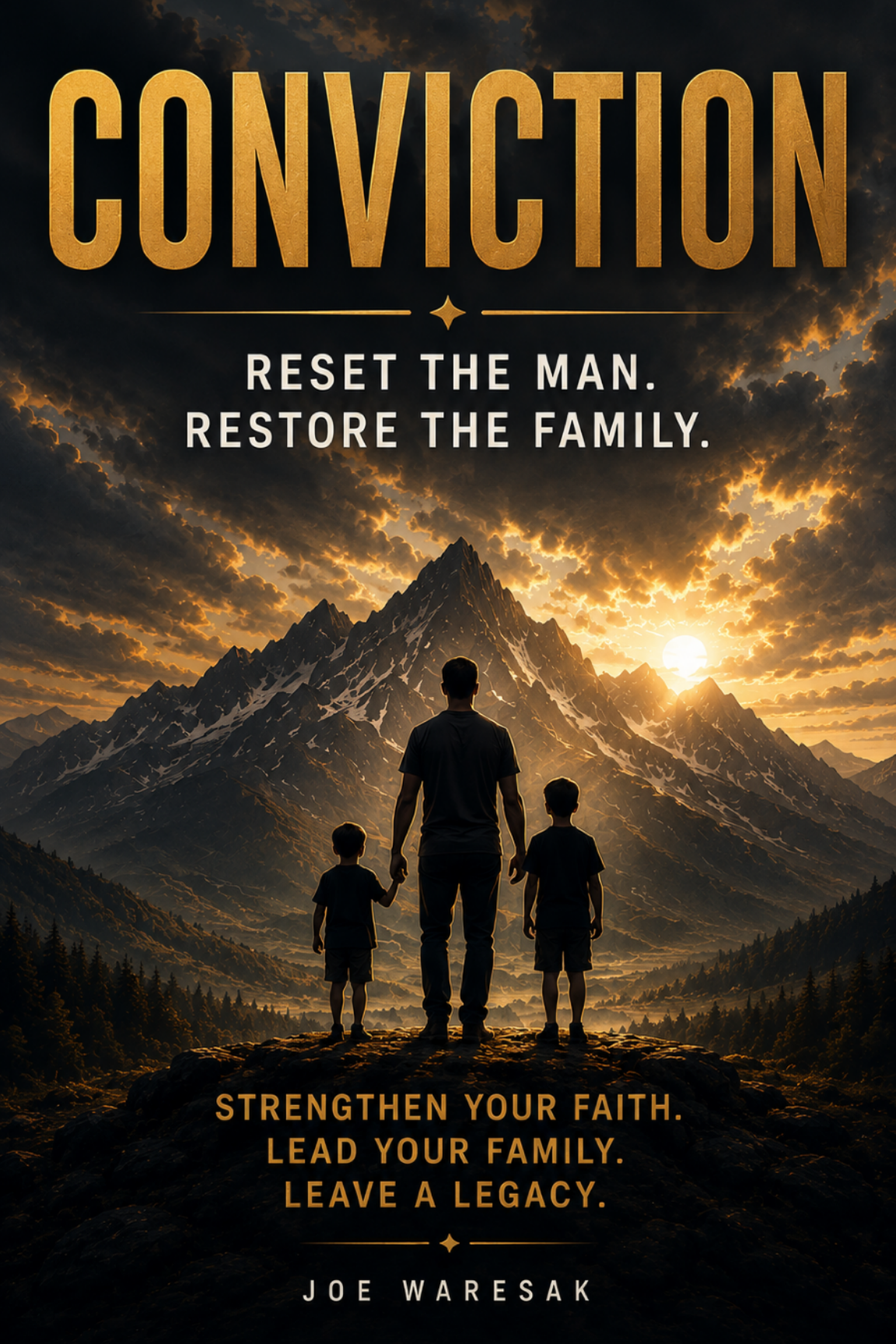


CONVICTION



RESET THE MAN.
RESTORE THE FAMILY.

STRENGTHEN YOUR FAITH.
LEAD YOUR FAMILY.
LEAVE A LEGACY.

JOE WARESAK

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Introduction

"A man's real belief is that which he lives by, not that which he talks about." – A.W. Tozer

Over the past several decades, the biblical ideals of manhood—faith, duty, honor, and love—have been steadily fading and collecting dust. We have failed to anchor our lives in God-driven convictions, and the fallout from this generational drift is real. From the headlines to our closest relationships, we see the consequences of men who have lost their way. Sadly, the church is not immune, and the impact on families has been devastating.

Convictions, by nature, compel action. To say you're convinced about something but do nothing about it only invalidates your conviction. Look at what drives your life decisions and actions, and you will discover your true convictions.

Like the foundations of a house, the convictions we hold provide a structural framework and guardrails for our lives. My father was a builder, and I learned how vital it is to get the foundation right. No matter how amazing a house may look, if the foundation is lacking, it's likely to collapse when the first storm hits.

That said, if our convictions are grounded in our relationship with Jesus Christ, our house will withstand the hurricane-force winds this world will bring our way. This

doesn't mean life will be easy—it won't. But it does mean we will be right where God wants us—depending on Him.

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.” Matthew 7:24-25

The primary goal of this book is to serve as a spiritual reset—a call back to conviction—to help men reestablish biblical resolve and reorient their lives around what matters most. It is a high calling—one that draws us upward to Christ and outward in service.

Each of these 30 Conviction chapters is designed to encourage and challenge you to deepen your relational convictions toward God and to center your life more fully on Christ. Every entry ends with a Scripture and a simple yet searching question to encourage evaluation and application. If you willingly submit these readings to God, your convictions, rooted in Christ, will be challenged and very likely further solidify and deepen. Yet it's totally up to you – “Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.” (James 4:8)

Take time to prayerfully reflect on each passage. In humility, ask God to reveal where your life needs to become more about Him and less about you. Consider taking a few

days—or even a week—with each conviction to evaluate, plan, and take meaningful action.

If you are married, invite your wife to join the discussion process. Share the devotional with a few trusted men. Some of my most significant spiritual growth happened in my living room among several good men. We were never meant to go it alone.

And never forget: in Christ, you stand in His abundant grace. As you abide in Him, He will produce His fruit in you.

Godspeed,

Joe

Conviction 1:

Intentional with What Matters Most

Years ago, during a sermon, my pastor asked men a question that God used to radically change my life: Are you as intentional at home as you are at work?

I knew the answer immediately.

No... I wasn't.

At work, I showed up every day aligned with the company's mission. I held myself accountable. There were standards, expectations, and best practices. I was always learning, always growing professionally. But at home? I rarely made time to grow as a man... a husband... a father.

And then it hit me—I was failing in my greatest God-ordained assignment—and that had to change.

I would venture a guess that I wasn't alone.

Most men put more deliberate effort into their professional lives than into their roles as husbands and fathers. For the first decade of my marriage, that was certainly true for me. Not because I didn't care, but because I had bought into a model of manhood that sounded right—but was incomplete: Work hard, provide, and engage as I can. That's what a man does.

And while our vocational efforts matter, it's not the main focus of our calling. Too often, that mindset leads to something we don't intend: our wives and children don't get our best—only what's left over, which, on many days, doesn't amount to much.

The old adage is true—we don't live to work; we work to live. This applies to our faith and our families. Our work is a means to an end—in serving God, our families, and our fellow man.

When I stepped back and looked honestly at my life, the difference was clear.

At work, I had resolved to succeed and poured myself into that effort. I set clear expectations, measurable goals, and a plan for growth, and I committed myself to that end. I left nothing to chance.

Yet at home, I acted with good intentions but lacked a clear plan and defined standards.

But Scripture paints a much fuller picture. A man is not defined primarily by his vocation or annual income—but by how he leads, loves, and discipless those around him.

“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” –Ephesians 5:25

“You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise” –Deuteronomy 6:7

“He must manage his own household well...”
–1 Timothy 3:4

Provision is only part of the calling. The larger aspect of our manly-driven responsibilities is tied to relationships, especially the sacred ones involving our wives and children. Never forget this—the family unit is the first relational institution God created, and the means by which humanity made in His image is propagated. It deserves our highest level of attention and careful consideration.

After hearing that sermon and truly evaluating my life before God, I made a decision. I would no longer give all of my energy, focus, and intentionality to my work while giving my family whatever was left over.

I resolved to be more intentional in growing as a man of God, a husband, and a father. What began to change for me wasn't just my mindset—it was my approach. I started treating my role at home with the same determination and consideration I gave my work. As my father had always taught me, have a plan and work the plan. This is what I began to do.

1. Define the mission

We do this at work—how much more do we need it at home? Your family’s mission statement helps cement the foundation that supports your values and greater life purpose. Include Bible verses and seek to memorize them as a family. Over time, it will serve as a missional compass, keeping your focus on your life priorities.

2. Set the pattern

Deliberately set aside time in your schedule for the relationships that matter most: time with God, time with your wife, and time with your kids.

3. Create accountability

Involve your wife in the process. You are co-heirs in Christ, and often our wives see what we don’t. Also, invite a few men into the journey—sharpen one another as God calls us to do.

4. Commit to growth

Hold yourself accountable for what matters most. If you’re too busy, make the hard decisions to remove the lesser so you can remain focused on the greater, and ask yourself this question on a regular basis: If I’m not taking care of what matters most, why am I so busy with everything else?

Again, this isn’t about perfection. It’s about intentional leadership in the place God has entrusted to you most. So,

let me ask you the same question that changed me: Are you as intentional at home as you are at work?

If the answer is no—you're not alone. But you don't have to stay there. Your greatest God-ordained assignment awaits. Because at the end of the day, success at work means very little if we fail where God has entrusted us most.

Focus Bible Verse:

"For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?" –Matthew 16:26a

The Reset

Where am I not being intentional at home, and what does that say about my priorities? What is one change I can make this week to be more intentional and put first things first? If you've never developed a mission statement for your family, begin the process this week.

Conviction 2:

Character

"Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope," –Romans 5:3-4

We promote character development across our academic institutions and leadership programs. However, our actions have demonstrated that, while we uphold the ideal of godly character, most men let the world shape who we are rather than the God who created us.

Character can be defined as the cumulative sum of a person's convictions that shape their way of living. In short, character reveals who a person truly is on the inside, at any moment and in any circumstance—without a façade. Ultimately, character doesn't care what others think; instead, it drives what a person does, regardless of others' opinions.

Many have observed that a person's true character is revealed during times of trial and suffering. This is true. However, it is equally true that a genuine character rooted in Christ will not only shine in difficult moments but also serve as a guiding light in good times.

The Greek word used to convey the understanding of character in the New Testament is dokime (dok-ee-may),

and it is found in Romans 5:4. In ancient times, the meaning of this word arose from the use of a metal currency. Given that metals used in the money-making process were relatively soft, people would often shave away as much of the metal as they could in an attempt to cheat the system. It was such a rampant practice that in Athens alone, more than 80 laws were enacted to stop the circulation of shaved coins. Yet there were a number of honest men, men of character, who would not allow the shaved coins to be used.

These honorable individuals, who would not shave the coins, were approved men (*dokime*), determined by their convictions to honor God through their actions.

“Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial (approved), for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.” –James 1:12

No matter how small or large the matter, a man of character seeks to act justly. This doesn't mean he gets it right all the time. However, his God-driven priorities and passion will yield results, and when they fall short, he seeks to make it right before God and before others. This is key: His character perseveres through his successes and his failures.

C.S. Lewis wrote one of my favorite children's fictional stories, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. It is an epic tale of good versus evil that paints a picture for kids and adults

of what true character looks like in the fantasy world of Narnia. The noblest of creatures is the lion, Aslan, the larger-than-life overseer of this fantasy realm. This is how one of his characters described him.

“Safe?” said Mr. Beaver; “don’t you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? ‘Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you.”

As a man, husband, and father, I hope I am seen in a similar light—a force of character that is not easily moved—yet good, reflecting the power and love of my Savior.

While competencies may come and go, we will take our character to the grave and beyond, as it is one of the most powerful legacies we can pass to the next generation. Yet it requires great humility, sacrifice, time, and a willingness to stand resolute against the evils of our day.

Over time, a divinely driven character, one that God is shaping, will grow stronger—like a divine granite of sorts—remaining steadfast and unwavering.

Focus Bible Verse

“Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,”
—Romans 5:3-4

The Reset

Do I place my Christ-rooted character development over my desire to be competent and liked? Is there a book I can start reading with my children that will challenge us all to become men and women of character? (If you haven't visited the world of Narnia with your family, you won't regret it.)

Conviction 3:

Duty

“That which a person owes to another; that which a person is bound, by any natural, moral or legal obligation, to pay, do or perform.”

—Webster’s Dictionary, 1828

The prolific General George S. Patton Jr. of the United States Army said, “Duty is the essence of manhood.” I’m sure he saw this reality play out on the battlefield time and again, in matters of life and death. We all have duties in life—responsibilities we owe and obligations we’re expected to fulfill. But not all duties are equal. There is a hierarchy of responsibility that every man must discern, and we are accountable before God to put first things first.

Here’s the guiding principle: We must not allow lesser duties to compromise the greater ones.

The greatest and highest duty you were born with is your obligation to glorify God with your life. He made you for this purpose: to love Him and others. It is the highest duty, and it is the one that gives meaning, direction, and strength to all others. A man who first fulfills his highest duty to God will quickly realize that this divinely ordained duty is the foundation that supports all others.

This doesn’t mean abandoning all lesser obligations or giving them anything less than our best. Yet, living our

priorities calls us to organize our lives so that what matters most receives our greatest attention and energy. This often requires minimizing, adjusting, or removing secondary duties that hinder faithful stewardship of our primary ones. We need to guard what matters most in our lives and avoid spreading ourselves too thin. If we focus on too many areas, our impact on any one diminishes.

If I'm not taking care of the most important things, why am I so busy with everything else? I share this question a lot, and for good reason. If you're like me, you tend to run faster and harder than you should. This can sometimes lead to a pattern in which things are done at the expense of spending time with the ones you love. We need to courageously and relentlessly refuse to focus on less important matters, so we can prioritize and execute what truly matters most.

When I think about the men who shaped my life, they were not perfect, but they were consistent. They aligned their lives to their greatest responsibilities. Their strength came from focus, intensity and faithfulness to what mattered most—God, family, and the people entrusted to their care.

So, as a man, husband, father, friend, and worker, consider the order of your own duties. Let Scripture define and compel how you live them out—with intentionality, discipline, and prayer.

Focus Bible Verse

“...what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

–Micah 6:8

The Reset

Am I protecting my highest duties, or am I spending too much time on the lesser ones?

Conviction 4:

Honor

“True nobleness of mind; magnanimity; dignified respect for character, springing from probity, principle, or moral rectitude; a distinguishing trait in the character of good men.”

—Webster’s Dictionary, 1828

The Medal of Honor is the United States’ highest military award for valor. It is presented by the President, on behalf of Congress, to service members who display “conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life beyond and above the call of duty.” Among these recipients is Private First Class Charles R. Johnson—one story among many, yet powerful in its simplicity and sacrifice.

“Johnson administered first aid to other injured Soldiers, despite being wounded himself. After recognizing their situation as untenable, and with disregard for his personal safety, he placed himself between the enemy and his injured comrades, and told them he would hold off the enemy forces as best as he could. His brave and selfless efforts that day saved the lives of as many as 10 Soldiers.”

—U.S. Army, Medal of Honor: Private First Class Charles R. Johnson

What struck me most about Johnson's account was the immediate and instinctive way he acted without hesitation, no discussion of rank or duty, and no concern for recognition. His actions flowed from his character. Long before he received a medal, he was already a man of honor—and when the need came, his character led the way.

The late, great actor John Wayne understood a key principle of manhood: "A man's got to have a code, a creed to live by, no matter his job." As Christian men, we have been given a divinely driven man code, anchored to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ: To fulfill our duties with the same instinctive selflessness and passion—putting others before ourselves. We won't always do it perfectly, but it must remain our aim.

Honor is not something that just happens; it is forged by a resolve to live by a higher standard for the Lord, established one decision at a time.

And if you find yourself alone in a trench, bloodied and feeling defeated from a divorce, a separation, or just exhausted from a struggling marriage or ineffective parenting efforts, don't give up. If there is something you own, repent and make it right with God, your spouse, or your kids. Then pull yourself up and take hold of the amazing grace in which you stand. Look up, then look forward, for God has redeemed you for a purpose. Be the man, husband, and dad he has called you to be.

Most of us will never be asked to lay down our lives on a battlefield in war. But we are called to the same standard of selflessness in our homes—to be men of honor in how we lead, serve, protect, and sacrifice for our wives and our children.

Focus Bible Verse

“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” —John 15:13

The Reset

Is there an area of my life that is not honorable? Where do I need to sacrifice more for others?

Conviction 5:

Nailed to the Cross with Christ

It's one thing to wear a cross around your neck. It's another thing to nail yourself to it.

Too often, our faith is like the cross we wear around our necks. It's something we can put on or take off as we choose. If it's not convenient to wear our cross at work or in our marriage, we can simply remove it. Not so if you decide to nail yourself to it.

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

—Galatians 2:20

When you nail yourself to the cross, you will become less, and Christ will become more, and this is where God does His greatest work in our lives. When we are crucified with Christ, we can't help but take Him and His love into every area of our lives.

At the heart of this calling is a radical recalibration of our lives on Jesus, focusing on the true meaning of His sacrificial love via the cross of Calvary. It represents God's love for humanity, bound within a divine covenant sealed by the blood and faithfulness of His Son. Jesus gave His life for us, and we are called to do the same for Him.

In another God-given covenant, once we say “I do” with our wives and place rings on our fingers, we are no longer living for ourselves, but for each other. How much more must we define who we are and how we live based on our relationship with our Savior God and the eternal work He accomplished for us on the cross?

And He now calls you to share in that fellowship of love by being crucified with Him—you no longer live, but Christ lives in you. You don’t just wear a cross; you nail yourself to it.

Focus Bible Verse:

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." –Galatians 2:20

The Reset

Am I crucified with Christ? Is my faith something I live or just wear when it’s convenient? If you’ve never memorized Galatians 2:20, do it this week.

Conviction 6:

No Neutral Ground

“There is no neutral ground in the universe; every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God and counter-claimed by Satan.” C.S. Lewis had it right. Nothing on earth is void of Satan’s ambitions, and there is no middle ground regarding God’s righteous rule over His creation. Every aspect of life — including our family life— is part of this epic battle between good and evil.

Satan has one major objective: to destroy what God has deemed as good. If you’re not experiencing some healthy struggle over the state of this world, you’ve probably stopped engaging with it and have become part of it. And that’s exactly where the enemy wants you — comfortable, inattentive, and a non-threat in his presence.

Scripture defines the lines clearly. In Romans 12, we’re told that genuine love must abhor what is evil and cling to what is good. It’s not enough to simply dislike evil; we must recognize it for what it is — an enemy that seeks to deceive and destroy. Knowing this, if we loosen our grip on God and what He has declared as good, evil will inevitably take hold of us.

A few verses later, we are commanded to overcome evil with good—not to ignore it or to accommodate it.

Yet we are living in a cultural moment that intentionally blurs moral clarity — erasing the lines God has drawn and calling evil good and good evil. When truth becomes fluid, and virtue becomes negotiable, we can easily rationalize circumstances to fit our self-centered needs.

But here's the critical point: this is not a time to panic. It is a call to faithful engagement.

We are not men anxiously trying to engage the enemy. We are ambassadors of a victorious King who has already won. We live with a higher purpose. We lead with confidence knowing who we serve. We engage with joy — understanding we are exactly where God has placed us, in His hands and on His mission.

Real love, anchored in God's goodness, is one of the most powerful forces in the universe and will overcome evil. It is discerning and refuses to celebrate what God condemns. At the same time, it does not grow bitter or cynical. In Christ Jesus, real love always hopes and endures, and we must carry that message to the battlefronts of life.

As dads, one of the greatest influences we will have on our children — and on this culture — is how we respond to evil. Do we merely rant? Or do we demonstrate the overcoming goodness of God and do something about it?

If you're like me, this means dedicating more time to prayer, having more intentional conversations at the dinner table,

exercising greater vigilance about what enters our homes, and renewing our commitment never to hold back God's goodness in the face of evil.

Focus Bible Verse:

"Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good." –Romans 12:9

The Reset

Does my prayer life reflect the spiritual warfare taking place in this world and within my own house? Am I actively engaging the evil of the day with God's greater goodness?

Conviction 7:

Anchored to Grace

Scripture reminds us that grace originates with God. It is not a reward for good behavior nor a passive allowance for sin. Rather, grace is a gift from God—calling us, redeeming us, and transforming us through the finished work of Jesus Christ. We are saved by grace, sustained by grace, and ultimately shaped by grace.

The most beautiful thing about grace is that it displays God’s enduring love at work in broken people like you and me. And when rightly understood and coupled alongside God’s truth, it becomes one of the most powerful forces shaping a man’s faith, his family, and his legacy.

True grace does not lower God’s standard; it empowers us to pursue it. In response to His amazing grace, we turn from our sins, take up our cross, and pursue a walk of faithfulness—not out of fear, but out of gratitude and love.

“But he gives more grace. Therefore, it says, ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’”

—James 4:6

This understanding of grace has profound implications for how we live and lead our families. As husbands and fathers, we are called to reflect God’s grace in our homes. That means extending patience, forgiveness, and mercy—but also modeling humility, repentance, and obedience. Grace

is not passive; it is active and formative. It teaches us how to live rightly before God and before others. And this is one of the most important lessons we must not only teach our children but also show them.

God's grace opens our eyes, humbles our hearts, and secures our souls. The apostle Paul reminds us that it is by grace we are saved, and it is by grace we must now live. Our kids need to see us pouring God's grace over our most challenging situations involving people and circumstances.

And because we are sinners, it's important to remind each other of this often.

When our children see grace lived out—not just talked about—they begin to understand the heart of the gospel. A home filled with God's grace isn't perfect, but it is one anchored in truth, repentance, forgiveness, and hope in Christ. It truly changes everything.

Focus Bible Verse

“But he gives more grace. Therefore, it says, ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’” –James 4:6

The Reset

Am I resisting God by holding on to pride in ways I justify?
What is one area I need to surrender in order to be transformed by His grace?

Conviction 8:

First and Most

Sadly, a recent Barna study revealed what we've been seeing for years.

“In 2000, nearly three-quarters of Christians (74%) strongly agreed that faith was central to their lives. Today, that number sits closer to half (54%).”

The bottom line is this—over the past three decades, there was a 20% drop in Americans who believe their faith in Jesus Christ is the most important thing. The faith of our fathers is fading, and we're losing the younger generations.

Men—this has happened on our watch. If faith in Christ is only a part of one's life and not the driving force behind everything, it ultimately means little. Growing up, my father made it a habit to remind me that giving anything less than my full self wasn't worth it. In practical terms, our relationship with Jesus is the same.

The prolific pastor and author A.W. Tozer understood this well:

“If Jesus cannot control you, He cannot save you. And if He cannot control all of you, He cannot control any of you.”

A more contemporary Christian teacher and author said it this way:

"We are saved by faith; but we are not saved by fruitless faith." — Tim Keller

Yet, what does a lasting, genuine faith look like? Jesus stated it like this:

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field." – Matthew 13:44

Is Jesus Christ our first and most? By no stretch of the imagination does this mean we're living the perfect life, but it does mean we are pursuing The One who did. It is this straightforward. If Jesus Christ isn't the essence of your everything, the driving force behind who you are and how you live, you're likely living and passing on a mirage of faith, a tradition rather than a life-transforming, conviction-driven relationship.

How can we turn around this tragic trend of a fading faith? It begins with us and our relationship with Jesus. As we give everything to Him, He makes everything His. It is a one-time decision that plays out every day for the rest of our lives. We live for His glory and aim to pass on genuine faith — a relationship with God through the finished work of Jesus Christ. Our children must not only hear about the

glorious works of our Heavenly Father, but they must also see the fruit of His work in our lives.

What does this look like?

If Jesus is central to who we are, He will influence our life decisions. We consider Him, His truth, His glory, in everything we do. Nothing is off limits when it comes to His involvement — our marriage, our parenting, how we work, how we think, how we talk, etc. And when we stumble, and we will, we make it right with God and others, get back up, and continue to walk in His amazing grace.

We set the example for the next generation through the pursuit of a sanctified life, in which Christ becomes more and we become less. Not always easy, but as we trust and acknowledge Him in all we do, He will lead the way.

Focus Bible Verse

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”
–Matthew 6:21

The Reset

In what area of my life does Jesus need to be more, and I need to be less?

Conviction 9:

No Compromise

A few generations ago, it was a rarity for a man to walk away from his marriage vows and his children. Yet today it is becoming more of the norm. We have become men of compromise to the point that women and children almost expect it from us. Two questions come to mind as I write this:

1. Why now?
2. What has changed?

If we answer the second question, we will have the answer to the first one. What has changed in men within two generations to cause such a recurring and pervasive tragedy in our homes?

First things first, we know that it is not Christ who has changed. The power of the Holy Spirit within every believer is the same now as it was two generations ago. This is not to say we haven't greatly grieved and quenched the Holy Spirit. Yet, God is at work today, just as He was during the days of my great-grandparents. His character and power are unchanging.

As I survey the fallout around the families, this one verse keeps coming to mind.

"Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth." –Colossians 3:2

We have largely become a generation of men whose hearts and minds are set on the things of this world. However, God makes it clear in Scripture that we are to be "in" this world and not "of" it. To love the things of this world is to be an enemy of God (James 4:4, 1 John 2). When we set our minds on this world, we quickly become men of compromise.

God knows that our lives will quickly follow where we set our minds (and hearts). As men, we are all too familiar with this biblical truism. We will pursue what we love most. Our hearts and minds will produce the fuel, direction, and boundaries (or lack of) that comprise our life passion and purpose. That is precisely why God calls us to set our hearts and minds on Him.

If we're not holding onto Christ, we're holding onto this world and everything that comes with it. Apart from Christ, this is who we are. It's this simple.

I was recently reminded of the life story of a young man who inspired a generation of men to go beyond the norm of their day. While he never had the chance to marry or have children, I have no doubt that he would have been a great husband and father. His life still speaks to us today. These words were inscribed on the back cover of his Bible.

No Reserves.

No Retreats.

No Regrets.

The man was William Borden (1887-1913). He was born into wealth and attended the most prestigious schools of his day. At 16, his parents sent him on a trip around the world. As he witnessed the spiritual destitution of the Middle East and Asia, his heart became burdened for these lost people. He became convicted to become a missionary and to do something about it.

In the years that followed, Borden was used by God to catalyze a spiritual revival on the campus of Yale University. One Yale student wrote of William, "He came to college far ahead, spiritually, of any of us. He had already given his heart in full surrender to Christ and had really done it. We who were his classmates learned to lean on him and find in him a strength that was solid as a rock, just because of this settled purpose and consecration."

While at Yale, William penned these words within his personal journal:

"Say 'no' to self and 'yes' to Jesus every time."

After graduating from Yale, William attended Princeton Theological Seminary. Upon concluding his studies at Princeton, he sailed for China to pursue his mission work.

To minister to Muslims, William spent time in Egypt studying Arabic. While there, he contracted spinal meningitis and died a month later. Even though this young man died at the age of 25, his life convictions are still impacting us today.

A man who held nothing back—no reserves.

A man who would not give up—no retreat.

A man who pursued life with godly passion and purpose—no regrets.

As husbands and fathers, in Christ, we can go beyond the norm of our day. We can say no to this world and its compromises. Like William Borden, we can embrace God's calling for our lives, hold fast to Christ, and impact this generation for Him. By God's grace, we can be men of honor and reset the standard of manhood.

Focus Bible Verse

"Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth." –Colossians 3:2

The Reset

Setting my mind on the things above, what do I need to stop chasing, and what do I need to start pursuing?

(William Borden-*Borden of Yale*, Moody Press, Chicago)

Conviction 10:

Defining Greatness

Our God-given sex, as males and females, affords the propagation of humankind while providing an amazing and intimate relationship between husbands and wives. It is humbling to realize that we, men and women, share in the likeness of God Himself as co-image bearers. When it comes to great men and women that God has used to accomplish amazing things throughout history, the "greatness factor" is not found in the DNA that drives the biology of our God-constructed bodies. The greatness factor is rooted within the deepest fibers of one's heart and soul.

It is a driving force, that intangible part of a man that encompasses an undeniable mission that compels him forward beyond the normalcy of his surrounding culture, beyond his biological constraints, and beyond life's circumstances that would seek to hold him captive. The greatness factor lies in an unwavering commitment before God that awakens a man's soul to a life quest that far surpasses his raw abilities.

In the realms of history, one man takes precedence as the most extraordinary man who ever walked this earth. That man was the God-Man, Jesus Christ. We know the "heart and soul" of greatness by the mission and life He pursued.

"...and whoever would be first among you must be slave to all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." –Mark 10:44-45

Every great husband and dad I know embodies this greatness variable in some shape or form. Ultimately, this makes them great men: their humility before God and others. Like Christ, these great men lead best when they love most and are willing to take on whatever sacrifice is necessary to achieve a greater good for others. In this way, any greatness that exudes from these men is reflected upward to the source of that greatness and glory.

While each of these men has a unique aspect to their lives, they share overlapping qualities. In this way, the greatness variable is not limited to one trait. Instead, it is the driving force behind a collection of attributes that define greatness in a man's life.

Here are 10 "greatness" traits that I've read about in biographies and have also witnessed first-hand in the lives of many exceptional men of the past and present:

1. He has a relentless passion to serve God and others. This drives his life purpose.
2. Where others see the impossible, he sees the possible, given that God is leading his efforts. He is a man of great humility who keeps God's greater glory in front of him.

3. Regardless of where he is, what he's doing, or who is with him, he is the same man.

4. He leads by example. His actions align with his words.

5. He is a lover of justice. He seeks to protect and uphold those who cannot defend themselves; in other words, he practices genuine religion by caring for the orphans and widows of our time (James 1:27).

6. He knows that real love means commitment at any cost, especially concerning his wife.

7. His wife and kids know that he will go to battle for them.

8. He's a friend to men, a mentor to boys, and helps set the standard for his daughters.

9. He spends regular time in God's Word and is a man of prayer. This translates into a life of little worry and much action, knowing that God holds the results in His hands.

10. He understands that faith and determination must overcome fear and failure.

When God considers "greatness" in a man, He does not look at the man's outer appearance. Rather, God looks at a man's heart to determine his usefulness...a contrite heart that trembles at His Word (Isaiah 66:2). I've often told my kids that good actions will follow if the heart is in the right place. It is the same with greatness. If the heart and soul are

anchored to Christ, God's greatness and glory will be revealed in and through that life.

This is not to say that every great man has to rise to a certain level of social popularity or change the course of history. Most great men will never adorn the pages of any books. Yet, these are men of greatness through their commitment to God, to their wives, and the unceasing love they pour upon their children. They are men who remain faithful to God regardless of their calling, the costs, and the circumstances in life.

If you're like me, you're still working on developing these '10 greatness traits." Yet the blessing is that any greatness we radiate from our lives is not ultimately dependent upon us. We're just God's vessels that He chooses to use to display His image, His greatness, and His glory. I try to remind myself of this fact regularly. While it doesn't relieve all the pressure to do my best as a husband and a father, it helps me stay focused on God's greatness and what matters most in life.

Always remember: God is not limited by who we are. In Christ Jesus, our lives are unlimited by who He is!

Focus Bible Verse

"and whoever would be first among you must be slave to all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to

serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

– Mark 10:44-45

The Reset

How have I defined greatness? What are some "greatness" traits that I need to prioritize in my own life?

Conviction 11:

The High Calling

We cannot separate our biology from our theology. At its core, manhood is about God, family, and others. As men, we are made to glorify God in our bodies and in every relationship—especially with our wives and children. Not always easy—but not complicated.

God has uniquely wired and positioned men as leaders in their homes.

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,”
—Ephesians 5:22-25

While some may debate this, God’s Word is clear: men are called to lead their families in the same way Christ leads His church—with sacrificial love and an unwavering commitment.

When my children were younger, I reminded them often of the two most important things in life—to love God and to love others. Nowhere is this more impactful than in our homes, and nowhere is it more needed.

I saw this firsthand during my years of serving in prison ministry. One of the most glaring common threads I encountered was the absence of a loving, engaged father. Of the hundreds of men and women I met, only one or two had a healthy relationship with their dad.

That said, I've also seen the other side. Over the past twenty years in family ministry, I've been blessed to meet hundreds of dads forging a different path and doubly blessed to know some as friends.

I especially remember a good friend who humbled me with the way he served his wife and children. He exemplified what it means to be a man of honor. I'll never forget when he shared that they were adopting a little girl from China. He and his wife made tremendous sacrifices to reorient their lives toward this special calling. To say it was a hard and challenging pursuit is a gross understatement. Yet their trust in God and love for this little girl never wavered. Along the way, they adopted a second girl and inspired a community of families.

This man, along with the others, understood the simplicity of the calling: show up—no matter the circumstances—with one aim in mind: to love God, love our wives, and to love our children. Like soldiers, they understand that their effectiveness depends on preparation and staying battle-ready. Practically, this means time in God's Word, time in prayer, time with other men, and intentional time loving those entrusted to them. They also understand that apart

from Christ, we can do nothing of eternal value. My encouragement to you, if you haven't already, is to find some of these men, connect with them, and suit up in God's armor.

This life is a battle. Taking off our armor or stepping off the battlefield leads to spiritual drift—and often to the breakdown of our families. This isn't to say we don't rest or enjoy fun activities—we most certainly should. We all need our sabbaths and extended downtime. But those moments cannot define the pattern of our lives—they serve to refuel us for the job at hand. God has us here to work, serve, and lead as we seek to glorify Him with our lives (Romans 12:1).

So, as best you can: stay healthy, stay strong, and stay humbly dependent on the Lord. Your family—and this world—needs you to reflect your Savior's light.

You were made for this high calling. Duty. Honor. Love.

Focus Bible Verse:

“for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.” –1 Corinthians 6:20

The Reset

As a man, what is my high calling? How does my life reflect this?

Conviction 12:

Spiritual Resolve

I have been blessed to know some good men who truly understand a vital spiritual principle: a resolution never to give up in their calling to serve God and others—regardless of how difficult it may become.

This doesn't mean they don't have bad days or question their faith at times. They are sinners like you and me, and they have made their fair share of mistakes. Still, they persevere for the Lord, their wives, and their children. They know that the majority of the battle is just showing up.

My father was such a man—imperfect but a steady rock of faith for his family because of the God he served. He wasn't a theologian, but he applied what godly wisdom he had. He faced tough times, but quitting or walking away was never an option for him. His iron-laced determination to love our family was firmly anchored in God, and he demonstrated that love through an unwavering presence and effort, no matter what. He didn't have all the answers, but he always knew how to show up and get the job done.

As husbands and fathers, we have been given an incredible responsibility — a job without equal — to be present for our families through both good and bad times. The truth is that everyone will face challenges. Yet it is often during these times that God displays His glory through our lives —

as we trust in Him and remain faithful to our calling to support our family and friends when they need us most. And we're not alone in these efforts — God will make our paths straight—as we acknowledge Him in all our ways (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Being present can be as simple as sharing a family meal once a day and including a short devotional or Bible passage. Some of my most cherished memories are of the times we lingered after dinner, talking about our day and current events. My wife and I did our best to help our kids connect their activities and conversations to God. From my perspective, I was the one truly blessed to spend time with them.

May we all be men of spiritual resilience and resolve, who persevere and always show up for our families, no matter how difficult it becomes – knowing that our God is with us.

Focus Bible Verse

“And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.” –Galatians 6:9

The Reset

Am I showing up for my family—regardless of life's circumstances? In what areas of life do I need to be more present?

Conviction 13:

Covenantal Love

Too often, we reduce love to an emotion—or, worse yet, to a fleeting romantic impulse that rises and falls with our desires. While emotions are certainly part of love, they were never meant to be the driving force behind this divine attribute given to us by God. Love is far more than a collage of feelings.

Given that God’s design for the family includes a father and a mother, it is essential that we love our wives as the Lord commands, in the same way that Christ loves His church and gave His life for her (Ephesians 5:25). This is our calling as husbands and represents one of the greatest examples of love we can teach our children, both younger and older.

One of my favorite reflections on marital love comes from Dietrich Bonhoeffer. In 1943, while imprisoned by the Nazis, he wrote a wedding letter to his niece and her fiancé. In it, he offered this profound message:

“It is not your love that sustains the marriage, but from now on, the marriage that sustains your love.”

What was Bonhoeffer getting at? He understood the deep covenantal nature of marriage—God’s model of love is anchored to His unwavering commitment.

It's the promise or pledge that binds us to love, and a framework of additional traits that truly define what love is — a driving force unlike any other. Scripture repeatedly points to these traits, many of which we've heard echoed in wedding ceremonies.

This is the ironclad framework of God's love: loyalty, sacrifice, humility, forgiveness, obedience, respect, sanctification, encouragement, and refusal to give up. Without these qualities, it isn't the love God designed for us to share with Him and with one another.

The Song of Solomon celebrates the romantic and sensual dimension of marital love—the joyful “oneness” of two becoming one. That intimacy is a beautiful and God-given gift. But if we're honest, those moments represent a small portion of our married lives. What sustains love over a lifetime is everything that happens around those moments—the daily choices, sacrifices, and acts of faithfulness that shape the heart of a marriage.

Having been married for over thirty years and having counseled many couples, I can confidently say that what happens outside our bedrooms often shapes what occurs within them. Our wives need to see and feel our love-driven passion for them expressed in life through our commitment and resolute effort to prioritize them over ourselves.

God's description of love in 1 Corinthians 13 captures this perfectly:

“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends...

So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

—1 Corinthians 13:4–8, 13

Bonhoeffer got it right—your marriage covenant, the pledge you made on your wedding day, truly sustains your love—not just an emotional response, but a covenantal vow strengthened by God Himself. It is the Lord's divine will to see what He has made flourish. As we draw near to God, He draws near to us (James 4:8)—true for the individual and the married couple. It is the kind of love that deepens, becomes steadier, and grows more resilient as we walk with God and our spouses through every season of life.

So when you hit those challenging marital times, draw courage and fortitude knowing that God created this glorious institution—for His glory. He joined you together to become one flesh and will walk with you through your ups and downs. God is an active participant in your marriage—don't ever forget that. Trust Him as a couple, acknowledge Him in all your ways, and He will guide your path (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Focus Bible Verse

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

–Genesis 2:24

The Reset

Have I allowed my emotions to dictate my love for my wife?
How can I demonstrate to my wife this week my unwavering commitment to her?

Conviction 14:

Resolved Eyes

I grew up in an era where the prevailing thought was, “You can look as long as you don’t touch.” Sadly, this was the “manly motto” that most boys heard as they matured into young men. It was a lie then, and it still is today. The natural outcome of this philosophy has led millions of boys and men into a pattern of porn that has reached pandemic proportions. Beyond despairing is the undeniable fact that, as Christians, our lives aren’t much different when it comes to controlling what we put in front of our eyes.

At the core of this issue is the reality that pornography itself is not the root of the problem. In some sense, pornography has been and will always be available. The actual dilemma here is that we have placed ourselves before God and our wives. It’s a heart issue. As men, we will protect what matters most to us. If we don’t take the action needed to defend something, we really don’t care too much about it.

Some years ago, my adult daughter shared that she was watching a sporting event on TV with a group of twenty-something friends, including several young men. A commercial came on that displayed extremely scantily dressed female models. As she and other young ladies sat uncomfortably among this group of young men, not one of them had the conviction to get up and turn off the TV, or at

least change the channel. This scene epitomizes today's man when it comes to the topic of immodesty and pornography. Too often, we lack godly resolve to do what is right.

As a married Christian, I have two life priorities that take the highest precedence: my relationship with God and my relationship with my wife. These relationships define me as a man and compel how I live my life. By God's grace, he has blessed me with children, and my role as a father is added to this high-priority list. Within each God-defined relationship, I am called to love in a manner that places others before myself.

I'm reminded of a young Jew named Daniel who purposed in his heart not to defile God with his life (Daniel 1:8). To have resolved eyes, we must first have a resolved heart. This doesn't mean we'll ever be perfect, but it does mean we will never give up our pursuit of putting God and our families before ourselves.

For me, this is a daily priority of caring for what matters most. I am compelled to continually engage with the battlefronts surrounding these relationships. If I'm not actively fighting the battle, I'm losing it. Given the unabashed access to immodest and porn-laced web content, the online world in which we all live must be perceived as a huge battlefront of epic proportions. We must discern the enemy's tactics and strategize a plan to defeat them.

Here are my “5 Must-Haves” for this battlefield strategy to protect my marriage (and my family). While these principles pertain specifically toward husbands, I believe they apply to wives as well:

1. Keeping God at the center of my life.

I must daily take in God’s truth and grace through His Word, knowing that what I take in regularly will define who I am and how I live. We’re called to “renew” our minds, “set our minds on things above” and not on the things of this earth (Colossians 3:2) and to think about things that are “honorable, ...just...pure...lovely... commendable...worthy of praise” (Philippians 4:8).

2. Maintain an uncompromising love for God and my wife.

Any form of immodesty that could lead toward lust must not be something I willingly put in front of my eyes. As necessary, I also need to actively protect my family from it. This certainly means that any form of porn, however loosely defined, is something that I will not tolerate in my life. I’ve often shared with my children that if it’s wrong before God, it’s wrong before us. From a very practical standpoint, this will greatly limit the entertainment in my life and the movies I will watch. It is a small sacrifice to give up for the sake of my walk with God, my wife and my kids. (Check out VidAngel or Clear Play as two filtering systems

for movies that will remove all inappropriate scenes and language.)

3. Total Transparency before God and my wife.

My online activities are an open book for anyone to see – especially my wife. Filters are also great. Yet, the most excellent “filter” needs to be God’s Spirit within me. I must embrace the Coram Deo life—one that is lived before the ever-presence of God (my body is His temple – 1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

4. Keep the battle in front of us.

I discuss this topic regularly with my wife and children (in age-appropriate terms, of course). My teens and young adult children know that the online and entertainment worlds are battlefronts that require the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18). They know that, like anything else in life, the battle-readiness starts with God Himself. He is our source of power in this conflict.

5. Pulling together to fight the good fight.

Going beyond my own family, we need to address this issue at a church-wide level. Not only are marriages and families being destroyed, but our witness for Christ is being significantly compromised. In Christ, we live in community. I pray that our pastors and men within our churches make this a regular topic of conversation. Resolved eyes must

become a priority and a life-mission where we seek to protect what matters most. What are we saying if we don't?

Wives and moms out there, we need you to fight the battle with us. This enemy is real. We need your prayers, encouragement and help. If you're a single mom, reach out to a male relative, your pastor, or another godly man who can assist you in building this life principle into the heart of your son. Every boy and man needs a mentor to stand alongside them in this battle. We can't go it alone.

There is no doubt that we have taken some serious hits and losses when it comes to pornography. However, the battle is not over. Regardless of our past, Christ calls us to walk with Him in the present. Like Daniel, we can resolve in our hearts not to defile ourselves before God. We can choose God, our wives and our children over this world and the lust of the eyes it will offer us. Men, in Christ, we can have resolved eyes. The battle against porn begins with us.

Focus Bible Verse

"But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself..."
–Daniel 1:8

The Reset

Have I become complacent about allowing immodesty or pornography into my life? Do I truly see pornography and the lust of this world as enemies that want to destroy my marriage and my godly influence on my kids?

Conviction 15:

Uplifting Our Wives

When it comes right down to it, being a wife and mom is one of the world's toughest jobs (whether she works outside the home or is a "stay-at-home mom"). That being the case, who wouldn't, from time to time, feel like throwing in the towel? Yet that's the beauty of this sacred oneness relationship we call marriage; we are called to be there for each other.

As a man of God, it's not optional. We need to make sure we're not too caught up in the busyness of life that we fail to realize when our wives need us most. I know this was me for many years. My wife pours everything she has into her role as a mother. If I'm not paying attention, she can definitely compromise her well-being for the sake of others.

While there are countless reasons our wives may lose hope and want to give up from time to time, here are three I've seen personally in my marriage and among married couples I know.

1. Your wife is simply worn out.

Like most wives and moms, my wife is driven by an unquenchable love for her family. If I'm working too many hours and not helping around the house, it means my wife is working double overtime. Our wives and the mothers of our children are warrior-minded in their pursuits to take

care of their families, and almost always, put the needs of others before themselves.

As a husband, I need to love my wife as my own body and be willing to lay my life down for her, as Christ did for us (Ephesians 5:25-28). What does this really mean? Just as I care for my own body, I need to care for my wife's. If my body is worn out, I must ensure it gets the rest it needs. In the same way, we need to make sure our wives are getting the rest they need. If you're like me, you need to be ultra intentional about this.

This means I need to remind myself weekly to evaluate how my wife is doing and be willing to make sacrifices on my end to make sure she's getting rest and refueled. Practically, that could be as simple as doing the dishes and other household chores regularly.

2. Your wife needs your spiritual encouragement.

Over the past 20 years, I've been involved in the active ministry of marriage and family. I wish I could say it's the norm for both wives and husbands to share equal blame for marital problems, but that's not what I've seen. Too often, it's because the husband isn't involved or engaged spiritually in his wife's and children's lives. While it's great that so many churches have thriving women's and children's ministries, it's sad that so many men's ministries are woefully lacking.

As Christ is the head of the church, the husband is called to be the head of his marriage (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:23). As men, we need to step up and lead our families. Foremost, as a Christian husband and father, this requires me to take ownership of my God-given calling and build into my wife and children spiritually.

Many wives would be elated if their husbands spent time each week in God's Word with them and led family prayers. I'm constantly reminded that I can't adequately encourage my wife and children unless I'm personally spending time in prayer and God's word. Praying regularly for and with our wives will make a huge difference in their lives. From my wife's perspective, it's one of the most important things I do for her.

3. Your wife needs some one-on-one time with you.

Countless studies have shown that communication breakdowns are a sure way to kill intimacy in a marriage, often leading to feelings of loneliness and resentment. Whenever things start to get crazy in our house, and I sense my wife's frustration, it's likely due to a breakdown in communication. In times like these, I need to devote some one-on-one time with my wife just to listen to her.

Our wives are wired to want intimate fellowship with us—emotionally, spiritually, and physically. This can only be achieved if we dedicate some "alone time" to them. I know this translates to regular weekly meetings and a special

night out every so often. They also need to hear how much we appreciate all they do for the family. When was the last time you showered your wife with serious overdue praise for how she takes care of you and your children?

Again, these are just three examples of why some wives feel overwhelmed and lose hope. After my relationship with God, there is no more intimate and sacred relationship than the one I share with my wife. If I'm not getting it done here as a man—uplifting my wife, I'm not succeeding in one of the most important roles of my life.

Focus Bible Verse

“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,” –Ephesians 5:25

The Reset

Where do I need to step up this week to help my wife?
What do I need to do more regularly to lessen her load?

Conviction 16:

Breaking the Two Wrongs Cycle

Growing up, my parents and coaches always told me that two wrongs don't make a right. It's a simplistic ideal that teaches us it's never right to retaliate or seek revenge for a wrong committed against us. However basic this rule is, it remains challenging to practice in the relationships that matter most to us, and this is exactly why we must be men of grace and set the example for our kids. Without it, we're almost certain to default to a perpetual cycle of wrongs.

I hate to admit it, but I was a repeat offender in that cycle during the early years of my marriage. If my wife did something I perceived as hurtful, I often responded with an equally hurtful word or action. Often, my weapon of choice was the silent treatment. Over time, by God's grace, I came to realize that this retaliatory game of relational ping-pong accomplishes nothing. It neither heals wounds nor produces righteousness. In fact, it is the very opposite of doing what is right.

I am deeply blessed to be married to a grace-filled woman who, almost without fail, refused to return a retaliatory serve. At that time, my wife was more grounded in her faith than I was, and she clearly understood the grace God had extended to her. As important, she was willing to extend that same grace to me. She recognized that real love must reflect God's love for us—a love that offers favor even when

it is undeserved. Without grace, forgiveness has little room to take root, especially when we've been genuinely wronged. When questioned about forgiveness, Jesus didn't lower the standard; He set a God-sized one.

“Then Peter came up and said to him, ‘Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.’”
—Matthew 18:21–22

I've tried to pass this principle on to my children, though—like most kids, and like their father—grace does not always come naturally. Grace-giving is a Christian virtue that often takes time and intentionality to become our default response. And here's the reality: if my children don't see grace lived out in my relationship with my wife and with them, they won't listen to a single word I say about it. Over the years, they've heard the phrase, “Pour grace over the person or situation.”

Grace, however, does not mean the absence of accountability. When someone wrongs you, there still must be an honest conversation. Actions must be owned—mess up, fess up. But once the issue has been addressed, grace—unearned favor—must step in for healing and forward movement to occur.

So the next time your wife or your children do something hurtful, choose grace. In doing so, you follow the example

Christ has given us, and you strengthen the relationships that matter most.

Focus Bible Verse

“Then Peter came up and said to him, ‘Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.’ –Matthew 18:21–22

The Reset

Is there any relationship I need to “pour grace over?” How can I reinforce the conviction of forgiving “seventy times seven” in our home?

Conviction 17:

Manly Leadership

Tragically, the ideal of biblical manhood has come under an unrelenting attack. For decades, the liberal institutions of our society and the entertainment world have spoon-fed boys, who are presently the younger men of our country, with consistent meals of self-indulgence and lies that godly masculinity equates to toxicity. So, why are we surprised that many of them have walked away from the love of God and their families?

Theodore Roosevelt said it well, “We do not admire the man of timid peace. We admire the man who embodies victorious effort; the man who never wrongs his neighbor, who is prompt to help a friend, but who has those virile qualities necessary to win in the stern strife of actual men.”

Men, we were made to embody a “victorious effort,” given that we serve a victorious king. There is something God-entrenched deep within the very fiber of our manhood that shouts against the mere idea of cowardice and yearns for something more. I believe that “more” is God’s grand calling for men to reflect His greater glory in who we are and how we live.

Foundational within this God-given quest is the antithesis of being a winsome milquetoast. As men, we are called to

be resolved and courageous, and to embrace an undertaking where God directs and wills it. Foremost, as husbands and fathers, we are called to lay our lives down for our families. Men: Our wives and children need to know that we will go to battle for them—regardless of the cost or sacrifice.

Such were the men, dubbed "The Greatest Generation," who lived through The Great Depression and fought in World War II, one of America's most grueling eras. While not perfect, they embodied a moral spirit and a resolve reminiscent of the heroic men and women who sacrificed their very lives to found and build this country; we've all been building our lives upon their blood, sweat, and tears ever since.

Sadly, I have too often allowed the world to lull me into a state of slumber and failed to engage in the battle that raged around me. This is true for many men of faith. Instead of courageously leading our families and impacting the culture for Christ, we've become entangled by the world's trite affairs and have stepped off the battlefield. Admittedly, like King David, some men have abandoned our grand calling for a rooftop of self-indulgence.

At the end of the day, God has given us a blueprint for manhood in His Word and in the life of Jesus Christ. He came on a mission, and He calls us to follow His example. His life is the supreme picture of true manhood. We must emulate Christ as we willingly embrace sacrifice, hardship,

diligence, discipline, devotion, honor, duty, valor, and, above all else, a heart that loves what God loves and hates what He hates.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, martyred for his willingness to fight the evil of Hitler and Nazism head-on, expressed it like this: "When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die." It's not toxic for a man to lead by his unwavering commitment to serve God and others. Without this iron-laced truth as a bedrock for the foundation of our lives, our families and this nation will falter. The time has come to regain our manly vigor and become a generation of men strong in faith and action.

Focus Bible Verse

"Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong." –1 Corinthians 16:13

The Reset

Have we allowed the prevailing culture to tame and mute our masculinity? Where is God calling us to lead as men?

Conviction 18:

Stewarding the Quiver

“Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.” – Psalm 127:3-5

In Psalm 127, God's word compares a father and his children to a warrior with arrows in his quiver. In just a few words, it conveys blessings, responsibility, and the lasting influence a father can have on his children. As dads, are we giving due consideration and energy to this tremendous calling?

We have about 20 years to partner with our wives to prepare our children for life's journey. Just as a warrior carefully crafts his arrows for accuracy, a father must be diligent in training his children. We don't get a second chance during these formative years. Once the bowstring is released, so is the arrow, and all your efforts leading up to that point will greatly influence its direction. This doesn't mean we can't affect the arrow's flight after it has been launched; we can. But it does become more challenging.

The quiver holds and protects the arrows just as our homes and marriages provide the foundational haven that nurtures and shapes our children. Besides Christ, one's

family life will have the most significant influence on how children understand their faith and cultivate future relationships.

Statistically, a stable two-parent home with the biological parents is optimal for children's welfare, and that is God's design. Yet if your marriage and home life are unstructured and chaotic—even with both parents present—your children will often default to either replicating that disorder or rebelling against it. Our homes, the quivers, are meant to be a refuge of God-honoring stability, security and guidance. If the Lord is not building the house, i.e., the family, your parenting efforts will be in vain (Psalm 127:1a).

If you are going the parenting route solo, be sure to include mentors who specifically set the standard for what it means to be a man or woman of God. If divorce is part of your life, be sure to engage your children in an age-appropriate way that pours God's grace and truth into the situation. Regardless of failed marriages (for any reason), the child needs to know that he or she is greatly loved and not to blame. Statistically, the odds are that it will have some adverse, potentially lasting effects. However, God's grace is always sufficient; never doubt this.

When figuring out how to craft arrows for a successful flight, we must consider the end goal—the target. When my children were young, I often told them their lives should always aim at a God-honoring target, a goal, or a mission.

Surprisingly, and equally as sad, research by Barna reveals that born-again Christian parents often raise their kids no differently than non-Christians, with similar goals and habits in the home, i.e., many Christian parents are aiming at the world's targets. (Barna: *Parents Describe How They Raise Their Children*)

As Christians and fathers, we have clear directives from our Creator God regarding the duty to share with and teach our children who He is and what it means to follow Christ. This is the bullseye. While education, sports, and the arts are important, guiding their hearts and minds toward Christ and teaching and living out the Gospel take precedence.

That's why cultivating a love for God and others must be integrated into every aspect of life. The importance of maintaining a biblical worldview—rooted in God's Word and its application—cannot be overstated. It doesn't have to be overly complicated. It's as simple as sharing God's truth and grace as we experience life together (Deuteronomy 6:5-7). Don't underestimate your divine-given influence over your children—especially during their formative years.

Ultimately, the results are in the sovereign hands of our Heavenly Father. Our primary job is to do everything possible to ensure the quiver is doing its job and the bow and arrows are aimed at the greater mission of knowing and glorifying our Savior God. If this isn't a high priority,

we risk missing the most important mark in our lives as fathers.

Focus Bible Verse

“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

–Ephesians 6:4

The Reset

What am I doing on a weekly basis to ensure my home, the quiver, is equipping our children to take flight for the Lord? How can I include my wife in this process?

Conviction 19:

Ministry Begins at Home

Your most powerful testimony to those around you is how well you love your wife and children. When God's love and truth are active in your home, the world takes notice. For every husband and father, your family is your primary mission field.

According to God's design, the family is the essential building block of the Christian life and of society at large. It has often been said that as goes the family, so goes the nation. I would add that as goes the father, so goes the family.

It is within the home, often passed down through generations, that God has perpetuated His legacy of salvation. To witness a family anchored to Christ is a beautiful thing. It doesn't mean everything is perfect. It never is. However, when troubles and tough times come – and they will – this family draws closer to God and each other.

Interestingly, the Apostle Paul outlines the framework for spiritual growth in Ephesians 4 and Colossians 3, using the family unit as a primary example of its application. Inherent in Paul's instructions is a blueprint for familial form and function, a divine order that provides the foundation for God-honoring relationships in our homes.

To start, all Christians are to submit to one another out of reverence for God.

“submitting to one another in the fear of God.”

–Ephesians 5:21

This verse precedes the specific teaching on the differing roles of the wife, husband, and children, and establishes a tone of humility and the basis of a grace-filled home.

Regardless of one’s God-ordained authority, there is an element of submission to God and to one another that must always be present within our varying roles. Ignoring this foundational principle of Ephesians 5:21 in our homes sets a family up for failure. It is only through humility that grace truly abounds in our relationships (James 4:6).

Next, wives are called to submit to their husbands as the church submits to Christ.

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church... Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.”

–Ephesians 5:22-24

While there is some debate about the use of these words in Christian circles, Paul’s language here is straightforward. Wives are called to submit to their husbands’ leadership, similar to how the church submits to Christ. Paul then

addresses husbands, instructing them to love their wives as Christ loves His church. As married couples, this is our God-given goal.

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.” –Ephesians 5:25

This is essential: There is mutual submission in both roles. I once heard a pastor compare the relational dynamics of marriage to those of ballroom dancers. Their movements are so fluid and seamless that they seem to act as one body. For men, this is a worthy example to follow as we lead our wives.

It is a process of self-denial in which we place the interests of God and our spouses before our own, a fundamental principle that applies to all our relationships. It’s about linking the horizontal—our relationships—to the vertical—to God—so we interact with others in ways that showcase Christ within us. As the foolish builder described by Jesus in one of His parables (Matthew 7:26-27), not building my life upon Him is the surest way for my life to crumble, and with it all the relationships around me.

Given the sinful nature of humanity, it is essential to recognize that a woman or her children should never submit to an abusive husband and father. This is not God’s design or will for anyone. Men are called to protect their wives and children, not to harm them. There is no wiggle

room. If any form of abuse is occurring, immediate intervention is needed.

Children are to be in submission to their parents, seeking to honor them.

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” –Ephesians 6:1

Within this process of submission, the husband's leadership role carries tremendous responsibility to direct his children's spiritual formation. He joins with his wife in a high calling to disciple his children in the ways of the Lord. I have observed firsthand the lasting impact parents have on their children – the good, the bad, and the ugly.

With humility before God, we must relentlessly steward our children's hearts, knowing the outcome is in the Lord's hands. This also means we should never give up on any wayward child. We may need to practice tough love and even set boundaries, but we should always remain open to ministering to our children, regardless of their age.

One of the greatest testimonies to God's work in our lives will be seen in our marriage and in the lives of our children. We must be the most available and intentional in serving within this primary mission field. It is here that Christ's calling to make disciples becomes a generational one, yet it must not end here. God's love and calling compels us beyond ourselves and our homes.

Focus Bible Verse

“Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” –Philippians 2:4

The Reset

How am I intentionally reinforcing God’s design in my home?

Conviction 20:

Affirming What Matters Most

It pains me to think that a large percentage of kids in our world today will never experience the love of an earthly father. For one reason or another, their dads aren't around, or they are around but don't take the time to invest in their sons' and daughters' lives. Yet it doesn't need to be this way. As dads, we've been given an amazing blessing to help shape our kids' lives by affirming what matters most. While we'll never be perfect, our goal should always be to do our best.

I revisit these five things regularly. It's not the "ultimate" list, but a great starting point for instilling a priority-based life.

Here are five things my kids need to see and hear from me regularly:

1. A continuous reminder of what matters most in life.

Even though I've made many mistakes as a dad these past 30 years, each of my kids knows, without a doubt, the larger purpose and mission in life: To love God and others. This translates into a life where I strive to live and share the gospel with my children daily, through words and actions.

2. A father's affirming love.

It's absolutely vital that every son and daughter knows their dad's affirming love. For generations, children have struggled to understand who they are and where they're going. As fathers, we are positioned, along with our wives, to help our children navigate through these often difficult and confusing years of childhood development. As a dad, I want my child to feel my affirming love every step of the way. This alone will profoundly impact who they are and who they become.

3. Success is defined by one's character—not one's performance.

Not to say that results aren't important. However, character will always win over everything else, and my kids need to know this. As we train our children in various aspects of life, i.e., academics, sports, vocation, etc., they must understand that these are secondary to who they are before God. Eternal success is defined by who you are, not by what you achieve. While man may place a lot of stock in one's appearance and performance, God cares most about the heart of a man or woman.

4. Never quit.

Winston Churchill said it well—"never, never, never give up." Our family embraces the saying, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." I like to position Philippians

4:13 right beside this, knowing it's Christ in us that enables us to persevere regardless of life's circumstances. God doesn't promise us a life without hard times. Yet He does promise that he'll always be with us—during the good and bad times. Life will be hard. However, holding fast to Christ and to each other will get you through it.

5. I'll be there for you.

As long as God sustains me, I'll be there for my children. No matter what life throws at us, and it will, our kids need to know that we'll be there for them. This is the picture of real love—a commitment and resolve to lay one's life down for another just as Christ did for us (1 John 3:16). Do your children know this?

This is just a short list to get us going. I'd encourage you to write your own list and evaluate how you're doing as a parent. If you have the opportunity, discuss the list with your wife. You won't regret it.

Focus Bible Verse

“Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” –1 Corinthians 13:7

The Reset

What do my kids need to hear from me this week?

Conviction 21:

Redefine Beauty

It's an epic battle that takes place every day of your daughter's formative and teen years—and it never stops. It involves endless ads, movies, songs, social media posts, and articles that target her heart and mind with a single, larger objective: to shape how your daughter views herself. If the world can define your daughter's perception of beauty, it can control her life.

While I would love to place all the blame on the world and its well-oiled marketing machines, the fact is that most of the blame rests squarely with us men. We've fed into the enormous lie that purports to define a woman's beauty as purely an outward expression of her appearance. You need only to pick up a woman's magazine or watch the latest movie to see how men define beauty. It's skin-deep, and it creates deep, lasting wounds.

As husbands and fathers, we need to go to battle for our wives and daughters by living on the front line with them and helping them redefine beauty. With great intentionality, we need to communicate a much larger vision of what beauty really is every day.

Here are two essential realities to help us get started:

1. A woman's beauty is a multifaceted expression that involves her total person.

As a husband and a father, I can't tell my wife and daughters enough how beautiful they are, regardless of how they perceive their outward appearance, which is often related to how they think others see them. While beauty may entail a physical element, it is only a small part of a much larger whole.

I must help my wife and daughters associate their beauty with who they are, not just their outward appearance. This involves their attitude, demeanor, emotions, confidence, and the way they exude the glory of their Heavenly Father. I often tell my daughters that when they smile, they light up a room, and one cannot help but see the beauty radiating from them. It's true for my wife as well. Nothing is more beautiful than seeing my wife and daughters smiling and laughing together. In this sense, beauty has more to do with inner joy and peace than anything else. For this reason, true beauty will reflect the glory of God's goodness.

First Peter 3:4-5 tells us, "a woman's beauty should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful."

2. How she perceives herself uniquely influences a woman's beauty.

Unfortunately, we live in a social media-driven world that continually compares oneself to others. Even though these platforms are one-dimensional, paper-thin realities, millions of young women (and men) still crave the approval of their "friends." This can become a very dangerous place for our teen daughters and even older ones, as they will too often define their self-esteem based upon the rise and fall of their "likes."

That's why dads must speak truth into their daughters' lives and, if necessary, limit or closely monitor a young girl's access to social media. To counter this message, our wives and daughters need a regular dose of affirmation around who they are and the real beauty they exude as children of God.

When they look at me and ask, "Am I beautiful?" I need to respond in a way that speaks to their total beauty as a woman. This may involve their clothes or how they've styled their hair. However, even more so, I need to affirm their character and heart before God. I want them to see themselves as God sees them and, at the same time, to know the joy they bring to my life.

Given that our wives and daughters live their lives on this battlefield filled with lies, we must do all we can to ensure they know the truth and encourage them to see themselves

as their Heavenly Father sees them—beautiful women fashioned in His image! It doesn't get any better than that.

Focus Bible Verse

"but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious." –1 Peter 3:4

The Reset

What can I do this week to help my wife and daughter(s) realize how beautiful they are—outwardly and inwardly? How do I reinforce the importance of adorning “the hidden person of the heart” with “the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit?”

Conviction 22:

Raising Boys of Honor

As a dad, there's no greater calling than this: to help my sons grow into men of honor. While my role has changed for my older kids, by God's grace, I can still be used by the Lord to help influence their lives.

I read an article this past year that stated men are not attaining adulthood until their early 40s. My oldest daughter once said it well, "Dad, guys my age need to man up!" At that time, she was in her early twenties. She had a reason to be concerned. We are raising a generation of men who live in a state of perpetual boyhood, consumed more by virtual games than by the lives around them.

If they can father a child and fight for our country, they'd better be men and not merely boys. We need to show them what real manhood is all about, and we must pursue it with great focus, intensity and passion. President Theodore Roosevelt said it well:

"In short, in life, as in a football game, the principle to follow is: Hit the line hard: don't foul and don't shirk, but hit the line hard."

We must prepare our sons to "hit the line hard" for God and their families. If our young men are soft, non-committal, and self-centered, our future families have little hope. Men of honor don't happen by chance—they are

forged with great intention, sacrifice, and a life mission driven by God and the men who build into their lives, not by themselves.

Here are five lessons I keep coming back to as I try to encourage and shape my sons' hearts and minds.

1. One's name is worth more than any amount of money or fame.

“A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold.”

–Proverbs 22:1

One of the greatest lies our culture has communicated to our boys and young men is the idea that wealth and fame are what life is all about. Whether it's how we uplift our sport's heroes or other pop culture icons of our day, we've focused too much on what a man does vocationally or how he looks versus who a man is.

Integrity and honor mean little in a world infatuated with wealth and prestige. A man with integrity anchored in God will get the job done. When it comes down to it, it is one's character that holds the greatest value in this life. When God chose David, a young shepherd boy, to be the next King of His people, He looked at David's heart, i.e., his character, to determine his worthiness. Our sons desperately need us to do the same and live in a manner that affirms this truth.

2. Defeat is a training ground for success.

Every boy and man will experience the pain and frustration of failure at some point in their lives. What makes the man is the way he responds to it. My dad told me and showed me at a young age, “When the going gets tough, the tough get going.” As fathers, we must prepare our children for those tough times when failure or trials come, and always encourage them through it. What matters most is that we're there for them. They need us to help them learn from their experiences, inspire them to climb the next mountain, and cheer for them every step of the way.

3. Humility precedes honor.

The book of Proverbs notes, “Before his downfall a man's heart is proud, but humility comes before honor” (Proverbs 18:12). If our sons miss this, they will never know what true manhood looks like. At the heart of our Christian faith is the precept that we must humble ourselves before God and acknowledge our neediness. We're called to lead with a servant's heart in that same light. Christ is our most excellent example as He led by a willingness to give His life for those He loved. As a husband and a father, my boys need to know this and see this in my own life.

4. Self-discipline or the lack of it will define one's life.

In my own life and among the men I have known, this trait must be thoroughly embraced if success in anything is ever

to be achieved. Without self-discipline, we will raise a generation of men who lack control, self-restraint, and the ability to persevere through life's many trials. Being mentally tough and self-disciplined is not something one is born with—it is a chosen quality made one decision at a time. The heart of this matter is the ability to say “no” to temptation even though your flesh is saying “yes.” Equally, it's the capacity to say “yes” to the right way when everyone else is doing it the wrong way, i.e., taking the high.

5. Do everything for the Lord—for His glory.

This is the foundation and highest calling for every Christian: to glorify God and enjoy Him forever (Colossians 3:17, 1 Corinthians 10:31). If there is anything my sons and daughters learn from my life, I pray that this is it. As a father, my greatest priority is that my children know that they were created by God, for God. If my sons embrace this truth, they will become men of honor who “hit the line hard,” and our future families will be blessed by it.

Focus Bible Verse

“A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold.” –Proverbs 22:1

The Reset

Regardless of the age of your son(s), what can you do on a regular basis to encourage them on their journey to becoming men of honor? (Consider reading a book

together that uplifts godly character—fiction or non-fiction. One of my favorite non-fiction books I read with my three sons was *Mansfield's Book of Manly Men: An Utterly Invigorating Guide to Being Your Most Masculine Self.*)

Conviction 23:

The Disciplined Life

The pursuit of a disciplined life may be one of the most valuable lessons we can teach our children. Sadly, I've seen too many men derailed by an inability to say no to temptations that pull them away from God and their families. It all comes down to walking the talk and being a faithful steward.

Scripture tells us that a man who lacks self-control is like a city without walls—broken down and exposed (Proverbs 25:28). In the ancient world, walls were the source of protection and refuge for the people. They provided security and safeguarded what mattered most. Yet a city without walls was vulnerable to every external threat and unable to defend itself.

The same principle applies to our lives and our homes today. We all need walls of self-control. When we don't have them, we remove the protective boundaries God intends to build around us. We become exposed—morally, spiritually, and relationally. This is not freedom; it is an invitation for the evils of this world to take hold. God warns us that when we abandon discipline, we place ourselves in a position of weakness, open to temptation and compromise.

The apostle Paul frequently used the imagery of an athlete in training to describe the Christian life. An athlete does not win a race by accident. He disciplines his body, submits to rigorous training, and willingly sacrifices temporary comforts for a reward of greater value (1 Corinthians 9:24–27). Through his actions, he gives something up now to gain something later. In a world that constantly tells our children to focus on the here and now, we must set an example that shows them the value of forgoing short-term gains for long-term success.

A quote of unknown attribution, but often referenced by the U.S. Navy Seals, underscores the necessity of being ready for what the world throws at you: “You don’t rise to the occasion, you fall to the level of your preparation.” Part of being disciplined is being prepared—spiritually, mentally, and physically.

This principle of self-control remains vital to our walk with Christ and influences every part of life. We must teach and model for our children how to live out our highest priorities – starting with our faith and family. If our children grasp this, they will see the importance of staying grounded in His Word and with His people.

Jesus Himself made this clear when He said that anyone who wants to follow Him must deny himself and take up his cross daily (Luke 9:23). To follow Christ is to willingly submit our desires, ambitions, and impulses to God’s authority. Self-control is not optional—it is a defining mark

of faithful obedience and a mindset that protects what matters most.

We see this clearly demonstrated in the life of Joseph. His walls of faith were not built overnight; they were constructed one obedient choice at a time. This didn't make his life easy—it certainly wasn't—but a resolute life of faith is one paved with discipline and perseverance, no matter how difficult the road becomes.

Dads, when our lives demonstrate a pursuit of self-control before God, He builds His walls around us. This divine bulwark protects our marriages, guards our homes, preserves our witness, and provides a much-needed example for our children.

Focus Bible Verse

“A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.” –Proverbs 25:28

The Reset

What area of my life needs more self-control, and how can I intentionally help my children build walls of discipline in their lives?

Conviction 24:

The Battle Cry

Some years ago, my youngest daughter told me, "Daddy, I don't understand. Most of the families in our neighborhood are divorced." She was right. Unfortunately, the street we lived on was likely similar to yours. The family is under a full and relentless assault, and men are taking the biggest hit.

While not every case involves a disengaged man, the statistics indicate that many do. I recently read an article that predicted the "end of man." In essence, they were drawing on studies from the past twenty years that portrayed the "great decline of manhood" across every sector of life. The numbers don't lie. It appears from the hard data that men are walking away from their jobs, families, and responsibilities as men.

What most concerns me is the failure of dads and husbands to step up against this onslaught, determined to remove the inherent and God-given influence of the devoted family man. Let's face it, the prevailing feminist culture and mainstream media appear to want men to fail. They seemingly enjoy reporting the moral failures and mishaps of men that break up marriages and leave a wake of destruction that their kids will carry well into adulthood.

This is a battle for our families, a spiritual conflict that rages within and around us. The spiritual and moral

contest begins with each one of us men. Let's not give the enemy ammunition to use against us.

Regardless of your past, you can resolve to be there for your family, now and into the future. In Christ, your identity is defined by Him—not by past sins or current circumstances. We all must hold fast to this divine truth: we stand in His grace every day (Romans 5:1-8).

I am reminded of the simplicity of the calling. It is one of divine purpose and priority. As a man who follows Christ, my highest mission is to love God and to love others. Nowhere is this godly-given assignment more precise than within the walls of my own home.

In a day when many men seem to be running from the battlefield that encompasses our wives and children, it's time we once again capture the same passion that a young teenager had when he ran to meet a giant-sized adversary on the field of battle.

"When the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine." —1 Samuel 17:48

Not only did David meet his enemy head on, but he ran to do so. For today's man, the enemy that wages war against our families is also giant-sized. But before running, let's not forget what we need most to engage in the battle. Before David ran to fight Goliath, he said this:

"For the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hand." (verse 47)

Like David, we can only advance in this divine calling if God fights the battle on our behalf. For me, and for many men, it is all too common to start running into action without first acknowledging and trusting in the One who will deliver us from all evil. Before taking on the enemy, my life purpose must be defined by my relationship with Jesus Christ. The more I make my life about Christ, the more He makes my life about Him. This is where a man's true identity becomes unwavering—when God is at the center.

Regardless of what the world says or does, our battle cry is for our families. Our wives and children need to know that we will lay our lives down for them, not just in a figurative way, but by stepping up to be godly men in every area of our lives.

Focus Bible Verse

"For the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hand." –1 Samuel 17:47b

The Reset

Like David, am I relying on God to fight the battle for me? Is this reflected in my prayer life and time in His word?

Conviction 25:

That's What Families Do

Have you ever heard a husband, wife, dad, mom, sibling, or grandparent say, "Because that's what families do?" This comment usually precedes an act of sacrifice, unconditional love, or an outpouring of grace to another family member. It's stated with no fanfare in a matter-of-fact manner and speaks to the unwavering love and commitment that is hard-wired into family relationships. While it doesn't always happen, it is how God designed it.

I had a friend who has been battling brain cancer for years. He passed a few years ago. Yet he courageously fought this relentless foe repeatedly. His love for God and his family compelled him never to give up. Behind his daily fight for life was another equally courageous person—his wife. She cared for her husband day and night, tended to the household needs, and homeschooled their school-aged daughter. Through all the chemo, radiation, and doctor appointments, she was by his side, fighting for him and her family. His battle for life and her enduring care for him were nothing less than pure heroism. And that is precisely how God intended marriage to be—a lifelong commitment and sacrificial love that transcends the trials of life. It is a regardless type of love that knows no boundaries. Because that's what the Lord designed families to do—be there for each other regardless of the cost.

I witnessed a similar act between a son and his aging mother some years ago. When his mother could no longer care for herself, the son and his wife restructured their lives and took care of her. It was a reversal of roles in which he now cooked, bathed, clothed, and cared for this amazing woman who had once done the same for him, years earlier, when he was a little boy. If asked why he and his wife did this, the son, my father, would simply reply, "She's my mom. That's what families do."

God created the institution of the family when He took the rib of man and fashioned it into a woman, stating that it was not good for man to be alone.

“So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. “ –Genesis 2:21-24

The divinely established marital bond between a husband and his wife is like no other. And from this sacred and intimate oneness, children are created. Is it any wonder

that family relationships can be so deeply caring and connected?

Sadly, many people have not experienced the blessing of a caring family. Rather than receive love or loyalty from a parent, they have been the recipients of the opposite. Throughout my years in ministry, I have seen the lasting hurt and generational damage that can occur when things do not go as they should in one's home. Rather than a place of sanctuary and protection, it becomes a house of abuse and condemnation.

As Christians, we must be there for each other and never forget the grace God poured out for us through His Son. In this way, God set the example for us, and we have an awesome opportunity to live out this model of love in our own homes and communities.

I pray you've encountered a "that's what families do" moment firsthand. It's a beautiful thing to experience, the unwavering love and loyalty of a parent, sibling, or grandparent. For those of us who have, we need to be mindful that not everyone is so blessed. It is our calling in Christ to go beyond our own homes to ensure that our communities and the world know the unstoppable power of a family anchored in God and in each other.

It's one of my highest priorities in life as a husband and a father. Because that's what families ought to do.

Focus Bible Verse

“But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” –1 Timothy 5:8

The Reset

Am I taking care of my family, including any relatives that may be going through a difficult time? As God presents the needs around me, am I sharing the love of family with others?

Conviction 26:

Words of Life

There is something amazingly special and consequential about the words spoken between a father and his children. The same is true for moms. Our children crave and need affirmation from both their parents. If not received and known, our sons will often pull away, while our daughters will seek a man's affection and approval elsewhere.

In Deuteronomy 6, we are told as parents to pour God's love and truth into the hearts of our children as we rise, walk, and live out our days. When spoken in love, these words not only affirm our children's identity in Christ and our love for them but also spur them on to become men and women of God. My goal as a parent is not only to build up their self-esteem, but also to encourage their God-esteem, i.e., to see themselves as God sees them, while giving Him the glory and understanding that God created them for a greater purpose beyond themselves.

I break these "words" into three areas of communication: 1. Words of Love, 2. Words of Affirmation, and 3. Words of Encouragement (which includes both training and discipline). My children need to hear from me in each of these areas, while doing my best to saturate my communications with God's Word.

Here are 12 things my kids need to hear from me on a regular basis:

1. "I love you."
2. "I believe in you."
3. "You can do this because of who you are in Christ." (We often say in our household when tackling a difficult task, "Philippians 4:13 it.")
4. "I'm here for you—always."
5. "No, and this is why...or Yes, and this is why..." (pull in relevant Scripture...there is typically a verse that hits the topic)
6. "You are one of my greatest joys in life."
7. "I trust you." (while emphasizing why I trust them—see number 8)
8. "Keep trusting in God, and He will make your path straight."
9. "Follow me as I follow Christ. Together, we'll keep our eyes on Jesus,"
10. "It's okay to make mistakes. We all do. It's how you respond to them that matters most."
11. "Please forgive me."

12. "Always remember the two most important things in life: Love God and love others."

My five children range in age. Yet, regardless of how old they are, I've seen firsthand how my words can build them up or tear them down. This is not to say we should shower our kids with mere flattery. They need to know my love for them is unconditional and real. This includes those times when words of exhortation or discipline are necessary.

Yet, if my life actions do not support my words, they will likely never be received. I've witnessed my children quickly discern whether I'm "walking the talk." My words of affirmation and counsel mean very little if there is no action to back them up. Kids are quick to see hypocrisy. I must be resolved to live what I preach.

While all my children need to hear truth and encouragement from me, my sons especially need words that affirm their developing manhood, and my daughters need encouraging words that speak to their hearts as young ladies. What son or daughter doesn't crave to hear affirming words from their father or mother that speak to their developing manhood or womanhood?

I can never be too intentional about the words I share with my wife and my children. This is most certainly an area of intentional living I need to practice daily. I once heard of a man who carried pebbles in his pocket, one for each of his family members, to remind him each day to speak words of

life, truth, and love into their hearts. Whatever it takes, I want to be that man for my family.

Focus Bible Verse

“Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.” –Ephesians 4:29

The Reset

How intentional am I with the words I speak to children?
What do they need to hear from me more often?

Conviction 27:

Teach Them Diligently

I've witnessed this happen repeatedly in my own life and in others' lives. If we don't teach and train our children, the world will gladly do it for us. As a dad, I want my children to know a number of life lessons before they set out on their own. Here are six that I consider essential.

1. It's not all about them.

Starting at a very young age, our kids have been taught about the "two most important things." First, love God. Second, love others.

This simple truth is the foundation of our faith and must be "caught" by our kids at an early age. If they miss this essential life lesson, the teen years will be rough ones. This is not to say that they will always be perfect angels for us. However, if they understand that their primary life mission is to love God and others, they will be less likely to fall into the teen mentality that the world is all about them, and with social media around, this is not always easy.

2. Embrace hard work and challenges.

In the age of crazy, advancing technology, "hard work" seems to have gotten a bad rap. I love technology as much as the next guy. However, as a dad, I don't want my children growing up without experiencing some physically

challenging work. As I have learned over the years, hard work and sweat are great teachers. There is something special about working hard towards a goal and nailing it. Whether it's doing household chores, pursuing fitness goals, or tackling a mentally demanding puzzle, our children need to develop the discipline and fortitude to see something through to completion, especially when it's hard. Also, don't forget to celebrate the goals achieved along the way, or, more importantly, to applaud the efforts even when a goal is not attained.

3. Character comes first.

This will be a difficult one. Our world today, including most educational and athletic systems, teaches and rewards just the opposite. Let's face it. Today's "heroes" and role models are often professional athletes and movie stars who infrequently emphasize character as the most important aspect of a person. Pick up any magazine today, and you'll quickly see what the world values: self-centeredness, outward appearance, money, stuff, and self-indulgence.

We must resolve to teach our sons and daughters that God looks first at the inner person and not the outer appearance.

4. Be quick to listen and slow to speak.

James stresses this point to the early church, and we need to hear it just as much (James 1:19-20). I've been blessed

with five children, two of whom are still at home and three of whom are young adults. If I could turn back the clock, I'd reinforce more this extremely practical tenet that applies to all relationships in life—seek first to listen, then to speak. I've never regretted listening more intently to my wife and children before responding. Unfortunately, we live in a time when people just want to be heard, rather than taking the time to listen to one another. While social media isn't the cause of this issue, it's fueling the fire.

If our kids grasp this simple yet profound truth, they will cultivate discernment in a world that often listens too little and speaks far too much.

5. Mistakes and failures are opportunities to grow.

I want my kids to know when they make mistakes (they will): 1. Own it; 2. Learn from it, and 3. Grow from it.

Given none of us walks on water, we'll never get it all right. We all make mistakes. The sooner our kids get this, the better off they will be. Mistakes and failures will always be a part of our lives. What's important is how we respond to them. As parents, we need to stress and celebrate our child's attitude and efforts, and not necessarily the outcomes. My kids know this truth well ... we give it our best, and God holds the results. Do your sons and daughters understand this?

6. Forgiven and forgiving.

So much of our walk of faith comes down to this—yet while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. The same grace and mercy that God has shown to us should also be extended to others. Knowing that we will always be in some state of sinfulness, this is a must in every household. As parents, we need to set the example. We have a saying in my family—"mess up, fess up." It's a daily process of making things right with God and with one another.

The road our actions forge today will likely become the path our children take tomorrow. Never underestimate the power of your example.

Focus Bible Verse

“And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” –Matthew 22:37-40

The Reset

What key biblical principles define our homes? Are we taking the time each day to teach our children what matters most?

Conviction 28:

The Truth About Sex

As a Christian dad, it's my calling to raise my children in accordance with God's divine and empirical truth.

Anything less compromises one of my greatest objectives in life—raising my sons and daughters to be godly men and women. Here are three truths that I've done my best to live by and instill into the hearts and minds of my children.

There are absolutes in life, and God is the ultimate truth.

To think there aren't absolutes is to deny the evidence presented through general revelation and generations of scientific data. Both God's word and the preponderance of evidence speak to the fact that we, as humans, are purposed to be created male and female.

"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 has been this way since the beginning of time and is an undeniable reality of life. Basic biology, human genetics and God's word clearly delineate the veracity of this absolute. Our children must also know that the Lord's plan for the family includes a one-flesh relationship, and if possible, is meant to involve the offspring of children—boys and/or girls.

Boys and girls are different in both form and function.

While there is total equality between the sexes in value before God and man, each sex was designed with unique qualities and capacities. This doesn't negate the inherent value within each sex. Instead, it uplifts the strengths and natural bent of each gender. We can see complementary relationships that afford stability, propagation, and generational unity throughout creation. Nowhere is this more visible than within the historical blueprint of the God-ordained family structure. Countless studies have demonstrated that children thrive best in a family where stability and order are the norm. Attempting to alter the reality of these relationships will only lead to further confusion and chaos.

As Christian dads and moms, we shouldn't treat our boys and girls as "genderless" beings. God made them male and female. Our job is to cultivate the uniqueness of the individual within their God-given sex and to do our best to celebrate both the child's sex and the giftedness that each one possesses.

Practically, fathers should mentor their sons to prepare them for manhood. Foremost, this means living a godly life before them and teaching them what it means to be a man. At the same time, we need to set the standard for our daughters.

Also, our moms must mentor our daughters as they develop into young ladies. For single moms, it is crucial that they find assistance from trusted men who can help build into the lives of their sons. The same holds true for single dads with daughters.

We must always communicate love and support to our children when they face doubts or confusion about who they are.

Most, if not all of us, have had questions regarding who we are and our life purpose. It's during these times that we must point our children to God and encourage them to find their greatest value and life mission in and through a relationship with Jesus Christ. As a dad, I need my sons and daughters to know they are loved and valued because they were created in God's image. They must be reminded regularly that they have a heavenly Father who made them male and female for a divine purpose and plan.

Given the pervasiveness of the cultural messaging around this topic, children may naturally question themselves and others. Yet, as a father, this is my personal "for such a time as this" moment. To be "in" this world and not "of" this world will be a struggle. Our kids must know it's okay to wrestle with things—we all do.

This is why parents need to be actively engaged in their children's lives throughout every stage of their development. The enemy wants nothing more than to pull

them away from the truth of their divine creation and calling. God fearfully and wonderfully made them for a purpose and plan beyond themselves. We must relentlessly embrace this God-driven parental duty and do all we can to uplift our children and their God-given sex.

One last thought I believe is critical during the heaviness of our days: Don't forget to find joy and laughter as you pursue the missional calling of being a parent. I can sometimes find myself overwhelmed by life's busyness and our world's moral decline. Yet it is essential that we make time to enjoy the blessings of our sons and daughters and let them know, without question, the blessings they are to us.

Focus Bible Verse

"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

The Reset

How am I cultivating biblical masculinity and femininity in my sons and daughters?

Conviction 29:

Biblical Dating

I shared with my children that most marriages are defiled before the man or woman has a chance to say, "I do." In one prominent online study on dating, over 80% of the respondents indicated that they would consent to sex before marriage. This study revealed that many couples would move in together before their wedding day. This study also noted that dads and moms had little influence on who their children dated. For every parent out there, this should be a huge wake-up call. It's high time we rethink dating.

"Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous." –Hebrews 13:4

Here are four basic principles of biblically-focused dating:

1. Dating With a Purpose

This hits the foundational motive of dating or courting with God's glory in mind. We know God's will for a man and woman is marriage, regarding romantic relationships beyond friendship. Yet, within this goal is the mutual objective: to get to know each other as brothers and sisters in Christ in a way that honors God. A prerequisite to this objective is the "equal yoke" principle, in which Christians

should only enter into a romantic relationship with other equally yoked Christians.

While every dating relationship or courtship may not end in marriage, it should result in growing closer to God and building each other up in the Lord. Without a God-driven purpose in dating, too often, our youth and young adults will be caught up in the emotional and physical pulls that are naturally there.

2. We All Need Boundaries

Boundaries are essential in every relationship, especially between men and women. It's a fundamental truth that sharing time and feelings in proximity is the breeding ground for intimacy. Unfortunately, there seems to be a growing trend among young adults to shy away from any boundaries in their relationships (Hedges by Jerry Jenkins is an excellent book that discusses this topic in more detail).

I've seen the fallout when young adults lack guardrails in their relationships. Sadly, today's young ladies ride an emotional roller coaster because there are no defined expectations for the young men in their lives. God hard-wired men and women to desire intimacy with the opposite sex. While it's possible to be friends with the opposite sex, it needs to be done so with evident and intentional boundaries in place.

When it comes to dating, it is necessary to define boundaries up front, such as group outings, dating in public spaces, and never being totally alone. Any couple that thinks they can spend considerable time together without definite parameters is setting themselves up for failure. As dads, we need to actively engage our sons and daughters in this topic and provide them with a functioning model of what this looks like. If we don't, the culture around them will set the tone.

3. Dads Need to Step Up

In a marriage ceremony, there is a reason that the father "gives the bride away." God designed it this way. As my daughters understand, before they meet the man they marry, there is no man on this earth who knows her and loves her more than I do. I realize that not every young girl has a dad who will be there for her. In that case, the mother and daughter should try to include a man who can provide insight into evaluating the young male suitor. It could be an older brother, an uncle, a pastor, or a close friend. Men notice things about other men that only men recognize. My wife and daughter understand this truth well (not to say that women lack perception; they often have better relational insights, especially concerning the actions of other women).

4. No Losers

In every God-honoring relationship, a primary objective should always be to build each other up in Christ (Ephesians 4:29). Regardless of the dating outcome, each person is encouraged in their personal growth and relationship with God. In this way, it is always a win-win proposition, honoring God as the ultimate goal.

Using an analogy, I've shared the concept of dating with a God-driven purpose with my sons and daughters. It's like walking down two paths that lead in the same direction. They are two distinct paths, but close enough to walk together. As time passes and the "couple" gets to know each other, their paths draw closer and share the same bends and turns. However, they remain two paths with uncertain destinations. At any point during this "getting to know" journey, the paths can separate and take different directions. However, if the couple decides marriage is the next step, the paths ultimately become one.

We must embrace the idea that dating and courtship are preludes to marriage. Considering it any less creates a slippery slope where emotional and physical ties naturally take hold. Men and women were created for intimacy with one another. Time will never erase this reality. If a man and woman spend time together in close proximity and share their innermost feelings, there is a very good chance that intimate affection will follow. Even couples with the best

intentions have faltered when boundaries aren't set. Fail to plan; plan to fail.

This may sound like an "old school" concept or something our great-grandfathers practiced. It likely is. The truth is that nothing has changed from one generation to the next when it comes to love and romance. Biologically, our bodies are designed for intimate and sexual relationships with the opposite sex. Sure, times have changed, and people have adapted accordingly. To uphold the sanctity of marriage and the importance of sexual purity, we will find ourselves turning back to our history books to learn from our great-grandparents.

We must set an example for our teenage sons and daughters. Our younger men must honor our daughters as precious sisters in Christ and safeguard their purity. They should understand that real love is not about self-gratification. It's about pleasing God and prioritizing another person's interests over your own. The same applies to our daughters. If we pursue our relationships according to God's ways, His glory and honor will follow.

Like most Christian dads, my top prayer for my kids is that they come to know Jesus as their Savior. Close behind this prayer is a request for an equally yoked spouse (if marriage aligns with God's will for their lives). As a father, I pray that my children, whether heading toward singleness or marriage, will follow God's ways of building relationships.

Focus Bible Verse

"Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous." –Hebrews 13:4

The Reset

How can I start now in building a biblical framework of dating for my son(s) and daughter(s)? What must I do on a regular basis to counter the world's version that so many of us grew up with?

Conviction 30:

Protect What Matters Most

We were recently made aware of yet another prominent Christian man who failed morally. Philip Yancey, a prolific author, admitted to an eight-year affair. Several years ago, we also learned that Ravi Zacharias, after his death, had lived a secret life of sexual sin and deception. Prior to his passing, Zacharias was widely regarded as one of the most respected apologists in the Christian world. Yancey, without question, was considered one of the most influential Christian authors of our time.

If two highly intelligent, gifted, and committed Christian men failed in this way, an honest question naturally arises: how can any man expect to remain faithful to his calling?

If you had asked either of these men what mattered most to them, I'm confident they would have given the right answers—God, their wives, their families, and their callings. So, what happened?

Here is the short version: before their moral downfall, they failed to protect what mattered most.

I want to give both men the benefit of the doubt that their spiritual convictions in Christ were sincere. They likely treasured their faith, their marriages, and their calling. I could be wrong, but that is how I am choosing to approach it.

But we all must understand something sobering:

Unless we intentionally and relentlessly protect what matters most, any of us—including me—can fall into temptation and, regretfully, act upon it.

“Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.” –1 Corinthians 10:12

Protecting what matters most requires a strong defense and offense. It is not enough to simply erect guardrails or rules around our lives; we must also cultivate a vibrant, growing spiritual life. We need both.

Guardrails reduce the risk of vulnerable pitfalls or enemy access points, while spiritual growth keeps us grounded in humility and gratitude to the King we serve. In the case of these two men, it appears that this twofold strategy was missing.

Consider something practical. If these men had simply applied what is often called the Billy Graham Rule, there is a strong possibility they never would have placed themselves in situations where temptation could be acted upon. The rule—practiced by evangelist Billy Graham—simply meant he would not spend time alone with a woman who was not his wife.

Graham once explained his reasoning clearly:

“I do not want to do anything that would compromise my testimony or hurt my family.”

In today’s world, this principle must extend beyond physical interactions to include digital communications, messaging, and social media relationships.

We all experience moments of weakness in life.

Jesus Himself said:

“The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”
—Matthew 26:41b

During seasons of vulnerability, guardrails like the Billy Graham Rule—or other intentional boundaries—provide an added layer of protection.

These defined boundaries are not signs of weakness—they are signs of wisdom that reflect a priority to steward what matters most. If we are prone to wander—and aren’t we all—then we need these protections in place.

Faithful men understand something important: protecting their marriage, their family, and their witness requires intentional effort. One’s character rarely collapses overnight. It erodes slowly when vigilance fades, and we take our eyes off what truly matters most.

Here’s another truth about faithful men: they don’t ignore warning signs when they see them in others. I know there

were likely good men close to Ravi Zacharias who saw some red flags but chose to rationalize and do nothing about them. At some level, they share some responsibility for his downfall. If we care about our Savior and His mission, we must also care about our fellow men on the front lines.

That said, when someone we know falls, we must turn to the Lord and help restore them. Without a doubt, this man and his wife need our support and prayers. As a body of Christ, we haven't always done this well, and that needs to change.

I shared a passage from 1 Corinthians earlier. Here is the second part of that passage, which offers us tremendous hope during times of potential weakness:

"No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide a way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." –1 Corinthians 10:13

This is wonderful news wrapped in a divine promise. However, God's graciousness doesn't remove our responsibility in this process. A way of escape or endurance may be something spiritually driven, or it may involve applying a godly discipline.

A wise man establishes guardrails of protection long before he ever needs them. He also understands that his greatest strength lies in his dependence on his Savior. If we hold fast to Christ, He will hold fast to us. He is faithful even when we waver. That's why it's equally important for men to cultivate a devotional life rooted in God's Word, prayer, and fellowship with other believers. It may look different for each person, but it is something every man needs.

Because once what matters most is lost, no level of success, reputation, or accomplishment can replace it.

Focus Bible Verse

“Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.” –1 Corinthians 10:12

The Reset

Do I realize how vulnerable I am and the need to hold fast to Christ? What am I actively doing to protect what matters most regarding my faith, my marriage, and my family?

Postscript

Years ago, when I was a freshman in college, I spent a weekend on a farm with some friends. After riding four-wheelers late into the night, I finally crawled into bed expecting a full night's sleep. Instead, I was shaken awake at 4:00 AM. Half-asleep, I assumed something was wrong—until I heard, “Joe, it’s time to milk the cows.”

My immediate response in my mind? “Let the cows milk themselves.”

That weekend taught me something I’ve never forgotten. Farming isn’t a job—it’s a way of life. It requires discipline, consistency, and attention every single day. It defines what a farmer does almost every hour. Regardless of what this world may throw at us, like the good farmer, we still must show up and get the job done.

In many ways, the calling to biblical manhood is no different. The convictions we hold will shape our day-to-day priorities and, over time, influence how our family and the people around us grow. Like the farmer, we can’t control the final outcome, but we can show up every day, do what we can, and trust God with the results.

If you’ve made it through all 30 convictions and have taken time to evaluate your life before God and His word, I can assure you it will make a difference. As you humble yourself

before your Savior and abide in Him, He will produce His fruit in your life.

As men of God, may we be like the faithful farmers who have tended tirelessly to the needs of what God has entrusted to them, doing all we can while trusting Him with the results—to His glory and honor.

About the Author

Joe is the founder and resident author of The Devoted Dad, a resource hub dedicated to strengthening families by encouraging and equipping Christian men and dads in their God-given roles.

After leaving the corporate world to pursue full-time ministry, Joe has helped lead and execute strategies to build strong families and preserve biblical values. He holds a Master of Ministry degree and several business designations, combining operational strategy with ministry purpose.

Most importantly, Joe is a husband, father, and grandfather who believes that, by God's grace, one of his greatest life pursuits is serving his family. Through The Devoted Dad, he invites churches and dads to join that same journey with truth, grace, and bold faith. Visit devodad.com for more resources or to have Joe speak at your next church men's event.

