

# THANK YOU FOR SAMPLING "HOW TO BE A MAN"

*How To Be A Man* is a 40-day devotional that will challenge and equip you to become the man God has called you to be by pursuing a Christ-centered masculinity. The authors, Rick Burgess and Andy Blanks, identified eight core characteristics in the life of Jesus. Each week looks at a different characteristic, challenging men to seek to see these characteristics come alive in their own lives.

If you have any questions about *How To Be A Man*, or the *How To Be A Man: Student Edition*, please don't hesitate to call us at 1-888-969-6360.

# HOW TO BE A MAN

PURSUING  
CHRIST-CENTERED  
MASCULINITY

RICK BURGESS & ANDY BLANKS



ARE YOU WILLING TO TAKE THE

**HOW TO BE A MAN**

**CHALLENGE**

We've crafted a pretty cool experience to go alongside this book. Now, you can do this book on its own and not miss a thing. But if you'd like to take your experience to the next level, we've created the "How To Be A Man Challenge." The challenge equips you to get the absolute most out of this book.

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**IF YOU'RE A DAD, THE CHALLENGE WILL HELP YOU AND YOUR SON GROW CLOSER TO CHRIST TOGETHER.**

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**IF YOU ARE A GUY IN A SMALL GROUP WITH OTHER MEN, THE CHALLENGE WILL HELP YOU COLLECTIVELY BECOME THE MEN GOD IS CALLING YOU TO BE.**

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**IF YOU'RE A YOUTH WORKER DISCIPLING TEENAGERS, THE CHALLENGE WILL HELP YOU LEAD THESE GUYS TO PURSUE CHRIST-CENTERED MASCULINITY.**

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**AND IF YOU'RE JUST A MAN READING THIS BOOK ON YOUR OWN, THE CHALLENGE WILL GIVE YOU A WAY TO REFLECT ON WHAT YOU'RE LEARNING AND PUT IT INTO ACTION.**

Sure, you can do this without taking the challenge. But don't you want to go bigger? Man up. Take the challenge.

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## **HOW TO BE A MAN: PURSUING CHRIST-CENTERED MASCULINITY**

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**HOW  
TO BE**

**A**

**PURSUING  
CHRIST-CENTERED  
MASCULINITY**

**MAN**

**RICK BURGESS & ANDY BLANKS**

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# INTRODUCTION

Manhood is in crisis in our culture today. Kind of a bleak way to start a book, isn't it? But it's true. In the majority of our churches, men make up the minority of regular attenders. And many of the men who show up on Sunday mornings are disconnected from the work and life of the church.

Did you know that the biblical picture of discipleship in the home is of an active, godly man leading his family? Numerous studies have shown that when a father is obediently following after Christ, it's more likely that his family will also be devoted Christians. The only problem with this is that many of our churches don't act like they think this is true. You'll never reach a family by catering programs to women and children in hopes that they would bring the man along with them into the church. No, men must be intentionally equipped and disciplined. And yet, many of the men we encounter are disconnected from their God-given task of being the spiritual leader of their family.

Why is this? And what can we do about it? These questions have plagued us as we evaluate our own church, and the churches and churchgoers we interact with on a regular basis. How can we help men become the man God wants them to be?

What does it even mean to be a man anyway? If you look to today's culture for your answer, you'll have a pretty tough time answering this question.

Searching for a definition of a man in today's world leads to a lot of frustration. Everywhere you look there's an example of what not to do. You turn one direction and you see a 20-something (or 30-something) detached from the workforce, spending much of their days playing video games in mom and dad's

basement. Look in another direction and you see a hyper-masculine guy, loud, outspoken, and disdainful of anyone he considers “other.” Still, look again and you’ll find a guy who resists being “defined” by gender at all, embracing the anything-goes concept of gender neutrality.

If you want to find examples of how not to be the man God has called you to be, you have plenty of options. All around us are men who are at turns passive, or tyrannical, or aimless.

But if you look closer, if can somehow manage to weed out the imposters, you’ll find something refreshing. There are individuals in our communities and in our world who are modeling exactly what it means to be a man. There are guys with blossoming new careers striving to make a difference in their workplace. There are husbands and dads who lovingly and sacrificially lead their wife and children. There are bold but compassionate men all around us who, in the midst of a rapidly changing culture, are shepherding the Church toward a bright future.

So the question is, “What do these men know that other guys don’t”? What’s the secret? While there’s no way to know for sure (we’ve talked to a lot of guys, but not all of them), our hunch is that these guys have at least figured out two important things: they’re intentionally pursuing manhood, and they’re focused on the right ideal.

In essence, these guys have figured out how to be a man.

How do you become a man? First, you have to want to be one. Seems simple, but it’s not. There’s a very powerful truth our fathers passed on to us, one that we’ve endeavored to pass on to our children. The truth is this: most things worth having are only attained through hard work. While this is gloriously un-true about the salvation offered to us by our Heavenly Father, in most other areas of our lives, you have to work for what you want. Want to build a thriving business? You have to work for it. Want to learn a trade? You have to work for it. (You wouldn’t want a guy building your house who hasn’t worked hard for the experience he’s gained.) Want a strong marriage? You guessed it: hard work. Becoming a man is no different.

Most of the guys in this world who fall short of our concept of a real man have one thing in common: they don’t want to





be a man. They don't strive to be any better than they are. They don't have a goal. They don't have a vision of what manhood is. And so they are what they are. Think about a guy who you would define as a real man, and chances are he works hard to be the person he is.

How do you become a man? Intentionality is huge. But you can be intentional and still miss the mark. There are plenty of people in this world who work hard at being the man they think they need to be. But the issue is that their model is wrong. They are striving to become the wrong thing.

How do you become a man? It's impossible without grounding your definition of manhood in the person of Christ.

Here's the deal: through His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus makes it possible for you to have an identity that is completely found in Himself. If you've come to a saving faith in Christ, you're a new creation, having been freed from the bondage of sin. And what you have been freed to become is the man God intends you to be.

You see, the Gospel perfects masculinity. (It perfects femininity too, but that's a different book . . . one we won't be trying our hands at.) Freed from the chains of sin, given new life and purpose in Christ, and empowered by the very Spirit of God Himself, we are equipped to pursue a masculinity grounded in Christ. Not a masculinity grounded in culture. Not a masculinity grounded in tradition. But a masculinity that looks to Christ as both its source and aim.

Do you want to be a man? Let us tell you how. Actually, let the Apostle Paul tell you how; though we may be more fun around a campfire, he's undoubtedly better qualified than we are in this area. In Ephesians 5:1-2, Paul says, "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Becoming the man God wants you to be means living like God wants you to live. Imitating God. Walking as Christ walked. Seeing God, especially in the example of Christ, as the pattern for manhood.

How do you become a man? By living like Jesus.

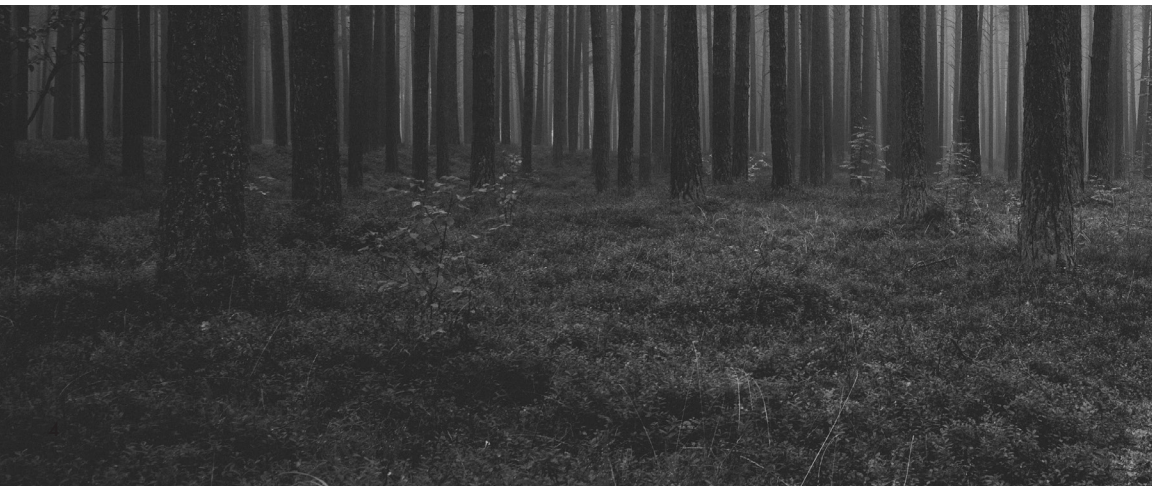


We knew that we wanted to write a book that would help readers like you pursue a Christ-centered masculinity. We have both been active in ministry for many years. But in the past few years God has awakened in us a sincere desire to see men — from teenagers to granddaddies — own the identity God has set aside for them. This book is our way of guiding men to understand what they are called to be and challenge them to go after it. But the question was, “How”? How do we present Christ in such a way that men could see in Him what they are called to be?

We wanted to present Christ as an in-depth model of manhood, while simplifying the way in which we understand how to pursue Him. To do this, we identified eight core characteristics we saw in the person of Christ, biblically solid characteristics that we can seek to exemplify in our own lives. These characteristics are powerful ways to view Christ, seeing Him and His actions as expressions of the model man. The characteristics are as follows:

- IDENTITY
- INTEGRITY
- PURPOSE
- SURRENDER
- PASSION
- COMMITMENT
- COMPASSION
- INFLUENCE

The man God has called you to be is a man who knows that his identity and his purpose are completely found in Christ. The man God has called you to be is a man who says what he means and means what he says. His word is always to be counted on. The man God has called you to be is a man who sacrifices for the good of others, first and foremost for the good of his wife and children. The man God has called you to be is a man who wholeheartedly invests himself in life, giving his all to his work and his recreation. The man God has called you to be is a man who uses his influence to



make the world a better place all in the name of God. This is the man God has called you to be. And brother, it's the man we want you to be as well.

This is simple stuff. And yet, we have to be realistic. Is Jesus more complex than the sum of these eight characteristics? Absolutely. Is it possible to perfectly master these and therefore be the perfect, godly man? Of course not. But, these are qualities Jesus modeled and modeled in abundance. And we assure you, with the Spirit's power, if you obediently and passionately pursue Christ-likeness by seeking to see these characteristics realized in your own life, you will indeed become the man God has called you to be.

It is our prayer that this 40-day devotional will spur you on to a more passionate pursuit of Christ-centered manhood. It's designed to give you manageable devotional content that shouldn't take you more than a few minutes to read, and questions (what we call "Processing the Pursuit") that will challenge you to apply what you're learning in your life in order to become a real man of God. If this book helps you in that pursuit, we'd love to hear from you. If we can ever help your church or your men's ministry, we'd love to hear from you. If you want to talk about football, or hunting, or parenting, or life in general, we'd love to hear from you. We're both pretty easy to find.

More than anything, we want you to hear us say that we're men on the same journey you are, striving with humility and effort to grow into Christ-likeness every day. We don't always get it right. Neither do you. But we're committed to this journey. And we hope you are too.

Your Brothers in Christ,

Rick Burgess and Andy Blanks



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# IDENTITY

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“Who are you?” It’s an interesting question. In fact, it’s at the very heart of what it means to be a man. And yet, there are a few ways you could answer this question.

You could respond with your name: “I’m John Smith.” And that would say something about you, wouldn’t it? That would identify you as John from the family Smith, and depending on your family’s legacy, it may say a great deal about your identity. Or it might not really say anything at all.

You could respond to this question with your role. “Who am I? I’m a father. A husband. A brother. A son.” While this may speak to more of who you are rather than your name alone, it’s still an incomplete way of answering the question.

So maybe you answer the question by listing your hobbies. “Who am I? I’m a runner.” Or a handyman. Or a hunter. Or an artist. I play video games. I do CrossFit. I enjoy landscaping. Again, though, this doesn’t seem complete. Do we really want to answer the question of who we are by listing the things we do? (For many of us, this is a lot closer to the truth than the other two responses.)

No. None of these responses are complete. None paint the full picture. Who you are is one of the most important questions you can answer. Period. Before you can begin this journey of being the man God has called you to be, you have to know where the starting line is. You wouldn’t build a house without laying a good foundation. A solid understanding of our identity is the foundation for pursuing a Christ-centered masculinity. If you have been saved by faith in Christ, then your identity is wonderfully wrapped up in who Christ is. This, before anything else, is the key to understanding how to pursue a life that is God-honoring.

Who are you? The key to answering this question is found in discovering who you are in Christ. The next five days of devotions will help you do just that.



# IDENTITY DAY I

“THEREFORE, IF ANYONE IS IN CHRIST, HE IS A NEW CREATION. THE OLD HAS PASSED AWAY; BEHOLD, THE NEW HAS COME.” - 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

“New” is almost always better than “improved.” Given the choice between putting a new transmission in your 2003 SUV or getting a brand new model fresh off the assembly line, what would you choose? A cutting edge laptop is a better choice than an old machine with a new processor. There’s usually a pretty big difference between “new” and “improved.” This is especially true when it comes to our identities as men.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. Here, the Apostle Paul makes a profound statement about the idea of “new” versus “improved.” And Paul would know as well as anyone. Paul was the number one enemy of the Church, literally making it his life’s mission to persecute Christ-followers. Until Jesus pretty much shut all of that down. As Paul was traveling to Damascus to hunt down more Christians, Jesus appeared to him in a blinding vision and asked Paul why he was persecuting Him. This moment was the line in the sand for Paul, the “point of no return.”

The moment we come to a saving faith in Christ, there is death and life. You see, from the moment of his encounter with Christ, Paul’s identity was transformed. In his words, the old Paul was dead. And in its place was the new Paul. Did you catch that? Not the improved Paul. Not the better Paul. The NEW Paul. Not Paul 1.1. We’re talking Paul 2.0.

To be in Christ is to be made new. The old you that lived in bondage to sin is dead. The old you that lived for you and you alone is dead. The old you that was purposeless is dead. The old you that pursued meaningless things is dead. But the best news is that death is only part of the story.

You see, to understand your identity as a Christ-follower and as a man is to look at the last part of verse 17. “Behold, the new has come.” This is the proclamation God makes over you. The same God who spoke creation into existence tells you that you are new. The same God who sent His Son to earth to save His people tells you that you are new. The same God who promises to one day usher in a new order of things where ALL things are made new tells you that you, too, are new. There may be no more empowering promise in Scripture.

Before you can become the man God wants you to be, you must first understand that the man you were is no more. You are new in Christ. And this changes everything.

## PROCESSING THE PURSUIT

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1. Paul says in his letter to the Romans that if we confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead, we will be saved from the death our sinfulness rightfully earns for us (Romans 10:9). If we're not careful, the Gospel is something we think of as just "fire insurance." And yet, the Gospel speaks powerfully to our identity in Christ. In your own words, how does the Gospel radically change the way you see yourself and your identity?

2. Sometimes as men, our identity is still tied to "the old," that part of us that is dead. What is keeping you from embracing your identity as a new creation in Christ?

3. Look at the scale below. If 1 represents "a life lived completely for myself," and 10 represents "a life lived completely in Christ," how would you rate the way you're currently living your life? What is your motivation? For whom are you truly living?

---

1

10

4. Take some time to pray to God right now. Praise Him that He is a God of new beginnings. Thank Him for making you new in Christ. And ask Him to reveal through His Spirit working in you the places in your life where you need to more fully surrender to Him.

# IDENTITY DAY 2

“PUT ON THE NEW SELF, WHICH IS BEING RENEWED IN KNOWLEDGE AFTER THE IMAGE OF ITS CREATOR.” - COLOSSIANS 3:10

In Colossians 3:1, Paul sets up his argument with a conditional statement. He says, essentially, if you're a Christian, then your focus in life shouldn't be worldly. You should have a Kingdom focus in all you do. This is a HUGE reminder for us as men. But it's only the beginning. Paul then makes a statement in verse 3 that echoes what we studied in yesterday's devotion: The old you has died, and the new you is alive in Christ. Paul goes on to contrast the life of the "dead self" (verses 5-9) versus the life of the "new creation" (verses 12-14). As we seek to pursue a Christ-centered masculinity, this is extremely relevant stuff, and it's where we are going to focus most of our attention today.

In verses 5-9, Paul encourages us to kill the desires in our life that are earthly. Paul rightfully says that these are things that once had a place in our lives, but no longer. These are a dead man's pursuits. If we've come to Christ, we can no longer foster these impulses. It's not a part of our identity as men who are new creations.

So what IS a part of our identity? Paul lists a few examples in verses 12-14. What a stark difference this list is from the previous list! This is a picture of someone who A) has been made new in Christ, and B) is pursuing Christ with all he is worth.

This world tells us much about what it means to be a man, and very little of it is in line with God's character or His ways. What Paul calls us to here is Christ-likeness. Compassion. Kindness. Humility. Patience. Forgiveness. And love. So we must ask, how does this look in your life? What does it mean to be a man who pursues these characteristics?

The attributes Paul lists may not look like the world's definition of being a man, but they are part of God's definition. And seeking to realize them in your life is part of what it means to pursue a Christ-centered masculinity.

## PROCESSING THE PURSUIT

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1. Think about the list Paul gave us here. Beside each characteristic below, write down what you think it means:

Compassion  
Kindness  
Humility  
Meekness  
Patience  
Bearing with one another  
Forgiving  
Loving

2. As a man, which one of these is easiest for you to live out in your life? Circle one or two from the list above that come naturally to you.

3. As a man, which one of these characteristics is more difficult for you to live out in your life? Underline it.

4. For the characteristic you underlined, take a moment and think of three practical examples of how you may live this out today.

5. Here's the cool thing: You're not stuck trying to live out these things on your own. You have the Spirit working within you to make you more like Jesus. But you do have to surrender your will to God. Say a prayer telling God that you want to see Him work in your life to make you more of a man after His own heart. Trust God to finish the work in you that He has started.

# IDENTITY DAY 3

"IN THE SAME WAY, LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE OTHERS, SO THAT THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS AND GIVE GLORY TO YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN." - MATTHEW 5:16

Read Matthew 5:13-16. These are familiar verses to us. They come just as Jesus is about to kick off His Sermon on the Mount, a large passage of teaching where Jesus flips His audience's religious understanding on its head. Jesus' teaching would have rocked the world of those listening. His goal was to get people to see that while they may have been trying to follow the letter of God's law, they had overlooked the heart of it. He was shaking folks up. And His words should shake us up, too.

These words in Matthew speak to the heart of our identity as men. We were created by God to be difference-makers in this world. Like salt in a bland meal, we are to live up the world around us for the sake of Christ. Like light, our lives are supposed to dispel the darkness of the fallen world in which we live. Jesus says our lives are literally to be lived in such a way that people observe us and are left to offer praise to God.

Let that last sentence sink in. When people look at your life, does it lead them to look to God? When your children think of you, are their next thoughts of God? When your wife interacts with you, is she led to a deeper pursuit of the Lord? When your co-workers leave your presence, are they left wondering what it is about you that makes you different? Jesus' expectation that you impact your world is intrinsically tied to your identity. It's part of who you are. And yet, so many of us fail to live up to this aspect of our God-given identity.

We have countless opportunities every day to dramatically impact others for Christ, but we are so distracted and so preoccupied that we miss many of them. Awareness of these micro-moments of influence, and the courage to act on them, is the difference between men who make much of their life and men who fail to leave their mark.

As we spend time this week considering our identity in Christ, it's important to grasp what God expects of us. God sees your life as an invaluable resource, a powerful force of influence capable of dramatically impacting the world around you, all for His glory. The question is, do you view your life this way?

# PROCESSING THE PURSUIT

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1. Consider the areas of influence you have in your life. Where do you have the most influence?

2. How well have you been a steward of your influence? Describe how you have used your influence to bring honor and glory to God.

3. The things you say or don't say have tremendous potential to work as "salt" in our world. Think of a time recently when you said something that made a difference for Christ. Now, think of a time recently when you said (or didn't say) something that was out of character for you. Think about the difference in these two instances. What can you learn from them? How can you be more intentional in how you use your words for God's glory?

4. The identity God has called you to is one of a difference-maker. Spend some time in prayer and reflection today, asking God how He wants to use you as a difference-maker in your world.

# IDENTITY DAY 4

"AND HE SAT DOWN AND CALLED THE TWELVE. AND HE SAID TO THEM, 'IF ANYONE WOULD BE FIRST, HE MUST BE LAST OF ALL AND SERVANT OF ALL.'" - MARK 9:35

Before we finish our look at the foundational concept of our identity, we have to spend some time looking at one of Jesus' core teachings. I think it's one that many of us men, me included, struggle with. It's a teaching that's in stark contrast to the words we sometimes speak to ourselves about what it means to be a man. But it's a concept that is foundational to who Jesus wants us to be.

Read Mark 9:33-37. Capernaum was essentially Jesus' home base. This was where Jesus and the disciples hung out the most. When we encounter Jesus and the guys in Matthew 9, they had been on a kind of walking tour of Galilee and the region to the north. Jesus had been teaching, healing, and performing miracles. Here, we can almost see Jesus seated, relaxed in a house (possibly Peter's), teaching the disciples in a quiet moment.

Look at what Jesus says. He's essentially describing the economy of the Kingdom. It's as if He's saying, "Listen up guys, because this is pretty different than how the world sees things." And then He tells them: To be great is to be a servant. To be strong means to be weak. To be first is to be last. What a countercultural message! This is the opposite of our cultural understanding of what it means to be a man, isn't it?

So often in our world, being a man is all about pursuing power and authority. It's crushing the weak. It's being the guy out front or at the top. And yet, this isn't at all how the Bible describes being a man. Jesus says here and elsewhere that greatness in God's eyes is sacrificing for the good of others. It's looking at our spouses, children, employees, friends . . . everyone in our life, and asking, "How can I live in such a way as to always be lifting these people up?"

Servanthood is using your life to make other people's lives better. It's leveraging all of who you are to empower, equip, and encourage those around you. And it's at the very heart of your identity as a Christ-follower.

## PROCESSING THE PURSUIT

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1. Why is this such a hard concept for us to implement? What is it about seeing ourselves as less than others that seems to strike at the heart of our understanding of masculinity?

2. In Philippians 2:3-4, Paul writes, “[3] Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. [4] Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” In verse 4, Paul seems to give us a strategy toward actually implementing this concept. What does he say is the key to seeing ourselves as servants?

3. What has to happen in our hearts for us to begin to see the needs of others? What has to happen in your heart for you to be aware of what your wife needs? What has to happen in your heart to truly see what your children need?

4. Take some time today to pray to God. Ask Him to give you a heart of empathy for those around you. Ask Him to give you the discernment to make you aware of what is going on in their lives, as well as courage to act on what He reveals to you. Thank God for serving you by sending His Son to die so that you may have life.



# IDENTITY DAY 5

“SO GOD CREATED MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE, IN THE IMAGE OF GOD HE CREATED HIM; MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM.” - GENESIS 1:27

It's so easy to read these verses in Genesis and breeze right past them without stopping to really reflect on what they mean for us as men. And yet, the statement that God made us in His image should stop us in our tracks. After all, this wasn't said about anything else in God's creation. It was only said about us. Shouldn't we spend some time thinking about what this means for us and for our identity as men?

What does it mean that we were made in God's image?

Well, it has nothing to do with our physical makeup. God is not a biological person in the way we understand that concept. So being made in God's image must be something other than appearance. I think there are a few ways we can understand this. The first is tied to the second part of verse 26. Being made in God's image means we have dominion, or rule, over creation. We're the apex of creation. We've been given "rule" in a way that no other created thing has been given rule. There are aspects of our worlds that we are in charge, or in command, of. But here's the deal: Our rule was always intended to mirror God's rule! We are to rule with justness, fairness, compassion, humility, and so on. Being made in God's likeness means, in part, being good stewards of anything He has entrusted to us. Our spouses. Our children. His mission. Our very lives.

Second, being made in God's image means we have a shadow of God's nature in us. While we'll never exhibit these traits anywhere near as perfectly or universally as God will, we have the capacity to be loving, forgiving, steadfast, just, and so on. Being made in God's image means that we have the potential to be messengers of godliness in our everyday lives. And so, we have to ask ourselves, how is the world around us better because of God's nature flowing out of us? How are we reflecting God's character in our homes and workplaces? In what ways are our conversations with others ripe for God's nature to transform our world?

Being created in God's image isn't some abstract theological concept. It's a true statement about the nature of our identity as Christ-followers.

# PROCESSING THE PURSUIT

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1. You have been given “rule,” or leadership responsibility, over certain areas in your life. Some of these areas are listed below. Beside each one, briefly describe your rule here. What kind of leader are you in these areas of your life?

Marriage:

Children:

Career:

Church:

2. All leaders have a legacy. How would you describe the legacy you’re building for the areas listed above? Are you satisfied with it? If so, what can you do to continue to grow your legacy as a leader? If not, what can you do to change? (There’s still time, you know.)

3. Spend some time in prayer today asking God to show you a picture of how you have stewarded the “rule” He has entrusted you with. Ask Him to show you areas in which you have acted in His image by replicating His qualities in your world. Ask Him to reveal to you areas where you need to rely upon Him for improvement.