

BRAVE

— **AND** —

BOLD

31



**DEVOTIONS
- TO -
STRENGTHEN MEN**

MARTY MACHOWSKI

“My sons can tell you about the Saturday mornings when I used to take them out for breakfast and for what I called ‘manhood training.’ I realized it was my job to help them grow from boyhood to the responsibilities of mature manhood. How I wish I’d had Marty’s book back then. I’m so glad today’s dads have this invaluable tool to use with their sons.”

Bob Lepine, Cohost, FamilyLife Today

“*Brave and Bold: 31 Devotions to Strengthen Men* is a basic training manual for biblical manhood. Machowski offers thirty-one essential characteristics of biblical manhood in this compact, accessible devotional. Men who read this work and take on the challenges contained in it will be blessed and grow far beyond the thirty-one days it is designed to cover.”

Curtis Solomon, Executive Director of the Biblical Counseling Coalition; Cofounder of Solomon Soul Care

“As the father of five now-grown sons, I was called to the man-raising business. Had this book been around when my sons were younger, it would have been part of our manhood curriculum. It expresses what men are meant to be—and what I still want to be when I grow up. *Brave and Bold* is solid, practical, biblical, and accessible. Marty combines great illustrations with biblical insight, and then adds recommended next steps for application. Get it. Read it. Do it.”

Tim Shorey, Author of *Respect the Image: Reflecting Human Worth in How We Listen and Talk*, *30/30 Hindsight: 30 Reflections on a 30-Year Headache*, and *An ABC Prayer to Jesus: Praise for Hearts Both Young and Old*

“I thank God for *Brave and Bold*. It provides an antidote to one of the primary spiritual problems for men of our day: complacency. The church is not a passive organization to be tossed about by the whims of a pagan world. Rather, the church is a militant army, marching against the enemy on a mission for God. Marty reminds us of that in a loving, pastoral way, challenging men to be soldiers for Christ!”

Major O.J. DiIulio, Retired Army chaplain

“Marty Machowski has written a thoroughly biblical, highly practical, and enjoyable book that will encourage men, young and old, to pursue godly manhood. I know Marty personally and he is the kind of man I would be honored for my sons to grow up to be like. I highly recommend this book to anyone who wants to rise above the misguided versions of manhood presented in society and wishes to capture a biblical vision for manhood. Pick up a copy today—you will be blessed!”

Josh Mulvihill, President of Gospel Shaped Family;
author of *Biblical Grandparenting* and *Preparing Children for Marriage*

“As a father of four boys, I am exceedingly thankful for *Brave and Bold*. Machowski has produced a timely, winsome, understandable, grace-infused, biblically saturated devotional for men of all ages. As Christian men desperately need compassionate and compelling guidance, *Brave and Bold* offers a clear path toward God-honoring biblical manhood. Whether used for personal devotion, group study, or parenting, Machowski’s work will undoubtedly bless and challenge you!”

J. Aaron White, Pastor for Teaching and Training,
Redeemer Bible Church, Minnetonka, MN; author of *Man Up, Kneel Down: Shepherding Your Wife Toward Greater Joy in Jesus* and *Paul’s Big Letter: A Kid-Friendly Journey Through Romans*

“We all know Marty is one of today’s preeminent authors for gospel-centered children’s and family literature. Now he has blessed the church with a fantastic resource for men. *Brave and Bold* is refreshing spiritual boot camp for both young believers and longtime Christians—never heavy-handed, never watered down, always grace-filled, and brimming with applicable truth. Pick up a copy! I have already recommended it to several churches I know.”

Joshua Cooley, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Creator, Father, King: A One Year Journey With God, Heroes of the Bible Devotional*, and *The Biggest Win*

BRAVE AND BOLD

31 Devotions to Strengthen Men

Marty Machowski



New Growth Press, Greensboro, NC 27404
newgrowthpress.com
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Cover Design: Faceout Books, faceoutstudio.com
Interior Design and Typesetting: Gretchen Logterman

ISBN: 978-1-64507-069-6 (Print)
ISBN: 978-1-64507-098-6 (eBook)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Machowski, Martin, 1963- author.

Title: Brave and bold : 31 devotions to strengthen men / Marty Machowski.

Description: Greensboro, NC : New Growth Press, [2021] | Includes bibliographical references. | Summary: "In Brave and Bold, Marty Machowski offers thirty-one daily readings to encourage you to become a man whose strength comes from following Jesus and reflects him to a watching world"-- Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020051048 (print) | LCCN 2020051049 (ebook) | ISBN 9781645070696 (print) | ISBN 9781645070986 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Men--Religious life--Meditations.

Classification: LCC BV4528.2 .M28 2021 (print) | LCC BV4528.2 (ebook) | DDC 242/.642--dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020051048>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020051049>

Printed in the United States of America

28 27 26 25 24 23 22 21 1 2 3 4 5

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this book to the memory of my father, Thaddeus Joseph Machowski, who passed on into glory October 16th, 2020. No other man influenced my life more than him.

My father ran the race of faith with grace and finished well; he remained faithful to his family and his God.

In his last days, he shared his faith with the aid assisting in his care. In our last conversation, he told me, "People ask me if I am afraid to die. I say, 'Afraid to die? Why should I be afraid to die? I'm going home to be with Jesus!'"

Dad, thank you for your consistent example of love, generosity, and grace toward God and others.

I learned to be faithful by watching you model faithfulness as a husband and father over the years.

And there is no doubt that I've been sustained by your prayers. You've left big shoes to fill, but by God's grace, I will follow Christ, the way you did, with grace and strength, until my final breath.

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Introduction

I remember the day Uncle Joe took my brother and me, along with our cousin Danny, fishing. One of us knocked over the water jug. We argued over who should pick it up while the day's water supply poured out like an open fire hose. Uncle Joe ran over and righted the jug. Then he pointed to his size 14 clodhoppers and said, "You see this boot? If you don't stop fooling around, you will find this boot in your backside!" While it was clear to us that Uncle Joe never intended to carry out his threat, his warnings curbed our foolishness and helped us boys to take responsibility and become men. Those outings were more than recreation; my uncle wanted to see his nephews, along with his son, grow to be men—honorable, responsible men. The time he sacrificed to spend with us and take us on regular outings inspired me to spend time doing similar things with my own sons.

Manhood is not about strength or stature; biblical manhood is about character—leading, serving, being responsible, protecting, and providing. More than any other area, we are called to lead in our love and worship of God. Think of King David, too small of stature to be presented to Samuel for consideration for king. His gifts? He wrote poetry and played music. But God describes him as "a man after his [my] own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14). David may have been small of stature, but his trust in the Lord led to his defeat of Goliath with nothing more than a sling and a stone.

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Men are not born; boys are. Manhood requires education, development, and application. You can learn the skills of manhood by reading and applying the Scriptures and by watching and listening to other men as they lead. Or you can ignore that instruction and learn by life's consequences in the school of hard knocks.

Joining the Army accelerated my manhood education. Every basic training recruit there benefited from a good old-fashioned kick in the pants now and again. At least that was my drill sergeant's philosophy. Except the way he said it was not quite so diplomatic. From the moment I was assigned to Bravo Company till the day I left for home, Sergeant Harris spent his days getting us ready for war. While I never saw combat, the lessons Sergeant Harris taught me helped me to become a man.

The Army transformed me from a scrawny, couldn't-do-more-than-ten-push-ups, put-off-until-tomorrow procrastinator into a leader. Harris didn't accept excuses. He pushed our platoon beyond our comfort zone. A weight lifter doesn't get stronger by lifting less. He adds ten pounds to the bar and strains every sinew to press it. Harris added the ten pounds and then shouted it up with his encouragement to not quit. In the end, he helped us all raise the bar.

Many days we thought he pushed us farther than we could run. But each time we arrived at our destination, we realized our expectations were too low. Harris wasn't just mean (although we sure wondered); every law, including detailed directions for rolling up our T-shirts and underwear, had a purpose. It wasn't an attempt to glorify order or make his platoon look good; his rules provided the discipline we needed for survival in war. Though I never fired my M-16 at a person, I would learn that all of life is a battle. I would appreciate the discipline that came with a veiled affection from the man with the trooper hat.

Introduction

Harris loved his job, and he loved his recruits. He knew how to change the inflection in his voice so that you knew he loved you while he was yelling. As the weeks passed, I came to discern the encouragement hidden behind his harsh charges. On graduation day, no one stood prouder of our little grid of soldiers, all lined up on the parade field and standing at attention, than Sergeant Harris. I don't know whether Harris was a Christian, but if so, I'm sure his favorite Bible verse would have been 1 Corinthians 16:13: "Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong."

The truth is that mature manhood requires every one of us to stay on top of our game. While some countries, like Israel, still have mandatory military service for everyone over eighteen years of age, there are a ton of guys who grow up without a dad or Uncle Joe or Sergeant Harris to model manhood and insist they follow. Guys who grow from boy to man without mentorship face the temptation to coast, take it easy, and go slack. Today too many of our young men fritter away valuable time fighting computer gaming battles online. More than a hundred billion dollars are spent annually by gamers across the world.¹ Hours and even days are sacrificed to artificial wars where gamers always live to play another day, even if their characters die.

While you may not be a military kind of a guy, I hope my illustrations and stories of warriors, army life, and battle will serve you nonetheless. Think of *Brave and Bold* as one older guy passing on what he has learned through the years. I pray this book can help you grow in manhood and align your priorities with what is truly most important. Think of it as manhood basic training. While each topic only takes a few minutes to read, you'll discover that the entries in these pages can take a lifetime to apply.

There are a few ways to use this book. You can read it straight through and choose two or three areas to apply. Or you can move through at a slower pace. Start at the beginning with

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challenge #1 and take the following week to put it into practice. Do that every week for thirty-one weeks. Then, after you complete the last challenge, keep the book on hand to use as a refresher. On any given day, pick up the book and read the entry number that matches the calendar day of the month. Be sure to read and consider the action steps found at the end of each entry. The Get Started action step provides a Scripture to meditate on, along with a simple application that anyone can fit into his schedule. The Take the Challenge section provides you with a more challenging test and application.

Each of the daily exhortations begins with a Scripture and then moves to a story or illustration. Many of these are taken from my experiences in the Army or other military themes. (I've changed some names of people in my personal stories to protect their identities.) Each entry also contains a brief Scripture study on the topic at hand and ends with a challenge to apply the study. As James says, "be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (1:22). Consider this book your pocket biblical manhood boot camp.

Turn the page if you're ready to enlist in this study. But once you do, I don't want you quitting on me after a few days; purpose now to finish this book. Reading is the key to unlocking the truth that God revealed to us through his Son Jesus. It is through our study of the Word that we come to love God and the gospel that has the power to transform our lives. Every man is called by God to worship, and our study of God's Word teaches us who he is and why we should worship him. The call upon every man is to move from knowing about God to loving him. Worship is the core principle that governs the heart of every man—and this is where we begin our study.

1

Men Worship God

“Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.” (Hebrews 12:28–29)

President Lincoln found himself drawing near to God amid the Gettysburg conflict.¹ “In the stress and pinch of the campaign there, I went to my room, and got down on my knees and prayed God Almighty for victory at Gettysburg. I told him that this was his country, and the war was his war, but that we really couldn’t stand another Fredericksburg or Chancellorsville. And then and there I made a solemn vow with my Maker that if He would stand by you boys at Gettysburg I would stand by him. And he did, and I will!”²

The true measure of a man’s affection can be observed in his day-to-day pursuits and the things that capture his attention the fullest. Do his affections for God run to the core of who he is, or has something else captivated his attention and devotion? Where does he invest his energy, money, and time? Watch what excites him, what makes him angry, what makes him cry, and you will discover the object of his worship.

What do you worship? Who or what has your highest measure of devotion? *Worship* is a word that aptly describes any of our loves. The key is discovering what we love most. If we love God most and all else falls in line, then we do indeed worship God. But when anything receives our highest praise over God,

it becomes an idol. The great pastor and writer Aiden Tozer said, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. . . Worship is pure or base as the worshiper entertains high or low thoughts of God.”³

Whatever you love or want most will control what you do and determine what you live for. If we live for our kid’s performance in sports, our lives will revolve around athletics. If we live for success, we’ll give ourselves to our job and work more than anyone else in our company to prove our dedication. We can give our greatest affections to impressing a beautiful woman, building a ripped physique, or even to conquering a video game, instead of to God. Anything can become the center of our life and displace God—what the Bible calls an idol.

Our love for God and our love for idols are connected; when one increases, the other decreases. Jesus said you can’t serve two masters. You will love one and hate the other (Luke 16:13).

When a rich man inquired of Jesus about what he needed to do to inherit eternal life, Jesus told him to obey the commandments. The man replied that he had kept the commandments. Jesus didn’t disagree with him. The problem was that the man didn’t obey out of love for God but more out of obligation. Jesus’s final words to the rich young ruler were some of the most challenging words ever spoken: “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me” (Mark 10:21 NIV). Jesus knew he worshipped his money more than he did God.

What is Jesus trying to get at? Very simply, a man must love God more and worship him more—more than money, more than possessions, more than a job, more than his wife, his kids, or his free time. Whatever you love, you must love God more. If not, you’ll be drawn away from God to serve worldly things. No one can serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). Jesus said he will love one and hate the other. And our love dictates what we live

for. That is why we must strive to love God more than people or things. We should purpose to love him more today than we did yesterday and long to draw nearer his throne tomorrow.

Get Started

Take time today to meditate on Romans 14:11–12: “For it is written, ‘As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.’ So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.”

You’ll never be a true man unless you come to grips with what it means to be a human made in God’s image. We have all rebelled and sinned against God. But in the man Christ Jesus, we find not only forgiveness but also a covering in Christ’s righteousness. If you haven’t yet placed your trust in Christ, call out in a simple prayer to him, and he will reveal himself to you through the Scriptures in this study. It is only as redeemed sinners empowered by God’s Spirit that we can learn what it means to be truly human.

Ask the Spirit of God to help you see what is competing for first place in your affections. What most stands in the way of you loving God more? We all have things that threaten to take our hearts captive. What do you live for? Do you live for your work? Do you live for your own comfort? If you examine your heart and ask God to show you your idols, he will. Once you discover what they are, refuse to live for them. Put God first.

Take the Challenge

After you uncover the area of your life that you are tempted to love more than God, you’ve got to do more than just make a change for a day. To keep God as your top priority, daily repent of your misguided affection. Consider whether Jesus is calling you, like the rich young ruler, to readjust your priorities. That

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could mean giving up a whole season of sports or a promotion at work, canceling a membership, limiting your involvement in an activity, or cutting out just about anything from alcohol to ice cream. In short, get radical and love God more.

2

Men Trust God

“Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.” (Psalm 20:7)

Imagine you and a band of loyal soldiers are in the wilderness, on the run from a fierce enemy. You take refuge in a cave and plan to rest in the dark inner passages. Then you hear someone say, “I’ll be out in a bit. I’m going to relieve myself in this cave.” You recognize the voice immediately. It is the commander of the enemy army, alone and unaware. Kill him and you secure instant victory. You sneak up with a knife in your hand, and he would have no idea you are there in the pitch black. What would you do?

That is the true story of David (of Goliath fame) standing over King Saul in the cave of Adullam. You can read the fascinating story in 1 Samuel 24. One swipe of the knife and David could have defeated Saul. But instead of killing Saul, David cut off a piece of his robe to prove he was innocent, still loyal to God’s anointed king. David trusted the Lord to win his victory and would not take matters into his own hands. David followed Saul out of the cave, declared his innocence, and offered the cloth as proof saying, “Behold, this day your eyes have seen how the LORD gave you today into my hand in the cave. And some told me to kill you, but I spared you. I said, ‘I will not put out my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD’s anointed’” (1 Samuel 24:10). It was then that Saul knew he had been defeated. Saul

wept, confessed his wickedness, and said, “I know that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand” (1 Samuel 24:20).

David’s example in the cave and the psalms he wrote springing from his life experiences teach us the importance of trusting God in all of life. We say we trust God, but what do we do when life’s trials bear down on us. Is prayer our first resort? When the challenges of life press in on all sides, can we rest knowing God is in control and he can deliver us?

David turned his prayer in that cave into a song. David prayed, “Attend to my cry, for I am brought very low! Deliver me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me! Bring me out of prison, that I may give thanks to your name!” (Psalm 142:6–7). When life’s challenges press into you like an enemy, do you trust God to deliver you, or do you look to try to press in by your own strength? Do you work harder, argue more forcefully, or resort to dishonesty, bitterness, or just plain giving up?

Godly men know they don’t control their future. God is in control. They don’t decide the outcome of a battle; God does. Peter tells us to follow the example of Christ, who, “When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly” (1 Peter 2:23).

Our courage comes from entrusting our lives to God and following his ways. Solomon said, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths” (Proverbs 3:5–6). Are you fearful of an unknown future outcome? Trust the Lord. Are you suffering in the midst of trial, or are you mistreated? Entrust yourself to the one who judges justly.

Get Started

Take time today to meditate on Proverbs 3:5–6: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”

Commit this verse to memory and make it the subject of your prayers. Bring your fears, anxieties, uncertainties, and confusion about your life or circumstances to the Lord, and entrust yourself to your God who judges justly. While God does not guarantee a trial-free life, we can be sure he will use every trial for our good and his glory in our lives.

Take the Challenge

Ask a friend to join you on a study of David’s life. Read through 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, and the book of Psalms (most of which David wrote). Keep a journal and record everything you learn from David’s life—both his successes and failures—about trusting God.