

THE

MASTER THE 10 CHARACTERISTICS
OF THE **COMPREHENSIVE MAN**

MAN

THE | **MOMENT**

DEMANDS

JASON WILSON

author of
**BATTLE
CRY**

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ISBN 978-1-4041-2055-6 (custom)

Epub Edition DECEMBER 2024 9781400249060

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Wilson, Jason, author.

Title: The man the moment demands : master the 10 characteristics of the comprehensive man / Jason Wilson.

Description: Nashville, Tennessee : Nelson Books, [2025] | Summary: "Jason Wilson, bestselling author and director of the Cave of Adullam Transformational Training Academy, teaches men how to break free from societal shackles and master the ten characteristics of the comprehensive man that will equip them to overcome life's many challenges"-- Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2024034317 (print) | LCCN 2024034318 (ebook) | ISBN 9781400249053 (tp) | ISBN 9781400249060 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Men--Conduct of life. | Self-esteem in men. | Life skills.

Classification: LCC BJ1601 .W48 2025 (print) | LCC BJ1601 (ebook) | DDC 248.8/42--dc23/eng/20240904

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024034317>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024034318>

[OceanofPDF.com](https://oceanofpdf.com)

Information about External Hyperlinks in this ebook

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**To every man who is tired of being the wrong man in the
moment.**

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CHAPTER 1

THE INITIATION

Men like to put up the facade that they're never vulnerable. Like there's never anything wrong—and everyone knows it's bull****!" That's what Joe Rogan once said to me when I was a guest on his podcast, *The Joe Rogan Experience*. Joe possesses an astute understanding of masculinity, drawing from his diverse experiences as an actor, comedian, Brazilian jiu-jitsu black belt, UFC color commentator, and host of the number one podcast on Spotify.

"No one can be strong all the time," I replied to Joe. "When we say to each other, 'Stay strong, bro!' we're subconsciously telling each other that when we feel weak, something's wrong with us."

"You're not tricking anybody," Joe said. "You're posturing. When you're posturing, it's really a weakness. There's more strength in just being who you are. And just because you have vulnerable moments, or just because you're emotional, or just because you're sad doesn't mean you're weak."

I paused. "Who are we . . . really?" I asked him.

I pose that same question to the men reading this right now: *Who are you . . . really?*

From the moment we take our first breaths, we arrive as exuberant, carefree boys, radiating joy and authenticity. Yet our culture molds us over time into less expressive versions of ourselves—males hemmed in by the rigid notion of "manhood." As a result, our humanity bows at the altar of masculinity, leaving minimal space for genuine transparency—and no room for those lighthearted boys.

As we grow, oftentimes our ventings are dismissed as complaints, expressions of pain are labeled as weakness, fatigue is mislabeled as laziness, resistance is denounced as rebellion, and hesitation is branded as being double-minded. When tears flow, we're called "soft," teaching us from an early age to bottle our anguish and show either indifference or strength toward whatever stresses and depresses us. As the pressure causes us to suffer in silence, we stop seeking our purpose in life and start pursuing unhealthy and dangerous outlets of release instead—or we simply give up.

You're tired of being the bad guy when you're a good man. You're tired of being misunderstood. You're tired of feeling like a failure as a father, husband, and son. And you're tired of having to be strong for everyone. Maybe you're tired of struggling with the same issues again and again. You've lost hope, and, in some cases, there may seem to be only one thing left to do. But trust me, my friend, you weren't born to kill yourself or to commit the less noticeable suicide of the heart. You're not alone.

If you are like most men I've known, at some point you've struggled with feeling confused. Over my decades of working with men of all ages, I have learned this: Confusion exists when you don't know why you exist.

This confusion reminds me of the film *Wanted*, directed by Timur Bekmambetov. In the movie, we meet Wesley (portrayed by James McAvoy), an office worker leading an unfulfilled life. After his father's tragic death, he is recruited by Fox (played by Angelina Jolie) to be part of an ancient secret society of assassins called The Fraternity.

On Wesley's first day of training, Fox repeatedly demands to know why he is there. Clearly perturbed, Wesley responds sarcastically, "I don't know, so hit me!" Fox complies, delivering a jarring backslap, then striking Wesley three times with her knee and kicking him once in the sternum. Fox even strikes Wesley's jaw with brass knuckles, causing blood to gush from his mouth.

She then grabs him by the arm, knees him again, and asks once more, "Why are you here?"

In obvious pain, Wesley responds, "I don't know why I am here."

Fox clenches Wesley's hair and violently snatches his head back, repeating the question with even more passion, "Why are you here?" This time, Wesley doesn't respond. Fox strikes him again with a brass-knuckled blow to the body.

Finally, hunched over with a heavy emotional cry, Wesley yells, “I don’t know who I am!” Fox flips him over onto his back, drops to one knee beside him, and asks sternly, “What did you say?”

With voice trembling and tears welling, Wesley looks up and repeats, “I said, I don’t know who I am.”

The pain Wesley feels goes deeper than Fox’s physical assault. In fact, I would suggest that his deeper, inner pain is what hurts more than anything. Maybe you have felt that pain. If you haven’t (or don’t feel like you are allowed to admit it), I guarantee you know someone who *has* felt the depths of this despair.

For example, one of my close friends who is a retired police officer once called me with a deep sense of concern. Out of nowhere, he had been engulfed by an intense surge of anger. The grip on his steering wheel had become so fierce that his fingernails left imprints on his own palms. On the surface, my friend is the embodiment of joviality, the happiest person you could ever meet. But beneath his smile was a man grappling with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The weight of his life’s circumstances would have overwhelmed the average individual.

He told me about an incident where he had broken down crying in front of his wife—a first for him. “What’s wrong, babe?” she had asked him.

His response is all too familiar for many men: “I’m tired.” When men say we’re tired, it typically doesn’t mean we need sleep. It means we want rest—there is a major difference between the two. Sleep is an *unconscious* state that provides physical and mental relaxation. Rest is a *conscious* state of *freedom*—from anything that wearies the soul.

My friend proceeded to confide in his wife about his battle with PTSD. I confess I felt a surge of encouragement when he told me because I had been urging him to acknowledge his PTSD for years. But this story is not unique. In my experience, most men are fatigued by this inner battle, this solo struggle; it’s truly a weariness of our souls.

Regrettably, the true weight of “I’m tired” often eludes many friends and family members until it’s too late. I once saw a wife’s comment on one of my videos that remains etched in my mind: “When a strong man says he’s tired, believe him. I wish I had truly understood the depth of those words before I found myself burying my husband.”

THE ROOT OF OUR EXHAUSTION

Emotional instability is at the root of most men's common struggles, creating this weariness of spirit. Throughout the annals of human history, this struggle has resulted in some of the most insidious crimes and senseless wars. Today, 90 percent of individuals who commit violent physical assaults are men.¹ In the United States, the suicide rate for men is 3.5 times that of women.² What else could we expect when the most commendable human traits such as caring, compassion, and empathy have been systematically suppressed in men's hearts by the time they reach their early teens?

I firmly believe that these behaviors stem from what I call *emotional incarceration*—a self-imposed mental imprisonment where men lock away their allegedly unmasculine emotions and isolate their hearts from the world.

Consider the trend of wearing sagging pants, a style ironically born in the United States prison system where belts were prohibited; this serves as a poignant example.³ While many viewed it as blatant rebellion and obscenity, I saw the sagging pants as a reflection of “sagging” souls—an external manifestation of hearts deprived of hope. Unfortunately, this interpretation was not widely shared among teachers, mentors, parents, and pastors. Consequently, these young men were admonished both privately and publicly, which only inflamed their defensiveness and anger. Already burdened by societal expectations of what it means to be a man, and lacking safe spaces for transparency, these young men further suppressed their emotions and authenticity. This suppression does not merely hide their true feelings; it actively impedes their emotional stability and personal development.

Another physical manifestation of this inward condition is wearing hooded sweatshirts indoors. After the tragic passing of Kobe Bryant and his daughter Gianna, NBA stars like Dwayne Wade and Carmelo Anthony publicly expressed their grief while wearing a “hoodie” inside. Few people know that the hood was first added to sweatshirts in 1934 by Champion to protect athletes and laborers from the elements.⁴ Throughout my twenty years of mentoring, I have often noticed boys using hooded sweatshirts as a shield to protect themselves from the elements of life and internal struggles such as depression, abandonment, and shame. In these moments, I refer to

the hoodie as a “portable cave.” When I speak at youth events, I often observe boys slouching in their chairs with their hoods pulled over their faces. With a compassionate tone, I come alongside to let them know that their choice to wear hoodies indoors may be a way of coping with inner pain. They often respond by sitting up and gradually removing their hoods, revealing a willingness to confront their emotions.

How many men today wear portable caves, trying to hide away from our pain and take refuge from the world? Do not feel ashamed if you are one of these men; I, too, once concealed my true self. I know the way out and am here to help you.

I created Emotional Stability Training (EST) in 2010. EST is a comprehensive system for males that weans the soul (the emotional seat of man) and renews the mind, empowering males to maintain self-control. EST effectively addresses the underlying causes of unresolved anger, anxieties, lack of focus, and fears. Its core focus is to empower boys and men to engage in introspection, courageously confront and overcome emotions, and effectively communicate their feelings with composure.

While it is widely believed that the mind governs the body, the soul serves as the seat of our emotions, often asserting its influence over the messages conveyed by the mind. How many intellectually gifted men find themselves imprisoned because they couldn’t control their emotions in a moment of heated passion or rage? When men are conditioned to suppress or neglect a wide range of emotions, managing “masculine” ones becomes an even greater struggle.

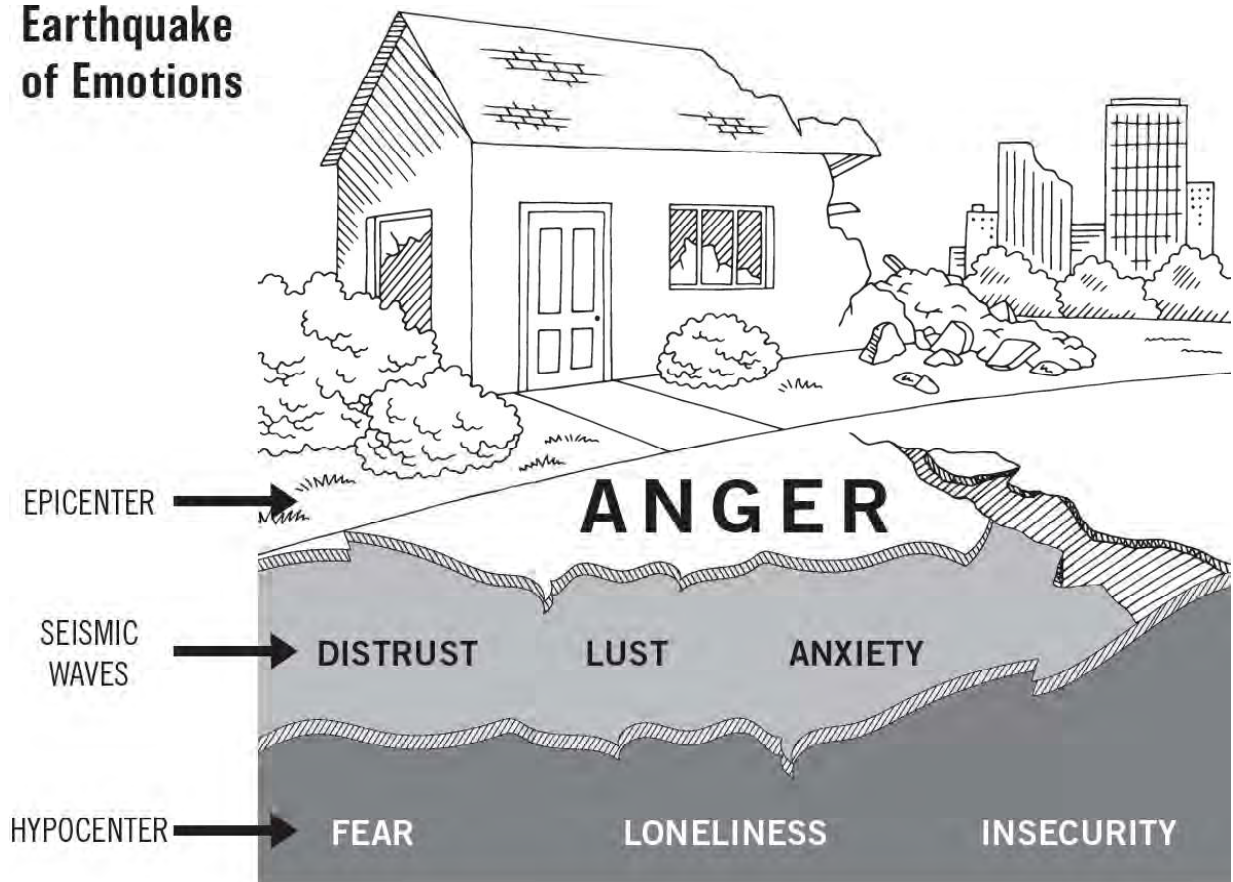
It may help to think about our struggle by comparing our emotions to crayons. A small box of eight crayons represents the restricted range of emotions men often allow themselves to express, while a larger box of sixty-four crayons symbolizes the full spectrum of emotions we all actually possess. When a woman requests a violet emotion, for example, and all we have is a basic purple emotion in our box, we will struggle to respond in a way that meets the moment. There are moments that call for more nuanced emotions, but if we limit ourselves to those eight, we can communicate only a limited range, especially when it comes to relating to women. Men, that is why we must understand why we fear being courageously transparent. We need to expand our emotional repertoire, like adding more colors to our crayon box.

The truth is that all emotions were divinely created for all humans, transcending gender boundaries. We should focus on embracing the richness of all emotions without being restricted by two adjectives: *masculine* or *feminine*.

THE EARTHQUAKE OF EMOTIONS

Society has taught men to repress their emotions until they explode. It's time to relearn how to express our feelings in a healthy and productive way. I created a tool called the *Earthquake of Emotions* to empower men with the introspective skills needed to move from being emotionally unstable to becoming verbal processors. In the visual representation that follows, I compare our emotional outbursts to earthquakes. This tool is designed to help men understand how their intense or poignant emotions move throughout their bodies. It also offers guidance on how to express these emotions before they shake and damage the surface of their lives.

Earthquake of Emotions



An earthquake begins many layers beneath the earth's surface at a point called the *hypocenter* or the *focus*.⁵ This is the point where the energy released from the earth's core builds up underneath the ground. For humans, the emotions that we initially feel but rarely express are like the energy released from the core of the earth. These core emotions are the ones we need to express. However, fear of appearing "unmasculine" compels us to suppress them. This suppression causes a buildup, much like the pressure at the core of the earth.

Now, if the energy at the hypocenter is dispersed only at these deepest levels, we won't notice any damage on the earth's surface. Similarly, if we internally release our initial tense emotions, we can avoid damaging external aspects of our lives, such as relationships (spouse, children, friends, jobs, and more). But when the energy at the hypocenter remains trapped, it will eventually create seismic waves that progress outward from

the hypocenter. In the same way, our repressed emotions inevitably force their way out of our bodies to relieve the internal pressure in our hearts. In the body these seismic waves are the emotions one step removed from those you most need to express. Just as geological factors affect the strength of seismic waves, various factors in your life will influence the strength of your emotions, from subtle feelings to intense reactions.

If the seismic waves are strong enough to reach the surface, the point at which they hit the most intensely is called the *epicenter*. This epicenter lies directly above the hypocenter, and it's where the ground will move the most during an earthquake. For men, the epicenter becomes the expressed emotion, most often anger, which I call the *surface emotion*. While this is what most people would see and experience on the outside, anger is never the root-cause or hypocenter emotion for the outburst. Instead, it's the result of a much deeper feeling, such as insecurity or fear. But due to men's emotional incarceration, we are unable to identify and release the deep-seated emotions, hence our emotional earthquakes.

As further proof of this concept, I conducted polls on social media in both 2018 and 2023, where I asked men to identify the emotions that overpower them. Unsurprisingly, out of the 1,348 participants from both polls, anger emerged as the number one emotion among thirty.

To master the emotions that often rule us at the wrong moments, we must first understand the root cause of our feelings. This involves addressing the underlying factors contributing to our emotional struggles, whether they stem from personal experiences, toxic thoughts, or trauma. Achieving emotional stability and effective communication requires this understanding and action.

When I finally understood my own emotional struggles and learned how to reconnect with my heart, I realized that I had been emotionally incarcerated. I understood how my upbringing had subtly ingrained in me an unyielding resistance to becoming a whole person—I couldn't be a complete man for my family, friends, and loved ones because I couldn't be one for myself. That's when I began to learn what it means to be a *comprehensive man*, a phrase I coined in 2018 when writing my first book, *Cry Like a Man*.

Back then, I was unsure how men would receive this message of comprehensive manhood. The dedication read, "To every man who is tired of not being able to say he is tired." Within days of the book's release, men

began posting pictures on social media of themselves proudly holding their copies. It was like the idea of *Cry Like a Man* was a long-kept secret, hoarded in the hearts of men worldwide. This reception was truly a message from the Most High to liberate His men from emotional incarceration and encourage them to become comprehensive men.

So, why did we men allow ourselves to become imprisoned in the first place?

WHO YOU WERE CREATED TO BE

Prior to gaining a deeper awareness of who the Most High created me to be, I yielded to the culture's distorted ideas of manhood instead of understanding the value of being a comprehensive man. First, as a younger man and then as a husband, I allowed my self-perception to be shaped by culture. During the 1980s, it seemed as if every boy in my community aspired to be the hypermasculine male or simply felt the pressure to assume that persona to be accepted. I adeptly played the role, but I was never truly a *thug*. I've since transformed that word into an acronym that accurately captures who I was at the time: a Traumatized Human Unable to Grieve. But this reality of repressed trauma explains the tense demeanor and the hair-trigger reactions we often witness among many of our brothers who still wear *thug* as a badge of honor.

Think about it. In the African American community, we don't brag about living in a safe neighborhood; instead, we boast about growing up in a dangerous one. Many say proudly, "I almost got shot yesterday!" But no one can live a healthy life in that reality. The age-old adage "It takes a village to raise a child" holds true, but a traumatized village can't raise little boys to become comprehensive men.

Here's the good news, though: The script is not fixed—it can be amended. We have the power to redefine manhood in a way that embraces emotions and authentic expression. We can create a world where young boys are free to grow into men without the burden of stifled emotions. A world where intergenerational healing, not intergenerational trauma, is passed down. But this shift requires courage—the courage to unlearn, to question, and to embrace change.

Unsure if this shift is even possible? I know firsthand that it is because I've been in the trenches of life with men of all ages for the last two decades. In the heart of Detroit, Michigan, I founded the Yunion in 2003, a faith-based nonprofit dedicated to the healing of youth and the fortifying of families at the core of community transformation. My wife joined me as the executive director, and together, we have impacted over seventeen thousand lives. With her at the operational helm and me steering our strategic vision, our team of unwaveringly dedicated individuals has driven profound community change.

My passion for helping misguided African American boys led me to establish the Cave of Adullam Transformational Training Academy (CATTA). In the CATTA, we teach, train, and transform uninitiated boys into comprehensive men of the Most High—men who are physically conscious, mentally astute, and spiritually strong enough to navigate the pressures of this world without succumbing to their emotions.

When one of the CATTA's videos went viral in 2016, garnering over 350 million views worldwide, it opened doors to remarkable opportunities, including representing the CATTA at President Obama's "My Brother's Keeper" Showcase at the White House. The hit TV show *This Is Us* featured our work in a widely viewed and award-winning episode.⁶ Then, in 2018, renowned actor/producer Laurence Fishburne's film company, Cinema Gypsy, produced a documentary showcasing my story of working with young men. The film debuted at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2022, captivating audiences and earning prestigious accolades, including Best Feature Documentary. During this time, I also authored two bestselling books, *Cry Like a Man* and *Battle Cry*, which introduced the idea of emotional incarceration and offered strategies to help men begin to break free from their internal constraints.

I mention this because all the attention has created an opportunity for us to deepen the conversation about what it means to be a man today. For example, when I was a panelist at Lenard "Charlamagne" McKelvey's Mental Wealth Expo in New York, the moderator posed a thought-provoking question to me: "Jason, how would you define a man?" A simple question with complex implications.

Without hesitating, I responded, "You can't." My audacious reply surprised the moderator, fellow panelists, and attendees. As everyone leaned

in with curiosity, I passionately expressed, “Once you’ve allowed someone else to define you, you can never be all you were created to be.”

After that moment of clarity onstage, the fire that had smoldered within me ignited once again. This discussion along with the response to *Battle Cry* affirmed the urgency and importance of writing this book. I realized we needed to further explore the intricacies of who we are as men, the impact of societal pressures, and the journey to help us reclaim our authentic selves.

Men, it is time to eradicate the societal norms, cultural expectations, and stereotypes that confine and define us all within one rigid word—*masculinity*.

TAKE ACTION

Throughout this book, I will encourage you not only to read but also to take action. The only way you can change the man you are is to free yourself from preexisting paradigms. So, at each step of our journey together, choose to act on what you learn. Start now.

ACTIVITY #1: MIRROR TIME

Buy a pocket mirror to keep with you while reading this book. Stare into it and recite powerful affirmations—words designed to dispel self-condemning thoughts. It may feel strange to talk to yourself in the mirror (or you may already do it), but science shows that it can help people process emotions and thoughts. Dr. Tara Well, an associate professor of psychology at Barnard College of Columbia University and an expert in self-reflection, explained that “the mirror serves as a tool to externalize your inner dialogue, allowing you to observe and analyze it from a different perspective.”⁷

You might consider this exercise cliché, but for men, looking at oneself with such a level of intimacy can be challenging. In a culture that programs us to focus on the negatives and constantly strive for improvement, recognizing the positives in who we already are becomes a significant task.

When I do this exercise with boys in the Cave of Adullam, my initial question to them is, “Do you love who you see in the mirror?” And I ask the same of you now. Take a long look in the mirror and answer that question honestly: *Do you love who you see in the mirror?* I’m not talking about the way that man in the mirror styles his hair or the clothes he wears. Think back to how he handled tense moments or situations, what he’s been through, his regrets, his triumphs, and who he is now. Do you really *love* who you see in the mirror?

If you are like most men, the answer is probably no. Maybe even an emphatic NO! If that is true for you, don’t worry. Being honest with yourself about yourself is the first step toward becoming a comprehensive man.

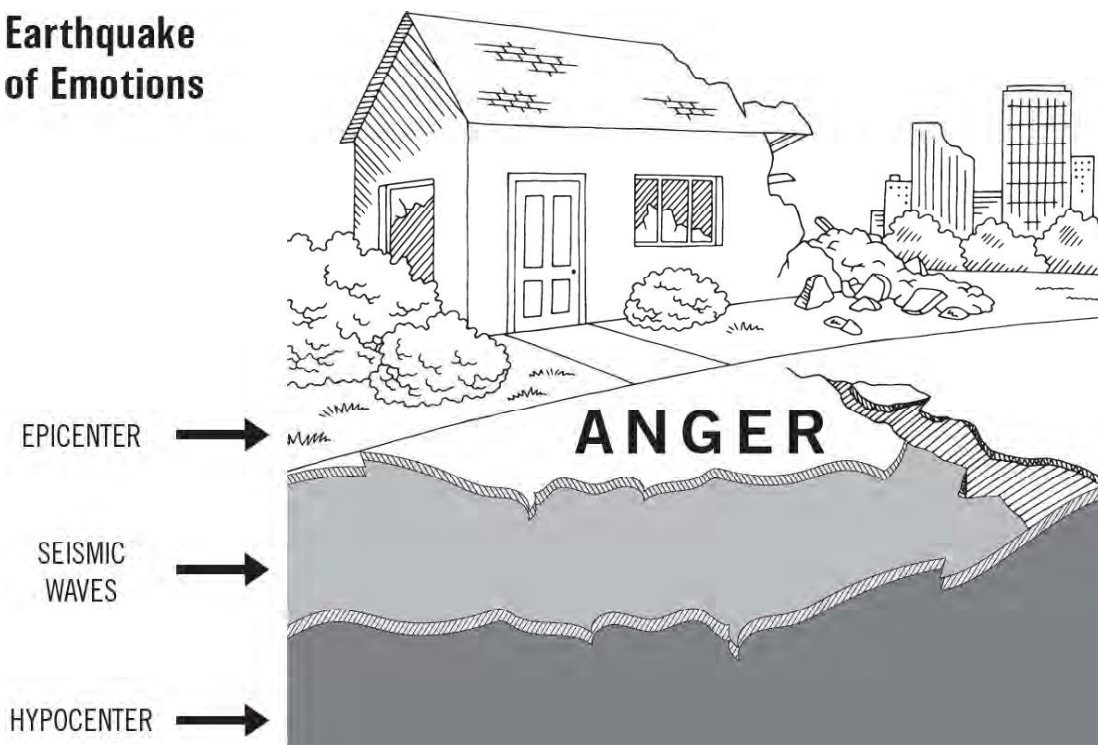
ACTIVITY #2: EARTHQUAKE OF EMOTIONS

Throughout this book, we will probe deeper into our emotions and hearts. We will learn to name and feel our root-cause emotions with the intention of relearning how to express them in healthy ways on our journey to becoming verbal processors and, subsequently, comprehensive men.

You'll find that the Earthquake of Emotions enables a more introspective exploration of your emotional landscape, offering insights into the depths of your feelings. I invite you to fill in the Earthquake of Emotions chart below to start that process.

1. In the Seismic Waves row, write down the emotions that you believe are directly beneath the anger you've identified. Remember, these should be the emotions closest to how you genuinely feel (the hypocenter), but they are not the ones you need to initially express. Use a pencil so that you can erase, as these emotions may change over time.
2. Then, in the Hypocenter row, write the emotions you believe are the root cause of your anger. Identifying and internally releasing these emotions first will help prevent unintentionally affecting those you love or quaking your life. This process will help reset your mind and bring rest to your soul—promoting a more mindful and considerate approach to expressing your emotions.

Earthquake of Emotions



ACTIVITY #3: REDUCE THE RISKS

Although we cannot prevent natural earthquakes from happening, we can significantly reduce the likelihood of our emotions triggering tremors in our lives. Take a moment to meditate on the emotions you identified in the Hypocenter row. Then contemplate strategies to reduce the risk of emotional earthquakes. Construct a stronger emotional infrastructure of friends and confidants to lean on when hypocenter emotions begin to destabilize you. Educate yourself by seeking professional help from either a counselor or a psychotherapist to fortify your knowledge and resilience, ensuring your foundation remains solid even when times are unsteady.

CHAPTER 2

WHATEVER THE MOMENT DEMANDS

As a popular DJ in Detroit in 1986, my expertise was primarily in hip-hop. My reluctance to play other genres of music was driven by a desire to maintain a tough, exclusively masculine persona. Consequently, I never was hired to spin at events like wedding receptions and graduation parties, which required a broader musical selection. To make more money, I had to collaborate with other DJs, playing a “set” at their parties—a specifically timed sequence of songs mixed continuously. A pivotal moment came during a backyard party when the main DJ left to buy more beer, leaving me in charge. A girl I’d been watching all night asked me to play house music, but my crate of records was devoid of dance songs. To mask this limitation, I proudly proclaimed, “I only spin hip-hop!” and played another rap song.

She walked away, clearly unimpressed. I acted unfazed by her exit, but that was a turning point for me as a DJ. I realized the need to evolve, to become capable of playing to the moment and rocking any crowd. Once my music selection became comprehensive, I emerged as one of the most sought-after DJs in my city and commanded the highest fees.

Becoming a comprehensive man extends beyond a mere mental battle; it also delves into the depths of the spiritual realm. Throughout this book, I refer to Jesus by His Hebrew name, *Yahushua*, and acknowledge God the Father as *Yah* (a shortened form of YHWH / Yahuah / the Most High). The truth is that the word *masculinity* could never define the comprehensive nature in which Yah created man. And while I cannot claim to possess all

the answers, my life stands as a testament to the profound potential Yah has placed within us to overcome and evolve. You, too, can achieve triumph by dismantling the deceptive beliefs that have held you back.

During my transformative journey, I have faced numerous moments of weakness and the temptation to surrender, yet I have consistently discovered renewed strength in the Scriptures. Embracing Yah and His Word has been instrumental in guiding me toward righteousness and preventing me from becoming ensnared by my past. It has propelled me toward the fulfillment of the purpose bestowed on me (Acts 20:24). But I want to be clear—my intention is not to proselytize; instead, I want to equip you with tools that have proven effective for me and many other men. Then it'll be up to you to make the choice of who you want to be. In my pursuit of becoming a comprehensive man, I recognized the need to transcend the confines of the stereotypical male identity. Initially, I defined a comprehensive man as one who embodies both courage and compassion, strength and sensitivity—a man guided by the good in his heart, rather than fear of how he could be perceived. While I've outlined ten characteristics of the comprehensive man in this book, it's vital to remain open to evolving. Remember, once you've allowed someone else to define you, you can never be all you were created to be.

Therefore, instead of simply conforming to perceived expectations, the comprehensive man becomes *whatever the moment demands*.

As I embarked on the journey of writing this book, I delved deep into personal experiences, stories of others, and the wisdom of experts in various fields. I aimed to delve into the critical role that self-definition plays in fortifying mental well-being and empower men with ten characteristics that can enrich and evolve their lives.

It is encouraging these days to see more men learning how to *speak* about emotions, but sadly, most of those same men do not know how to *feel* them!

That is why I advocate for freeing us from predefined notions. I encourage embracing the uniqueness that lies within each of us. Becoming the man the moment demands is a call that starts with rejecting the limits set by others and embarking on a path of self-discovery, empowerment, and mental wealth. By challenging the notion of defining myself based on external standards, I found the inspiration to write this book to share my

insights and empower you to embrace your true self, to live authentically, and to become a comprehensive man.

This man is not defined by societal demands. In fact, this man typically chooses the opposite path of the one laid out for the “masculine” male, as you can see here:

The Masculine Male	The Comprehensive Man
Suppresses his emotions and hides behind a facade to appear strong	Expresses his emotions freely without fear of being judged
Exudes only masculine characteristics	Exudes both masculine and “unmasculine” characteristics
Feels threatened when another man is more successful	Is not threatened by another man’s success but is inspired by it
Views women as subservient and sex objects	Respects women and values their superior qualities
Feels fear but will do anything to prevent anyone from knowing he is scared	Feels fear but openly admits it and thereby makes wise life decisions
Is a slave to his thoughts and emotions	Masters his emotions <i>before</i> his thoughts become toxic

In the pages that follow, we will explore the ten characteristics of the comprehensive man, covering each vital area of a man’s life. I like to think of these characteristics as part of three general themes:

The Dynamic Characteristics *call you to take action.*

The Deeper Characteristics *inspire you to look within.*

The Devotion Characteristics *focus on your closest relationships.*

Within these three themes, we’ll explore the following ten characteristics:

The Dynamic Characteristics

1. The **Fighter** discerns when to engage and when to walk away. He masters his ego and emotions to ensure he stays in an advantageous

position.

2. The **Provider** ensures the provision of essential resources, guidance, and support for his family, friends, community, and himself.
3. The **Leader** guides and inspires others. He knows when to speak and when to listen—leading by example, not intimidation.

The Deeper Characteristics

4. The **Lover** knows that love is demonstrated through action—devotion to Yah, loving his neighbor, and maintaining his own well-being.
5. The **Nurturer** cultivates growth and development, caring for individuals and environments within their influence and beyond.
6. The **Gentleman** exudes respect for others and himself through deliberate and appropriate etiquette without compromising his values.
7. The **Friend** loves at all times and is steadfast in the face of adversity—willing to lay down his life for his companions.

The Devotion Characteristics

8. The **Husband** emulates Christ's love by sacrificially giving of himself for his wife's well-being, treating her as he would like to be honored.
9. The **Father** desires his children's trust and provides a safe space for them to receive love, learn from their mistakes, and conquer their fears.
10. The **Son** unwaveringly supports his parents despite challenges, embracing the journey and honoring them with his words, heart, and actions.

As I show you how each of these characteristics contributes to the journey of becoming a comprehensive man, I will guide you to confront the depths of your own life and experiences, urging action as you awaken to the truth. This may be painful, discouraging, or, frankly, something you don't want to do, but trust me when I say I have been there. And remember, you will not be alone. Yah has given you the strength to become the man you were always meant to be; you only need to believe it.

You are worth this fight.

COMPREHENSIVE MANHOOD

In the early 2000s the idea of comprehensive manhood was unfathomable and, I believe, would have been widely rejected by men of that day. Hypermasculinity dominated the cultural landscape of my community, though I now recognize it as a facade masking deep-seated insecurity.

During those years I owned and operated a ceramic and marble tile company. One morning I received a call to provide an estimate for two bathroom remodels. When I arrived a tall man, seemingly incapable of cracking a smile, welcomed me into his home. As I tallied up the materials, I inquired about his preferred color scheme. He sat back in his chair, fixed his gaze on me, and responded with surprise, “I ain’t no [expletive]! I don’t know how to pick no colors!”

This man’s passionate response caught me off guard. I couldn’t fathom why he reacted so insecurely when I was only asking about color choices. Suppressing my laughter, I retorted, “Are you suggesting that I’m somehow less of a man because I excel at coordinating colors for various remodel projects?”

“Nah, dog!” he replied. “I’m just saying I don’t have that kind of sensitive side.” I wanted to say more but felt that replying would just be doing what Yahushua called “casting pearls before swine” (Matt. 7:6, paraphrased). So I simply completed the estimate and left.

While I was a far cry from the man I am today, I could still see through that man’s facade. The person who had referred me to him later told me that the dour homeowner was like many men today: lonely and harboring deep-seated anger, resentment, and fear. He struggled with a misconstrued understanding of masculinity. Instead of becoming a comprehensive man, many men embrace this myopic view of manhood and adopt harmful or unhealthy behaviors, attitudes, or traits in an attempt to conform to societal or cultural expectations of men. It leads to negative outcomes for individuals and society as a whole and lies at the heart of emotional incarceration.

But many men who’ve begun to break free from emotional incarceration struggle to maintain their newfound freedom. They often mistakenly think their liberation was solely for the benefit of their wives, children, friends, or others in their lives. But allow me to be unequivocally clear: The journey from a purely masculine male to a comprehensive man is

a path you take for yourself. When your motivation to change is driven by pleasing others, especially women, you risk emotional recidivism the moment you feel your efforts are unappreciated.

True transformation occurs when the driving force is not external but *internal* validation. While external encouragement can certainly play a role in our introspective victories, relying on it for motivation is like driving a car with a hole in the gas tank—you'll soon find yourself running on fumes. It's important that you undergo this transformation for your own sake. Will others benefit? Of course. My wife, children, friends, and those I serve have all benefited from my transformation. Nevertheless, I had to embark on this journey primarily for myself.

And that is what you must choose to do now. You must fight this battle with the same masculine energy you conjure up when someone tries to harm you or your family or when you feel disrespected. When you feel discouraged and tempted to surrender to the prevailing culture, don't give up. Strategically fight for the life you deserve and prove you have what it takes to evolve into a comprehensive man.

Growing up in Detroit in the 1970s and early '80s, I developed a deep fascination with martial arts movies and competitions. The flying kicks, one-inch punches, and impressive choreographed movements captivated my imagination. Even the mystical pressure-point techniques that could supposedly render an attacker powerless captured my interest. At the age of twelve I began practicing ninjutsu, a martial art developed in Japan, but I didn't fully commit to serious martial arts training until I turned twenty-one.

While I may not have been particularly adept at artsy punching and kicking, I eventually discovered that I possessed a natural strength and an innate ability to wrestle opponents to the ground and subdue them. During a friendly sparring session with my best friend in his front yard, I decided to try a different approach—something rarely seen at the time. I rushed in, clinched for control, and naturally executed a takedown. To my surprise, it worked without much effort at all.

However, this practice was not always appreciated by the traditional “masters” on my martial arts journey. When they would stress the importance of not relying on strength, I would feel irritated. I eventually realized that this de-emphasis of strength kept strong men in the dojo from exposing the flaws in certain martial arts styles that relied on compliant attackers for the techniques to work. These rigid styles were not

comprehensive and had no defense against an attacker willing to take the “death touch,” rush in, invade the defender’s space, and take them down to the ground. And if you wanted to advance in the belt ranks within many dojos, you had to conform to the established systems. The gatekeepers of traditional martial arts were considered untouchable.

But in 1993, everything changed. In the annals of martial arts history, a defining moment emerged at the Ultimate Fighting Championship (later renamed UFC 1: The Beginning) held at McNichols Sports Arena in Denver, Colorado. On November 12, 1993, Royce Gracie, a member of the legendary Gracie family, forever altered the course of martial arts.

Royce faced off against Art Jimmerson, Gerard Gordeau, and Ken Shamrock. These fights culminated in a breathtaking display of skill as Royce decisively defeated all three fighters in the first round. Royce had showcased a revolutionary approach that went against the norms of the time—Brazilian jiu-jitsu (BJJ), a grappling art developed by his family that emphasizes leverage, technique, and submissions over flashy styles and raw strength. These victories sent shock waves through the traditional martial arts community.

Movies like *Five Deadly Venoms*, *Enter the Dragon*, *The 36th Chamber of Shaolin*, *The Last Dragon*, and *Bloodsport* predated BJJ, which is why millions of martial artists never questioned the effectiveness of kung fu, aikido, karate, tae kwon do, Wing Chun, or ninjutsu. But Royce’s dominance required the martial arts world to reevaluate and recognize the effectiveness of BJJ. It was a wake-up call to evolve and be willing to embrace new techniques and ideas.

Just as BJJ transformed the martial arts landscape, discovering the broader characteristics of manhood can similarly transform our perception of masculinity. The traditional definition of manhood cripples our identities, leaving us empty and unfulfilled. When we acknowledge the comprehensive nature of men, we expand beyond mere stereotypes to appreciate the full spectrum of their identities and purpose in today’s world.

Men, it is time to break free from the shackles of societal expectations. It is written that there is a time for everything (Eccl. 3:1–8), but unfortunately, we as men have allowed this culture to coerce us into *misconstruing* masculinity. As a result, we have relentlessly and foolishly fought to preserve a life that many of us now admit is a miserable, limited, unfulfilled journey to death.

One of the most influential martial arts instructors in my life, Kajana Cetshwayo, often said, “A warrior must be anything and everything he has to be at any given moment.” Sadly, when men succumb to society’s pressure to perform strictly as masculine males, we sacrifice our authenticity and emotional depth for the sake of maintaining a superficial facade—thus losing our ability to be “anything and everything” the moment demands.

Behind every strong man’s smile, there are internal tears from a story untold. Men, let’s stop suffering in silence and become comprehensively strong. It’s important that we “man up” during adversity, but it’s vital to open up when we’re about to mentally crash. We are human too.

THE STRUGGLE IS REAL

My friend, there’s no need to suffer in silence anymore. You’re not alone in feeling like you have more days where you’d rather stay in bed than get up. You’re not alone in feeling like you’re valued only for what you can do instead of who you are. You’re not alone in feeling like everyone asks how you’re doing only because their own well-being rests on your mental stability. Fear, doubt, shame, and self-condemning thoughts—these are common experiences. You may feel like you have reached a tipping point, but don’t give up—because you’re not tired of living, you’re tired of *not* living.

Many men like you and me—just like the brothers you see on TV, in movies, or playing sports—feel the same. We must unite and fight as one. Without such unity, change will remain elusive and the burden wearisome. A man standing alone can be defeated. But two can stand back-to-back to wage war—and win (Eccl. 4:12). Believe me, there are men just like you waiting to help you break through the same barriers they’ve confronted—but you must be willing to remove the superhero cape that is strangling you.

But it won’t be easy. In an experiential psychotherapy session that my wife and I attended with nine other married couples, a husband suddenly collapsed before his wife and bellowed at himself, “What the hell is wrong with you, man!” For a brief but intense moment, he pounded the ground and cried out, “Why can’t you get yourself together?” Sound familiar?

Men, the greatest battle takes place within us. Our relentless thoughts drive us to the precipice: *I'm tired of battling my own insecurities. I'm tired of feeling like I'm failing as a husband. I'm tired of feeling like I'm the same father to my children that mine was to me.*

To be candid, one thought I really struggled with is this: My son looks up to me more than I look up to myself. Maybe you can relate.

And when these thoughts feel overwhelming, we may find ourselves, without warning, flirting with thoughts of suicide or of having an affair that self-sabotages our beautiful marriages and families.

If you're honest with yourself, you must acknowledge that it's not your family causing this turmoil—it's your mind and heart. The apostle Paul emphasized the significance of renewing the mind—a renewal that leads us to discern Yah's will (Rom. 12:2). As long as your mind remains conformed to the societal constraints of traditional masculinity, you'll persistently seek escape routes instead of becoming the comprehensive man that Yah made you to be, living the life you truly deserve.

In a world where the essence of manhood is often obscured by facades and ego, a new path emerges. This journey is more than introspective—it's a revolution, an invitation to join the ranks of men who have yelled their battle cry, fought for freedom from emotional incarceration, and won their internal wars. But be forewarned: This journey will challenge every preconceived notion you hold about manhood, revealing a more profound truth about what it means not only to be a man but to be authentically human.

As we delve deep into the ten characteristics of the comprehensive man, I will empower you with the knowledge, statistics, personal stories, and historical insights to confront the entrenched misogyny, misleading mantras, and often unchallenged hypermasculine behaviors that have deeply influenced our lives. I break the unwritten rule of suffering in silence, a code that too often dismisses the crucial role of transparency in a man's life, sometimes acknowledged only in the finality of a funeral.

TAKE ACTION

Are you ready to deconstruct society's narrow definition of manhood? To live a life unbounded by limitations, becoming the man every moment demands? If so, gather

yourself—mentally, physically, and emotionally—as I take you down the narrow path that leads to a fuller life!

ACTIVITY #1: THE FOUR R'S

One of the techniques I've developed to help you embrace the freedom to fail, to let go of setbacks, and to live in the moment is called the Four R's. I suggest you get a journal to use for this purpose or use the Notes app on your phone or whatever means you find best to write down your thoughts.

1. **Reflect** on the challenges that have shaken your soul.
2. **Release** each negative thought before it becomes toxic.
3. **Reset** yourself mentally and emotionally.
4. **Rest** in the moment instead of being traumatized by the past and anxious about the future.

In this way, you are letting go of the past and allowing yourself to live in the present. Over time, I recommend inviting another trustworthy man into this process to share your Four R's, but get started now by tapping into what is already happening inside you.

ACTIVITY #2: TREE OF TRAUMA

I created the Tree of Trauma to help boys and men easily identify the root causes of their struggles, helping them understand why they feel the way they do. The following is a breakdown explanation of the Tree of Trauma and steps to help you identify your cause and effect, resolve trauma, and unlock the potential for growth and thriving as a comprehensive man.

Healing is possible when we delve introspectively, identifying our issues and then courageously confronting them.

The Soil symbolizes our physical and social environments that influence our development and overall well-being. These surroundings significantly impact our life experiences. Ideally, our “soil” should consist of supportive friends, loving family, a healthy workplace, and a nurturing community.

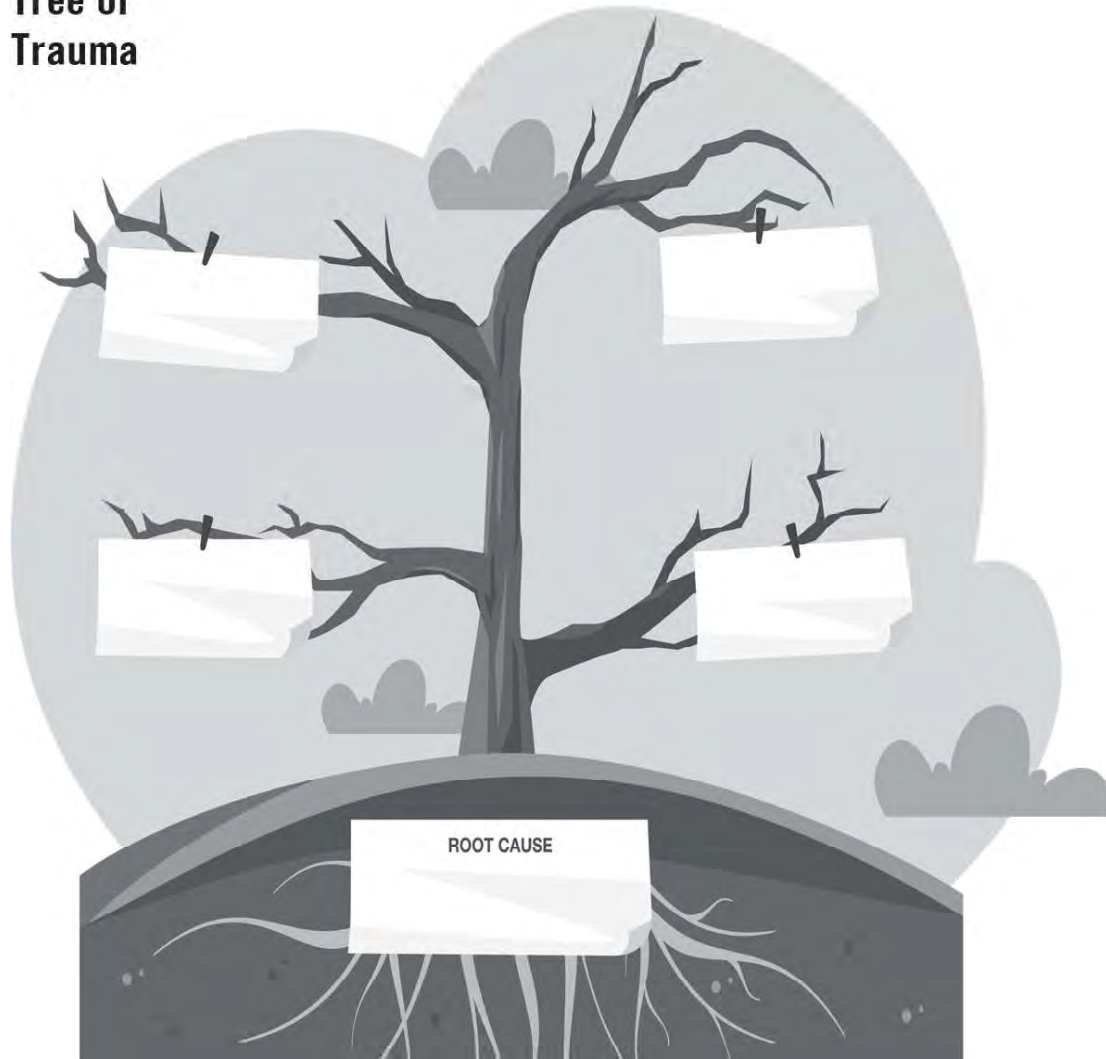
The Roots symbolize the cause and effect on our emotional and psychological well-being, stemming from experiences like mother and father wounds, childhood abuse, or abandonment. Identifying and uprooting toxic roots is essential for a more fulfilling life. Just as nurturing a tree is necessary for growth, men require therapy and self-maintenance to overcome challenges from life's roots—a process that ultimately leads to a more fulfilling life.

The Tree Trunk symbolizes our mind, influencing our mental and emotional well-being, providing stability, and supporting cognitive function. Just as the tree trunk supports branches and leaves, a healthy mind stabilizes thoughts and emotions, aiding personal growth, learning, and decision-making.

The Branches symbolize our issues and negative thoughts, such as fear of failure, self-hate, depression, rage, and suicidal ideation. Often, people opt for a quick fix, cutting off these branches. However, similar to a tree, the mental branches tend to regrow

over time. The only lasting solution is to uproot the tree and replant it in healthier soil.

Tree of Trauma



THE WORK

Step One: Reflect on your soil. Is your environment nutrient-rich or is it nutrient-deficient, neglectful, and burdened with traumatic memories? If it's the latter, note where you believe your tree should be replanted to thrive with purpose.

Step Two: Take a moment to reflect on the negative thoughts you're experiencing. In the space provided, use a pencil to write down their root cause—whether it's a breakup, childhood abuse, the death of a loved one, parental abandonment, or another significant event.

Step Three: On each branch, write in the four provided spaces the issues that grow from your mind that make life miserable and hard to live. For me it was unresolved anger, depression, lack of focus, and fear of failure.

Now you have in front of you a cause and effect layout, the blueprint to show to your counselor or therapist to help you uproot and relocate your tree, enabling you to embark on your healing journey.

ACTIVITY #3: MIRROR TIME

Take out the mirror you borrowed or bought and silently gaze into the eyes of the man reflected in it. Don't look away for sixty seconds. Then affirm that man with the following statements:

- I am more than masculine.
- I will unlearn the misconceptions about masculinity and embark on a journey to becoming a comprehensive man.
- I will tear down the facade.
- I'll take off my mask and cape, acknowledging that I can't be a superhero, but I can be human.

PART 1

THE DYNAMIC CHARACTERISTICS

A Call for You to Take Action

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CHAPTER 3

THE FIGHTER

The Fighter discerns when to engage and when to walk away. He masters his ego and emotions to ensure he stays in an advantageous position.

For most men, the urge to fight comes all too easily. But it is crucial to demonstrate restraint and wisdom, especially in potentially volatile situations. In fact, being a comprehensive man also means understanding the long-term consequences of our choices *before* making them.

Being a Fighter is about not only being strong and assertive when necessary but also knowing when to exercise self-control and seek peaceful solutions when possible. A comprehensive mindset rooted in the desire to protect not only fosters healthy relationships but also ensures a safer environment for ourselves, our loved ones, and our community. Standing up for what we hold sacred is crucial, yet we must do so with wisdom that shields both them and ourselves from harm.

On March 27, 2022, during a spectacular night in Los Angeles, Will Smith was anticipated to receive the Oscar for Best Male Actor for his acclaimed performance in *King Richard*. Unfortunately, the memorable evening took an unexpected turn when his emotions got the best of him, significantly altering the trajectory of his future. The second he stood up from his chair, ignited with rage over presenter Chris Rock's jokes about his wife, Jada Pinkett Smith, he still had a pivotal moment to pause. Instead of reacting impulsively, he could have sat back down and tactically addressed Mr. Rock afterward.

However, when he left his seat, stepped onto the runway, and walked toward Chris Rock, his internal battle became an external war that he lost.

Although it appeared that Will was defending his wife in that moment, a closer examination of Will Smith's traumatic past suggests that he may have been driven by a subconscious need to protect his mother.

In his memoir, *Will*, he candidly shares a moment as a child where he witnessed his father violently attack his mother, causing her to bleed and collapse in front of him. Although Will viewed himself as a coward throughout his youth—afraid of other kids, being injured or humiliated, or appearing pusillanimous—it was this moment that led to a lifelong struggle with feelings of inadequacy and cowardice. His achievements, he reveals, have often been an unspoken apology to his mother for his perceived failure to protect her.

This example underscores a vital psychological truth: Unresolved trauma can resurface in unexpected ways, often manifesting uncontrollably in adulthood. This is a hallmark of Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (C-PTSD), especially when rooted in formative experiences of abuse or violence.

Now, it's important I clarify that understanding Will's background does not excuse his actions. Slapping and humiliating Chris Rock was unequivocally wrong and cannot be justified. If a man insults your wife, standing up for her is crucial, but it should always be done in a way that keeps us in an advantageous position. This moment at the Oscars highlights the importance of addressing our unresolved traumas strategically, rather than letting them dictate our actions in moments of conflict. I've witnessed far too many good men die young from gun violence, instead of seeking to first resolve an altercation in a nonviolent way.

Moreover, misleading mantras like "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me" subtly teach men to suppress emotional wounds while urging us to confront physical threats by any means necessary. In reality, words can cause more damage than sticks and stones: *Words can shatter our minds*. Various studies and research in the field of psychology and mental health have shown that verbal abuse can lead to issues such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem.¹ Emotional wounds can be just as damaging as physical injuries and often have an even greater impact on one's ability to function and find happiness in life.

On the other hand, in the midst of the incident with Will Smith at the Oscars, Chris Rock demonstrated a remarkable display of restraint and maturity by choosing not to retaliate either physically or verbally. This

decision aligns with the biblical teaching of “turn the other cheek,” which is often misinterpreted, like many of Yahushua’s teachings. If you have read my book *Battle Cry*, this discussion may sound familiar, but it’s important to include here because it illustrates a comprehensive man.

Matthew 5:39 says, “But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.” In biblical times, society predominantly favored the right hand, relegating the left to unclean tasks.² Therefore, to slap someone’s right cheek, the aggressor would have to use the back of his right hand (a backslap). From a theological perspective, “turning the other cheek” represents a response to a reprimand or insult rather than a cowardly act of submission to a physical threat. It champions a radical form of emotional stability and strategic strength.

By not responding with aggression, Chris Rock defied the conventional notion of “an eye for an eye” and showed that true strength lies in rising above provocation and staying in the advantageous position. It takes great courage and self-control to be the man the moment demands, especially in challenging situations. Mr. Rock’s response serves as a valuable lesson in maintaining composure without succumbing to your emotions.

THE SPIRITUAL FIGHTER

The comprehensive man knows that not all our battles take place in the physical world. Some of these fights will be spiritual: It is written that we do not fight against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places (Eph. 6:12). These fights can begin with emotions from past trauma affecting us in the present.

One day I received a call from a distressed former UFC champion who had become a friend. Despite living in a different city, he expressed a strong desire to meet with me privately as soon as possible. I assured him of my support and encouraged him to visit Detroit whenever he could manage it. He flew in the very next morning.

During our heartfelt conversation, we discussed all of the traumas he had endured between the ages of seven and twelve. Then we sat in silence for about ten minutes as he deeply contemplated his past. Suddenly, tears

started streaming down his face, and I knew it was a moment of catharsis for him. Acknowledging his trauma liberated him to release what he'd been hoarding in his heart for decades. Leaving my desk, I embraced him, giving him the comfort and reassurance he needed to let it all out. He confided that out of all the therapy sessions he had experienced, this was the one where he felt he could truly cry and let go of his pain.

I explained to him how his present struggles intertwined with the unresolved wounds from his traumatic past and how that realization allowed him to make sense of it all. When we let our trauma time travel and influence our present, we inadvertently fight our present battles from that painful place in the past.

After our conversation and prayer, the former UFC champion's soul seemed to find some semblance of peace as the weight of the past began to lift. At that moment, he looked at me and said, "I want to get baptized." It was a profound declaration, signifying his desire for a fresh start and a new path forward.

It was a cold afternoon in October, which is important to note because I always baptize in the Detroit River. We went to my home, grabbed swim trunks and towels, and drove to Belle Isle, a 982-acre island in Detroit. He had professionally fought for years fueled by his painful past; now, as a believer in Yahushua, he was ready to fight from a healed heart. Before we walked into the water, I blew the shofar, a trumpet used by the ancient Hebrews made from a ram's horn. In silence, we entered the frigid water. When we reached a deep enough spot, I prayed over him and baptized him in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and in the name of Yahushua, I submerged his entire body underwater.

After the baptism, as we started walking toward my truck, he joked, "Bro, it's cold out here. We gotta hurry up and get to that heat!"

"Man, I wish you wouldn't have said that, because now we have to stand out here longer," I replied. "This is a spiritual fight, and your soul—the seat of your emotions—is trying to rule you in a moment where your mind should only be focused on the Most High. This cold will not kill you. So now we have to stand here in it until your soul is silent and you are fully immersed in the power of this moment."

It was a privilege to witness his transformation and be a part of his healing process. The experience left a lasting impact on both of us, and it reminded me of the power of human connection and the healing journey we

can embark on together. He found solace and strength, ready to face the challenges of life with a renewed spirit.

If you're tired of hanging on to the string of unresolved conflicts and hurt, stop allowing the devil to reel you back into the emotions that keep you from reconciling with others and even with yourself. The more anger, depression, distress, and unforgiveness we carry in our hearts from the past, the less capable we are of fighting from a place of love and fully living in the moment. The comprehensive man seeks out the resources he needs to process past traumas so he can overcome them.

COGNITIVE COUNTERPUNCHING

The comprehensive man has many strategies at his disposal to help him navigate life, one of which is cognitive counterpunching. One of the best strategies in boxing against an aggressive attack is known as “punching in retreat.” In this strategy, the boxer intentionally moves backward or retreats while still maintaining distance and control.

Similarly, when a married man faces flirtatious advances from an attractive coworker or business associate, he has two choices: meet her advances head-on or cognitively counterpunch. If he employs the latter, he can maintain control of the situation. If the married man chooses the former and confronts this force head-on, his chances of losing self-control—along with his wife, family, and finances—greatly increase.

Through proactive recognition—deliberately assessing the situation before it turns into a problem—he can avoid getting knocked out in life. Rather than pridefully engaging with her initial attack, he should mentally “slip the punch,” bob and weave until he identifies an opportunity to cognitively counterpunch or retreat from the momentum of her advances. If retreating doesn't weaken the attack, he should capitalize on his opponent's aggressive movements and timing his responses to land effective counters:

Her attacking jab: “Your wife is so lucky to have you!”

His slip: “Yes, we are incredibly blessed and happy to have each other!”

Her cross punch: “Well, if you ever need someone to talk to when you and your wife aren't getting along, please know I am here for you.”

His counterpunch: “My wife and I seek counsel only from our therapist and trusted friends, and we pray daily for the Most High to keep our marriage far from evil.”

When fleeing is accompanied by counterpunching, a married man can navigate life’s challenges without cheating on his wife or making decisions that jeopardize his life.

There’s another misleading mantra pushing males toward early graves: “What doesn’t kill you can only make you stronger.” But that’s like me impulsively running across the street, nearly getting hit by a car, and then saying, “Whoa, that’s only going to make me faster!” It’s pure foolishness! Instead, next time, I should wait for the light at the crosswalk and then walk across safely. The same principle applies in fighting. If you focus only on punching your opponent, you’ll constantly leave yourself open to getting knocked out. Sometimes you need to cognitively counterpunch your challenges and temptations rather than trying to tackle them head-on. It’s not merely the strongest who survive. Wisdom is what makes winning possible.

THE EDGE

The legendary rap group Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five released a song in 1982 called “The Message.” This iconic hip-hop anthem described the challenges associated with surviving in “the hood.” Sadly, more than forty years later, the chorus is still relevant for many men, regardless of ethnicity. It warned people not to push men because they were close to the edge, “trying not to lose [their] head.” The gist of the song is that men were fighting hard and trying to keep from “going under.”

Men, no one can be strong all the time. And the last thing a strong man needs is a push when he’s close to the edge of life. Please don’t misconstrue what I am saying—there’s a time for tough love, just not *all* the time.

Just a day before English professional mixed martial artist and UFC lightweight Paddy Pimblett had a crucial fight, he received news that his close friend had died by suicide. During the postfight interview, Pimblett dedicated his victory to his friend and transparently shared his heart before

a sold-out crowd. With tears in his eyes, Pimblett grabbed the microphone and passionately pleaded:

Listen, if you're a man, and you've got weight on your shoulders, and you think the only way you can solve it is by killing yourself, please speak to someone. Speak to anyone! People would rather . . . I know I'd rather me mate cry on me shoulder than go to his funeral next week. So please, let's get rid of this stigma. And men, start talking!³

My friend, if you feel like you are on the edge of life and ready to jump, please take ten mental steps backward, breathe, and dial 988 *right now*. You're not the only one who has thought about taking their life. In all transparency, I've pondered the same thing, but I chose to fight my toxic thoughts and live. If you are not on that extreme edge at this moment, perhaps you've been in the past or can relate.

Know this: You are loved by someone. Instead of trying to man up alone, open up. Talk to someone—there's no need to suffer in silence anymore. There are other men just like you who are waiting on you and willing to help you break through what they've already experienced. Remember, you're not tired of living, you're tired of *not* living. Embrace the battle for the life you desire and deserve; you are worth the fight.

FLIP THE SWITCH

The comprehensive man knows it takes immense resilience to fight introspectively. He cannot escape himself—wherever he goes, his mental challenges follow. Therefore, instead of backing down or surrendering to defeat, he may need to *flip the switch*.

During my teenage years in the mid- to late 1980s, basement parties were popular. Chill music, drinks, girls, and most importantly, an ambiance of darkness. We navigated the shadows effortlessly, indulging our desires as if bodies were braille. Occasionally, someone would accidentally hit the light switch, momentarily illuminating what we tried to keep hidden. The crowd would shout, "Cut the light off!" as the person responsible hurried to restore the darkness. It's profound how a single moment could shift the entire mood.

In life, especially for middle-aged men and older, darkness often descends from uncertainty, loneliness, loss, a lack of clarity, and the trials of

challenging times. Maybe you're weary of dwelling in those shadows, living unnoticed or hiding behind a crafted facade. When life shifts from a celebration to a pity party, with DJ Depression spinning the painful tunes of your past, your sign to escape that mental basement. You must turn inward, flip the switch, and bring light to the areas of your life that have kept you in darkness for far too long.

The greatest comebacks are often the result of this principle. In sports, when a team is trailing in points or morale, a player steps up and flips the switch, both mentally and physically, and drives their team to victory. When a man, having faced numerous setbacks and on the verge of giving up, flips the switch from losing to winning, he can become a sports champion or rise from the depths of depression and hopelessness to transform into a successful entrepreneur.

A comprehensive man understands the importance of embracing the “flip the switch” principle to live life to its fullest potential. So, step out of the darkness that breeds toxic thoughts and draining emotions—*flip the switch!* You don't need to carry the burden of abandonment from your father—*flip the switch!* You don't have to suppress your emotions in relationships—*flip the switch!*

THE LAMB AND THE LION

Throughout this chapter, we've been considering different aspects of being the Fighter: discerning when to fight and when to retreat, overcoming ego, eradicating past trauma, and fighting for yourself. This brings us now to the vital importance of being both the lion and the lamb.

At the Cave of Adullam, “the lamb and the lion” is one of the combat principles we teach. Just as Yahushua first came as the lamb to sacrifice His life for our sins and will return in all power as the lion to judge the world, we instruct our students to morph between these roles when conflicts arise—the yield and the attack. Staying fixed in one role when the other is required can have serious consequences for both you and your loved ones.

In this combat principle, the lion symbolizes a formidable protector who emerges whenever a threat endangers the pride. In a human context, this mirrors our instinctual fight-or-flight response. However, men cannot permanently dwell in that state. Even lions need to sleep for up to twenty

hours a day to replenish their strength so they are ready to fight when the need arises.⁴

This is why we emphasize the equal significance of embracing the lamb's qualities. The lamb represents peace, serenity, and calm—a state of mind we aspire to inhabit. In combat, the lion strikes with power and destructive intent, while the lamb patiently yields to resistance, skillfully parries, and evades to set up the lion for a counterattack. If comprehensive manhood is our ultimate goal, we must strive to embody both, maintaining access to the lion's strength but readily returning to the lamb's serenity once the threat is resolved.

The ability to morph between the lion and the lamb, as the moment demands, is what truly distinguishes a comprehensive man. Yet too often we linger in lion mode, driven by aggression. Others, however, retreat into the passivity of the lamb, clinging to the “nice guy” persona, even when confronted with blatant disrespect or when physically assaulted. Yes, if possible, we should live at peace with everyone (Rom. 12:18), but when peace isn't possible, we should be willing to engage. To echo the wisdom of the great martial arts pioneer Moses Powell, “It's better to know it and not need it, than to need it and not know it.”⁵ Possessing the skills of a professional fighter is not crucial, but you should have enough training to ensure that any assailant is left with a lasting impression of fighting you, be it through physical or mental scars. Even if you don't “win” the fight, the capability to hold your own is also a significant victory!

Research shows men are more likely to engage in physical aggression or violence than women.⁶ Therefore, being proactive about learning self-defense, even in nonviolent ways, is a life skill. Yah did not give us a spirit of fear but of power, love, and discipline (2 Tim. 1:7). Unfortunately, I've encountered several life-threatening moments where my experience in martial arts and tactical firearms training made the difference between walking away unscathed or being carried away.

In an increasingly volatile world, I strongly advocate that every man should consider learning a battle-tested martial art—a self-defense system proven effective in real-life scenarios, such as street fights or self-defense situations. These martial arts prioritize practical techniques that work regardless of an attacker's strength, speed, or weaponry, in contrast to those exclusively designed for sports or competition.

Stamina is also a crucial element in the art of physical combat. I urge the men within my sphere of influence who are free from disabilities to powerfully stride or run a mile every day. Research consistently demonstrates that men who maintain a regular running or walking regimen tend to possess sturdier hearts, denser bones, and leaner physiques compared to those who neglect this discipline.⁷

But let me caution you. Stamina varies from person to person. A champion swimmer may falter in a mile run, just as a seasoned runner might struggle to swim the same distance. Hence, cross-training is the ultimate reason I hold boxing in high regard. It incorporates the fierce harmony of running, jump-roping, punching, and sparring. I encourage you to discover your forte and embrace it with the intensity of a warrior. Remember, it's about being prepared, not paranoid.

Furthermore, given the rise in senseless violence in today's world, every man has to soberly consider the responsible use and secure storage of firearms. While I hope never to have to use my guns, there's an old saying that captures this sentiment: "I'd rather be judged by twelve than carried by six." This philosophy aligns with a principle from the teachings of Yahushua: "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace" (Luke 11:21). I once shared a video on social media of myself at a gun range that prompted a sarcastic comment from a pacifist who asked, "Why?"

My response was simple: "Why not?"

As men, we must be prepared to protect. This preparation isn't about paranoia but being fully equipped to meet whatever the moment demands, knowing when to use force and when to exercise restraint. The harmony of power and gentleness was something I truly came to understand through my training in Brazilian jiu-jitsu (BJJ).

I remember the first time I trained in BJJ, the coach invited me to "roll" with him—to spar and apply techniques in a dynamic and realistic manner. The only rules were that I couldn't punch, kick, elbow, or knee him, only grapple. This made me a fish out of water. To my surprise, roll after roll, he tapped me out with ease, rendering my physical strength useless. I was reminded that brute force isn't always the answer. After more than twenty years of training in various martial arts, it was humbling to realize in that moment I was not a comprehensive fighter.

As men, if we remain steadfastly anchored in the belief that every fight is won by technical knockout, we'll inevitably find ourselves grounded in life's challenges when we are weak. Rather than allowing my wounded pride to steer me away from BJJ, I opted to don another white belt and learn some of the principles of this powerful martial art.

Where there is a lamb, there must also be a lion. Be sensitive but be strong. Be compassionate but also courageous. Be debonair but also dangerous. I concur with psychotherapist Jordan Peterson, who says, "A harmless man is not a good man. A good man is a very, very dangerous man who has that under voluntary control."⁸ Being a kind man is a commendable quality, but it's equally vital to be the kind of man others dare not cross.

THE COMPREHENSIVE PROTECTOR

One reason the comprehensive man needs to be adept at switching between the lamb and the lion is to protect his family when the need arises. I was reminded of this fact when the documentary *The Cave of Adullam* had its world premiere at Robert De Niro and Jane Rosenthal's Tribeca Film Festival in 2022.

The night before the red-carpet premiere, as my wife, Nicole, and I were about to drift off to sleep, my phone buzzed. It was our son, Jason. His voice was tense; there was a man banging on the door of the hotel room where he and his sister, Alexis, were staying, just two floors below us. Instantly Nicole dropped to her knees in prayer, while I—heart pounding and adrenaline surging—bolted out of our suite, silently praying as I raced down to their room.

When I reached Jason and Alexis's floor, security was already detaining the man who was attempting to enter their room. Before security could escort the middle-aged man dressed like a cowboy to the elevator, he collapsed. He was clearly intoxicated and had mistaken my children's room for his own, which was on a different floor but at the same corner of the hotel.

A simple, almost innocent error could have easily turned the situation tragic. I knew the real battle wasn't just what unfolded in the hotel corridor; it was the unseen conflict in the spiritual realm (Eph. 6:12). I had to process

my emotions in real time because my initial thoughts were not good. What if I had reached the scene before security and confronted the man while he was aggressively banging on Jason and Alexis's room door? What if, in his drunken state, he had attacked me and I killed him? The consequences could have been catastrophic. Everything I had built through *The Cave of Adullam*—years of service and sacrifice—could have been lost.

While I came into the situation like the lion, as any good father would, I had the training I needed to process the scene and become the lamb when I understood what was happening. However, this was not always the case.

Years before the Tribeca Film Festival incident, there was another moment that tested my emotional stability. One Saturday morning while I was playing with my son, Nicole called me, her voice shaking with fear.

"Jason, a man has been following me."

As a protective husband, my adrenaline surged instantly. "Where are you?" I asked.

"I walked into the gas station next to the salon to be around more people, but the man followed me inside," she anxiously replied.

I got the address, jumped in my truck without hesitation, and raced to Nicole's location. I instructed Nicole to stay on the phone until I arrived. When I pulled up, I told her to walk outside. To my surprise the man dared to follow her. But the moment he saw me exit my truck, he froze like a child caught with his hand in the cookie jar.

Once Nicole was safely in the truck, I turned to her and asked, "Are you okay?"

"I am now," she replied. Though the immediate danger had passed, I found myself still in lion mode, unable to calm the storm within.

Driven by the raw emotions of anger and fear, my subsequent actions were reckless. The thought of this man causing harm to Nicole filled me with intense fury.

I grabbed both of my handguns from my truck and aggressively approached the man. With hands gripping the guns beneath my hoodie, I sternly demanded, "Why the [expletive] are you following my wife?!"

"I wasn't," he mumbled. His short response enraged me. I stepped closer until we were nearly nose to nose. His lie intensified my anger to the point where I wanted to headbutt him.

Through clenched teeth, I asked, "So you're calling my wife a liar?" In that moment, I hoped he would give me a reason to unleash my rage. But

instead, he stood there, frozen as if he just realized the seriousness of the situation. “The next time you see my wife around here, you’d better walk in the opposite direction,” I warned, with my voice steady but my spirit far from calm.

The typical “masculine” male would applaud my emotional and nonstrategic reaction, but it was a major failure on my part. If the man had engaged with me, it could have cost him his life and put my freedom at risk—and for what purpose? Nicole was already safely back in my truck before I decided to confront him. There was no longer any imminent danger. I should’ve simply driven away.

These are the moments that can alter the course of countless lives, including those of millions of incarcerated men. And for what? To prove a point? As protectors, we will do anything to keep our families safe, yet my reaction highlights how staying in lion mode can lead to decisions that may seem right in the heat of the moment but ultimately jeopardize what matters most—the pride, a powerful symbol for our family and lineage.

When such moments arise, we must strive to be comprehensive fighters, always processing our responses before acting, rather than reacting to our erratic emotions. We need to learn to reflect, release, and reset in real time so that we can maintain emotional stability in every situation.

If I had not been physically fit and martially and tactically trained, I wouldn’t have been ready or confident to defend my wife and children, with or without a gun. If I hadn’t been working on mastering self-control instead of allowing my emotions to control me, I might have reacted rashly to a situation rather than responding effectively.

You cannot defend what hasn’t been disciplined. In other words, without disciplining your mind and mastering your emotions, you won’t have the mental fortitude and emotional stability required to stay calm under pressure, make quick and rational decisions, and protect yourself or others when necessary.

FIGHTING FOR RESPECT

Before concluding the characteristic of the Fighter, let me mention one final thing we men must fight for—*respect*. When my wife and I visit Mexico, I’ve noticed that the hospitality staff always addresses me first. However,

when we visit tropical islands, the male hosts and/or butlers cater to my wife, almost like I'm not even there. I thought it was just me at first, but other men have confirmed this happens to them as well. In these scenarios, it's imperative for you to establish grounds for any male who will be in the presence of your wife, family, or loved ones.

On a visit to the Maldives, Nicole and I were given a tour of the island where we would be staying. During the tour, I observed that our butler directed his questions and suggestions to Nicole. Instead of harboring my feelings, I took a brief moment to process my emotions, calculating the end goal before saying a word. Then I waited for the right moment.

The butler said to Nicole, "Mrs. Wilson, if you would like to use the Wi-Fi, here's the name and password." Before Nicole could input one character of login information, I abruptly but respectfully asked, "Is the Wi-Fi only for her?"

With a surprised look, he responded, "No, Mr. Wilson, it's for everyone." Then with gradual assertiveness, I leaned into his space with my phone in hand awaiting the information. This set the tone for the rest of our stay. The very next encounter, he intentionally included me in the discussion, and I appreciated it. In his defense, he probably is used to women planning and leading the vacation experience. But by our last day, he knew there was more to manhood than just providing and protecting.

Men, let's ensure that our demonstrative energy is not misdirected toward those we are meant to protect—our wives and children. By remaining calm and asserting ourselves in these moments, rather than staying silent, we communicate clearly what is not acceptable to us. This not only sets the standard for the respect we deserve but also encourages our wives to advocate for us when necessary. For example, Nicole informing the butler, "I'm married, and I would appreciate you speaking to both of us."

We are not overreacting when we feel disrespected in such situations. Imagine if roles were reversed, with a female host directing all her attention toward you—your wife would not tolerate it, nor should she. Instead of resorting to physical confrontation, utilize comprehensive fighting skills. This strategic approach allows you to effectively express your emotions, assert your needs, and stand your ground when necessary.

TAKE ACTION

ACTIVITY #1: EXPLORE COLD PLUNGING

To forge the resilience of a warrior, mere intellectual learning is not enough; you will need to test your mind and body—often. One of the disciplines I’ve adopted is the cold plunge, which involves immersing my body up to my earlobes in forty-degrees-Fahrenheit water for three to ten minutes. This isn’t just a physical trial; it’s also a process of weaning my soul, fortifying my mind, and surrendering to my spirit. According to the Mental Health Center of America, “Cold exposure increases the production of a neurotransmitter called *norepinephrine* (focus, attention, vigilance, mood). As a result, cold therapy can produce a feeling of calm, happiness, and well-being, which can support the mitigation of mental health symptoms such as depression and anxiety.”⁹

In the icy grip of frigid waters, your soul may urge you to escape. Recognizing these feelings as natural responses to adversity is crucial. Yet you must embody the spirit of a comprehensive fighter and command any emotion that whispers weakness to stand down. Mastering this soul control will not only empower you but also equip you to effectively overcome adversity whenever you face it.

I often hear men plead for peace, but placidity will always escape us when our souls haven’t been calmed and quieted, which prohibits our minds from staying focused on the Most High (Ps. 131:1; Isa. 26:3). Peace is a state we must nurture within ourselves before it can manifest in our surroundings. It’s a misconception that the mind solely controls the body; in reality, our soul, which harbors our emotions, frequently overrides what the mind transmits. Thus, being mentally strong is simply not enough. However, when a man can walk and fight by the Spirit, the flesh becomes a slave to Yah’s will (Gal. 5:16).

If we cannot still and quiet our soul during challenging times, finding comfort in discomfort, we will succumb to our surroundings instead of transforming them.

Disclaimer: As with any physical practice, please consult your doctor before cold plunging to ensure it is safe for you to do.

ACTIVITY #2: FIGHTING BEFORE THE FIGHT

It’s imperative that you wage and win your inner battles before they manifest into external wars. I refer to this as “fighting before the fight,” a combat concept where you process your thoughts and emotions thoroughly before expressing them verbally or physically. These are my five foundational strategies to help you develop this skill.

1. **Fight Spiritually:** Our weapons of warfare are not carnal but have divine power to demolish strongholds (2 Cor. 10:4). Always engage in prayer and don the full armor of Yah (Eph. 6:10–18) to stand firm against the devil’s schemes and bring every thought into obedience to Yahushua (2 Cor. 10:5).
2. **Confront Trauma:** Charge into the battlefield of your mind daily with bravery. Acknowledge every emotion that arises without self-condemnation.
3. **Stop Suppressing:** Embrace transparency as a strength and tears as your battle cry. Doing so helps dismantle the mental barricades that isolate you from your loved ones and life itself.

4. **Forge Alliances:** Pursue professional counsel and surround yourself with men of courage, competence, and character. The warpath that leads to mental freedom is not one to be fought alone but with the support of those committed to seeing you grow and succeed.
5. **Evolve Cognitively:** Develop your mind into a formidable force—capable of defeating negative thoughts before they manifest into detrimental actions. Read books on the mind and emotions, practice Shaloch meditation, and apply problem-solving strategies. Mastering this real-time processing enables you to navigate life's challenges with acumen and foresight.

ACTIVITY #3: MIRROR TIME

Take out your mirror and silently gaze into the eyes of the man reflected in it. Don't look away for sixty seconds. Then, affirm that man with the following statements:

- I may have lost some physical battles, but I am still a fighter at heart.
- I do not have to hurt someone in order to prove I am powerful.
- I will not be mastered by my emotions; instead, I will rule over them.
- I will no longer suffer in silence but will fight against the desire to be alone and confidently reach out for help when I'm close to the edge.

CHAPTER 4

THE PROVIDER

The Provider ensures the provision of essential resources, guidance, and support for his family, friends, community, and himself.

Following my keynote at a conference in Ohio, a man waiting in line for me to sign a copy of my book transparently shared his emotional struggles regarding his mother, who was suffering from dementia. As he spoke, he expressed how he needed to stay strong for her and his entire family. Much of what he said resonated with me because I had gone through a similar experience with my own mother.

When he was finished, I inquired about his well-being. With a warm yet somewhat strained smile, he replied, “I’m great! Doing what a man needs to do.”

I gently countered, “You know, it’s okay to cry.” While maintaining his composed smile, tears welled in his eyes. Without hesitation, I embraced him, and he expressed profound gratitude for being granted the permission to be human.

Men often dedicate themselves to the needs of others while suppressing their own feelings. As men, we have been charged with the responsibility of providing for the well-being of our families, a job we take so seriously that we often forget we are part of that family and also need looking after.

Yet there is more to manhood—our value extends beyond the realm of our work. Although we feel this inside, we continue to convey to the world, persistently and subliminally, that our worth is solely determined by our professional pursuits. Consequently, many honorable men have propelled

themselves to premature ends. Trust me, without a break, you risk reaching a point where you too will break.

In the beginning, Yah created the earth and its fullness in six days and rested on the seventh, the Sabbath. This is important to share because almighty Yah could have easily created everything in one day. It's also interesting to note that on the fourth day when Yah created the sun and the moon, He didn't make the moon's light as bright as the sun's. I believe this was intended to encourage rest during the night, not work.

Humans are the ones who have created bright lights for the night; from streetlights to our smartphone screens, our brains are now stimulated to keep working when our minds, bodies, and souls are in dire need of rest.

Dr. Michael Breus, clinical psychologist and sleep medicine expert, stated, "Your internal clock responds to indicators of light and darkness to prepare for when to be awake and when to be asleep. Keeping the lights on while you're trying to sleep can confuse your internal clock and cause you to wake up or lead to lower quality sleep."¹

The role of provider has drastically changed throughout human history. Originally, as hunter-gatherers, providers would hunt or fish, bringing back food for their family groups or seek out wild vegetation to collect. They would protect their families from physical dangers and help make decisions. They would build shelters, make clothing, and trade with other groups.

With the advancement of civilization, the role of the provider has become more complicated. We no longer simply go out and hunt in the traditional sense. Rather we need jobs to earn money to buy groceries, pay taxes on our homes, cover transportation costs, buy clothing for our families, pay for our children's education, and afford vacations and other nonessentials. If we're fortunate. The more you think about it, the more overwhelming it becomes.

Unfortunately, it's only when we reach a breaking point that others realize we're on the verge of a mental collapse. Many men prefer to fall on their swords, choosing to withhold words that could unburden their souls, rather than burdening others with their concerns.

To be a provider is a noble pursuit, especially in a world where the weight of responsibility crushes many men. Yet the comprehensive man embraces this characteristic without compromising his own well-being or his family's financial future.

THE FINANCIAL PROVIDER

One aspect of being a comprehensive provider is looking after the financial future of your family. It brings to mind 1 Timothy 5:8 (NASB): “If anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” For some, this duty is split between the husband and wife. For others, it may fall heavily on the shoulders of one person. Either way, it is no less heartrending when we hear stories about families falling into financial ruin and ending up on the street.

In 2020, the US Census Bureau released a report called “America’s Families and Living Arrangements,” which discovered that children in fatherless families were four times more likely to live in poverty.² Meanwhile in November 2022, their report titled “Historical Living Arrangements of Children” found single mothers led 80 percent of single-parent households.³ And the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists issued an opinion in October 2013 titled “Healthcare for Homeless Women” that stated women headed 84 percent of all homeless families.⁴ Why am I sharing this with you? To demonstrate how important it is for men to substantially contribute to the financial success of their families.

To that effect, studies consistently show that married couples enjoy higher household incomes and have a greater ability to build wealth together. By combining resources, sharing financial responsibilities, and leveraging tax benefits, couples often find it easier to achieve their financial goals. Data from an American Enterprise Institute study from 1980 to 2012 found that among families with married parents, the median family income rose 30 percent, while families with unmarried parents saw incomes rise only 14 percent over the same period.⁵

Believe me, while my wife and I didn’t marry for financial gain, nor were we initially aware of generational wealth, through our twenty-five years together, we’ve experienced firsthand how a strong marriage can lead to remarkable fiscal advantages.

Our collaboration transformed what could have been a difficult financial journey into a clear, purposeful path. Together, Nicole and I aligned our efforts toward saving for a new home, our children’s education, and

retirement. Working together to manage our expenses and bills alleviated the stress of one person shouldering the financial burden alone.

The main benefit of having a team approach to finances in marriage is that we tend to make more thoughtful and well-informed choices, reducing the likelihood of impulsive and emotional spending. When a couple is “one flesh” in finances, it fosters a more secure and prosperous financial future.

In my mentorship of numerous young single men, I consistently emphasize the transformative power of choosing the right life partner and staying with her. When you’re alone, the repercussions of financial mistakes affect only you. However, when your decisions impact not just your spouse but also your children, a responsible husband and father meticulously considers every financial choice. This careful consideration becomes a cornerstone in the construction of generational wealth, elevating the potential for a lasting legacy.

One morning at breakfast, Nicole and I talked with our children about the importance of generational wealth. We shared how important it is for us to leave them not just a financial inheritance but also the wisdom and values to create a prosperous life of their own. My daughter’s profound words still resonate: “Dad, generational wealth started by you and Mom staying together. We can’t build without a foundation.”

IT’S OKAY TO SAY YOU’RE TIRED

Nicole and I had longed for a two-week vacation in Dubai and the Maldives to celebrate our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. Of course, achieving it required some extra entrepreneurship, as relying solely on our nonprofit salaries wouldn’t have sufficed. It also required us to effectively communicate with each other.

One morning before the trip, Nicole and I were lying in bed, perusing videos and spa packages. Nicole kept asking me to pick the massage package I wanted, but I wasn’t feeling mentally up to it that morning. As I explained to Nicole how I felt mentally tapped out, she seemed taken aback. “Jason, I planned this trip for two years. You could at least take a moment to pick what package you want.”

I calmly acknowledged that I appreciated her effort while also mentioning that it was my extra earnings that paid for the trip. My response

initially bothered her because in our twenty-five years together, we had never separated our roles when it came to finances, and this change made her feel uneasy. I had to reassure her that I would never hold what I contributed to our home over her head, but it hurts when my extra financial income is overlooked.

I was mentally exhausted, and I needed a vacation where I didn't have to think about anything. Nicole deserved the trip of a lifetime, and she had every right to desire that, but I needed her to understand that I was reaching a breaking point. Nicole listened to my heart and squeezed my hand as we continued to explore spa packages in Dubai. It was crucial to find a way to communicate how close I was to the edge without allowing anger or frustration to spoil the moment. Sometimes, as husbands, we need to help our wives understand the weight we carry as the Provider without letting our emotions hinder the connection between us.

In that quiet moment, with our hands intertwined and the promise of a relaxing vacation ahead, I hoped that Nicole could see the love and appreciation I had for her. I wanted her to know that despite my exhaustion, my devotion to her was unwavering. This trip was not just a celebration of our twenty-five years together but also a chance to renew our bond. We can now happily cross that trip off our bucket list.

THE IMPORTANCE OF REST

Relentless toil devours tranquility. Being a provider doesn't mean you are always on the go, hustlin' to make that next dollar, as popular as that myth may be today. I used to be ensnared in the relentless grind, a prisoner to its demands. Rest seemed an elusive luxury I dared not embrace.

I vividly recall the days when I was trapped in emotional incarceration and would jolt awake from a much-needed nap at the faintest sound of Nicole's return. It's a tale I've heard echoed in the lives of countless men from all walks of life and corners of society. A shadow of fear looms over us whenever the opportunity to take a nap arises, driven by an unwarranted apprehension of being labeled as lazy.

It's a lamentable tragedy—this hesitation to recline and allow ourselves a moment of respite. The truth is stark: A multitude of men tread hesitantly on the path of rest, fearing the stigma of being unsuccessful. But herein lies

the heartache. As I've asked many women for their views on men and naps, they unanimously say they yearn to see their husbands embrace rest more and find solace in sleep.

When I talk about taking the time to nap, what I am really addressing is the notion of self-maintenance. Amid all our hard work and excitement, we mustn't forget ourselves. It's crucial to avoid any potential mental breakdown or burnout. So, while we're chasing our dreams, we must all make sure to take moments to rest and recharge, ensuring that our pursuit of a dream doesn't turn into a health-scary nightmare. After all, taking care of ourselves along the way is equally as important as achieving our goals. Work hard, but rest even harder!

It is written, "If a man doesn't work, a man doesn't eat" (2 Thess. 3:10, paraphrased). However, as I often proclaim, if we never cease work in order to rest, work will rest us in peace. We men are worth more than the mere sum of our labor. Though the world whispers to the contrary, we must remain unswayed—our value transcends our exertion. This seemingly plain wisdom battles a world insistent on branding our existence by the sweat of our brow—ensnaring many into the grinding lifestyle that leads to an untimely grave.

In this frenetic dance with time, let us not overlook the profound wisdom of a brief intermission. A daily reprieve, such as a fifteen- to twenty-minute nap, should not be seen as a hindrance to our responsibilities but as a respite that refuels our spirit. The truth reveals itself: If the prospect of a short hiatus endangers our ability to provide, then we need to confront a much more serious problem.

Since 2018 I had been working diligently—writing two bestselling books in three years, raising money and leading renovations for our nonprofit's new building, and filming an award-winning documentary, among other things. Although I maintained a daily rest regimen, getting a minimum of seven hours of sleep at night and keeping the Sabbath, my mental capacity had finally dwindled. Nicole and those close to me saw it.

I knew and applied the principle of resting in Yah's provision, but I strayed when we arrived in Dubai. This was my part of the trip! The technology, the architecture, the people-watching at one of the largest malls in the world, and the exotic cars fascinated me. Regrettably, I allowed my excitement to override my need for rest. As a result, I developed a severe sinus infection on the second day in Dubai and was bedridden with

antibiotics on the third day. Eventually, frustration set in, and I was deeply disappointed that I had to cancel the activities Nicole and I had planned for that day.

On our fourth day in Dubai, I felt about 60 percent and had enough stamina to finally have fun. After touring the Burj Khalifa and Dubai Mall, I needed to go back to our hotel for a thirty-minute nap before we took a taxi to the Museum of the Future.

I was unaware that Nicole also wanted to visit the fountains, a popular tourist attraction in Dubai. At this point, I was starting to feel muscle aches throughout my body. Could I push through this discomfort? Of course, but I chose to be a comprehensive man instead of the ever-performing masculine male. I looked at Nicole and calmly reminded her that I had a severe sinus infection. The doctor had advised me to rest, but I had been walking all day. A good husband desires to bless his wife, but many of us end up performing for our wives rather than simply loving them. It's imperative for our health that we sometimes disappoint those we love.

Nicole had made reservations at a downtown restaurant, but unbeknownst to her, male patrons couldn't wear shorts. We took a thirty-minute taxi ride back to our resort, where Nicole had made dinner reservations. It was 11 p.m. when we finished dinner. Would you believe I still didn't listen to my body and chose sex over rest? In the morning, I woke up to unrelenting aches from head to toe. I developed crippling spasms in my left hip and entire lower back—the worst I have ever experienced!

Men rarely shed tears from the pain itself; it's the deeper emotions linked to why the pain happened or the opportunities the pain could prevent that truly bring us to tears. My own experience echoed this truth. I cried as Nicole had to dry me off after bathing me in the shower. My strength was gone, and I had never experienced this type of exposure in my life. I was naked, ashamed, in pain, and physically fastened to a chair as if I were nailed to it. Every time I tried to rise, my flesh pulled me back.

Thankfully, our resort had a full clinic, and Nicole called for a wheelchair. After receiving three pain medications via IV, I was wheeled back to our suite. As I sat and watched the sunset over the ocean, I processed past the emotion of anger and let my heart release what I was really feeling—disappointment. Tears slowly streamed down my face, and I

wept because I had worked so hard for this trip. On our last day in Dubai, all I could do was lie on the couch in pain.

I was more focused on doing things in Dubai than resting in the Most High. But when I experienced the breathtaking beauty and calming breeze in the Maldives, I quoted Psalm 119:67 in my spirit: “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word.”

It’s no coincidence that pastors or people who take sabbaticals are always on the verge of a breakdown when they do. Keeping the Sabbath helps maintain our physical, mental, and spiritual health. Incorporating the principles of rest and reflection from the Sabbath into daily life, combined with other self-maintenance practices, can contribute to a healthier life and greatly reduce the risk of burnout.

It’s not about escaping—it’s about creating a life that brings you joy. Even the Messiah would retreat in the morning, but He never strayed too far from His disciples and His mission. Escapism is the mindset that suggests you need extended periods away to rejuvenate. What I’m saying is that true peace can never solely depend on a place; it must come from within, regardless of where we are in the moment.

During my time in Dubai, I relearned that peace should be independent of location. For some people, escapism becomes their only way of survival. However, a man of the Most High doesn’t let his emotions dictate his life or his mindset toward challenges. Instead, he must learn to adapt and find contentment and stability in every situation, whether in times of plenty or scarcity (Phil. 4:11–13).

Believe it or not, I experience more peace riding my bike through the streets of Detroit feeling the calm breeze against my helmet than I did sitting by the turquoise waters of the Maldives. The pain I experienced in Dubai was meant to teach me *again* how to rest in Yah and not my busyness.

In truth, our worth does not hinge on our endeavors, nor is our value measured by the sweat of ceaseless toil. Our strength does not lie solely in the persistent march toward war and fighting. It is also seen in the wisdom to halt and retreat momentarily to recover from the relentless fight. This is not an act of concession; it’s a declaration of our free will over the decisions in our lives.

True strength is fortified not just by action but by the wisdom to rest. Many men boast about their prowess, calling themselves “beasts,” yet

overlook that the king of beasts, the African male lion, conserves his strength by resting up to twenty hours a day. This rest isn't a sign of laziness; it's strategic, allowing the lion to be efficient and powerful during hunting. So, men, let us shatter the stigma associated with resting and reclaim the power to rest without remorse—to nap without guilt. It is not mere idleness but rather a deliberate act of fortification. Rest, therefore, is not a lapse of resilience but a conscious replenishment of it!

THE IMBALANCED LIFE

Mastering the art of an imbalanced life requires focusing on the things that matter most. Social media influencers and motivational speakers often praise the concept of living a “balanced life.” However, let me caution you—this teaching, though well-intentioned, can be a perilous path, leveling everything to the same degree. Yet deep down we all know that some things should tip the scale more than others.

Picture my life as a perfectly balanced pan scale. On one pan rests my relationship with Yah, His will, my family, and self-maintenance. On the other pan sit my career, community service, business pursuits, and investments. If everything is evenly balanced, I'm giving equal attention to both sides—and nothing truly claims priority. This leads to blurred focus with the most important aspects of my life going underserved. So whenever my life scale appears balanced, I deliberately shift it, tipping it toward what matters most. My relationship with Yah, His will, my family, and self-maintenance should always tip the scale.

When we treat all things as equally important, we get fixated solely on work and become human doings instead of human beings. However, when I rejected the notion of a “balanced life,” I finally experienced the love, peace, and affirmation I longed for.

Now it's your turn to take an essential step toward becoming the Provider you were made to be.

TAKE ACTION

ACTIVITY #1: BEGIN BUILDING GENERATIONAL WEALTH

You do not have to be a high earner to grow your wealth and leave an inheritance for your children. You just need to be educated, disciplined, and consistently investing.

1. **Learn.** Use one of the resources from this list:
 - *Rich Dad, Poor Dad* by Robert Kiyosaki
 - *The Millionaire Next Door* by Thomas J. Stanley and William D. Danko
 - *The Total Money Makeover* by Dave Ramsey
2. **Budget.** If you are not living on a budget, start today. A budget is a plan for your money. It tells your cash where to go instead of your credit card company telling you where it went. Budgeting is simple. You can download many free or low-cost apps to help you get started.
3. **Pay off debt.** In your budget, make debt-free living a priority. Together with your wife, commit to eliminating your debt as quickly as you can. Generational wealth is about having money to lend to others, not borrowing money from others.
4. **Invest for the future.** Look for a personal financial adviser near you. I recommend finding someone you can talk to face-to-face, not a company you connect with online. Share your goals, dreams, income, assets, and debts. Then, work together to create a sensible plan to help secure your future, live in your purpose, and invest in your children's children (Prov. 13:22).

ACTIVITY #2: EVALUATE SLEEP HABITS

Adults need seven to eight hours of sleep a night, including one to two hours of deep sleep. Alcohol, heavy meals, and late-night gaming binges can all affect your sleep patterns. That's why I eat my heaviest meal at lunchtime. My daily goal is to not eat meat after 7 p.m., a common strategy for managing weight and improving digestion.⁶ On date nights with my wife, I tend to eat later, but I try to limit this to just four times per month. Consult with your primary care doctor or a nutritionist to see if this way of eating is optimal for your health.

If you are managing your sleep well but you still feel tired, ask your health-care provider about a sleep study. Men are twice as likely as women to have sleep apnea, and poor sleep sets you up for erectile dysfunction, hypertension, stroke, and a myriad of cardiovascular diseases.⁷ Your poor sleep may not be about your habits at all; you may need treatment from a medical provider.

Do you need to address any of these behaviors?

ACTIVITY #3: MIRROR TIME

Take out your mirror and silently gaze into the eyes of the man reflected in it. Don't look away for sixty seconds. Then, affirm that man with the following statements:

- "Rest in peace" isn't exclusively reserved for the afterlife. I can take a nap.
- I am worth more than what I can provide to others. I am valued and appreciated for who I am, not just for what I do.

- I am not lazy—I will work hard but I will rest harder.
- I will leave a good inheritance for my grandchildren, amassing wealth that benefits generations of my lineage.
- I will not love money but will respect its role—my soul isn't worth sacrificing for wealth (1 Tim. 6:10).

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CHAPTER 5

THE LEADER

The Leader guides and inspires others. He knows when to speak and when to listen—leading by example, not intimidation.

Many men believe leadership must be overtly visible. Anything other than being *fierce* is a sign of weakness. However, some of history’s greatest warriors—the samurai—were actually servant leaders. The word *samurai* originates from the Japanese word *saburau*, which means “to serve.” It was actually deemed dishonorable for a samurai to be without a master to serve. From this we see that the most effective leaders are in fact those who aspire to serve others rather than amassing power or seeking control.

From Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King Jr. to Mother Teresa and Mahatma Gandhi, the world has witnessed profound healing when servant leaders step forward. If the prevailing model of fierce, demonstrable leadership were truly effective, the world would likely be a better place. However, some men, driven by a solely masculine perspective, tend to center their leadership on themselves rather than the people they claim to lead. Moreover, when their plans and policies fail, they often place blame on others instead of examining their own actions.

As we consider the leadership role of a comprehensive man, you will come to understand that he is not only a servant leader of Yah carrying out the commands of the Most High here on earth but also the head of his household, practicing good listening skills and working with his wife to best serve his family.

At the heart of servant leadership lies sacrificial service and support—principles that stand in stark contrast to the pursuit of power and control. It

prioritizes sacrificially serving and lifting up others, especially in moments of vulnerability and despair. Sacrifice is not about doing what you desire; it's doing what needs to be done, especially when you don't feel like it. When we move beyond our immediate wants and act from a place of responsibility, guided by a deeper purpose, we become a compelling force that pushes us beyond comfort zones to the frontlines of service and impact.

In a world plagued by greed, division, and deteriorating mental health, it is vital that men lead as servants rather than focusing on being served, leading by example, not intimidation (Prov. 28:16). Rather than dimming someone else's light to make your own seem brighter, invest your time in sparking their wick and, when needed, offer your support to help them kindle a new source of illumination.

However, be careful not to extinguish your own flame in the process, for while some may change when they see the light, others require the transformative heat of adversity to truly change.

YOU CAN'T SAVE EVERYONE

One afternoon as I spoke to a new group of students in the Cave of Adullam, I grabbed a pitcher of water and a glass, placing both in front of me on the mats. I told the middle school boys that the glass represented them, while the pitcher symbolized me. The contents within the pitcher signified my love, sacrifice, and discipline, all of which I was willing to pour into them. Then, slowly and deliberately, I poured water from the pitcher into the glass, filling it to the brim.

I looked at all the boys and posed a question: "What needs to happen for me to pour more water into this glass?"

Their response was, "Someone has to drink it, Sharath!" (Instead of *sensei*, my students call me Sharath, which means "servant" in Hebrew.)

"Exactly!" Gently placing the pitcher of water down, I continued. "Until you drink from or apply the love, sacrifice, and discipline I offer, I cannot give you any more."

It took me decades to learn this invaluable lesson as a community servant and youth minister. I would lose sleep whenever any of my students failed to apply my lessons in the real world—where they mattered most. After years of misplaced guilt, I eventually understood why Yahushua told

His disciples, “For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me” (John 12:8 NASB). In essence, the Messiah teaches us that there will always be people in need, but what truly matters is seeking His will above all else. When we do this, we reach those who *can* be reached.

During the early years of teaching boys in the Cave of Adullam, I often felt disheartened. Despite my fervent efforts, some young men chose paths of mischief. These choices often led to serious consequences: expulsion from school, banishment from their parents’ homes, incarceration in juvenile detention centers, or death. I now focus on the will of Yahushua in the moment, dedicating myself to the boys He sends my way who are impoverished in hope. During student orientation, I emphasize this philosophy by saying, “You’ve never seen a door at the mouth of a cave. You are free to leave at will, but if you return, you will always be met with the same loving welcome.”

I no longer feel like a failure when any of my students make poor decisions—it isn’t my fault. I cannot serve and save everyone. This is an imperative lesson for anyone who desires to be a servant, which every good leader must be.

SETTING BOUNDARIES

Leaders are often driven, self-starters who pride themselves on getting things done. But this mentality can lead to taking on every task, resisting delegation, and ultimately burning out. Many leaders struggle with setting boundaries because they aim to please others, often trying to do everything for everyone instead of asking for help. Yet, without boundaries, a leader’s purpose becomes clouded by constant demands and distractions. As long as I prioritized answering everyone’s call, I could never fully walk in my divine calling. As challenging as it was, I had to set boundaries.

In ancient times, cities were safeguarded and fortified with stone walls to ensure their protection from enemies. Just as those stone walls provided security, establishing boundaries in life becomes essential to shield ourselves from those who may seek to exploit or misuse us.

Boundaries are also essential for preserving our well-being and sense of self-worth. They empower us to say no when necessary, protecting our time, energy, and emotions from being depleted. By establishing these limits, we

remain focused on our narrow path, rather than losing ourselves in the endless service to others. Instead, let your boundaries not only be a sign of self-respect but a standard for what you expect from others, fostering healthier and more meaningful connections while remaining open to those who genuinely seek growth.

LEADING FROM THE FRONT

As a leader, you're charged with serving not only your community but also your family. While the former has a clearer position, the latter can be more difficult to navigate.

Consider this: You spend all day working hard at your nine-to-five job, then host a youth event at your church or neighborhood community center. By the time you get home, your family has already eaten dinner and your kids are doing homework. You sit down to decompress from the day and relax, but then your wife appears with a stack of bills and a list of items to discuss.

Instead of requesting a moment of reprieve or asking if you could both sort through everything tomorrow, you ask if your wife could just take care of everything this time. She does so because you married an industrious woman, but then something similar happens the next week. Though instead of hosting another youth event, you arrive home late after watching the game at a sports bar. You've served your community, been faithful to your job, and fellowshiped with friends. But your family has taken a back seat, leaving your wife with no choice but to step up—and to keep stepping up, carrying more than her share of the load.

Once this happens, you've created a "wife-mom," or a wife who exudes motherly characteristics toward you. Before you know it, your wife is ordering your food, telling you what your taste buds will like, selecting clothes for you to buy, and speaking for you when you're the one spoken to. Although well intended, wife-moms create husbands who take on the role of a dependent child, one who doesn't manage his own life but who allows others to manage it for him.

The role infantilizes the man, but the consequences of men not assuming their rightful leadership roles in their families can also be a source of deep pain. When we shrink from our responsibilities and allow our wives

to assume roles that are not only expected of us but that we actually desire to fulfill, it hinders our own personal growth, creating a conflict within us. *Do I keep shrinking back or do I step up and lead?* This unfulfilled yearning to unwaveringly lead, make decisions, and provide for our loved ones often remains buried and surfaces as passive aggression. Before we know it, we admonish our wives for doing something we relinquished but that still needs to be done.

The weight of not taking the lead can cause a sense of emasculation and frustration, where even the most straightforward decisions feel like insurmountable challenges. James 1:8 tells us that a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways, and trust me, I know this all too well. At times, I have allowed life stresses to push me into a position where my wife, Nicole, had to shoulder the majority of our life's responsibilities.

When doing so, I found myself unfairly resenting her, although it was never her fault. Instead of addressing the issues in my life that had undermined my desire to take the lead at home, I willingly let Nicole oversee our financial management, vacation planning, and our children's education. Let me be clear: Nicole is not the kind of wife who desires a passive husband. But like many wives, she desires stability and control. They won't pressure you to lead when you retreat, because such hesitation itself communicates instability.

You might argue, "But my wife knows I'm supposed to lead!" That's true, but it's essential to remember Eve's punishment for eating fruit from the forbidden Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil: "And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you" (Gen. 3:16 NLT). Can you fathom how difficult it is for a woman to submit to a man she desires to lead but is punished to follow? This aspect still proves challenging for Nicole and me as I sometimes struggle to lead from the front—particularly when it involves uncomfortable topics like finances.

When the husband's only role in the financial management of the household is to provide money to pay the bills, things can get out of control quickly. Nicole has the gift of administration, so I never had an issue with her sending out the payments for our bills. She also loves making sure our family creates memories, and I am thankful for that because if I fully managed our finances, we never would have traveled outside the United States or bought our current house. We've always complemented each other well, but I realized I still needed to be directly involved with our finances.

When I shared with one of my mentors that I have difficulty proactively discussing our family's finances with Nicole, he advised me that Nicole should continue to pay the bills but that I should sign each check. This process would force me to see where the money was going and question any expense that seemed unnecessary and would help to reassert me as a household leader.

I thought this was a good plan, but Nicole was upset by my mentor's advice. Within minutes we were in a heated argument. At the time, I embodied the very essence of a "loose cannon"—someone unpredictable and volatile, capable of escalating from calm to fury in an instant, often causing unintentional damage. So I let the issue drop, not because it wasn't a good idea but because I lacked the emotional maturity to navigate it well. In the end, we paid the price for my lack of leadership as we simply avoided discussing important topics for far too long because I didn't become a verbal processor (in other words, an effective communicator) until I was forty-nine years old.

With time, I discovered the root emotion underlying my anger—hurt. Previously, I would resort to yelling and saying, "Are you here to help me or to tell me how you should help me?" But I learned to communicate my feelings differently, expressing, "It hurts that you don't trust me, especially considering I've never put our family in financial constraints." As I identified and conveyed the true emotions behind my frustrations, our communication improved, allowing us to approach difficult conversations more effectively and with greater understanding.

An effective leader is an effective communicator. If you cannot articulate your thoughts clearly, how can you expect others to heed your guidance? Consider trying to warn your teenage son about behaviors that could lead to trouble. If he fails to see the wisdom in your reasoning and the conversation escalates because you lose your temper, chances are he might still engage in the very activities you advised against.

OUR ARSENAL OF AVOIDANCE

Even as a comprehensive man, you may be tempted to employ weaponized incompetence when faced with a task you don't like; however, to be a good leader, you must work to overcome it.

Weaponized incompetence occurs when someone intentionally acts incapable in the hopes of controlling others. It's a manipulative maneuver often found in a man's arsenal of avoidance. It manifests as a man deliberately fumbling tasks or attempting to complete them with subpar execution. In this way, the man dexterously sidesteps mastering the emotions that fuel his fear of failure, all to manipulate someone else—specifically, a woman—into shouldering his burden.

I've witnessed men married to "wife-moms" feigning ineptitude to evade their responsibilities. This not only drains the vitality of their wives but also perpetuates a mentality of weakness and laziness among men. Additionally, it fosters a dangerous attitude of dependency and lack of accountability.

Consider a husband who purposely pretends to be incapable of managing household finances. He avoids discussing the family budget, bills, and financial planning, often claiming he doesn't understand numbers or budgeting. This manipulation forces his wife, who also works a full-time job, to take control of financial matters, leaving her overwhelmed, burdened, and alone with the responsibility.

In a healthy relationship, the husband pushes past his insecurities and pride and actively participates in financial discussions with his wife. While he may not be an expert, he makes an effort to learn and understand basic budgeting principles. He asks questions, seeks guidance, and contributes his perspective without raising his voice or arguing. Together, they foster a collaborative approach to managing their household finances.

In the first example, the husband's weaponized incompetence is used as a means of avoiding responsibility and manipulating his wife into taking on a disproportionate share of the financial burden. In the healthy alternative, the husband acknowledges his role in the partnership, takes steps to learn and contribute, and works alongside his wife to create a mutually supportive environment.

Manipulative men often exhibit a consistent pattern of timidity, recoiling from their fear of making mistakes. Driven by the need to exhibit dominance and avoid confronting their own insecurities or shortcomings, they believe manipulating others allows them to control the outcomes and avoid situations that trigger their frequency of failure.

A comprehensive man does not find contentment with merely standing in the shallow waters of safety; he follows the need to plunge headlong into

uncharted depths, embracing challenges and forging ahead. Recognizing and addressing weaponized incompetence is essential for fostering healthy relationships built on trust, respect, and genuine collaboration instead of manipulation and control. Let's break free from this cycle, harness the unique strength of the men and women in our lives, and nurture a resolute, unwavering spirit of comprehensive leadership.

CAMARADERIE

One myth of leadership is that a leader should never ask for help since it makes a person seem weak or incompetent. However, it is written, "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another" (Prov. 27:17 ESV). Just as one piece of iron requires friction to sharpen another, one man needs another to refine him. This friction is necessary for a man to become mentally and spiritually sharp enough to cut away any sin, addiction, or strongholds that come his way. Unfortunately, many of us seek polishing partners—men who tell us only what we want to hear instead of what's needed for us to grow.

As long as we keep our swords sheathed, no one will know if they need sharpening. I used to struggle with asking for help because for so long it seemed like I had to do everything myself. That mentality has taken a tremendous toll on my body and mind, and I do not wish the same for you. Allow yourself to be supported by those who love you, and don't hesitate to seek help when you're struggling. It saddens me to see so many good men pass away prematurely (Eccl. 7:17), causing profound grief and regret among their families at their funerals.

Due to the amount of trauma I experienced in my younger years, I had to take steps toward opening up to others. First, I recorded myself sharing my struggles, and then I played it back. This process revealed that there was nothing pusillanimous about expressing my emotions, but it required strength from muscles I had never trained. Eventually, I felt comfortable sharing one of my concerns with a friend, and to my amazement, my transparency encouraged him to be open as well. Before we knew it, we were both supporting and affirming each other, and being human became the norm.

That being said, as a leader, do not be afraid to ask questions or seek guidance. We don't have all the answers. When we allow the men in our lives to see when our swords are dull, we foster a camaraderie that sharpens us all—equipping us to confront and cut away sin when it surfaces in our lives.

PUSH THE PEN AND THE BROOM

My approach to leadership has always been comprehensive, which is why the *C* in chief executive officer (CEO) often represents more than just “chief” for me—it also implies the idea of “contractor” and “custodian.” This reflects my commitment to lead by example, never asking others to do tasks I wouldn't do myself. For me, it was never about the letters following my name but rather the name that I followed—Yahushua.

It is also a reminder that we are servants for those we lead and servants of Yah. Twenty-one years ago, when the Most High gave me the vision to establish the Yunion, I was always willing to do the dirty work. This commitment remained unwavering even after the Cave of Adullam's viral videos, worldwide media coverage, bestselling books, an award-winning documentary, and acquisition of a larger building. I often reflect on the years I served as a facilities manager at a popular charter school in Detroit, where I maintained the grounds, facilitated essential repairs, and safeguarded the property, among other duties. Those three years were instrumental in preparing me to maintain what we have today.

I firmly believe in this principle: Whatever we do, we should do it as unto the Most High (1 Cor. 10:31). Consequently, I refuse to allow His property to go unkempt even for a day. Do I get tired? Yes, I do! However, I continuously strive to manage my emotions so that weariness doesn't overtake me. I firmly believe that the Most High is worth the greatest sacrifices.

Despite having the resources to hire staff now, I remain willing to jump in and assist when needed. For instance, I recently hired one of my spiritual sons to install porcelain tiles in one of the rooms within our building. When it was time to apply the grout, he required assistance due to the rapid drying time of the additive I had purchased. Without hesitation, I joined in to help.

Being on my knees once again reminded me of the years when I owned and operated a ceramic and marble tile company. During those years, I worked diligently, though sometimes begrudgingly. My heart's true desire was to engage in the work I believed the Most High had created me for. Yet I learned that as long as my attitude toward my current situation didn't align with what was pleasing to the Most High, He couldn't move me to where I needed to be.

If you become frustrated or trapped in a certain stage of life, seek to learn every lesson Yah is teaching you in that moment. Remain patient and committed to long-term growth rather than chasing quick rewards. The lesson from my leadership journey is this: Never resent the process you're in, because what you're doing now will likely be crucial for where you're predestined to go.

BE HANDS-ON

It was a scorching summer afternoon in 2002; I had just finished installing a granite floor at my father-in-law's church and was driving home when I noticed the fuel gauge nearing empty. I pulled into a nearby gas station to fill up my tank.

When I walked in, I noticed a woman inside asking people for a light. Although I wasn't a smoker, I always kept a divine light within me (Matt. 5:16). So I responded, "I have a light that never goes out."

Her face lit up with excitement. "Where?" she asked eagerly.

"His name is Jesus," I replied.

As I reflect on this now, I realize how religious I sounded. No wonder she yelled, "I don't have time for that [expletive]!" She stormed out of the gas station and walked across the street to a restaurant. My attention remained fixed on her. After filling up my work van, I felt compelled to follow her. I parked on the side of the gas station and crossed the street. When she finished placing her order, I humbly asked, "Would you mind if I paid for your meal?"

She replied with a heartfelt "Thank you."

With her permission, I sat down to talk. Looking into her eyes I asked, "How are you doing?" It was as if that question served as a plunger to unclog a drain that had been blocked for decades.

Tears welled in her eyes, and she reached out to grasp my hands. “You’re touchable,” she whispered as her weathered hands moved up my forearms. “You didn’t jump. You’ve allowed me to touch you. You’re real!” Her tears flowed even more freely, and she wiped them away as she continued. “I can’t begin to tell you how many church people are afraid of me because of what I’ve been through. I’ve battled drug addiction for most of my life, and I’m doing better now, but I need more support.”

I could see evidence of her struggle—marks from needle injections tattooed across her arms. In that moment, I prayed for her right there in the middle of the restaurant. She held on to my hands tightly, her body started trembling, and then she cried out, “Jesus!” After I finished praying, I gently wiped her tears with a napkin. She looked into my eyes and made a heartfelt plea for help. She wasn’t homeless, but she felt utterly hopeless. Remembering James 2:20, “faith without works is dead,” I connected her with a state-funded drug rehabilitation center whose owner I happened to know. She saved the contact information in her phone and thanked me sincerely.

I share this memory because countless men I’ve known have lost their way as leaders, much like the woman in this story. If Yahushua walked through Jerusalem weeping because the people were like sheep without a shepherd, something is profoundly amiss today when leaders—especially those of us who profess to have His Spirit—are not daily grieved by the state of His flock. The hands-off approach simply isn’t effective anymore.

In truth, it never was. Comprehensive leaders lead with love. Will you?

TAKE ACTION

ACTIVITY #1: PRACTICE TRANSPARENCY

You can start the same way I did. Record yourself sharing your struggles, fears, and disappointments—then play back the audio. When you’re ready to dive deeper, make a video of yourself discussing the same issues while maintaining eye contact with your reflection.

These exercises sharpen your verbal processing skills as a leader. Over time, seek out a mentor, friend, coach, counselor, or loved one with whom you can openly share your thoughts and remain receptive to their feedback.

ACTIVITY #2: MANAGING BOUNDARIES

Boundaries are vital for any leader who wants to excel both professionally and personally. Throughout my years of leading, mentoring, and martial arts training, I've discovered the importance of timing and situational awareness—skills crucial not only in combat but also in managing boundaries effectively. Knowing when to set, adjust, or remove boundaries is like sensing the right moment to strike or defend in martial arts. Take a moment now to reflect on the boundaries you've established in your life—whether in work, family, or friendships. Grab your journal and thoughtfully consider the following questions for each boundary you've identified. This exercise isn't just about setting boundaries; it's about understanding why they're there and how they serve you.

- Is this boundary still serving its intended purpose?
- Does this boundary need to be removed or reinforced?
- Have there been instances where I allowed the wrong person to cross this boundary?
- What were my consequences for allowing them to cross this boundary?
- What were their consequences for crossing this boundary?

ACTIVITY #3: MIRROR TIME

Take out your mirror and silently gaze into the eyes of the man reflected in it. Don't look away for sixty seconds. Then, affirm that man with the following statements:

- I will be a strong and compassionate leader, maintaining emotional stability.
- I will pass the torch before it burns out in my hand.
- I will listen to others with the same intensity and attention that I desire for my own voice to be heard.
- I will never be so successful that I can't get my hands dirty for the success of others.
- My life is not a highlight reel—I will allow people to learn from the mistakes I made.

PART 2

THE DEEPER CHARACTERISTICS

Be Inspired to Look Within

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CHAPTER 6

THE LOVER

The Lover knows that love is demonstrated through action—devotion to Yah, loving his neighbors, and maintaining his own well-being.

When Mel Robbins asked me to be a guest on her CBS talk show in 2019, she was seeking assistance for a father emotionally incarcerated by his childhood trauma. He was on the verge of losing what he loved most: his marriage and family.

I asked Mel for a pair of boxing gloves and focus mitts, then got in front of the father and said, “You’re hurting, but you’ve got to learn how to release and let go. It’s trauma, and you have to release it. As long as you hold it, you become its hostage.”

I then asked the father to yell the traumatic memories of his childhood every time he punched one of the boxing mitts. He pondered, punched, and yelled, “My father keeps hitting me!” He punched again and exclaimed, “My father keeps hitting my mom!”

In a calm but resolute tone, I told him, “Now let’s be positive. What do you want?”

With passion, he said, “I want to be a better father.”

“What else do you want?” I asked.

With a determined look, he said, “I want my marriage to succeed!”

“Let’s get that!” I proclaimed. Punch after punch, he expressed his desires. I then said, “Here comes a blow!” and tapped him on the body. “That’s a bad memory. Let it go!” I continued to encourage him as he released years of trauma.

I stopped and asked, “You love your wife?”

Without hesitation, he said, “I do!”

“You love your son?”

Again, without hesitation, he replied, “I love my son.”

The next thing I said stunned him and the audience: “Now I need you to love yourself.” My words evoked a profound stillness that reverberated in his mind and throughout the audience.

Mel Robbins then asked him, “What’s coming up for you right now?”

“Just a lot of old emotions. That’s one of my biggest fears.” His gaze shifted to his wife, and with glistening tears, he said, “I don’t want to lose you.” In a swift, poignant moment, his wife rose from her seat, enveloping her husband in a tender embrace as they shed tears of shared empathy.

As the man’s tears mingled with his wife’s, a powerful realization dawned on him: The key to preserving what he held dear lay in his ability to embrace self-love and release the traumatic shackles of his past. In that transformative moment, a path toward healing and renewal emerged.

A critical characteristic of the comprehensive man is the Lover. Typically, the word *lover* conjures images of external behaviors, such as those of a lothario—a promiscuous man who obsessively seduces and deceives women to affirm his own manhood. However, I want to shift our focus to the inward aspect of love—self-love, or in more masculine terms, “self-maintenance.” Just as regular maintenance is vital for our vehicles, tools, and equipment to function optimally, preserving our mental and physical health is equally essential. We must allow ourselves to love ourselves or else we risk losing not only our well-being but also those we hold important.

DON’T LIVE ON EMPTY

One crisp morning as I was filling up my truck at the gas station, a young man approached me and said, “Mr. Wilson, I’m ready to give up.” He had recognized me from social media and needed a man to confide in. As always, I took a moment to pray, process, and gather the right words before responding.

With a steady, empathetic voice, I asked, “Do you wait until your tank is nearly bone dry before getting gas, or do you fill your tank as soon as you see it’s getting low?”

His eyes met mine, and the unspoken answer hung in the air, pulsing with meaning.

I decided to share more, hoping my experiences could offer some guidance. “Driving or living on fumes puts strain on your fuel pump and could clog your filter or mind. Please learn from my mistakes. Allowing life to leave you emotionally, mentally, and physically drained puts you on the brink of emptiness, leading to decisions you might later regret.”

A glimmer of understanding danced in his eyes, and he responded with a heartfelt “Thank you.” The connection was palpable, so I decided to be transparent, wanting him to know he wasn’t alone.

“You know, there are days when I also feel like giving up,” I admitted, “but if I had surrendered to that feeling, you wouldn’t have seen me here today.” Our exchange may have been brief, but in that moment, we both knew that life’s twists and turns can be a little easier when we lift each other up with genuine concern and understanding.

Later that year, a remarkably successful friend of mine shared that once, when he had achieved something truly commendable, his team urged him to keep going without a break. Strike while the iron was hot, so to speak. His response held weight: “If I do, I’m going to hurt myself.”

That prompted me to reflect on occasions when I’ve pondered, *What’s the threshold? Must I brandish a firearm to my skull for someone to understand that enough is enough?*

FIGHT TO LOVE YOURSELF

My father once shared wise advice with me: “Stop expecting someone to apologize for punching you.” In a metaphorical sense, this counsel urges us to stop anticipating an apology from people who intentionally wound us emotionally or verbally. It implies that waiting for an apology or remorse from the wrongdoer might be both unrealistic and unproductive. If someone says “I’m sorry” but doesn’t change their behavior, it’s not an apology; they simply said, “*Sike!*”

Rather than awaiting the next “punch,” it is more constructive to address the situation by openly expressing your feelings about it. Your metaphorical counterpunch may involve setting boundaries, seeking

resolution, or prioritizing your own well-being instead of waiting for an apology that may never happen.

For example, I strongly dislike being pressured into attending an event I have no interest in. While my people-pleasing nature once pushed me to accept every invite, regardless of my own wishes, I now stand firm in declining what doesn't align with my purpose.

It's crucial to understand you are not a bad guy just because you erect boundaries and tell people no. A common misconception is that setting boundaries is negative. In truth, boundaries are protective barriers—defensive lines we draw to shield our own well-being. The curious thing is that we tend to extend this safeguarding effort to those around us yet frequently overlook the necessity of protecting ourselves.

Embrace the power of *no* and *not now*. These are not just words; they are your guardians against the erosion of your mental and physical health. When spoken, you shield yourself from others' expectations and reap many benefits:

- **Preserve Energy and Time:** Declining allows you to channel your resources into activities that truly matter.
- **Gain Respect for Boundaries:** Saying no establishes healthy boundaries and garners respect from others.
- **Enhance Well-Being:** Avoiding situations that generate stress or discomfort nurtures your mental and emotional well-being. Your choice not to attend matters because your decision directly impacts your own experience.
- **Prioritize Self-Maintenance:** “Not now” allows you to prioritize your needs, enabling you to recharge and show up more fully later in areas you select, including those connected to your family, job, and more.
- **Promote Authenticity:** Embracing refusal fosters authenticity as you live in alignment with your purpose.
- **Open Opportunities:** Saying no to the wrong opportunities creates space for the right ones to emerge.
- **Strengthen Confidence:** Asserting your choices boosts your confidence and reaffirms your independence from the desires and urgencies of others.

Remember, a comprehensive man understands that saying no isn't a rejection of others; it's an affirmation of himself. If you persist on this path, you'll unearth freedom from the festering frustration and resentment that stem from doing something you don't want or need to do. With each refusal, you meticulously build a fortress, brick by brick, of strong mental health.

NOT BY DISCIPLINE ALONE

Society appears to expect every man to embody discipline. This is why, when we fail to meet our goals, we often blame our lack of discipline, leading us to conclude that we are not mentally strong enough. However, this is not always the case. More often than not, what we truly lack is the desire to implement the discipline needed to make the necessary changes in our lives.

Recently, one of my friends FaceTimed me, deeply discouraged. He is overweight but can't seem to stick with a dietary plan or workout regimen. He started telling himself, *You really ain't a man because you lack discipline.*

I told my friend that his problem was not a lack of discipline but a lack of desire. I continued by asking him how many years he had been a supervisor on his job. He proudly replied, "Eighteen years!"

"How many times have you been written up for actions that were detrimental to your company's success?" I asked.

"Never."

"How many times have you been late to work?"

"Less than eight."

Then I looked at him with a smile and said, "That's discipline, brother. What if you went to your doctor for your annual physical and the doctor said you'll be dead within hours if you don't start eating healthy and working out as soon as you leave the office?"

My friend looked at me and said, "Without question, I would start working out and eating correctly as soon as I left my doctor!"

I looked at him and said, "That's not discipline, brother—that's desire."

Here's another reason discipline is deceptive. I have several friends who are great martial artists and could beat you down or choke you out in ten

seconds. I also know men who are in phenomenal physical shape—literally abs on top of abs! They can implement the discipline needed to fight daily or deny junk food in order to maintain their chiseled look, but they can't save their own marriage by denying their extramarital desires when it comes to sex.

Remember, the root comes before the fruit. It's your desire to get the weight off that brings the muscle. It's your desire to live and love living that makes you change your diet. It's your desire to please Yah by being faithful to your wife that empowers you to escape the immoral woman.

I love the way Yahushua said it: "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15 NASB). As we see here, the word *love* is rooted in desire. However, practicing something is rooted in discipline. So, instead of condemning yourself, take time to identify the emotions, toxic thoughts, negative pronouncements, or past traumas that are stopping you from taking care of yourself.

FOR THE LOVE OF WOMEN

Often when men talk about love as it relates to a woman, we mean sex. This has distorted the concept of love's purest definition. Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance (1 Cor. 13:4–7).

Our failure to express love in a healthy way has driven many of our women into emotional incarceration, causing them to isolate their hearts from the world. I had this epiphany while hosting *The Comprehensive Man* podcast while interviewing my wife, Nicole; my friend Eve Fontes; and three other female friends. Within minutes, years of repressed emotional pain and trauma began to release, and tears flowed freely. In that moment I pondered, *When was the last time I saw strong women cry?*

We find ourselves preoccupied with concerns over the stock market crashing or the potential for World War III, yet we overlook one of mankind's greatest blessings—a woman's empathy. Isn't it ironic that the women we try to impress with unwavering stoicism are now becoming

stoics themselves? In the past, bad relationships and a misogynistic culture led me to believe that showing public affection, even to my wife, was a sign of weakness. But as a comprehensive man I understand that mentality was fear-based. I now express my love more freely, which enhances my marriage.

Furthermore, every emotion is fleeting, so embrace feelings of intimacy when they arise. When you want to kiss your wife, kiss her. When you want to hold her hand, hold it. When you want to say, “I love you,” say it!

THE MOTHER WOUND

I often talk about the father wound—trauma inflicted by our father’s abuse or abandonment emotionally or physically—and how it negatively affects the way boys and men love the women in their lives.

But just like the father wound, the mother wound affects the hearts and minds of men, impacting their psychological and emotional well-being as a result of unmet needs, trauma, or strained relationships, which then shapes their beliefs about women, their self-perception, their own behaviors, and other relationships throughout their lives. I believe the mother wound is more impactful than the father wound because the mother is not only the first love of a boy’s life but also the first person he learns to trust.

Since there’s a universal belief that mothers are the ones who stay present throughout a child’s life, when a woman shatters this narrative about motherhood, it requires twice as much heartrending effort for me to help her son heal.

As psychotherapist Dr. Tim Broe told me,

The profound impact of the mother wound in boys manifests in the form of deficient emotional synchronization, particularly when guiding the son through complex emotional states such as fear, anger, guilt, shame, etc. Consequently, this creates an attachment style in young males that will make it difficult for them to establish trustworthy and resilient interpersonal relationships in subsequent phases of their lives.¹

I vividly recall one class in the Cave of Adullam when a student emotionally imploded during a challenging kicking drill, almost to the point where it seemed like he wanted to fight me due to experiencing failure. Several students were perplexed by his reaction, but I understood the cause

and effect. I paused the class and asked everyone, “Who here has their mother actively in their lives? Raise your hand.” Everyone raised their hands except the one student who was acting out. I did this to help my other students understand how much the mother wound was affecting their peer.

I then placed my hands on his shoulders, stared intently into his eyes, and said, “It’s unfair that your mother isn’t in your life as you desire, but do not let her absence make you lose sight of who’s present.” He had a committed father, a loving grandmother and nanny, and also a sacrificial teacher in me. His eyes welled up with tears, confirming that I spoke to the heart of the matter. To everyone’s surprise, he immediately excelled at the kicking drill.

Here are some of the ways the mother wound plays out:

- **Unmet Emotional Needs:** Many boys who grow up with emotional neglect, mistreatment, or insufficient nurturing from their mothers often carry these unaddressed emotional needs into adulthood, expecting women to fill this void.
- **Emotional Transference:** It’s common for men to unconsciously project unresolved feelings and unmet emotional needs from their maternal relationships onto other women in their lives.
- **Seeking Validation:** Men who have experienced a mother wound may relentlessly seek validation and affirmation from women, hoping to fill the emotional void left by their mothers.
- **Abandonment Anxiety:** The fear of abandonment is a significant repercussion of the mother wound, which can make it exceedingly difficult for men to be emotionally present and transparent in relationships.
- **Stereotypes and Misogyny:** For some, an unresolved mother wound may lead to negative perceptions of women. This often manifests as misogyny, fueled by underlying resentment, anger, or mistrust that originated from conflicts with their mothers.
- **Self-Perception Impact:** Similar to the effects of a father wound, the mother wound profoundly influences a man’s perception of himself. Harboring internalized feelings of inadequacy, unworthiness, or rejection from his mother can negatively affect his self-esteem and confidence.

Although I had a loving mother, the tragic death of my brother caused her to parent me in fear. Instead of encouraging me to do great things, she discouraged me from attempting to do anything risky. This eventually caused conflict between us, creating a mother wound. As a result, I started searching for an affirming love in unhealthy ways—visiting strip clubs, engaging in premarital sex, and watching porn, just to name a few.

Through Yah's grace and biblically based psychotherapy, I finally empathized with my mother's fear of losing another son. This breakthrough paved the way for vulnerable and therapeutic conversations between us. It was almost instant: My mother began encouraging me to keep my faith in Yah and push through my fears. I was fifty-two years old at the time, yet I discovered that the boy who had yearned for her encouragement to achieve greatness was still alive within me.

The journey to healing the mother wound is demanding, requiring patience and introspection. Only after undergoing this process can a man embark on the journey to find a wife with his heart unburdened by unresolved pain. As part of your transformation into a comprehensive man, you will learn that recognizing the origins of these behaviors and working through them will enable you to cultivate healthier attitudes toward women.

LOVE AND RESPECT

As I stated at the beginning of this chapter, when men contemplate the term *lover*, their thoughts often gravitate toward the promiscuous lifestyle of a lothario. The album cover of rapper Drake's *Certified Lover Boy*, featuring twelve pregnant women, illustrates this perception. When the album was released in 2021, it shattered Spotify's record for the most album streams in a single day and, within just twelve hours, set a new record on Apple Music for single-day album streams.² The danger is that this messaging not only endorses immorality but also contributes to the cultural degradation of love and the promotion of promiscuity, ultimately leading to more fatherless households.

Looking at this from a prehistoric perspective, some men may have been compelled by a primal instinct to propagate their genes as widely as possible. However, I contend that this behavior is often rooted in the association of manhood with sexual conquest, driven by cultural pressures

to showcase dominance by engaging with multiple partners and fathering children.

I acknowledge that I, too, succumbed to this allure when I relinquished my virginity. It wasn't my own desire but rather the influence of my peers that led me to engage in a sexual encounter with a young woman I hardly knew and didn't particularly like. Truth be told, during that phase of my life, I didn't even love myself, which was part of the problem. If I had known my self-worth, I may not have let the peer pressure get to me. Thankfully, my younger years unfolded before the rise of social media; otherwise I might have found myself on another path—navigating the responsibilities of fatherhood with different women.

A comprehensive man understands the power of purity and respecting the sanctity of love. Don't believe the misleading mantra "Good guys finish last." They don't. They arrive just in time for the woman who waits patiently. Men, do not rush the process. Abstain from premarital sex and discard the misogynistic mindset, because promiscuity clouds clarity (1 Peter 2:11). Trust me, Adam, you may miss the Eve standing right in *front* of you because you're focusing on another *behind*.

THE LOVER IN BED

Many couples experience challenges in the bedroom. Wives struggle to attain sexual satisfaction, while husbands grapple with the emotions of not being desired by their wives. Few insecurities hit a man as profoundly as the fear of being unable to satisfy his wife during sexual intimacy.

As long as we persist in viewing sex as a mere physical interaction, devoid of deeper connection, we remain far from the lovers we aspire to be. Emotionally incarcerated men often perceive sex as simply a tool to fulfill their desires or to reaffirm their worth. When we fall short in satisfying our wives during sex, we tend to either dismiss it as their issue or seek out women who seem satisfied, thereby boosting our egos. But a performance-based approach to sex inevitably confines it to the physical realm, leaving countless women feeling unstimulated and unfulfilled—never experiencing a true climax, emotional release, and physical connection with the men they love.

According to Scripture, we are instructed to love our wives as we do our own bodies (Eph. 5:28). Unfortunately, because many of us do not love ourselves, our love for our wives feels like hate. When I transitioned from my youthful explorations and began to love myself, I finally became an impeccable and passionate lover for my wife, Nicole.

Success in pleasing your wife and satisfying your own needs comes when the focus shifts from individual desires to mutual fulfillment. Both husband and wife should be willing to learn about each other's needs and bodies (Song 4:1–7), eagerly seeking to fulfill each other's sexual desires.

With this in mind, gentlemen, just as the “ground and pound” isn't the sole technique used in an MMA fight, it's also not the only element in intercourse that pleases your wife. A comprehensive man understands when to embrace his wife with strength and when to caress her with tenderness, recognizing that intimacy is seldom achieved through physical aggression. Moreover, when you allow intimacy to enter the bedroom, you have also created space for an emotional connection that can supersede physical pleasure.

For years Nicole carried a deep self-consciousness about the prominent vertical scar on her abdomen—the result of an incision made by her doctor after her fourth miscarriage. The same scar became the entry point through which our son came into the world. No matter how many times I reassured Nicole that the scar did not diminish her beauty in my eyes, my words could never quiet the self-doubt that lingered within her. One evening, during a moment of foreplay, Yah guided me to kiss her scar, tracing its path from top to bottom.

As I pressed my lips to the scar, tears began to flow from Nicole's eyes. I placed my heart over hers, attempting to sync the rhythm of our heartbeats. I offered a prayer to Yah, seeking a positive transformation in her self-image. This sacred moment not only liberated Nicole from years of self-inflicted body shame but also culminated in one of the most profoundly memorable experiences of intimacy we had ever shared.

By allowing my heart to lead, I connected with Nicole on a much deeper level. Inviting Yah's divine presence into the bedroom not only confirmed that sex is a spiritual act but also revealed its power to heal.

THE POWER OF LOVE

I remember watching a news special that featured former Special Forces operative David Eubank during his time in Mosul, when he risked his life to save a young girl caught in the cross fire between US Marines and ISIS.³ In that tense moment, Eubank swiftly gathered his team, formulated a rescue plan, and sprang into action. His fellow team members provided cover as he raced to reach the girl and bring her to safety.

One might assume that Eubank's heroic act was fueled by courage, but it was the profound power of love that drove him to charge into that hail of gunfire. When asked about the Bible verse that motivated his swift response, Eubank replied with conviction, "It was John 15:13, 'Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.' " Reflecting on that pivotal moment, he continued, "If I were to die right now, my wife and kids would understand . . . it was all for the love of that girl."

If we are honest with ourselves, we know deep inside that love is often what gives birth to courage, not the other way around. In life-threatening situations, the fear of losing our lives or someone we love serves as a powerful motivator, prompting us to summon the courage needed to face challenges. However, there is no fear in love—instead, "perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18).

Let's not deviate from this truth. Yes, courage can certainly exist independently, but it is frequently inspired by the presence of love. When we embrace the practice of living from love—the good within our hearts—we free ourselves from the death grip of our fears and live liberated lives as the Lover.

TAKE ACTION

ACTIVITY #1: HEAL YOUR MOTHER WOUND

None of us grew up with perfect fathers or mothers. Some of us grew up with parents who tried hard but still failed spectacularly. A few of us grew up with parents who never even tried. Regardless of your unique past experience, your mother wound may be coloring how you approach life as a man today.

Healing begins with recognizing that you are, in fact, wounded. Read through the signs of a mother wound again. Think about them carefully. Answer honestly: Are you a wounded man? If so, remember that Yah is the Healer. Seek Him through fervent prayer and also search for a reputable psychotherapist. This professional can help you safely open

your unhealed wounds and treat your mental and emotional infections, facilitating your journey toward healing.

ACTIVITY #2: LOVING WITHOUT FEAR

Identify the emotional barriers that prevent you from living from the good in your heart and loving without fear. Take out your journal and respond to the following questions to begin breaking through these barriers. This exercise aims to cultivate purity in heart (Matt. 5:8) and to counter its sinful nature (Jer. 17:9). What are the good desires of your heart that you long to live from but hesitate to pursue due to fear of others' perceptions?

- How would your life improve if you truly lived from the good in your heart?
- What fears prevent you from loving your wife, family, or friends without fear?

ACTIVITY #3: MIRROR TIME

The key to finding real love begins by looking in the mirror—recognizing that we are made in the image of Yah (Gen. 1:27) and our bodies are temples of His Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). Take out your mirror and silently gaze into the eyes of the man reflected in it. Don't look away for sixty seconds. Then, affirm that man with the following statements:

- I will love myself for who I am and not for what I can do.
- I will no longer allow lust to tempt me into having premarital sex.
- I will overcome any past deficiencies in love and affirmation.
- I will learn how to love and respect the women in my life.
- I will seek the help I need to heal and truly love myself and others.

CHAPTER 7

THE NURTURER

The Nurturer cultivates growth and development, caring for individuals and environments within their influence and beyond.

Just as the masculine traits of courage, boldness, and strength are innate to every man, the human qualities of compassion, tenderheartedness, and nurturing are in each of us as well. Let's take the example of boxing legend Mike Tyson. While he is celebrated for his exceptional skill and prowess in the boxing ring, less recognized is his profound nurturing side. Growing up in the tough streets of Brooklyn, Tyson found solace and connection through caring for pigeons. His compassionate bond with these birds provided a refuge from the challenges of his upbringing. Tyson's capacity for nurturing didn't diminish his masculinity; rather, it enriched his humanity.

In 2015 I had an epiphany about the importance of embracing a comprehensive approach to manhood. It came during a presentation at an accelerated leadership training in Detroit when a fellow participant made an intriguing observation. He remarked that my life, mission, and divine calling reminded him of the opening scene in the blockbuster movie *Gladiator*. What struck me was that this individual had insight into my character and desires without having a personal connection with me. He went on to say, "Jason, you yearn for peace, yet your divine calling continually leads you into chaos."

For those who don't know, in the opening scene of *Gladiator*, we see General Maximus, portrayed by Russell Crowe, running his hand through the wheatgrass on a beautiful day. As our fingers house a great number of

touch receptors, one can distinctly feel his sensory connection with nature. However, Maximus is jolted from his meditation as he realizes he actually stands on the battle line on an overcast and gloomy day. His attention is then drawn to a beautiful, delicate bird that takes flight. Maximus smiles as he watches it soar away, appearing to yearn for that kind of freedom—a profound desire for a simpler life far removed from the brutality of war.

This moment of quiet reflection and mental preparation appears to be an essential ritual he performs before every battle. It serves to underscore Maximus’s humanity and yearning for a life beyond the confines of mere masculinity. Can you resonate with this sentiment?

This scene communicates more than just a warrior’s desire for a simple and peaceful life. It emphasizes the significance of embracing nurturing emotions to find respite from the internal and external battles we face every day. As long as we remain apprehensive about being more than just masculine, our humanity will remain concealed, much like the countless men who have perished without experiencing comprehensive and fulfilling lives.

THE UNCONDITIONAL NURTURER

When many men think of nurturing, they often view it as a characteristic exclusive to women, especially mothers caring for children. However, the truth is that men have always possessed nurturing qualities, though these characteristics may manifest differently than those associated with women. The way I embrace my son and daughter differs from the way my wife embraces them. Similarly, my approach to teaching, disciplining, or guiding my son varies from my wife’s.

Unfortunately, for some reason, many men perceive nurturing as a sign of weakness. This perspective stems from the narrow concept of masculinity perpetuated by popular culture—one that constrains the heart from embracing these valuable traits to do things like patiently parent a child with disabilities, offer support to a terminally ill loved one, or tend to an aging parent.

Consider the example of a dog breeder who nurtures puppies from protective breeds such as pit bulls, cane corsos, and African Boerboels. On any given day on TikTok or Instagram, you’re likely to come across a

strong man cradling and bottle-feeding a puppy from one of these breeds. In such cases, the breeder is not typically labeled as soft or weak. In contrast, it's a rarity to see a man publicly engaging in the same nurturing actions with breeds like poodles, shih tzus, or Pomeranians. Why does this difference exist? Image plays a significant role, but it's important to remember that nurturing is nurturing, regardless of the situation.

Another example is my friend Gabriel, a battle-tested Marine who endured severe PTSD for decades after being shot in the streets of Detroit and fighting in wars. He consistently pursued intensive therapy, but it wasn't until he adopted a shih tzu that his mind finally found solace from his traumatic experiences. As Dr. Barbara Nosal, chief clinical officer at Newport Academy, explained, "The unconditionally loving nature of dogs helps individuals with PTSD emerge from the protective emotional shells they have built around themselves."¹

Nowadays, wherever Gabe goes, his dog, Gizmo, accompanies him. However, not everyone is accepting of a man's man with a ten-pound toy dog. One day while Gabe was walking Gizmo, a male neighbor jokingly yelled, "You need a real dog!"

Gabriel replied, "When you *are* a real dog, you just need a pet!" A moment of silence followed, then laughter.

Similar to myself, Gabriel doesn't keep a dog for protection; rather, he keeps Gizmo as therapy for his mind. I have a handsome and loving fifteen-pound Cavapoo named Shalom. While I've owned and still love protective breeds, this phase of my life calls for a dog whose presence brings a sense of calm after days burdened by mental stress and compassion fatigue. And it works!

NURTURING YOURSELF

During All-Star NBA player Damian Lillard's Formula Zero basketball camp—an assembly of elite basketball players and coaches—I had an opportunity to share my combat concept of "letting go of the blow" with some of the top high school and collegiate athletes in the country. When boxers or MMA fighters are punched or kicked, they can't linger on the fact that someone just hit them. This prevents them from effectively handling what's coming next because their focus remains on the past.

Following the talk, the players were transported to the gym to play in front of NBA scouts and coaches. The pressure was palpable. One of the players missed an uncontested dunk. Throughout the next few plays up and down the court, it was evident he was still dwelling on his miss. So, during a time-out, I took a seat on the bench next to him and said, “Hey, man, do you recall the principle of letting go of the blow?”

“Yeah, I remember,” he responded. “But I can’t stop thinking about blowing that dunk.”

I wanted him to dig deeper. So, I leaned into his shoulder and calmly asserted, “What I really want you to consider is *why* you’re finding it difficult to move on.”

He turned to look at me and asked, “What do you mean?”

“For instance, does that missed dunk symbolize something else you perceive as a mistake? Maybe it’s the negative words spoken by your parents or a mistake from the past you’ve been criticized for?” He leaned back, deep in thought. Taking a moment, I went on to share the wisdom of Kobe Bryant, who once revealed that he found the strength to pursue greatness when his parents granted him the freedom to make mistakes and learn from them.

“My young brother,” I continued, “several players missed numerous shots following your unsuccessful dunk. Allow yourself the grace to move beyond it.” He acknowledged the possibility of his trauma time traveling from the past to the present—and from then on, he played with freedom.

This type of open dialogue cultivates an environment where growth isn’t limited to physical skills; it extends to mental and emotional resilience as well.

COMPREHENSIVE COACHING

I’ve always had a deep love for playing and watching sports. However, as coaching methods have evolved—or should I say, declined—so have my thoughts about sports, particularly within the context of school. In short, many have lost the Nurturer characteristic.

The term *student athlete* signifies that the student aspect should take precedence over being an athlete. Unfortunately, the days when sports were a means to unwind after classes and instill discipline and teamwork are long

gone as school sports have transitioned from being true extracurriculars to being treated as integral to the curriculum. In fact, athletics now often overshadows academics.

We know this shift in focus has occurred when a student athlete who needs to miss a few practices the week of a game to prepare for an exam gets benched that weekend. I was taken aback when I discovered that students at many schools could continue participating in a sport even with an average GPA of 2.0. This attitude subtly conveys to students that academic excellence is secondary to athletic success. While various factors have contributed to this shift, the lack of comprehensive coaching has been one of the most significant.

Comprehensive coaches teach more than just athletic skills; they also emphasize character development without condemning their athletes. I know it's possible to teach character alongside champion-level skills because of my own experience at the Formula Zero basketball camp.

This camp transcended basketball—it was infused with unwavering mentorship and genuine care that touched the lives of every young man present, not only improving basketball skills but also placing strong emphasis on academics and character development. This experience unquestionably reinforced my decision to remove my son, Jason, from his school's basketball team.

Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu, often regarded as the godfather of Black male achievement, is well known for stating his views on the odds of making it to the NBA: “That which you do most will be that which you do best. If you play basketball from three o'clock until nine o'clock, you'll be a very good basketball player. If you went home and went to the library, you'll be a very good scholar. We need more Black male role models to encourage our youth in math and science.”²

Dr. Kunjufu was right. The following school year confirmed that my decision to remove Jason from his team was a wise move. When the time spent practicing for games shifted to hours dedicated to academics, Jason made the honor roll again after being off it for two years.

This improvement reminded me of when a successful multimillionaire told me that he allowed his son to play soccer instead of basketball because he didn't want him to have “hoop dreams”—a dream of becoming a professional basketball player in the NBA. Unbeknownst to many, fewer than five thousand men have ever played in the NBA since it was

established in 1946.³ Thus, investing our most precious asset—time—in this game in hopes of making it to the NBA is severely shortsighted.

Recent statistics highlight this reality: Only sixteen thousand of the five hundred thousand or so high school boys playing basketball will make an appearance in one of the three college divisions.⁴ The odds of playing in the NBA are prohibitive (1 in 3,333 against you, meaning only two players from each college team will be drafted in any given year). Moreover, 60 to 65 percent of NBA players find themselves financially insolvent within the first five years of retirement.⁵ This places an even stronger emphasis on the importance of comprehensive coaches rather than ones who are more concerned about wins and losses on the court instead of in life.

Here are my five C's that are the foundation for comprehensive coaching:

1. **Constructive Approach:** Comprehensive coaching involves adopting a constructive approach instead of harsh criticism and condemnation. Comprehensive coaching is about guiding and inspiring athletes through constructive feedback, genuine encouragement, and meaningful mentorship rather than shattering athletes' confidence. This comprehensive approach not only enhances performance but also nurtures a sense of self-worth and confidence that extends beyond athletic achievements.
2. **Character Development:** Comprehensive coaching emphasizes character alongside physical development. By incorporating qualities such as integrity, accountability, self-control, teamwork, and resilience along with honing physical skills, coaches foster holistic growth. This comprehensive approach ensures athletes not only excel in their chosen sport but also develop the attributes necessary for success in life.
3. **Cognitive Performance:** Many professional teams now recognize the inseparable link between high-level physical performance and sound mental health, particularly in this era when an athlete's private life can be readily exposed to the public eye. Thankfully, several NBA franchises, specifically the Memphis Grizzlies, have created a position for a psychologist to join their staff. This deliberate action not only prioritizes their athletes' direct access to mental health professionals but also champions the cause of dismantling the

societal stigma that has, for too long, been associated with men's mental health.

4. **Compassionate Communication:** Comprehensive coaching relies on communication rooted in genuine concern for athletes' personal growth and possesses the power to ignite change. Even methods like raising one's voice can be impactful when rooted in genuine love for the athlete. Athletes need to feel valued beyond their physical abilities, especially in a world where others often appreciate them solely for their skills. Also, when coaches openly share their own vulnerabilities and personal struggles, it encourages their athletes to do the same without the weight of fearing they will be judged or lose their spot on the team.
5. **Christ-Centered:** Comprehensive coaching fosters spiritual growth in players. While this *C* may be specific to those who have faith in Yahushua, I believe it's the foundation for all transformation. Due to the separation of church and state, the in-school programming for the Cave of Adullam couldn't be Christ-centered. Consequently, the results of my labor weren't sustainable. However, when I started holding the Cave of Adullam classes at a leased location, keeping the teaching Christ-centered, the transformation in my students was undeniably evident!
 - Seventy-eight percent of the CATTA students improved their grade point average by one letter grade without academic tutoring
 - Ninety-eight percent of parents report their sons have grown spiritually since becoming a student in the CATTA
 - One hundred percent of the CATTA students who were bullied are no longer victims of bullying

True resilience emerges when an individual is spiritually trained for godliness (1 Tim. 4:8). In moments where the mind yields to the body's emotional strains, the regenerating power of Ruach Ha'kodesh (the Holy Spirit, in Hebrew) can propel the athlete forward in the sport and in life.

In the journey to excellence, our coaching philosophy must transcend mere physical-skill refinement. Comprehensive coaching is about holistically nurturing athletes, guiding them through a transformative journey that intertwines a commitment to a constructive approach, character

and physical development, cognitive performance, and compassionate communication, all deeply anchored in a Christ-centered foundation. By embracing this multifaceted coaching style, we don't just train athletes; we sculpt champions in this life.

The comprehensive man knows that when men allow their hearts to take a more prominent role, the world is blessed with what it truly needs—the power of the nurturing love of a man—particularly within the realm of sports.

TO NURTURE IS HUMAN

Avoid the unattainable pursuit of constant happiness; remember that all emotions are fleeting. In a world marked by suffering, what's truly needed are men of compassion. Such empathy is vital, for without it, our hearts remain unmoved by the pain of others (Matt. 9:36–37). Reflect on this: Yah often works not through those who are perpetually happy but through those acquainted with hardship and struggle (Isa. 53:3).

To be a nurturing man, you need to get in touch with your human side. When my mother's mind was clouded by dementia, she needed more than just a protector to guard her from pill-pushing doctors or a provider to bridge the gaps left by her inadequate Social Security. She needed a comprehensive man—someone who embodied strength, assertiveness, and courage while also possessing tenderness, compassion, and enduring patience.

Some days, I'd massage her scalp to soothe her restless thoughts or gently tend to her grooming needs. Nurturing is not a characteristic exclusive to women. I, too, am a nurturer, yet I am not feminine. Observing these moments from me toward my mother has enriched my son's comprehensive character. When his mother's feet ache and she requests for him to massage them, Jason doesn't hesitate because he knows that a man embodies many qualities, including nurturing.

I vividly recall an incident when Jason underwent ear surgery. Post-surgery, he was gripped by emergent delirium—a bewildered state that sometimes follows anesthesia. When he cried out in distress, causing concern for my wife and me, we hurried to his side. Despite Nicole's earnest attempts, Jason remained scared. In a calm tone, I placed my hand

on his chest and said, “Son, take a deep breath. It’s alright. Your nervousness is understandable; this is a new environment for you.” Almost instantly, Jason’s anxiety subsided. This is the power of a father’s nurturing love. This is protection. This is solace.

I encourage you to have the courage to allow yourself the emotional space to explore these feelings of nurturing. In doing so, you not only enrich your own life but also contribute to a more compassionate and caring world for everyone.

TAKE ACTION

ACTIVITY #1: EMBRACE THE POWER OF NURTURING

Unleashing the nurturing characteristic not only enriches those around you but also enhances your own emotional and interpersonal skills. It liberates your heart to express how powerful you truly are! Take out your journal, find a quiet space, and deeply ponder the questions listed below before you write down your answers.

- How did I view being a nurturer before reading this chapter?
- When was the last time I exuded the characteristic of the Nurturer?
- How could being a nurturer enhance my life, and in which areas would it make a significant impact?
- Do I fear any emotions that are associated with being a nurturer? If so, who can I discuss these fears with in order to fully embrace this characteristic of a comprehensive man?

ACTIVITY #2: NURTURE OTHERS

Keep your journal out and write down your answers to these questions:

- Who am I nurturing?
- Who needs my coaching, compassion, kindness, understanding, and empathy but isn’t receiving it right now?
- Do the people I nurture also feel both celebrated and encouraged by me?

ACTIVITY #3: NURTURE YOURSELF

Take out your mirror and silently gaze into the eyes of the man reflected in it. Don’t look away for sixty seconds. Then, affirm that man with the following statements:

- I will commit to fostering not only my own growth but also the potential in those around me.

- I will embrace my imperfections and stop condemning myself for making mistakes.
- I will courageously walk into the heart of emotional challenges, bringing the unique strength and tenderness of a man's nurturing love.
- I will be a coach who transcends teaching just physical skills. I will train my players to excel not only in sports but also in life (1 Tim. 4:8).

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CHAPTER 8

THE GENTLEMAN

The Gentleman exudes respect for others and himself through deliberate and appropriate etiquette without compromising his values.

Across music, entertainment, and mainstream media, the attributes of a gentleman are becoming increasingly scarce. In today's cultural climate, chivalry might naively be viewed as pandering to women. However, its historical concept was associated with medieval knights, who were not only courageous and skilled warriors but also exemplars of honor and virtue. Chivalry, a defining trait of a gentleman, is a code of conduct characterized by bravery, boldness, respect for women, and adherence to virtues such as loyalty and compassion. It encompasses acting with courtesy and consideration, particularly toward women.

The decline of chivalry among men can be attributed to various factors but none more impactful than the concept of the alpha male, which has poisoned the minds and hardened the hearts of males globally. You can spot these men from a mile away—the ones who proudly call themselves alpha males. Such men often exude arrogance, struggle with deep-seated insecurities, chase material wealth, and view women as objects or subservient.

The alpha male concept originated from studies of wolf behavior. Ethologists, experts in animal behavior, studied hierarchies within wolf packs and labeled the dominant ones *alphas*. Unfortunately, masses of men mistakenly believe that displaying animalistic behavior is the only way for a human male to lead—unaware that this kind of theory has since been debunked.

The image of the alpha male has been promoted on social media as the epitome of what it takes to be a successful man. But in my experience working with men from all walks of life, the so-called alpha male mindset is often just a defense mechanism—emotional armor to hide personal insecurities, childhood abuse, or unresolved trauma. So when I hear a man proclaim himself an alpha, I actually become grieved in my spirit, because deep down, I know he's hurting.

Defining male behavior through the lens of an alpha hierarchy dismisses qualities like self-control and reason. When was the last time you saw a movie or show where two men resolved their differences without violence? Today, if a man demonstrates self-regulation or shows support and kindness, he's labeled a *beta*, as if compassion and cooperation were somehow lesser traits. Thankfully I've evolved into a man who strives to resolve conflict without violence.

One afternoon, I was driving to the shopping center with Nicole when a public bus nearly ran us off the road. I instinctively pulled up beside the bus to see what the driver was doing. His eyes met mine as if I was in the wrong. I pulled away to prevent the situation from escalating. Yet, to my surprise, the bus driver decided to follow us into the shopping center's parking lot. The driver parked, stepped out, and stormed toward Nicole and me, exuding the energy of an alpha male.

Without hesitation, I extended my left hand. "If you come within my three-foot radius for conflict, I will have no choice but to respond physically," I said calmly but unyielding. He immediately stopped and began to speak.

I remained composed, conscious not to let Nicole's presence ignite my ego. I focused on his body language, tuning in to the rhythm of his heart as we exchanged words. To my surprise, we found common ground and ended up shaking hands. No punches thrown, no bullets fired, and I didn't feel feeble for choosing to honor our shared humanity.

However, not every conflict ends this way. When a man adopts an animalistic mentality, there's little room for rationality as the focus shifts to fighting as a means of establishing dominance rather than engaging in constructive dialogue that could lead to peace.

Comprehensive manhood defies extremes. To live solely by a concept that originated from the study of wolves is a grave oversimplification. Even wildlife biologists have widely abandoned the term *alpha*, because research

has shown that most wolf packs are family units led by a breeding pair, and violent struggles for dominance between male wolves are rare. Essentially, the alpha isn't a lone male wolf but a male and female leading together.¹ Let that sink in. It's time to drop the *alpha male* label, allowing men to evolve past this outdated myth and gain a deeper understanding of who they really are.

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

I had arranged to meet a general contractor for breakfast, hoping to secure a contract after showing him my ceramic and marble tile portfolio. Just as I had finished cutting my pancakes, I realized I hadn't washed my hands. I excused myself to use the restroom. When I returned, I reached for my portfolio. The contractor smiled, extended his hand, and said, "I don't need to see your work. You've got the job."

As you can imagine, I was baffled; it was the first time I'd ever secured a tile job without the customer or contractor inspecting my work. Curious, I asked how he made such a quick decision without reviewing my work. He laughed, pointed to my plate, and said, "Anyone who cuts their pancakes like you do can cut my tile any day!"

As I looked down at my plate with pancakes symmetrically cut like a pie chart, I realized it wasn't a deliberate act; it came naturally as a reflection of who I had become. What may have seemed a very small thing at the time—my meticulously cut pancakes—signaled something deeper to the contractor. My actions showed him that I had attention to detail, a trait that is highly sought-after in the ceramic tile and marble business.

I could share countless stories like this one, but the point is clear: Embodying the true essence of a gentleman encompasses attention to detail, and you've mastered this when it's done unconsciously.

DINING ETIQUETTE

Dining isn't just about what's on your plate; it's about how you conduct yourself at the table. Therefore, dining etiquette is a set of principles that

encompasses everything from the skillful handling of your knife and fork to ensuring your conversation enhances the experience instead of detracts from it. It's been said that within every man, the spirit of his boyhood echoes. In other words, our childhood experiences shape who we become as adults, and they highlight the importance of developing positive behaviors and life skills at a young age. Understanding this fact, Finesse Worldwide conducted a national survey targeting kids ages ten to fourteen to assess their etiquette IQ and their perceptions of other kids' manners.² The results were not surprising:

- Fifty-seven percent of kids are unaware that platters and bowls of food should be passed to the right.
- Eighty-three percent of participants acknowledged the need for improvement in their own table manners as well as their friends' manners.
- Just 23 percent correctly identified that placing elbows and arms on the table is acceptable only when there is no food present.

In 1984, as a fourteen-year-old, I was clueless about dining etiquette, but I soon learned its importance. My parents had divorced when I was six, and every Monday, my father would pick me up from school—our designated day together.

I always looked forward to eating with him. One memorable evening, we dined at Red Lobster, my favorite seafood restaurant at the time.

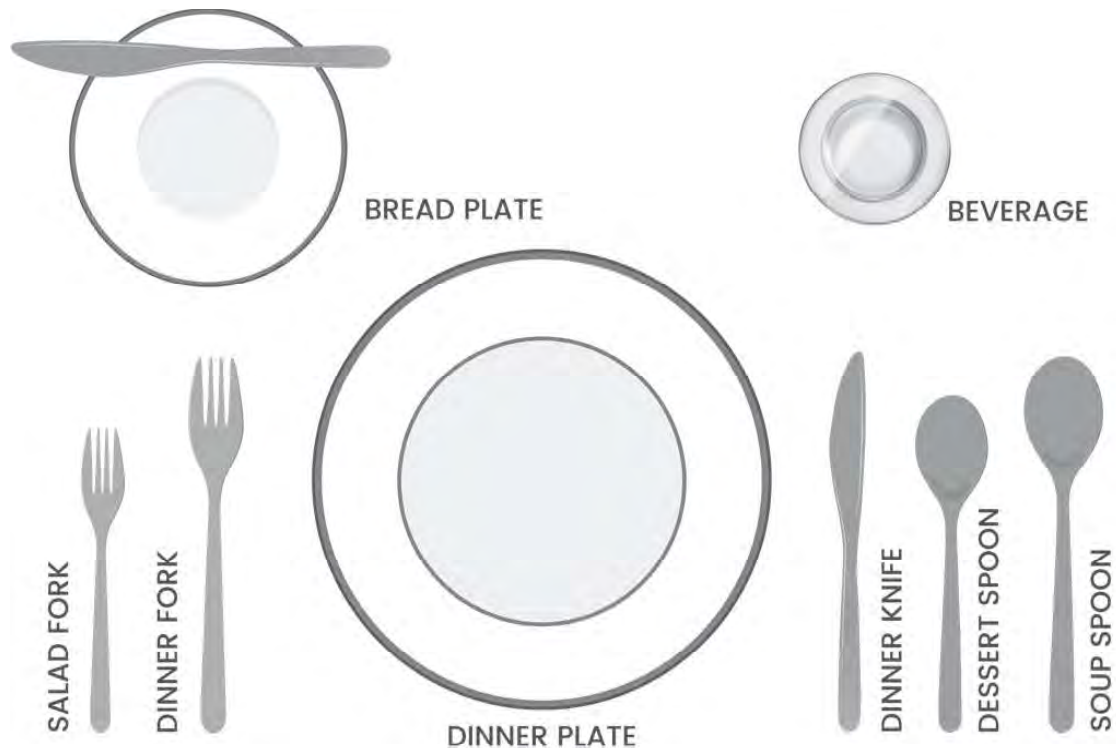
My anticipation grew as we took our seats. I eagerly ordered my favorite meal: fried shrimp. I devoured it! Each bite was a delight. I relished every delectable crumb, even licking my fingers clean. After the meal, my father dropped me off at home, and everything seemed fine. However, within thirty minutes, I overheard my mother's voice rising in a heated argument with my dad over the phone. The intensity of their conversation indicated something significant. When the discussion ended, my mother shared with me that my dad had blamed her for my embarrassing dining etiquette at the restaurant.

As you can imagine, this experience hurt me deeply, but I turned that pain into a source of healing for the boys I work with today in the Cave of Adullam. Driven by the desire to give boys what I longed for growing up, I created a comprehensive dining etiquette training program to empower

young men with the essential skills needed to not only improve their dining experiences but also enhance their networking, job opportunities, and overall confidence.

It's no surprise that many of my students' fathers have expressed interest in learning how to dine like gentlemen. If you want to refine your skills, practice these eleven elements of dining etiquette:

1. **Entering the Table.** Approach the table standing to the left side of the chair. Use your right hand to gently pull the chair out from under the table. Ensure you pull it back just enough to allow yourself to sit comfortably without the need to adjust its position by scooting the chair multiple times. Aim for a smooth and graceful motion to take your seat at the table.
2. **Sitting with Good Posture.** Sit up straight with your shoulders rolled back so you don't slouch. Ensure that your back is aligned with the back of the chair to provide support and as a reminder to maintain an upright position throughout the meal.
3. **Unfolding Your Napkin.** Once seated, gently remove the napkin from the table. Discreetly unfold it beneath the table and then fold it in half, ensuring the fold faces your waist before placing it on your lap. During the meal, use a corner of the napkin to gently dab your mouth. Then, neatly place the napkin back on your lap.
4. **Knowing Your Place Setting.** Below is the layout you will typically see at a fine-dining restaurant. With the utensils, work your way from the outside in. Even if you do not eat a salad or a soup, be careful not to use the salad fork for your entrée or your soup spoon for dessert. Your water glass should always be placed to the top right of your dinner plate, and your bread plate should always sit to the top left. After completing a course, indicate that you are finished by positioning the fork and the knife side by side on the right side of your plate, with the fork on the left with tines facing up. Imagine your plate as the face of a clock, with the handles of both utensils pointing toward four o'clock and the tips pointing toward ten o'clock, showing a time of 10:20.



5. **Beginning with Bread and Butter.** Break off only one small piece of bread at a time, using only enough butter for one bite at a time, and butter the bread over the bread plate. After buttering, place the butter knife on the top edge of the bread plate with the blade facing yourself.
6. **Cutting Your Food.** With your palms facing up, grasp the knife in your dominant hand and the fork in your other hand. Position the fork (tines down) to hold the food in place on the plate, and use the knife to gently apply downward pressure to cut your food. Ensure that both utensils are angled slightly downward toward the plate for efficient cutting. Never scrape the plate with your utensils. Using your index fingers to control the utensils, cut your food. Then place the knife at the top of the dinner plate with the blade facing toward you when you are finished cutting.



7. **Eating Your Meal.** After cutting your food, switch the fork into your dominant hand and place the knife on the edge of your plate with the blade facing inward. Place your empty hand in your lap. Then, hold your fork like a pencil, placing your index finger on the back of the fork's neck. Take small bites, chewing your food thoroughly, and swallow before taking another bite.
8. **Taking a Drink.** Place your fork on your plate, opposite side of your knife with the tines facing up. Then wipe the corners of your mouth with your napkin. Refold and replace the napkin on your lap. Finally, pick up your beverage with your dominant hand and take a sip, leaving the empty hand in your lap.
9. **Using the Restroom.** If you need to excuse yourself from the table to use the restroom, place your fork on your plate, opposite side of your knife with the tines facing up. Wipe the corners of your mouth with the napkin. Then, fold it neatly and place it to the left of your plate. This signals to the waitstaff that you are not done with your meal. Then quietly leave the table and return in the same manner as you initially sat down.
10. **Tipping.** Currently, a standard tip is 15 to 18 percent of the cost of the meal, but if the service is unsatisfactory, you can tip lower than 15 percent. I typically tip 20 percent at fine-dining restaurants.
11. **Exiting the Table.** After your meal, gently slide your chair backward with one smooth motion. Stand up and then step to the left side of

your chair. Using your right hand, guide the chair back under the table with a single push, without the need for further adjustments.

A comprehensive man understands the art of dining in any environment, whether he's sharing pizza with friends, enjoying a first dinner date with the woman of his dreams, or negotiating a multimillion-dollar business deal at a prestigious five-star restaurant. Adaptability is key to embodying any role at a moment's notice, and achieving this requires preparation. Don't be too harsh on yourself for what you don't know. However, once you recognize the need for change, failing to act and implement a plan can lead to missed opportunities, stalled relationships, and diminished credibility.

THE GENTLE MAN

I was ordering food at my favorite Middle Eastern restaurant when one of my longtime friends walked in. I hadn't seen her in a while—we hugged and immediately began updating each other on our lives. She mentioned that she loved her new job but felt the need to assert herself when dealing with men. Curious, I asked, "What do you mean?"

"Well, when I shake their hands," she explained, "I give a really firm handshake."

When I asked her to shake my hand, she confidently extended hers and squeezed mine like a champion arm wrestler. I then shared some advice: "Listen, never let an environment compromise who you are. First of all, no man should ever shake your hand like he's shaking a man's hand. Secondly, I want you to start shaking men's hands as if you were an African queen—placing your hand on top when a man reaches out to shake it. When you observe the queens of Africa," I continued, "or any country for that matter, you'll notice that they shake men's hands with theirs on top. This gesture signifies their position in society and authority. When you shake a man's hand as a man would, you inadvertently lessen your uniqueness."

I emphasized that women should be treated as priceless fine china, while men can be likened to a rugged cast-iron pan. I encouraged her to take control of these greetings and ensure that men respect her in that way. She agreed to give it a try.

A gentleman never employs a firm handshake with a woman as he would with another man. Such behavior typically reflects either insecurity or chauvinism. Allowing a woman's hand to rest on top during a handshake is a symbolic gesture of respect for her vital role and responsibilities in the community, society, or the world as a whole. Women should never feel intimidated by our presence—instead, they should feel safe and valued.

It's crucial to understand that the need for gentlemen in this world isn't about women lacking strength. Comprehensive men already recognize the multitude of adversities women have overcome to reach where they are today. But, as a gentleman, when I shake a woman's hand, I make sure my hand is underneath or gentle if she prefers the traditional business handshake. In doing so, I aim to convey my respect for her uniqueness and capabilities.

THE WRONG ARMOR FOR THE FIGHT

At the Cave of Adullam, we place great emphasis on the concept of dressing for success. During our professional development trips or activity outings, none of our students are allowed to wear Crocs, slides, or any type of slipper-like shoes. This protocol also extends to the do-rag, a headwear item typically worn by men to manage their hair. In the 1980s, it was uncommon for a man to be seen in public wearing a do-rag because it was intended for home use only. However, in the late 1990s, do-rags became a fashion statement. Nevertheless, in the Cave of Adullam, we still emphasize that they should be worn strictly at home, as they were originally intended.

We firmly believe in the old adage "How you dress determines how you'll be addressed." This principle extends not only to personal style but also to professional attire. Our appearance often serves as the initial basis for judgment, leading to many deserving men being unfairly misjudged. This can result in missed opportunities that could have otherwise transformed the course of their lives and improved their financial circumstances.

Regrettably, some men appear content to lose out on opportunities, opting to remain mentally entrenched in perpetual adolescence—often reflected in their choice of clothing that doesn't align with their age.

Sagging pants, ashy hands, dirty nails, do-rags in public, unpolished shoes, and untucked shirts can all influence the impressions we make.

Years ago, when I owned and operated a successful tile and marble business, the growth became stagnant until I learned a valuable lesson about the importance of presenting oneself through professional clothing. One afternoon, I visited a father figure of mine—a highly successful businessman. I entered his office wearing my company-embroidered-logo polo shirt, which was casually hanging out over my belt. He paused from his work and asked, “Why isn’t your shirt tucked in?”

“I shouldn’t have to tuck in my shirt,” I responded. “I’m just being myself.” His years of wisdom restrained his response as he continued working.

An hour later, I drove to submit an estimate for a high-end marble job in one of Michigan’s wealthiest communities—which I never seemed to get. As I stepped out of my work van, I glanced down at my shirt and, for the first time, decided to tuck it in. My professionalism and proposal remained excellent as always, but this time my appearance reflected that same standard. I secured the job.

When I returned to the general contractor’s office to collect the deposit to start the project, I inquired about how much lower my proposal was compared to the other tile companies. He replied, “It wasn’t your price that secured this job; it was your presentation.” I was perplexed because all my presentations were consistently good. I inquired further, asking what made my presentation stand out. He explained, “Your shirt was tucked in, and your hat was turned to the front.” I nodded, as if that had always been my practice, but I later admitted to my father figure that he was right.

From that day forward I began to outsell competitors with decades more experience. While other tile contractors displayed a disregard for personal grooming and proudly wearing torn jeans and T-shirts sprinkled with thin-set mortar, I invested in new work clothes twice a year. I reserved a separate pair of clean boots and set of tools solely for estimates, ensuring I never brought debris into a potential client’s home. I had a separate set of working attire for the actual tile installation.

This lesson was reinforced after one of the Cave of Adullam’s videos went viral and I found myself thrust into the spotlight. I requested a dinner meeting with a respected business coach, during which I sought advice on how to maximize this opportunity to secure the financial resources needed

to serve the boys in the Cave of Adullam. He candidly advised that I needed to upgrade my wardrobe to reflect my current position in the nonprofit business sector and in life.

Although I grasped the concept of what I was being advised to do, I still hadn't fully internalized it. At the time, I dressed like a youth worker providing direct services to kids in our programs, but now Yah had moved me into circles with CEOs of charitable organizations and philanthropists who were passionate about funding programs that empowered youth. Knowing of my deep passion for martial arts, the coach wisely remarked, "You're wearing the wrong armor for the fight." That struck a chord with me.

I promptly revamped my attire—or should I say, battle array—to be better suited for garnering financial support for the young men I cared so deeply about. Simply transitioning from oversized shirts, jeans, and sneakers to tailored suits, blazers, slacks, and quality business footwear allowed me to access influential financial circles and secure funding for our nonprofit.

I made the choice to upgrade my wardrobe, and the results have been transformative. I've experienced significant victories, and I wholeheartedly encourage you to do the same. The comprehensive man knows that dressing for success, and becoming a gentleman in every aspect of life, can open doors you never imagined.

TAKE ACTION

ACTIVITY #1: PRACTICE THE FINE ART OF DINING IN PUBLIC

Invite your family, friends, or parents to a restaurant that's a step above your usual choice. If you typically dine at a fast-food spot, try a family-style restaurant instead. Encourage yourself to break out of routine and create new memories in places that inspire growth and deeper connection. Make sure you focus on the following points of etiquette while you are dining:

- Avoid wearing jogging suits or sneakers.
- Put away your phone.
- Refrain from taking a picture of the food.
- Pay attention to your posture.
- Keep your napkin in your lap.

- Pass items to the right.
- Tip the server generously (if service is excellent).

When you leave the restaurant, observe how you feel. How did you make your guests feel? What did you do well? How could you improve?

ACTIVITY #2: REVIVE CHIVALRY

Contrary to popular belief, chivalry isn't dead. However, it calls for comprehensive men to embrace it again, breathing new life into this essential code of respect and honor that our world so desperately needs.

- Make chivalry a daily practice—like holding doors open for everyone, with special attention to the elderly, or courteously opening the car door for the women in your life.
- Always temper your strength with gentleness when shaking a woman's hand—hold it with care and equality, as a gesture of deep respect and acknowledgment of her worth.
- When you have the opportunity, verbally recognize the resilience and achievements of the women in your life.
- Remove your hat, baseball cap, or hoodie as you enter a building.
- Wisely act on opportunities to stand up for the honor of others, ensuring your actions are not driven by ego.
- Diligently cultivate an environment where your presence is a source of protection, making women feel safe and valued.

ACTIVITY #3: MIRROR TIME

Take out your mirror and silently gaze into the eyes of the man reflected in it. Don't look away for sixty seconds. Then, affirm that man with the following statements:

- I am not an alpha male—I am a comprehensive man.
- I will practice chivalry in the lives of the women I love and encounter.
- I am worth the effort it takes to look good.
- I am smart and capable enough to master the rules needed to impressively and successfully participate in any social function.

CHAPTER 9

THE FRIEND

The Friend loves at all times and is steadfast in the face of adversity—willing to lay down his life for his companions.

I have many friends, but there's only one person my wife would call if my life were in danger: Gabriel Green. I've known Gabe since middle school. We've shared a bond forged through situations that required us to risk our lives for each other.

The first incident unfolded when Gabe found himself in a heated altercation with someone from his neighborhood and a fight ensued. My friends and I stood by to ensure no one from the other crew jumped into the fight. Gabe had decisively won. Both sides conceded and the fight was over. Gabe walked home, and my friends and I got into my car and started our drive back to our neighborhood.

Unfortunately, the confrontation wasn't over. The guy Gabe beat and his friends managed to track down my car. As they pulled up beside me, it was clear they weren't waving the white flag. The three men inside wanted us to pull over. My friends and I were ready for round two, so we did. That's when things took a sinister turn—they had guns.

A guy from the other group slid into the back seat of my car, pressed a gun to my head, and demanded that I drive him to Gabe's house. There was no way I would do that; I cared too much about Gabe and his family. I strategically stalled him for a couple of minutes. With both of my hands above the steering wheel, keeping my eye on him via the rearview mirror, I said, "Sorry, but I can't take you there." That's when he exited the vehicle with the gun to converse with his friends, as if they had another option to

get me to comply. I was scared, but I put that aside, thinking about what could happen if I complied and led them to Gabe's house. As soon as he exited the vehicle, I seized the opportunity and sped away—but not before a single gunshot rang out, shattering the back window.

The second life-threatening event happened when my brother, Keith, disappeared. I was the last person to speak with him, and it had been only days since that conversation. We presumed that he had been kidnapped because he was, unfortunately, deeply entrenched in the drug game. Keith had often warned me that if he ever went missing, I shouldn't attempt to find him because those responsible for his abduction were likely intent on taking his life. While I held great respect for his words, my love for him outweighed my ability to follow that advice.

So when Keith didn't return home, I knew in my heart something was wrong. I called Gabe. He joined me in the search for Keith without asking any questions. While we drove through the east side of Detroit, a Ford Probe resembling one belonging to Keith's fiancée caught our attention, prompting us to pull over. Suddenly, several men emerged from the liftback coupe. Gabriel and I wasted no time exiting our cars because my pistol grip shotgun was in my trunk. Gabe took the lead, providing a cover while I hurried to retrieve it.

However, as I walked back to my car, I heard a familiar voice call out, "Jason!" It was my cousin. These guys were, as it turned out, also searching for my brother. We continued looking for Keith but didn't find him that night. He was later found to have been tortured and murdered. Gabe was right there when I received the devastating news, and he continued to support me at the funeral.

Today, while Gabe and I may not spend as much time together or talk as frequently as we once did, we have an unspoken understanding that we'll always be there for each other.

Do you have friends like this in your circle? Do you strive to be this kind of friend to other men? These friends resemble priceless gems, their brilliance shining even in the darkest moments of our lives. They are the ones who stand steadfast by our side, unwavering in their support and loyalty. These friendships are the true treasures of life, a testament to the profound depth and unwavering strength of the human bond.

And they don't happen by accident.

One of the most significant obstacles preventing men from breaking free from emotional incarceration and evolving into comprehensive men is the inclination to suffer alone in silence. This suffering persists because men often believe nobody cares—and even more critically, nobody truly comprehends their plight. This falsehood has waged an internal war within the minds of countless men, but there is a remedy that ultimately eradicates external conflicts as well as internal ones: *friendship*.

Humans are inherently social beings, yet regrettably, reports suggest the United States is currently grappling with a “friendship recession.”¹ As it turns out, men are disproportionately affected. According to the American Enterprise Institute’s May 2021 American Perspectives Survey, a staggering 15 percent of men acknowledge that they do not have a single close friend.² Additionally, the survey revealed men are less likely than women to receive essential emotional support from their friends.³ It’s also reported that loneliness negatively impacts our immune systems, leading to conditions such as cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and premature death.⁴

Numerous factors are suspected of contributing to this decline in friendships, with social isolation emerging as the primary culprit. But no matter the reason, the importance of nurturing meaningful connections with others is unquestionable. In the presence of companions, our overall well-being truly flourishes.

DEFINING “FRIEND”

I firmly believe friends serve as the anchors to the ship of comprehensive manhood. When life’s currents come crashing—from stress, abuse, job loss, or addiction—these anchors can prevent us from drifting out to sea. However, we must first be willing to be anchored during traumatic times. Trials and tribulations serve as tidal waves, threatening to capsize our lives. During these challenging moments, we can truly gauge the depth of our friendships and value the unwavering support of our true companions.

I used to strongly advocate for a man to have an accountability partner, but after witnessing so many men’s accountability groups fail, I stopped participating in them. After all, no one can be with another person twenty-four hours a day, and no human can fully comprehend the thoughts and

intentions of another. The only One who can truly hold us accountable is the Spirit of the Most High, the Holy Spirit. It is written that He is with us, and He will never abandon or forsake us. He knows the deepest thoughts of mankind, searches our hearts, and convicts us (Rom. 8:27).

But let's set aside spirituality for a moment and focus on the natural. Every man understands that no one can truly hold another accountable. If a married man is wrestling with lust for another woman, will his accountability partner quit his job to shadow him throughout the day? Of course not. If a man is struggling with a porn addiction that's wreaking havoc on his life, will his accountability partner stay with him every night to prevent his friend from masturbating to porn? Probably not.

This brings us to the crux of the matter: We need to know what a friend is and how to operate as one. The idea that there are good or bad friends is fundamentally misleading. You're either a friend or a foe.

The dictionary's definition of the word is clear: "A person who is on good terms with another; a person who is not hostile."⁵

We must create safe spaces where we can be transparent with our friends and develop healthy practices for releasing our emotions. As we grow older, our circle of friends doesn't necessarily shrink; instead, it reveals those who are truly there to listen and support us through life's challenges.

Use this acronym to help you remember the characteristics of a FRIEND:

- **Fortitude** represents the strength, courage, and resilience that a friend exhibits during challenging times.
- **Righteousness** embodies morality (for me, biblical values) and demonstrates these qualities in the context of friendship.
- **Integrity** solidifies the friendship when someone keeps their word and upholds their commitments, whether their friend is present or not.
- **Empathy** fosters trust and transparency—deepening the bond between friends.
- **Nobility** in friendship promotes stability through fair and mature conflict resolution—making it easier to resolve differences.
- **Dependability** establishes trust, reliability, and commitment in a friendship.

THE “TOXIC” LABEL

In recent years, the term *toxic* has gained popularity as a way to describe negative behaviors and attitudes in various contexts, such as toxic relationships, work environments, or friendships. As a result, people who aren't consistently happy or exuding positive energy are quickly pushed to the outskirts of friendship circles. This lack of sacrificial love, paired with strong self-centered desires, even extends to eldercare—or more accurately, the abandonment of the elderly in this country.

Having lived six years as the son of a parent with dementia, I've spoken to numerous people who were in my position but who rarely visited their parents. I discovered that it's not that they don't love their parents; it's just too difficult for them to witness their decline.

I understand. When my mother first started struggling with dementia, her paranoia and mean-spiritedness began to have a negative impact not only on my own well-being but also on my family's. The emotions are complex for sure, but I'm somewhat ashamed to admit that I eventually prayed for Yah to take my mother's life because I felt that she was no longer living, just suffering. Yah showed me my prayer wasn't for my mother but for me. I wasn't truly loving my mother, because I was unwilling to sacrifice the comforts of my life for her.

As I journeyed with my mom through the valley of dementia, I learned that sacrifice is not necessarily doing what you want to do to help someone; it's doing what needs to be done even when you don't want to. There were countless times when I had to step away from family dinners, miss special programs celebrating my children's achievements, leave martial arts classes, or end work early to attend to my beloved mother.

Today, many might quickly label my mother's situation as toxic, urging me to set “healthy” boundaries. During the years my mother battled dementia, the term *toxic* wasn't widely used, yet it seemed to exist as friends and loved ones drifted away. It was always heartrending to hear my mother lament, “Dementia isn't contagious.”

While I believe in the importance of boundaries as a biblical concept, I've always been troubled by the term *toxic* because it often places blame on the person rather than examining the cause and effect of their actions. When the word *toxic* is used to describe people, it can lead to society casting away individuals who maybe have simply needed a friend to

support them. The key here is *friend*. When you're struggling mentally, it's important not to reach out for support from people you may have offended or haven't spoken to in years. They will understandably lack the capacity to help you. Instead, always reach out to friends who are readily available on a daily basis and who love you for who you are. These friends won't shy away from you; they'll offer the love and support you need, patiently helping you navigate your mental state and overcome any challenges you may be facing.

Consider Eeyore from the iconic Winnie-the-Pooh stories. Despite Eeyore's perpetual state of sadness, his friends never turn their backs on him. To them, he's not toxic; he's simply himself. They never exclude him during their joyous gatherings, nor do they expect him to smile or laugh on their adventures. They love him just as he is, and their bond stays strong. Because they are his friends, their friendship endures the test of time.

As a grown man, I've often found myself in the Eeyore role because of my extensive trauma and numerous losses. But unlike Eeyore's friends who embrace him with unwavering empathy, my emotionally heavy calls to loved ones often feel like an intrusion, as if my transparency disrupts their peace. In those moments, I feel like a thorn in everyone's side. Fueled by a deep desire to never be anyone's burden, I drove two hours north to meet with a psychiatrist, seeking a prescription that might fade the scars of my traumatic past and numb the pain of my present struggles. I called it the *happy pill*, believing it could be my escape from a world where I felt forced to live as a stoic.

I walked out of the psychiatrist's office with a prescription in hand but a heavy conviction in my heart. Deep down I knew I hadn't exhausted all the possibilities within my power, nor fully embraced Yah's grace to renew my mind. As I drove back to Detroit, I pondered how I had reached this place mentally. I was on the brink of surrender, losing sight of the fact that perseverance is not developed in easy escapes but in facing life's battles head-on. Yah never promised an easy life for His servants; that's why He sent the Comforter (John 14:16). So I discarded the antidepressant and resolved to keep fighting, this time alongside the few friends who would be there for me, as I was for them.

I yearned for the type of camaraderie that inspired the warrior David to leave the refuge of the cave of Adullam and claim his crown as king of Israel. History tells us that around four hundred men—distressed,

discontent, and in debt—gathered to him (1 Sam. 22). They came together not to judge but to uplift each other. And from that place of shared pain and purpose, those “toxic” men emerged as mighty men of valor. When friends unite in their struggles, they don’t just survive—they elevate each other to greatness.

Imagine if the most compassionate man who ever walked the earth, Yahushua, had taught His disciples that anyone coming to Him with mental illness, sickness, physical ailments, or demon possession was toxic. Where would we all be today? I can say with certainty that I would have been condemned. I once epitomized what some would label as toxic, displaying behavior that frequently caused emotional distress, frustration, or tension for others, especially my family in the early years of my marriage.

As a young dad, my father wounds often festered and held me back from being the father my daughter deserved. Witnessing my mother’s mental struggle after the lynching of her father, the abuse from her first husband, and the death of her son would often leave me in a state of pessimism. I could delve deeper into my mental and emotional struggles, but in short, I’m grateful that Yahushua didn’t cast me aside as toxic the way many might today.

The remarkable thing is that Yahushua continues to be there for me, no matter how many times I lose faith, struggle mentally, and stray like a sheep from its shepherd. Regardless of one’s faith or religion, we can all agree that Yahushua is the ultimate friend we should aspire to be for others. Even Gandhi, a Hindu, once said, “I like your Christ. I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ.”⁶

Do you see it now? The word *friend* doesn’t require adjectives like *true* or *good*; it is either authentic friendship or it isn’t. What truly matters is that a person embodies its profound essence, transcending labels like *toxic* to become a wellspring of strength for those in need. Friends do not let fleeting societal terms dictate how we show up for one another.

FINDING YOUR TOW TRUCK

During my younger years in Detroit, being friendly often meant getting labeled fragile, naïve, or easy prey. Yet those of us who wore hard exteriors, always projecting toughness, often wondered why we felt so alone in a

crowd. But developing a friendship is never easy, and keeping it alive is even harder. The losses I've suffered throughout my life have taught me that we must navigate a sea of emotions and insecurities and confront our own trauma if we want to have meaningful friendships.

Darryl "Big D" Jackson and I were close friends. We never once argued during our fifteen-year friendship. He was beloved by many, particularly at Powerhouse Gym in Highland Park, Michigan. Darryl was akin to a cyborg when it came to weightlifting. His chiseled, 240-pound physique served as irrefutable proof of his unwavering dedication to fitness.

Unbeknownst to me and the many other men who dearly loved Darryl, beneath his superhero-like physique lay a preexisting heart condition. On top of that, Darryl was experiencing overwhelming stress at the time, making a heart attack imminent. He disappeared for a week after being unjustly fired from his engineering job, marking the first time my best friend had ever distanced himself from me. My initial concern gradually turned into anger because I cherished him like a big brother.

But I was certain of one thing: He wouldn't stay away from the gym for too long. So I waited in the parking lot until he arrived, followed him inside, and confronted him with love. As soon as I began speaking, however, I noticed the hope that had once inspired everyone in the gym had vanished from Darryl's eyes. At this moment, I stopped talking and placed my hand on his shoulder. Looking back, I wish I had been a comprehensive man back then because I would have embraced my best friend—he truly needed it.

Then I noticed a bruise on Darryl's face and asked him what had happened. He shared that he had passed out while walking earlier in the week. I assumed he had simply fainted from the stress but pleaded with him to go see a doctor. He told me he had, but I later would come to doubt it.

Not long after our conversation, on a sunny Saturday afternoon, we all gathered at our friend Vic's house to celebrate his wife's birthday. Darryl and I laughed like never before, to the point that my friend from Pittsburgh remarked, "Wow, you two must really love each other." Two days later, while I was at home, I received an urgent call from Vic. Darryl had passed out on the floor. At first I was like, "Okay, wake him up!" Although Vic was trained in CPR, he couldn't revive our friend. I jumped in the car and sped off to meet them.

Nicole called while I was driving to Vic and Darryl. I didn't become fearful that I'd lose my best friend until I heard Nicole choke up when I shared that Darryl had been out for almost five minutes. Before becoming the Yunion's executive director, Nicole served as a registered nurse for the American Red Cross where she was trained to maintain her composure, especially in critical moments. Even with all her training, the weight of this moment was too great to conceal. Her usual calm gave way to a tremor in her voice, revealing the depth of her worry. In that instant I knew my best friend was in trouble. She informed me the ambulance had already taken him, urging me to meet them at the emergency room.

I changed direction and raced to the hospital. I arrived just in time to see the EMT rush Darryl inside. After a tense ten-minute wait, the doctor informed us Darryl had passed away.

I was given permission to walk back and view his body. Gazing at Darryl felt like the scene from *The Matrix* when Morpheus stoically stares at Neo after he dies from being shot. It's profound how our lives can take such drastic turns in just forty-eight hours. That last celebration only two days prior became even more poignant, almost as if the Most High knew what lay ahead and granted me a "last supper" with Darryl.

From that day on, my life looked different when it came to friendship. I was hesitant to get close to anyone again, fearing the grief I had felt when I lost Darryl. But deep down, I knew I needed a close friend. A few months later, I met Dale. Although it took years for my heart to drop its guard, Dale and I became close. We trained together in kempo, hapkido, and aikibujutsu. Ironically, now I affectionately call him "D," just as I did with Darryl. It was challenging at first, but I allowed myself to be a friend to Dale and accept his friendship in return.

Now, I ask you: Are you apprehensive about forming new friendships? Are you in need of a different type of friend in this phase of your life? Do you desire someone you can call on—someone who may not have lived your exact experiences but is willing to listen to your problems, whether new or old, and offer advice without judging you?

I've endured significant trauma and profound losses. I've been told the weight I carry can overwhelm those who haven't experienced similar hardships. Consequently, I don't confide in many people. Numerous times in the past, I reached out to male friends, seeking solace and the chance to pour my heart out, only to hear them kindly express their inability to relate.

Each time, I was left feeling somewhat flawed, although I knew that wasn't the intention. Did that make those friends bad people? No, it meant they may not have been the right people for me to confide in when life became burdensome.

I've often pondered, *What tows a tow truck when it breaks down?* The answer came to me one day while driving on the freeway. I saw a tow truck being hauled by a semi-tow truck twice its size. In that moment, I realized that when I'm mentally broken down on the road of life, I need to lean on Yah and men who have experienced even more than I have.

A comprehensive man doesn't take it personally when those he considers friends don't have the patience to listen to his heart or provide wise counsel. In times like those, he must lean on friends who have had similar experiences because they understand. The phenomenon is similar to Alcoholics Anonymous, where the group leader is typically a recovering alcoholic. Thanks to that person's own experiences, he or she possesses the enduring empathy needed to patiently listen to others unburdening themselves.

So, I have friends for every situation. I have those I call on when I need spiritual guidance. I have others I turn to when grappling with physical pain or injury setbacks from years of martial arts training. Then there are those I reach out to when facing marital discord with my wife. Finally, there are those I confide in when my past traumas resurface. I've always wanted to make sure I'm never the friend whose call gets sent to voicemail. Enlist the right soldier for the battle, and you won't be left alone when the fighting gets intense.

FRIENDS AND FRENEMIES

As you travel through life, you'll meet people who fit different types of needs. While you may connect with them on many levels, they may not be authentic FRIENDS, and that's okay—as long as you know who you can call when your back is against the wall.

The comprehensive man knows friends are the ones who stand by us when the world seems to crumble. They act as a steady rudder guiding us through the roughest waters. They serve as a lighthouse in the darkest storms. When life's challenges weigh heavily on our shoulders, friends step

forward and offer their unwavering support. “A friend loves at all times” (Prov. 17:17). Friends don’t abandon us in the face of adversity; they stand back-to-back with us, helping us fight and emerge victorious.

Friends wholeheartedly celebrate our success, while disingenuous people will struggle to acknowledge our achievements, unless they stand to benefit. If we’re not vigilant, these individuals will use our bricks to build their homes. Then, when we need shelter, they’ll brazenly ask what happened to our bricks.

Yahushua said, “You’re either with Me or against Me” (Matt. 12:30, paraphrased). Therefore, a comprehensive man must learn the difference between a friend and a negative influence, because bad company corrupts good character (1 Cor. 15:33).

Beware of a frenemy—a person who poses as your friend but is really your enemy. It’s imperative for comprehensive men to be discerning in choosing companions, recognizing that some may not have our best interests at heart. We should identify and steer clear of those duplicitous relationships. Just as a snake camouflages itself to strike unsuspecting prey, some individuals may conceal their true intentions. Be vigilant for the signs and establish healthy boundaries to protect the integrity of your circle of friends.

The adage “actions speak louder than words” is particularly true in terms of friendship, especially when it comes to their absence. A person’s absence during moments of need speaks volumes about the strength of the friendship. Professing friendship is easy, but demonstrating it through consistent deeds and genuine care is the true test of legitimacy. Trust shouldn’t be freely given; it must be earned through actions that align with one’s words.

I learned this lesson quickly when I surrendered my life to Yahushua. Being a new believer, I assumed everyone who professed to be a Christian was a friend. Man, was I wrong. The “fellowship fakeness” discouraged me from seeking new friendships in the church.

When we surround ourselves with people who pretend to be someone they’re not, we too are compelled to don masks and hide our true selves. But when I started testing the authenticity of people’s words to guide our interactions, I avoided fakeness and found friendships that, to this day, are built on mutual trust, respect, and values. These brotherhood bonds, in turn, bring glory to Christ by exemplifying the enduring love and sacrifice

associated with being called a friend. Friends, not phonies, allow us to be our true selves, fostering an environment where we can flourish and grow without fear of judgment.

Confiding in a friend, someone you value enough to patiently and mutually share concerns, will not only help sharpen your communication skills but also reinforce the significance of reciprocity in the bonds of brotherhood. You're not alone in facing life's challenges.

When you find friends, invest time in nurturing those relationships. Keep communication reciprocal by practicing restraint and attentiveness when it is your turn to listen (James 1:19).

Finding and being the Friend takes work. But friendship is both essential and worth it.

TAKE ACTION

ACTIVITY #1: DETERMINE THE FRIEND YOU NEED

As we grow, our friendships naturally evolve—some becoming stronger and others fading away. And that's okay as long as you remain aware of these changes. Take out your journal and write down your answers to the following questions:

- What kind of friend do I need at this point in my life?
- Is one of my existing friendships meeting this need?
- If not, where can I find this kind of friend? To whom can I be this kind of friend?

ACTIVITY #2: LOSE THE TOXIC LABEL

Remember, there's a cause and effect for every behavior. Do you truly understand *why* someone is behaving in a negative way? Before labeling them as toxic, seek to understand their story.

Reflect on the people in your life you've categorized as toxic. Ask yourself: *Is this person really dangerous to my mental health, family, or life?*

If being around them is detrimental, consider how you could help from a distance, like paying for therapy or suggesting other resources.

ACTIVITY #3: MIRROR TIME

Take out your mirror and silently gaze into the eyes of the man reflected in it. Don't look away for sixty seconds. Then, affirm that man with the following statements:

- I will strive to be the epitome of a friend.

- I will not allow past bad relationships to prevent me from developing new healthy ones.
- I will never assume someone is my friend just because they need me.
- I will not label people as toxic and will have empathy toward their struggles but protect my own well-being.
- I will accept that as I get older, my circle of friends may get smaller but increase in value.

PART 3

THE DEVOTION CHARACTERISTICS

Focus on Your Closest Relationships

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CHAPTER 10

THE HUSBAND

The Husband emulates Christ's love by sacrificially giving of himself for his wife's well-being, treating her as he would like to be honored.

One day while working out at the gym, a younger married man recognized me from my social media videos and greeted me with a handshake. He sincerely asked, "Why is marriage so hard?"

I could tell from his build that he took weight training seriously. So I asked, "Is weight training hard?"

"Yes," he replied with a nod.

"But you don't think about quitting, do you?" I replied. "You knew from the start that the gains you seek would demand hard work."

We smiled as he made the connection. I shared what my wife and I call marriage: *the beautiful struggle*. I encouraged him to shift his perspective. "Think of marriage as the most desired amount of weight you'd like to lift in the gym—it will challenge you the most, yet promises you the greatest growth. When it feels too heavy, rack the weight but keep your hands on the bar—that's commitment. Wait a moment until you regain energy, then lift it again with renewed determination. Eventually, you'll come to love the results of that hard work to develop your marriage, just like you do your muscles."

He thanked me before we went our separate ways.

One of the deepest relationships we can have on this earth is marriage, but by its very nature it can also be one of the most challenging. Marriage, once a perfect union, became a challenge when sin entered the initial covenant between man and woman and Yah.

When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden, they were both punished. However, Adam's punishment wouldn't cause conflict in their relationship (Gen. 3:17–19); it was the punishment of Eve that laid the groundwork for the challenges marriages would thereafter encounter (I touched on this in [chapter 5](#)): “And you [Eve] will desire to control your husband [Adam], but he will rule over you” (Gen. 3:16 NLT).

The comprehensive man knows there will be hard times that may make him want to divorce his wife and take the weights of marriage off his mental barbell. However, these are the times when he needs to temporarily rack the weight, keep his hand on the bar (staying committed), and lean into Yah until he regains the strength to push through another set.

MISLEADING MARRIAGE MANTRAS

Have you ever considered all the negative sayings associated with marriage? I suggest misleading mantras are at the root of many divorces. Consider some of the most common—and problematic—mantras associated with marriage:

- **Happy Wife, Happy Life:** This saying perpetuates the idea that a wife's happiness is key to a happy life and satisfaction in marriage. There's nothing wrong with a good man desiring to make his wife happy, but when the relationship is built on that premise, no one in it will truly be happy.
- **Better Half:** When people refer to a wife as the better half, what message is conveyed to the husband? The sentiment may be innocent, but its psychological effects subconsciously condemn good husbands. When we are married, two halves become one. It is written, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue”; therefore, we must be wise regarding the words we use (Prov. 18:21 NASB).
- **Honey Do List:** Once again, this saying sends the message that a husband's worth is found in what he does. It also encapsulates the “joke” that the list is never done—it seems there's always something. When the relationship is defined by never-ending performance, someone is sure to be disappointed because all of us fall short as part of being human.

While these mantras are intended as lighthearted jokes about marriage, they perpetuate harmful stereotypes—seemingly implying that the responsibility for a happy marriage rests solely on the husband. I vividly recall seeking counsel from a pastor when I was frustrated that Nicole wasn't contributing to what I perceived as her share of household chores, specifically washing clothes weekly. The pastor's advice was simple: If I bought more underwear and T-shirts, I wouldn't have a reason to complain.

This advice fueled my frustration because it appeared that there was never any accountability placed on wives during counseling. I then asked, "What can Nicole do to avoid complaining when I'm too tired to repair things around the house or mow the lawn?"

He chuckled. "That's your responsibility too!" Regrettably, I clung to this belief for many years. Later, the pastor revealed that many clergy leaders opt to place all the responsibility on husbands because it's much easier than holding their wives accountable when they are wrong.

This one-sided approach to marriage counseling was also widespread in the Christian literary world. A notable example is the popular book from the early 2000s *The Love Dare*. I joined a group of men from my church to take this forty-day challenge aimed at strengthening marriages. While it was an honorable attempt, as the Bible commands husbands to love their wives, it's essential to recognize that the Bible also commands wives to submit to their husbands. I believe the results would have been more impactful and sustainable if there had been a companion book for wives titled *The Love Dare: The Submission Edition*.

While it's crucial for both partners in a marriage to respectfully express their needs and desires—because none of us are mind readers—it seems the "Honey Do List" is usually meant for husbands. Perhaps it's time for us men to have one for our wives too. I like to think of it as the "Honey Don't List":

- "Honey, don't ask for some of my food when I offered to buy you dinner and you declined."
- "Honey, don't wake me from my nap to do something that isn't urgent."
- "Honey, don't dismiss how I feel when I dare to be transparent with you."

- “Honey, don’t call me to bring dinner home until you’re 100 percent certain what you want to eat.”

My intent here is to be lighthearted about a serious challenge for men. I pray it carries a weighty message for you to break free from a performance-based life in your marriage. Trust me, consistently feeling obligated to meet expectations can breed resentment toward your wife and cultivate unresolved anger within you.

STAYING IN SHAPE

Often in marriage, we tend to get comfortable and let ourselves go physically, but it’s imperative for a good sex life that we do our best to stay in sexual shape. Being able to share this sacred union with your wife helps nurture your relationship and keep it strong. Do you recall my discussion of desire and discipline when explaining the characteristics of the Lover? In this case, the comprehensive man wants to inspire desire in his marriage through the discipline of self-maintenance by keeping his body and mind strong.

Remember, whether for better or worse, there’s always a cause and effect to our actions or lack thereof. Men, the truth is that unresolved issues from our past are the main reason why many of us struggle to truly love ourselves today. Unresolved trauma torments us and prohibits us from having the self-desire needed to improve physically, spiritually, mentally, and sexually. Along with working out and eating a healthy diet, having yearly physicals and preventative procedures, such as a prostate exam, are important for your sexual shape.

In my father’s later years, when he was diagnosed with prostate cancer, I drove him to his morning treatments throughout the week. During those car rides, he would express regrets about not taking better care of himself when he was younger. His battle with prostate cancer became a wake-up call for him, particularly concerning his most prized and often bragged-about possession—his penis.

In an article about sex and prostate disease, Harvard Medical School stated that “men who have benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), a noncancerous enlargement of the prostate, may also experience erectile

dysfunction and ejaculatory problems.”¹ One piece of advice my father gave me that I will never forget is this: Don’t wait until you need good health before you start maintaining it.

Staying in shape is not just about our physical health, though. A low sex drive is strongly correlated with mental stress. In a 2020 article published by Global News, wellness expert Kyle Buchanan stated, “Stress can increase the production of the hormone cortisol in the body, which can suppress our sex hormones, creating a lower libido.”² That same article referenced a BodyLogicMD study in which 51 percent of respondents reported “dead bedrooms” stemming from work stress. Taking time for a vacation or days off with your spouse can have amazing benefits. Whenever I am alone with Nicole on vacation, we have sex almost every night—and I’m in my early fifties.

I’ve asked several men their opinion, and they, too, agreed that they are more sexually active while on vacation than at home. It’s crucial to identify and remove the stress that shadows your life, wherever possible. Doing so will not only liberate your libido but also resurrect your bedroom.

GUARDING YOUR EYES

One day while I was lifting weights in the gym with my spiritual son and longtime assistant, Chris, I noticed something different. He wasn’t wearing his glasses. Knowing he could hardly see without them, I asked, “Why aren’t you wearing your glasses?”

Chris’s response caught me off guard: “It helps me keep from lusting,” Chris replied. Intrigued, I asked him to explain further. “Without my glasses, I can see only the blurred shapes of women, not details.” His commitment to guarding his eyes and heart deeply moved me. Research has shown that lust and sexual desire can indeed impact the functioning of the prefrontal cortex in the brain, which is responsible for higher-order cognitive functions such as decision-making, impulse control, and judgment.³

Chris’s actions, setting boundaries against lust, reminded me of a teaching from Yahushua: “But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your

right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell” (Matt. 5:28–29). Of course, our Messiah wasn’t advocating self-inflicted harm, but He emphasized the critical importance of taking radical measures to keep sin at bay. Even Job made a covenant with his eyes to keep from lusting (Job 31:1). It’s a powerful reminder that the struggle against such desires has been a part of man’s experience for ages, even in times when women were typically fully clothed regardless of the season.

In our modern age, we can find ourselves ensnared in a seemingly never-ending loop of lust via the internet. Social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok harness algorithms to perpetuate content they believe users will “love,” keeping us engaged and often, unknowingly, trapped in a cycle of consumption. But it’s the rise of AI (artificial intelligence) that takes this to another level, allowing men to create their ideal women for visual pleasure and even real-time conversation. I believe this technological term has gained a tandem meaning in this context—artificial intimacy. This blend of technology and temptation doesn’t just blur the line between reality and fantasy; it erases it, setting the stage for potentially destructive outcomes.

Although I had never clicked the “like” button on the pictures or videos of attractive women, this content continued to populate my newsfeed. It makes good marketing sense, given I’m a man, but I knew I had to find a way to create digital boundaries if I wanted to continue using social media. By selecting “not interested” on the images and videos of seductive women, I have been able to effectively guard my digital eyes on all my social media accounts. Now all I see are dogs, exotic animals, martial arts, watches, and vacation destinations.

I learned the importance of this simple preventative action after scrolling through TikTok in bed while Nicole was asleep. I had spent too much time on a video that featured a voluptuous woman walking down a runway, and Nicole suddenly woke up and was hurt by my lack of self-control. Now, you may say, “Mr. Wilson, you were just looking! And Mrs. Wilson has probably looked at physically fit men,” but all of that is irrelevant when one understands the deceptive and alluring power of sin. Our evil desires may initially appear innocent, but when those desires go unchecked, sin is allowed to grow, and when sin is fully grown, it will give

birth to death (James 1:15). So stop allowing the algorithm to control you; instead, make it work for the benefit of your mind, body, and spirit.

SEXUAL SELF-CONTROL

Sexual self-control is the power to control one's sexual desires and erotic emotions—especially in tempting situations. During my career installing marble and ceramic tiles, over 90 percent of my clients were women, both single and married. It wasn't uncommon for some to flirt or imply interest in more than just my tiling skills. Maintaining sexual self-control was imperative not only for preserving my marriage but also for upholding business boundaries.

Consider the time I was completing a bathroom remodel for a client—a single woman who didn't hesitate to show she had money to spend. As I finished the final touches, she made her intentions crystal clear. “I also need my kitchen and master bath remodeled, but I can't have you in my house if you're not interested in being more than just my tile guy,” she said with boldness.

My employees, driven by lust, proposed that they “step in” to keep the job going, eager to engage in intimate relations with the client. The \$35,000 paycheck would have been a significant benefit to my family. But I chose to walk away. Setting boundaries in business is essential, but for me, preserving my integrity was nonnegotiable, especially as a married man devoted to honoring Yah.

Men, let us not let momentary pleasure derail us from our true purpose. Remember this vital lesson, along with the wisdom of Chris, to remain vigilant in protecting your eyes (Prov. 30:17) and guarding your heart (Prov. 4:23). By doing so, you not only cultivate sexual self-control but also build a fortress around your personal integrity, safeguarding your marriage, family, and future. Let's commit to this path, not just as a defense against temptation but as a proactive step toward a life of honor and fulfillment.

THE SHIELD AND SUCCOR

The Hebrew word *ezer* means “helper”—used when Yah blessed Adam with a helper, Eve. Interestingly, *ezer* also means succor—the act of providing support, shelter, and protection amid hardship and distress. It’s the same word David employed when he cried to the Almighty, proclaiming Yah as his helper.

On the battlefield, the role of a warrior’s shield is fundamentally that of protection—it guards against arrows, spears, and sword strikes. A compelling illustration of succor is documented in 2 Samuel 21:15–17, where the warrior Abishai succored David from the giant Ishbi-Benob—a crucial intervention to avert potential defeat.

Yet how often do we as men fail to give our women the opportunity to display their strength, to support us when we’re weak, and to become that shield and buffer when we’re bombarded by toxic thoughts, insecurities, or job worries? This leads to us silently suffering and eventually turning to unhealthy outlets like alcohol, pornography, or drugs in search of a release. Let me warn you, just as one of my martial arts instructors, Kajana Cetshwayo, once warned me: “Strong men often avoid seeking help from their wives, but be wary. Pressure can burst pipes, and remember, you’re not made of metal. Learn from my mistakes, or it can catch up with you.”

In many ways, we’ve contributed to our own struggles by creating a patriarchy that strayed from the divine order initially established by Yah. What was once a blessing to both men and women became a system that restricted and burdened women alone. In the garden of Eden, Yah gave Eve the same freedom and rules as Adam.

As a man, I felt shame upon discovering that prior to the 1960s in the United States, women were denied the right to pursuits such as voting, owning property (if married), opening a bank account, serving as a judge or on a jury, obtaining a credit card, earning a law degree, and attending an Ivy League college.⁴

I believe the man-made patriarchy has subtly programmed us to carry all the weight and live performance-based lives. Rather than empowering the Eves in our lives to operate as the *ezers* they are, we continue to cling to a system that burdens us with stress and pressure. Despite being overwhelmed, many men still refuse to delegate simple tasks like bill paying to their wives, unwilling to alleviate any burden placed solely on themselves, by themselves. Men weren’t meant to do life alone (Gen. 2:18);

it's long overdue for us to embrace the support of the women in our lives so that we can truly start living.

EMBRACE THE BATTLES

Every man wants to be “strong,” but only a few dare to lift what's heavy. Years ago, instead of fighting for my marriage, I allowed my repressed emotions to take the fight out of me. This is what almost led to Nicole and me separating in 2015. But love prevailed. Though the path of marriage is difficult at times, we must fight to remain on it.

I'm deeply grateful Nicole and I chose to face our battles with wisdom and Yah's grace before they could escalate into irrevocable wars. Many couples sweep their issues under the rug for temporary peace instead of seeking counseling to help achieve a sustainable peace. I couldn't fathom having twenty-five years invested in a marriage only to find out that it was a mirage.

Do not be deceived: Every marriage has its challenges at times, so never envy anyone's relationship. Instead of allowing hard times to harden your heart, do the introspective work needed to reset, recover, and rediscover the love that brought you together.

It is written that the mouth speaks from out of the cares of the heart (Matt. 12:34). Unfortunately, many only hear the words and not the heart behind them. As author Shannon L. Alder said, “The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't being said.”⁵ Nicole and I learned the hard way that it's not how much we know that will save our marriage but rather how much of that knowledge we are willing to apply even when it's challenging to do so.

I want to share a powerful practice I've adopted that keeps my heart in the right place, especially when conflicts arise in my marriage. On my phone, I have a cherished photo of my wife from her childhood. It captures a time in her life when she grappled with lack of confidence, fear of losing control, and feelings of not being good enough. Whenever Nicole and I get into an argument or a disagreement—or sometimes even on days when there's no discord at all—I grab my phone and look at that photo. It's become my way of centering myself and softening my heart toward my wife. This picture prompts me to reflect and ask, *Am I doing enough to help*

mend the wounds of that younger version of her? I often say that inside every man, there's a broken boy. Similarly, in every woman, we can recognize the presence of a wounded girl.

I believe when we are transparent about this aspect of our journey, our wives will feel safe enough to share their hearts about their childhood hurts. But if we do not increase our mind's and heart's capacity, we will never be able to take on our wives' cares. This is why it's essential that we release all that we've allowed to be poured into our mental cup throughout the day. By preparing our hearts and minds, we have room to receive what's burdening our wives and also pour into them the love and empathy they need to reset.

Ultimately, one of our goals in becoming comprehensive men should be to have the capacity to be a solid source of support for our women—those who've stood by us throughout. So often at award shows, you will see a man stand up and thank his wife or the woman in his life for always being there, supporting him when he didn't believe in himself, and being there for the family when he was working. My prayer is that we will see more women do the same—publicly acknowledge their husbands, not only for their role as providers but also for supporting them emotionally and mentally when they were on the verge of losing hope.

My brothers, as we embark on this journey of healing, let's remember our women—they, too, deserve a break from being strong all the time. Always take the time to affirm your wife and acknowledge her contributions.

COMMUNICATION IN CONFLICT

Avoiding heated discussions through text messaging is crucial, as emotions often get lost in this medium. Texts make it difficult to both convey the nuances of feelings and read the mood of the moment.

It was Thanksgiving night. After dinner with family, in-laws, cousins, and grandparents, I needed to resume writing this manuscript. I quietly informed Nicole, then said goodbye to everyone before leaving.

Before I could drive off, I received a short yet pointed text from Nicole: "Hey. You shouldn't have left without speaking to me."

Perplexed, I texted back, "What? I literally told you I was leaving."

Nicole response came swiftly, “I heard you say you were leaving to everyone. You didn’t come to say goodbye to me. You should have.”

“I came to you first,” I typed back.

“No, you didn’t, Jason.”

“Yes, I did, Nicole,” I insisted.

In that moment I had become very frustrated. In the thirty years we’d known each other, I had never left Nicole’s presence without saying goodbye. Yet, here we were, two people tangled in feelings not facts. Instead of acting like a mature married couple of twenty-five years, we let emotions guide us like teenagers in an argument.

In that heated moment texting with Nicole, I realized I should have chosen a more direct approach—a phone call to truly connect, to genuinely understand and express our feelings. My lack of emotional stability led to misunderstandings and unnecessary conflict.

To avoid these types of losses in relationships, I’ve adopted a principle from martial arts known as *Combat Communication*. This nonverbal language involved carefully analyzing an opponent’s strengths, weaknesses, and patterns during a fight to help a fighter respond to attacks strategically rather than impulsively.

Typically, I employ Combat Communication during disagreements with Nicole, but that Thanksgiving night revealed its ineffectiveness in text messaging, where being fully present is challenging. In times of disagreement or conflict, choosing a phone call over a text ensures clearer and more effective communication. It’s important to remember, even in apparent losses, the goal is to emerge stronger.

I am grateful Nicole and I can now resolve issues before the sun sets (Eph. 4:26). Reaching this level of understanding took over a decade and requires continuous commitment, humility, and willingness to grow together. Here are my top five tips for communication that fosters reconciliation.

1. **Active Listening:** Instead of listening to respond, be attentive to each other’s emotions and perspectives without judgment. This helps in understanding the root cause of the issue and being fully present in the moment.
2. **Don’t Sweep It Under the Rug:** Address issues as they arise instead of avoiding them. Psychologists attribute conflict avoidance as one of

the top reasons for the influx of divorces.⁶

3. **Empathy and Understanding:** Try to see the situation from your wife's perspective. This reduces defensiveness and encourages more transparency.
4. **Compassion over Condemnation:** Focus on expressing your emotions and needs rather than pointing out your wife's faults.
5. **Apologizing and Forgiving:** Check your pride and admit your mistakes; be willing to forgive your wife, encouraging healing and moving forward.

DON'T CHANGE THE WEATHER

When I speak of “changing the weather,” I’m describing a specific situation when a wife, with the best of intentions, attempts to comfort her husband. She might say, “Babe, it’s going to be okay,” particularly in moments when things are clearly not going well. The assurance that it will be sunny tomorrow doesn’t alleviate our concerns about today’s rain.

Please don’t misconstrue my words. Daily encouragement is crucial for overcoming sin in our lives (Heb. 3:13), and having a wife who desires to comfort us during times of despair is a blessing. However, sometimes it’s better to feel sorrowful, especially when we are wrong, for it is written, “Godly sorrow produces repentance” (2 Cor. 7:10).

I recall a day at church when a concerned wife tried to restrain her husband from crying uncontrollably at the altar. The pastor gently intervened, sensing the sacredness of the moment. This man, who had been both physically and emotionally abusive, was in the grip of deep, undeniable conviction—essential for a path to repentance.

Therefore, men, when you find the courage to share your failures with your wife, and she tries to alter your feelings by “changing the weather,” respond with grace and love. Use it as an opportunity to respectfully let her know that you deeply appreciate her support but need to express your feelings without immediate solutions.

Remember, effective communication is key, as no one is a mind reader. Although your wife’s response might unintentionally diminish your feelings, this could be an excellent moment for an open and honest dialogue about emotional openness in your marriage.

DON'T CREATE BATTLES

Embrace battles but don't create them. Your marriage will face enough external conflicts without adding any of your own. It's not just the obvious arguments; it's the sly remarks that can sow self-doubt or insecurity in your wife. Take a moment to reflect on how often you point out what she does wrong. I remember a time when Nicole felt she could never do anything right because I was always quick to criticize.

Men, just because we have something to say doesn't always mean it should be said. Sometimes, it's better to pray something than to say something. Only when I learned to control my emotions and surrendered to the guidance of the Holy Spirit could I restrain my tongue. This was especially crucial during a season when Nicole needed healing from years of my negative comments. What struck me was the realization that much of what I wanted to express stemmed from my own unresolved anger rather than Nicole's specific actions that I disliked.

Let's be clear: It's vital not to bury offenses or ignore issues that might lead to conflict later on. However, it's equally important to resist the temptation to let the heat of the moment burn down your house instead of warming the rooms.

Taking a moment to think before responding can make all the difference. Reflect on the source of your words and consider whether they contribute positively to the relationship. Release any emotion that might hinder your response from being a catalyst for understanding and healing. Reset to where you were before the offense occurred. Rest in the love of the relationship you have with your wife. By doing so you cultivate a deeper understanding of what truly defines a strong, authentic marriage beyond fleeting emotions or outward appearances.

I found it amusing when someone questioned the authenticity of my marriage after watching a video of Nicole and me conversing on social media—and noticing she wasn't smiling. What does it truly mean for a marriage to be authentic? Is it about constant happiness and outward appearances or navigating through both the joys and hardships together?

Nicole and I believe it's the latter.

Men, I urge you to embrace hardships like a good soldier to ensure your marriage never becomes a mirage. Be authentic. Be present. Be faithful.

FEAR OF COMMITMENT

Before we leave this chapter, I wanted to address the men who are not yet husbands but who may want to have that title someday. After a certain age, it's quite amusing to hear a grown man refer to his significant other as his girlfriend. Especially if you have been in a relationship for some time, using the term *girlfriend* might be seen as immature or not aligning with the deeper commitment and respect that a serious union deserves.

From a biblical perspective, there is no concept of a girlfriend; a woman is either a man's wife or simply a friend. Even in official documents, like credit card forms, the term *girlfriend* doesn't appear; people are identified as either single or married.

Due to the nature of my work, I'm often approached by professional athletes for counsel and life coaching. In one session a player's longtime fiancée was deeply hurt because he failed to publicly acknowledge her role in organizing a successful event for him. He had thanked everyone else on social media—except her. This kind of misunderstanding happens in relationships all the time. He was genuinely sorry, but his apology wasn't enough. She felt unappreciated and undervalued. He understood why she was upset but couldn't grasp why she couldn't let it go.

I asked him one simple question: “Why haven't you married her?”

He replied, “I'm just waiting until I can sign a longer contract with a team and have more security.”

That's when I presented this scenario: “Imagine if your team never signed you to a multiyear deal, instead offering you a one-year contract, season after season. How would that feel?”

He chuckled because he knew where I was headed. I continued, “She feels like a Pro Bowl unrestricted free agent—someone who puts up impressive numbers for the man in her life, achieves Super Bowl-level accomplishments, but never gets the commitment she truly deserves—a ring.”

I paused and said, “She wants the same kind of commitment you seek in your career—something that reflects her value and dedication.”

In *Battle Cry* I shared a story about a friend who insisted he wouldn't consider marriage until he had all his “ducks in a row”—a successful career, financial stability, a house, and so on. I couldn't help but question his

perspective. “When was the last time you saw ducks walking perfectly in a row?”

We shared a moment of laughter but also paused to reflect on his reasoning. Interestingly, by the end of that very year, he’d had a change of heart and decided to follow it. He proposed to the love of his life, and today they’re actively building their kingdom together. It’s undoubtedly commendable to desire financial stability and order before entering marriage. However, it’s equally important not to allow what you don’t have to hinder you from attaining what you can.

TAKE ACTION

ACTIVITY #1: SILENT COMMUNICATION

My wife and I were introduced to the silent communication exercise by our marriage therapist as a way to deepen the connection between our hearts, especially before engaging in discussions that have the potential to become contentious. It’s incredible how much can be communicated in silence. Our eyes often reveal truths that our words conceal, sometimes even leading to tears. I encourage you to try this introspective exercise with your wife.

1. Sit directly in front of your wife in a quiet room.
2. Allow your wife’s knees to be on the inside of yours, with yours on the outside of hers.
3. Keep your knees connected throughout the entire exercise.
4. Hold your wife’s hands;⁷ physical touch not only reduces the stress hormone cortisol but also stimulates the neurotransmitter oxytocin, fostering trust and love.⁸
5. Look into each other’s left eye. Focusing on the left eye means gazing into the right hemisphere, a crucial region of the brain that encompasses our identity center, creative aspects, emotional depth, and the genesis of joy.
6. Silently communicate through your eyes with your wife for three minutes.
7. Transition to normal conversation.

Disclaimer: This may feel awkward or intense; it’s okay to look away for a few seconds. But reset your focus back to your wife’s left eye—allowing yourself to deeply feel the emotions you long to express to her.

ACTIVITY #2: RENEW YOUR MIND

Renewing my mind began with complete surrender to the Most High, through salvation in the Messiah—Yahushua. This first step empowered me to wage and win my inner battles.

The following are five additional critical steps I took on my path to becoming not just a better husband but a comprehensive man.

1. Start dismantling the detrimental effects of patriarchy in your life and reestablish Yah's divine order.
2. Allow your wife to be an *ezer*, your ally, who can help buffer the burdens that come your way daily.
3. Practice sexual self-control to maintain marital boundaries in both professional and personal interactions with women, especially when you are physically attracted and tempted to act on your desires.
4. Start facing, fighting, and forging through your fears instead of allowing them to prevent you from having the life and love you desire and deserve.
5. Stop conforming to the ways of this world. Instead, ask Yah to renew your mind so that you'll know His purpose for you as a husband (Rom. 12:2).

ACTIVITY #3: MIRROR TIME

Take out your mirror and silently gaze into the eyes of the man reflected in it. Don't look away for sixty seconds. Then, affirm that man with the following statements:

- I will define my role and value as a husband based on truth and personal integrity, not mantras.
- I will practice sexual self-control—guarding my eyes and heart from lust.
- I will welcome my wife's help and embrace her uniqueness.
- I will seek professional support to resolve my trauma so that I am able to help my wife heal hers.
- I will strive to reconcile conflicts with my wife promptly, always keeping open and compassionate communication.
- I will not allow my fears to hinder my pursuit of a loving relationship with my wife.

CHAPTER 11

THE FATHER

The Father desires his children's trust and provides a safe space for them to receive love, learn from their mistakes, and conquer their fears.

On the 1600 block of Unproductive, lives a beautiful family named the Busys. They spend most of their days working to achieve their dreams, sacrificing their children's futures for their present indulgence. While Mr. and Mrs. Busy stay busy, the devil creeps in and gets busy. Busy parents keep a smile on the devil's face, for they work so much that almost everything takes their children's place. Although it is written that their gifts will make room and sit them before kings, they'd rather sacrifice their gifts (children) to make room for their dreams.

This poem I wrote years ago continues to convict me upon each reading. Countless times, I've reflected with regret on the missed opportunities to spend quality time with my daughter, Alexis, and son, Jason. While children don't come with instruction manuals, the more time we invest in them, the more we learn.

Thankfully, I've embraced Yah's grace and actively worked to make amends with my children for many of my past shortcomings. As fathers, we should aspire not only to understand our children's thoughts and emotions but also to assist them in processing their feelings. It was only by confronting my own trauma, toxic thoughts, and erratic emotions that I truly mastered this, bridging any distance that could separate my children and me.

Fathers, when we love our children sacrificially, we become their safe space, even when they appear to reject us. I recall a moment vividly when a father, burdened with a heavy heart, stood up to ask me a question during a panel discussion. With a deep desire to reconnect with his teenage son, he

spoke with palpable passion: “As a man, as a mentor, as a father, what is the comprehensive approach to breaking through a child’s heart that is hardened? They essentially drown you out. I’m trying to pour into him because I pour into people all the time, but I can’t pour into my son.”

“Parenting is not about perfection,” I told the father. “It’s about the power of our presence.” I continued, “My son doesn’t always want to talk. You know what I do? So I simply ask him if I can lie on the floor in his bedroom. And I stay there quietly until he’s ready to talk. This not only shows him that I honor his space, but it also reminds him that I’m ready and waiting to be part of his world.”

To put it more concisely, a father should never let his son simply be. The potential risks associated with parents disengaging from their children’s lives are far too great, even when our young ones seem distant. The disconnection can create emotional distance, increase the chances of mental health struggles, erode coping skills, diminish self-worth, negatively affect academic performance, and weaken the parent-child bond. Do not let misplaced guilt convince you that you’re failing as a parent just because the relationship feels strained. Remember, these moments are temporary and your presence remains essential.

It’s been said that a broke father who spends time with his child is better than a rich one who only sends checks. Fathers, the call is clear: Our presence is the ultimate present.

Being actively engaged and involved with your child holds far more weight than the mere act of giving money. Your time, guidance, love, and affirmation—these are the gifts that truly shape their world. It’s not just about providing for material needs; it’s about the profound impact you make by being present—not perfect.

When fathers complain about the demands of fatherhood, I ask them to ponder this: *What could you live with?* Could you endure pushing beyond the trauma of your upbringing to ensure your child feels safe with you? Or would you rather bear the weight of them succumbing to suicide or falling into addiction because they believed they had to face their problems alone?

The comprehensive man chooses to be the unwavering presence that his child needs and deserves.

FAST FORGIVENESS

Sadly, many of us have been conditioned by the tradition of tough love, believing that our role as fathers is only to discipline, just as our fathers did before us. This narrow approach, though often well-intentioned, misses the deeper understanding required to nurture our children's comprehensive development.

Consequently, it has resulted in a generation of emotionally suppressed men and has perpetuated intergenerational trauma. Our boys don't need more discipline; they need more love. When we provide them with a safe space to experience failure, they will overcome their fear of it.

One day, after training with my son, he turned to me and sincerely asked, "Dad, how did you become a great dad when your father wasn't?"

I replied honestly, "Son, I simply gave you what I longed for."

Our desire to give our sons the fathers we never had shouldn't mean we neglect to impose the discipline they need. It is written that there is a time for everything (Eccl. 3:1–8). So, there's a time for "tough love," but it shouldn't be the only approach.

Now, I've made my fair share of mistakes as a father, but I've always sought to make amends with my children. The day I took these steps marked a significant shift, not just in my relationship with my children but in my own journey as a father. It was the beginning of my transformation from being merely a disciplinarian to becoming a more loving parent.

For instance, I've found great value in what I refer to as *fast forgiveness* in parenting. As a father, I often compare my responses to those of my heavenly Father. Whenever my children offend me or fail to follow instructions and I feel the rush of anger and want to hold a grudge, I recall Psalm 30:5: "For His [Yah's] anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life."

To me this verse embodies a foundational principle for fathering. Yes, there are moments when we become angry or disappointed with our children's behavior. But like Yah, our anger should be fleeting.

After discipline, our favor, love, and grace for our children should endure throughout our lifetime, leaving a lasting impression on their hearts and minds. This approach requires us, as fathers, to be comprehensive and present in every moment, embracing the many roles that our children need us to fulfill.

When my children face struggles, I strive to become the man the moment demands. I am their father when they need to feel loved and

accepted. I am their counselor when they need a safe space to share their deepest thoughts and emotions. I am their sage when they seek wisdom to navigate the challenges ahead. I am their disciplinarian when they need guidance and correction to stay on the narrow path (Matt. 7:14).

AFFIRMING WHILE PROTECTING

Many of us were raised by fathers who were the “strong and silent” type. Unfortunately, these father-son relationships often lacked affirmation. When my son, Jason, was younger, he enjoyed training in martial arts with me. But I missed countless moments to affirm him along the way. Gradually, his passion for martial arts waned, and his interest shifted to basketball—a sport he felt would garner affirmation from his grandparents, uncles, and cousins. You see, Granddad had played basketball when he was young and is still an avid fan. Both of Jason’s uncles played on teams, and all of his male cousins are deeply committed to the game today. Can you imagine the overwhelming pressure my son felt to follow this family tradition?

However, this pressure isn’t confined to our family alone. There’s an inaccurate narrative in society that sports are the sole path to wealth and public affirmation for young African American men. Few things annoy me as much as when people notice my intelligent teenage son, standing tall at six foot three, and enthusiastically inquire, “Do you play basketball?” Just because a young man is tall doesn’t mean his brain can only calculate how to dribble a ball. It’s disheartening how many multitalented young men are confined to the pigeonhole of sports, as if life were merely a game.

I reluctantly allowed Jay to play organized basketball, but over time I began to regret that decision. Intergenerational trauma gets passed down not only through families but also through sports. Too often, good-hearted but unhealed men coach from their own childhood wounds. I salute the men who stop coaching and seek therapy when they realize they are doing more harm than good to their players.

Earlier I shared that I had decided to pull Jason from his school’s basketball team, and I believe it’s important to explain why I made that decision as a father. Jason was in his last year of the Cave of Adullam rite of passage when he started his ninth-grade school year. He had committed to finishing the rite of passage training with his “Cave brothers,” with whom

he started in 2013. But that changed when basketball practice approached. He wanted to play, and his mother was in favor of it, but I wasn't. I knew that organized sports would require Jason to dedicate an irresponsible amount of hours to practice—time that I preferred he spent on becoming a better academic student rather than an athletic one. However, I succumbed to the pressure—or should I say, Jason's desire—and even allowed him to stop training in the Cave of Adullam to play basketball.

What I didn't realize then was that my hesitation to let Jason play basketball went deeper than my concerns about academics or emotionally unstable coaches; it was also about enduring the heartache of watching him seek affirmation from my in-laws and his cousins, rather than from me. You see, all my nephews eagerly pursued their fathers' desires for them to play basketball, while my son chose a different path—one that did not include fulfilling my desire for him to complete his rite of passage. I never needed to live vicariously through my son; Yah had already accomplished so much through me. Yet there was a deep heartache in watching him walk away from the ministry that had been divinely entrusted to me. Still, I understood that my role was not to control Jay but to stand as a pillar of support for him during this transition—a silent strength amidst my own pain, trusting that his journey, too, had its purpose.

In the weeks leading up to Christmas break, Jason's team was playing an evening game when he took an inadvertent elbow to the head from an opposing player, resulting in a painful concussion. Our family doctor advised that Jason sit out the rest of the month and resume playing after the new year. During the Christmas break, I felt convicted by Yah to make Jason keep his word—honor his commitment to his Cave brothers and complete his rite of passage. So I devised a schedule where he could play basketball while continuing his training at the Cave of Adullam, though it meant missing two basketball practices a week. Jason and I were in agreement, and the athletic director fully supported the plan. All seemed well . . . for a moment.

It was the first game of the new year. As the team finished their pregame warmups, Jason went for a routine layup, something he'd done countless times before. But this time when he landed, his knee buckled, hyperextending and straining his MCL, ACL, meniscus, and calf. Jason was in excruciating pain, but all he heard from his teammates and coaches was laughter. Embarrassed, Jason felt compelled to play through his pain. Later

an orthopedic doctor confirmed that his decision to keep playing likely caused even more damage.

As Jason adhered to the doctor's prescribed rehabilitation regimen, he became aware of the growing skepticism among the team and coaches, who suspected he was exaggerating the severity of his injury. Consequently, the harm extended beyond Jason's knee; it profoundly wounded his heart. As you can imagine, indignation surged within me. If not promptly addressed, these are the types of moments that can instill paralyzing fear of failure in a young mind.

I recall that same month noticing several of my new Cave of Adullam students were very anxious during class, as if they had a fear of making a mistake. I stopped the class and asked, "Can you make a mistake during practice?" They all were baffled. I continued, "Practice is a time where you welcome mistakes and allow them to teach you, hone your skills, and make you better!" It's only during the game or competition that you do not want to make a mistake, because there it can cost you the game.

Since Jason couldn't play for the rest of the season, I encouraged him to use the time to consider whether playing basketball next school year would be worth it. Am I against Jason playing sports? Not necessarily. However, I'm against him wasting time. The average career of an NBA player is only four years, but many parents allow their sons to spend their entire childhood and young adulthood preparing for a three- or four-year job—if they are even lucky enough to hit the draft lottery.

Through my work, I've cultivated numerous relationships with professional athletes and Hall of Fame coaches. The Most High has used these connections to affirm that my desire for my son to aspire beyond mere athleticism isn't rooted in selfishness but wisdom.

One day, I noticed NBA All-Star Anthony Davis was following me on Instagram. Knowing that Jason is a huge fan of his, I decided to take a chance and send Anthony a direct message. To my amazement, he responded promptly! I took the opportunity to share that my son had been praying that Anthony would recover quickly from a recent injury. Remarkably, Anthony healed in time for the playoffs, and the Lakers went on to win the finals. But the story doesn't end there.

When Anthony saw an Instagram post where I proudly shared my son's impressive grade point average, he expressed interest in getting Jason a

signed jersey. I couldn't believe the kindness and generosity of this NBA superstar.

That same year, during a family vacation in Los Angeles, Anthony arranged for me to receive an autographed game-worn jersey with yellow and purple trim. It was a moment that would be etched into our memories. When I presented the jersey to Jason, the look on his face was priceless—a mixture of joy, awe, and inspiration. Anthony's signature read, "Keep going, young king!" I explained to Jason that the jersey wasn't given to him just because he played basketball. Anthony saw something deeper: a young man of good character, someone with tremendous potential.

ASPIRATIONS VS. LIMITATIONS

Fathers, we must define reality for our children while also inspiring them to reach their full potential. I recall a day when my son, around seven years old, eagerly wanted to go outside and play. I told him that he couldn't go out without my supervision. "Dad," he replied confidently, "my teacher said there's no such thing as *can't*."

"Is that so?" I responded, recognizing the good intention behind his teacher's words, yet also seeing an opportunity to teach a vital lesson that some limits are real and must be understood. He needed to grasp the concept that limits do exist.

"Jason," I said calmly, "make a fist." As his small hand formed into a fist, I gently closed my hand around his. "Now can you open it?" I asked, letting him feel the boundaries of the moment, yet guiding him to understand that while potential is limitless, reality still has its place.

He answered with a grin, "I can't."

I smiled back and continued, "son, your teacher wanted to inspire you to chase your dreams. But as your father, I must help you understand that while you reach for the stars, you also respect the reality of rules and certain limitations."

Mantras possess the power to motivate, yet they can also mislead. Therefore, you must guide your children in discerning the difference between the two.

This lesson isn't meant to discourage aspiration but rather to provide a grounded perspective. It's about nurturing a mindset that acknowledges

challenges while striving for achievement. Teaching the distinction between motivational mantras and practical understanding empowers our children to navigate through their emotions and life more effectively.

ERADICATING ENTITLEMENT

I was only twenty-five years old when my beautiful daughter, Alexis, came into this world. In those early years I possessed boundless energy, determination, and a relentless work ethic that allowed me to take on nearly any challenge I chose. I ventured into diverse fields ranging from owning and operating a music production business and a construction company to founding the Yunion nonprofit.

Alexis witnessed not only the sacrifices required to succeed in this life but the self-denial required to carry our cross and follow Yahushua to an eternal place with Him. As the saying goes, our children don't do what we say; they do what we do. By the age of twenty-three, after years of observing my work ethic, Alexis founded a talent agency specializing in mindset transformation and brand alignment.

In 2007 Nicole and I received one of the greatest blessings from the Most High, our beautiful baby boy, Jason. He was an answer to our prayers. From his infancy and elementary school years, Jason and I were inseparable; he brought an immense amount of joy to my heart. I made it my mission to provide him with everything I had wanted from my own father—and then some. To him, I was like a hero. He would often say, “Dad, you can do so much!”

My response was always, “Son, you can achieve great things, too, if you put in the work.”

Now that I am an older father raising a teenage son, I face a unique set of challenges. It's not that my son is rebellious or disobedient, but in my fifties I lack the energy I had in my younger years while raising his sister. Additionally, injuries from martial arts training have taken their toll on my physical condition. When I return home from work, I often feel drained and ready for rest rather than a game of basketball or training in martial arts.

One evening the Most High convicted my heart, revealing the glaring absence of intentional time I was spending with my son—time Jason needed to become a self-sufficient man. For one month, I kept a journal of

the time Jason and I spent together. I was saddened to discover it amounted to only twenty minutes a day during the school year.

Deeply convicted, I repented and prayed, much like Samson in the Bible, asking for strength one more time. My intention wasn't to use that strength for combat as Samson did but to help my son understand what it takes to turn visions into reality.

At that point in time, Jason had only witnessed the fruits of my labor and not the effort it took to reach where I am today. Consequently, his work ethic and diligence were not at the level they needed to be. He tended to become easily discouraged when he encountered initial failures. I'm profoundly grateful I have recognized this tendency while Jason is still under our roof and I can help him overcome it.

I recently spoke to a group of older fathers who were also distressed by their sons' lack of work ethic and initiative. Much like myself, they had overlooked the fact that their sons see only the fruits of their labor but not the hard work it took for the fathers to get where they are. Sometimes as fathers, especially in our latter years, we have to take a step back in order to help our children move forward. So, now, I must temporarily set aside the comfort I've worked so hard to attain and must rekindle the mindset I had when I was striving to achieve it—something I encouraged these men to do, to show their sons both the sowing and the reaping of their success. By intentionally sharing not only the fruits of our labor but also the effort it took to cultivate a harvest, we uproot the seeds of entitlement before they take root in our children's minds. This approach to fathering in our middle-aged years ensures our children understand the value of hard work and perseverance.

RECONCILING RELATIONSHIPS

The journey of being a truly comprehensive father has no fixed destination; it's a continuous process of growth and evolution.

I feel compelled to share a few of the mistakes I made with my daughter for two reasons. First, to remind struggling fathers that they are not alone in their feelings of failure. Second, to encourage fathers not to be too hard on themselves when mistakes inevitably happen.

As Alexis was growing up, I was a young, hypermasculine father, struggling with unresolved anger and bouts of depression that stemmed from my father wound and significant personal losses. I personified the very definition of masculinity—strong, aggressive, and bold. While I was a fun dad, I projected toughness more than tenderness. But as my daughter entered different stages of her life, she needed a father who was gentle, compassionate, understanding, and patient.

In retrospect, I realize that I wasn't mature enough as a man to consider whether her consistently disordered bedroom might be indicative of an underlying issue. Rather than approaching the situation with sensitivity, I often jumped to conclusions, assuming she didn't respect my authority or was being deliberately disobedient.

Psychotherapy helped me dig deep into the roots of my parenting style. I soon discovered that my own experiences with my father's constant criticism and strictness had profoundly influenced the kind of father I had become. For example, one afternoon when I was about twelve years old I left my hairbrush on the kitchen table, unaware that it might be considered unsanitary. Instead of teaching me about hygiene, my father reacted with a barrage of curses. It turned out that having hair on the kitchen table was one of his pet peeves—a fact I was unaware of at the time, even though he was a barber. My father's obsession with cleanliness taught me that maintaining an appearance of order was more important than fostering genuine order, understanding, or harmony within his home. Decades later when I became a dad, I found myself repeating those patterns, often without even realizing it. This is the effect of intergenerational trauma, a cycle of harmful behaviors passed down from parent to child. And as children, we often unconsciously repeat what we've learned.

In the formative years of Alexis's life, I often found myself parenting her with the same harshness I had subconsciously learned from my father—berating her whenever her bedroom wasn't clean. As you can imagine, my behavior caused emotional repercussions for her both then and into adulthood. Alexis didn't need "Discipline Dad"; she needed a father who made her feel like the apple of his eye, instead of the worm in the fruit. I recognized my shortcomings in this regard and chose to fight to become a better man. I committed myself to deep inner work: resolving childhood trauma, releasing losses, and spiritually training to guard my heart against any emotions that threatened to pull me back into destructive behavior.

Now, when I fall short in my role as a father, I bounce back quicker by taking a hard look at myself and implementing the four *R*'s: Reflect, Release, Reset, and Rest. Yahushua once said, "Don't be a hypocrite. First, look in the mirror and remove the plank from your own eye before attempting to take the speck out of someone else's" (Matt. 7:3–5, paraphrased). Whenever I say or do something that hurts my children, I first *reflect* deeply in my mental mirror, *release* negative thoughts before responding, emotionally *reset* so my response isn't a reaction, and then after reconciling, I find *rest* for my soul. Each time I gaze into that mirror, I'm confronted with that massive piece of wood in my own eye. But once I've managed to rid myself of that splintered plank, I can see clearly how to guide my children in removing the speck from their eyes. It's crucial, though, not to linger in front of the mirror too long. We'll always find areas we can better ourselves in, but if we stay there, we'll never actually help our children with their own "specks."

Today, despite having taken the difficult step of apologizing to my daughter for the years during which I was physically present but emotionally absent, there are still wounds I inflicted that require ongoing effort to heal. While I have made progress in acknowledging my shortcomings, the process of healing these wounds and rebuilding our relationship continues.

Believe me, I understand the fatigue that can come from feeling like we fathers are always responsible for the problems our families experience. Yet this perception isn't accurate, and self-condemnation only hinders recovery. It's important to take a moment to ask yourself, "How did this happen? And was my response a reaction to something much deeper?"

I desire for both my son and daughter to know unequivocally how amazing they are in my eyes. But this truth must go beyond mere words. I must live it through actions. Love is all theory until it's been tested. Our children must have the unwavering assurance that our support extends even to moments when we have to discipline them. On that note, as fathers, we must be careful not to push them to the place where they love us but don't like us, provoking them to anger and rebellion (Eph. 6:4).

I am a constant work in progress; the same holds true for you. Remember there is no final destination for self-development—just constant evolution.

Fathers, don't fear failure. Mistakes are our greatest teachers, guiding us toward growth. The only fatal mistake is the one we refuse to learn from. Therefore, stay encouraged during the reconciliation stage; broken relationships can be mended if we refuse to surrender our desire for healing.

THE GRIEVING FATHER

The sky was overcast as I drove Nicole to the hospital. She was pregnant, and our hearts were filled with excitement as we headed there to discover the gender of our unborn baby. In those days, there were no elaborate gender reveal parties; instead, it was all about the cold gel and the ultrasound wand.

While the technician examined Nicole's stomach, we detected an unsettling shift in her demeanor. She exited and returned with the doctor, who confirmed our fears: Our baby was no longer alive. Grief tightened its grip on Nicole. When the doctor left the room, Nicole moaned and started crying. She had already experienced four miscarriages, making this moment especially harrowing. I attempted to muster the emotions necessary to console her, but, regrettably, compassion, empathy, and sorrow eluded me—I couldn't be the man she needed in that moment. As a typical masculine male, I buried this pain, much as I had done with other losses in my life.

The hospital extended the offer to pay for a funeral for our daughter, whom we had named Olivia, but we chose to decline—a decision that we both regret to this day. My reason to forgo the funeral was rooted in me remaining strong and shielding myself from the unbearable pain of burying a baby, which I know now was not the best choice for my emotional well-being.

A pastor of ours had expressed his condolences by giving us a plant. Years later, while I was cleaning the kitchen, I noticed that the plant wasn't in its usual spot. Nicole had temporarily relocated it. However, that moment triggered a surge of unexpected anxiety within me, propelling me to search the house in a frantic pursuit of the plant. Upon locating it, I swiftly returned it to its accustomed spot. As I was wiping it down, tears unexpectedly welled up. I questioned the sudden surge of emotions: *Where is this coming from?*

Instead of suppressing my feelings, I allowed myself to cry and reflect so I could release and reset. Amid that introspection, a revelation emerged—the Most High illuminated the fact that I hadn’t grieved the loss of our beloved Olivia. Yah took me back to that somber day at the hospital. Unbeknownst to me then, I was emotionally devastated. However, I hadn’t been able to let those emotions surface because I felt obligated as a man to only project strength for Nicole—a facade that concealed the turmoil within.

Regrettably, I wasn’t present in that initial moment of loss and grief—for my wife or even for myself. It wasn’t until I couldn’t find the plant that represented Olivia that I realized how painful it was for me to lose her. For decades, expressing tender emotions publicly, especially in the presence of women, was something I unequivocally rejected. So, that day when I denied myself the human right to shed tears during one of the most heart-wrenching times in my life, I had suppressed my grief.

What kind of manhood is this, where a father can’t openly mourn the loss of his child? Why must we put up a facade and feign strength merely to get by? As you reflect on this, I hope it becomes evident that we must challenge the harmful behaviors society has ingrained in us. As fathers, we must grant ourselves the permission to grieve, especially when a tragedy touches more lives than our own.

LETTING GO

As a father, as much as I don’t like it, eventually I must learn to let go. I can’t tell you how many nights I stayed up worrying when Alexis was out with her friends. I know I will lose sleep when Jason starts driving.

Candidly, I don’t even want to think about that, especially considering the racial disparities in traffic stops. An investigation by the Justice Department revealed that African Americans in Ferguson, Missouri, accounted for 85 percent of vehicle stops between 2012 and 2014. African Americans were also “more than twice as likely as whites to be searched after traffic stops, even though they proved to be 26 percent less likely to be in possession of illegal drugs or weapons.”¹ As a man of the Most High, I have to constantly remind myself that Yah loves and can protect my children more than I ever can.

My desire to protect used to be so intense that I made Alexis choose an in-state school for college. She chose the University of Michigan. It was an expensive investment for that peace of mind, but I didn't complain. After graduating Alexis secured an internship in New York. I was adamantly against it—not due to any doubts about the opportunity but because I feared it could be an opportunity for someone to hurt her. It was the first time she would be out of “arm's reach,” and I did not like it.

I love New York, but I did not want my beloved daughter on the subway or walking alone in unfamiliar areas. Thankfully, it all worked out despite my fears. She had a great time and gained the experience needed to spark her career in management and marketing.

Years later, I flew to New York to be a guest on *The Breakfast Club*. The night before the interview, I decided to take a stroll through the city streets. As I walked past a dark entrance to the subway, I paused and pondered on how Yah protected my daughter in these very same conditions. It brings tears to my eyes even as I type this. So much energy is wasted when we do not let go. All the time I spent worrying could have been used to affirm and support Alexis's decision and encourage her along the way.

In addition to trusting Yah with the well-being of our children, we must resist the temptation to live vicariously through them. I've counseled many boys who harbored resentment toward their fathers due to the pressure to pursue interests that were never truly theirs. I made this mistake with my daughter but have refused to repeat it with my son. I offer him wisdom on what I believe might be best, but more importantly, I guide him in discerning between Yah's will and his own desires.

Fathers, when we let go and allow our children to grow, we not only begin to construct their confidence but also become willing vessels through which Yah guides them into His will.

PROVIDE WHEN POSSIBLE

Nicole is undeniably more frugal than I am when it comes to allocating financial resources to our children. Her upbringing, with three sisters, was often marked by days when they had to do whatever it took to make ends meet as a family. Many adults today who grew up like Nicole often misconstrue their situations as their parents' strategic plan to make them

strong and independent. In truth, it's usually a result of their financial limitations rather than a lack of desire to provide more.

Nicole's parents are truly amazing, and I love them immensely. I had always sensed they would have given Nicole more if they could. Instead of relying on assumptions, I chose to approach Nicole's parents for confirmation. Before I could finish articulating my question, Mama Smith interjected, emphatically saying, "We absolutely would have given all of our children more if we had it!" Nicole was surprised by Mama's words, but I was genuinely grateful she had shared this truth.

Let's be clear: My point isn't to suggest that we should give our children everything they want. However, we should supervise their struggles, similar to how Yah watches over us, intervening before they veer off course in life.

BLESSING OUR CHILDREN

As I was writing this chapter I realized that despite publicly affirming my son countless times, I had never blessed him. So on the day Nicole and I returned home from our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary vacation, I asked Jason to take a ride with me.

We drove to Belle Isle, where I had baptized him many years before. Overwhelmed with emotion, I quietly walked with him to the middle of the beach. We stood in silence, gazing at the river's flowing waters.

With a heart full of love, I said to Jason, "You are my only son, with whom I am well pleased. Today, I brought you here to bless you and affirm the divine purpose that the Most High has for your life."

I then reached into my pocket for my anointing oil, a sacred substance used to consecrate someone for Yah's service, and applied it to his forehead. Resting one hand on his shoulder and the other on his brow, I spoke words of deep affirmation into his spirit: "You are strong, godly, kind, assertive, intelligent, confident, generous, and wise." After a moment of quiet reflection, I felt the Holy Spirit's gentle nudge guiding me to add, "And you're good enough." It was as if those words unlocked a place in Jason's heart that had been imprisoned; he released a flood of tears that spoke volumes.

During Jason's formative years he was teased for not fitting in, particularly due to his lack of athleticism. This period in his life led him to carry a cross he was never meant to bear—the burden of self-doubt. Although my wife and I affirmed him throughout his life, it took this sacred moment for Jason to truly hear with his heart what his mind had struggled to believe.

Fathers, seize the opportunity to bestow a blessing on your son or daughter, and if you have more than one, anoint all of them. Let this powerful act be a catalyst for their journey toward fulfilling their divine callings. Take a moment now to reflect on how an experience like this with your father could have transformed your life. Consider the profound impact that freedom from insecurity, fear of failure, and self-doubt would have had during your young adult years. If Yah took time to publicly bless His Son (Matt. 3:17), then it is our duty to extend this act of affirmation to our own children. By doing so, we empower them with the confidence to embrace their purpose and navigate their future with conviction.

TAKE ACTION

ACTIVITY #1: CHANGE YOUR DISCIPLINE APPROACH

Change your approach to discipling your children by anchoring it in the foundation of love. Just as healthy plants grow from well-tended seeds, godly discipline sprouts from a nurturing and supportive relationship. Therefore, lavish your children with love. Expect their best effort but also grant them the grace to make mistakes and learn from them.

ACTIVITY #2: CULTIVATE CONNECTION

Comprehensive fatherhood lies not in the authority of our voice or the fear of our discipline but in the depth of our desire for our children's love and trust. Here are five tips to ensure you provide a safe space for your children to receive love, learn from their mistakes, and conquer their fears.

1. Practice the principle of fast forgiveness whenever your child sincerely apologizes for their disobedience at home or failures in school.
2. Do not hold grudges against your children. Instead, always seek to reconcile the relationship. Be a father to your child, like Yah is a Father to us—His anger is only for a moment, but His favor lasts a lifetime (Ps. 30:5).
3. Never discipline your child when you're frustrated. Always take a moment to process your thoughts and emotions before addressing your child's behavior. This

strategy ensures that your response, not reaction, is rooted in love rather than uncontrolled anger.

4. Time yourself for two weeks to gauge how much intentional time you're spending with your children daily. If it's less than twenty minutes per day, recognize there's room for improvement. Aim for no less than forty-five uninterrupted minutes with your children each day. Remember, life happens, so don't condemn yourself if you can't always meet this goal.
5. Plan activities with your children that will create opportunities for you to affirm them, building their confidence and self-worth.

ACTIVITY #3: MIRROR TIME

Take out your mirror and silently gaze into the eyes of the man reflected in it. Don't look away for sixty seconds. Then affirm that man with the following statements:

- I will focus on being present in my children's lives rather than being perfect.
- I will not bury the pain of my emotional experiences as a father but will allow myself the grace to grieve by reflecting, releasing, resetting, and resting.
- I will be more than a disciplinarian; I will be a father who loves comprehensively and nurtures my children in every stage of their lives.
- I will welcome the support of my children as I grow older and more dependent, instead of being stubborn.
- I will bless my children, affirming Yah's purpose for their lives and expressing my satisfaction of who they have become and my hope for who they will be.

CHAPTER 12

THE SON

The Son unwaveringly supports his parents despite challenges, embracing the journey and honoring them with his words, heart, and actions.

On one serene Saturday morning, the Cave of Adullam students were seated with the usual anticipation of another great class. As I began teaching, my wife walked in with a smile on her face that couldn't hide the concern in her eyes. She motioned for me to come closer. Her whispered words struck me like a lightning bolt. My mother had suffered another transient ischemic attack (TIA/ministroke) and was being rushed to the hospital. This was the fifth year of my walk with her through what I've come to call the *valley of dementia*—a journey filled with both profound pain and Yah's grace. The journey was taking a deep toll on my soul and forcing me to confront a sobering truth: No man can be strong all the time.

A torrent of emotions engulfed me at that moment. I turned to the class with my voice quivering as I explained the sudden need to leave. It was then that one student, moved by the situation, asked if the class could pray for me. A poignant moment of unity unfolded as every student quietly stood and formed a circle around me on the mat. Their hands rested gently on my shoulders and back as my student led the prayer.

Tears broke through the strong exterior I'd always maintained—the first my students had ever witnessed. This unexpected display of emotional transparency became a gateway for us all in the Cave of Adullam, shattering the myth that strength is synonymous with only stoicism. That day, we learned that power isn't defined just by physical and mental fortitude. Power is found in a man's ability to confront life's heart-wrenching

challenges without suppressing his emotions. It lies in the courage to face something heartrending without pushing it away, embracing authenticity to transform one's thoughts, actions, and outcomes. From my experience, that is the essence of power.

While this chapter is the shortest, I believe it holds the greatest significance. I've chosen to conclude with this characteristic of the Son because it was through serving my beloved mother during her battle with dementia that I was transformed into a comprehensive man.

I have come to realize that one of the greatest challenges men face is being in situations where our masculine traits alone do not suffice. Sadly, this fear frequently compels us to retreat from the very areas that demand our presence the most. A comprehensive man is not defined by acts of strength or aggression; rather he meets the demands of each moment with the appropriate response.

There is nothing more likely to provoke a masculine male's instinctive flight than having to witness the suffering of a beloved parent, whether from dementia, mental illness, addiction, or the natural decline of aging. Yet to fulfill the role of a supportive son during our parents' later years, we must tap into the very part of our hearts we have diligently trained to suppress all "unmasculine" emotions.

I used to be quite judgmental when children wouldn't visit their aging parents in nursing homes or assisted living, particularly as I watched my own mother grapple with the relentless progression of dementia. However, my mentality shifted one day in the cafeteria of a psych ward, when an imposing man in a motorcycle jacket eased into the seat beside me, exuding a sense of despair. I suspected he could feel the weight of my heartache, as I was there in another desperate attempt to adjust my mother's medication due to her recent violent outbursts.

I turned to him and calmly asked, "How are you doing?" He looked at me with deep sorrow in his eyes and replied, "This is the hardest thing I've ever done in my life. I'd rather fight twenty men with knives than see my mother suffer like this. It's been two months since I last saw her."

It's precisely this type of emotional transparency that is the key to unlocking the door to comprehensive manhood. For none of us, no matter how strong, can stop the certainty of death. Without a broken heart and a contrite spirit, our will remains stubborn and our pride unyielding, preventing us from becoming who we need to be at any given moment.

Staying in a state of stoicism renders all the other characteristics of a comprehensive man ineffectual, akin to possessing bullets without a gun.

Regrettably, many of us fail to recognize the inherent power in embracing our deepest emotions until the moment when we need them the most but find ourselves unable to express them. It's a profound truth that not every battle can be won with sheer force; sometimes, we must yield in order to gain ground.

So instead of letting your machismo pull you away from where your heart needs to be fully present, run toward the battle and face it head on. Be the man the moment demands. Stop wasting energy on what you can't control and focus on what you can change. This is especially true in our relationships with our aging parents, where the bravery to step up and serve them with unwavering love can profoundly shape our path forward (Ex. 20:12).

THE SERVANT SON

There comes a defining moment in every man's life when he must evolve from being a dependent child to a servant son. This shift is significant; it means resisting the urge to remain in the comfort of our parents' shadows and instead choosing to rise, honoring them in ways that elevate our own potential. Yet becoming a servant son can be challenging, especially when your father or mother wasn't the parent you felt you needed. But here's what I've discovered: Yah uses the very challenges we think will break us to ultimately shape us into the image of His Son, Yahushua.

This epiphany came only after becoming a comprehensive man. Before that transformation, you might ponder, *Why should I, now an adult, sacrifice my time, my heart, my tears, and my comfort to ensure the parent who was absent from my life and offered more criticism than care dies without regrets?*

That is exactly how I felt about my father.

I remember a particularly dark time in my life when my father stopped speaking to me for a year after falsely accusing me of stealing money from him. The situation worsened when he had my stepmother file a police report against me, deeply damaging our already strained relationship. Then one day my stepmother called, urging me to visit my father, whose health was

failing. Even with all the deep hurt and unresolved anger, I found myself standing at a crossroads as a grown man now needed by the very person who had cut me off.

Nicole, always a source of support, helped me navigate my storm of emotions and reminded me of the right thing to do: Honor him, no matter how he had raised me. At first, I hesitated, feeling the weight of the past on my shoulders, but I knew it was time to face it. When I walked into the room, I saw a man who had once radiated strength, now fragile and barely holding on.

I stepped closer to his bed and softly said, “Dad, it’s me, Jason.”

He slowly turned his head toward me, opened his eyes, and, for the first time in what felt like forever, spoke the familiar words: “Hey, son.”

After years of battling tremors and slowly losing his mobility, Parkinson’s disease finally confined my father to his bed. As I sat in a chair beside his bed and the weight of everything we had been through fell from my shoulders, tears flowed freely for at least ten minutes. My stepmother quietly entered the room and offered me a tissue, sensing the depth of emotions that had surfaced. There were so many feelings—pain, hurt, regret—and so much time had slipped away. But in that moment, I chose not to cling to a grudge. I decided that my father wouldn’t leave this earth without both of us receiving the healing we truly deserved.

I made a sacred vow to be present in my father’s life from that moment on; I never wavered in my commitment. As time passed, it became clear that my stepmother could no longer provide the twenty-four-hour care my dad needed. The reality set in: He needed full-time attention and had to be moved to a nursing home.

During my visits, armed with a notepad, I posed countless questions that had weighed on my heart for years. I wanted to uncover the story of his upbringing, to understand why he never introduced me to his parents, and to learn what had led him to turn away from Yah’s calling to preach.

Only now, in hindsight, do I realize that none of our conversations touched upon why he hadn’t been there for me during my formative years. Instead, my focus stayed on how he could be present for me in the time left on this earth. And it made all the difference. I allowed him to express himself beyond his role as a provider and protector, and he was finally able to give me, as a grown man, the affirmation I had yearned for as a child.

In the end, my father left this world without carrying the weight of regret. And I often wonder, *What if I had kept my heart hardened toward him?* I would have continued to struggle with years of unresolved anger.

This reminds me of a powerful moment from *The Avengers* when Iron Man skillfully lures an alien creature away from the vulnerable citizens and back to the Avengers. As the chaos of battle rages on, Bruce Banner arrives—calm, composed. He steps off his motorcycle and begins to walk slowly toward the incoming alien, a massive creature flying in while leaving a trail of destruction behind it. Sensing the impending danger, Captain America says, “Dr. Banner, now might be a good time for you to get angry.” Bruce Banner turns to Captain America with a knowing smile and replies, “That’s my secret, Captain; I’m always angry.” That line resonates deeply because I, like Bruce, carried anger that surfaced at the wrong moments, causing harm to myself and others. But when I chose to confront that anger and channel it into healing, everything changed. In an instant, Bruce transforms into the Hulk, channeling his anger into a single devastating punch that floors the alien and saves the world.¹

When we choose to confront our deepest feelings, we set ourselves on the journey to healing and becoming a truly unstoppable force, just like Bruce. This is the power of emotional mastery: transforming what could have broken you into what empowers you to become the man the moment demands.

Though my father was flawed, he was not a bad man. He was a masculine male who had suppressed decades of painful emotions, trauma, unresolved anger, and regret. When I chose to accept this truth, the path to my healing became clear. I allowed myself to be open to experiences I had never considered before, such as men’s retreats and biblically based psychotherapy, which became crucial steps in advancing my healing journey.

EMBRACING EVERY EMOTION

When men are unaccustomed to embracing and expressing the full range of human emotions, we find ourselves ill-equipped to navigate situations that don’t call for fists and guns. Yet when we draw on our masculine characteristics to confront these heartrending moments instead of fleeing,

we can boldly live from the good in our hearts rather than succumb to our fears.

The experience of caring for my mother transformed me from merely a masculine male into a more complete and compassionate human being—a comprehensive man. While the emotional toll of caring for someone with dementia can be overwhelming at times, it also fosters resilience, allowing one to persevere in the face of adversity.

Yes, there were times when I had to step into the role of protector, like when my mother didn't receive the care she deserved at a hospital or when relentless bill collectors harassed her. But there were more moments when I needed patience and empathy, such as when my mother asked the same question ten times and I had to answer it ten times without a hint of impatience.

To provide my mother with the attention she needed, I also had to become an active listener, hone my verbal processing skills, embrace adaptability, and practice selflessness. These new sets of skills not only made me a better caregiver but also greatly benefited my interactions with colleagues, students, friends, and family members.

So I ask you, can you find the strength within yourself to provide this kind of care? Can you go beyond the roles society may have prescribed for you and discover the profound beauty in being a caregiver who not only tends to the physical needs of your loved ones but also nurtures their hearts and souls? The answer lies within each of us, but until we are courageous enough to live from the good in our hearts, we may continue living unfulfilled lives.

As long as I suppressed my feelings, I remained at their mercy—a slave to my erratic emotions. However, when I granted myself permission to be fully human, embracing every emotion, I acquired the mastery to summon and harness them in every moment, employing them as needed.

THE ULTIMATE EXAMPLE

While all the characteristics I've presented are crucial for becoming and remaining a comprehensive man, the model for them comes from the ultimate exemplar of one, the Son of the Most High, Yahushua

Ha'Mashiach. He is truly an exceptional role model for us all to aspire to emulate regardless of your faith.

- He was a **fighter** when He made a whip from cords and courageously drove out the money changers from Yah's sacred temple (John 2:15–17).
- He was a **provider** when He miraculously fed five thousand hungry people with just two fish and five loaves of bread (Matt. 14:13–21).
- He was a **leader** when He transformed humble fishermen into fishers of men (Matt. 4:18–19).
- He was a **lover** when He sacrificed His life for our sins (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8–9).
- He was a **nurturer** when He healed the sick, sought the lost, and cast out demons from the possessed (Matt. 8:16; Luke 19:10).
- He was a **gentleman** when He listened to the hearts of women, offering them help without pursuing ulterior motives (John 4:1–26; Luke 7:37–48).
- He was a **friend** when He willingly sacrificed His life for His disciples (John 15:13).
- He is the ultimate **husband** to us, His bride, the church (Eph. 5:22–33).
- He is the **Father** incarnate (John 1:1, 14; 8:24; 12:45).
- He was a **Son** who honored His earthly parents while having the divine authority to choose His own path (Luke 2:41–51).

In every aspect of His existence, Yahushua embodies profound depth and sets an unwavering standard for what it means to be a comprehensive man. His life, death, and resurrection hold the power to not only transcend societal expectations of men but also allow us a boundless existence in eternity with the Most High.

This salvation—deliverance from sin and its consequences—is not achieved by merely reciting a formulaic belief statement. The initial step must be taken with the utmost seriousness (Rom. 3:23, 5:8, 6:23, 10:9–13). If this is something you're ready to do, diligently seek out reputable and biblically sound churches or men's ministries. They can show you how to wholeheartedly surrender your life to Yahushua and embark on a journey of profound purpose in Him!

TAKE ACTION

ACTIVITY #1: NOT BY STRENGTH

On the journey toward becoming a comprehensive man, it's crucial to acknowledge that relying solely on physical strength will not resolve life's most heartrending trials. Embracing this truth early on empowers us to meet the demand of every moment with grace, authenticity, and authority.

Take a moment of solitude. Grab your journal and write down your answers to these questions:

1. Can you recall a time when neither your physical strength nor your finances could resolve a heartrending situation? How did you feel in that moment?
2. In what ways could embracing and expressing the full range of human emotions empower you to connect more deeply in these situations—especially when it involves loved ones?
3. Which characteristics of the comprehensive man do you hesitate to openly exude, even though embracing them could empower you to meet the demands of every moment?
4. What steps can you take to ensure you will not lean on your strength in moments that require vulnerability?

ACTIVITY #2: THE GOOD SON

Navigating the complex emotions associated with parent-child relationships can be profoundly challenging. After all, none of our parents were perfect. The set of reflective questions that follows is designed to delve into the depths of such relationships, helping you transition from conflict and detachment toward reconciliation and deep connection. By confronting past hurts, resolving trauma, embracing authenticity, and practicing the power of forgiveness, you can begin to heal old wounds, escape emotional incarceration, and fortify bonds that have been weakened.

Take a moment to read and reflect on these questions, and when your heart is ready, grab your journal and write down your answers. I strongly recommend following up this exercise with counseling or psychotherapy to properly address any issues that may surface.

1. Recall a time when a parent needed you and you were too busy to help; how can you now make amends and consistently offer your support?
2. Consider the effects of distancing yourself from your parents as they age or decline in health; what changes might occur if you confront the root cause of your avoidance head-on?
3. In what ways could expressing your emotions allow you to connect more deeply with your parents, especially during their time of need?
4. How have you addressed unresolved anger toward a parent, and what transformations have occurred as a result?
5. Evaluate how forgiving—or not forgiving—a parent who was absent or abusive has affected your emotional and mental well-being.

6. What boundaries do you need to maintain or remove to ensure that you can become or remain a good son in Yah's eyes (Ex. 20:12)?

ACTIVITY #3: MIRROR TIME

Take out your mirror and silently gaze into the eyes of the man reflected in it. Don't look away for sixty seconds. Then recite these commitments:

- I will forgive my parents for what they did and didn't do.
- I will attempt to reconcile with my parents before they are too old to comprehend.
- I will strive to always be a servant son to my parents.
- I will no longer avoid being in heartrending situations where I am unable to restrain my poignant and moving emotions from my parents.
- I will be a good son.

THE COMMISSION

As we reach the final pages of this journey together, I feel a deep sense of pride for what you've accomplished and am deeply honored that you trusted me to lead you through this initiation into comprehensive manhood. Now, as we part ways, I am confident that the seeds of wisdom sown will flourish in the fertile ground of your courageous heart.

Remember, the end of this book is not a return to where you started; it is a new beginning. Like a tree shedding its leaves for a new season, you, too, must let go to grow. Release old beliefs, fears, and doubts, and embrace the actionable faith necessary to change your life.

You've lingered in the limits of "masculine" male-hood long enough. It's time to shift gears. Just as the first gear in a sports car is meant for moving from a standstill, the first gear of manhood is only the beginning—a starting point, not the destination. Staying there too long limits your potential. Shifting into the second gear will propel you further and faster, allowing you to evolve without burning out your clutch—wasting your life.

Once you've gained initial knowledge about comprehensive manhood in second gear, you will be able to accelerate, liberating your heart and mind from the facade. Progressing into the third gear of manhood will further enhance your growth and maturity while maintaining harmony between the lion and the lamb. Finally, transitioning into the highest gears will enable you to reach the greatest speeds, maximizing your purpose as a comprehensive man—cruising through the open roads of life.

In the path ahead, you will realize there are things you cannot change, like people's behaviors and pessimistic attitudes toward you. Don't allow this to discourage or coerce you into engaging emotionally. True victory lies

not in futile resistance but in shifting your perspective. Master a mindset that views detours not as setbacks but as divine delays, ensuring safe arrival to your destinations.

Finally, in moments when life's demands overwhelm you and personal peace seems elusive, it's vital that you articulate your needs and devote the necessary time for self-maintenance. Since a lack of communication can lead to confusion, always express your needs and feelings respectfully.

As you close this book, carry in your heart and mind the ten characteristics of the comprehensive man. May they empower you, keeping your life free from facades and rich in authenticity. Never forget, in comprehensive manhood, there is no final destination, only constant evolution.

I now welcome you to join the ranks of introspective warriors who cried like men, yelled a battle cry, and fought for their freedom from emotional incarceration. This journey began with an initiation, and during that time, you were uncertain about who you really were. But now, when someone asks, "Who are you?" you can confidently say,

- I am the **Fighter** who discerns when to engage and when to walk away. I master my ego and emotions to ensure I stay in an advantageous position.
- I am the **Provider** who ensures the provision of essential resources, guidance, and support for my family, friends, community, and myself.
- I am the **Leader** who guides and inspires others. I know when to speak and when to listen—leading by example, not intimidation.
- I am the **Lover** who demonstrates his love through action—devotion to Yah, loving my neighbors, and maintaining my own well-being.
- I am the **Nurturer** who cultivates growth and development, caring for individuals and environments within my influence and beyond.
- I am the **Gentleman** who exudes respect for others and himself through deliberate and appropriate etiquette without compromising my values.
- I am the **Friend** who loves at all times and is steadfast in the face of adversity—willing to lay down my life for my companions.
- I am the **Husband** who emulates Christ's love by sacrificially giving of myself for my wife's well-being, treating her as I would like to be

honored.

- I am the **Father** who desires my children's trust and provides a safe space for them to receive love, learn from their mistakes, and conquer their fears.
- I am the **Son** who unwaveringly supports my parents despite challenges, embracing the journey and honoring them with my words, heart, and actions.

Regardless of my circumstance, *I am the man the moment demands.*

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RESOURCES

www.mrjasonwilson.com

The Crucible Weekend: www.thecrucibleproject.org

Unlike other Christian men's retreats, The Crucible Project's weekend for men will "challenge you to take a hard look at what is and is not working in your life." You'll wrestle with God in a safe space, discover new truths about yourself, and embrace your God-given masculinity. Man by man, this work is "changing hearts, marriages, families, churches, careers, and cities."

National Alliance on Mental Illness: <https://www.nami.org> | 800-950-6264

NAMI is the National Alliance on Mental Illness, the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness.

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: www.988lifeline.org | 988

According to the "We Can All Prevent Suicide" page on the 988 Lifeline website, "Suicide is not inevitable for anyone. By starting the conversation, providing support, and directing help to those who need it, we can prevent suicides and save lives."

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Most High Yah: I am deeply grateful for You, not just for the lessons learned in the inner struggle but for the way You sustain my soul and fill my days with joy and peace. In You I find my essence and purpose. Your love is unparalleled, Your mercy boundless. I remain in awe of Your greatness and the way You guide my steps, orchestrate my trials, and answer my prayers. Through Yahushua, I can seek Your forgiveness and find Your embrace again. HalleluYah!

Nicole: In the quiet moments of sorrow, you've been my pillow of solace, and in the storms of fear and self-doubt, my steadfast *ezer*. When the Most High's call felt like a mountain, your love helped me climb over every trial. Never did you deter me from pursuing Yah's will; instead, you always asked, "How can I support your vision?" I will perpetually praise Yah for making our paths one. Your presence in my life is a blessing beyond words, and my gratitude for you is endless. I love you immensely.

Alexis: My cherished daughter, your intelligence, talent, and spiritual gifts continually astound me. I am immensely proud of you and grateful for the joy and love you bring into my life. Thank you for graciously pushing me through my doubts, you have always had my best interests at heart. I love you, Pooh, more than my heart could ever express.

Jason: My beloved son in whom I am well pleased. I couldn't have prayed for a better son! From your birth, Yah used you to soothe my troubled soul, traumatized mind, and ease the pain of watching my mother's decline. Now, as a young man, you are my closest friend, Chazaq AriYah—my strong lion of Yah! I love you deeply, my son.

Sinclair: Without you, the light of Christ in my early years, I wouldn't be the radical man of the Most High I am today. Your years of prayer and love guided me out of darkness. Thank you for living your faith so genuinely. I love you dearly.

Olivia: My beloved little sister, your encouragement has been a constant source of strength throughout the years. There have been many days when I felt discouraged, but a text from you would brighten my day. Your affirming words have helped me countless times overcome insecurities and fears. I am deeply grateful for your love and support. I love you.

To all my family and friends: Your love, prayers, and unwavering support have been my anchor through the years. Thank you for standing by me through every trial and tribulation. I am profoundly grateful for each of you and hold you all close to my heart.

Dr. Tim and Ellie Broe: Your unwavering love, support, and sacrifice have been a profound blessing to Nicole, me, and our entire family. You both are a godsend, and no words or amount of money could ever fully express our gratitude for everything you've done for us. I love you dearly.

Chris Park: I am deeply grateful to Yah for bringing our paths together for His glory, and today that divine connection is evident. Thank you for believing in me as an author; your advice and encouragement have shaped me into the writer I am today. Despite the trials you faced during my writing of this book, you remained a steadfast support. You are the best agent I could have ever hoped for. I truly cherish our friendship.

Brigitta Nortker: Words cannot fully capture my gratitude for you. Your expertise, creativity, fun-spiritedness, and patience have been a beacon throughout the challenging process of writing this book. When things didn't go as planned, you stabilized the ship and were always there, going above and beyond to ensure everything stayed on track for excellence. Thank you, my friend, for being a consistent source of inspiration and encouragement.

Bill Blankeshien: Working with you and the StoryBuilders team has been a transformative experience. I appreciated your methodical approach and your encouragement for me to keep writing when I felt exhausted; it allowed Yah to continue using me as His pen. Thank you for providing me with the framework to write this book and persevere through the revisions after our collaborative editing was done.

Andrew Stoddard: Brother, I've always remembered our first meeting during the Waterbrook Zoom interview amidst the pandemic. The passion

and connection we shared during that call left a lasting impression. Even after choosing to sign with Nelson, I prayed that our paths would cross again, and Yah answered that prayer. Thank you for your encouraging words and for caring about every detail of my vision for this book.

My Nelson family: Thank you, John Andrade, for your leadership and innovative ideas, Chris Sigfrids for your motivating passion in seeing men of Yah healed, and Lisa Beech for your infectious enthusiasm in bringing this message to the men who need it. From our first meeting, each of you was locked in! I am incredibly grateful to be part of a team with such amazing people.

Kathryn Duke: Thank you for your meticulous attention to detail and patience throughout the copyediting process. I deeply appreciate your dedication to enhancing every page.

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Jason Wilson is the founder and director of the Cave of Adullam Transformational Training Academy and bestselling author of *Cry Like a Man* and *Battle Cry*. Since 2005 Jason has been mentoring boys and young men, teaching them how to rise above life's inevitable challenges. His impactful work earned him the President's Volunteer Service Award from President Obama, and acclaimed actor Laurence Fishburne executive produced the award-winning ESPN Films documentary about Jason's work, titled *The Cave of Adullam*. He is a man of the Most High, a faithful husband to Nicole, and a devoted father to Alexis and Jason II.

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