# FOUR PILLARS GODLY MAN

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Love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul,
with all your mind,
and with all your strength.
Mark 12:30

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ot long ago I sat in a room with about 40 men spanning the ages of 18 to 49. When I asked them, "What does it mean to be a man?" they sat in silent discomfort. Some eventually offered vague descriptions like, "He's strong," or "He wears the pants in the family," or "He's the one who shaves."

What does it mean to be a man? How about a godly man? Many of us have no clue.

We can get a clear idea of what Jesus thought by examining his response to an intentionally difficult question directed to him by a teacher of the law: "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" (Mark 12:28). Jesus said simply, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength... Love your neighbor as yourself." (vv. 30–31).

In two sentences Jesus not only answered a spiritual riddle thrown at him, he revealed how God has designed men and women: with heart (emotions), soul (spirit), mind (intellect), and strength (body). I see a corresponding characteristic for each of the four components referred to in Mark 12:30 that defines godly manhood: Compassion, Confidence, Conviction, and Courage. I call them The 4 Pillars of Godly Men.

One more critical truth as we look deeper into these Pillars. Jesus followed his clear statement about the most important commandment with one more sentence: "Love your neighbor as yourself." The point for us: the beneficiaries of these qualities are others in our lives. They are not for elevating or promoting ourselves. They are for others.

Love God, and love others. In living with this other-centered principle Godly Men pass on a blessing—a life-giving legacy—to others.



# Pillar #1: Compassion Love the Lord your God with all your Heart

Compassion is a word that's not often associated with manliness. It tends to bring up images of softness or tenderness that we may attribute more to femininity than masculinity. But I disagree with the assumption that Compassion is gooey and unmanly. My conviction is the opposite; the quality of Compassion in a man is one of the most appealing and powerful qualities we can possess.

How do we become men of Compassion? By coming face to face with our own pain and woundedness.

# Where Do Wounds Come From?

Many times, our wounds are *self-inflicted*; they come from our own foolish choices. Many times our wounds come from *others' foolish choices*. For many men, the most gaping holes in their hearts and souls are the wounds they got from Dad—the Father Wound. It's the difference between the father-longing God placed in the hearts of all children and the reality of what they got.

Here's what boys need from their fathers to become healthy men. It's what God gave his son on the Mount of Transfiguration: "While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!'" (Matthew 17:5)

Acceptance (we are wanted): Men need to know they are embraced and fully accepted by their dads. They need to hear their dads say, "That's my boy!" or "Hey everyone, I'd like you to meet my son."

**Affection (we are loved):** "Man, I love him!" When a father says words like these in his son's presence, it demonstrates closeness, acceptance, connection, and safety with his dad. Some men pretend they don't need to hear those words; the truth is they long to know them. It proves to a son that the first man in his life loves him.

**Affirmation (who we are):** Men need to hear their dads say, "I am proud of you just the way you are." Sons need to know their dads are proud, not because of how well they reflect on their dads' image or uphold their dads' version of the perfect son. Sons need to know their dads are proud of *who* they are, not just *what* they do or *how* they behave.

Anointing (who we can become): Men need to be seen, embraced, called out, and given a blessing by their fathers. They need to know their dads believe in them and see something about them that others ought to notice. Dads are often blessers, that is, anointers. They instill in their children a belief in who they can become.

Too often the hearts of fathers have turned away from their children as predicted in Malachi 4:6. And the consequences range from hurtful to dreadful. Their sons become men who experience wounds of:

**Abandonment (physical distance):** About 50 percent of first marriages in the United States end in divorce, as do 75 percent of second marriages. The consequence of these broken marriages is often a physical distance between dads and their children.

Absence (physical presence, emotional absence): Some fathers remain present in the home but are sleepwalking through their roles. They may think they are fulfilling their role as a father just by being around, but in reality, they may be doing more damage than good.

**Abuse (physical, intellectual, spiritual or emotional damage):** Some fathers unleash their own pain onto their kids. Not having dealt with their own anger, emptiness or woundedness, they lash out at those closest to them.

# Consequences Of The Father Wound

We see the resulting consequences of the Father Wound, in varying degrees, in most of the men we meet. And they see them in us.

What do those scars look like?

**Anger:** The Aggressive Man is committed to protecting himself by controlling others and circumstances.

**Fear:** The Passive Man is committed to protecting himself by withdrawing to avoid conflict or failure. He avoids reminders that he may not measure up as a man.

**Shame:** The Searching Man is without direction or a sense of inner significance and value. He is at risk of having his emotional foundation collapse if the normal worldly sources of self-esteem—performance, possessions, power or prestige—are removed.

#### How Do We Heal The Father Wound?

The Father Wound is so deep that healing it is not a simple process. Most men carry a scar from this wound all their lives. The path to complete healing is a long one.

**Acknowledge and Grieve:** The first step is to admit we have this wound, as well as others, that have seriously harmed us. We do, indeed, walk with a limp. We are no better or worse than those we see whose wounds may be more evident than ours.

**Forgive:** Secondly, we need to forgive those who have hurt, or are hurting, us. Our anger toward them does nothing to heal us; it only keeps us stuck in misery. They are wounded people, too.

**Accept Forgiveness;** Third, we need to receive God's forgiveness for the choices we've made that have hurt us. We've all made poor choices and some of us have paid a high price for those mistakes.

# The Source of Compassion

It is the gift of redemption that God brings about through our wounds. He doesn't erase our scars as if they never existed. He allows them to remain visible and tender, but they now become a source of power, not woundedness.

We become men who live out 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God."

The Godly Man, filled with Compassion, passes on a truly powerful legacy of comfort, trust, and safety to those he loves.

#### SCRIPTURE TO READ AND PONDER

Psalm 103:3-13; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7; Ephesians 4:32-5:1 What do these passages reveal about Compassion?

#### QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION

- 1. When it comes to Compassion, which of these is most true of you: You were born compassionate; you are learning to be compassionate; you are becoming aware that you'd like to be more compassionate; you aren't compassionate at all?
- 2. A man of Compassion knows he's been wounded—he "walks with a limp." Have you been deeply wounded in any of these areas: Heart (emotions), soul (spirit), mind (intellect), and strength (physical)? If so, how has it made you tender or vulnerable?
- 3. The steps to healing from any wounds, including those from parents, are to acknowledge, grieve, forgive, and accept forgiveness. Where are you on this journey?

#### FOUR PILLARS STRENGTH TRAINING

A Spiritual Discipline to Practice: **Community** 

Are you presently in a Christian community, a church, couples, or men's group, where you can practice genuine community and deepen your Compassion for others? If not, how can you explore this opportunity? If so, how might you demonstrate Compassion to others in that group?



# Pillar #2: Confidence

# Love the Lord your God with all your Soul

man of real Confidence knows his significance is based on what God thinks of him, and what Jesus did for him. Psalm 139 is a chapter fully dedicated to describing God's magnificence.

In illustrating God's power, verses 13-16, the author, David, tells the story of your design in very specific, personal language:

- ▶ God created your inmost being
- ▶ He knit you together in your mother's womb
- ▶ You are fearfully and wonderfully made
- ▶ Your design was not hidden from God; he made you in the secret place
- ▶ You were woven together in the depths of the earth
- ▶ God saw your unformed body
- ▶ God knew every day of your life before even one of them came to be

Men, I don't know how you react to these words, but I want you to receive them personally. This is very specific language. God knew you, created you, watched you, and wanted you!

A man of rock-solid Confidence knows how God feels about him. God created him on purpose. He also knows what Jesus did for him. Jesus died for him. These truths provide unshakable Confidence.

A man of real Confidence knows he has flaws and weaknesses, but those don't undermine his sense of who he is. Those shortcomings don't determine his value; nor do they determine ours. God does. I want you to let that sink in. A real man has nothing to hide, nothing to prove, no one to bully. That's a confident man. Our Confidence is not based on our own prestige, power, or possessions. It is based on the character of God and how he views us: unique, beloved, forgiven, and celebrated.

# Confident Authority

You may not see yourself as an authority in business, politics, or in neighborhood turf battles. But every one of us has realms of authority in life. If you are a teacher of middle school students, president of your Homeowners Association, husband and father at home, night shift manager at a warehouse, coach of your daughter's softball team, Bible study leader, you have authority in that realm, a role that comes with a degree of responsibility and authority. We can use our position for the benefit of others or to promote our own self-serving agendas.

We read of biblical leaders like David who, though he demonstrated shocking self-centeredness, e.g., having one of his warriors killed in battle so he could take the man's widow, was nonetheless described as "a man after God's own heart." Sinful? Yes. Imperfect? Without question. But David was also filled with the Confidence that God loved him, forgave him, and granted him favor.

What does a Godly Man look like? He is less concerned with pursuing *positional* authority than in demonstrating *moral* authority. He has shown a willingness to follow others respectfully. He knows he's flawed, and won't hesitate to admit those flaws to the right people at the right time. He surrounds himself with others he trusts who use their giftedness to protect his weaknesses and complement his strengths.

He honors God as his ultimate authority. He uses his talents, roles, and opportunities to take action and make decisions that elevate and benefit others. He is committed to serving others, not himself. He is a man of genuine Confidence.

# Jesus As Role Model

Jesus was a confident man, fully aware of his own significance based on who his Father is. We can demonstrate the very same Confidence. Jesus was "the Son of God," and if we have embraced him as the Lord of our life, so are we.

This means we can rest in the knowledge that we are loved and accepted for who we are, not for what we do.

This is the foundation of the Confidence of a Godly Man: that the One who created us says that we have worth for all eternity. Our earthly fathers may have failed us, but the Heavenly Father has lifted us up to a place of great honor in his eyes.

In order to be this kind of man, we need to claim our birthright. We need to remember who our Father is. And we need to remember who we are: His heirs. In embracing that role, we can humbly and firmly live with Confidence.

The Godly Man, filled with Confidence in who his Heavenly Father is, passes on a truly powerful legacy of guidance and blessing to those he loves.

#### SCRIPTURE TO READ AND PONDER

Psalm 139; John 3:16; Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 4:4-7 What do these passages demonstrate about God and your value in his eyes?

#### QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION

- 1. What, if any, messages did you hear from your parents or other authority figures that caused you to question your confidence, value, or significance?
- 2. On what are you most tempted to base your sense of personal significance or Confidence: possessions, power, prestige, performance? How can you overcome this tendency?
- 3. What roles of influence do you currently have in life: Father, grand-father, uncle, supervisor, pastor, team leader? Have you spoken, or could you realistically speak, a blessing to someone in your life? To whom?

#### FOUR PILLARS STRENGTH TRAINING

# A Spiritual Discipline to Practice: **Speaking Blessing to Another**

A man of godly Confidence and authority speaks blessing to others. Is there someone who would benefit from your attention, your affirmation, and your spiritual guidance? When might you speak blessing to them? What would you like to say to them?



# Pillar #3: Conviction

# Love the Lord your God with all your Mind

o convictions matter? It depends on what kind of men we want to be and what kind of world we want to live in.

As long as getting ahead is a man's priority, other-centered Convictions don't matter. It takes no internal horsepower to make decisions and take actions that require no consideration of others. The man who lives solely for himself leaves a short-term legacy. Most of his impact ends when his life does. But what if we want our legacy to last beyond ourselves?

# **Living For Others**

The epitome of men of godly Conviction are those who have experience, knowledge, and wisdom—and who pass these on to others for their benefit. His primary concern is to respect, encourage, and lift up those he is instructing. He is passing on a legacy that will outlive him.

The source of Conviction is wisdom. How do we get wisdom? We ask for it. God longs to give his followers wisdom. Wisdom that comes from God is pure, peace-loving, considerate, impartial, and sincere, resulting in righteousness.

Men, do you see how deep and profound wisdom is? It determines the difference between self-absorbed, foolish lives and insightful, other-focused lives. Go after wisdom. Wisdom results in Conviction. Ask for it. Pray for it. God loves to grant it. But don't hold it to yourself. Pass it on.

#### How do we live with Conviction?

By living and speaking from our **HEART**:

**Honor our authorities and organizations:** The book of Daniel tells how Nebuchadnezzar searched for the finest men to serve in his palace. He found none equal to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These four godly men were not troublemakers or passive-aggressive whiners. Even though they had another God, they still honored Nebuchadnezzar's political authority over them.

Similarly, we should be men who honor those who are authorities, whether at city hall, at work, or at church.

**Examine our motives and intentions:** It's easy to see a smudge on our neighbor's face and be oblivious to the ugly sneer on our own. Do we have the nerve to say, "Let me wash your face," when our own face is distorted by contempt? "Wipe that ugly sneer off your own face and you might be fit to offer a washcloth to your neighbor." (Luke 6:41–42 The Message)

Approach the right people: When we disagree with a new policy at work or are legitimately concerned about a decision our pastors or elders have made at church, the easiest path is to find someone else just as aggrieved as we are and commiserate with them. Real men take their Convictions to those who are actually in authority.

**Represent:** Speak up. Be honest. Speak for yourself and for others. We understand that living with Conviction may well have some consequences for us. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego survived a furnace and then were promoted by the king. Daniel survived the lion's den.

God chose to honor Daniel and his fellow Israelites. It doesn't always work out that way, and it may not for you and me. In any case, the willingness to take the consequences of our Convictions and actions is a crucial part of the equation.

**Take the Consequences:** Just as in the above examples, we understand that living with Conviction may well have consequences. Patrick Lencioni, well-known business author of *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, says that the best way to tell what your deepest values are is to note the Convictions you're willing to get punished for.

There will often be consequences when we are men of Conviction. Genuine Godly Men, live courageously with the consequences of their Convictions. Often God uses those same men to powerfully influence the lives of others. In doing so, we pass on a legacy of wisdom to others.

#### SCRIPTURE TO READ AND PONDER

Daniel 3, John 18, Acts 4:5-21, Galatians 5:13-26, Philippians 2:3, 4 What truth from these passages can form a foundation of Conviction for you?

#### QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION

- 1. What did your parents value most in life as you were growing up: Relationships, work, money, service to others, family, power, God, possessions? Have you picked up some of the same values, or chosen completely different ones?
- 2. Who is a man you look up to as a role model? What Convictions do you admire about him?
- 3. Read Galatians 5:22, 23. Which of these attributes come naturally to you? Which do you struggle with, or long for, the most?

#### FOUR PILLARS STRENGTH TRAINING

# A Spiritual Discipline to Practice:

#### Meditation

The book of Proverbs is filled with wisdom which leads to Conviction. Read one chapter of Proverbs each day of the month coinciding with the day's date. Allow the words to go deeply, linger, and pray over any message or lesson the Holy Spirit speaks to you.



# Pillar #4: Courage

Love the Lord your God with all your Strength

ourageous men marshal their Courage, even in the face of fear, to fight for others, not themselves. They fight on behalf of People they love and Principles they believe in. They stand up for something bigger than themselves and are willing to put themselves at risk to defend what they believe in.

# **Biblical Examples**

The Bible gives many examples of men of Courage. David was a shepherd, a poet, a musician, and, to the shock of the intimidating Philistines, a warrior. He had the Courage that his cause was right, that God was behind it, and that God would strengthen him.

Joshua was an Old Testament character who defined the image of a man of Courage. The first chapter of the book of Joshua relates an inspiring challenge to Joshua in which God repeated one exhortation more than any other: "Be strong and courageous" (verse 4). "Be strong and very courageous" (verse 6). "Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged" (verse 9). And with that encouragement, Joshua stepped into uncertainty, threat, and perhaps fear, and led the Israelites into a land full of blessing and promise.

Jesus was the epitome of a man of Courage when he cleared the temple of thieves, but he was courageous in even more profound ways:

▶ When he stood in front of an angry mob and defended the woman they were about to stone. He got in the way.

- ▶ When he endured enormous agony alone in the Garden of Gethsemane.
- ▶ When he willingly submitted to beating and whipping.
- ▶ When he submitted to being nailed to the cross, thereby defeating death for all of us.

# Unseen Enemy

Our encounters with conflict are certainly not as epic as the ones Jesus faced. Nevertheless, men who long to be more Christ-like will face resistance and temptation. Ultimately we know that the toughest battles we will ever fight are against an unseen enemy.

Ephesians 6:10-12 tells us that our battle is not against flesh and blood but against spiritual powers that harm our heart, soul, mind, and strength. This enemy looks for anyone he can harm and destroy, I Peter 5:8.

In this spiritual battle, we must draw our Courage and strength from the Holy Spirit who lives in us. We need to pay attention to what challenges and trials are hiding behind the surface of the fear we face.

The deepest longing most men have is to be respected by others. As a result, the most common fear we experience is fear of failure—the loss of respect from others. The greatest source of Courage when we feel fear of failure is to be convinced that our significance is not defined by success in the eyes of the world, nor even in the opinions of other Christians. Our significance is established by our Creator who intentionally knit us together in our mothers' wombs (Psalm 139).

Courage is the willingness to step up, to encounter uncertainty, to risk failure, criticism, and embarrassment, to enter fear on behalf of people we love and principles we are willing to fight for, or even die for.

Are you the kind of man who will come forward when People you care about need you? Will you take action despite criticism when a person with less integrity is ignoring a Principle you believe in? Will you speak up? These are the signs of a man of Courage.

The Godly Man, who lives with Courage, passes on a truly powerful legacy of protection and security to those he loves.

#### SCRIPTURE TO READ AND PONDER

Matthew 21:12-17; Matthew 26:36-46; John 8:1-11; Ephesians 6:10-18 What lessons in Courage do these verses reveal to you?

#### QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION

- 1. Have you ever met, lived with, or worked for someone who uses their strength primarily for their own benefit? Who was (s)he? How did (s)he intimidate you?
- 2. Who or what in your life currently creates the most fear in you? What next healthy step in addressing this fear would require the most Courage from you?
- 3. Can you think of People you love, and Principles you believe in, that you are willing to to stand up for? Who are those People? What are those Principles?

#### FOUR PILLARS STRENGTH TRAINING

A Spiritual Discipline to Practice: Sharing Your Faith

One of the acts that takes the greatest Courage for Christ-followers or Seekers is to share their spiritual journey and current faith with others. The Bible urges us to do so. In what setting, and in what relationships, can you grow in telling others about your faith? Who comes to mind?

# Godly Men

Jesus said, "Love the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.... Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:30–31).

When we follow that calling as a man—loving God and others—we are Godly Men, who live with:

Hearts moved by Compassion Souls anchored in Confidence Minds compelled by Conviction Strength motivated by Courage

In our own efforts to live out these roles, we will fail. Or, at the very least, we will fall miserably short of our hopes, as we often have in the past. But when God made us men, he made us capable of these qualities.

In fact, these qualities are in us already. They may have been wounded, suppressed by shame, or lain dormant over the years, but every now and then, they rise to the surface. That's because they reside in us.

When we live as God designed us, trusting in his power to redeem us, we become Godly Men who pass on a life-giving legacy to others.