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CHAPTER ONE

LIVE AS THOUGH NOTHING *ELSE MATTERS*

As a child living in New Mexico, I remember looking up at the star-stenciled night sky and thinking, "Someone created all of this, and I want to know him. I want to be on his side."

But I didn't know God, and I had no idea how to meet him. Equally troublesome was the fact that my life had no direction. I was only a kid, but I sensed that knowing God would give my life meaning.

Years later, when I met God, he did just that. But like a lot of men, I tend to lose my spiritual focus. I forget the radical changes God brought to my life, and I find it easy to get trapped in an eddy of spiritual passivity. Round and round I go with lots of activity but no direction. At such times I realize I'm living with the same purposelessness I knew as a boy.

Do you know what I mean? If so, you're probably as con-

cerned with your bent toward spiritual passivity as I am with mine. This book was written for men who, like me, are tired of living like spiritual weaklings. It's for men who believe

they were created to be warriors but aren't sure how to fight or what they should be fighting for. It's for men who want to lock onto their purpose for living. And it's for men who want to learn ancient secrets from some of the greatest warriors of the Bible: David's special fighting force, the mighty men.



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But wait a minute. I'm getting ahead of myself and need to get back to the story of how I met God. Like I said, as a kid I wanted to know God but didn't know how. One day I asked a friend what I had to do to know God and he said, "It's simple, really. God is in heaven holding a giant scale. On the left side he places your good deeds and on the right side your bad ones. As long as your good deeds outweigh your bad deeds, you're in with God."

While such a religious philosophy may have seemed simple to him, it didn't help me at all. The more I evaluated my "deeds," the more I realized the scale wasn't tipping in the right direction.

I had another friend who attended church every Sunday. I asked him the same question. He told me I needed to be baptized. He explained that the water of baptism miraculously had the power to wash away the guilt of my past sins.

"And what about those I commit in the future?" I asked.

"Well, just don't sin after you're baptized and you'll be okay," he said. "Besides, once you're baptized, you won't want to sin."

I was ten at the time and decided to wait until I was twelve to take the big plunge. As unbelievable as it sounds, I thought that by age twelve I would be through sinning. I looked at adults and naively believed they didn't do bad things—at least not as many as I did.

The church I visited with my friend usually baptized by sprinkling, but once a year they baptized by immersion. I figured the sprinkling was for people who hadn't sinned much, so I decided to be immersed. I still remember getting out of the water and thinking, *All I have to do now is never sin again*. I even managed to make it for several seconds without sinning. However, less than an hour after the momentous event I realized the baptism must not have "taken." Nothing within me had changed. I felt and acted exactly the same as I had before.

I told my friend that baptism didn't seem to have had an effect on me. That's when he informed me that baptism is like a base hit: It gets a person to first base but it doesn't guarantee he'll make it home.

"So what else do I have to do?" I asked.

"Just do the best you can," he said. "God grades on a curve."

Something about that last statement made me uncomfortable, probably because I was a terrible student. I remember taking a health class in which we had to name every bone in the human body. I managed to name them

all—funny bone, neck bone, collarbone, pinky, index finger, knee bone, big toe, and so on.

A few days later I asked the teacher, "Are you going to grade on a curve?"

He smiled, and I felt a momentary rush of relief. Then he said, "Perkins, I could curve the test fifty points and you'd still flunk." The next day I got the test back and saw a great big nine written on it in red ink. I immediately thought about God. What if I only score a nine on my life morality test? I'm doomed.

It was at that moment I concluded that although God exists, he could no more be known than fictional characters like Santa Claus or Superman. And if God couldn't be known, then life was a maze with no purpose except to get through it—and getting

through it unscathed proved impossible for me.

It wasn't until I was a freshman at the University of Texas that a meltdown with three crucial people drove me to God. Within a month I had destroyed my relationship with my girlfriend, my best friend, and my mentor. I had repeatedly and deeply hurt the people I loved the most. The painful realization that I was the world's greatest jerk and had destroyed my best hopes for love and friendship drove me into a deep depression. Unable to do anything more than nibble at my food, I saw my weight drop from 145 pounds to 130 pounds. I looked and felt like a walking dead man.



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During the darkest moment of my depression, I knelt beside my bed and cried out to God, "I don't know if you can hear me, but if you can, please save me from myself."

I didn't expect anything to happen and it didn't—at least not right away. A few weeks later I met a student on campus, and he asked me if anyone had ever shown me from the Bible how I could know God. That seemed like a novel approach.

I had already learned that I could no more earn God's favor than I could jump to the moon, so the concept of Jesus dying in my place to take the punishment for all my sins made sense to me. So did the idea that God would accept me on the basis of faith and not baptism or good works. Over the next several months, as my understanding grew, I entered into a relationship with God. And I celebrated the fact that he welcomed my friendship.

Immediately I saw significant changes in my life. Since childhood I had tried to stop cussing and never succeeded. God replaced the cesspool in my soul with a spring of fresh water, and it affected my speech.

I had committed many sins in my nineteen or so years of life. When I looked at the Ten Commandments I knew for sure that the only one I hadn't committed was murder. Yet I had found forgiveness. Words can't capture the feelings of a forgiven man. I felt clean, and it was wonderful.

I also lived with a new sense of wonder. The change proved as extreme as turning on a light in a dark room and exposing a treasure that had been there all along.

But the most radical change involved the way I viewed

life. I realized that nothing else mattered when compared to knowing God. Not money, power, fame, sex, or even family.

Once I allowed this reality to govern my life, everything else took on meaning. I had found the box top to a puzzle, or

it had found me, and the pieces now had a place. I became a young man with a mission and a purpose. I wanted to know God better, and I wanted to help others know him. God became my ballast and my compass, keeping me upright and headed in the right direction.

That experience changed what I believe and changed the course of my life. What disturbs me is that now, years later, while I still believe that nothing else matters com-

pared to knowing God, I often live as though I don't believe it. I struggle with spiritual passivity. It eats away at me as covertly as termites in the walls of my house. And I know that most men are weakened in the same way.

How can we combat this passivity? We must choose to live with a focus on God. We must daily remind ourselves that compared to knowing him and fighting at his side, nothing else matters. We must live as the warriors God created us to be. As you'll see in the remainder of this book, God equipped us to win the six biggest battles of a man's life.

Winning these battles begins with an understanding of the broader war of which each battle is a part. In the next chapter you'll discover that we're all involved in the great



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aside our
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angelic conflict, which is a spiritual war for the hearts of men. Yes, angels, both fallen and unfallen, are involved in this war, and your heart is the battleground.

Discussion Questions

- 1. On your own spiritual journey, what kinds of things have you thought would bring you into a relationship with God?*
- 2. Suppose you were to stand before God and he asked you, "Why should I let you into heaven?" What would you tell him?*
- 3. Take a moment to read Romans 4:5, Ephesians 2:8-9, and John 3:18. Can you identify what the Bible says about why God should let you into heaven? Do you feel you've met that qualification? Why or why not?*
- 4. Can you say that compared to knowing God and fighting at his side, nothing else matters?*
- 5. If you lived as though nothing else mattered compared to knowing God and fighting at his side, what would your life look like?*

JOIN THE MOVEMENT

After reading the story of David's mighty men, I sensed God calling me to encourage guys to become modern-day mighty men. I launched a ministry called Million Mighty Men with the belief that revival would come, one man and one day at a time. My vision is for a million men to say: "I want to daily engage in the six battles of a mighty man, and I want to lock arms with others who share my desire for spiritual victory."

In order to engage as warriors in the great angelic conflict, I ask men to agree to practice the daily disciplines mentioned at the end of the previous chapter. I realize that these disciplines aren't the end-all in spiritual warfare. However, they equip us to fight the six battles by enabling us to deepen our relationship with God and our family.

As we engage the enemy, we'll want to encourage other men to join our ranks and aggressively support their pastor and church.

I would like to invite you to lock arms with me and other men around the world. You can do this by going to www.millionmightymen.com and entering your name. You'll receive a weekly e-mail from me and become part of a movement of men who have decided we will be bullied no more. By God's grace we will win the battle for our heart and those of our family.

You might also want to encourage your wife to go to www.millionprayingwomen.com and sign up for a weekly prayer e-mail that focuses on the needs of men. Revival will not come without a concentrated prayer effort. As we enter in these

six battles we need the focused prayers of our wife and the wives of other mighty men.

If you want more information regarding hosting a *Million Mighty Men* event in your church or community, please contact me at: bill@millionmightymen.com or at P.O. Box 415, Marylhurst, OR 97036.

ENDNOTES

Chapter Two: The Great Angelic Conflict

¹ Charles R. Swindoll, *Improving Your Serve* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 1981), 2.

² In Genesis 1:28 God is addressing men and women. Both were called to exercise responsible dominion over creation, and both entered the great angelic conflict as combatants. However, the focus of this book is on Adam's responsibility.

Chapter Three: Stand Your Ground: Winning the War for Your Heart

¹ Barna Research Online, "Women Are the Backbone of the Christian Congregations in America," 6 March 2000.

² I want to thank Dan Schaeffer for his currently unpublished research and insight into the male context.

³ Lynn H. Colwell, "Weekend Warriors," *Entrepreneur.com*, 30 January 2003.

⁴ Timothy Egan, "Wall Street Meets Pornography," *New York Times*, 23 October 2000.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Mark R. Laaser, "The Pornography Trap," *New Man*, September-October 2002, ix.

Chapter Four: Battle One: Fight for Your Identity

¹ The name Josheb-Basshebeth is found in the Masoretic Text, but the Septuagint has Ishbosheth, presumably from Ishboshet (man of shame). The meaning of the name Josheb-Basshebeth is incomprehensible: "the one dwelling in the