, as was pointed out in Chapter 3. One reason that men struggle with emotional and spiritual passivity is that they often wrestle with the concept of grace. Rohr says, “At our baptism, we are told that we are sons of God, but most of us don’t really believe it. We still keep trying to merit God’s love, as if we could. . . . we do not have to spend our efforts trying to earn what we already have.”\textsuperscript{39} Men want to accomplish something and have a hard time receiving anything for which they have not worked. Men have confused passivity (the lack of doing anything) with receptivity, the need to receive that which has not been earned.

Grace is difficult for men to receive. However, grace also has been misunderstood to mean “no effort is necessary.”\textsuperscript{40} When this misunderstanding happens, passivity rather than receptivity becomes the posture of the heart. Receptivity to the Spirit and his grace is needed, not passivity. Willard further explores the relationship of effort to Spirit-imparted

\textsuperscript{38} According to Richard E. Averbeck, “The Bible in Spiritual Formation,” in \textit{The Kingdom Life: A Practical Theology of Discipleship and Spiritual Formation}, ed. Alan Andrews (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2010), 281: “We do not supply the power for our transformation. The Holy Spirit (the wind of God) does that. But we can put up our sails to catch the enablement provided by the Spirit of God.” He goes on to compare hoisted sails to spiritual disciplines.

\textsuperscript{39} Rohr and Martos, \textit{From Wild Men to Wise Men}, 124.

\textsuperscript{40} Wilhoit, \textit{Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered}, 79. He makes the point that many Christians have narrowed grace down to only be about justification and not about how believers grow in Christ.
grace. He writes: “Grace isn’t opposed to effort but to earning.”\textsuperscript{41} Therefore, not only is receptivity toward the Spirit needed in men but also an effort to participate with the Spirit who wants to make them like Christ. On the hopeful side, the call to participation appeals to the part of a man that wants to be challenged, who sees life as a quest. The quest is to step up and keep in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:25).

Receptivity to and participation with the Spirit is also critical for men to heal the gap between their inner and outer lives. This gap exists between who men really are inwardly and who they project themselves to be outwardly. The definition of masculinity leans toward the external and practical. Men tend to be task-driven and rational and may be tempted to settle for behavioral change, without real transformation. Without the Spirit’s work, there is only effort to change behavior without inner transformation.\textsuperscript{42} Receptivity to and participation with the Spirit brings change to the heart, which then leads to changed behavior. Behavior-only, self-help efforts—while eschewing passivity—reject receptivity to the Spirit and participation with him and will not lead to real change.

Finally, it is important for men to grow in their awareness of the reality of the Spirit working in their lives.\textsuperscript{43} Fee argues for a movement away from doctrine to experiential intimacy, saying that without the Spirit’s work in the believer there is no real conversion or Christian life. He lists the intimate activities of the Spirit in believer’s lives:

\begin{itemize}
\item Willard, \textit{The Great Omission}, 61.
\item Willard, \textit{Renovation of the Heart}, 79.
\item Fee, “On Getting the Spirit Back into Spirituality,” 37, asserts the following: “In their [North American Christian’s] practical life in the world, there is very little self-conscious awareness of one’s being filled with, or led by, the Holy Spirit.”
\end{itemize}
The Spirit searches all things (1 Cor. 2:10), knows the mind of God (1 Cor. 2:11), teaches the content of the gospel to believers (1 Cor. 2:13), dwells among and within believers (Rom. 8:11, 1 Cor. 3:16, 2 Tim. 1:14), accomplishes all things (1 Cor. 12:11), gives life to those who believe (2 Cor. 3:6), cries out from within our hearts (Gal. 4:6), leads us in the ways of God (Rom. 8:14, Gal. 5:18), bears witness with our own spirits (Rom. 8:16), has desires that are in opposition to the flesh (Gal. 5:17), helps us in our weaknesses (Rom. 8:26), intercedes on our behalf (Rom. 8:26-27), works all things for our ultimate good (Rom. 8:28), strengthens believers (Eph. 3:16), and is grieved by our sinfulness (Eph. 4:30).44

For men to truly believe in the Holy Spirit and his work in them, they must experience the Spirit in their lives. They must actually become confident, at an experiential level, of the Spirit’s work in them (Philippians 1:6). Without this experience, all efforts in the spiritual life will be empty efforts. For men, growth in the Spirit in part comes through learning more about the Holy Spirit from the Word of God and in a Spirit-born community of men.

The Word of God

The second point of the triangle is the Word of God and serves the purpose of revealing to men truth from God, particularly that which defines discipleship. This section is not intended to be a complete theology of the Bible; rather, the purpose is to highlight the Bible as it functions in discipleship. Particular emphasis is given to the relationship between the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

It is important to show that the Word of God and the Spirit are related because they share the same source and purpose. The Word of God is Spirit-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16), implying that the Word of God and the Spirit of God are complementary and consistent. As the Spirit reveals the Word, so the Word reveals the Spirit. For example, the Bible says the

44 Ibid., 41.
Spirit of God works to transform people into the likeness of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18), to whom the Word and the Spirit both point (John 5:39; 15:26).

The Spirit also illuminates the Word and applies it to individual hearts in ways which bring about his purposes. This allows for the Word to be interpreted and applied in various situations for different people. Grenz and John Franke say, “The Bible is authoritative in that it is the vehicle through which the Spirit speaks.” Thus illumination of the Word by the Spirit is what gives the Bible its authority to speak into lives.

As the Spirit enlivens the Bible and allows it to speak with authority, the Bible provides a check and balance to subjective human experiences of the Spirit. Scripture has an objective authority apart from disciples receiving it through the Spirit. This objectivity is rooted in the third point of the triangle, community. The Word of God is the book of the entire Church and cannot be reduced to mere subjective interpretation.

A discipleship application of the Word and the Spirit working together is found in practicing spiritual disciplines, such as Bible reading and Scripture memorization. The Word of God carries authority over thoughts, feelings, and behavior as Christ is encountered as Lord through his Word (Colossians 3:16-17). In particular, Scripture memorization can have a transformative effect, if the disciple allows the internalized

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47 Ibid., 65.

48 Ibid., 68.

49 Ibid.
Scripture to be applied by the Spirit and not merely remain in the cognitive realm.\(^{50}\)

Memorized Scripture is not simply the recollection of moral imperatives; rather, it becomes a living resource that enables men to make real change that aligns the heart and mind. This can help men with the real issues they face in life—such as anger, lust, and failure to love their wives.

Two observations relating to the Word of God and discipleship are made here. First, it is important for the Word to find its way into the whole person and not only the rational dimension of the disciple. M. Robert Mulholland, Jr. speaks of reading Scripture for information versus formation.\(^{51}\) He argues that informational reading seeks to master or control the text. Informational reading gives primacy to function and doing.\(^{52}\) Given male tendencies, this makes it challenging for men to read in a way that leads to formation. This can be a way of not allowing the text to master or control the disciple. He writes:

> One of the chief characteristics of the religious false self is its ability to manipulate the scripture consciously, or more often, unconsciously to avoid a transforming encounter with God. . . . We often are not looking for a transforming encounter with God. We are more often seeking some tidbits of information that will enhance our self-protective understanding of the Christian faith without challenging or confronting the way we live in the world.\(^{53}\)

For the Word of God to carry authority over the thoughts, feelings, and behavior of the disciple, the Word must be taken in primarily for formation, not for information. Second,

\(^{50}\) Willard, *The Great Omission*, 58. The author says that if he had to choose one spiritual discipline, it would be Bible memorization.


\(^{52}\) Ibid., 105.

\(^{53}\) Ibid., 54.
the taking in of the Word of God by the disciple must find outward expression in the
disciple’s life. Averbeck writes:

Like human breathing for physical life, doing spiritual life with God and one another requires an ongoing pattern of breathing in and breathing out. There is a life-giving dynamic relationship between them: (1) inhaling: breathing in from God by reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating on Scripture; . . . and (2) exhaling: breathing out toward God and others through prayer and worship; fellowship, service, and mission; living the fruit of the Spirit.54

Since one of the purposes of Mountain Men is to align the inner and outer life of men, this observation is helpful in understanding how Scripture and related spiritual disciplines can shape both the inward and outward life of the disciple.

The Community of God

The third point of the triangle is the community of God. This is a reminder that discipleship is fundamentally not individualist but communal. Not only is it communal, but the transformation triangle is illustrated. The Word is Spirit-breathed, and the community of faith receives this same breath as well.55 The Church was born through an act of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2). The three thousand saved on that day were gathered into a new community to unite people who once were divided (Galatians 3:28). The rest of the Book of Acts is a history of the Spirit’s work in and through the Church being brought into existence throughout the Mediterranean world. In this, the Bible gives

54 Averbeck, “The Bible in Spiritual Formation,” 286.

the Church through the ages a picture of the Spirit of God’s work in forming and shaping a faith community.

The emphasis here is on being in community with other men. Rohr says, “Without a group, nothing goes very deep or lasts very long in the spiritual life.” When men are together, they stay awake to the work of the Spirit and the Word. Bonhoeffer writes: “The Christian needs another Christian to speak God’s Word to him . . . for by himself he cannot help himself without belying the truth.” Christian faith does not work apart from community. Glen H. Stassen and David P. Gushee say, “It takes community to shape a person with integrity of character.”

Communal environments are powerful in shaping lives. Bill Thrall and Bruce McNicol define community or culture as “how we do things around here.” They go on to speak of environments, “Environments are more powerful than words, no matter how carefully words are crafted. . . . over time, sermon truth loses out to environmental truth when the two conflict.” In this way, communal environments can have an atmosphere of fear and intimidation or freedom and safety. James Davison Hunter agrees. He writes: “In formation, it is the culture and community that gives shape and expression to

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56 Rohr, *Adam’s Return*, 34.


60 Ibid., 64.
it that is the key. Healthy formation is impossible without a healthy culture embedded within the warp and woof of community. “61

Thrall and McNicol envision Christ at the center of this community, imparting grace and trust, which opens the door to share truth.62 It is the Spirit of grace, not moralistic theology based in fear of what others think, that transforms lives.63 By moralism, they mean the effort to try to deal with sin through human effort and covering up sin rather than through repentance and the work of the Spirit. In this way, grace allows a disciple to work on sin issues honestly, without fear of condemnation from God and others (Romans 8:1).

Bonhoeffer expresses similar thoughts in his famous book on community, Life Together. He says real community is driven by vulnerability and not by moralism:

The pious fellowship permits no one to be a sinner. So everybody must conceal his sin from himself and from the fellowship. We dare not be sinners. Many Christians are unthinkably horrified when a real sinner is suddenly discovered among the righteous. So we remain alone in our sin, living in lies and hypocrisy. The fact is we are sinners!64

By “pious fellowship,” Bonhoeffer sarcastically chides those who do not understand real community. Real community allows people to be vulnerable and open with their sins and not hide them. Bonhoeffer says, “Sin demands to have a man by himself. The more isolated a person is, the more destructive will be the power of sin over him.”65 True community


63 Ibid., 67.

64 Bonhoeffer, Life Together, 110.

65 Ibid., 112.
must break through the desire to hide sin from others. Real community allows a person to confess sin and still be accepted in fellowship (James 5:16). Real community is gospel-centered in that it allows people to be known, even in their sin, and receive the grace of community. This mirrors what God has done with humanity in Christ (1 John 1:8-10). Bonhoeffer adds, “The sin concealed separated [the man] from the fellowship, make his apparent fellowship a sham; the sin confessed has helped him to find true fellowship with the breather in Jesus Christ.” Risking vulnerability opens avenues to honestly confess sins and weaknesses to one another and shuts the door to fear, thus paving the way to intimacy with God and other men.

For men to be spiritually formed, they must be part of a community of grace, a place where they can be both known and accepted. It must be a place where the truth that the Spirit and the Word reveal to men can be responded to honestly. Paradoxically, men who have an aversion to intimacy have been given a way forward through risking intimacy and vulnerability in community. When this happens, men can be transformed and are enabled to bridge the gap (with the grace of God and other men) between their inner and outer lives.

In concluding this section, the transformation triangle shows a theological interdependence of the three points. While the community is birthed by the Spirit, the community of God was used in the canonical process of determining, by listening together, to the voice of the Spirit and the canon that belongs to the Church. With the primacy of the Spirit who is prior to the Bible and the community of faith, the Spirit

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66 Ibid., 113.

67 Grenz and Franke, Beyond Foundationalism, 72.
breathes the Word into the world and the community of God into being. The Word reveals the work of the Spirit and shapes the community of faith. The community of faith is involved in recognizing and confirming the Word of God through listening to the Spirit. This is the triangle men are asked to live in as disciples of Christ.

**The Sermon on the Mount and Men**

The Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20) establishes that Jesus has “all authority.” He instructs his disciples to pass on to others who have come to faith and adds this caveat: “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” The Sermon on the Mount, contained in Matthew 5 through 7, is the largest section of Jesus’ teachings in the Bible. Teaching the Sermon on the Mount is a part of fulfilling the Great Commission, which rests on making disciples through Jesus’ authoritative teachings.68 This section will explore three important aspects of the Sermon. It will discuss the relationship of actions and motivations. It will explore the balance of high commitment and high vulnerability; and finally, it will emphasize relationship with God the Father.

**Actions and Motivations**

The challenge of male discipleship is not simply to get men to do the right things; it means helping them “do” with the right inner motivation. To become like Christ is not simply to do the things he did but to do them with the same heart. As Willard says, spiritual formation is “forming the inner world of the human self in a way that it becomes

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like the inner being of Christ himself.” Spiritual formation is concerned with both actions and motivations. The Great Commandment is to love God with wholeness of heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30). Wright identifies this tension between outward action and inner motivation common to making disciples. He comments,

People tend to go in one of two directions when they think of how to behave. You can live by the rules, by a sense of duty, by an obligation imposed on you whether you feel like doing it or not. Or you can declare you are free from all that sort of thing and able to be yourself, to discover your true identity, to go with your heart, to be authentic and spontaneous.” The focus is either on “rules” or “motivation.”

Discipleship is both about doing the right thing, what Wright calls “rules,” and having the true desire for doing the right thing. Wright argues that the work of the Holy Spirit is to get us to obey the rules with the right motivation.

On the one hand, the Sermon on the Mount calls men to action, tasks, discipline, and commitment. Men are called beyond simply knowing what to do to actually behaving in right ways. The Sermon concludes with a parable of the wise man who built his house on the rock instead of the sand. The major point is the critical importance of being a doer of God’s Word (Matthew 7:24-27). Both men knew, or cognitively understood, what they were to do. Only one man connected what he knew with correct behavior. The point of the parable does not address the motivation of the man; it only says he did the wise thing. Given men’s struggles with emotional and spiritual passivity, as well as

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69 Willard, Renovation of the Heart, 22.


management of desires, this illustrates the Sermon’s relevance to men. Jesus offers specific commands relating to actions. Men are given direct actions in relation to anger (Matthew 5:23-25) and lust (Matthew 5:29-30). The emphasis on doing the Word also is found in “good deeds” (Matthew 5:16), “whoever practices and teaches these commands” (Matthew 5:19), and “he who does the will of my Father” (Matthew 7:21).

Stassen and Gushee also point out that in each of the fourteen teachings of the Sermon, Jesus gives a “transforming initiative” to his disciples, something they are to do. A transforming initiative is a specific action to which the disciple is called, what they call a “practice norm.” They say, “Jesus taught practice norms. They are not mere inner attitudes, vague intentions, or moral convictions only, but regular practices to be engaged in.”72 They are called transforming initiatives because they transform the person who does them, the relationship involved, and the other party.73

On the other hand, if actions and practices are important in the Sermon, there is equal emphasis on how the disciple is challenged in the Sermon to look into his heart and ask why he is doing what he is doing. Stassen and Gushee say, “Jesus’ emphasis on the heart is also apparent throughout the Sermon on the Mount, and he called his disciples to do righteousness not for show and prestige but for God (Matthew 6:1-18, 7:6-12).”74 The root causes of behavior stem from character, which Jesus is also teaching to shape. Each time

72 Stassen and Gushee, Kingdom Ethics, 125-145, 136.
73 Ibid., 135.
74 Ibid., 94.
Jesus says, “You have heard it said, but I say . . . ,” he not only asks the disciple to go beyond the Law, he asks the disciple to look deeper into the very motivations for the action.

As has been stated, men have a bias towards activity and challenge but have difficulty connecting this with the spiritual life. In other words, men are more naturally aware of behavior than they are of their hearts. The Sermon on the Mount makes both of these priorities and, as Stassen and Gushee argue, offers a way to keep the outer and inner life together. They point out that the practice norms, or transforming initiatives, Jesus asks his followers to do can shape inner character. They say, “Practice shapes character. We are the kind of people we are because of what we do, what we practice.”

This balance between the outer and inner life, action and motivation, is complex. Bill Hull says, “God works both ‘inside out’ and ‘outside in.’ . . . The impulse to place being before doing—to insist on the internal to the exclusion of the external—should be resisted, because this is a false choice.” In other words, character transformation can begin with a change in behavior that leads to a change of heart. Stassen and Gushee, in referring to the Sermon on the Mount, assert, “This emphasis on the heart should not be misconstrued, as it so frequently is, as a teaching that says that conduct does not matter; ‘only’ one’s heart or attitude matters. This frequent and disastrous interpretive move is in

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75 Heart is defined here to mean the deepest part of the human being, the center of the inner life, the seat of thoughts, emotions, will, and desires. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, rev. ed., 1982, s.v. “heart.” Desire management, one of the issues raised in Chapter 2, is part of the heart. The desires that are dealt with in the Sermon on the Mount include anger, lust, pride, judgmentalism, greed, and worry.

76 Stassen and Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics*, 73.

direct contradiction to Jesus’ own teaching and that of the prophets.” Both heart and behavior are part of character shaping. The Sermon on the Mount keeps both action and motivation in tension in a way that leads to transformation. This tension forces men, who are inclined toward action and getting behavior right, to go deeper into the motivations behind the actions.

High Commitment and High Vulnerability

Not only does the Sermon on the Mount balance action and motivation, it also balances high commitment and high vulnerability. Richard B. Hays says that the Sermon on the Mount produces tensions between “rigor and mercy” and “communal discipline and forgiveness” and that the tension produces real community. On the one hand, the disciples are called to high commitment and perfection and to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 5:20, 48). On the other hand, Hays says they are “called to interpret Torah in light of a hermeneutic of mercy that leads them to subordinate the Law’s specific commandments to its deeper intent.” Hays sees God’s mercy being subordinated to the rigors of the Law by the Pharisees. He sees the Sermon is about more than giving highly committed effort in obedience to Jesus’ teachings; it is about relating rightly to God.

78 Stassen and Gushee, Kingdom Ethics, 74.


80 Ibid., 99.
and to each other. Stassen and Gushee say, “It is the way of grace that Jesus is calling us to participate in. . . . It [the transforming initiatives of Matthew 5:21-7:12] means the emphasis is not on some negative prohibitions or hard teachings. The emphasis is on the positive transforming initiatives that are the way of deliverance based in grace.”

Disciples are asked to practice mercy (Matthew 5:38-42), forgiveness (Matthew 6:14-15), vulnerability (Matthew 5:23-26), and grace (Matthew 5:43-48) in relationships. High commitment is needed to do the things Jesus calls his disciples to do. However, an equally high level of vulnerability and grace is required as well.

This tension between high commitment and high vulnerability makes the Sermon on the Mount a text from which real community can emerge. Stassen and Gushee explain:

Jesus strongly emphasizes both forgiveness and doing his teachings (Matthew 6:12-15 and 7:15-27). We believe the solution [to the tension] is in radically emphasizing forgiveness so we are not afraid of failure if we commit ourselves to following Jesus fully, and in radically emphasizing following Jesus so we do know that we fail and need to live by forgiveness.

Only by having a community of forgiveness can there be a high commitment to doing the things Jesus calls his followers to do. Otherwise, the fear of failure will block obedience.

Bonhoeffer’s reflections on community, from the last section, teach that real community

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81 The Sermon is broken into two major parts. Those dealing with human relationships are in Matthew 5:21-48. Matthew 6:1-7:11 focus on the disciple’s relationship with God. Matthew 7:12-27 is the conclusion. See Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 39. Talbert, *Reading the Sermon on the Mount*, 31, also warns against reducing the Sermon to a discourse on ethics: “The Sermon on the Mount is about covenant faithfulness, involving both vertical and horizontal relations.” He says the primary purpose of the Sermon is to shape character out of which covenant faithfulness comes.


83 Ibid., 69.
is not possible if there is only a high commitment. Real community must allow for vulnerability to confess failure and receive forgiveness.

The Relationship with God the Father

Finally, the Sermon on the Mount also invites men into intimacy with the Father. The invitation to intimacy is perhaps most profoundly given in the first clause of the Lord’s Prayer—"Our Father" (Matthew 6:9). The use of the Aramaic abba, translated "Father," is a term of familial intimacy and endearment of the first century. In using this term, "Jesus brings us into his experience of the Father." 84

Jesus employs the language of father-child intimacy throughout the Sermon on the Mount. The list includes these key phrases: “Praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16); “Be perfect as your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:48); and “No reward from your Father in heaven” (Matthew 6:1). 85 Guelich points out that Matthew’s use of “my Father,” “our Father,” and “your Father” are much more frequent than Mark or Luke. He says this keeps the reference to God as Father from “becoming an abstract designation of God’s remote transcendence.” 86 The use of these personal pronouns serves as reminders of the


85 Others references: “your Father who sees” (Matthew 6:3); “pray to your Father” (Matthew 6:4), “your Father who sees” (Matthew 6:6), “your Father knows” (Matthew 6:8), “Our Father in heaven” (Matthew 6:9); “your Father will forgive/not forgive” (Matthew 6:14-15); “your Father who sees” (Matthew 6:18); “your heavenly Father feeds” (Matthew 6:19); “your heavenly Father knows” (Matthew 6:32); “your Father in heaven gives” (Matthew 7:11); and “he who does the will of my Father” (Matthew 7:21).

86 Guelich, The Sermon on the Mount, 286.
personal relationship with God. Guelich adds that implied in Jesus’ words, “your Father” and “our Father,” to the disciples is a call to become sons of God.  

The invitation to intimacy is an invitation to sonship, which includes not only intimacy but rights of inheritance (Romans 8:14-17). It is a covenant relationship, in that there are both blessings and responsibilities associated with the relationship. This leads to the ethical dimension to sonship which the Sermon on the Mount addresses. Sons are to live in ways consistent with their Father. In the Sermon on the Mount, this relationship between the Father and his sons is fundamental for how one lives.  

The Sermon contains a balance between the relational aspects and ethical demands for the disciple that the term “Father” can bridge. Covenant relationship implies forgiveness when there is failure to keep covenant. Through forgiveness, intimacy can be restored. Forgiveness and mercy, as shown in the previous section, are central teachings of the Sermon on the Mount. When men know they are fundamentally loved and affirmed by their Father, ethical demands can be heard as coming from someone who is for them and wants the best for them. Again, the tendency of men to want to avoid relational intimacy, due to fear, is overcome through confession and vulnerability.  

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87 Ibid., 287-288.  
88 Covenant relationship is defined as a bond between God and his people which entails both blessing and obedience for his people. It also anticipates the need for forgiveness in the relationship. Robert S. Rayburn, “Covenant,” in The Concise Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, ed. Walter A. Elwell, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1991), 119-120.  
89 Ibid., 288.  
91 Wilhoit, Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered, 182, describes intimacy without fear: “So imagine standing before God, being fully known and yet feeling more completely loved than we have ever been
In the first section of this chapter, a definition of male spirituality was presented which shows men tending to be more active, practical, purposeful, energetic, challenging, rational, warrior-like, and have an aversion to intimacy. This chapter made the case that one of the keys to spiritual formation in men is also a paradox. For men to grow spiritually, they must grow in intimacy—the very thing to which they are averse. The transformation triangle of Spirit, Word, and community as well as the Sermon on the Mount were presented as transformational tools for men that can allow them to grow in intimacy with God and one another and heal the alignment between their inner and outer lives.

before. When Eden is restored, the children of God will know the reality of being fully known and having no fear.”
PART TWO

GOALS, STRATEGY, AND IMPLEMENTATION
CHAPTER 5

SPIRITUAL FORMATION GOALS IN MEN

In Part One of this discussion, a case was made for Christ as the goal for true masculinity. This chapter will look at spiritual goals stemming from the Christ-centered working description of masculinity as real, responsible, empowering, and quest-driven. These goals are related to practices that men are asked to do during their two-year experience in the Mountain Men journey, which are prompted by teachings from the Sermon on the Mount. At the end of each large-group teaching session, men are given a practice or activity to do that week which is processed in their small groups the following week. The activities themselves are easy to quantify and to measure. However, the formation goals—due to the nature of spiritual transformation—are more difficult to assess.¹ The hoped-for outcomes are not mediated as much by the curriculum as by the Spirit’s work in the men, as they submit to Christ through spiritual disciplines and practices of obedience. Rohr captures this well when he writes:

Without deliberate practices over time, nothing new is going to happen. . . . Solitude, silence, spiritual reading, contemplative practice, walking meditation, days alone in nature, journaling, spiritual direction, men’s support groups, volunteer work outside your comfort zone, educating yourself on at least one social issue in depth—these are the places I see men change.²

This chapter will take each of the four parts of the definition of masculinity—becoming more real, responsible, empowering, and questing—and use them as the basis for goals. As mentioned in Chapter 3, each of these is found in Christ, the model for manhood. He is the overarching example. After explaining why each characteristic of manhood is essential to formation and to the curriculum, specific goals related to the characteristic will be given. These will be linked to particular practices men are asked to do in the curriculum. After these goals are presented, some cautions are listed about the use of goals in spiritual formation.

**Goal #1: Becoming More Real**

The first goal, to become more real, was detailed in Chapter 3 of this discussion. This quality is seen in the life of Christ and involves being vulnerable, dependent, and receptive to God and others. Chapter 4 identified the avoidance of intimacy as a particular problem for men. Becoming more real is a goal designed to help men grow in intimacy with God and other men in a way that leads to greater alignment in their inner and outer lives.

Wilhoit says that understanding pervasive human brokenness is at the heart of spiritual formation.³ People must see that they have a deep spiritual need that will require

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³ Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered*, 58.
more than a “try harder attitude,” or there will be little interest in spiritual formation. Adam could not get back into the Garden of Eden by trying harder. A posture of receptivity is needed in order to grow. Wilhoit’s argument is that a curriculum for spiritual formation must begin with what he calls “receiving.” It is what this work refers to as “real” and it directly relates to the concept of grace. Wilhoit says that when a person experiences brokenness, a vulnerability is felt that leads to a receptivity of heart into which grace can come. Without brokenness, there is no receptivity to grace. This is exactly what the definition of “real” means.

Until men realize they have a need, they cannot receive. According to Wilhoit, this is the starting point of spiritual formation. However, helping men to see their sin and to acknowledge it—especially in the context of community—can be difficult. Chip Dodd writes: “Too many of us, in our woundedness, equate vulnerability with losing control or failure. The reality is that choosing to surrender control and become exposed as someone in need creates opportunity for change, growth, and fulfillment.” Rohr says men desperately want to get back to the Garden of Eden to find the true masculinity given to the first Adam; but they resist the vulnerability and suffering involved in going into the Garden of Gethsemane, where the second Adam went. Larry Crabb says that God’s judgments on Adam and Eve were gracious in that they were designed to keep them (and

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4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., 102.


7 Rohr, Adam’s Return, 45.
their descendants) from thinking that their lives could ever work without him. “He
wanted to hedge them in, to surface a despair that would drive them back to himself.”

The Mountain Men curriculum is founded on the concept of men admitting their
need and acknowledging their brokenness. This is part of the goal of becoming real, but it
also raises the fear level. A high commitment to discipleship begins with high
vulnerability, yet high vulnerability very often is associated with fear. According to
Nelson, vulnerability is difficult for men due to fear, which can make male friendship
difficult. He explains:

Underneath all explanations of men’s difficulty in friendship I believe there is one
pervasive and haunting theme: fear. Fear of vulnerability. Fear of emotions. Fear
of being uncovered, found out. So, fear leads to my desire for control. So my fear
leads to control—to be in control of situations, to be in control of my feelings, to
be in control of my relationships. Then I will be safe. No one will know my
weakness and vulnerability.\textsuperscript{9}

This relates to what in Chapter 4’s discussion regarding the paradox of intimacy that men
face. For men to grow spiritually they must grow in intimacy, which is something they
feel safer avoiding. They fear if they are known, others will discover who they really are.
In this way, fear stands as a barrier to men being real.

Such fear in adults has been addressed by adult learning researcher Jane Vella. She
identifies twelve principles and practices that are critical to change through the process of
adult learning. Safety in the environment and the process is one of these. She argues that
learning should be both challenging (implying the importance of high commitment) and

\textsuperscript{8} Larry Crabb, \textit{Men and Women: Enjoying the Difference} (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991), 157.

\textsuperscript{9} Nelson, \textit{The Intimate Connection}, 50.
safe (implying the importance of high vulnerability).\textsuperscript{10} Men must feel safe in order to be real with other men.\textsuperscript{11} For a man to feel safe, he will need to have a high degree of certainty that if he risks being real with his struggles, he will not be embarrassed or looked down upon—especially by other men. Parker J. Palmer says that if the soul of the learner does not feel safe, it will seek a shallower level of safety. “Instead of telling our vulnerable stories, we seek safety in abstractions, speaking to each other about our opinions, ideas, and beliefs rather than about our lives.”\textsuperscript{12} The observations of these two experts reveal the importance of how a safe sharing environment for men is significant.

This is because becoming real entails acknowledging brokenness within the context of community. When this happens, there is a hunger and thirst to receive grace through other men. When this happens, Wilhoit says, there is an opportunity for “optimistic brokenness.” By this he means that in spite of the feeling of brokenness, “there is a deep optimism about the power of grace to set things right.”\textsuperscript{13} It is optimistic, also because there is the discovery that the broken person is not alone. Grace becomes the fuel for formation, but it must be received from a hungry heart that desires more grace and is willing to receive it.


\textsuperscript{11} Kimmel, \textit{Manhood in America}, 7, says that “in large part, it’s other men who are important to American men; American men define their masculinity, not as much in relation to women, but in relationship to each other.”


\textsuperscript{13} Wilhoit, \textit{Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered}, 67-80.
When a man crosses this barrier of fear in faith and hopes for something good to happen, the atmosphere in the room changes. There is a deepening sense of grace that emerges from the shared experience of a man revealing his weakness before other men. Affirmation and acceptance are received in the man who shares his struggle, but the effect on others present is to open their heart as well. This often leads to another man sharing from the heart in a similar way. In this way, optimistic brokenness can be contagious.

The Mountain Men curriculum has specific goals and practices relating to men becoming more real. These are designed to help men work through their aversion to intimacy and to deepen relationships with their brothers in Christ. It entails developing new levels of friendship and trust with other males. It means growing in prayer with their heavenly Father. It also means growing in vulnerability and experiencing grace, not just as doctrine, but as the substance of transformation.

There are three practices men are asked to do which are designed to grow men in relational vulnerability with one another. The first two deal horizontally with fellow “Mountain Men,” and the third deals with vertical relationship with God. First, participants are to find someone in their lives whom they know well and to ask that person to identify one thing that individual sees them worrying most about that drains energy from their life; then, they are to ask the person to pray for them. This practice is done during the section of the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus addresses worry (Matthew 6:25-34). This practice puts men in a place of vulnerability, as they seek truth about themselves and also depend on another for prayer. It is hoped that this experience
will deepen their faith as they risk but also encourage them to become more like Christ by
not being anxious.

The second practice is to confess specific sin related to lust to one or two other men
in their small group. Once confessed, they are to hear the words, “In Jesus name you are
forgiven,” from another man. This is done during the session on lust (Matthew 5:27-30).
This practice is to teach men the importance of spoken confession and forgiveness in the
way that Bonhoeffer teaches, based on James 5:16.14 This experience also opens up the
hearts of men to one another in a way that is vulnerable, dependent, and where they are
encouraged to receive grace through the words of another. In this, the Spirit can move to
truly change men’s hearts to become more real in the manner defined in this paper.

The third practice is to memorize a Psalm which opens up relational intimacy
with God (Psalm 63, for example). This spiritual discipline is practiced during the section
on prayer. They are encouraged to pick a Psalm or at least eight verses from a Psalm that
includes strongly emotional and relational language. The reason for this is to develop a
language of spiritual intimacy with God and to allow the Spirit of God to apply this
language to their lives. They are asked both to recite their Psalm in their group and to
share how the Psalm functioned in their lives.

**Goal #2: Becoming More Responsible**

The second goal for men is to become more responsible to God and other men.
This is about everyday obedience and ethics—in other words, “doing the right thing”

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regardless of the costs. The two primary spheres of life where men are trained in responsibility are in the home and the workplace. Whereas becoming real is both a function of a man’s spiritual life and having a few other men with whom to relate, becoming responsible is more of an outward expression of ethical behavior. If becoming more real is related to “high vulnerability,” then becoming more responsible is related to “high commitment.” Becoming more responsible is about growth in the character of Christ and responding to life as a result of that character.\textsuperscript{15} This involves a quality dedication to “do the words of Jesus” (Matthew 7:24-27).

This paper argues that real discipleship is growing both inwardly and outwardly and that the gap between the two is the enemy of discipleship. Grace, if it is truly received inwardly, cannot be hoarded. It must overflow into a life of obedience and service to others. Responsibility is about the overflow of a changed heart where heart, mind, emotions, and behavior are in alignment.\textsuperscript{16} This is consistent with Jesus’ teachings in the Sermon on the Mount about good trees bearing good fruit (Matthew 7:17-18). It is the heart responding to grace expressing itself outwardly in acts of obedience.

Responsibility is also about doing the right thing in every sphere of life. Followers of Christ are to live out faith as priests of God’s grace to others and to the world. Wilhoit says, “In equipping for spiritual service, the church should give much attention to the two primary contexts in which people live out their faith: the home and the marketplace.”\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{15} Willard, \textit{The Great Omission}, 80-90, 150.
\textsuperscript{16} Willard, \textit{Renovation of the Heart}, 31.
\textsuperscript{17} Wilhoit, \textit{Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered}, 157.
The Mountain Men curriculum is focused on these two outward contexts as spheres of discipleship. The Appendix shows the teaching tool used in the Mountain Men curriculum to communicate both alignment (heart, mind, emotions, and behavior) and integration (all spheres of life, with emphasis on home and workplace). A responsible life is aligned with God’s teachings, which must be integrated into all of life.

As with becoming more real, spiritual disciplines and practices are needed in order to grow in the area of responsibility to God and others. Becoming responsible involves moving beyond passivity and giving effort to practices designed for spiritual growth. In the Mountain Men journey, participants are asked to put their faith into action in both the home and the marketplace. However, effort and the will alone are not strong enough. As Wilhoit says, “We should never expect our will to work by itself.” To live the Word of God effectively requires help and reinforcement by the Spirit of God and the community of other men (small groups). The Mountain Men curriculum has three practices relating to this goal of becoming more responsible. They are designed to help men grow in the ways they respond to God and one another. Small group members hold one another accountable to ensure each person participates in all three practices.

The first practice is memorizing fifteen passages or verses of Scripture over the two years they are part of Mountain Men. There are fifteen topics that are part of the curriculum that stems from the Sermon on the Mount. Each of these verses is related to the topic Jesus teaches within the Sermon, but most of the verses are from other places in Scripture. The men are taught why it is important to get the Word of God not only into

18 Ibid., 165.
their cognitive memory but into their hearts, so that it will affect their behavior in everyday life. They are taught that if they do this, the Spirit of God will use the Word of God to make disciples more like Christ. They are asked to recite these verses in their groups and remain responsible to one another for their learning in this way.

Second, men are responsible for thinking through how the Lord’s Prayer applies to their workplace and then formulating a prayer for work and writing it down. During the teaching on the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13, the men are asked to pray that prayer specifically for a two-week period. The men also are encouraged to find one person at work to ask this question: “How can I pray for you?” This exercise makes men aware that God uniquely has placed them where they work and that they are responsible for bringing the presence of Christ into that environment. For most men, this is not something they have ever done and is a bold step of faith and reliance on the Spirit. However, most report that the experience as one of the best things they have done in connecting the real world with their spiritual lives.

The third practice relates to becoming more responsible in talking with one other man about how they manage money in light of Jesus’ teachings in Matthew 6:19-24. This helps participants to focus on how they connect inward spirituality with outward ethics. It is not comfortable for many men, as money is considered a private matter. This practice leads men to see that Jesus’ words are meant to be embodied in every aspect of their lives.

**Goal #3: Empowering Others**

The third goal for participants is to grow in empowering others. As pointed out in Chapter 3, men are called to move from a place of the fallen use of power to its redemptive
use. One of the hoped-for outcomes of the Mountain Men curriculum is to turn male domination of others into a redeemed dominion to empower others. This means empowering others with a particular focus on the home and workplace.

Spiritual formation is not only for its own sake. In speaking about forming people to serve, Wilhoit says, “Cultivating the instinct to act on the gospel is crucial to our transformation. Our teaching is not complete until we have nurtured a tendency to act in learners.”\textsuperscript{19} Wilhoit grounds acts of service for others in the gospel. The disciple can be equipped and trained in how to pray, serve, and share their faith with others, specifically in the two primary contexts of home and marketplace.\textsuperscript{20} The Mountain Men curriculum has a primary focus on empowering and serving others in these two spheres of life in order to grow male disciples who model healthy masculinity.

Empowering others means using real masculinity as power to do good.\textsuperscript{21} An example of this in the home is how a father is uniquely designed to give identity, character, and competence to children.\textsuperscript{22} Giving identity means noticing the uniqueness of children in their strengths and weaknesses and affirming them toward how God has made them. Instilling character involves teaching ethical guidelines and modeling masculinity in terms of being like Christ and embracing the four callings to masculinity. Essentially, empowerment rests on how fathers disciple their children.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 149.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 157.

\textsuperscript{21} Payne, \textit{Masculinity in Crisis}, 11 and 81.

\textsuperscript{22} Blankenhorn, \textit{Fatherless America}, 25.
Fathers also uniquely are qualified to pass on competency to their children. This can include things like teaching children about money, dating, and the bodily changes experienced during puberty. It can encompass mastering a sport, learning a craft, helping with homework, and changing the oil. Rohr also talks about the power fathers have to do good and says it is his “job . . . to lead us into the outer world and give us security and confidence beyond the nest. He needs to choose us—from the other children—and lead us into bigger worlds with him. For a child to have to enter the larger world unsupported and unguided by a father is a life-long and gnawing sadness.”

Fathers are distinctly qualified to give their children, both boys and girls, confidence for life outside the home. Dalbey says that “a father’s primary value [in parenting] is to facilitate his child’s destiny.” This is what empowerment means for a father. It is to call a boy into manhood or a girl into womanhood. He has a voice that either can build up or tear down their confidence for life. He must learn to use his power to empower.

To do this in the home and the world, men will need the resources of Spirit, Word, and community to work against the tendency to “exasperate” or “discourage” their children (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:20), to not love their wives (Ephesians 5:25; Colossians 3:19), or to dominate women in general. For a man to be empowering in a way which transforms others, he needs to be transformed himself. “Transformed people transform people,” says Rohr, adding that the best thing a man can do for his family is to

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24 Dalbey, *Healing the Masculine Soul*, 47.

keep growing up himself. The intent is to get men to see that, though control and domination are part of the old fallen nature, their new self in Christ has great capacity to influence and empower others.

Being a man who empowers others involves a high commitment to become like Christ. This includes the call to “love your wife as Christ loved the church” (Ephesians 5:25). It involves intentionally parenting with a plan that confirms boys in their masculinity and girls in their femininity. It involves growing in leadership roles and training in how to disciple others. It encompasses sharing faith with other people as well as living a life that attracts others to Christ. It embodies the goal of a raised awareness to the influence men have for good and evil.

The Mountain Men curriculum has three practices relating to the goal of becoming more empowering. These practices are designed to grow men in empowering others both at work and in their home. Participants in this journey are accountable to their small group for engaging in these efforts.

The first practice is for each man to pray with and for his wife in an empowering way during a particular week. This can be a prayer for God to bless her in her life calling. It can be a prayer for God’s energy for her as a mother. It can be a prayer for God’s love to be known to her in deeper ways. This is part of the session in the Mountain Men curriculum on marriage. For many men, they find this as a new way to show love for their wives. It gives them a concrete idea of what it means to empower their wives.

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The second practice is for men to develop an intentional and empowering plan for parenting their children or mentoring someone they influence. Participants are to include specific ways they will affirm their children and competencies they wish to pass on to them. The training manual offers a template for reference to help the men with ideas and guidance. This is part of the session on becoming empowering fathers. Participants share their plans in the small groups. The purpose of this exercise is for men to be intentional in their parenting and to use their power to empower.

The third practice to help men become more empowering is for them to write their story of coming to faith and to share it with their small group in approximately three minutes, which provides them with training and practice in evangelism. They also are asked to pray for an opportunity to share their story at work. The purpose of this plan is to help men realize they are empowered to share the gospel with those God has placed in their life. All of these activities breed in the men a reliance on the Holy Spirit.

**Goal #4: Growing in Questing**

The fourth goal for men is questing. This means to be on a dangerous journey that requires both courage and faith. To be on a quest in this regard is to embrace the highest calling God has for a man and to resist the temptations of passivity in spiritual and emotional areas of life. The goal is for men to see their life stories as a quest that is foremost centered in the kingdom of God. Being on a quest means growing in the awareness that life is a battle with real spiritual enemies; it requires alertness and prayer with reliance upon the Spirit, Word, and community of God. When men are questing,
they come to understand that management of desires is part of the battle.\textsuperscript{27} Questing men grow confident in the calling to be a true man, one who is challenged to reclaim the authority lost by the first Adam in the fall.

In defining masculine spirituality in Chapter 4, part of that definition was that men tend to be active, challenge-oriented, purposeful, energetic, and warrior-like. Men are on a dangerous journey, where temptation and evil are experienced often (Matthew 6:13). When men forget they are on a journey, or neglect their quest-driven nature, they lose their way.\textsuperscript{28} Men need a noble cause for which to fight,\textsuperscript{29} something bigger to live for that takes them beyond themselves.\textsuperscript{30} Rohr says, “Without a transcendent connection, each of us is stuck in his own little psyche struggling to create meaning and produce an identity all by himself. . . . We need a wider universe in which to realize our own meaning.”\textsuperscript{31}

For this reason, the Mountain Men curriculum is modeled on a journey: a two-year climb. Participants are warned that this will not be easy and that there will come a day when they will want to give up. The metaphor of mountain climbing is used to show that, particularly in the dangerous passages, men need to be “roped up” with other men. This is

\textsuperscript{27} “Most men have a hard time sustaining any sort of devotional life because it has no vital connection to recovering and protecting their strength,” Eldridge, \textit{Wild at Heart}, 171, says “it feels about as important as flossing. But if you saw your life as a great battle and you knew you needed time with God for your very survival, you would do it.”

\textsuperscript{28} Rohr, \textit{On the Threshold of Transformation}, 120, says, “The only real adventure is the spiritual journey, which flows from a sense of personal call and leads to a gradual uncovering of your deeper soul, your true self, and a way to serve the world. What else were you born for? Surely not just to pay bills.”

\textsuperscript{29} “A man must have a battle to fight, a great mission to his life that involves and yet transcends even home and family. He must have a cause to which he is devoted even unto death, for this is written into the fabric of his being,” says Eldridge, \textit{Wild at Heart}, 141.

\textsuperscript{31} Rohr, \textit{On the Threshold of Transformation}, 54.
intended as a pedagogical image. The risk and the challenge are part of masculinity. To conquer and to quest are essential. It requires male character to grow.

In order to grow in questing, safeguards are needed in the journey. Foremost is to be grounded in the first goal of masculinity: “being real,” or vulnerable. This keeps the goal, which involves embracing warrior-like masculine strength, from domineering.

A second safeguard is helping a man to see that his quest is not primarily about him. Jesus says in the Sermon that the cause of quest is centered on the kingdom of God. For this reason, Jesus says, “Seek first the kingdom of God” (Matthew 6:33). This is the highest quest a human being can have, according to Christ. Therefore, male questing for the disciple of Jesus must be subject to this supreme quest.

A third safeguard is Paul’s reminder: “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12). In essence, the “deliver us from evil” (Matthew 6:13) warning of the Lord’s Prayer teaches this. It reminds the disciple that in the journey, which has battles, other people are not the real enemy. Participants in the Mountain Men journey come to realize that spiritual warfare prayer will be part of the quest.

The first practice is for each man to take the “Quest Test” and process it with their small group. This test is found in the training manual. The purpose of this self-evaluative test is to get men to realize they are on a dangerous journey that will require them to be more spiritually alert both to God and the world, their sinful nature, and the devil. This test, which is given in the session on prayer, encourages men toward reliance on the
Spirit of God, the Word of God, and a community of men in their journey. It is designed to help men see that self-reliance is not going to work.

The second practice is for men to gather their family together for the purpose of praying a “spiritual warfare” prayer with them and for them. Men are encouraged to use Scripture as the basis for this prayer. This can include the phrase “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,” from the Lord’s Prayer. It also may include Ephesians 6:10-18. This practice encourages men to see that their role of protecting their families as first about spiritual protection, which calls on the Holy Spirit of God and the Word of God.

The third practice is to develop a “desire management plan” that deals with money, sex, power, and other desires that are working against God’s will in their quest. This process asks men to honestly identify the three greatest struggles they have that relate to their desires. Then, they are asked to formulate a plan that includes the Spirit of God, the Word of God, and other men. The purpose of this exercise is to help men understand how desires and temptations form part of their dangerous journey and how they need to rely on the transformation triangle to survive and thrive in their quest.

The four goals of the Mountain Men curriculum are based on the callings of masculinity identified in Chapter 3. Collectively, it is hoped that these practices—when brought into contact with the transformative triangle of the Spirit of God, the Word of God, and the community of God—will prove effective in provoking both growth in Christ and biblical masculinity. The ultimate objective is for men to become more like Christ.
Cautions Regarding Goals for Spiritual Formation

There are certain cautions associated with setting spiritual goals. Overall, these cautions are part of formulating the above goals and heed Willard’s list of three models often used to achieve goals which are effective in spiritual formation. They are external conformity to the words of Jesus, profession of perfectly correct doctrine, and seeking out spiritual experiences. These do not lead to hearing Jesus and doing his words.\(^{32}\) External conformity is focused on behavior. Profession of correct doctrine gives priority to thinking right. Spiritual experiences are centered on the emotions. None of these are wrong but each, when made primary, can keep the disciple from growing in Christ. None of these alone leads to the character growth, which is the focus of spiritual formation.

Wilhoit also notes that giving more accurate information does not lead to transformation.\(^{33}\) This kind of discipleship is naïve in understanding the complexities of transformation. Spiritual transformation will need to engage the whole person to bring about the transformation of the whole person. Information is necessary but not primary. The words of Jesus, “to hear and do,” are needed to engage the whole person.

Furthermore, setting discipleship goals for men may need to take into account gender differences. Men seem to have a desire, perhaps more than women,\(^{34}\) to treat

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\(^{32}\) Willard, \textit{The Divine Conspiracy}, 320.

\(^{33}\) Wilhoit, \textit{Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered}, 123.

\(^{34}\) Gurian says men tend to learn in terms of abstract principles or categories, while women are more sensate learners, putting feelings to knowledge. Gurian, \textit{What Could He Be Thinking}, 60-61. Also, Baron-Cohen’s work on the brain differences says that the male brain has a great capacity to separate and systemize, suggesting a tendency toward compartmentalizing. Women tend to empathize and connect. Baron-Cohen, \textit{The Essential Difference}, 118-131.
learning as something to do—something to “check off,” before they move on to the next thing to do. Men tend to turn truth into an object that can be named and put into a category or objectified. Rohr explains: “Most men today, especially educated men, exist largely in their heads. . . . We suffer from too much desire to control and too little faith to ‘let go and let God.’ To really understand something, we need to submit to the experience without always understanding ahead of time what it is that we are about to experience.”

In essence, men must experience truth to really learn it. Palmer says, “We find it safer to seek facts that keep us in power rather than truths that require us to submit.” He calls this “objectivist education” which is a strategy for avoiding true conversion of the whole person. Consequently, goals that are set must seek to encourage men beyond mere intellectual ascent into experiential learning that involves the whole person.

Unlike the models Willard mentions above, a curriculum for Christ-likeness needs to be non-linear and grace-based. Wilhoit agrees and advises what he calls a spiral curriculum rather than linear “mastery learning,” such as from math and science. The spiral shape shows a pattern of growth, but it is not a straight line. Likewise, Rohr provides a reality check and cautions, “Spiritual progress is typically three steps forward and then perhaps two steps back. This challenges a man to keep his eye on the path and

35 Rohr, On the Threshold of Transformation, 53.
37 Willhoit, Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered, 119.
38 Rohr, On the Threshold of Transformation, 179.
learn from the path itself. He may find that the steps backward have as much to teach him as the steps forward—maybe even more.”

Ultimately, in the Mountain Men journey, there will be a need for continual renewal in the gospel relating to the topics that come up in the Sermon on the Mount. Grace-based discipleship that is designed to involve both high commitment and high vulnerability will encourage men to come back time and again to truth and grace. This truth can permeate their defenses and spiritual blind spots. Such grace allows for safe exposure of weakness and brokenness.39

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39 Morley, *Pastoring Men*, 124-125, makes the point that event-based ministry models are less effective than a relationship-based small group model, where grace is daily and relationally received.
CHAPTER 6

THE LEARNING TEMPLATES AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

The learning goals described in Chapter 5 require strategically designing an environment that is conducive to their outcomes. Essential to this are learning templates that encourage an environment of grace upon which to build male discipleship. For this reason, this chapter outlines the format and structure of the Mountain Men curriculum. Then, the learning templates are presented for both the large and small groups. Pedagogical rationale for the structure and the templates are given.

Most of the rationale is from Vella, who lists twelve principles for adult learning. The first of her principles, “needs assessment,” is found in the work in Chapter 2 of this discussion. Men were asked the real concerns of their lives, and their answers helped to shape the curriculum. Vella lists “learning needs and resource assessment” as a key principle of adult learning. This means that the teacher must begin the teaching process by listening to the needs of the learners before curriculum content is fully determined. She says, “Adult learners must take responsibility to explain their context. . . . As their
teacher, I need to discover what they already know and what they think they need or want to know.\textsuperscript{1}

Her second principle, “safety,” was brought into play in Chapter 5 of this discussion: men must feel safe in their learning environment in order to be real. The importance of learners feeling safe, she insists, does not lessen the element of challenge. Rather, she suggests, the higher the challenge, the greater the need for safety.\textsuperscript{2} This point will be returned to in the last section of this chapter on the importance of grace in learning environment. The other ten principles of adult learning Vella addresses are identified in this chapter. Each of these principles has shaped either the learning environment or the template used for learning. Finally, this chapter will close with an example of how these principles function in the Mountain Men curriculum in the teaching on The Lord’s Prayer.

**Overall Structure**

As mentioned earlier in this project, Mountain Men is a two-year discipleship journey for men through the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount was selected as a text for the curriculum as a result of a one-year pilot discipleship experience with twelve men. In the year-end evaluation, the group decided that this biblical text could be the foundation for a two-year men’s discipleship curriculum, which is the content of the strategy presented in this discussion.

\textsuperscript{1} Vella, *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach*, 5-6.

\textsuperscript{2} Ibid., 8-10.
There are approximately sixty meetings over the two years,\(^3\) with each meeting lasting 1½ hours. The disciples meet every Wednesday night from September through April, with exceptions for Christmas and spring breaks. The meetings alternate between large and small group. There are about fifteen large-group meetings and fifteen small gatherings each year.

Men are asked to commit to three things if they join. First, they are to maintain regular attendance as much as possible. If they cannot be there, they are to notify their group leader. Second, they are asked to commit to “big effort.” Mountain Men is based on a philosophy of discipleship, with “big effort” meaning both high commitment and high vulnerability. The imagery of mountain climbing is used to show the challenge of the journey. To be a man who engages in “big effort” is a difficult and sometimes hazardous quest. Third, they are asked to commit to confidentiality regarding their experiences in both large group and small group. Due to the male fear factor in being real, men are asked to protect one another in this way. This three-fold commitment is represented by “ABC”: A for attendance, B for big effort, C for confidentiality.\(^4\)

There are two different options given for the small group experience. “A” groups are those where men can commit to regular attendance. “B” groups allow for men who,

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\(^3\) The rationale for two years is based on local context. The military has a three-year rotation. Two years allows men in the military the opportunity to complete Mountain Men. Although there are approximately sixty sessions, so it could possibly be adapted to complete in one year, Alaska recreational opportunities make it extremely difficult to sustain programs during the summer months.

\(^4\) These are similar to Balswick’s three suggested rules for male small groups. Each member must make a commitment to be at each meeting unless prevented by sickness or travel, ensure complete confidentiality in the group unless permission is given, and assume responsibility for group life and growth. Balswick, *Men at the Crossroads*, 207.

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due to the nature of their work—pilots, military, oil workers, and the like—are in and out of town but still would like to participate. Men are asked to examine Luke 14:25-33 as a call to consider the costs before they enter into discipleship. They also are asked to consider Matthew 13:44 regarding the value of discipleship. Then, they are urged to “let their yes be yes, or their no be no” (Matthew 5:37). If they decide they want to make the journey, men then are asked to sign a commitment card and to submit the names of two people who will be requested by the teacher to pray for them in their discipleship over the next two years. The next step is for participants to purchase the Climber’s Guide, which is the written curriculum for sessions that occur in both large and small groups.5

During the two years, men may join at any time, as long as they can make the commitments. This is important in Alaska due to the transient nature of the population. When men engage in the Mountain Men journey, they are encouraged to go through the complete two years from when they started and be part of the graduation celebration at the end of that year.

Learning Templates

As noted in Chapter 4 of this project, one of the major themes of the Sermon on the Mount is that true discipleship involves the whole person and is incomplete without resulting in behavioral practice. In Matthew 7:21-24, Jesus tells the story of two men. Knowing the right thing to do was not enough. It was only in doing what was right that proved the man right. Richard Peace says that most evangelical discipleship curriculums

5 “If a man pays nothing, he’ll think it’s worth nothing.” Murrow, Why Men Hate Going to Church, 209.
in the past have put far too much emphasis on the cognitive first and on behavior second. He advises, “Balance is needed so that the Bible penetrates the whole of who we are. . . . Jesus calls us to a whole new way of life in which we participate in the unfolding of the Kingdom of God in us and around us. This is a way of life that is based on a new way of seeing, believing, understanding, acting, and feeling.”6 Peace combats the wrongly made assumption that just because a person understands truth cognitively does not mean that this is all a person needs for the truth to transform. Wilhoit says, “Christianity must touch all areas of a person’s life: thinking, feeling, and doing. That touch must be true, clear, and firm enough to provoke or promote an active response.”7 In essence, truth must engage the whole person for it to bring about transformation.

This is also one of Vella’s principles called “ideas, feelings, and actions,” which involves holistic engagement for true learning to occur. She says, “Learning with mind, emotions, and muscles and giving attention to the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects of adult learning is a vital principle that is often neglected.”8 For this reason, both the large group and small group learning templates engage participants in holistic discipleship that includes the mind, emotions, and behavior. The learning templates for large groups and small groups described below are designed to guide the learner to engage thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in ways which lead to transformation.

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7 Wilhoit, Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered, 179.

8 Vella, Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach, 17-19.
Large Group Learning Template

Each 1½-hour session starts promptly and involves about fifty men. Overall, the purpose of the large group time is to teach men the words of Jesus in ways that engage the whole person and lay the foundation for transformative small groups. The first segment, about five minutes, is used for organizational purposes. New men are welcomed, announcements are made, and prayer is offered for the evening.

The second segment, also about five minutes, is dedicated to orientation with the memory verse related to the topic. This involves either introducing it or using different ways of practicing, such as turning to the man beside him and reciting the verse or everyone saying it together. Through this practice in the large group, participants continually are reminded of the value of Scripture memorization, especially when it is not only a mental exercise but when the verse is lived in life’s circumstances. This is part of moving from a cognitive-only approach to learning. In reciting their memory verses aloud, they share with one another the relevance of the verse to their everyday lives at work and at home.

Vella lists “sequence and reinforcement” as key principles of adult learning, which also applies to Scripture memorization. “Reinforcement means the repetition of facts, skills, and attitudes in diverse, engaging, and interesting ways until they are learned. Although adults may do their own reinforcement through practical work and study, our teaching designs, if they are to be accountable, must carry adequate

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9 Morley, *Pastoring Men*, 146. In writing about effective men’s ministry, Morley makes the point that men in general love punctuality, “even if they themselves are not.” He argues for starting and ending on time, allowing for fellowship for those who choose to linger.
reinforcement within them to ensure learning."\textsuperscript{10} Mountain Men are given a number of suggested ideas on how to best memorize Scripture, some of which go beyond the mind to engage feelings and behavior. The reason for including Scripture memory in the template is to ensure this reinforcement is made.

The next forty to forty-five minutes include a teaching-learning time in the large group. This section has a number of steps within it. It is intentionally designed to involve learners in the topic. The maximum length of time for any one step is ten minutes. In order to keep the men engaged, the presenter is not to exceed more than five minutes in “lecture mode.” This will begin with an introduction to the topic, which may include reading the “big idea” (main point for the session), the “formation point” (a quote on how God forms disciples), or the “male box” (a statement or quote describing something unique about being a man). Each of these is in every session of the participants’ “Climber’s Guide” workbook but is not employed always in the lesson. There is freedom for the teacher to use them, as he directs the teaching for a particular emphasis.

The first step of the session involves reading a passage from the Sermon on the Mount. This leads to basic exegesis of the passage in its first-century context. Taking about five minutes, the speaker establishes the topic in the words of Jesus and his authority. This is done to both teach and model the importance of objectively grounding the discussion in the text. It shows men how to do the same in their small groups. It is

\textsuperscript{10} Vella, \textit{Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach}, 13.
important to begin with the text and its meaning, as Jesus spoke it in his historical context, before the discussion of what it means today.

The second step is a five- to seven-minute testimony from a man who has struggled with the particular session topic—anger or lust, for example. The testimony can take two forms: an ongoing struggle that has been resolved or one that has not yet been resolved.\(^\text{11}\) The man is asked to testify at least a week in advance so he has time to prepare. This follows after the grounding of the text and hopefully shows the relevance of the text today. It is also meant to illustrate the goal of being real. This testimony usually models vulnerability, which engages men beyond the mind, as emotion and behavior are experienced in a real life story.

There is a natural transition into the third step, which usually takes about five minutes and seeks to integrate the biblical topic into the world the men live in today. The presenter often shares from his life at this point\(^\text{12}\) or brings in statistics or other evidence to emphasize that the men who struggle with this topic are not alone. This exercise is about helping men to feel safe talking about the topic. The teacher’s intentionality in this segment is done to breed an atmosphere in the room that embodies truth (sourced in the words of Jesus) and grace (sourced in the gospel) as well as “sound relationships.” With this key principle of adult learning, Vella asserts there is accessibility, respect, mutuality, and vulnerability shown by the teacher to the learner which helps to overcome the “power

\(^{11}\) Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered*, 132-133, makes the point that both types of testimonies are needed and that some advanced coaching is helpful.

\(^{12}\) Vella, *Listen to Learn, Listen to Teach*, 10-12.
relationship” that can be real or perceived. This is modeled by the teacher in a large group setting as well as by small group leaders.¹³

The fourth step is to set the topic in theological perspective of the whole Bible. The presenter teaches from other parts of the Bible and shows how this topic fits in with the whole biblical story of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation. The gospel remains always in view. Men are asked to read different Bible passages aloud and are encouraged to interact with either questions or testimonies. However, the teacher must be on guard not to spend too much time on questions that are unrelated to discipleship concerns. Intellectual curiosity, doctrinal correctness, and objective knowledge all have their place but cannot be allowed to displace the specific concern of the Sermon on the Mount and Mountain Men, which is to make disciples. Palmer calls this type of education “objectivism,” which keeps real transformation at bay.¹⁴

This section usually lasts about ten minutes but can go longer, depending on the interaction. Vella identifies “clear roles” as a key principle to adult learning. What she argues for here is humility in the teacher, who invites dialogue from the learner. “Adult students need reinforcement of the human equity between teacher and student.”¹⁵ Consequently, this phase of the template allows for the teacher to invite responses from

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¹³ Ibid., 11.

¹⁴ According to Palmer, To Know as We Are Known, 40 and 49: “Objectivist education is a strategy for avoiding our own conversion. If we can keep reality ‘out there’, we can avoid, for a while, the truth. . . . If what we know is abstract, impersonal, apart from us, it cannot be truth, for truth involves a vulnerable, faithful, and risk-filled interpenetration of the knower by the known.”

¹⁵ Vella, Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach, 20-22.
the learner. This portion of the experience also allows for contemporary concerns to continually transform teaching for the future.

The next section is driven by application. The intent is to get very real with the topic and prepare men to talk in their small groups about where they are personally. This section often begins with a five-minute movie clip, if there is one that is particularly pointed, affective, and accessible to hearts. This section may include the men writing their personal inventory on the topic or it may introduce a spiritual discipline, such as journaling, that can be practiced to help form a habit, which can lead to a change in character.

The next step is splitting into small groups for twenty to twenty-five minutes. Vella says that “in a team, learning is enhanced by peers . . . [who] hold significant authority . . . have similar experience. . . . [and] can challenge each other. . . . Peers create safety for the learner who is struggling with complex concepts, skills, and attitudes.”

Here men can take the truth presented in the large group and discuss it within their intimate community. This encourages men beyond being potentially passive learners into a more participative model where they are processing truth with others.

Another purpose of moving from large assembly to small groups is to take advantage of the power of intimacy in a setting where truth and grace have been modeled and demonstrated in the large group. All the men meet in their groups in the same large room, getting into circles close enough so that they can hear one another. They are asked to wrestle with one or two questions relating to the topic that directly apply to their lives.

\[16 \text{ Ibid., 22-24.}\]
This is intended to lay the foundation for the more thorough small group meeting they will have the following week around the same topic.

Finally, the method of using small groups on the large group night has other practical benefits. It allows for observation of how the small groups are working by the presenter who can take time to observe group interaction. It also allows for coaching of small groups by the presenter in ways that can help the leaders and bring health to the groups. For example, as men divide into their groups to process a particular question, the presenter can say, “Make sure every man gets an opportunity to answer this question.” This reinforces the value of maintaining conversational balance in the groups.

The session concludes with the men coming back together for about five minutes and small groups reporting to the large group what they uncovered in their conversation. The men then receive their “practice point” for the week. Practice points are specific practices related to the particular teaching in the learning session. An example is to ask men to lead their family in prayer during the session on the Lord’s Prayer. Participants understand that they will begin their small group time at the next meeting by reflecting on their “practice point” experiences during the week.

The “practice point” relates with Vella’s mention of “praxis,” or action with reflection, as one of her twelve key principles for effective learning. “Praxis can be used in teaching knowledge, skills, and attitudes as learners do something with new knowledge, practice the new skills and attitudes, and reflect on what they have done.”

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17 Ibid., 14.
Most of this reflection is done in the context of the small group when it meets the following week. In this way, the learning involves the mind, emotions, and body. As Willard says, “Learning to do what He taught is not just a ‘mental shift’ without assistance from a modified use of the body, for behavior and life are not mental.”

Ultimately, the practice point is the action or behavior, and the reflection is using the mind to talk about the thoughts and feelings associated with the behavior. In this, the men are being spiritually formed.

Practice points also serve the purpose of immediately reinforcing and applying what was learned in the session. Vella lists “immediacy” as one of her principles of adult learning. She says, “A large percentage of adult learners start a course and then decide to give it up because they cannot see the immediate usefulness of what they are learning.”

She suggests learners have one particular skill to practice between sessions. Not only does the practice point encourage learning through behavior, it also shows how immediately applicable the words of Jesus are to men’s lives.

Finally, the large group template involves accountability of the teacher to the learning of the men. Vella says “accountability” is a key principle of adult learning. By this she means the teacher is predisposed to discerning if the learners are actually learning what they need for their context. Dialogue between teacher and learner during the learning session is one way the teacher knows if this is happening. Individual conversations held at

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19 Vella, Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach, 19.

20 Ibid., 25-27.
other times are another way to get feedback. Another way is in evaluation of the learner, which is addressed in Chapter 8. The Mountain Men presenter must ask himself, “Is this connecting with these men?” The best way to know is to let them speak.

Small Group Template

There is growing movement away from large group men’s events and toward small groups as a key to men’s ministry. McCloughry writes:

Much of the work among men that I have attended in the Church is part of the problem we are facing and not part of the solution. Many large men’s groups exist up and down the country within local churches; they have meetings or breakfasts at which a sports personality or a well known speaker addresses a gathering. It is very rare for men to talk personally together over a sustained period of time and yet this is what must happen if men are to rediscover themselves as men and not just see themselves as people.

Real community that transforms cannot happen through events. Events are helpful in motivating men on a short-term basis, but a sustainable men’s ministry must be based in small groups. For this reason, the Mountain Men journey contains small groups.

Following the week of the session in large group, small groups gather for ninety minutes to two hours, mostly in homes. The curriculum is based on the previous week’s session in large group. The first step is a “warm up” question that has some connection to

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21 Small groups are typically six to eight men. Balswick says, “The ideal size of a men’s group is between four to eight, and the group should meet from one to two hours each week or every other week.” Balswick, Men at the Crossroads, 207. If a group is made up of six men, it is not unusual for two to be unable to be there, thus six to eight seems right. Peace comments that, “Five seems to be the critical mass for a small group.” Richard Peace, “CF705: Spiritual Formation and Discipleship in a Postmodern World” (lecture, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, 1999), “The Design of Small Groups” handout, 18.

22 McCloughry, Men and Masculinity, 127.

23 Morley, Pastoring Men, 125.
the topic but is intended to be at a safe level, often leaving room for humor. This lasts about ten minutes and concludes with the leader praying for the evening.

The second step is to work on the memory verse(s). Participants may practice saying the text together, writing it out, or pairing up to go over it with another man. Five minutes is given to this exercise, which creates a positive motivation of peer pressure to learn the verses.

The third step is the “practice point” reflection, introduced the week before in the large group. The time allowed for this is ten to fifteen minutes. Leaders have freedom and flexibility to go longer, if deemed warranted by the conversation, in order to value and encourage male engagement. Vella says that “engagement” is another key to adult learning, arguing that it is much more important to have the learners engaged than to cover the material and leave them passive. Small group leaders are taught this principle and are instructed to allow the reflection on practice points to go as long as the men remain engaged. This is an important piece in the learning of the disciple, as it is what most encourages men to become doers of the Word.

The fourth step is Bible study. Typically, this is another section of Scripture pointing to the particular topic in the Sermon on the Mount. The Bible study usually occupies the largest amount of time, but it varies from thirty to fifty minutes. Leaders are trained to make the text personal without losing the sense of objective meaning of the text—keeping the balance between “what the text means” (in its context) and “what it

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24 Vella, *Listen to Learn, Listen to Teach*, 239.
means to me” (in a man’s personal context).\textsuperscript{25} This same balance will have been modeled in the larger setting. The general flow of the questions in the small group’s engagement with curriculum is from textual meaning on the page to textual meaning in the lives of the men—namely, from general objective truth to subjective personal truth and application. This falls in line with what Peace recommends. He says, “In the end that which distinguishes Christian small groups from other small groups is the willingness to ask transformational questions. It is not good enough to know; we are also called upon to do and to be.”\textsuperscript{26}

The last step involves responding and is crucial to the disciple’s process of transformation. Leaders are encouraged to shorten the Bible study section, if time is a factor, in order to leave enough room for response. This can take the form of experiencing a new spiritual discipline together or new commitments, confession, and relational accountability. Prayer concludes this, and the leaders are encouraged to use various forms which invite men to grow in learning to pray. Small group leaders are taught to maintain a level of safety during the prayer time. Morrow says, “Men fear incompetence.”\textsuperscript{27} As shown in Chapter 4, men particularly are intimidated by the thought that a lack of spiritual knowledge will be perceived as spiritual incompetence. Men are taught simple and direct prayers that they can use in their everyday lives.


\textsuperscript{26} Peace, “CF705: Spiritual Formation and Discipleship in a Postmodern World,” “The Design of Small Groups” handout, 37.

\textsuperscript{27} Murrow, \textit{Why Men Hate Going to Church}, 115.
One other dimension of small groups is service. Rohr writes:

Men relate to one another better shoulder-to-shoulder than face-to-face. . . . Men, however, will stick together in the trenches, on their teams, and with their tasks, feeling a kind of union, loyalty, and caring, a very real bonding with their fellow men in doing rather than talking. . . . This is actually a male style of intimacy. . . . It can lead men to great love, hard work, and sacrifice for others.28

Men are asked to serve in specific ways together as a small group during the year. This typically involves working together with young children, where male role models are scarce, or serving a single mom with practical help such as repairs around the house. Stories from such service are shared in the setting of the large group in ways that teach everyone it is through behavior that disciples love and serve both God and people.

Environmental Grace and Truth in both Large and Small Groups

John says that Jesus came “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). The templates and environment, along with the curriculum itself, strive for this balance or creative tension. Deison writes:

Real growth and change in life happen because of two key factors—truth and grace. Grace is the foundation of trust, patience, gentleness, and love. It also builds an atmosphere of unconditional acceptance and hope. Truth, on the other hand, is what forces me to examine my life, my sin, my impact on others, and my attitudes. Integrity and character are examined with grace and people can place themselves under accountability in areas of personal struggles, common to us all.29

As was pointed out in Chapter 4, the Sermon on the Mount holds a similar tension between “rigor and mercy.” Keeping this environmental balance and tension in both large

28 Rohr, On the Threshold of Transformation, 77.
and small groups is absolutely critical for transformation to happen. As Deison says, an atmosphere of grace or trust allows men to look at the truth of their lives.

Peace says that all small groups have typical stages. “The first stage is all about people getting to know each other.”³⁰ This is when people explore the outer dimensions of their lives. It is safe and polite, but it is also fairly shallow. He says that this is a stage which cannot be sustained, given that people have deeper concerns and desires. “What usually happens is that some brave soul (often the small group leader) moves a bit beyond the usual boundaries for sharing.”³¹ This sharing will bring a sense of brokenness and vulnerability to the group. Others in the group will see if this is acceptable (no one tries to “fix” the other person); and, if it is received in grace, it will unlock a deeper stage of the group’s life.

The Mountain Men learning environment and structure of the large group is intended to model and exist at this deeper stage to which Peace refers. When a man gives a testimony in the large group in front of fifty men about his honest struggles with anger, lust, or addiction to pornography, there is an intended consequence of deepening the level of conversation in small groups, where real transformation can take place in an atmosphere of support and accountability. This also can happen through the presenter sharing vulnerability from his own story. A well-chosen movie clip can enable this, or a statistic can tell men they are not alone. The purpose of the story, clip, or statistic is to


³¹ Ibid.
engage men at the emotional level, illustrating truth in a way that opens up conversations in small groups.

Consequently, the learning environment of the large group can “seed” or model grace and truth to the learning environment of the small groups. The intentional strategy is that if vulnerability to truth can happen in a large group, which is by nature more intimidating than a smaller setting, then a small group of men will feel more comfortable risking exposure to truth. This is what it means to seed the large group with truth and grace. By modeling aspects of real community in the large group, men can experience a breakthrough more readily from the first stage to the deeper stage of community life.

The Lord’s Prayer: A Test Case for Masculine Learning

If there is one topic which men find most difficult to learn, according to McCloughry, it is prayer. For this reason, the Mountain Men curriculum dedicates six weeks to discipling men in Jesus’ teaching on prayer found in Matthew 6:5-14, which contains the Lord’s Prayer. The tendencies identified in this project in masculine spirituality and learning styles present numerous pedagogical challenges to the teacher. In addition to the tendencies of male spirituality, male learning styles tend toward active and visual orientation that calls on the teacher to work in brief and engaging template sections.

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The teaching is designed to break through the challenges men have with praying. The purpose of these six weeks is to help establish an environment that facilitates connection with both God and others. This falls in line with wisdom offered by Balswick:

> It’s good to recognize that men may have distinctive spiritual strengths and vulnerabilities, but we shouldn’t fatalistically accept any masculine stereotype. Rather, because we know that men have difficulty in becoming intimately connected in relationships, we need to intentionally create situations that will facilitate connection. 33

In other words, since men have a tendency toward action and away from intimacy, the teacher should not give up on teaching men how to become closer to God through prayer.

The first challenge is men’s aversion to intimacy. Beginning with “Our Father,” Jesus’ disciples and the Mountain Men are taught that prayer is fundamentally about connecting with God. Relationship has primacy over task in the prayer. Before praying “for” anything, the relationship of men coming to their heavenly Father is established. This opens up conversations about seeing God as a loving Father, which is the foundation for a life of prayer in Jesus. N. T. Wright agrees and says, “This prayer starts by addressing God intimately and lovingly, as ‘Father’—and by bowing before his greatness and majesty. If you can hold those two together, you’re already on the way to understanding what Christianity is all about.” 34 Understanding “what Christianity is all about” is the key to discipleship.

The teacher must acknowledge this challenge of aversion to intimacy as common to men and give men simple tools to grow in intimacy with God. Men are asked to do an

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33 Balswick, *Men at the Crossroads*, 133.

exercise that requires them to journal their prayers to God. They are asked to begin their journaling by writing a paragraph that is concerned simply with their relationship to God, in language that uses first- and second-person personal pronouns. Then they are asked to talk about this experience in their small groups while reflecting on what they wrote, what they learned about themselves, and what was most difficult. This provides a simple step into relational intimacy with God.

The teacher also must navigate the fear men have towards prayer. Lippy, as stated in Chapter 4, argues that men often “fake it” when it comes to prayer and spirituality because they have not been trained in ways of praying that are consistent with their masculinity.35 Johnson says the Lord’s Prayer “frees us from anxiety about whether or not we are praying in a way that pleases the Living God.”36 The prayer is taught by Jesus himself, the one who pleases God in all things. The words Jesus teaches are words in which men can have absolute confidence, knowing that God wants to hear them prayed.

Men are taught also that their fear of not knowing how to pray is neither original to them nor does it disqualify them from prayer. It is noted that in Luke’s rendition of the prayer that the male disciples come and ask Jesus, “Teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). Men are taught that in making this request, the disciples were admitting they did not know how to pray the way Jesus did. In other words, the disciples were simply being “real” or vulnerable, one of the callings of masculinity. By asking, the disciples were stepping into a position to receive the gift of the Lord’s Prayer from Jesus.

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35 Lippy, Do Real Men Pray? 207-222.

36 Johnson, Fifty-Seven Words that Changed the World, 13.
Men are challenged to work through their fears of not knowing how to pray. The exercise they are asked to do involves praying the prayer with boldness. They are taught that the verbs in the Lord’s Prayer are in the imperative voice, actually commands to God and not requests.37 After the objective meaning of each clause has been taught, they are asked to write out the prayer the way they understand its meaning for their lives. In other words, they are asked to put the six clauses of the prayer into their own words in a bold imperative voice. Then they read the prayer out loud to their group and talk about the prayer in light of any fears they have had towards prayer.

The teacher must be aware of the tendencies of men regarding intimacy and fear in prayer. To be unaware of these challenges or fatalistically accept that men cannot learn to pray will not allow them to experience the gift of the Lord’s Prayer, which has a number of dimensions that are actually very masculine-friendly, such as its brevity and action-orientation.38 It is refreshing for men to discover that the only prayer Jesus taught his disciples is a good fit for what men tend to be like.

Through the Lord’s Prayer, the Mountain Men curriculum teaches men a few key tips for spiritual engagement. First, they learn to keep their prayers relational. They do this by experiencing God as their Father. This helps them to know that prayer is more about relationship than task. The impact of this allows them to pray in a way that is personal. They also learn to keep their prayers short. This helps them experience prayer as something they can do. The impact of this exercise can diminish the sense of failure

37 Ibid., 20.
38 Ibid., 101.
men often feel in prayer. Additionally, Mountain Men are taught to be bold and focus on the things about which Jesus said to pray. This means men can grow in confidence in their prayer life. This serves to allow their prayers prayed in faith to be more effective. In all of this they are becoming more like Christ.

In this way, the Lord’s Prayer becomes a spiritual male utterance that captures the essence of masculinity in that it is centered in Christ and encourages men to be real (with the Father), responsible (for asking), empowering (praying for others), and quest-driven (praying cosmic prayers that include battle). Men are taught to talk honestly about their struggles in prayer. They are taught perseverance in prayer and to know that, like any relationship, there will be times of dryness to endure in faith. Also, they are introduced to the discipline of journaling as a simple, tangible way to grow in prayer. The intention is to help men grow in their prayer lives within the context of how they learn best and the nature of masculine spirituality. Teaching on prayer in the Mountain Men curriculum is designed to give men confidence to pray in ways that are consistent with who they are and not feel defeated or intimidated by certain modes of prayer. The Lord’s Prayer deals with male aversion to intimacy and fears of “not knowing how.” The goal is that these exercises will take away the fears that work against real prayer.
CHAPTER 7

IMPLEMENTATION, MAINTENANCE, AND ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

The senior pastor’s leadership vision, according to Morley’s research, is absolutely critical to men’s discipleship. The senior pastor’s vision, determination, sustainability, and strategy must come from a heart for men and see the potential impact of the high commitment of time and energy that is both personal and necessary. This is a prerequisite to implementation. It is not enough, however, to have a vision for masculine discipleship; nor is it enough to develop a curriculum. There needs to be a strategy to implement that vision, to maintain energy and focus for the vision, and to assess the effectiveness of the experience in men’s lives.

Moving from Vision to Implementation

To move from having a vision for men’s discipleship to implementation of that vision involves many challenging steps or stages. At Community Covenant Church, a one-year pilot test, the development of small group leaders, the information night, and the

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launch of the curriculum are identified here as four critical stages of moving from vision to implementation. These four stages took place over a one-year period, from September 2006 to September 2007 at Community Covenant Church. These prepared the way for the first two-year Mountain Men journey, from September 2007 through the end of April 2008.

The first stage in moving from vision to implementation involved creating the groundwork. In Eagle River, this was a one-year pilot program with twelve men who were asked by the senior pastor to prayerfully consider being part of a new men’s discipleship initiative. These men were told that they most likely would be the small group leaders of the Mountain Men journey once the pilot year was complete. Consequently, there was a two-part function: discipling men and preparing a foundation with leadership for the future. These twelve men were continually evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum and the experience as they went through it. Morley’s three key factors for successful men’s ministry (vision, determination, and sustainability) were shared and modeled in this phase, creating an ownership by the twelve men of the process itself. The men were challenged to a high commitment to discipleship. They also were challenged with high vulnerability to God and with one another—what this project has described as the calling to be real.

From this pilot group came the shared leadership necessary for success in the Mountain Men experience. There were three key leadership functions identified: teaching, leadership, and administration. Teaching involved the presentations in the large group, which primarily were done by me as the senior pastor. This also included writing the curriculum. Teaching was shared at times, to model discipleship, with another man who had the gift of teaching.
Leadership also primarily was done by me as the senior pastor. This involved leading and training small group leaders, strategic evaluation, and finding ways to make Mountain Men better at discipling men. This encompassed sharing the vision, determination, sustainability, and strategic responsibility with a few others.

Administration was necessary to sustain the systems that were put in place. During the pilot year, there was not a great need for this, but eventually it became critical for regular communication with all of the men and small group leaders. Posting information on the website, orientating new men and placing them into small groups, and collecting money were accomplished by one or two men who had the gift of administration and were tasked with these duties.

The second stage involved training the leaders of small groups. The twelve men were told from the beginning that they would become the foundation for future small group leadership. All twelve men were given opportunities to practice leadership of a small group during the year, as many never had done so before. They also were trained in ten essentials for small group leadership, which are described here.

The first essential is a commitment to the values of Mountain Men. As a leader, men were asked to be committed to the Mountain Men definition of masculinity as real, responsible, empowering, and questing. They also were asked to be committed to transformational change coming through the Spirit, Word, and community of God. This commitment was not only a matter of mental assent but of commitment of lifestyle.

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2 A most helpful and practical resource for small group training is Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *Making Small Groups Work* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003). All leaders are given a copy.
The second essential is depth. Men were trained to know that their job as leader was to help men to open up their lives without forcing them to talk. They were taught ways to keep men from using generic truth to avoid personal truth and to avoid keeping the truth from becoming personal to them. This involves the third essential, which is safety. Men will share more deeply when they feel safe. Their job as a small group leader was to build confidence in men that their small group was a safe place to share in the context of confidentiality. Many men never had experienced this before.

Engagement is the fourth essential for small group leaders. They were taught that engagement of men’s hearts and minds is more important than covering the material. If the men are engaged in a conversation that is real and has discipleship concerns, they were advised, “Don’t cut it off for the sake of the curriculum.” The fifth essential is balanced participation, which tries to maintain an engagement of all men in the group and not just those who tend to talk more. Leaders were taught how to include all men in the group.

The sixth essential is to strive for a balance of Bible and life. Leaders were trained to keep a balance between the biblical text and the real-life situations men brought up in the group. This was to ensure that conversations men would bring to the group were talked about in relationship to the Word of God. They also were warned not to allow men to talk only about the text without regard for their lives. Similarly, the seventh essential is the balance of grace and truth. Leaders were warned that an over-emphasis on grace can lead to a therapeutic group culture, where biblical truth becomes secondary to the feelings of the group. They also were warned against truth without grace, which can lead to a harsh atmosphere in the group that discourages men from opening their hearts.
The eighth essential small group leaders were trained in was prayer. As leaders, they were taught that it is their job to introduce men to ways of praying that may be new to them but would help them grow. These ways of praying were modeled and are part of the curriculum. As leaders, they were also taught the importance of regularly praying for the men in their small groups.

The ninth essential taught to leaders was the importance of accountable communication with their group. Their job was to remind men via email or phone calls of each small group night. The men in their group were responsible for letting their leaders know if they could not be there. This accountable communication must be in both directions.

The tenth essential for small group leaders was monthly meetings. These meetings were designed to bring support and accountability to the leaders. They included training, problem solving, mutual support, overall communication, and praying for one another as small group leaders. This also was a time used for addressing feelings of discouragement.

One factor that brought discouragement was attrition. This entered into the reality of me, the leadership core, and the small group leaders. The reasons were many: over-commitment in general, job or schedule changes, or moving. Sometimes, it was due to a loss of interest or unwillingness to sustain the commitment made. It was discouraging, yet it was helpful for the leaders to talk about it and pray for one another, remembering that Jesus himself experienced something very similar (John 6:60-70).

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3 Morley asked his leaders to meet twice a month but changed to once a month as leaders struggled to be regular in attendance. Morley, *Pastoring Men*, 152.
The ten essentials of small group leadership were critical to the implementation of Mountain Men. The curriculum was developed during the same year the pilot group met. It began with topics, presented in a Bible study format, that were common struggles for most men. During the year, through interaction with the men who would be the small group leaders, the Sermon on the Mount was identified as the primary text for the curriculum.

The third stage of moving from vision to implementation was the information night in early September 2007. This included preparation and planning for a night (one to 1½ hours) designed to let men know what Mountain Men was about, both in terms of commitment and benefit. Prior to this meeting, announcements and invitations were given. I sent an email invitation to every man in the church, and each was encouraged to invite a friend. Small group leaders from the pilot year were involved in preparing and planning for this event.

At the information night (included in Appendix), a description of Mountain Men was put before the men, which included the basic structure in terms of learning templates and schedule. The growth goals also were presented. There was a question-and-answer time; and then men were asked to either commit that night or simply come to the first session, which was scheduled for the following week. Committing involved signing and turning in a commitment card and a prayer card that asked for the names of two people who were willing to pray for him on his journey. The tone of the informational meeting was one of challenge (high commitment) but also of grace (high vulnerability). Emphasis was not put on where a man was in his spiritual life but whether he wanted to follow Jesus from where he was into a new place. Men needed to know that this could be one of
the most important decisions in their lives. It involved putting a vision before them that could awaken and capture their masculine imaginations.

The fourth stage was the “launch.” This initiated the journey through the two-year curriculum. The first large meeting was designed to introduce men to the Mountain Men definition of masculinity as real, responsible, empowering and quest-driven, as seen in Jesus Christ as the true man. The other topic introduced was discipleship. This led participants through doing a cost-benefit analysis of following Jesus. The biblical material and focus came from Luke 14:25-33 and Matthew 13:44. This was also the night that men broke into small groups for the first time, as part of the large group meeting. The following week, the men met for the first full gathering of small groups. This meant they needed to agree on a time and place for their meeting the following week. Information then was communicated to the administrator who compiled a roster of all men, with phone numbers and emails, which groups they were in, and where they were meeting.

These four stages were involved in the vision to implementation process. Working through these four stages created an identity and momentum for men’s discipleship at

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4 The first session is on masculinity and discipleship, which covers week one (large group) and week two (small group). The second session is on how men are transformed, which covers week three (large group) and week four (small group). Week five begins the Sermon on the Mount with Matthew 5:21-26, “anger.” An earlier version of the curriculum spent three sessions (six weeks) on how men are transformed. It was determined by the leadership core that this was “too abstract” for most men, thus it was condensed to one session.

5 The administrator emails all men to remind them of the large meetings two days prior. He also emails group leaders two days before smaller gatherings. The group leaders then are responsible for emailing all the men in their groups. All men are responsible to their small group leader to let him know if they cannot attend that week. This is similar to what Morley Pastoring Men, 147, recommends.

6 Ibid., 130-133. Morley speaks of the importance of momentum that overcomes the spiritual inertia that men tend to have.
Community Covenant Church. Included in these stages were strategies for sustainability. However, it became evident to the leadership early on that sustaining momentum and energy would require ongoing effort.

**Maintaining Focus and Momentum**

There were seven key elements that we as leaders identified as most important for maintaining momentum and energy over the two years. These were recognized during the two years of Mountain Men and formally listed at the end of that time period. The purpose of identifying the key elements was to recognize their importance in maintaining energy and momentum as the program continued. They provide a reference point for me and key leadership at any point in the two-year journey.

The first key element identified was purpose. Men need a continual reminder that the purpose of their life is to become more like Christ. Included in this is a continual reminder of the four goals of masculinity that Christ models: becoming more real, responsible, empowering, and questing. Men are always at risk of seeing their primary purpose or God’s primary purpose for them in life as something other than this.

The second element identified for leadership to never lose sight of was passivity. Men have become passive in many areas of life. They need to be challenged to move out of their passivity into their manhood—which is real, responsible, empowering, and questing. Men need the reminder that they are called to recognize life as a dangerous adventure.

The third was participation. Participating with the Spirit of God who is at work in men is the key to growth. Knowing that the Spirit is already at work in them is an
important factor in building confidence in men. Men need to see their growth as dependent on participating with him and not merely through self-effort.

Practice was the fourth key element identified. Becoming doers of God’s Word is essential to being a disciple, whether men feel like doing it or not. It will take faith, courage, and dependence on the Spirit. It also will take the encouragement and accountability of other men.

The fifth was potential. Men have great potential to influence their families and their world, either positively or negatively. Men need to continually be awakened to the great potential they have to bring change and leave a legacy, both at home and at work. Men tend to underestimate the degree to which they can be world-changers.

Patience was the sixth key element identified. The topics in the Sermon on the Mount can be overwhelming to men. They need to be encouraged to trust in the slow work of God in them. This means looking for incremental, grace-based growth and being patient with the transformation process.

The seventh key element for men is perseverance. Men needed to know that there might be days when they do not feel like going to Mountain Men or engaging in the practices they are asked to do. They might grow weary during their climb, but they need to be reminded of the reward if they continue persevering to the top.

These are the seven key elements which were identified. It is important to have a focus on these in order for energy and momentum to be sustained over the two-year journey. Without continually refocusing on these elements, the leaders also concluded that their energy levels for Mountain Men would have begun to wane.
Assessment of Outcomes

Men were given the hope, when they entered into the two-year journey, that if they engaged the transformation triangle of Spirit, Word, and community with an open heart to God and other men, they would see transformation in their lives. For men to see growth there needed to be a concrete assessment process in place. Willard says that measuring spiritual growth is both good and necessary, as long as the right things are being measured.\(^7\) This section looks at what is being measured and how it is done.

The assessment process for Mountain Men has been fairly simple. They were to evaluate themselves in regard to the four goals set forth in Chapter 5: becoming more real, responsible, empowering, and questing. These goals were communicated to them as they began the two-year journey and were kept in front of them regularly. They were told that they would be doing the practice points to help them attain these goals. In addition, at the beginning of their Mountain Men journey, men were asked to evaluate themselves in three topic areas from the Sermon on the Mount where they personally felt they needed the most growth. This could include anger, lust, and worry, for example. These three areas were chosen by them when they began the journey and were evaluated for growth as they ended.

The results of the first five questions are given in Table 1, with a distribution for all responses received. The evaluation was done in the last month of their two Mountain Men years. It included six questions. Along with a place for comments, the four goals of

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\(^7\) Willard, “How Do We Assess Spiritual Growth?” Also, Palmer says essentially the same thing; we need to measure but “we need to make sure (1) that we measure things worth measuring. . . (2) that we know how to measure what we set out to measure; and (3) that we attach no more importance to measurable things than we attach to things equally or more important that elude our instruments.” Palmer, Courage to Teach, xiii.
masculinity were listed with the options to circle: “about the same,” “improved,” or “greatly improved.”

**Table 1. Assessment Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Four Goals of Masculinity</th>
<th>About the Same</th>
<th>Improved</th>
<th>Greatly Improved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More Real?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Responsible?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Empowering?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Questing?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Spiritual Inventory and Goals Improvement</th>
<th>About the Same</th>
<th>Improved</th>
<th>Greatly Improved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lust</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Stewardship</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worry and Stress</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judgmentalism</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spiritual Fruit</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man of the Word</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith at Work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fifth question asked them to identify growth in the three topic areas of the Sermon on the Mount, which they had identified as struggles when they began. Overall, assessment results show participants in the Mountain Men journey as “improved” or “greatly improved” in becoming more real, responsible, empowering, and questing as well as in their personally targeted areas. The greatest growth was shown in moving from “about the same” to “improved.” The final question, which kept the ultimate goal in mind, was this: “Did you, by the grace of God in his Spirit, Word, and community, become more like
Jesus Christ during these two years?” More than giving a “yes” or “no”, men were asked to give explanation in their groups to this question.

They did this on their own, and then brought it to their group to walk through with them. Willard says that useful assessment tools have two dimensions: self-assessment and the assessment of someone close to the person or a small group that has developed a deep level of trust. The group gave input on each response. Men were coached to just be as honest as they could as they filled out the assessment. The group also was told to be honest but to encourage, as truth allowed. The exercise was closed in a personal prayer for each man by the group.

Men also were asked to fill out a sheet called “My Seven Next Steps.” The intent of this was to help each man determine an intentional plan to sustain their personal growth trajectory. The encouragement was for them, as they graduate, to steward the work that Christ had done in them into the future. They were challenged to find ways to remain in the transformation triangle for the rest of their lives.

Finally, a celebration dinner was scheduled for the last large gathering of the year, in late April. This was done with families, including children. It was a graduation ceremony; but it was also a chance to celebrate the transformation in men’s lives through the Spirit, Word, and community of God. During this time men were congratulated by both me and the small group leaders. Each received a rock with the Bible verse “Guard your heart” (Proverbs 4:23) written on it. Testimonies were given by men, and family members were invited to share the effects of transformation they saw in their husband and father.

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8 Willard, “How Do We Assess Spiritual Growth?”

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CONCLUSION

This project has described the development of a two-year discipleship journey for men. It gave historical context for the topic of masculinity in North America and the particular context today at Community Covenant Church in Eagle River, Alaska. Theological reflection was provided regarding the topic of biblical masculinity and the debate that has surrounded defining gender, both inside and outside the Church. A foundation was given for a Christ-centered definition of masculinity which involves four callings: to become more real, responsible, empowering, and questing. Theological reflection also was given regarding how spiritual formation happens in men. A transformation triangle of the Spirit, the Bible, and a community of men was presented as a means for transformation. Rationale for using the Sermon on the Mount as the primary text for male discipleship was offered. Part Two of this project was concerned with transformational goals, learning templates and environments, and pedagogy. It described how Mountain Men was implemented, how energy and momentum were maintained, and how transformation was assessed. A sample of the curriculum is given in the Appendix.

As this project was being developed, there were three strong observations that came to me. The first of these is the importance of the goal for men to become more real and their challenge in this due to confusion and fear. This stream can be seen throughout the project. It is found in the first few chapters, primarily by sourcing and defining the confusion and fear that men feel in North America today, mostly since the 1960s. Then, a definition is given for masculinity that is centered in Christ. My hope is that this
definition can be both a reference point and a vision for men that will diminish the confusion and fear.

At the same time, in the reflection on male spirituality, fear of intimacy with God and others was identified as one of the key struggles for men. Fear also was identified as important for understanding the challenge men have with aligning their inner lives and their behavior. In this sense, fear has been named as a major factor in masculine discipleship.

For transformation to occur, it is necessary for a man to locate himself in the transformation triangle. The Sermon on the Mount is a great text from which transformation in men can grow. High commitment is absolutely necessary for a disciple of Christ. However, if the primary barrier to men being transformed is fear, it is important to see that without the calling to become more real—what this project also calls “high vulnerability”—masculine discipleship and transformation are built on a shaky foundation. It is founded on trying harder and pretending harder.

This is the paradox that this project has clarified for me. For men to be transformed, they must enter into a sphere of being and doing, that with which they are not comfortable. This requires a step of faith for the man who wants to follow Christ. It also requires the leader of men’s discipleship to be very aware of what goes on in the hearts of men as they feel the weight of this paradox. The aversion to intimacy can be so strong that a man may want to choose trying harder and pretending over real transformation.

Consequently, this project emphasized the importance of becoming more real as a goal for the learning. This was stated to be the most foundational of the four goals. In the discussion of learning templates, it was shown how they were designed to draw men out
of their fears and experience grace. In the discussion of learning environments, it was also shown how important it is to keep these safe for men. With respect to pedagogy, the importance of the teacher being real further illustrated this. This emphasis also was seen in the implementation, maintenance, and assessment of the strategies.

To put it differently, high vulnerability was not something that was emphasized as much in the beginning of the project as it is now. Changes have been made in the curriculum to reflect this. I have drawn a strong conviction that becoming more real is absolutely foundational to masculine discipleship, regardless of the curriculum being used. If this is not done, legalism, performance orientation, and pretending will be the result.

A second observation that also came later in the project is the importance of fathers for masculine discipleship. This relates to the observation about fears mentioned above. Men who are unaffirmed or under-affirmed by their fathers live with more fear and confusion regarding what it means to be a man. This makes the point of paradox just mentioned that much more intense. They have an even greater barrier of fear, not being sure if they know what manhood is or what it takes to be a man, because this never was transmitted to them by their father.

There are three specific applications to the Mountain Men curriculum that have been added or reemphasized in light of this observation. The first is that men, regardless of their age, need affirmation as men in order to lower the fear barrier enough where they will risk being real. The second application relates to parenting sons and daughters. Men need to learn the importance of affirming their children, so that these children eventually become parents who affirm their children. This is one of the most important aspects of
fathering to model. The third application is to grow in understanding of and experiencing God as Father in prayer. These three implications of fathering are seen in this project in a way that was not there when it began, and the curriculum has been revised to account for them.

A third observation that grew as this project unfolded is that men’s discipleship can be very difficult for the leader. The rewards are usually not as immediate as the work is. It is often an act of faith on the part of the leader that this is time and effort well spent. It is easier, particularly for a senior pastor, to define discipleship more as something that just sort of happens to people as they hang around in a Christian environment. In this approach there is not as much energy required, because there is no system of accountability to build and maintain and no specific goals in mind that can be measured or assessed.

The intentionality of discipleship must be focused on making the connection between what Jesus taught, and the hearts and behavior of the disciple. This intentionality is what requires greater energy from the leader. The rewards of transformation are sometimes immediate but often are not evident until later. One of the key transformational verses used in Mountain Men is Philippians 1:6, which reads: “He who began a good work in you will carry it out to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” This verse has meaning for leaders as well as for the men in their groups. To trust in this work of the Spirit, to believe that he is gradually transforming men who are putting themselves in the triangle of Spirit, Word, and community is an act not only of faith but of hope. It is this hope that I would pray over any leader who courageously enters into the quest of masculine discipleship.
Welcome to Mountain Men. This Climbers Guide is for year one of a two-year journey through the Sermon on the Mount. It is a huge challenge to be a real and responsible man. I hope you take the challenge.
**Main Point** Tonight is designed to let you know what Mountain Men is and isn’t. At the end of our time, you will be asked to make a prayerful and realistic decision to become a part or not.

**A. What is Mountain Men?**
Two quick ways to answer that question for now: Structurally, *Mountain Men* is a two-year discipleship journey through the Sermon on the Mount. There are approximately sixty weeks we will meet together over two years, alternating between large group and small group meetings.

- Our large group meetings will be from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. on Wednesday nights and will usually include some small group time.

Missionally, our goal is to experience real transformation in our lives—to really become less angry, less stressed, more prayerful, better husbands, and better parents—to become more like Jesus in all we do. How does this transformation happen? We believe it happens when we are in what we call “the Transformation Triangle” of the Spirit of God, the Word of God and the Community of God. We will move from passivity toward participation with the Spirit, practice of the Word of God, and perseverance in community.

**B. What is your commitment?**
In Luke 14:28-33, we have a principle that we need to apply. We need to count the cost we are willing to pay to follow him, assessing what we can commit to.

Also, in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:37, we are told by Jesus to “let our yes be yes and our no be no.” In other words, when you commit to something, let your word have integrity.

There are two levels of commitment to choose from:

**“Plan A” Groups:**
“*A*” groups are for men who can commit to being here a minimum of about 80 percent of the time. We hate to put a number on this, but we have found it just doesn’t work when you miss more than one out of four sessions. There is no guilt here and no one is counting. This is to help you decide if this is a commitment you can make. If you make this commitment you will be asked to sign a commitment card that you will keep with you as a reminder.

Here are the **ABC** ground rules for you:

- **Attendance:** you make a commitment to be here at least 80 percent of the time and you notify your small group leader if you cannot make it (by email or phone).
- **Big Effort:** discipleship will require effort born in faith and grace. (1 Cor. 9:24-26)
- **Confidentiality:** what is said in your group stays there.

**“Plan B” Groups:**
“*B*” groups are for men whose hearts are committed but whose schedules make it impossible to be here that regularly. The commitment to “*B*” groups is simply to be here when you can.

- **Attendance:** you commit to being here when you can.
Big Effort: you do what you can, given your limitations.
Confidentiality: what is said in your group stays there.

FAQ’s

1. Why is attendance such a big deal?
   Simply put, there is no substitute for being together. We are not just transmitting information, we are mutually part of forming each other’s lives. Attendance is also about commitment to others. It says, “This is a huge priority in my life right now and has the potential to change the way I live the rest of my life. It is worth doing anything I can to be there.”

2. What do we mean by “big effort”?
   We mean being very intentional about doing certain things so that you can raise the bar on your whole life. Tom Landry, when he coached the Dallas Cowboys said, “My job is to get you to do what you don’t want to do so that you can get to where you want to be.” This takes faith and character. It also takes lots of grace. Some of the things we will do together are: memorize Scripture, read the Bible, read books, serve together, practice what we learn together, learn to pray together, retreat together, and share emotional vulnerability with each other. These are called “spiritual disciplines” and they often take supernatural effort!

3. Why is confidentiality so important?
   This gets into the “emotional vulnerability” area. If we are going to share something deep within, perhaps for the first time with other men, we need to feel safe and know that it will stay within the group. We want to protect each other in love. What we learned last year is that this is the key to the whole discipleship experience, above all else. Men will not grow if they can’t be real with each other. To do something that seems dangerous, we must first feel safe!

4. What if I am going to be moving during these two years?
   We encourage you to join an "A" group for as long as you are here, if that works with your schedule.

5. What if I didn’t join at the beginning?
   Mountain Men is designed so that you can join it at any time. See it through for two years from when you start and you will have the whole thing.

6. Why the Sermon on the Mount?
   Three reasons: First, this is by far the largest block of teaching we have from Jesus. Many believe Matthew is referring to the teachings of the Sermon when he directs his disciples in the Great Commission to “teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.” (Matt. 28:20)
   Secondly, the Sermon on the Mount is driven by something essential to discipleship: becoming a doer of God’s word. We find this emphasis in the introduction to the sermon (5:19-20), in the midst of the sermon, with the emphasis on what we are to do, and in the summary conclusion, where Jesus says it is the man who practices the words he hears from God who is able to stand against the storms of life.
   Thirdly, the topics of this sermon are so relevant for men today, especially for men who have become passive in their faith. The first four topics Jesus brings up are anger, lust, marriage, and integrity. We need to hear and practice his teachings.

7. Will we only be in the Sermon on the Mount?
   No. We will be all over the Bible but we will use the Sermon on the Mount as our outline. We will also be reading four books over our two years: For Men Only, Life Together, The Treasure Principle, and Season of Life.

8. Beyond Wednesday nights, what else is there?
   There may be a retreat each year and your group will have a service project. Beyond that, it is up to your group.

9. Do I need to know a lot about the Bible?
   No! The main thing is to have a desire to live out the words of Jesus. We are not after information but formation. Our goal is not to master what the Bible says, but to have God’s Word master us.

10. Do I need to be a Christian to join?
    No—to those who followed Jesus, he first gave the invitation to “come and see.” You are free to explore the claims of Christ with us—as long as you can make the commitment to ABC above.

11. What does it cost?
    The Climber’s Guide cost is $10. You will be asked to pay this next week, as we enter in. This will be
for this year only. The second year is also $10 and will be collected next year. The four books will also need to be paid for as we get into them. Average cost is about $10 per book.

More Information You Need to Climb:

1) Bring your Bibles and your Climber’s Guide each week. These will be handed out the first week we meet.

2) Your small group leaders will email you each week as a reminder to you of when and where you are meeting, what you need to do to prepare, and any other information necessary. Their job is to facilitate the Holy Spirit’s work in you and to get all members of the group to share in meaningful ways. Their task is to draw out things the Holy Spirit is doing in you and get you to share this with others—be cooperative!

3) We are committed, in this two year journey, to keep what we learn connected with our lives. We don’t want to learn a bunch of stuff we are not attempting to practice in our lives. This is more than a Bible Study. The goal is life change. You will be asked next week to identify areas of life-change where you hope to grow over the next year. (Matt. 7:24)

4) We want to encourage you to be open to a new and greater vision of what God wants to do in you—to get a greater, Christ-centered vision of yourself as a man, a husband, a friend, a dad, a leader. Change a man’s heart and you change a family; change a man’s heart and you change the world! In doing this we are going to address head-on the problem of male passivity.

5) The “hang in there” factor. This is huge in all things worth doing in life. James 1:2-8 speaks of the value of perseverance. The Greek word is “hypomeno,” which means to “hang in there.” It is often translated “endurance” or “perseverance.” This is a huge discipleship principle you will be tested on.

6) Prayer support. Next week, I want the emails of two people who know you, who will commit to pray for you over the next two years. I will send an email to them thanking them and giving them some ways to pray for you. One of them can be your spouse, but this is not necessary.

7) Next week we will also ask you to fill out your commitment cards.

8) Please be aware of the information about Mountain Men on our website at www.communitycovenant.net. This is a great place to stay in the loop.

9) A note on movies. We will be viewing movie clips that relate to various topics. There are also recommended movies to watch on your own related to topics. Please note that in recommending these movies we are not saying everything in them is good. The Bible has much in it that is not good (violence, rape, adultery) yet we still find the good. Be careful and guard your heart! Ask Pastor Mark if you have a question about a particular movie.

10) Seven Action Points. At the end of two years, you will be asked to turn in seven actions you will commit to keep working on. There will be plenty to choose from. We are not all going to be changed in the same way. Listen for the Holy Spirit’s voice speaking to you. There will be a page in the back of your climber’s guide for this and you can revise it as much as you want, but you will need to turn it in to graduate.

Summary of what will be asked of you over the next two years:

1) Regular attendance on Wednesday nights from September through April.

2) Memorize 15 Bible verses over two years.

3) In addition to the 15 Bible verses, you will be asked to memorize part of a Psalm and a prayer from the Bible.

4) Doing the weekly “practice points” for your small group discussion.

5) Read the four books (Except for Life Together, these are not hard reads).
In order to grow as a follower of Jesus Christ through the Mountain Men discipleship journey, I commit over the next eight months to:

I. ATTEND

☐ (Plan A) around 80% or more of the large and small group gatherings.

or

☐ (Plan B) the large and small group gatherings whenever possible given my scheduling limitations.

II. Put forth Big Effort in keeping up with all reading and spiritual exercises.

III. Uphold Confidentiality within group sharing.

Signed _________________________________
Date _________________________________

Mountain Men 2010 - 2011 Schedule

Aug 25 Small group leaders training meeting
Sept 1 Information night
Sept 8 Large Group #1, Masculinity and Discipleship
   Kids’ Club starts
Sept 15 Small Groups, Masculinity and Discipleship
Sept 22 LG #2, How We Change
Sept 29 SG, How We Change
Oct 6 LG #3, Anger, Part 1
Oct 13 SG, Anger, Part 1
Oct 20 LG #4, Anger, Part 2
Oct 27 SG, Anger, Part 2
Nov 3 LG #5, Lust, Part 1
Nov 10 SG, Lust, Part 1
Nov 17 LG #6, Lust, Part 2
Nov 24 Thanksgiving Eve, no groups
Dec 1 SG, Lust, Part 2
   No Kids’ Club
   Nursery/elementary care--please register--
Dec 8 LG #7, Marriage, Part 1
Dec 15 No groups, no Kids’ Club
Dec 22 No groups, no Kids’ Club
Dec 29 No groups, no Kids’ Club
Jan 5 SG, Marriage, Part 1
   Kids’ Club resumes
Jan 12 LG #7, Marriage, Part 2
Jan 19 SG, Marriage, Part 2
Jan 26 LG #9, Marriage, Part 3
Feb 2 SG, Marriage, Part 3
Feb 9 LG #10, Integrity, Part 1
Feb 16 SG, Integrity, Part 1
Feb 23 LG #11, Integrity, Part 2
March 2 SG, Integrity, Part 2
March 9 Spring Break, no groups, no Kids’ Club
March 16 LG #12, Faith in the Workplace
March 23 SG, Faith in the Workplace
March 30 LG #13, Grace
April 6 SG, Grace
April 13 LG #14, Bonhoeffer Film
April 20 Easter Week, no groups, no Kids’ Club
April 27 Celebration Dinner
SESSION 1
What is a Masculine Disciple?

Template. You will recognize a common template for our large group times. It will start with a main point for the evening—WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?—followed by a Memory Verse we are working on. Then you will see a FORMATION POINT in the sidebar with a quote regarding how we change. Another box will be called the MALE BOX, referring to something unique to us as men. At the end of most sessions will be a PRACTICE POINT. This is what you are to do before your small group meets and your experience will be talked about there.

Memory Verse #1. Proverbs 4:23, “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.”

Memory Verse #2. Proverbs 14:12, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end, it leads to death.”

Note: In Sessions 1 and 2, we will have two memory verses to build our foundations. We will have one memory verse per session beginning with Session 3.

A. What is masculinity? We live in an age where it is difficult to answer this question with any confidence or consensus. Our hope tonight is to give a working definition of what it means to be male. In some ways, this is what we will be working on each week as we come together. What we want to do tonight is establish the boundaries within which we will find the answer, and identify the major problem we face as men today.

(Clip from Lars and the Real Girl [Scene 19, three minutes])

Let's walk toward a definition:

1) Men and women are of equal value, both created in God’s image. This is absolutely clear from Scripture as we look at the creation story. Though both are human and need each other to be fully human, there are more than biological differences between men and women. We live in an age where this statement is accepted by almost everyone but there is not a lot of agreement about what those differences are.

We can also say that men are not all the same. We need to give each other room to not fit a strong stereotype of what it means to be male. Some like sports, some like art. We are also aware that not all women are the same. So when we talk about being male, we need to say things like “on average” or “tend to be.”
2) We live in a culture which is now substantially egalitarian—we have women in roles that were once reserved for men. There is nothing in this that the Bible has a problem with, when it comes to our culture at large. The questions come up in regard to church and home. We need to see that committed Christians don’t agree on the role of women in the home and church. This adds to our confusion.

3) We believe that both men and women are wounded in some way and bring those wounds to the answer of the gender debate in our age. We also believe that Jesus can heal our wounds and restore us to his intentions for living our gender-gifted lives. We also believe that Jesus is our best model for what it means to be human and to be male. The challenge for us to think through is that he is also the model for women—their goal is also to become like Christ in their character.

4) All men struggle with being a man (at least at some point). Our impulse is to become “cave men” rather than “mountain men.” To be a cave man can mean two things. One, we act like cave men in our macho anger, lust, and

“More than 99 percent of male and female genetic coding is exactly the same. Out of the thirty thousand genes in the human genome, the less than one percent variation between the sexes is small. But that percentage difference influences every single cell in our bodies—from the nerves that register pleasure and pain to the neurons that transmit perception, thoughts, feelings, and emotions.” Dr. Luann Brizendine, The Female Brain

Egalitarian marriage is described as a marriage where both partners share equally the responsibilities of the home and children.
domineering ways; sort of barbaric. But there is another form that is seen today: we retreat into our caves, becoming emotionally, relationally, and spiritually passive. Some of this retreat comes out of our confusion about what it means to be male. These two kinds of cave men are both very unhealthy and take us away from the life God wants for us.

Two Sobering Thoughts:
- "Most men live lives of quiet desperation." (Thoreau)
- 90 percent of American males are friendless (beyond acquaintances).

Another metaphor—the Walk Across the Desert.
If we go back to Genesis chapters 1 and 2, we find a picture of man (and woman) as he was intended to be. He was both totally secure and totally free. He was secure in God’s care and design. He was free within God’s care and design. There was only one boundary he could not cross. To cross that boundary would mean trading freedom for slavery.

In Genesis 3 we see this tragedy unfold. The result is that the man looses his security and freedom. He is taken out of the garden and now must walk across the desert. This walk is only done by faith that there is real security and freedom for those who walk faithfully on the other side. But, the temptation, false security, and freedom are found by trying to get back into the garden, usually done by building pseudo-gardens where we feel a measure of security and freedom. This is found in our attachments to substances, pornography, and money, to name a few.

The way forward through the desert is to walk faithfully with other men, guarding our hearts together from false security and freedom. This is what Mountain Men is all about.

B. What is a disciple? On this we can be more clear. A disciple is someone who, regardless of where they are now, is committed to following Jesus Christ wherever he leads and is being “formed into Christ.” Jesus encourages us to do a cost/benefit analysis of discipleship before saying “yes” or “no.”
**Small Group Time**

Let's get into our small groups now to discuss this, then come back together at the end.

Each person introduce yourself.
- “My name is _________________.
- I work (or used to work or want to work) in the _________ industry.”

1) Read Luke 14:25-33. Here are some questions for us to discuss:
- From this passage, what can we say about discipleship?
- What two “industries” are his metaphors from?
- How much is a disciple asked to give up?
- Let’s put this on the cost side of your analysis. Before we find out the answer from the Bible, what do you think is a possible reason, given the high cost, for someone to want to become a disciple of Christ?

2) Now read Matthew 13:44-46.
- What are the two “industries” represented here?
- Why would someone give up so much?
- What was the man’s attitude who bought the field?

3) Jesus really wants us to make the cost/benefit analysis on a personal level. Are you willing to give up what he asks for to receive what only he can give?

**Practice Point**

Tell someone this week why you want to follow Jesus.

**Movies**

...on what it means to be a man. (Good and bad.)

*Unforgiven*, *3:10 to Yuma*, *The Great Santini*, *High Noon*, *African Queen*, *Casablanca*, *Gran Torino*
SESSION 1—SMALL GROUP
Masculinity & Discipleship

SMALL GROUP ESSENTIALS
- Remember the ABCs...Accountability, Big Effort, and Confidentiality.
- Notify your group leader if you can’t be there, either by phone or email.
- Decide what time your group will end each week. It is suggested that you not go less than an hour and a half and no more than two hours.
- Try to be free of all distractions: pets, kids, phones, etc.
- Do everything to be on time and start the group on time.
- Make sure everyone in your group gets an equal opportunity to contribute.
- Be real with each other.
- Don’t worry about getting through all the questions, but don’t skimp on “practice” and “prayer,” which are usually going to be at the end.
- There are times given for each section. Please don’t feel bound by these. Use them as guidelines only.

Template. There will be a standard template we will use as we come together. It will begin with a Getting Started, then Memory Verse, a Practice Point, Bible Study, then Prayer Time. This may vary from time to time but we will use this as our standard format.

Getting Started. (10 minutes) Introduce yourselves. Talk about the one thing you love most about Alaska. Secondly, when it comes to the imagery of “cave man,” is your tendency to be more of an “aggressive” cave man or a “passive” one?

Memory verses #1 and #2. (10 minutes) Proverbs 4:23 and 14:12. Each week when we meet as small groups, we want to reinforce and practice together our memory verses. Your group can do this any way that works best. What we are after is a mix of encouragement and accountability. Over the next two years, you will be memorizing fourteen verses. Here are some tips:
- It is much better for you to live with each verse over time than to cram them into your head at the last minute.
- Allow the meaning, not just the words, to penetrate your heart and mind, asking God how he wants you to apply this verse to your life.
- Write it down on a 3x5 card and carry it around with you during the day. Identify certain times when you will look at it.
- Carry the verse card you were given in your wallet or use it as a bookmark and review it occasionally throughout the week.
- In your group, discuss other ways that might be helpful.

#1
Memory Verse

“Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.” Proverbs 4:23

#2
Memory Verse

“There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end, it leads to death.” Proverbs 14:12
Bible Study on Masculinity

**Definition:** A real man is real, responsible, empowering, quest-driven, and above all, Christ-centered.

We are going to look at what the Bible calls the “two Adams” to sharpen our focus of what masculinity is. "Adam" is the Hebrew word for "man." We meet the first Adam in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3), where he is tempted. We meet the second Adam in a much more difficult place, in the desert wilderness, where he is tempted (Matt. 4:1-11).

Notice something else that parallels in these stories. Adam was given an identity in the first two chapters of Genesis. He is made in God’s image. He is given dominion or responsibility over creation. Jesus was also given this before his temptation at his baptism, which is the beginning of his public ministry. He is affirmed by his Father as, “My Son who I love, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matt. 3:17) What is at stake in both temptations is the identity and calling of these two Adams.

   a. In 2:15-16, what is Adam clearly told to do and not to do?
   b. In chapter 3, during the dialogue between the serpent and Eve, (we have to assume Adam was there, vs. 6.) why doesn't Adam say or do something?
   c. In what ways does Adam fail our definition of what a man is?
   d. Can you think of a time where you acted like Adam in this regard?

2) Read Matthew 4:1-11.
   a. What is the devil really tempting Jesus to do in turning stones into bread?
   b. What about in jumping off the temple?
   c. What about in exchanging worship of the devil for power?
   d. How does Jesus defeat the devil's temptations?
   e. In what ways does Jesus pass our definition of what a man is?
   f. Can you think of a time where you acted like Christ in this regard?

**Prayer Time**

Each week we will have a prayer time, usually at the end. Sometimes this will be “directed” by the study guide, other times you will be free to pray as you want. Here are some ideas:

- You can have each person share a prayer request and then pray at the end.
- You can pray after each request is shared.
- You can get into sub-groups of 2-3 guys and share and pray.
- You can share requests and close with the Lord’s Prayer.
- You can pray for the person on your left or right after they share.
- Remember to keep your prayers brief and that it is okay not to pray if you are not comfortable doing so.
- The form you choose may depend on how much time you have left.

For tonight, find a way to pray for each other as men; that we would be the kind of men God would want us to be.
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