

## CHAPTER 1

# WHY WE NEED MEN OF RESOLUTION



*Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you. Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.*

*Ephesians 5:14–16*

When Jack woke up to people screaming, he was jolted back into reality, and it took him only a split second to realize this wasn't a dream. His wife, Sarah, had reached over to try steering their minivan back onto the road, but she had overcompensated, swerving past their lane and into oncoming traffic. A guy in a pickup truck laid on his horn and quickly maneuvered off the road, barely missing them.

"Watch out!" Jack yelled as he once again grabbed the wheel. But Sarah's hands still gripped it tightly as she swung their vehicle back across the lane to the right, again overcorrecting and veering them off the road on the other side. The rapid thumping of the road deflectors under the tires was soon replaced by the sound of guardrails scraping down the side of their van. Jack flinched as a road

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sign quickly took out the right, sideview mirror. All three of their children in the back seat began crying hysterically as the car sped toward a sharp turn in the road, where a single railing was the only thing keeping them from plummeting over a dirt embankment.

“Let go, Sarah! I got it!”

Everything went into slow motion. Jack, in shock, turned to his wife, who was pale white with a look of intense fear in her eyes, hands fused to the wheel as she and her husband both fought—almost against each other—to control the car’s path. His eyes darted up to the rearview mirror to see the panic-stricken faces of the children he loved more than any others in the world. Reality began settling into Jack’s mind: he had fallen asleep at the wheel. He knew that he was the reason why his whole family was about to die. But he also knew that the cause of their current crisis was the key to their potential rescue.

Himself.

With a knee-jerk reaction, Jack hit the brakes, sending the car sliding on the pavement, throwing everyone’s body forward, locking their seatbelts around them like a vise. Burning out the tires, he screeched to a halt within inches of the guardrail overlooking the long drop-off. As everyone rocked backward and into their seats, Jack stared over the hood in shock at the catastrophe his entire family had been mere seconds from experiencing.

His wife and kids were speechless. Jack sat silently, repressing an emotional rush of guilt mixed with relief. Sarah unlocked her seatbelt, wrapped her arms around him, and buried her head into his chest, sobbing in relief. His children also continued to cry as Jack whispered, “I’m so sorry; I’m so sorry”—over and over again.

Fear. Gratitude. Trauma. Prayer. Sarah cycled through every emotional response in her system. She was still a mess, very slowly starting to pull herself back together. Then finally, with her heart rhythm beginning to lessen, color returning to her cheeks, she looked up at Jack through tear-filled eyes and whispered words he would never forget: “Please don’t ever do that again.”

This vivid story illustrates where countless men are today. Disengaged and drifting. They have been given the position of

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leadership over their families and have been placed in the driver's seat. But over time, they have been lulled into a dream by their own passivity and the allures of a dark, seductive culture.

In this dream world, men often feel permission to be irresponsible, immature, and carelessly negligent in their roles as husbands and fathers. In the meantime, they have placed their families in moral and spiritual danger, threatening their marriages, their children, and their faith. They don't realize that they can't have it both ways.

As a result, the mothers of their children become the ones who (by default and necessity) are carrying the weight of the family on their shoulders in order to survive. These women are stressed out and longing for the man in their lives to wake up, rescue them, and grab the wheel again.

That's why before it's too late, we are sounding the call and asking men if they are awake at the wheel. Or more importantly, to see if they even realize they are in the driver's seat at all.

God's Word commands husbands and fathers to lovingly lead their homes. As men, we are to walk in honor and integrity and fully embrace our responsibilities as shepherds over our families. We are called to model a loving, Christlike example for our wives and children.

Therefore—because this is God's calling—it's no mystery that a godless culture would mock and constantly undermine fatherhood, attacking and inverting what God designs and values. Men are being told they don't have the permission or responsibility to lead. But the culture is not your authority. *God is.*

You need to be willing to ask yourself some revealing questions:

- Is your wife weary, worn out, and always feeling like she is carrying too much on her shoulders?
- Does your marriage lack clear direction, romance, and true intimacy?
- Are your children, whether young or grown, emotionally distant from you and spiritually apathetic toward God?

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- Is your own faith and spiritual condition weak or mediocre at best?

If your wife has been calling all the shots in the family and has her hands on the wheel, then very likely it's because you have not. Regardless of what she does, God has intentionally placed *you* in the driver's seat and wants *you* to lead. You need her deeply; but leading is your God-ordained responsibility, not hers.

You may not like this. You may feel totally inadequate in your leadership of your home. You may not see any way to reestablish relationships that have slipped into brokenness and distrust. Like countless men, you may have huge regrets and valid obstacles that seem to keep you from being the man you want to be inside.

Be encouraged! We want to give you some very real hope and direction toward future success in your journey. No man and no family is a lost cause when God gets involved. And since you are also the one in the driver's seat, you can become the one He uses to steer your family back onto the path that will lead them to a place of safety, strength, and health.

All of us should be willing to go to the next level. When you get right down to it, the success or failure of fatherhood is the key issue of our generation. *Leadership determines direction.*

And deep down inside, we all know it.

And we all really want things to improve.

### The Power of a Father

If you want to get to the core of who people really are, get them to start talking about their dad. Let them tell you what he said to them. How he treated them. Things he modeled for them. It will be very telling as to *why* they are *who* they are. And if they're being transparent, they will often be fighting back tears, either because they loved and admired their father so much or because he deeply wounded them in one or more ways.

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Regardless of age, everyone wants a good answer to the question, “What does my dad really think about me?” Our hearts intrinsically long for his approval. And when we don’t get it, we tend to spend the rest of our lives working tirelessly to win the approval of others in an attempt to fill the intense void he has left. At the same time, when a man becomes bitter with his father, he can spend his whole life trying to prove his dad wrong. He’ll say, “I never want to be like my dad.” Either way, his dad becomes the focus of so much emotional energy in his life.

But a lot of fathers don’t realize their vital role, and their kids are destined to suffer for it. If you boil down many of the issues associated with today’s detached, passive, or absentee dads, you discover this: *fathers have lost their sense of purpose*.

Dads used to be very intentional about *fathering* their children. They knew how pivotal their influence was. But because so many fathers today don’t know who they are or what they are doing, they end up doing very little. And because they are not training their sons how to be responsible men, the culture is stepping in and subtly emasculating them.

This current generation of young men doesn’t know what it means to be a man. Or to be a mature, responsible leader. Or to be a strong and engaged father one day. Society is guiding boys to remain boys as long as possible—extending childhood into their thirties—while forcing girls to become women long before they are ready.

Instead of growing up, getting married, and courageously raising up the next generation, millions of young men are staying single, remaining emotionally and directionally dependent on their mothers while becoming addicted to entertainment, pornography, and video games. They want the privileges and rewards of manhood but only the responsibilities and moral requirements of boys. So when they become fathers themselves, they don’t know what to do, and they feel extremely ill-equipped.

Young women, likewise, are entering life without a deep sense of value and worth. Rather than displaying feminine charm, modesty, and grace, many have become nearly (if not equally) as rude and

unrestrained as the stereotypical guy. They are told to act like and outdo men as much as possible. Flirty, immodest, and aggressive, they stay on a constant search for acceptance and attention—things they haven't been freely given by the one man in their life whose love and approval they really want. And so millions of teenage girls auction away their priceless virginity every year for a pizza, a movie, and some on-the-spot flattery. Each of them hopes that being held for a few minutes by a porn-addicted teenage boy with raging hormones will somehow fill the dark canyon of love that her disengaged father has left aching inside her heart. And it never does.

The consistently missing piece of the puzzle? *Fathers*.

## The Missing Piece

When a father disconnects, leaves, or dies too soon, so does a part of his child's heart. At the point a child gets detached from his or her father, it creates a massive vacuum of unmet needs in all the key areas for which the father is responsible.

More and more kids are going to bed at night without their father in their home. The physical absence of fathers is now considered the most significant family and social problem facing America.<sup>1</sup>

The research is staggering. Prisoners, drug users, dropouts, runaways, and rapists all share something in common. The overwhelming majority of them come from homes without a father. Fatherless homes produce more than half of all youth suicides, as well as the majority of kids with behavior disorders. Kids are twenty times more likely to end up in prison if their dad is not involved in their lives.<sup>2</sup>

Fatherlessness also affects kids' physical health. Those living without their dads have a much higher rate of asthma, headaches, anxiety, depression, and behavior problems. They are significantly more likely to use drugs and become suicidal.<sup>3</sup>

It makes sense, then, why the Scripture says God has a special place in His heart for two specific groups of people: *fatherless children* and *widows*. In James 1:27, the Bible describes "pure and undefiled

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religion” in terms of visiting and showing compassion to these individuals in their “distress.” What do fatherless children and widows have in common? The most important man in the leadership role of their lives is gone.

Even the dads who have every intention of doing a better job in this role are finding a world of things working against them, luring them away from their leadership mission. There are multiple factors undermining fatherhood. Here are some of the most influential.

*Divorce.* Marriage is the glue that keeps dads connected to their children. Illegitimate births and divorce are the two greatest factors that steal kids away from their fathers. Couples in previous generations were more likely to stay together for the sake of the kids. But this generation has been increasingly convinced that kids are better off if their unhappy parents get a divorce. The stats reveal that this is not true. The absolute best thing for kids is to see their parents humble themselves, repent of their selfishness, forgive one another, and recommit to their marriage. The convenience of no-fault divorce has come at an extremely high price. And millions of innocent kids are forced to pay that price every year.

*Work.* Before the industrial revolution, fathers primarily worked at home with their children often working alongside *them*, giving dads natural opportunities for sharing their faith and their values with the next generation. But in the 1800s, factory work took men away from home, leaving kids alone with mom and diminishing the influence of fathers. When dad finally did get home, he was too tired to engage, and his family got the leftovers of his attention and energy. Today, the problem continues. If a man doesn't set boundaries and learn to say “no,” his work priorities will constantly pull him away from his wife and children whose hearts are reaching for him.

*Entertainment.* Men today spend more time watching TV or surfing the Internet than in meaningful conversation with their children. If his children are with dad while he's being entertained, then the television becomes their influence instead. And it is a lousy father.

*Anti-fatherhood bias in media.* When America was guided more by a Judeo-Christian ethic, fathers in television shows and movies

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were usually depicted as honorable and heroic. In the 1950s and '60s, programs like *Father Knows Best*, *The Andy Griffith Show*, *My Three Sons*, and *Leave It to Beaver* showed strong, intelligent, responsible fathers. In contrast, dads on TV today are incompetent and constantly outwitted by their wives and disrespectful kids. Their perversion and passivity subtly redefine what's normal for fathers and can creep into the expectations we have of ourselves.

*The church.* It hurts to include this item, but too often pastors have gone silent when it comes to teaching men what God's Word says about their roles and responsibilities. At the same time, many church programs separate families to the point that kids never see their fathers leading, reading their Bibles, worshipping, or praying because they're not with them when they do.

These aren't the only threats. From the feminist movement's constant attack on male leadership, to abortion laws that legally identify mothers as solely responsible for the life of their children, to welfare laws that pay moms to keep dad out of the house, men are up against a society that wants to take them down.

Which shouldn't surprise us.

The Devil will never stop attacking what God prioritizes. And just like on a battlefield, the enemy always tries to take out the leader. If you want to keep a team out of the Super Bowl, put their quarterback out of commission. How do you win at chess? By putting the king in checkmate. An all-out assault has been declared against you as a husband and father. And that's why now more than ever, we need men of resolution who understand their purpose.

### The Priceless Purpose of Fatherhood

God created fatherhood with an eternal purpose: to reveal and represent Himself. He did not simply realize that earthly fathers were like Him and then decide to call Himself our Father. On the contrary, He eternally existed as God the Father in heaven and intentionally created the role of fatherhood on earth to reveal who He is and to show us the nature of His relationship with His Son.

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All fatherhood comes from Him (Ephesians 3:14–15). Every human father is called to be a daily, physical representation of God to his children, to introduce Him to the next generation. When a child looks at his earthly father, he should be able to see these qualities of God:

- a loving Provider
- a strong Protector
- a truthful Leader
- a respectable Authority
- an intimate Friend

This affects how a child thinks. “If my earthly father loves and cares for me, then my heavenly Father loves and cares for me. If my father means what he says, then *God* means what He says. If my father would die for me, *God* would die for me.” On the other hand, if a child’s earthly father is harsh or distant, what will the child think when someone says, “God is your Father”?

Naturally, all of us earthly fathers are unavoidably flawed. We are a long way from being like God. And yet it is part of children’s human nature to judge what they *cannot* see in God in light of what they *can* see in us.

Right now, this generation doesn’t know what true fatherhood looks like. They rarely see it modeled in the media or at home. And sadly, the result is another generation deeply struggling to understand what God is really like.

The word *father* means “founder, source, chief, or leader.” The father of a nation, an invention, a company, or a movement is the one who helped bring it into existence. As our heavenly Father, God is the source from which all other things come into being. In Scripture, God as Father is the first Person of the Trinity. Any time you hear the Godhead described, it is always God the Father first, then the Son, then the Holy Spirit. Jesus the Son willingly follows the leadership of the Father. And if you study the life of Christ, you discover that He always speaks the words, performs the works, and carries out the will of His heavenly Father. As God’s Son, Jesus came

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to reveal the Father to us. The Bible says that Jesus is the “fullness” of the Godhead “in bodily form” (Colossians 2:9). So if you want to know what God is like, then just look at Jesus. He represents His Father perfectly.

How well are *you* representing your heavenly Father? To *your* son? To *your* daughter? That is your priceless purpose.

Both the Scriptures and statistics clearly communicate that there is no more influential person in the life of a child than his or her father. Whereas moms are priceless, irreplaceable, and needed beyond measure, they were never designed to be men or to fill the role of a dad. When the Bible states that “the glory of children is their father” (Proverbs 17:6 NKJV), it is revealing an important dynamic of how God has wired the hearts and minds of children.

*They learn their identity from you.* When your kids are young, they don't know who they are, what is right or wrong, or who God is. They don't know how to live life. But kids naturally go to their dads for answers to their biggest questions: *Who is God? Who am I? Am I loved? Am I a success? Do I have what it takes? What is my purpose in life?* And if dads don't teach their kids the truth about these things, then the world will teach them lies.

*They learn their values from you.* Kids watch their dads to find what's important. It's a dad's job to keep his children from having to learn the lessons of life the hard way. A father's wise words and actions constantly reinforce the higher priorities and deeper truths of life. So if he is not there—or if he's there but not intentional in his training and leadership—his kids will be walking through their most important decisions without the one person who should be loving and leading them the most.

*They learn their worth from you.* When a child has a dad who says, “I love you, I'm proud of you, and I'm going to stand with you and always be there for you,” it changes the life of that child forever. Sons who have their dads in their lives do significantly better in school, have better social skills and self-esteem, and are more likely to say no to criminal behavior.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, when a daughter looks into the mirror, she needs to hear her father's voice in her heart reminding

her that she is beautiful and loved. As a result, girls with strong dads are much more likely to feel secure—and are much *less* likely to have eating disorders and identity issues or to become sexually active in their teen years.<sup>5</sup> But in too many families, this is not what's happening.

We need to rediscover God's original intention of what our homes are supposed to be like. Families should be havens of love and enjoyment. Homes should be places of peace and purpose. But great homes don't just happen. They are gardens that need to be intentionally cultivated and guarded. A man must let truth, love, and wise discipline become constant ingredients to his fathering. He should carefully nurture his wife, his children, and his own attitude so that his home is a place where his marriage and the next generation can grow and thrive.

That's why we need a game-changing *Resolution*.

And that's what our times are calling for.

## It's Time for Men to Be Courageous

Our generation desperately needs courageous men to step up. We need men who will not be swayed by the culture or afraid of criticism. We need men who are resolved to lead their families no matter what. We need men to teach sexual purity to their sons and daughters so that more children won't enter the world without married parents. We need men who stick to their marriage vows and cry out for God's help to love their wives rather than giving up during difficult times.

We need men who refuse to sacrifice their families for the sake of a promotion at work. Men who refuse to let entertainment eat up all their time and deaden their consciences. Men who will speak out against laws and philosophies that are destroying families. Men who will forgive their dads, break the chains of the past, and set new standards. Men who will pray for their pastors and for revival in their churches and make decisions that will strengthen the next generation. We need to be these men. And we need one another!

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When strong men work together, they can accomplish amazing things.

A story from 2 Samuel 10 provides a powerful picture of how we men can effectively support one another in our generation. The armies of David had come together to face their enemies amid seemingly impossible odds. Joab, David's commanding general, recognized that the battle was against him both in front and in the rear. But he and his brother, Abishai, decided to work together, support one another, and then trust God's power, knowing the results were in His hands.

Joab challenged his brother with these bold words:

*If the Arameans are too strong for me, then you shall help me, but if the sons of Ammon are too strong for you, then I will come to help you. Be strong, and let us show ourselves courageous for the sake of our people and for the cities of our God; and may the LORD do what is good in His sight. (2 Samuel 10:11–12)*

Their gutsy strategy worked! God blessed their courage and teamwork and brought a powerful victory in the midst of what seemed to be an impossible situation.

Men today are feeling intense pressure all around them. The dark depravity of our culture and the desperate needs of the next generation stand in front of us. The mistakes of our fathers and the sins of our own past stand against us from behind. Each of these can feel like an ominous cloud, challenging us to give up and surrender ourselves and our families in defeat.

But we need to remember one immovable, unconditional truth: we have a Father in heaven who is for us—our loving Provider, our strong Protector, our truthful Leader, our respectable Authority, and our intimate Friend. He loves us unconditionally. He alone is a majority, and the battle always belongs to Him!

If He is for us, it doesn't matter who or what is against us.

We are here on this earth at this moment to be like His Son, Jesus Christ. We are here to boldly speak the words, do the work, and

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carry out the will of our Father. Regardless of what our culture says, regardless of what other men do, we must be courageous to lead our marriages and our families for the sake of the One we represent and for the sake of the generations that will come after us.

We must stop complaining about where our culture is going and resolve instead to do something about it. We must lock shields with other men around us and refuse to allow one another to fail any longer in the battles for our marriages and families. We must give our sons and grandsons a new picture of leadership and a new example worth following. We must help our generation of men to step up to embrace their responsibilities before God and to love and lead their families. If we will take courage and lead the way, we can change the world and leave a strong legacy for our children's children.

That is the purpose of this book. That is our mission!

We must learn to stand up together, become men of resolution, and boldly say, "If my battle gets too strong for me, then you shall help me, but if your battle is too strong for you, then I will come to help you! Be strong, and let us show ourselves courageous for the sake of our people and for the cities of our God; and may the Lord do what is good in His sight!"



### COURAGEOUS CHALLENGE

*Watch or read out loud the closing speech from the movie Courageous (found in the appendix, page 248).*

### MEMORY VERSE

*Be strong, and let us show ourselves courageous for the sake of our people and for the cities of our God; and may the LORD do what is good in His sight. (2 Samuel 10:12)*