

# *The One Amazing Thing God Wants to Do With Men*

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# The One Amazing Thing God Wants to Do With Men

## Introduction

What if churches in America were full of men who took seriously the biblical command, “Consider the needs of others as more important than your own”? What if, as a result, they ensured the well-being of the neediest in their churches and neighborhoods?

If Christian men were trained to obey that biblical command, and then actually did it, America as we know it today would be a very different place indeed. The church, so maligned in our culture in recent decades, would become a much brighter beacon of light and truth and the world would see what men who have come to faith in Christ and have been infused with his love can do. Perhaps our culture would even begin to respect all men again.

Respect for men is a rare commodity in America these days. For example, as you read the following list of social ills, ask yourself who comes to mind first, men or women.

- Pornography addiction
- Child abandonment
- Terrorists
- Rapists
- Mass murderers
- Gangs
- Prisoners

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- Workplace sexual abuse
- Drug lords
- Computer hackers

If you answered “women” to any of the above, I’d wonder what planet you live on. The truth is, men make up most of the practitioners of anti-social behavior.

While it has always been the case that more men than women engage in anti-social and self-destructive behavior, until the last half of the twentieth century men who exhibited pathological behavior represented a minority on the fringes of our culture. The majority were stable, self-assured, goal oriented men who formed a functional and productive part of society as husbands and fathers as well as business, church and community leaders.

Now, however, it is becoming increasingly clear that men in general have a problem: men no longer know who they are, why they are here, nor where they are going. They are not fitting into society well. What exactly is an adult man supposed to be and do, anyway?

Kay Hymowitz, author of “Manning Up: How the Rise of Women Has Turned Men into Boys,” cites a long list of book and magazine article titles that demonstrate how rudderless men have become. “Articles and books,” she writes, “with such titles as “The End of Men,” “Are Men Necessary?,” “The Decline of Males,” “The Death of Macho,” “Women Will Rule the World,” and “Is There Anything Good About Men?” point toward a growing recognition that men are not thriving in today’s cultural and economic environment.”

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While I could talk about the various sociological explanations for this modern phenomenon of male role model amnesia – i.e., how the feminist movement and the sexual revolution have had a negative impact on male identity, or that changing economic conditions favor females, or how mass media and consumer culture are eviscerating the male ego – the explanation I want to put forward is this: as our culture has strayed from a biblical world view, we have lost the ability to define who and what a man is.

When one takes away the biblical view of reality – that all that we see has been created by a personal God and that people have been created in God’s image and are immortal souls – then what we have left is materialism. And if all we have is a material universe, then men are animals and nothing more. The result is exactly what we are seeing in the general culture: if you tell us men we are just animals over and over for a long enough time, then we will act like we are just animals and nothing more.

In this new universe, men have been inculcated with the attitude that sex is merely an animal function. “Their problem,” observes Kay Hymowitz, “is coming of age in a culture without reliable conventions to tame the raw egotism and roughness of nature’s mating dance. It’s all about sex anyway, a lot of guys conclude, so why dress it all up in silly manners?” So men shrug off normal family relationships like sweaty socks and become completely immersed in their selves. As a result, they take American individualism to its extreme conclusion: “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness *for me*”.

Why should men sacrifice for women and children if there isn’t any real need for men anyway, if society only winks at their mutiny, and if there are no moral codes to condemn their behavior? If men aren’t even interested in marriage, let alone sacrificing for a wife and kids, then they certainly aren’t going to sacrifice for others in their community.

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Therefore, we need to understand as Christians that it's not just the church that is having a problem with men, it's society in general. Consequently, the solution we offer is not just a solution for our churches, but for our entire culture.

To put it bluntly, the solution we offer is simply this: Jesus turns asses into assets. Jesus takes selfish, self-centered men and turns them into servants of the Most High God who serve those in need around them. In Christ, rudderless men become men of consequence, men who effect good in all their relationships.

To understand how this transformation happens, we first need to understand what it is God wants to do with men, accurately dissect why men so often fail to do it, explain how men can rightly relate to God, and finally, how men can do the one amazing thing that God wants them to do.

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Let's cut to the chase.

Good.

That's right. Good. The one amazing thing God wants to do with men is good. It may sound simplistic, but it's true. Think of it this way. Satan wants to use men to accomplish evil – truly evil things that have horrific consequences for themselves and others for generations on earth and for eternity in hell. And from the looks of things, Satan is doing a great job of it.

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With God, it's just the opposite. What God wants to do is use men to accomplish good – amazing good that also has consequences for themselves and others for generations on earth and for eternity in heaven. Scripture states this goal of good repeatedly. Here are just three examples:

- “Learn to do good.” Isaiah 1:17
- “As we have opportunity, let us do good.” Galatians 6:10
- “Command them to do good.” 1 Timothy 6:18

Okay, so “good” is what God wants to do with men. To which, I'm thinking, you reply with a resounding yawn: “Great. I learned this in Boy Scouts. We're all supposed to do one good deed a day. *Booooooring!*”

True. Everyone practices doing good. In fact, every major religion in the world stresses the importance of doing good. And, yes, it can be boring. But the good God wants to do with Christian men is qualitatively different from the good the rest of the world does. This qualitative difference is what makes the good God wants us to do so amazing.

Furthermore, this jaw-dropping good that God accomplishes with men comes with a set of precise instructions and crystal-clear examples, all encapsulated in the Bible.

Not only is God's good unique, clearly articulated and concretely exemplified, but it is also doable. In fact, the good God wants us to do is often easy and refreshing and brings innumerable results that are overwhelmingly satisfying.

One more thing: while most people do their own version of good, almost no one does God's amazing good. Even Christian men miss much of the good God wants them to do.

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And that is where this book comes in. The purpose of this book is to help Christian men discern and do the amazing, thrilling and fulfilling good God has called them to do.

## All Men's Ministry Begins at Cain's Door

American men have an identity crisis. They don't know who they are. They have lost their way. Why? Because our culture as a whole has turned its back on God. With nothing else to explain ourselves, we look to the natural world and begin to think of ourselves as mere animals. The result of this materialistic thinking is that we men have become enslaved to our lusts.

Before we can do the good God wants us to do, we have to deal with the evil Satan has already done in us, with us, and through us. We have to deal with the penalty, power and presence of sin in our lives.

Why? Because in our essence, we are all sons of Cain. In the story of Cain killing Abel in Genesis 4, we see Cain, consumed with jealousy of his brother Abel. He's standing at the door, hearing sin knocking to come in and knowing that he is powerless to keep it out. And just as God spoke the following words to Cain, so God is speaking them to every man who has followed him:

"If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is knocking at your door and its desire is for you. But you must master it."

In reality, all men's ministry begins at Cain's door. Every man has to deal with the issue of sin and how he is going to either master it or let it destroy him. Before we can do God's amazing good, we have to deal with Satan's horrible evil that he has and is accomplishing in and through us.

## Every Man's Dream, Every Man's Reality



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Every man harbors, either consciously or unconsciously, a powerful dream inside him. It's the dream of being a hero. What guy hasn't wanted to be the stereotypical white knight in shining armor riding in on his stallion to save the day (and impress the girls)?

Hollywood makes billions of dollars off of this dream by churning out one action adventure film after another. Companies with dangerous jobs to perform recruit men using this dream. Nations fill the ranks of their armies by exploiting this dream. Advertisers sell product to men by appealing to this dream. Sports thrive on this dream.

In his book, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, David Murrow describes this dream in terms of what he calls "man laws":

"Man laws are an informal code imposed on all the men of society, except for the very young and very old. A 'real man' must stand up to danger, bear up under suffering, and sacrifice himself for the good of others. This code of conduct helps a man overcome his natural instincts (fear, hunger, loneliness, etc.) so he will do what's best for the tribe, not for himself. Masculine qualities such as bravery, stoicism, and self-sacrifice don't come naturally to a man; they are drawn from this cultural well."

The problem, however, is that this dream we men have has a dark side: the reality that all of us fall short of our ideal hero role. We sacrifice the good for the evil that dwells within us. We see famous men selling out constantly in our culture. The politician sacrifices his career for a bribe, the football star beats his wife in private, the pastor has an affair, the Wall Street broker trades on insider information, and on and on. And deep inside we know that these high profile failings of male leaders are simply the tip of the iceberg.

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The result is the rise of what is sometimes called the “antihero.” The antihero is a man who has come to believe that his dream of being a white knight is impossible for any real man. And since his dream is impossible, an authentic man, a real man, openly rejects the dream and lives out the opposite reality: the life of a dark knight.

The dark knight, or antihero, is a man who openly practices evil as the highest expression of his manhood. He doesn't care what people think, nor how much pain he causes them. He's simply in it for himself. At least, he thinks, he's not being a hypocrite like other men. High profile examples of antiheroes are gangs, drug lords and despots. In everyday life, the antihero walks away from his wife for a younger woman, cheats on his taxes and brags about it, curses and swears like a sailor, tells filthy jokes, and on and on. What he is saying is, “I'm no white knight and I'm proud of it. I don't believe in fairy tales.”

Every man feels this white knight-dark knight tension and, thankfully, Christianity addresses and resolves the issue for men. It calls men to acknowledge before God the darkness that dwells within and then invites them to trust in God's provision for that darkness, his son, Jesus Christ. He and He alone is our moral and spiritual shining white armor that we put on. Jesus Christ is the way we become the white knight every man dreams of becoming. The beauty of Christianity is that it deals with the reality of evil in every man while at the same time offering every man the opportunity to become a champion of good.

Before we can live the dream, we men have to deal with the nightmare of sin. The beautiful thing about Christianity is that it turns men into white knights while still dealing with the reality of their rusty and chinked armor. Christianity has ideals without being idealistic. It fulfills every man's dream while also dealing with every man's reality.

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## Coming Clean With God

When it comes to sin, all men are introverts. Guilt, shame and fear, as Gordon Dalby so eloquently points out in his book, “Healing the Masculine Soul,” keep us chained behind our private door. We can’t get out to do the good God wants us to do because, like Cain, sin is right there pouncing on us every time we step past the threshold.

But God in His mercy and grace has provided a way out of our bondage to sin. That way out is to enter into a relationship with Him through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. He died on the cross for our sin to provide a way for us to be reconciled to a holy God and to give us the power to overcome sin in our lives. This is what Jesus meant when he said, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me.”

Coming clean with God means we acknowledge that we are sinners and put our faith in Christ as the one who paid the penalty for our sin. God’s promise to us is that “whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Then and only then do we have the power to do the amazing good God wants us to do.

If you have never placed your faith in Christ, God’s invitation to you is to receive His free gift by faith right now. Perhaps the following prayer expresses your desire to trust Christ as your savior. If so, I invite you to pray it to God:

“Dear God, I confess that I have sinned against you and am a sinner. I turn to you and put my faith in your son, Jesus Christ, as the one who died for the penalty of my sin on the cross and rose again from the dead. Thank you for forgiving my sin, for making me your child, and for giving me eternal life. Help

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## Covenants: How God Accomplishes His Good In and Through Men

Once we know that the one amazing thing God wants to do with men is “good” and that we need to come into a right relationship with God through faith in his son, Jesus Christ, we next need to ask how God accomplishes this good.

The answer is simple. God accomplishes his good in and through men by the use of covenants.

A covenant is a contractual agreement between two parties that stipulates the responsibilities of the parties making the agreement and the benefits to the parties making the agreement.

A mortgage is a covenant between a home buyer and a bank or mortgage company. It stipulates that x number of dollars will be given to the borrower to purchase a home and that it will be paid back at a certain interest rate over a certain number of years. The buyer benefits by having enough money to buy a home and the company benefits by receiving a return on its investment.

Other examples of covenants are marriage covenants, work agreements, covenant communities, and the “social contract” individuals have with their government. All of these covenants, agreements, contracts—call them whatever you will—have stipulations to keep for the parties involved and benefits for them to receive

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When it comes to men, it can be said that men become valuable in a practical way to society, to themselves, and to God only when they enter into and keep their covenants. When a man has no covenants with others, or when he breaks his covenants with others, he becomes a thug at best and a brute beast at worst. Like Cain, he wanders in the land of Nod.

There are many examples in the Bible of God making covenants with men. Some of the men God has made covenants with were Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, the Children of Israel and David.

This fact, that God is a covenant-making God and expects us to enter into a covenant relationship with Him, brings us to the covenant He has made with us as Christian men. It is this covenant that makes the good we do distinctive from all other goods. The reason our good is distinctive is because we are doing it under the express direction of our God while others do their good on their own terms.

To illustrate, suppose you hired a contractor to work on your home, but instead of signing a contract with you he told you that he's a professional, he knows all about homes and he does good work. You don't need to tell him what to do, he says, and he doesn't need to sign a contract with you, he'll figure things out on his own and finish the work whenever he pleases.

Would you let him work on your home? I'm thinking you wouldn't. But this autonomous attitude is precisely what people who don't know God and who don't have a covenant with Him are doing when they do their good. They are essentially saying, "No one needs to tell me what good needs to be done. I can figure it out myself." The popular phrase, "Practice random acts of kindness," is a perfect illustration of this independent and rebellious mentality.

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Now back to our illustration of the contractor. Before letting him work on your home, you would insist that he sign a contract, wouldn't you? It would stipulate exactly what he is to do on your home and how he is to do it. It would list projects, materials, labor costs, a timeline, total costs and some kind of payment schedule. Then and only then would you allow him to work on your home.

It's the same with God. when we accepted Jesus Christ as our savior, we entered into a covenant relationship with him. (You can read more about this "New Covenant" in John 13.) He only accepts good "under contract," as it were. God is God and He owns this world. The good we are to do is His good, not ours. We can only do His good when we follow his covenant, which is: Believe in his son, Jesus Christ, and love each other.

## Signed the Contract? Then Let's Get to Work

As I've stated before, what sets Christian good works apart from all other good works is that Christian good works are done "under contract." That is, Christians are in a covenant relationship with God and that covenant dictates what kind of good works we do.

Our covenant is called the "New Covenant." This covenant, or agreement, has two stipulations: 1) that we believe on the name of God's Son, Jesus Christ, as the one who paid the penalty for our sin by dying on the cross and rising again and, 2) that we love one another (1 John 3:23).

The first part of this covenant involves no good works on our part. That is, we are saved and reconciled to God through faith apart from our good works. But the second part of the covenant does involve good works on our part. As a result of being reconciled to God, he expects us to love each other and this love is to be expressed practically by doing good works.

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These two aspects of our covenant with God—salvation *apart* from good works and salvation that *results* in good works—are beautifully expressed by the Apostle Paul in his famous passage in Ephesians 2:8-10:

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast. For you are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God created beforehand that you should walk in them.”

In other words, God didn't save us to sit on our butt in endless meetings. God saved us to, quite literally, work. We have walked through Cain's door into the light. We have been set free from our lust, guilt and shame. We have a new relationship with the God of this universe through faith in his Son. He has filled us with his Spirit. We now have the ability to do God's amazing good.

## Who Benefits From a Man's Good Work?

Now that we men are in a proper relationship with God through faith in his son, Jesus Christ, it's time to get to work and do the amazing good God has called us to do. So the question is, who does God want us to do our good works for?

Fortunately, Scripture is clear about who God wants us to do our good works for: fellow believers who are in need, followed by others who are in need. “Let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10). John states in 1 John 3, “If anyone has this world's goods and sees his *brother* in need and shuts up his compassion from him, how does the love of God dwell in him. Beloved, let us love, not in word only, but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:17-18, italics mine).

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Why this preference for needy believers? Because we are in a covenant relationship, not only with God, but also with them. These fellow believers are part of our eternal family. In fact, this eternal family is far more durable than our earthly family. Because our church is a family bound together in a covenant relationship to love each other, it is critical that all ongoing needs be addressed in our forever family. Paul says, “Let our people learn to engage in good deeds, to meet pressing needs. That they may not be unfruitful” (Titus 3:14).

Unfortunately, churches often ignore the neediest in their own congregations and instead reach out to the community and even to foreign lands. Imagine that I have a family with young children. But instead of feeding them, I take all our food and donate it to the Salvation Army. You would say that I have my priorities confused, that I first must meet the needs of my family and then—and only then—should I donate to outside organizations. But the church does this all the time.

It's the same way with the amazing good God wants men to do. The reason he sent his son to save them is for the benefit of the neediest in their churches, followed by the neediest in their communities.

## A Christian Man's Good Work: Guarantee the Well-Being of Those in Need Around Him

By way of review, we Christians are not at liberty to decide what good works we are going to do. The reason is because we are under contract to do God's good works, not ours. Our “contract” is the New Covenant and our good works have been predetermined by God under this covenant. “We are his workmanship,” Paul states in Ephesians 2:10, “created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God has determined beforehand, that we should walk in them.”



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So what is the good work that God has determined for us as Christian men to do? Simply put, *a Christian man's good work is to guarantee the wellbeing of those in need around him.* That is, a Christian man doesn't simply do nice things for people around him who are in need. Rather, he takes *personal responsibility* to make sure the need is met. It is this act of taking personal responsibility for the need that distinguishes Christian good works from non-Christian good works.

Of course, the first thought that comes to mind is that guaranteeing the wellbeing of those in need around us is an overwhelmingly impossible task. But before we get into the feasibility of this kind of good work, I first want to establish the biblical teaching, because it is clearly taught throughout the Word of God, both explicitly and through many concrete examples.

Let's first look at concrete examples in the Bible of believers who guaranteed the wellbeing of others around them.

## Cain and Abel – A Negative Example, Genesis 4:1-9

The story of Cain and Abel is the story of how Cain murders his brother in a jealous rage. When God asks Cain where his brother is, Cain responds dismissively with, "I don't know. Am I my brother's keeper." This story sets the stage for the rest of the book of Genesis where it finally climaxes in the account of Judah offering himself to a ruler in Egypt (his unrecognized brother, Joseph) in place of his brother Benjamin. The key distinctive of a follower of Satan is callous disregard for one's brother while the key mark of a follower of God is care and concern for one's brother, even if it means giving oneself to save your brother.

## Abram and Lot, Genesis 14

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Lot has abused his privilege of first choice of the land by choosing what he thinks is the best.

In fact, it turns out to be a spiritual and physical death trap. Lot is taken captive by King Kedorlaomer and his allies, at which point, Abram rescues him in a daring raid. By doing so, Abram proves that he is indeed his “brother’s keeper.”

## Judah and Benjamin, Genesis 44

Out of envy, Judah and his brothers have sold their brother Joseph into slavery in Egypt. Through a long course of events, Joseph is elevated to second in command in Egypt. At the same time, a severe famine is occurring, forcing Judah and his brothers to go down to Egypt to seek food for a second time. They have been warned that when they return they must bring Benjamin with them, Jacob’s other favored son. To overcome Jacob’s hesitation at letting him go, Judah guarantees his wellbeing.

When Joseph, who is not yet recognized by his brothers as their brother, threatens to keep Benjamin, Judah offers himself as a ransom in his place. He becomes his “brother’s keeper.”

## Ruth and Naomi, Ruth 1

Naomi and her husband have two sons. During a drought they leave the land of promise to go to Moab. While in Moab, their two sons marry and then die. One of the wives’ name is Ruth. Naomi’s husband also dies. Naomi decides to return to Israel and Ruth goes with her. Naomi tries to discourage her, but Ruth vows to go with her and care for her. By doing so, Ruth becomes the female version of a “brother’s keeper.”

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## Jonathan and David, 1 Samuel 20:17

Jonathan is the heir to the throne, but it becomes obvious that God has chosen David to be the next king. But Jonathan is a true follower of God and makes an oath with David that he will support him, an oath that ultimately results in his death. Jonathan is another “brother’s keeper.”

## The Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37

Jesus is asked to define “neighbor” in a discussion about the command to love one’s neighbor as one’s self. He responds by telling the story of the Good Samaritan. At the end of the story, the Samaritan asks the inn keeper to take care of the man who has been wounded by attackers. He gives him money and promises to return and pay him whatever else is needed. In doing so, the Good Samaritan guarantees the well being of the wounded man and proves that he is his “brother’s keeper.”

## John and Jesus’ Mother, John 19:25-27

As his last act before he dies, Jesus entrusts his mother—herself a widow and single mom— into the care of John. John took responsibility for the care of Jesus’ mother for the rest of her life.

The Church and Widows, Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-37; 6:1-6; 20:32-35; 1 Timothy 5:1-16; Titus 3:14, etc.

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One of the first descriptions of the early church includes this statement: “There was not a needy person among them.” The church makes its number one priority that of caring for widows and others in need in its ranks. What is important to note is that what in the Old Testament is exemplified by individuals, now in the New Testament church becomes the general characteristic of all believers. All believers are to love each other as Christ loves us and this is demonstrated over and over again in the NT by its care of widows.

So we see that the Word of God is full of clear and specific examples of people guaranteeing the wellbeing of others.

## A Christian Man’s Good Work – Part II

In this chapter I want to cover the explicit biblical teaching on this topic of guaranteeing the well-being of others. Let’s first look at what the Old Testament has to say about caring for the needs of others.

### Old Testament Teaching

A believing community that is fully obeying the Lord will eradicate poverty within it. This is why Luke stresses in Acts 2 and 4 that “there were no needy people among them.”

“There need be no poor people among you, for in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you, if only you fully obey the Lord your God and are careful to follow all these commands I am giving you today.” Deuteronomy 15:4

However, since the Lord knew his people would not fully obey his law, he also states that there would always be poor people in the land. Jesus later reaffirmed this fact.

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“There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land.” Deuteronomy 15:11; Matthew 26:11

God commanded his people through Isaiah that they were to seek justice by pleading the cause of the fatherless and widow.

“Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.” Isaiah 1:15

## New Testament Teaching

One of Jesus’ requirements for discipleship is that his disciples be willing to sell all that they have and give the proceeds to the poor.

Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” Matthew 19:21; Luke 12:33; Luke 18:22; Mark 10:21

In Paul’s last instructions to the Ephesian elders, he cited his own example of supporting his own needs as well as the needs of those around him.

“Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have not coveted anyone’s silver or gold or clothing. You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

The result of unity in the body of Christ is believers concerning themselves with the needs of others.

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“Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.” Philippians 2:1-4

The love of Christ and on-going need cannot coexist in the local church.

“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.” 1 John 3:16-18

The purest expression of our faith is to look after orphans and widows.

“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” James 1:27

The purpose of good works is to provide for urgent needs.

“Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives.” Titus 3:14

The church is to concern it self with the needs of widows who have no other support.

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“Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God. The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help. But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives. Give the people these instructions, so that no one may be open to blame. Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

“No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over sixty, has been faithful to her husband, and is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the Lord’s people, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds.” 1 Timothy 5:3-10

Wealthy believers are to be generous with their wealth.

“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.” 1 Timothy 6:17-19

## Summary

# The One Amazing Thing God Wants to Do With Men

A primary purpose of a Christian man's good work, then, is to eradicate need around him as an expression of his love for God, his love for people, and his obedience to the Scriptures. This truth is clearly taught in many different passages in both the Old and New Testaments.

## A Christian Man's Five Circles of Responsibility... and Blessing

Okay, so now we know that the task of a Christian's man's good work is to guarantee the wellbeing of those around him. So the question is, who are these people who are "around" him?

Before I answer this question, remember, I am not at the moment dealing with how he guarantees the well-being of those around him, just who these people are. I will discuss the how in the next chapter.

So who are the people "around" a Christian man for whom he is responsible? I like to think of this topic in terms of concentric circles, with the innermost circles having greater priority over the outer circles. This doesn't mean that the outer circles are less important, just that the needs of those in the inner circles should be met before meeting the needs of those in the outer circles.

### First Circle of a Christian Man's Responsibility - Himself

A Christian man is responsible for making sure he is self supporting and not a burden on others. "No man hates his own body," Paul states in Ephesians 5:29, "but nourishes it and cares for it." The goal of providing for our own needs is normal and central to our existence. "These hands of mine have worked to supply my own needs," Paul told the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:34. In Galatians 6:5, he exhorts the Galatians, "Every man must bear his own burden."



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Conversely, upon learning that some of the Thessalonians were not working, Paul reminded them of the rule he had previously given them, “If any man will not work, neither let him eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

Of course, there are times when a man cannot find work, or is disabled. Or it may be that his wife is the chief breadwinner and they have a mutual agreement that she be so. The latter has been the case in our home for the past few years. Just as Jesus was supported by women of means (Luke 8:1-3), so God has blessed my wife with a wonderful career that enables me to focus on men’s ministry.

But in ordinary circumstances, If there are no other sources of income and work is available, then a man must go out, get a job and be self-supporting.

## **Second Circle of a Christian Man’s Responsibility – His Wife and Children**

It should go without saying that a Christian man is responsible for supporting his wife and children. Unfortunately, in our culture men have often abdicated their roles as husband and father, abandoning their wives to raise their children on their own. Sometimes this selfish, self-centered male mentality has seeped into the church to the degree that Christian men may ignore the needs of their spouse and dependent children.

But scripture is clear that a Christian husband and father is to be willing to lay down his life for his family in the same way that Christ gave himself for the church (Ephesians 5:25).

## **Third Circle of a Christian Man’s Responsibility – His Extended Family**

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A Christian man is next responsible for providing for the needs of “his own.” Paul writes in 1 Timothy 5:4, “If a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God.” Then he goes on to make the following severe exhortation in verse 8, “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”

Households in New Testament times were normally multi-generational and also could include slaves and work associates. Ancient society held the owner of a home responsible to provide for the basic needs of all those within his home. Even non-believers today generally care for members of their extended family when they are in need.

When a Christian man doesn't fulfill the obligations that even non-believers generally do, Scripture says he has committed apostasy and is worse than an unbeliever. In other words, failure to provide for “one's own” is one of the worst sins a Christian man can commit.

## Fourth Circle of a Christian Man's Responsibility – “Pressing Needs” in His Church

Up to this point, both non-Christians and Christians generally fulfill their obligations in these first three circles of responsibility – obligations to themselves, their families and their extended families. But it is the fourth and fifth circles of responsibility that particularly distinguish a Christian man from an unbeliever.

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Upon salvation, a Christian man has entered into a covenant with God – the New Covenant – and has been made a member of the body of Christ through faith in Him. In addition, hopefully this Christian man has also joined a local church. As part of his New Covenant obligations, a Christian man has a responsibility to meet “pressing needs” in his church: “Let our people learn to engage in good deeds, to meet pressing needs, that they may not be unfruitful” (Titus 3:14).

I discuss the nature of pressings needs in another place, but to summarize, pressing needs refer to emergency needs where there is imminent danger to life or property; long term needs, such as the widowed and single parents; and catastrophic needs that result in total dependence.

A Christian man, then, not only has a responsibility to meet his own needs and the needs of his relatives, both distant and near, he also is responsible for finding out what the pressing needs are in his local church and then meeting them.

## **Fifth Circle of a Christian Man’s Responsibility – His Neighbor**

Finally, a Christian man has a responsibility to people in his immediate neighborhood or someone in dire need whom he may run into during his normal course of life. “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” is the second most important command in scripture, Jesus stated (Luke 12:31). Of course, the story of the Good Samaritan that follows this declaration is the definitive story on the command to love one’s neighbor.

In this story, Jesus defines neighbor in the broadest possible terms. Essentially, a neighbor is anyone we come across who is in dire need whom we can help, even someone whom our society would consider an outcast and/or an enemy.

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But often, by giving the term “neighbor” a broad definition such as this, we tend to forget the more narrow and concrete sense of neighbor, i.e. the person who lives next to us. I like to point out that neighbor means neighbor. We can think abstractly about our neighbor across town or even our neighbor in other countries. But the more common use of the term refers to the person or people who live next to us, or very near to us.

## ...And Blessing

These, then, are the five circles of responsibility every Christian man has surrounding him.

But they are not only circles of responsibility, they are also circles of blessing. As a Christian man meets his responsibilities in each circle, immense blessing flows to him. As he becomes self supporting, supports his wife and children, meets needs in his extended family, the needs in his church, and the needs in his neighborhood, blessing after blessing flows to him in the form of prosperity, loving relationships, mutual support, a stable and secure community, self confidence, love, and even aid in times when he himself is in need. His life becomes a living example of what Jesus said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

# The One Amazing Thing God Wants to Do With Men

## Meeting the Pressing Needs in a Christian Man's Five Circles of Responsibility

Now that we've identified the five circles of a Christian man's responsibility to guarantee the well-being of those in need around him—himself, his family, his extended family, his church and his neighbors—the next question is how one goes about fulfilling this responsibility.

At first, one would think that guaranteeing the well-being of all of these people is an impossible task. Perhaps you feel the same incredulity Moses felt leading his hungry people in the wilderness, “Here I am,” Moses complained to God, “Among six hundred thousand men on foot, and you say, ‘I will give them meat to eat for a whole month!’” Numbers 11:21. You probably also identify with how the disciples of Jesus felt when they looked out at several thousand people who had followed them into the wilderness and then heard Jesus tell them, “You feed them!” Matthew 14:16.

I often think of this latter story, called “The Feeding of the Five Thousand”, when I consider what God is calling us to do with those in need around us. Just as the disciples looked at their meager resources— five loaves of bread and two fish—and concluded that there was no way they could meet Jesus' demand, so we look at our own resources and decide that they are insufficient to meet all these needs. Often, we may barely have enough to meet our own needs and the needs of our family, let alone the needs of those outside our family.

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But Jesus showed his disciples, and all of his disciples who would follow after them, that if we trust him with our finite resources to meet the needs of those around us, he will in fact meet those needs. “God is able,” Paul would later remind the Corinthian church, “to make all grace abound to you, so that at all times, in every way, you will have all that you need for every good work.” 2 Corinthians 9:8.

So how do we in a practical sense go about meeting needs in our five circles of responsibility? Here are seven ways every Christian man can accomplish “every good work” God calls him to do in meeting the needs of those around him.

**1. We establish loving relationships with those around us who are in need.**

We are not called to simply “serve one another.” We are to “serve one another *in love*,” Galatians 5:13. It is love that motivates the Christian man to doggedly provide for those in need around him. Without love—without genuine, affectionate relationships—as a motivating factor, such a task becomes pure drudgery.

It is because a Christian man loves his wife and children that he makes sure their needs are met. It is because a Christian man loves his extended family that he responds effectively in times of crisis. It is because a Christian man loves his church family that he looks out for its widowed and single parents and others in need. It is because a Christian man has come to know and understand his neighbors—to really love them with affection—that he goes the extra mile for them.

Without loving relationships, all of this sacrifice is impossible. But with love, sacrifice is natural.

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## 2. We work hard.

Good work is, well, *work*. And sometimes it is hard work. This is how the apostle Paul describes it, “You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me. In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive,’” Acts 20:34-35.

Paul worked hard by taking a second job—tent making—besides his primary job of preaching the gospel. He did this to not only provide for his own needs, but also for the needs of those around him. Then he used what he did as an example for his fellow believers in Ephesus to follow.

In another passage, Paul repeats this same idea of working to meet the needs of others: “Let the one who stole, steal no more. But rather let him labor with his hands, that he may have something to share with him who is in need,” Ephesians 4:28.

Like everyone else, A Christian man works hard to provide for himself and for his family and his extended family. But when it comes to his church family and to his neighbor, a Christian man distinguishes himself by being willing to take a second job if need be in order to meet “pressing needs” in his church and community, Titus 3:14.

Again, in the absence of a loving relationship, such work is highly unusual and might even be labeled as neurotic. But because a Christian man knows and loves the widow in his church or the neighbor down the block, he becomes highly motivated to sacrifice for them. I have observed this sacrifice-motivated-by-love phenomenon frequently in men’s team ministry and it is clearly stated in Philippians 2:1-4:

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“Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”

### 3. We sacrifice.

If the need is dire—for example, if someone we know were dying of starvation, or in desperate need of an expensive surgery—a Christian man may even sell an asset to meet the need. Many widows in the early church were on the verge of starvation. Believers responded in that situation by selling property and possessions to meet needs as those needs arose (Acts 2:45 and 4:34).

Similarly, in 1 Timothy 6:18, Paul told Timothy to instruct the rich “to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share.”

### 4. We use discernment.

A Christian man is not a chump when it comes to meeting needs. He knows people can be knaves, cheats and liars. He knows people can be unwise, lazy and manipulative. But he also knows that there are people around him with genuine “pressing needs.” Because he works hard at developing relationships with those he helps, he has an awareness of the situation that enables him to wisely allocate his time, energy and finances and doesn’t just blindly throw his resources at anyone who comes to him with a request.

### 5. We advocate.



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A Christian man doesn't just throw up his hands and walk away from a genuine need simply because the need exceeds his resources. Instead, he begins looking for other sources of help, such as the needy person's relatives, charities, government programs, and, finally, his church.

When the Good Samaritan asked the innkeeper to take care of his wounded friend while he was away, he was advocating for him. When Paul exhorted the Ephesian elders to work hard so they could help the weak in their church, he was advocating for them. In the same way, when Jesus committed the care of his mother into the hands of John, he was advocating for her.

## 6. We join with others.

A Christian man uses teamwork to help meet the genuine pressing needs of those around him. He enters into committed relationships with fellow believers who help him share the load. I call this process "coagulation." A single blood cell can't staunch a wound. But that blood cell can and does join with other blood cells to form a healing scab. This process of blood cells joining together is called coagulation. In the same way, one Christian man cannot meet all the needs around him alone. But he can when he joins together with other believers.

The early church used teamwork when it assigned seven godly men to care for its widows in Acts 6. Jesus used teamwork when he fed the five thousand and the four thousand. All through the New Testament we see teams of men meeting needs and spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## 7. We trust God.

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“Give us this day our daily bread,” Jesus taught us to pray. Some needs are so great they require divine intervention. God has promised us that if we trust Him to meet an outstanding need, he will provide the resources to meet it (2 Corinthians 9:8). A Christian man knows the power of God. When he has exhausted all his resources and explored all his options in attempting to meet a need, he knows that God’s promise still stands. So he waits on the Lord and spends time in intercessory prayer.

The joy that comes in seeing God meet needs in this way only strengthens a Christian man’s faith and motivates him to even greater good works. The result is that Christian men meeting the pressing needs of those around them become men of great consequence.

One might be tempted to think that the above description of Christian men meeting pressing needs is pie-in-the-sky wishful thinking. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, there are many thousands of men across the United States and around the world who are indeed meeting the pressing needs in all five of their circles of responsibility. In the next chapter I will describe who these men are and the impact they are having.

## But Does This Work?

I’ve discussed the seven ways Christian men go about meeting pressing needs in their five circles of responsibility (Those circles of responsibility being themselves, their family, their extended family, their church and their neighbor). The means by which Christian men meet pressing needs are: they develop loving relationships, they work hard, they sacrifice, they use discernment, they advocate, they join together with others, and they trust God.

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Now the question is, does this work in the real world? After all, this vision of eradicating need around us seems overwhelming and unrealistic. So are there in fact Christian men who really are meeting the pressing needs in their five circles of responsibility?

When I first began New Commandment Men's Ministries over fifteen years ago with the goal of helping churches develop men's team ministries to their people with long term needs, my wife asked me, "Why don't you just write a book about it?"

My response was that I first wanted to prove the practicality of Christian men meeting pressing needs and *then* write a book about it. I wanted to write from experience and not just present an interesting, but unproven, theory of men's ministry. I am pleased to say that after fifteen years of hard work I can now point to thousands and thousands of Christian men who are indeed meeting the pressing needs in their five circles of responsibility.

## Am I Doing This?

The bane of all ministry is that it's easier to tell people what they should do than it is to actually do it. Therefore, it is critical that I be able to point to my own experience when I talk about meeting pressing needs. Paul charged Timothy to "set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity," (1 Timothy 4:12). And more than once he set himself up as an example for his readers to follow (Philippians 3:17; 1 Corinthians 11:1). Paul wasn't bragging when he did this. He was simply showing his readers how to do what he was talking about.

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In the same way, I can say that over the past several years I have worked hard at meeting needs in my five circles of responsibility. At times, those needs have seemed overwhelming. But in each case, as I learned to “walk toward liability instead of away from it,” the Lord gave me ways to meet the needs, just as He promised in 2 Corinthians 9:8.

“God is able to make all grace abound to you so that at all times, in every way, you will have all that you need for every good work.”

With regard to the needs of those in the churches I have either been the pastor of or have attended, I have served on teams of my own. At various times, my teams have served a widow, a single mom, the wife of a soldier stationed in Iraq, and a divorcee. We have been able to establish consistent and effective ministry over many years. In the process, I have grown close to my team members, had an effective ministry to our care receivers and witnessed for the Lord to the neighbors, relatives and friends of our care receivers. The entire process has been a great personal joy. There are few things I would rather do than spend time with my team serving our care receiver.

The result is that I can personally validate everything when I talk about men’s team ministry, not only from the reports of others, but from my own experience. At the time of this writing I don’t know of a single need going unmet in my five circles of responsibility.

**Is My Own Church Doing This?**

# The One Amazing Thing God Wants to Do With Men

I attend Crossroads Church, a mid-sized church of 2,000 adults with three campuses in Northglenn, Thornton and Ft. Lupton, Colorado. I head up the men's team ministry at the church as a volunteer. We started our men's team ministry fifteen years ago with three teams, twelve men and three care receivers. Over the years the ministry has grown to sixteen teams, with sixty-one men serving twenty-six widows, widowers and single parents, plus another five children. Some teams have been serving their care receiver for over ten years, and the majority for over five years. About a quarter of our care receivers are from outside the church.

We are covering everyone in our church with a team who needs and wants one. There is no one on our waiting list. I believe we can truly say, "There is not a needy person among us."

As a result, the response has been overwhelming. We have seen God's blessing on this ministry at Crossroads over and over again. Widows say they are not depressed anymore. The children of single parents have godly role models to follow and often wind up establishing godly marriages of their own. Significant financial needs are being met. The men in the ministry have developed close Christian friends. And the teams have a wonderful testimony in the community. My pastor has told me more than once, "I never get any complaints from your ministry."

## Are Other Churches in My Community Doing This?

Besides my own church, men's team ministry has spread to over half a dozen churches in the Denver area. These churches range in size from a couple of hundred to several thousand. Most of these churches have been doing men's team ministry for over five years and have had similar results as our church.

## Can Different Types of Churches in Different Regions of the Country Do This?

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Men's team ministry has also spread to several hundred churches outside of Colorado. There are churches of all sizes and types with this ministry in every state except Delaware. These churches are in dozens of denominations and represent the broad spectrum of demographic groups.

## Is This Practical for Churches in Other Countries?

Not only has men's team ministry spread across America, it has also been adopted by churches in the following foreign countries: Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Latvia, Greece, Nigeria, South Africa and Cayman Islands.

So the question, "But does it work?" can be answered with a resounding "Yes!" It is indeed possible for Christian men to meet the pressing needs in all five of their circles of responsibility and men's team ministry is one very effective way to do it.

And that is the one amazing thing God wants men to do!

## Your Next Step: Look Around You

If all you do is read this book and then put it down and forget about it, I've failed.

Instead, I hope you take a very important step toward putting what I've been writing about into action. Take a few moments to write down who you think the neediest people in your church may be and who you think the neediest people on your block and in your community may be. List specific names if possible.

The neediest people in my church are:

The neediest people on my block and in my community are:

# The One Amazing Thing God Wants to Do With Men

Now apply what you've learned in this book toward meeting those needs.

It's as simple as that.