

MY SON RISING

*Letters to a Fatherless
Generation*

JASON DERAMO

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DEDICATION

To the spiritual orphans and lost sons.

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INTRODUCTION

It never dawned on me that growing up with an exemplary father and role model would lead to one of the greatest strengths of ministry. One would think you would serve others from a past area of struggle, but for the dozens of young men I've mentored over the years, the vast majority have never experienced genuine fathering before.

In my first book, *The Hardest Men*, I explored the qualities and characteristics of what makes men truly strong. In keeping with this tradition, I now wish to journey into the young man's soul as portrayed through the eyes of a loving father.

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The goal of this book is to hopefully pass on Godly wisdom and encouragement to the next generation, especially to those without an earthly father.

Some of the illustrations presented throughout this text are drawn from diverse sources, including Biblical literature, African and Eastern folktales, and fictional stories pieced together from my own experience and imagination.

The issues addressed here are especially relevant in today's culture, where household dysfunction and abandonment have grown at alarming rates. Beyond merely quoting research or offering suggestions, I am going to speak from the heart of a loving father.

My ultimate hope is to remind people of the truth that they are first and fully loved by a *Heavenly Father* who cares for them deeply, and to live purposely out of that relationship.

– Jason

1. LOVE

*“Little children, let us not love in word or talk
but in deed and in truth.”*

1 John 3:18

Have I told you what I’m proud of most? It’s watching you rise. It’s seeing my face in your reflection; every hair on your head intricately woven by the Creator. You are my pride and joy, His masterpiece. You are my light, and His bright and shining star.

You may think it’s strange that I’m saying these things to you. Perhaps you’ve never heard a man tell you how much he loves you, how proud he is of you, or that you’re enough in his eyes. But I am.

Did you know that love is not just a noun, but a verb too? This means there should be action

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behind it. When someone is truly loved, they feel safe, secure, and special. That's real love.

Perhaps an illustration of love is needed:

Let's say someone gave you a warm bowl of soup on a cold day. Do you ask the person why, where it came from, or what it cost? Maybe you feel their generosity is merely human, a good deed even. Surely you would do the same for someone in need. But true love requires no such display to justify itself. *Love is about the heart of the giver.*

I'm writing these things to you because you matter to me. You are loved, and this love is not dependent upon me, but God. He has a Son too. Some call him the Christ, or Messiah; others a prophet, a teacher, or holy man. Who do you say that He is?

Rise, my son. Be strong. Though you may not hear it often, I am proud of you. I love you for who you are, not for what you could do for me or others. You can never earn my love; I don't want you to perform.

Tell me your thoughts so I can listen. My heart desires to know more. I don't want to fix you, but

LOVE

sometimes love presents itself in discipline and correction. There is a difference in my approach though. My love is meant to keep you from pain, from destroying your body and soul or giving the best parts of yourself away. I wish to spare you the wounds and consequences I've suffered.

When I was a young man, I thoughtlessly gave in to my desires, and the darkness overcame me. It's not worth it, son. No love or peace existed in that place. You can try to fill your heart with the things of this world, but deep down they will never satisfy you. That place is for the things of eternity. Love alone belongs there.

What is love, anyway? Is it brotherly affection or romantic passion? Maybe it's self-sacrificing, like giving up something of importance for another person? That's the kind of love a good father shows for his son. Love is not just in what we do or say, it's in how we act; it is a reality.

When we examine what we know, believe, and trust, we must question love's origin and meaning. Where does it come from, and what does it say about our identity and purpose?

Question these things intently, son. Search the

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ancient storehouses of Wisdom and find for yourself what love truly is. Set yourself apart to discover this most profound revelation, and you will not be disappointed.

In all my searching, this is what I have found:

*"God is love."*¹

*"We love because He first loved us."*²

*"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."*³

I want to tell you about the first love I ever knew. It was my earthly father. He raised, provided for, and protected me. He loved me as he loved himself. *He was my friend.* He walked me home from school, and we said our prayers together before bed each night. When I was alone and scared, I cried aloud, and he came to me. A good father is present, consistent, self-controlled, and reliable. *He is loving.*

Before my father passed, he told me to be strong, to wipe my tears, and to be a man. He was the greatest example of an earthly father I ever knew, and yet my life is just a mere reflection of

LOVE

the figure he once was. If you have never experienced this kind of love, then I say to you now: *You have a Father in Heaven, He loves you, and desires a relationship with you.*

I remember a man who once shared with me his wisdom on fathering. He said that when each of his sons reached a certain age, he spoke to them individually and said:

“Son, you’re a man now. I want to tell you something because you are ready. I am not your father. Your true Father is God, who is in Heaven. I’m just the man on earth that’s here to point you to Him.”

That is what I desire to share with you now: *God is your Father.* His Spirit rests in the hearts of those who believe in His Son, Jesus. No greater Source of love compares with Him, for His love is eternal.

This may sound heavy—strange even—but please keep reading. I want to show you an image of how a true father should be. This portrait was shown to me, and I am now passing it on to you. To discover it, we must begin with a search. *Open God’s Word* and see for yourself what is written.

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His love soaks every page of the Bible with joy, peace, and forgiveness.

But what about the many evils in life people suffer? How can a loving God allow this to happen? Son, why do we ask such things instead of looking at the love in the world? Why do we question the hate in a man's heart and ignore the grace we've been given? Shall we cease showing love because some choose to do evil?

Some may say, "God has abandoned us," or "love has died," but that is not so. God is *with us*. His Son made this possible when he died on the cross:

*"But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed."*⁴

This is the hope we have: *Love ultimately wins!* We know this to be true; we feel it deep down. When all else fails, love shines through, piercing the broken crevices of our hearts and immersing us with hope and warmth beyond imagination. Love comforts our souls in darkness and covers us through the pain and sorrows of life.

LOVE

When all seems lost, love remains. When hope
dwindles; His presence sustains.

Love is a Person.

2. STRENGTH

“The strength of the crocodile is in the water.”

African Proverb

May I ask, son, have you ever been bullied? Have you felt abandoned or rejected? Were you teased, threatened, or forced to submit to another's will? Had I been there, I would've protected you. I would've stood in the gap and exchanged my life for yours. I would take a thousand bullets, beatings, lashes, and scars to keep the tears from running down your face—I would die for you.

One night I asked my father, “Papa, if you were away, and I needed you, what should I do?” He

STRENGTH

replied, "Son, you say the prayer. The same one we do every night when I tuck you into bed":

*"Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one."*⁵

When we pray, we show our true strength. Prayer opens our hearts to God, making them more tender toward Him and others. For real strength is not just measured by bars of steel but in strands of velvet.

Who among us is without blemish? Who born of dirt can claim they do not sin? We all fall and stumble, but a truly strong man admits his faults, repents, and keeps getting better. And don't be ashamed to show mercy, for it takes courage to forgive without losing heart.

Allow these truths to keep you grounded, son.

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Be strong in both mind and spirit, where the toughest battles are fought. Take your thoughts captive—surrender and submit them to God—and He will fight our battles for us.⁶ It may take a lifetime of discipline, but the outcome produces Godly character leading to righteousness.

I have seen many men of strength lose the battle before engaging with their trials. Don't let this be you. Learn to develop spiritual muscles by depending more on Christ, and He will move mountains in your path.

I would like to share with you a parable about strength. Listen closely to what is said and apply this wisdom to your heart:

A mountain lion went searching diligently for its prey with hungry cubs in tow. Winter was on the horizon, and not a precious moment to waste.

At first, she happened upon a zebra, but the lion was too stately to pursue this grass-eating herbivore. She then proceeded to chase a herd of antelope but was tired and famished from the week's hunt.

Starving and concerned for her cub's safety,

STRENGTH

the lion found a nearby cave in which to hide. Without warning, a sudden blizzard swept through the region, trapping them in the snow-covered rock. Soon after, the lion died, leaving the cubs to feast on her carcass until the winter passed.

Do you perceive the lesson here, son? Don't waste your stamina on the pursuit while neglecting the more obvious and important things in life: *your faith and family*. There are sometimes no right or wrong choices; just the decisions themselves shaping our lives and future in different ways.

Often, we equate strength with "toughing it out" or "being a man," but it takes real humility to surrender pride and admit our faults. Do the voices in your head tell you otherwise? Are they saying that you'll never succeed—you'll never measure up—and to just quit? Don't listen to them, son. No one ever achieves victory by surrendering after defeat. True strength is getting back up each time, wiping the dust off your face, and reengaging in life's battles.

One of the bloodiest conflicts in modern history surrounded the American Civil War. Over

600,000 men gave their lives for an unforeseen future. Whites and blacks—both slave and free—were conscripted from all walks to fight for the most fundamental rights of life, liberty, and equality.

William H. Carney was one man whose example of strength and bravery transcended a generation:

Born a slave in the state of Virginia, Carney made his way to freedom and enlisted in the 54th Massachusetts Infantry, the first African American regiment of the Union Army.

After fighting alongside other free blacks, and surviving multiple horrific battles in between, his unit was given the crucial task of taking Fort Wagner. The base sat along the fortified beachhead near Charleston Harbor, South Carolina, a location of strategic importance to the war effort.

Carney, and the rest of the 54th Infantry, stormed the fort's walls against heavy enemy forces and artillery. The Union flag bearer was killed, leaving his unit in much disarray. Despite suffering multiple injuries, Carney

STRENGTH

selflessly took up the flag in the slain soldier's place, holding it for the duration of the battle.

"I only did my duty," Carney later said in a report, "The old flag never touched the ground!"

For his actions, William Carney was awarded the Medal of Honor in 1900; the first of any African American soldier in U.S. history.

Examples of military heroism are certain to spark courage in a young man, but I will share another story—a very different example than the previous—and you can judge for yourself what it means to be truly strong.

Saint Telemachus was a religious man who lived in Rome around 404 AD. During this time, Christians, slaves, and other persecuted groups were thrown into the Colosseum to be killed or tortured for the crowd's amusement.

Without warning, Telemachus jumped over the wall and began speaking against the horrific acts in the arena. The crowds shifted their attention from the brutality of the games toward this looming figure and preacher.

After calling the people to turn from innocent bloodshed to receive Jesus as Lord and King, the crowds began to hurl large objects and insults at him. Stones, food, and other missiles rained down as the gladiators below slayed him to death.

With Telemachus' lifeless body on display, the miraculous happened: The crowd's angry cries for bloodshed gave way to a profound silence. People slowly began to leave, until the entire arena was empty.

According to one historical report, *"From the day Telemachus fell dead in the Colosseum, no other gladiatorial fight was held there ever again."*⁷

It is easy to forget about the blood and tears others have shed for the freedoms we enjoy today. Many of these people never saw the fruit of their sacrifice, but they fought for something greater than themselves, even if it cost them their lives. Likewise, Jesus took the death penalty for our sins, sacrificing everything so that we can live victoriously through Him. He accomplished this not through violence, or political rhetoric, but by courage, faithfulness, and forgiveness.

STRENGTH

Let's return the honor by aligning our lives to God's Holy standard and begin making positive differences to gain strength for the things that matter most. Yesterday may have passed, but each day is a new opportunity to begin again.

3. TRUTH

"What is truth?"

Pontius Pilate, c. 33 AD

You have likely heard this question before, but have you deeply pondered its meaning? Is truth objective? Can we search for it or discover its origin? Can we define truth, and if so, by what standard? How can we know for certain if our findings are accurate?

Mankind has engineered technology and bridged the known world. We have examined the brain, discovered DNA, and explored the ends of the galaxy. But who has mastered the human heart? Who can know man's ways and determine

TRUTH

his steps? These questions are not so easy, son, but their answers are more profound than we can imagine.

When I was a young man, I pondered these things long and hard. Like you, I was smart, capable, and full of vigor. I wanted life and all its pleasures. More so, I wanted to know everything; to learn, and to become great and admired.

A wise man once told me, "The part of you that seeks to understand is the same part that desires control." We do this also with facts and knowledge. We bend truth to our image, and with distorted purposes make it do our bidding.

It has been said, "You have your truth, and I have my truth," but how can two contradictory truths both be true at the same time? To determine the best path forward, we must start with the premise that truth exists independently of opinions.

If these same principles apply to how we construct a bridge or a tower, would it still stand? Consider the following example:

A construction firm was reviewing plans for a new skyscraper they intended to build. During

the planning phase, two engineers disagreed about the design of the building. One of the engineers wanted a round building, while the other opted for a traditional square tower.

After pouring over each other's plans, the circular concept was ruled out. The structure and design of the building simply could not be supported. However, a traditional square tower could be achieved by centuries of applied building methods. This should have settled the matter, but the engineers continued to disagree, each insisting the other's building model was the only correct way. In the end, the project was awarded to the team that could physically get the job done.

Both engineers approached the same problem but with two different perspectives. Regardless of their creative efforts, one thought he could envision the design one way while the other based his plans on established methods that have proven their reliability over time.

When we hear things that challenge our beliefs on a core level, we raise mountains around our hearts and minds instead of processing the

TRUTH

logical arguments raised. We should certainly assess thoughts and perspectives that differ from our own, but we should by no means discard the simple and obvious facts of life that have remained for centuries.

“What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.”⁸

The quest for truth and meaning has long been a key task in the heart of man. We’re uniquely created to perceive the reality around us—as it is—and to make sense of life and living. A further illustration may provide valuable insight into the perspectives of reality we all carry:

An ancient folktale from India speaks of six old men who were born blind. Among all the stories they heard, the one that captivated them the most was about elephants.

A chance occasion afforded them to be near one of these great beasts. Each of the men walked up to the elephant without the faintest clue of what to expect.

The first blind man reached out and touched its side: “An elephant is smooth and solid, like

a wall.”

The second blind man reached out and grabbed its trunk: “An elephant is like a snake.”

The third blind man reached out and grabbed its pointed tusk: “The beast is sharp and deadly, like a spear.”

The fourth blind man reached out and grabbed one of its four legs: “What is this, a large cow of some kind?”

The fifth blind man reached out and grabbed the elephant’s ear: “I’m convinced this elephant is like a fan or magic carpet that can fly above the mountains.”

Lastly, the sixth blind man reached out and grabbed its tail: “Why this is nothing more than an old piece of rope.”

The blind men then discussed among themselves what was felt, comparing their experiences with each other. An argument quickly emerged over who was right, and which accounts were more genuine.

A concerned guide and friend—who could

TRUTH

see—approached them with a question: “What is the difference between an elephant and a baboon?”

The blind men pondered among themselves for a few minutes, each with slightly different descriptions of the two animals. Realizing the conundrum before them, the oldest in the group responded, “We don’t know.”

Son, I hope this helps explain just how important it is to learn and seek knowledge from reliable and proven sources. The blind men discovered that each possessed a fragment of the total picture, and yet the elephant never stopped being an elephant. Nothing changes the truth of what is known and revealed, only the perceptions by which we view reality.

Even the Greek philosophers proclaim, “God is truth and light his shadow.”⁹ So how then did we lose our way? When did man consider himself equal to God? Surely, we have split the atom, we have reached for the stars, but did we create them? Do we know the past and why it happened, or the future and its many outcomes?

Listen to what the ancients prophesied:

“Present the case for your idols... Let them try to tell us what happened long ago so that we may consider the evidence. Or let them tell us what the future holds, so we can know what’s going to happen. Yes, tell us what will occur in the days ahead. Then we will know you are gods.”¹⁰

If the wise men diligently searched for Him, and if countless hearts for centuries were changed by the power and miracles of a man claiming to be God, then perhaps we owe it to ourselves to discover why.

Examine all the beliefs of the world and see for yourself what their principal messengers say. Have any claimed to possess knowledge and wisdom equal to God, and if so, how did they prove it? More importantly, what was the result of their lives and impact on us today?

What then can we say about truth? Truth is the Christ—the ultimate reality. The great I AM.

4. HONOR

“Honor is the morality of duty.”

Unknown

Can you think of a moment where you felt proud of yourself? Perhaps you helped a friend or gave money to the poor. Have you sacrificed your time to benefit others, even if no one saw it?

An honorable person is someone whose character and actions warrant the highest degree of respect. Without honor, whole families and communities suffer.

Great people are known for their honorable deeds, regardless of their age or life

accomplishments. One example of honor emerges from a humble and unsuspecting origin:

It was the eve of Christmas, and a small rural family was battling through poverty. The father had recently been laid off from his job, and the family was suffering severe financial difficulties. There wasn't even enough money left for a single toy truck their son had wished for. Still, the family had faith that things would turn around for the better.

Someone from their church called and asked the father to come by early in the morning. Upon arriving the following day, the priest opened his car trunk and pulled out bags of newly wrapped presents donated by other families. The father had not asked for help but humbly accepted the presents with gratitude in his heart.

That Christmas morning, the parents were surprised when their son had received not just one toy truck but two. Instead of keeping both presents, the boy selected the finest truck and asked to donate it to another child in need. That year marked a new family tradition of purchasing an extra Christmas gift for

HONOR

desperate families which continues to this day.

We see three portraits of honor in this story. The first comes from a father who humbles himself by going to the church at his priest's request. Instead of sitting in shame, the man receives undeserved gifts from fellow members. The second portrait is of the priest, who shows compassion to the family by requesting the church's support and care. Finally, the third illustration is found in the son, who upon receiving more than he'd wished for, graciously offered his gifts to the poor. This was a defining moment for the family, demonstrating how honor can be passed on through future generations.

When you strip away a man's outward status and accomplishments, what is he left with? *His honor.* This is the currency of ancients, my son. Before modern systems of credit existed, a man's word was enough to square a trade. Could we say the same about our world today?

Without honor, no one would take pride in their work. There would be no need to sacrifice extra effort or personal time for the sake of others. Yet, in every profession, you'll find

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ordinary people going above and beyond to see the job done right. That is honor in action—it is working hard for the internal satisfaction of knowing you did the job well by valuing your commitments.

I want to briefly share with you a letter from my own father that demonstrates how honor comes in many forms. These were some of the last words he imparted to me before his passing:

A friend of mine was a Senior Vice President at a large oil company. He always thought his father, who was a shop steward at a manufacturing plant, was a failure. His father never attended college and certainly didn't have the salary or title that my friend had.

When his dad passed away, over 1000 people attended his funeral. People from all walks of life told stories about what a great guy his dad was, and my friend began to question what it meant to be a success.

It's not important how many things you acquire while you are here. What's important is to leave this place in a little better condition than how you found it.

HONOR

Honor isn't just about what we say or do, it's about the lives we lead and the people we impact along the way. When you consider the most honorable thing a man can do, isn't it to lead a life for God's glory and the sake of others? To Whom else deserves our ultimate praise and trust?

Maybe you want to attend college one day, launch a business, or even serve in the military. What an honor it would be to represent your family, community, or country as a righteous leader to many.

What if your actions could not only impact the lives of those you love but uplift an entire nation in the process? That was the case for heavyweight boxer James J. Braddock, who earned the nickname "Cinderella Man" because of his fairytale rise from a poor local fighter to the height of championship boxing:

Born in New York City, Braddock had a powerful right hand that led to a successful amateur boxing career. He fought for the light heavyweight title in 1929 but was defeated in a heartbreaking decision by referees. The stock market crashed that same year, triggering the Great Depression and leaving

millions of Americans out of work.

Struggling between jobs and facing poverty as a family, Braddock did whatever he could to provide. He worked the shipping docks whenever able, but the pain of heavy lifting damaged his strong right hand. To adapt, he learned to use his left. During this season of immense struggle, he found comfort in trusting God to provide.

In the years following, Jim's luck began to change. He started to get fights again, and in 1934 he upset leading contenders like Corn Griffin and John Henry Lewis. With these two wins secured, Braddock was in position for the title fight against reigning heavyweight, Max Baer; a superior fighter whose lethal hands had previously killed a man in the ring.

Captivated by this real-life David and Goliath story, the entire country soon followed Braddock's rise from the ashes.

On June 13th, 1935, in Long Island City, New York; a poor Irish boxer from Hell's Kitchen, and a 10 to 1 underdog against the deadliest fighter of his time, would battle through 15

HONOR

rounds of the most painful blows imaginable. He fought to feed his family—to survive and provide—and would win the heavyweight championship of the world.¹¹

What's more incredible than a man's outward achievements is his character. One could view Braddock's life as a testament to overcoming hardships in the face of dire and desperate circumstances. But Braddock's story challenges us to dig deeper into our own hearts, to draw upon God's strength, and uplift the ones we love while fighting through life's toughest battles.

Ultimately, the true test of a man's strength is not when he's on top, but when he's at his very bottom. That is where the heart of man is revealed and where champions emerge. That, my son, is where honor is found.

5. PURITY

*I walk down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I fall in.
I am lost... I am hopeless.
It isn't my fault.
It takes forever to find a way out.*

*I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don't see it.
I fall in again.
I can't believe I am in this same place.
But it isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.*

I walk down the same street.

PURITY

*There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it there.
I still fall in... it's a habit... but,
my eyes are open.
I know where I am.
It is my fault.
I get out immediately.*

*I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.*

I walk down another street.¹²

Portia Nelson

Why do we stay pure? Is there a moral reason or virtue to espouse? How do we even abstain from lust in a society dominated by unrestrained sexual behavior? When contemplating these questions, consider the following advice: *a man cannot fully love until he has mastered his own desires.*

We celebrate people's accomplishments, triumphs, and heroic deeds, but what about the man who flees from sin? Why isn't the person who escapes pornography, masturbation, and

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premarital sex honored? Perhaps you're thinking, *I don't really have a problem, it's my body anyway, and besides, I'm not hurting anyone.* But that's not true:

"You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies."¹³

When we sin against ourselves, we are dishonoring God. Not only does this destroy our minds, but can separate those closest to us. Many of these harmful materials are created through means of human trafficking and violence against actors within the porn industry.¹⁴ These very sons and daughters may be someone's future spouse or loved one, and are shamelessly caught in these destructive lifestyles.

Let me share with you a parable that I believe captures the seriousness of remaining pure, while also avoiding temptation and its countless forms:

A certain man had spent a lifetime fishing near his home. Over the years, he acquired many skills to lure in different kinds of fish. However, the one thing he never learned to do was swim. Instead, he wore a life vest and whistle

PURITY

in case he fell into the water.

After gaining mastery of his craft, the man decided to turn his passion into a business by taking people to good fishing spots near his lake home. He was confident in his abilities, earning him a reputation for having the best charter service around.

One afternoon, the man took a new route across a marshy bank that had previously been hidden. Venturing through unexplored waters, the man caught glimpses of fish teeming the nearby shore. Because his boat was in shallower waters, the man thought to himself, *"Why do I need a life jacket?"* But being cautious, he decided to tie a rope around his waist and anchor it to the boat in case he fell.

Peering over the edge, the man's eyes caught glimpses of large bass; bigger than anything he had seen before. The longer he stared, the more captivated he was by their appearance. The possibilities for success and satisfaction were irresistible.

Seeing the glistening fish within arm's reach,

the man dipped one foot below to gauge the river's depth. *"Certainly, it couldn't be more than a few feet,"* he told himself, *"Besides, I have a rope in case I get stuck."* The man then placed his other foot into the water and felt what appeared to be the river's floor. Confident he was on level ground, the man proceeded to lower his entire body into the water.

The river's bottom turned out to be a giant log that had fallen into the stream during the previous flood. Before the man could fully comprehend the situation, his feet gave way, pulling him deeper into the muddy abyss. Unable to swim, his only two options were to cry for help or grab onto anything he could to stay alive. But the more the man fought to tread water, the less strength he had to keep himself afloat. In the darkest moment of despair, he remembered the rope around his waist. The man immediately came to his senses, grasping the line with every bit of strength he had left, and began pulling himself towards the water's surface.

After surviving a near-death experience that day, the man decided to change three

PURITY

important things before ever stepping foot on a boat again. The first was to never venture out on the water alone. He would either charter people for his business or find another experienced fisherman to go with him. The second thing he learned was that if something looks appealing, he ought to proceed with caution. The man decided that he would rather stick to proven catches in familiar areas than pursue the sparkling glimmer of foreign fish. And the third thing the man took away from the experience was to *learn how to swim*.

By applying these changes, the man never found himself again in unchartered areas, maintaining his life and reputation for being the most reliable boat on the water.

What lessons can we glean from this story regarding moral purity, and how can we apply them in our daily struggle against lustful desires?

Having spent a lifetime fishing around the lake, the man was deeply aware of his surroundings. Over time, he grew confident in his knowledge and began to increase the potential earnings from his business. This is the result of living meaningful and productive lives within the

boundaries God has determined. More importantly, when we're physically and spiritually healthy, we can bring others along the journey.

However, as new rewards and challenges are presented, so are temptations in various ways. A sudden change in the environment created an opportunity for the man to increase his wealth beyond measure. Did he need to risk his life and business by steering up an exposed riverbank for a few extra fish? In the same way, we often fail to hold onto a good thing because we think there's something better on the other side.

How easily we forsake our duties, sacrificing time and treasure, for some instant pleasure. Despite the fisherman's experience and knowledge, he failed to master the basic survival skill of swimming. This is comparable to when one neglects their responsibilities to pursue riches, power, or pleasure. You see, son, the further we drift from our course, the harder it will be to return. The wisest action the fisherman took was to anchor his body to the boat; he intentionally gave himself a lifeline.

No matter how many precautions we take in life, there are always opportunities to do wrong

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at every turn. The man believed his feet were on level ground until the log gave way and pulled him deeper into the water. Once he *came to his senses*, he immediately reached for a lifeline and found the surface again.

What then can we learn by reflecting on the fisherman's experience? Here are three things to consider in your battle for purity:

- 1) Don't fight sexual temptation on your own.
- 2) Surround yourself with experienced men to lean on for advice.
- 3) Depend on God's strength—*He's your refuge in times of trouble.*¹⁵

When the fleeting desires of lust come upon you, and you're overwhelmed with physical temptation to sin, turn the opposite direction and run. Free yourself from the struggle and don't look back. The rewards of lifelong relationships and moral purity far outweigh a guilty and perverse conscience.

Trust me, son, it's worth it—you're worth it.

6. FORGIVENESS

We forgive because He first forgave us.

Ephesians 4:32

A lost and hurting dog ran from its home one day following a dispute with its owner. The two were inseparable from the beginning, but a new addition to the owner's family—a small baby—created division among them.

The following morning, the dog began his pursuit of food and basic shelter. Hungry and tired, beaten by the scorching heat, he collapsed in the middle of the road. Just when all hope seemed lost, the dog's owner discovered him and rushed to a nearby vet where he stayed overnight.

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Happy at their reunion, the dog soon recovered with greater devotion to his loving owner; once again enjoying the crumbs that fell from the master's table.

Without forgiveness, we carry the pain of our past like poison; we drink it, expecting the other person to die. But what if we didn't have to bear it all upon our shoulders? What if *Someone* greater than us suffered the weight of the world's unforgiveness so we could be set free?

*"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*¹⁶

Son, when you trust in Christ, you are forgiven. What Jesus endured at the cross was enough for all mankind. He experienced the greatest pains imaginable to save us from the pit of hell and eternal suffering apart from Him. Our response is to forgive others and invite them into the same revelation of Christ's mercy and grace.

The Son came from the Father in heaven, dwelled among us as a man, suffered and died a horrific death, and rose from the grave three days later having prophesied it beforehand. He accomplished this so His life-giving Spirit could dwell within our hearts, restoring harmony between us and our Heavenly Father.

Perhaps another example of forgiveness can better help us navigate the challenges within our own lives and families:

Two pioneering brothers traveled to the western frontier in search of fortune. At the time, people migrated from all over the known world, hoping to strike it rich and build a new legacy of their making. Settling near the Black Hills of South Dakota, the brothers laid claim alongside thousands of gold and silver prospectors.

The younger brother believed the real money was in mining, which allotted them sole ownership and a greater return on investment. However, the older brother insisted the true profits could be found in selling goods and equipment to other prospectors. The two quarreled over their varied business approaches and decided to go their separate ways. The younger brother invested every dollar into his mining operation, and the older brother took up farming and bookkeeping while gradually acquiring funds to save for his merchant store.

The following summer, a drought struck the western plains causing major shortages in food and commercial goods. Many mining towns were especially susceptible to its

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impact. Prospectors couldn't even trade their gold for food and other provisions when resources were scarce.

The younger brother soon found himself desperate. He pleaded with fellow miners for help and basic goods, but they too were in dire need. Meanwhile, the older brother had expanded his merchant shop to include a small grocery with canned food. Before long, everyone in town was seeking his assistance. He was even willing to trade for precious metals, which earned him a small fortune.

After months without work, the younger brother was desperate. He heard his brother's store fared well during the drought, and believed it was his best hope for survival. *If only I had settled my differences with my brother,* the younger thought to himself, *we both could be thriving during these terrible times.*

Entering the store, the younger brother's heart sank. He nervously walked up to his brother, expecting a sigh of disapproval. But having compassion for him, the older reached out his hand and said, "Brother, I have these customers trading their gold and silver, but lack the faintest clue of its worth. I could benefit from an expert's hand in determining

the value.” The younger brother was relieved and immediately began to assist his beloved kinsman. From then on, the two worked closely together and became the most successful merchants of their day.

What stuck out from this story? How does it demonstrate forgiveness in practice, and what can be applied to our own hearts? Upon closer examination, several important details begin to surface.

The brothers first made the great journey together as a family. The younger believed that by investing everything into a mining operation, their efforts would eventually pay off. He worked hard at his skill and was determined to pursue success at any cost.

The older brother saw their situation from a different perspective. Instead of putting everything he had into one venture, he chose to diversify his assets. He also started with a vision, and quickly realized that certain skills and relationships would be necessary to fulfill it. Not only did he work in other enterprises to increase his financial prospects but chose specific jobs that would move him closer to his desired goal.

When facing natural disasters, family loss, or even a strong moral conviction; it’s our choice to

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determine how we respond and to act accordingly. The older brother modeled this by accepting the miner's gold and silver in place of payment, anticipating the market to stabilize at a future date. Alternatively, when the younger brother fell on desperate times, he humbly entered his brother's store and accepted a job. Showing grace and humility, the older asked his brother to partner with him, drawing on his wealth of experience in mining and trust as his closest kinsman. The two became united as they had originally planned, but with greater love and forgiveness than ever before.

Each moment of our lives is an opportunity to forgive and love as true children of God. When we lean on His understanding, and not our own, we gain greater confidence to handle the difficult and uncertain challenges that come in life. If you have yet to experience true forgiveness for yourself and would like to now, I invite you to speak the following words:

Father, I know I have sinned and fallen short of Your perfect standard. I ask for forgiveness for all those I've wronged and those who've wronged me. Give me a soul that's kind and loving, and faith that endures through life's many trials. I ask and believe these things in Your Son, Jesus' name. Amen.

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When you receive God's mercy and let Him heal you from past wounds, you are ready to walk in freedom. Then, and only then, can you forgive yourself and others. That is where the past ends and where healing begins.

7. VISION

*"Where there is no vision,
the people perish."*

Proverbs 29:18

A merchant vessel was on a long voyage carrying precious cargo and spices to the New World. The ship's captain, an experienced navigator at sea, had earned the nickname "Grey Bird" for his white hair and eagle-like eyes. It was said he could see for several miles without the use of a scope.

One morning, a squall broke, sending the ship into a violent frenzy. The crew quickly rushed to their assigned duties while Grey Bird

remained at his position near the helm. With each wave that assaulted the ship, the men's panic grew. All eyes remained on the captain who kept a steady hand and calm composure amid the storm.

Grey Bird spotted a narrow opening on the horizon and instructed the crew to brace for impending crosswinds. After several sharp corrections, the captain steered the vessel back on course with the entire crew and cargo preserved. For the remainder of the voyage, the men cheered and sang songs of their mighty leader who rescued them from certain and untimely death.

What does this tale teach us about facing challenges and navigating through the rough waters of life? Peering closer, we may discover a great deal more than what is presented.

The story opens with a lone vessel bearing towards the Americas through the West Indies. The crew was sizable with many valuable goods needing to be delivered on time and intact. We also learn about their captain, an experienced seaman who earned a reputation for having superb vision and navigational skills.

VISION

Marine life was a particularly dangerous job centuries ago. Many unforeseen challenges and storms awaited those who took to the high seas. A ship's crew needed to hold utmost confidence in their captain's abilities. Even to the most experienced fishermen, massive storms could mean life or death.

At the helm, Grey Bird exercised unnatural levels of calmness. Instead of reacting to the external forces, he maintained his composure while scanning ahead for a way out of the storm.

I hope you understand the importance of seeing clearly when countless people walk in darkness. How can we expect to lead others if we're unable to discern the path ahead? We need a standard, or *compass*, to help guide our steps in the right direction. Sometimes, the smallest decisions can have far greater impacts when viewed over time. Consider the following scenario:

A young man was hiking through the woods on a recent camping trip and lost his way. All he had in his possession was a map, a survival compass, and a day's rations. Having spent

time in the Scouts as a boy, he remembered to plot his grid points by measuring right and up. He was also careful to identify a few markers beforehand—the campsite, rivers, and nearby roads—to reference in case he got lost.

Each time the man plotted a new bearing with his compass, the chances of missing the target either greatly increased or decreased by a considerable range. While his small mistakes could be corrected by periodically reviewing the map and keeping an accurate pace count, the opposite proved true over greater distances. A mere one-degree change in azimuth could lead him miles off target without the constant readjusting of his location. Thankfully, the man found his way back to his campsite through deliberate preparation and training from the beginning.

Do you understand now why vision and direction are so vital? If you don't know where you're going, how will you know how to get there or when you've arrived?

Most people are constantly searching for the *One Thing* they can never seem to find, and even fewer know where to find it. If we're being honest,

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our hearts often take us to great lengths for the objects we desire. We'll change our character and habits—do things we never thought ourselves capable of—in pursuit of that person, dream, or goal.

A positive vision of the future helps when doubt or disbelief settles in. By not giving up when facing disappointment or challenges, we can discover new paths of hope to carry us through life's storms. The same could be said of one legendary sea captain's rise from humble origins:

The youngest of seven brothers, Thomas Alexander Rhodes (*Grey Bird*) was the least likely to become the future leader of a ship. One of his earliest memories was fishing on their family's boat. His father would invite each of his sons to the helm and teach them the ways of the sea. Being the smallest among them, Thomas was overlooked on many occasions, missing a genuine connection with his family. Instead, he stuck to less noticeable tasks, earning and saving what little he could for a boat of his own one day.

His grandpa, upon seeing the look of neglect on Thomas' face, decided to take him for a

catch early one morning. When they reached a prime fishing spot, grandfather and grandson dropped their nets and began to reel in the day's haul. Before long, each had filled two barrels full of mackerel and tuna—a generous bounty.

On the return home, the grandfather asked Thomas to join him at the helm. Having fished for years with his father and brothers, he only stepped foot onto the captain's deck to clean it. Now he was taking hold of the wheel and steering the entire ship.

Without warning, a sudden rainstorm swept across the ship's path. In terror, Thomas loosened his grip and attempted to find a place to hide. "No!" his grandfather shouted, placing his hands back on the wheel. "Stay the course, my son." The boat shook violently with each successive wave pounding against the ship. "Observe the waters and find your way through," said the grandfather in his stern voice. Thomas scanned ahead and maintained his bearing, making only small course adjustments to avoid nearby shores. The storm calmed down shortly after, followed by a quiet stillness.

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As they came near the house to dock, the father and brothers were waiting for them in anger. "Stay with me, Thomas," said his grandfather as they pulled in. Furious, the father boarded the ship and immediately began to scold them. "The storm could've destroyed our boat along with the family's livelihood." The older brothers joined in their father's frustration, expressing mutual disdain for the two.

Having been a man of few words, the grandfather hollered, "Enough! If it weren't for this son of yours we would not be alive, let alone have returned with the boat unscathed." The father's face went pale. The grandfather continued, "As the sole heir of this vessel, I reserve the right to grant my property to whomever I choose." Turning to young Thomas, the grandfather extended his hand outward in pledge. "Because you saved my life and our future, I entrust this boat to be received on your seventeen birthday." Stunned in disbelief, the father stormed off the boat with the brothers staggering behind.

In the years following, Thomas became more familiar with the ship, enjoying equal time

with his father and brothers at the helm. He learned a great deal about marine life and became a capable fisherman. Nearing his seventeenth birthday, Thomas enlisted his grandpa's help to split the inheritance between his six brothers, with their father as guarantor. Confident in his seafaring abilities, he commissioned in the Navy with the hope of leading his own boat and crew on many adventures.

What can we learn about vision from this story? How did examining Thomas' life, before he became a sea captain, teach us about overcoming and growing from our own challenges?

To see ahead, we must sometimes look behind for understanding. Like Grey Bird, we all endure personal challenges and trials. Whether it is competing for a family member's approval, or desiring to pursue our own dreams, we each face a harsh undertow that tries to pull us deeper and further away from our destiny.

Vision keeps our hearts on the straight path, focusing on the journey ahead with clear eyes toward the horizon. Vision gives us hope when fear and darkness try to set in, preparing us with

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confidence to brave life's storms.

When we fix our eyes on Jesus—placing our trust and full dependence in Him—the distant mirages won't easily lure us into dangerous territory. Like a compass pointing our way back home, Christ helps us navigate the rough waters of life with gentle peace and security.

8. REST

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

Matthew 11:28

Would it surprise you to know that one of the greatest gifts we receive in life is rest? Who doesn't like to relax after a long day's work? Could you imagine a world where people never took time off?

We should not confuse getting rest for sleep. The difference between doing nothing versus recovering from our labor is incredibly vast. Rest is not simply relaxing; it's finding *peace* amid life's struggles and experiencing strength to carry us on

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through. Neglecting the gift of rest can result in severe consequences to our life and health. An example from antiquity can provide clues to its importance:

David was one of Israel's earliest kings. Having risen to power by divine providence, he would risk his honor and crown in an act of momentary pleasure. Observe closely the events surrounding his moral failing, and discern for yourself why rest is so crucial:

"In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army... But David remained in Jerusalem.

One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "She is Bathsheba... the wife of Uriah the Hittite." Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her... The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant."

So David sent this word to Joab: "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent him to David... Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house" ...But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants and did not go down to his house.

...How could I go to my house to eat and drink and make love to my wife? [said Uriah] As surely as [the King lives], I will not do such a thing!

In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. In it he wrote, "Put Uriah out in front where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die."

When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the Lord."¹⁷

Whether you're single, a family man or the leader of a nation, the consequences of stress and

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burnout can be detrimental to your most intimate relationships. Examining David's actions long before his affair with Bathsheba may provide valuable insight into rest's benefit for the soul.

David was a lowly shepherd boy before he became Israel's king. The youngest of seven brothers, he was often found outside the home tending sheep and singing songs about the Lord. It is recorded he'd fought both a mountain lion and a bear to protect his flock.¹⁸ Around fighting age, David challenged the Philistine giant, Goliath, and dropped him with a single stone from his sling. David's bravery earned him favor with Israel's army and the people, but this troubled King Saul who was jealous of his popularity. David feared for his life and would spend years in hiding to avoid execution. Saul eventually fell in battle against the Philistines, allowing David to ascend as Israel's righteous ruler.

The Biblical record of David and Bathsheba opens with, *"At the time when kings go off to war... David remained in Jerusalem."*¹⁹ In just a few passages we discover the immense responsibilities placed upon rulers to lead their troops into battle. David was no stranger to

combat, previously engaging in many successful campaigns against the Philistines and surrounding armies. However, when his rest from war eventually came, so did the temptation. Without properly transitioning from battle to court, David opened himself up to a host of pressures that would place him on the edge of disaster.

Spending years apart from family and the place of normal life, David found himself on the palace roof overlooking the entire kingdom. His eyes quickly fixated on a naked woman bathing outside:

*"[She] was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her... She is Bathsheba... the wife of Uriah the Hittite. Then David sent messengers to get her... and he slept with her."*²⁰

Do you see how easily and quickly this sin took root? King David wasn't like the modern ruler or president we may think of today. At the time, kings had complete dominion over the land—including its inhabitants. David's actions were a clear abuse of power since he was not only

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violating God's law by sleeping with a married woman but was personally violating the wife of one of his military commanders, whom the Scriptures describe as a righteous man.

Whether we are stressed from long hours of work, or wandering into forbidden areas looking for pleasure, we can destroy the very lives we are attempting to build. That is why we must find rest amid our daily struggles, and not in place of them.

The enemy—Satan—loves to keep people so distracted that even the smallest disciplines like prayer and meditation become ineffective in the heart of a believer. If King David, the same man who wrote most of the Biblical Psalms and whom God said, “was a man after My own heart” could fall, how much more grounded in faith should we be?²¹

One of the best tools for succeeding in this battle is *boundaries*. Like castle walls, boundaries can guard us against the snares of pornography, pre-marital sex, and other addictions that destroy our relationships with God and others. Boundaries are also meant to ensure we're taking healthy space to process important decisions, and

to enjoy time with friends and loved ones.

For many in this technology-saturated world, the *fear of missing out* for even a few hours may seem like an eternity. Perhaps a modern story can help explain what applying boundaries could look like, including the many benefits enjoyed when one rests from their labors:

A factory worker took a job at a brickmaking plant following a long stretch of unemployment. Each day, the man was assigned a select number of bricks to complete. The company offered incentives to whoever could make the most bricks on a given day. Some men formed crews, others skipped lunch, and others still worked until the early morning hours.

Promising his wife and children that he would come home each night on time, the man declined offers from other crewmembers to join their teams. "We could all earn more," his fellow brickmakers pleaded. Some of the men even threatened him, saying he was slowing down their progress. Nonetheless, the man remembered how his father rarely came home

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in the evenings due to working extra shifts. He vowed not to fall into the same trap, even if the family had to forego simple luxuries at times.

Over time, fellow crew members would heckle the man, showing off their new vehicles or commenting on the latest vacation resorts they attended. Yet, despite the allure of increased earnings, the man anticipated his quality evenings at home with family.

One morning, a kiln operator was pouring molten brick into a factory press. Tired from the previous night's shift, he mistakenly set the wrong mold in place. The overflow of fiery material spilled onto the shop floor, searing the feet of nearby crew members. Emergency services immediately halted operations, costing the company millions in damages and personal injury claims.

After safety inspectors conducted their assessment, the company immediately restricted employee overtime to prevent further damages and workplace fatigue. Many of the employees could no longer afford their

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new vehicles and vacation homes, while others quit or were fired for negligence. Because the man's integrity and consistent work on the job was noticed, he was eventually awarded a salary position within the company, affording him more personal time with family.

The above story demonstrates how rest and boundary setting can prevent people from experiencing injuries far beyond their immediate sphere. We see the man making conscious decisions not to repeat his father's mistakes. Moreover, he was willing to prioritize time with family over material gain, even at the expense of his career and reputation.

Prioritizing rest should naturally increase our focus on the people that matter most. By setting healthy boundaries, the man not only protected himself but also the safety and well-being of his coworkers. Consequently, the man enjoyed the fruit of his labor without putting his career, family, and health in jeopardy.

Whether leading nations or making bricks, we must actively decide what we're willing to

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sacrifice to protect our time with God and loved ones. If we neglect to set proper boundaries, the world will attempt to fill what our souls most desperately need.

My son, learn the lessons from your fathers and do not buy into the lie that busyness and excessive striving equate to success. In the end, you will cease to be satisfied, and wish you would've rested more.

9. PATIENCE

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,
patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
gentleness, and self-control”

Galatians 5:22-23

Many of us were taught growing up that “good things come to those who wait.” We learned that by staying productive we can avoid the long-suffering that comes with patience. Yet, there is a hidden reward in enduring with hopeful expectation, as we observe in the following illustration:

An elementary school teacher was instructing her class on the principles of patience. In front

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of each child's desk was placed a small tray of cookies. The students were given the option to either receive the batch immediately or wait until the end of class to enjoy them. Most devoured their allotted portion as soon as the instruction was given. Some even traded their cookies for other snacks, while a few decided not to eat until the class was over.

Before releasing the children, the teacher circled the room and reviewed each of the student's trays. For those with cookies remaining, the teacher doubled their portion. Many of the students began to grumble, demanding an equal portion as well. The lesson of the day proved the value of waiting with patience.

At first glance, this seems like an innocent story, but beneath the student's actions lies an important lesson to examine. Let's explore the decisions made by each child to see what valuable details can be gleaned:

The class begins with each child receiving an equal number of cookies to *eat at their pleasure*. Some immediately indulged before

they knew the point of the lesson, while others waited for the teacher's instruction. However, upon further reading, we discover a few students decided to exchange their cookies with friends, suggesting that a shared sense of responsibility was present. At the day's end, the teacher commended those who patiently waited; whom to everyone's shock and amazement had received an unexpected reward.

Do you now perceive the benefits of patience to those who master it? Waiting is never without cause but is purposed for those desiring to reach maturity. It is key to developing men as leaders and examples for our families and communities.

When considering the patience our Lord has with us, time no longer becomes an issue. We *lack nothing* because we have everything in Him, and the sooner we live in that reality the more patience we develop because of His finished work on the cross.

"But those who trust in the LORD will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They

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will walk and not faint.”²²

I want to present you with one last example of how patience and determination can help achieve victory in life, regardless of the circumstances we are born into. There is always a way forward if we believe, are patient enough, and never give up on our dreams:

Professional skateboarder and X Games gold medalist, Danny Way, endured a rough childhood long before becoming an elite athlete in the skating community.

Facing the tragic deaths of his father, stepfather, and close mentor, including family struggles with addiction, drove Danny to skateboarding as an outlet to channel his pain.²³

Many injuries later, including breaking his neck and undergoing dozens of medical operations, forced Danny to heal and reflect on his trials. Despite those momentary setbacks, Danny would continue to grow in his skating ability—pushing himself to newer heights in life and his career.

Whether being the first to jump out of a helicopter on a skateboard or clearing the Great Wall of China; Danny was not content with just setting records—He wanted to push himself and the sport to greater levels previously unimaginable.²⁴

Despite Danny's life-long battles with trauma and healing, his patient endurance led to achieving more for himself and others beyond his perceivable circumstances. Not only did he break every skateboarding high jump record of his time, but he created entirely new categories within the sport, paving the way for future generations to follow.

The fruit of patience results in a heart that is hopefully expectant and readily prepared to navigate the pain and uncertainties of life. Patience helps us to see beyond the momentary circumstances, trials, and setbacks; instead, focusing our hearts on the pursuit where true victory lies.

Regardless of the challenges presented in life, the position of our hearts should always reflect that of Christ, and our hopeful expectation of

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reward found in Him:

"For I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us...

*but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies."*²⁵

10. HUMILITY

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourself."

Philippians 2:3

The president of a Fortune 500 company was reflecting on his lifetime of achievements before announcing retirement. He remembered how his father built the business from the ground up and left it to him just before he passed. Since then, they had transformed into a global industry with many daily tasks entrusted to lesser subordinates who the man rarely interacted with.

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One afternoon, while attending a meeting with senior board members, the president had a moment of clarity. He remembered how his father always cared for the people who worked for him, often recognizing their efforts no matter how big or small the contribution. Now, the president found himself surrounded by profit-obsessed people who knew neither his father's values, nor their own, before advancing the corporate ladder. The son thought to himself, *where could I find such people of character who helped build this business to its modern greatness?*

That week, an email was sent to the entire company requesting all legacy employees report to the executive suite. Several individuals at varying levels of the organization showed up to meet the president. They all shared stories about the man's father, and how in the early days they each had a voice in the company's decisions. After these interactions, the president decided to make drastic changes to company policy. He started by firing his senior board and promoting some of those same people who once built the company to its modern

greatness. Not only did the business continue to thrive, but the president retired knowing the same principles instilled by his father were now preserved for future generations to follow.

Humility involves laying down one's pride and selfishness, placing value in others above oneself. It wasn't until the president of the Fortune 500 company reflected on his life and legacy that he considered those around him; the people who paved the way for his future success.

People may strive to lead moral lives, but how many have the grace and conviction to see them through without fault? We need a model of humility that is demonstrated to its purest form, and there is no greater example of servanthood and submission than the person of Jesus:

"Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privilege; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death

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*on a cross."*²⁶

This humble position is reflective in people and organizations whose character and selfless sacrifice have championed the past century. One such example can be found in the leadership and mission of the Salvation Army:

It was Christmas Eve, 1910, and the founder of The Salvation Army, General William Booth, was near the end of his life. His frail condition made it impossible for him to speak at the company's annual convention.

Many soldiers in attendance that evening needed encouragement from the countless hours of serving through the holidays and cold winter months. Someone close to the General suggested he send a telegram to be read at the event. He agreed.

Funds were limited at the time, and telegrams were charged by the word making them expensive for most citizens. General Booth decided to send a short message to encapsulate every effort the organization would need to make for future success.

Meanwhile, thousands of delegates at the convention became discouraged upon discovering the General could not be present. Gloom swept across the event floor until the moderator announced Booth's address to the people. The message was just one word:

"Others!"²⁷

Leading a humble, *others-focused life*, may not always result in success or status among people. But it's often when serving the needs of others that we're fulfilling our very purpose to exist and love. This leads to an important illustration of humility from a time long before individuals and organizations governed the affairs of men:

In the medieval era, kings and monarchs ruled their subjects using severe punishments and taxation, often enforcing harsh penalties to keep the masses subdued. Rarely would a common man emerge to challenge the ruling elite and inspire the nation to dream for greater things.

A popular form of entertainment in this era were jousting tournaments, which hosted

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people from all walks of life. Two knights would mount horses in full armor to simulate real combat. On command, both men would charge full speed at each other, wielding lances aimed at the opponent's head and torso. The goal was to maim the other rider or dismount them completely from their steed.

A king or ruler would often commission his knights to compete on behalf of the family's name. On one occasion, a knight was so drunk and indisposed from the festivities, he could barely stand up, let alone mount his horse. To preserve the master's honor, a lowly squire agreed to take the knight's place.

Having closely watched jousting battles for years, the squire was keenly aware of the opponents' tactics. With each victory, the squire quickly earned a reputation for being the best jouster in the realm. He was eventually awarded an honorary knighthood by the family and became a crowd favorite. His newfound acclaim propelled him to court, where he engaged with society's wealthiest and most elite families.

Sometime later, a war broke out among neighboring lands. Many brave men were falling daily in battle as the kingdom was being threatened by rival factions within. The young knight, by then a popular hero among the people, was asked to lead a small force against advancing armies. While criticized for his lack of experience in combat, he quickly proved naysayers wrong after launching several successful campaigns.

Galvanizing the soldiers, the knight inspired his fellow countrymen to achieve honor through victories won on the battlefield. With the whole nation rallying behind him, the people fought back against forces nearly triple their size, securing their land and sovereignty as a nation.

Tired and battle worn, the people grew impatient with ruling elites compromising with their oppressors. Collectively, they stormed the castle walls, deposed of their king and his court, and unanimously crowned the warrior knight to govern with true justice and honor.

HUMILITY

That is how a humble squire rose through the ranks of knighthood, championing the hearts of his people, and eventually becoming their king.

When we seek the best in others, laying down our selfish desires for the good of the whole, we model the kind of leadership most desperately needed in society today. Not everyone will be CEOs, military generals, or founders of charitable organizations; but we each possess the heart of a knight to serve others faithfully with honor and humility.

11. TRUST

"Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends."

John 15:13

Long before complex legal agreements, a man's word was his contract. He would shake hands with associates and offer his name in a pledge of services rendered. Yet today, we no longer trust our neighbors to fulfill their word or make good on their promises.

I want to propose a challenge for you, my son, one that I know you can accept. If there is one outcome I desire most from these letters, it is this: *be a man of your word*. Our dependability as men

TRUST

and leaders can be the greatest currency we offer in life.

At its core, trust is consistency demonstrated. It's established through trials, refined by testing, and proven reliable with time. Practically speaking, what we know about most things ultimately hinges on their constancy and trustworthiness.

When examining the life and character of Jesus, we see that He was loving, focused, and incredibly consistent. For this reason, people still follow because His nature never changes: *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever."*²⁸

To capture just how impactful trust is to a man's character, I thought a more relevant example may appeal to you:

An experienced gamer was leading his team on a quest through uncharted landscapes filled with hidden dangers. Having spent years on raids, fighting powerful adversaries and earning respect from other players, the team's captain decided it was time to step down. He wanted his friends and fellow gamers to carry

on the mission long after he was gone.

As the team was gearing up for a high-level raid, this time against a powerful boss preventing them from reaching newer levels of play, the captain did something rather unexpected. Just before entering the battle area, he disarmed himself of all mythical armor and weaponry. The team members were astonished since the accumulated worth of his gear could fetch valuable game coins on the open market. The co-leader begged the captain him to rearm himself, even offering his own weaponry to keep him in-game.

As the main boss drew near, provoking the team with threats of violence, the captain turned to his fellow players and wished them farewell. Immediately, he charged full speed ahead and was destroyed with a single enemy blow. The entire team was shaken by the fact their most experienced leader, a seasoned gamer and fearless warrior in battle, was killed without launching a single strike. Emboldened by this sudden loss, the co-captain rallied his team and proceeded to launch waves of counterattacks until the boss

TRUST

was defeated.

Following the campaign, the new team leader reached out to the former and asked why he surrendered in battle without warning. "Simple," the previous captain responded, "I needed to step down so that you could step up. Besides, there was no way we could've defeated that boss unless someone distracted him." Amazed by his response, the captain replied, "You were willing to lay down your character—all the years you put into leveling up—so that we could advance to the next level?" With a large grin on his face, his friend responded, "It was never just about the game for me, but about you guys. Besides, I have freshman year of college starting in the fall, so priorities man!" The two exchanged numbers and resolved to stay in touch that summer.

When giving up the best parts of ourselves for others, we can earn deeper levels of confidence and favor than ever before. Like tree rings, we establish circles of trust in relationships that are built and strengthened through time and trials.

The team's captain developed trust from his

peers by battling alongside them for years. Each successive raid or quest completed further demonstrated his reliability as a leader. However, what earned him respect among fellow teammates wasn't the rankings accumulated, or the special gear won on campaigns, but his character and self-sacrifice for the good of the whole. Most importantly, the captain was prioritizing important life and education goals before his personal interests. Ultimately, what mattered most to the captain wasn't winning at any cost, but the internal satisfaction of seeing others grow in their leadership journey.

How does this example inform our view of trust and influence? Does the story challenge us to become better friends and examples to those we care about? What does it say about the quality of leaders we should aspire to be like?

When we consider the character of Jesus, how *"He humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross,"* we encounter a trustworthiness that supersedes anything we could hope for or imagine in life.²⁹ Jesus not only calls us to examine our own hearts but challenges us to lay down our lives for the sake of others

TRUST

coming after us.

Whether you're playing video games, pursuing higher education, or even instructing your own children in the ways they should go; your character, and the consistency of your word being modeled through actions, are what truly counts in the end.

12. FIGHT

*"We are more than conquerors
through Him who loved us."*

Romans 8:37

Pause for a moment and reflect on your favorite superhero. What about them sticks out or inspires you? Was it their strength, intelligence, or supernatural abilities to defeat evil? Were they born with their powers, or did they acquire them elsewhere? How does their story relate to yours?

Every hero experiences the challenge of overcoming immense personal setbacks. Whether surviving a freak accident, losing a loved one, or helping others when no one else would,

FIGHT

each is shaped by monumental events that propel them further toward their destiny. One great example is found in the comic book story, *Batman*:

Bruce Wayne (*Batman*) was born to Thomas and Martha Wayne, an influential family of Gotham City whose wealth attracted both friends and enemies alike. When Bruce was a young boy, his parents were tragically murdered, fueling his desire for revenge against the criminal elements of society.

Bruce's butler, Alfred, would later raise him into the man and leader capable of running the family's estate. Over time, Bruce would adopt the alter ego *Batman*, using his wealth and advanced training in martial arts to fight crime as a caped crusader in the form of a bat.

Similarly, a young boy and circus aerialist, Dick Grayson, tragically lost his parents when two gangsters sabotaged their performance midair. Upon hearing the news, Bruce agreed to adopt Dick and take him in as his own. Seeking both revenge and a new identity, Dick would later embrace his alter ego, *Robin*, and

learn to fight crime alongside his caped mentor.³⁰

Several observations can be gleaned from the lives of these men. Before Bruce Wayne became *Batman*, he was an orphan and prodigal child. In the original comic book series, Bruce ran away from home and was lost in the world of extreme travel, martial arts, and idle pursuits that jeopardized his future inheritance. It wasn't until later in life, after discovering Dick Grayson, where he embraced his full identity as a friend and father. While some versions of the comic series place *Robin* as Bruce's biological son, the connection between the two men is nonetheless the same.

Bruce Wayne was more than just a mentor and leader, but a father figure as well. Whether providing for *Robin's* life and education needs or training him for the inevitable battles he'll face; *Batman's* inner transformation shifted from an "I work alone" mindset to fighting crime alongside his adopted son. Dick Grayson also received a new identity as a hero rather than a victim. The two complement the gaps in each other's lives created by both chance and evil, enabling them

to heal and reconcile past wounds.

We have learned much from the *Batman and Robin* saga, but just in case you're not a DC Comics fan, a superhero from the Marvel universe can also drive home this particular issue. One such example is Steve Rogers, otherwise known as *Captain America*:

In the prelude to WWII, the Allies realized they would need extraordinary soldiers to defeat the rising totalitarian regimes. America responded by calling for a nationwide enlistment to support the war effort.

A young man, Steve Rogers, attempted to serve in the U.S. Army on several occasions but denied each time because of numerous health problems. Nearly exhausting every known attempt, a unique opportunity led him to a special program called *Project Rebirth*—an experimental serum designed to create super-soldiers with enhanced physical abilities. After being accepted into the program, Rogers was soon promoted to Captain—mainly as a publicity stunt—but denied multiple requests to go on mission. He was eventually granted

permission and would later defeat *Red Skull*—the leader of *HYDRA*—a totalitarian organization with Nazi ties.

Following his debut as the world's protector of freedom, *Captain America* would join an elite group of fellow superheroes called the *Avengers*.³¹

How do you relate to these characters? What examples can you point to in your own life? Maybe you identify with losing a loved one or wanting to make a difference in the world. By examining *Captain America*, we can better understand what makes a hero truly stand apart from the rest.

Steve Rogers wanted to fight. He attempted to enlist on multiple occasions despite his initial rejection. He had an attitude of a real hero: *they are not content to quit when challenges arise*.

Fate would have it that Steve Rogers would accomplish his dream, not only upgrading his natural abilities, but also receiving a promotion propelling him to the world's stage. Without the character and inner strength necessary to

FIGHT

maintain such immense pressures of stardom, Steve Rogers may never have lived up to his new identity.

Rogers wasn't born with super-human abilities or status. Yet, his positive attitude and selfless service were ingrained long before he championed in battle. As we discover in *Captain America*, true heroes seek not just their own success, but also the well-being of others often at their own expense.

We must be the examples of heroism we desire to see in society today; strong men of character, internal conviction, and a willingness to serve God and others because it's the right thing to do. While we may not possess equal strengths, talents, or skills, but we can each contribute to the destruction of evil while protecting the lives of the innocent.

Jesus also possessed special abilities, whether defying natural laws, reading people's thoughts, and even creating matter from nothing. He was a hardened warrior who fought against injustice with the truth while instilling hope and salvation to a people desperate for pure leadership. Jesus

not only stood up to the most powerful authorities of his day but conquered the hearts of man for eternity.

What figures like Bruce Wayne, Dick Grayson, and Steve Rogers each have in common is that they overcame immense challenges while seeking to defend freedom, even at the cost of their own. They stepped in front of the fight, despite negative and unforeseen circumstances, and prevailed against seemingly unconquerable enemies. They went from uncommon men to unrivaled superheroes.

13. FAITH

*"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for
and assurance about what we do not see."*

Hebrews 11:1

Faith challenges us to reach beyond known limitations and perceived reality. It orients our hearts to trust in God and others even without full knowledge or understanding. But what if we could have confidence in faith through a demonstration of evidence followed by personal experience?

What we know of Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great, Aristotle or Socrates, pales in comparison to the historical reality of Jesus' life, death, and

resurrection. Whenever people doubt His existence, Christ shows up in dreams and hearts. When skeptics say there is no proof, more evidence is discovered.

Son, don't be deceived by the opinions of others. Research for yourself what was testified about Him—you will not be disappointed. *"Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you."*³² Speak to Him as I'm speaking to you now, and He will meet you where you are:

*"You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart."*³³

The very forces we depend on for life and breath do not readily reveal themselves. Yet, to place your faith in something you can't see is also not to believe in the imaginary:

*"The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going."*³⁴

Never just blindly follow anyone or anything; commit first to a standard of trustworthiness based on reason and experience. Please take

FAITH

these words to heart: *one day you will pass this wisdom to your children, and they will pass it to their children, and then my calling will be fulfilled.*

I want to share with you a testimony of forgiveness from my own life. Consider the man I once was, and the person I am now becoming, so that you may know Jesus has the power to save and transform lives:

In my youth, I knew and felt love. However, my parents divorced at an early age, wounding me deeply. I tried to hide the pain, hoping it would go away, but it kept coming back.

Later in life, I gave into many destructive behaviors to mask my feelings: drugs, alcohol, and sex with many people. I tried to seek truth and love, but eventually grew to hate myself and despised the day I was born. I wanted to die, to hide the pain and sorrow and disappear into nothingness. There was a God-sized hole in my heart that was never satisfied.

Not content in life, I committed to searching out deeper truth and understanding. I

experimented with other beliefs—different religions and man-made gods—and even entertained doctrines of demons. There were instances when I sought to lead God’s chosen ones away from faith because I wasn’t satisfied with my own. I was lost, son, very lost.

When my father was alive, he pleaded with me to seek help and attend church. By this point, I had hit so many bottoms and needed a way out. I diligently searched for a community to belong—people who truly cared for me—and by God’s grace I found it. This time, it wasn’t just the teachings I received, but the Lord’s power and presence that pierced my heart to the core.

After two years of renewing my mind, I thought I was healed. Then, one afternoon, surrounded by men in prayer, *Something* came over me. My body and mind were still, but my Spirit came alive. I felt a bright light—nothing like I had ever experienced before—moving me upward into what I can only describe as “The arms of a loving Father.” A calm warmth clothed me, and praise was on my heart. I had never experienced such peace

FAITH

and security in my entire life—It was serene.

I learned to live out this profound revelation of God's love. I surrounded myself with His people and anything that would help me hold onto that peace I encountered. I read and studied His Word daily, sought every teaching I could, and committed myself to prayer. Despite all this, I kept falling back to my old ways. My outside appeared godly, but the inside was full of anger, bitterness, and despair.

Despite those initial feelings, I remained hopeful. I knew something was changing inside me. The things I once enjoyed no longer pleased me. Even disconnecting from the Bible and Church would make my heart would grieve. I was utterly lost without Him.

The Spirit of the living God dwells among His people in fellowship. I found him in small groups, among brothers and sisters in Christ, but most vividly in the quiet place of my heart. He came to me through His Word, and in dreams and visions.

My Son Rising

The Gospel of Jesus revealed to me that regardless of how far and deep my sin takes me, there is always a way back if I surrender and return to Him.

*"Never will I leave you;
Never will I forsake you."*³⁵

*"Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*³⁶

Faith is vital and personal, son. It is to be cherished and fought for. Don't take your beliefs for granted, and never forsake the truth for a lie. When life drags you down, faith will be your anchor. When darkness sets in, faith will light the way. And when the journey leads you through hard and uncertain paths, faith will lead you on the right course every time.

This is where my journey in faith began, and where it will end: running into His loving arms.

14. HOPE

*"There is surely a future hope for you,
and your hope will not be cut off."*

Proverbs 23:18

By now you have learned much about faith and love. You have discovered the wisdom of kings, the parables of ancients, and even modern lessons for life's journey. But for these letters to conclude, my son, I must also talk about hope.

Hope is the peace we have in waiting for a promise, dream, or desire. Without it, nothing is propelling us toward our destiny; hope is essential to knowing and believing in God.

My Son Rising

Perhaps, an illustration may help us discover how hope emerges, even if the circumstances do not seem favorable:

A young woman went to inspect her garden on a hot summer day. Tired and scorched from the beating sun, she knew the seeds she'd planted would not survive without continuous watering. Since the region was dependent upon fruitful harvests, the garden was vital for sustaining her family and community.

When the young woman wasn't outside, she would help in the home. She learned carpentry and basic mechanical repairs from books she acquired at the library. Before long, she was assisting friends and neighbors with small work projects. She even built a mini-irrigation system to help water continuously flow into her garden.

When harvest time came, the young woman was surprised to see her vegetables had grown to nearly double in size as compared to previous seasons. The yield provided enough for her family, with additional servings for the poor, while the remaining seeds were used for

HOPE

future harvests.

The story above demonstrates the power of hopeful expectation in action. Hope isn't something we wish for or expect, but a reward of faithful diligence and dependence upon God and the unseen forces that guide our lives. Like the old African proverb states, *"A little seed of imagination you can grow in a field of hope."* We too can cultivate a heart of hopeful endurance to properly care for the gifts we've received.

The young woman portrayed was no stranger to hard work. She tended her vegetables with the utmost care, knowing too little or too much water could ruin the potential yield. She also gracefully served at home, offering her time and energy to help those she loved.

When harvest time came, the woman's efforts paid off. The vegetable yield provided more than enough food for the family, with extra servings benefiting the least in her community.

It's easy in life to look at the glass half-empty. Maybe a prayer request from the past failed to materialize, or you trusted in someone who let

you down repeatedly. Let's examine this narrative again—from a slightly different perspective—to gain a fuller understanding of this young woman's heart, including ways we can cultivate hope in our own lives:

A rural family of six lost their father to a sudden illness. The oldest child, a young teenager, helped her grieving mother and siblings during the painful transition. Since the family had depended on their father's income, the young woman decided to delay her dreams of engineering school to help provide for the family. Occasionally, she would work in the garden to keep her mind off the stress and hardships they endured. A few neighbors took compassion on her, delivering books from the school library even though she stopped attending.

One older gentleman was especially kind to the family. He was a mechanic by trade and ran a small repair business out of his home. The young woman would often borrow his tools for projects she was working on, including a new irrigation system for her garden. After each completed project, the

HOPE

man would let her keep the equipment she had used. By the end of the season, the young woman amassed a small workshop of her own that she used to help other neighbors in need. At first, people were skeptical that she could fix basic things, but with each successful job she gained a steady stream of customers.

At harvest time, the young woman went to gather from her garden. To everyone's amazement, the vegetables had grown much larger than in previous seasons due to the continuous flow of water. The process was so effective that local community leaders invited her to speak at a regional science fair. A major university was in attendance that day and were so impressed by the young woman's research they offered her a full scholarship to their prestigious engineering program.

She would eventually graduate high school, and later complete her college education, becoming the first person in her family to earn a degree.

Do you see how hope never escaped this young woman, despite the dire circumstances she

incurred? Instead of giving up, or falling into despair, she chose to embrace the unforeseen events that surrounded her with a hopeful eye toward the future.

Whether relying on friends and family for support, or accepting undeserved kindness from strangers; it's hope that carries us through, spilling over into the lives of people in and around us. Ultimately, the young woman's faithfulness resulted in greater prosperity for herself, the community, and society at large—and it all began with a few seeds of hope.

I would like to leave you now with a poem that I think captures the essence of hope, and that regardless of trials, setbacks, and unexpected circumstances we face in life, there is always a light beyond the horizon if we just believe:

"Hope is a fragile thing... as fragile as a flower. Its fragility makes it easy to sneer at, by people who see life as a dark and difficult ordeal, people who get angry when something they can't believe in themselves gives comfort to others. They prefer to crush the flower underfoot, as if to say: See how weak this thing

HOPE

*is, see how easily it can be destroyed. But, in truth, hope is one of the strongest things in the universe. Empires fall, civilizations vanish into dust, but hope always comes back, pushing up through the ashes, growing from seeds that are invisible and invincible."*³⁷

15. PERSEVERANCE

“And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.”

Philippians 1:6

We have reached the end of these letters, my son, and yet you still draw near. I'm amazed! Let me impart to you, now, one last grain of wisdom; a story of perseverance to comfort you in the journey ahead with its inevitable challenges and rewards:

A boy once dreamed of changing the world,

PERSEVERANCE

but his small frame and average talents did not earn him much respect among men. Despite the bullying he often received, the young boy never gave up on his dreams. He kept believing that he would change the world, making it a better place for those coming after him.

As a young man, he dared to prove himself. Throwing caution to the wind, he traveled far away from the pain most familiar to him. He pursued advanced training and knowledge, achieving the highest attainable education. He served others generously, volunteering his efforts to give what he had never received. And still, this was not enough for him. There were always more lives to change, and a great big world to impact for the better.

Over time, the young man grew busy with life and the distraction of its many pleasures. His dreams slowly began to fade. His strength failed, and he was pulled further and lower each time. Sometimes, the pain of failure was so great it took him back to his childhood of being told he wasn't good enough, strong enough, or big enough to make a difference.

He contemplated ending his life—to be forgotten forever—but no matter how close he came, a *still small voice* within him continued to say, “*Keep moving forward.*”³⁸

The young man pursued *the still voice* using knowledge of the world: philosophy, science, ethics; there was no end to his efforts. He combed through the ancient storehouses of wisdom, turned over every rock, and sought out the wisest men for understanding. Finally, when his efforts seemed hopeless, *the Voice* spoke aloud and consumed the young man. Time lost all meaning and complete peace enveloped him.

From that moment on, the reality of God’s truth was known and received. He was fully loved and fully accepted by his Creator; sonship was restored, and true healing began to take root. He could now fulfill his purpose to change the world through the message of the Gospel—the life, death, resurrection, and proclamation—of Jesus to the ends of the earth.

“In love he predestined us for adoption to

PERSEVERANCE

sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.”³⁹

The incredible joy the young man experienced was like being made clean, washed from a fruitless life of lust and sinful desire. He was wrecked, unable to comprehend the gravity his sin brought to God and others. On his knees, weeping bittersweet tears of remorse and gratitude, his soul cried out to the One he loved:

Father. I’m unclean. How could you ever forgive me?

The young man’s heart quickened again to perceive the “*still small voice*”:

“My son. You are redeemed. You are Mine!”

In a single moment, the man’s entire past came rushing back to him like a whirlwind. His memories from childhood returned. He could see the hearts of those who bullied him;

children who deep down needed the love of a father. He remembered the people who had been kind, and the moments when he was kind to others. He also witnessed the point of depravity he had reached; unspeakable acts were revealed back to him in vivid detail. Tears ran down his face as he heard the prayers of complete strangers spoken over him without knowledge. Even those he hated prayed for his soul.

What the young man came to discover is that every decision he had made—both good and bad—was God’s way of drawing him in closer. It was all meant for His glory, *“To accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”*⁴⁰

Do you see how it all fits together, son? Before the man knew God, he saw only mere glimpses of His reality. Like the blind men who could not fully describe an elephant, we too once walked in darkness, deceived by the elemental spirits of the world that kept us from knowing our Heavenly Father. But the *true Light* has been revealed, guiding the way back to His place of peace.⁴¹ It’s now your choice to walk the narrow path leading

PERSEVERANCE

to eternal life in Christ, and that decision is yours alone to make.

I will now leave you with some final words of encouragement—wisdom given by my Father in the Spirit—that I now pass on to you:

Endure, my son. Stay the course. Fight for those you love. Do what is right, and don't quit when life gets hard. You were made for glory, by glory, so live in such a way that points people to the very source of everlasting life, hope, and peace found in Jesus.

Be strong.
You're a man.
You have what it takes.

Rise!

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I want to thank God for the two greatest gifts
He's ever provided me: *His Son, and my father.*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jason Deramo is a Christian, writer, and brother to many. He desires for all sons to know the image of a loving Father, and to seek healing with both God and others.

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MY SON RISING

*Letters to a Fatherless
Generation*

JASON DERAMO

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