

True North – A Father’s Compass

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Synopsis

Why Was the Book Written?

There is a void in my life that cannot be filled. This void came about as a result of not having the strong influence of a father (or any other man) in my life. My father and I were disconnected, sharing no common interests; sharing no common bond. We never had a deep discussion, or spent time together. I had no guidance from him, and had no idea what his opinions were on matters of importance, whether family, local, national or international.

Given my experiences growing up, and the lack of male influence in my childhood, I wrote this book to go on record with the young men in my family, and the fathers of other young men, concerning critically important issues related to life and their eternal destiny. My hope is to challenge them and make them think deeply about life and the course they are currently following. My hope is to share what I have learned with them, challenge them to think through the deep issues of life, and to avoid the ebbs and flows of societal truth in favor of immutable truth, real truth.

Additionally, it is my belief that men of all ages in our society are deeply confused about their role in the family. They are weaker today than at any time in my memory. They have been beaten down and preached to by a society that takes its cue and plots its course from the latest fad, that all things male are trivial, or childish, or shallow. Maleness has been labeled “macho,” which originally was a one-word description of actions or activities depicting a phony or feigned maleness that detracted from the real strength of a man. But today, the word macho has taken on a much broader meaning to include all things male, and as a result men are backing away from their natural instincts; they are confused and without direction; they have abdicated their leadership role in the family, and families are suffering and disintegrating as a result.

I wrote this book partly to help rekindle the joy of being a man, and to help provide a game plan for reasserting their proper place in the family and in society at large.

Most importantly, I wrote this book to help men, women, and children everywhere come to Christ. This book is intended to be an understandable apologetic of Christianity, written not in theological terms and style, but in an interesting, biting, and provocative way. I am not a theologian, but to the extent I understand the Christian message, it is my profound hope to pass on that understanding to my family and others. This book was designed to present Jesus as True North, and to present the gospel message in an interesting and compelling way.

Presentation of the Book

True North – A Father’s Compass was not written as a novel, with a flowing story line. It was written in sections, each addressing one or more important lessons in life. For this reason, reading the book from front to back is not necessary.

True North consists of about 48,000 words and is presented in six sections. The first four sections end with a brief outline of the important points and lessons covered. This outline is called **Therefore**. In addition, **Applications to Everyday Life** are presented at the end of each of these sections, providing comments and suggestions with regard to applying those lessons to one's life on a day to day basis. A synopsis of each section follows...

Part One: Responsibility

In our society today there is a great lack of responsibility among men. No one seems to be at fault for anything and no one seems to want to take responsibility. Men are dodging their responsibilities. This short section exposes this behavior in no uncertain terms. The point is made that real men are responsible; real men keep their promises. When responsibility is shirked and promises are not kept (responsibility is, at its base, simply keeping one's promises) men lose the respect of those involved in their lives, especially the women in their lives. Consequently, men cannot lead and they lose their vision.

Irresponsible behavior is immature and belittling, opening men to disparagement and scorn. Men require respect in order to function in their families, or in their businesses. When they are irresponsible, they will not be respected and they cannot effectively function in the important areas of their lives.

Part Two: And He Calls Himself a Christian

I have been in the business world for many years and have noticed a growing and decided lack of tolerance toward Christians. Some people – a growing number, it seems – delight in the failings of Christians. When Christians fall into immoral behavior, or make mistakes, or come across in a harsh or unkind manner, our society seems to rejoice.

Christians are often considered to be right-winged zealots, lacking in reason and overflowing with unharnessed emotion. This section seeks to expose this growing intolerance toward Christians in our society, as well as the common misconceptions held by an unbelieving world toward professing believers, such as:

- Christians are not very intelligent and are given to superstitious beliefs.
- All Christians are right-wing extremist, not given to thoughtful discourse.
- Christians believe themselves to be perfect, as Jesus was (notice the use of past tense) perfect. They think they can do no wrong and they are preachy.
- Christians are no fun. All they want to do is sit around and act religious.
- Christians are forever judging others. No one is good enough for them.
- Almost all Christians are immoral, secretly. They just put up a goodie-goodie front.
- Christians are hypocrites. They say one thing and do another.

This section then seeks to explain the root causes of these misconceptions. One unfortunate cause is that we Christians may too often deserve the criticism cast upon us by in fact being the way we are accused of being. We may sometimes be preachy, or

judgmental, or no fun, or immoral. We may think far too highly of ourselves, forgetting that we are far from perfect – anything but perfect, in fact. But that’s not the whole story: the people making these charges are not Christians and in fact know very little about the faith. They make scurrilous judgments themselves against Christians, never realizing the irony of it all (they dislike Christians because they judge others unfairly, yet they, too, judge the Christians – likewise unfairly).

It is clear that people do not like to have their lives and actions exposed; people do not like to be challenged, or made to think through an issue. People want to do what they want to do, and they do not want to have to justify their actions or beliefs.

Furthermore, the unreligious, liberal majority in our society worships tolerance – tolerance of all behavior and belief structures. They become very angry at those who do not display an abundance of tolerance. In fact, they simply cannot tolerate those who are intolerant – in other words, those who disagree with them. This group of tolerant, liberal thinking folks is tolerant of anything and everything, except one thing: those who disagree with them. They, then, become intolerant. Again, the liberal group misses the irony of it all.

The discussion then moves to why Christians must sometimes break off relationships with friends or associates who are involved in activities that are unbecoming a believer and follower of Christ, even if you are judged to be “too good for the rest of us.” The biblical teaching that bad company corrupts is discussed. After all, why should we always expect that the bad will win out over the good? Maybe my ways will rub off on those other guys instead of the other way around. The point is strongly made that in all cases bad company corrupts good. Some of the reasons why are discussed:

- Men want to be in control. They want to control you by making you like them. People feel justified if they can win you over to their way of thinking.
- Man does not want to obey an unseen God, so, bad behavior knows no boundaries.
- No one wants to be accused of being “holier than thou,” or thinking he is better than someone. As a result, we tend to stick around and take part in the bad behavior.
- We don’t want to reject people and hurt them.
- Unfortunately, the fact is that guilt by association is widely practiced. When you run with a bad crowd, you are judged to be bad right along with the others. This is just the way it is.
- We often want to help someone and think that we can change a person’s behavior. But the bad behavior and the bad company will usually cause significant problems in the life of the well-intentioned. We sooner or later discover that only God can change a person’s heart.

A further point is made that Christians are belittled because they seen things in absolute terms: right v. wrong. Society, on the other hand, rejects the concept of absolutes. If absolutes exist, then a dispenser of the absolutes would be necessary, and that dispenser would be God. This would be unacceptable to the unbeliever. Therefore, no absolutes. Therefore, every one is on his own to define his own code of conduct and life philosophy.

One way to devalue Christianity is to catch Christians in their imperfections, and then to widely expose them. In this way Christians can be belittled in the eyes of socie-

ty at large. They – and their God – can be discredited. The imperfections caught on video – so to speak – can range from not returning incorrect change, to unkind words, or swearing, to the deadly impact of sexual sin.

The fact that sexual sin is different is discussed. It seems that society loves to catch a professed believer in this type of activity and then use that to fully discredit the faith. For some reason, sexual sin cannot be forgiven by society if you are a professing Christian. It can certainly be forgiven if you are just one of the boys. Sexual sin attaches a permanent stigma to a believer who falls into this particular activity. Society will not forget, and the perpetrator's reputation will forever be tarnished. That's just the way it is.

I end this section with another truth: You are being watched. You are God's advertisement for His love.

Part Three: Truth, Relativism, and Tolerance

Relativism is pervasive in our society. Relativism is destructive to the concept of truth, like a slow growing cancer. Truth and relativism cannot co-exist because truth claims to be absolute and unique, while, on the other hand, relativism claims that truth does not exist – all is truth, depending on one's point of view.

Young people in today's world have been dealt a bogus hand. They have been told that relativism and its sister, tolerance, are to be sought after and taken up as a life philosophy. They are taught that the concept of truth is narrow minded, intolerant, dogmatic, and not worthy of a thinking person. They are taught that the concept of absolute truth is the creation of the obdurate mindset of the fundamentalist crowd – certainly not worthy of an informed and intelligent generation.

Relativism and tolerance have become the foundation of the new world religion, Humanism. It suits Humanism well because if there is no truth, then there cannot be a dispenser of truth – God. And if there is no God, then they don't have to deal with His holy word, His claims, His commands, or requirements. One can do as one wishes, and man can be elevated to the throne of god (with a lower case 'g').

Following behind relativism like the tail of a mongrel is tolerance – bad tolerance. There used to be a good tolerance -- a tolerance that taught that all people had the right to believe as they wished; a tolerance that recognized the obvious: that people come in all types, religions, backgrounds, and cultures. Good tolerance was practiced as a result of love, generosity, and acceptance of the differences in people, but it never compromised the truth. It was, in fact, practiced from a platform of truth, absolute truth. In practicing tolerance, one never varied from his known truth, or accepted as equal the varying philosophies with which he came in contact. He did not embrace the different philosophies, or accept them as truth, or equal to his own deeply held beliefs. He simply accepted that differences existed and that people, all people, had the right to choose for themselves. This 'good tolerance' did not seek to hurt those who differed in their beliefs and culture, it simply recognized the differences as a fact of life. One tolerated, without animosity, those with differing views.

Today, however, we have 'bad tolerance.' This type of tolerance, which is a malevolent twist of the original definition, seeks to destroy absolute truth by pushing this

new brand of tolerance, which accepts all beliefs, actions, philosophies, and religions as equally true. Therefore, all is truth, and, nothing is absolutely true.

Relativism and 'bad tolerance' are destructive to Christianity and moral values in general. There is such a thing as absolute truth. For example, it cannot be both raining and not raining outside at the same time and in the same place. Either it's raining or it isn't. Furthermore, there is a dispenser of truth, and He is God. His truth is available in the Holy Scriptures. This section of the book is about truth, real truth, absolute truth, immutable truth.

Part Four: Men and the Family Structure

A significant portion of the male population today has lost a sense of maleness, and has very little pride in being a man. Men are tentative and unsure of their role--their job, if you will. Every time they display male traits it seems to result in antipathy by the women in their lives. For definition, the young men of today — and some of the older ones, too — look to women. Men today sort of try this and then that until they conjure up a cacophony of personality traits and mores that seems to be somewhat acceptable to the women of their lives. Men today are belittled for being male-like. They are put down and their presence in society reduced to that of a macho sire for the propagation of the species. In T.V. commercials, which are extremely revealing with regard to society's current dicta, men are reduced to overgrown children, often whinny with high-pitched voices, and looking to their wives for wisdom and direction, along with the younger children. Even the children on T.V. commercials are depicted as having more street smarts and savvy than their dads.

Too often in our modern day society, dads are providing less and less of an example for young boys to follow, and if an example is offered, it is amorphous and inappropriate. I remember dads teaching boys not to cry at the drop of a hat and to have other masculine ways, while today's society nullifies dad's teaching with that of its own: that readily crying and having feminine characteristics is not only acceptable, but to be encouraged.

I remember dads teaching boys to defend themselves and their families, if necessary, while today's society nullifies dad's teaching with that of its own: that fighting is never justified and should be avoided at all cost, even to the point of surrender.

I remember dads teaching boys about the demands of work and the responsibility of providing for one's family, while today's society nullifies dad's teaching with that of its own: that the responsibility of provision is just as much mom's as it is dad's, and that one should not allow work to interfere with one's personal life.

I remember dads teaching boys about the importance of providing leadership for the family, while today's society nullifies dad's teaching with that of its own: that mom is just as much a leader in the family as dad, and that dad has no right to impose his vision for the family on her or the children. And I don't see dads teaching their children about God. Religious training is left to the women, if it is addressed at all.

The limited examples provided above are certainly not intended to be an exhaustive list, but rather provide just a glimpse into the five major categories of a man's mission: 1) teaching boys how to be, and act like men (yes, men act differently than women); 2) teaching boys to defend themselves and their families from all manner of harm; 3) teaching boys about the importance and joy of providing for their families; 4) teaching boys to

provide leadership and love for their families; and 5) the most important job of all: teaching children about God and being the high priest of the family.

Men today are confused. They are confused about their role in society. They are confused about their role in the family. They are confused about what's expected of them. They are confused about their interactions with women. They are confused and they have been sold a bill of goods, which redefines their mission and their role. This confusion and lack of role definition are relatively new phenomenon in our society; starting, I believe, in the 1960s and continuing on today. The 1960s brought a mentality of 'if it feels good, do it' to our society. It was also the age of drugs, rebellion, a lack of respect for authority, and unquestionably a white-hot distrust for the establishment, which was exacerbated by the Viet Nam conflict.

The Retooling of the American Male: This fundamental change in our society continued with the feminist movement of the 1970s and 1980s. Brought about in part by the sometimes-unfair treatment and second-class citizen status of women, the movement lost its balance and marched ahead with profligate abandon to belittle men, burn bras, systematically destroy the age-old tradition of chivalry, and fashion a profound distrust and animosity between the genders. The goal seems to be to create a new race of hermaphrodites. Uni-sex is in; male and female is out.

"There is but one step from the sublime to the ridiculous."
Napoleon 1, after the retreat from Russia, December 1812.

Dr. James Dobson, who founded and continues to head Focus on the Family, a fabulous Christian ministry that, as the name indicates, focuses on family issues, sees two possible reasons for this apparent retooling of the American male. He states, "First, feminists hope that by indoctrinating and modifying boys' behavior during their teachable years, they can mold and shape the men those lads will become. That accounts for the effort to 'straighten them out' while they are young. The problem with that strategy is that little boys are being treated as members of a flawed sex that is desperately in need of 'fixing.'"¹ Dobson's view seems to be seconded by David Blankenhorn, author of "Fatherless America," who said, "Can you imagine what would happen if women were labeled basically destructive? It would be seen as hostile, mean-spirited, outside the boundaries of civil discourse."²

A family therapist named Michael Gurian adds to the discussion in his book "The Wonder of Boys." He postulates that boys are being rebuffed and rebuked for being what they are "hard wired" to be. Boys are, by God's design, impacted by the hormone testosterone, which affects the male brain to make boys and men aggressive, competitive, performance-oriented, problem-solvers, and risk takers.³

¹ Dobson, James C., Ph.D., p. 2.

² Karen Peterson, "Have They Been Trampled in Rush to Bolster Girls?" USA Today, November 14, 1996, p. 1D.

³ Michael Gurian, "The Wonder of Boys", New York: Tarcher and Putnam, 1996.

The second reason Dr. Dobson sees for the retooling of boys is government funding and policy. In his view, the way to get government funding for a favorite program or cause is to identify a category of victims and then design a program to, as Dobson says, "Give 'em a hand." He postulates that the radical feminists have identified girls as the victims. Boys, of course, are the offenders, and left-wing activists are the rescuers. This leaves government as the benefactor. There is obviously some truth to his observations in that Congress appropriated millions of dollars under the Gender Equity Act. We now have various "gender-equity training programs" in the public schools.⁴ Dr. Dobson further observes that many jobs have been created in order to promote the leftist agenda in public schools. All it takes is the identification of a vast group of victims.

It seems that a certain segment of women have successfully identified themselves as victims, and as a consequence of their status as victims, have demanded and received yet another weighty status, that of a "minority group." It is curious that they claim minority status when females constitute 51.2% of the American population.⁵ This successful entry into "victim status" has been emulated by various other groups, who claim minority status due to the American cultural system (white males being the worst victimizers of all). Dobson adds to this observation by saying, "Now homosexuals...drug addicts, alcoholics, transsexuals and many other groups *identified by their behavior* have been granted special rights and benefits in specific regions of the nation. Any effort to curtail that special status is met with outrage."⁶

I do not want any person to be treated unfairly or discriminated against or treated in a mean-spirited manner because of race, color, gender, or religious affiliation. This is abhorrent to a God who hates an "unfair measure".⁷ It is abhorrent to hold people down or beat them down or even talk down to them. But I do believe that we all have the obligation to be discriminating with regard to the behavior of those around us. Some behavior is simply not acceptable, and that is not being a bigot or prejudice. That is Satan's lie to get you to accept his ways along side God's ways. Anyone with any degree of common sense realizes that certain behaviors are not acceptable and that each of us has a right to decide that on his own. And the fact is that each of us freely makes use of that right and obligation.

I want to further state that I do not put the blame on women, specifically the radical feminists, for the woes of our society, as you will see upon reading further. Nor do I put all women into the category of 'radical feminist,' whom I realize represent only a small fraction of the female population. I respect, admire, and fully enjoy my friendships and associations with women in general. I do not share these feelings, however, with the radical feminist, who I believe are dividing the genders, causing confusion and distrust to abound.

⁴ "Take Your Daughter to Congress Day," National Review, May 15, 1995.

⁵ U. S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1995, Washington D.C., 1995, p.14.

⁶ Dobson, James C., Ph.D., p. 3.

⁷ Proverbs 20:10,23; The Holy Bible; New International Version.

As a result of all these changes, our society has all but lost its fabric; its skeletal shape is deformed and its purpose and mission have been lost somewhere in the muck and quagmire of modern-day thinking. Half of all marriages end in a renting divorce. This is fully triple the number of marriages dissolved by the courts in 1960.⁸ In my own state of Texas, 55% of marriages end in divorce.⁹ In my view, women have never been treated with less respect and admiration. Manners and civility have been proclaimed old-fashioned, unnecessary, and a relic of the past, not to speak of condescending.

The fruits of our modern thinking and new age thought can further be seen in pernicious pornography, exploitation of children, more than one million babies killed each year as a result of abortion on demand (the ultimate method of birth control), rising crime, and the disintegration of the American family. Adding to the attack on an ordered society and the nuclear family unit is the ever-increasing acceptance of homosexuality and same-sex marriages. Major companies are now offering full marital benefits to same-sex partners of employees. State governments, as well as the Federal Government, are being pressured relentlessly to grant full spousal benefits to same-sex partners. Next we will have heterosexual live-in couples crying foul because they are not getting spousal benefits. They might have a point! Seems you have to practice deviant behavior to be eligible for governmental benefits.

As we begin this discussion, let me say that I am well aware that many will recoil, and reject outright these concepts. God's plan is most certainly out of sync with modern-day society. Women often look upon God's plan as ridiculous and outdated, reflecting the customs of a social order dating back some two millennia. Some women will find God's plan, as it appears in Holy Scripture, to be insulting and degrading to women. Some will feel that if this is the Christian injunction for women, then "I want nothing to do with Christianity." Others will continue to feign Christianity, except for certain ordinances which one disagrees with, and which cause considerable discomfort.

It really all boils down to whether a person considers the Bible to be the inerrant, indisputable word of God (see section called "The Interview"), appropriate and relevant for all time and for all of God's creation. Or, on the other hand, one might determine that the Bible is as old and out-dated, as is the message it espouses. Or, that the Bible was inspired by God perhaps, but written by men, who were prone to error, just as all people are so prone.

God's Plan: Scripture #1:

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

⁸ Source: Los Angeles Times, 5/27/96, page A16.

⁹ 1995 Texas Department of Health Bureau of Vital Statistics Annual Report.

The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.¹⁰

God, Himself, created the institution of marriage between a man and a woman. His ideal is that the marriage relationship would endure for a lifetime, surviving trials and tribulations until death they do part. As to the term "suitable helper" in the above passage, only another God-created human being, shaped in the image of God, would be "suitable" for Adam. After the 'he', God created a most suitable 'she', the perfect complement and completion of the basic family unit.

Concerning the word "helper," today's modern woman often looks upon that term as degrading, as if she is less than a man; as if she is not as worthy as a man, in that she is only his helper. After all, is an apprentice as significant as the master craftsman? The Hebrew word for helper is "ezer," meaning "a help," or "a support," or an "assistant." This term, however, takes on an astounding significance when one considers other places in the Bible where this word is used. The root of this word is used repeatedly in the Bible to refer to God as 'helper' of a nation or of individuals.

You see, the concept of helper as defined by God is a high calling, not a position of servitude or inferiority or obsequiousness. God is by nature a helper and it is my heart-opinion (an opinion I hold to deeply, although I have no Scriptural foundation for it) that when He created woman, He placed in her the ability to have this very sweet part of God's nature — the helper, the care giver, the servant — and He then charged her with continuing the task that He, Himself, has always assumed. Being a helper is in no way a lowly rank, or a statement as to one's worth or relative value. It is a mission, a charge given by God to women, just as He gives other charges to men. To refuse His mission, is to refuse to obey Him, and a refusal to obey, is a rejection of His Lordship.

Refer now to the latter part of Scripture No. 1: *For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.*¹¹ It was God's plan that the husband and wife would somehow, mysteriously become one flesh. Just imagine, the relationship would be so close, so harmonious, so dependent on one another, that they would become one flesh. (More on this later.)

As a businessman, I can't help but to think of two different companies merging. They have two characters (souls), two balance sheets, two sets of management, and two sets of employees, but somehow they come together to form one company — they merge and go forward for the common good. Sometime mergers fail, but it's not because of an uncomplimentary product base, or a lack of planning, or regulatory prohibitions, or a lack of funds, or the incompatibility of their respective asset bases. The main reason mergers sometimes fail is because the cultures of the two companies are widely disparate. In other words, what matters to one doesn't matter at all to the other. Goals and aspirations differ greatly as does character and moral fiber. One company might be extremely employee

¹⁰ Genesis 2:21-25; The Holy Bible; New International Version.

¹¹ Genesis 2:24; The Holy Bible; New International Version.

oriented, while the other is not. And at the core of an unsuccessful merger is ego. The acquired management team refuses to submit its will to the acquiring management team. Power plays ensue and there is no harmony, no oneness of purpose, and direction; no thought of what is best for the company or the other guy. The focus is 'me,' and my career, and my influence, and my reputation, and my power base. Wise boards of directors study the culture of a merger candidate like a mother studies a newborn baby. When the cultures are harmonious, the two companies come together as one and go forward more competitively and successfully than either could have possibly done alone.

God's Plan: Scripture #2:

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself....For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery — but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother — which is the first commandment with a promise — that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on earth.

Fathers, do not exasperate your children, instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.¹²

In reading this passage, we are immediately presented with one of the most controversial passages in the Bible: *Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.*¹³

¹² Ephesians 5:22 - 6:4; The Holy Bible; New International Version.

¹³ Ephesians 5:22-24; The Holy Bible; New International Version.

The word 'submit' has been defined and redefined, apparently the most misunderstood word in the English language. This is one of those uncomfortable passages that a large number of professing Christians, mostly women, simply will not accept at face value. As a Sunday School teacher of adults for several years in an evangelical church, I was astounded at the response from the women in the class when these passages were taught. The most commonly recurring comment I heard was that the word 'submit' did not really mean submit, as we understand the word today. It meant something else — undefined of course. It never ceased to amaze me that otherwise intelligent people could claim to be Christians and to believe in the inerrancy of the Bible, while at the same time selecting certain biblical passages with which they passionately disagree, and then proceeding to disclaim the wording, the language, and the meaning, assigning instead their own mutated, amorphous definition.

Another common argument was along the lines that the submission of women to their husbands was clearly a cultural practice of the times, but one that is wholly inappropriate for today. Furthermore, they would argue, to submit to anyone is demeaning and straight out of the ignorance of the outdated customs of past ages. In my experience, I can think of no other biblical passage that engenders so much anger and frustration among women, not to speak of a thorough misunderstanding among men, who too often acquiesce to the strident and vociferous opinions of their women.

If each of us is the final judge as to which biblical passages are appropriate and canonical (according to church decree, or law; included in the canon of Scripture), then it must follow that we place our judgments above the God in whom we claim to believe. Each of us, then, is a god (little 'g'). I can conceive of no more offensive example of hubris and illogical rationalization. Don't you see, this is another twist in the age-old problem of mankind: he wants to be like God, and sometimes thinks he is God, or at least he exhibits judgments that are more appropriate to the modern-day condition (or so he thinks).

Well, let's look at the facts. The Greek word used in the ancient Scriptures, and translated into English as submit, is *hypotasso* or *hypotage*. The meaning of these words clearly and specifically translates into subjection, implying that one subjects himself, or submits himself, or subordinates himself, to another. In the Greek, these words imply responsive obedience to whomever one is subject to. These words occur only three times in the Gospels, but forty-one times in the Epistles.

The word 'submit,' clearly means submit; however, the biblical concept of submission goes considerably deeper. There are, of course, two types of submission: voluntary and involuntary. The biblical concept of the submission of wives to their husbands involves only voluntary submission. Involuntary submission of wives to husbands would most definitely be cultural in nature, given only to a time and place in history and defined by local custom. But voluntary submission is totally another matter. It is an act of the woman's will, in obedience to God's directives and His plan for families.

Submission is crucial to our Christian development; perhaps even the quintessential element. If we cannot submit one to the other, and wives to husbands, as instructed by God's word, then we will not be able to submit to God, as He also instructs us to do in His word. If one cannot submit to God, then he or she is lost, for He requires submission. Submission is the means by which we acknowledge the Lordship of Christ; it is the manifestation of a humble realization of the person of Christ; it is the proof positive of our belief in Him. Belief is an action verb, not an intellectual or theoretical exercise. You believe a chair

will hold you, so you sit in it without first testing its sturdiness. You believe the parachute will open, so you jump out of the plane. You believe the surgeon can heal you, so you submit to an operation. This last example clearly depicts the close relationship between belief and submission. First you believe, and then you submit. If you didn't believe in the claims of the surgeon, you would not submit to his care. So it is with Jesus. If you believe in Him, you will submit to Him. If not, you won't!

Husbands/Fathers: Let's now turn our focus to the men. In "God's Plan: Scripture #2," instructions to men account for about 62% of the entire passage (instructions to women account for about 21%, with the remaining 17% applying to children). Apparently, God was of the opinion that men were in need of considerably more instruction.

The first instruction, right out of the gate, is for husbands to love their wives. For you young men who are already married and are confident in their love for their wives, don't be too smug. The temptation here is to say (in that very private part of your mind where no one hears you, except God, of course), "Hey, I've got it made. All I have to do is love my wife — and I do — while she has to submit to me in all things. Not a bad deal."

Before you break your arm patting yourself on the back, read further in the passage. Men like to stop at the second comma, not even reading to the end of the first sentence.

*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water throughout the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.*¹⁴

Clearly, husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church. In this passage, as well as throughout the New Testament, the term "church" refers to the entire body of believers. Christ loved the church so much that He died for her. He suffered a torturous death on the cross for the church.

The word "love" clearly denotes action, not simply a feeling. Jesus was willing to do whatever it took to act in the best interest of the church, even to the extent of giving up His life to a humiliating public execution so that the church — you and me — could vicariously earn, through the sacrifice of Jesus, a place in Heaven. Just imagine: He was willing to do whatever it took to save the church and act in its best interest.

Is this the way you love your wife? Are you willing to do whatever it takes to act in her best interest? Where is your focus, on you or on your wife?

Men, you are to love your wives with the same personal concern that you have for yourselves. A mentally healthy man is not knowingly going to do something that harms himself, or is not in his best interest. He is concerned with his body, his safety, his health, and his well-being. Husbands must show this same concern and respect for their wives. This is one of a thousand reasons why hitting your wife, or physically hurting her in any way is disgusting, pernicious, and antithetical to the entire concept of manhood. We are protectors and lovers of our wives, not mean-spirited tormentors who abuse or intimidate them. Leadership is not domination. Domination causes discouragement, loss of self-respect and

¹⁴ Ephesians 5:25-27; The Holy Bible; New International Version.

it disheartens those who are dominated. Only the weak in mind and intellect, wrapped in a poor self-image, have a need to dominate.

Respect: As we continue our study of God's Plan: Scripture #2, we come across one of the most profound statements in the Bible with regard to men. God's final admonition to wives in this passage is:

*"...and the wife must respect her husband."*¹⁵

This passage provides a deep insight into how men operate. Notice that men are admonished to love their wives, while women are instructed to submit to, and respect, their husbands.

Now, you might ask which one goes first. Should the wife show this enormous level of respect for an undeserving husband? Or should a husband show biblical love for a wife who doesn't respect him or acknowledge his position of leadership in the family? Well, here is my answer: I don't know! I can suggest, however, that both parties believe in the power of God's plan and simply start, to the best of their ability, walking down the path so carefully laid out before them in Scripture. I can also tell you that when a wife follows these biblical principals, that the husband will notice and his heart will be moved toward God's plan. Again, it's like a key that unlocks the man in his heart. The key, therefore, to a man's heart is respect, not a good meal. I know this because my wife didn't wait for me. She did it God's way from the beginning and I finally got the message and ran to catch up. I would imagine that the same results would occur in the event that the husband jumped in with both feet, showing biblical love to a wife who, perhaps, was lagging behind on her part of the relationship. **Children:** The remainder of this fabulously insightful Scripture deals with children. Children are to obey and honor their parents. The importance of these instructions to children is further demonstrated in the fifth of the Ten Commandments:

*Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.*¹⁶

Here again we encounter voluntary submission, this time to the will of one's parents. You surely see by now that submission is the essential ingredient to the Christian life. Everyone submits to someone, ending in our ultimate submission to God, as is manifested in our obedience to Him. No submission; no obedience. No obedience; no acknowledgment of God's Lordship over our lives. No acknowledgment of God's Lordship equals, without equivocation, our own lordship over our lives.

When a child obeys and honors his or her parents, the parents are free to consider the wishes of the child, or to change their minds about something the child wants to do, but was previously denied permission to do. When a child obeys and honors his or her parents, the parents are free to bathe the child in absolute trust. This type of trust translates into unimaginable freedom for the child. A trusted child is allowed to do a lot more than one who is not trusted.

¹⁵ Ephesians 5:33; The Holy Bible; New International Version.

¹⁶ Exodus 20:12; The Holy Bible; New International Version.

Children, in their quest for adulthood and freedom of choice, incorrectly surmise that rebellion will force their parents to provide more freedom. Children, particularly teenagers, surmise that freedom of choice is unfairly being withheld from them. To force a corrected course, they determine to get their own way by disobeying and rebelling against the God-given authority of their parents. In this way, they conclude, I will force my parents to “get off my case and let me make my own decisions.”

Well, this simply is not true. The inexperienced and immature mind of a child tends to draw incorrect conclusions from an incomplete fact pattern. A more careful look at the “real world” shows a completely different picture. How do you stay out of jail? By following the rules — obeying. How do you get time off for good behavior if already in jail? By obeying the rules. How do you get a promotion at work? By obeying the rules and doing a better job than your competition. How do you become trusted with the combination to the safe at the office? By honoring your boss and obeying the rules. How do you become a squad leader in the military? By honoring your platoon leader and obeying the rules. In the real world, the path to freedom of choice and success is to honor and obey. The path to losing your freedom is paved with stones of rebellion and dishonor and self-interest. There can be no harmony in the family unless everyone plays by the rules God has designed. For children, this means obedience and honor to parents.

Leadership: At the beginning of this section, I mentioned the sad state of affairs families are in, and the animosity, which seems to be growing between men and women. I asked who was to blame. Well, it’s time to answer that question more specifically. Who’s to blame? Men are to blame. They are responsible under God’s plan for the well-being of the family. Men are to provide the leadership and set policy for the family. Therefore, if the American family is in danger of extinction, or at least crippling wounds, then the buck stops at the door of the head of the family — the husband, the father, the man.

Men are simply not providing the leadership they are responsible for providing. Exactly what is leadership and how is it manifested? I can’t provide a slick one-liner for a definition, but I can provide a spiritual example from the Bible, followed by a list of twenty-four manifestations of leadership that I have noticed over the years. Put them all together and you have a definition.

Leadership is:

1. Working hard;
2. Going there first to show the way and set the example;
3. Coaching all those for whom you are responsible;
4. Listening before answering;
5. Being open to new ideas;
6. The ability to discern right from wrong;
7. Seeing what needs to be done and doing it, or making sure it is done by others;
8. Taking action;
9. The ability to see the big picture;

10. Fairness in the face of unfairness;
11. Never compromising basic principals — always willing to compromise a process;
12. Standing alone — the willingness to make unpopular decisions;
13. The ability to do unpleasant tasks;
14. Standing for something;
15. The ability to set worthy goals and then encourage others to their attainment;
16. Being achievement oriented;
17. The ability to delegate and do only what only you can do — don't take back a task that has been delegated;
18. The willingness and ability to follow-up — to inspect what you expect (my daughter hates it when I say that);
19. Having vision;
20. Caring about those you lead — acting in the best interest of all;
21. Willing to be responsible.
22. Not penalizing people for integrity;
23. Standing up under pressure; and
24. Standing up under praise. (The most difficult of all!)

You see, a lot of men get it all wrong. The immature mind equates leadership with ordering people around and having uncompromising control over people. Leadership to the immature, underdeveloped mind is considered a privilege, a rank, or a high standing. Well, that is not leadership. That is demagoguery. Furthermore, leadership isn't a privilege; it is a responsibility — heavy, unrelenting responsibility. And in order to lead, someone must be willing to follow. People usually are not willing to follow someone who does not have their best interest at heart.

The leader must know, must know that he knows, and must be able to make it abundantly clear to those about him that he knows. Clarence B. Randall, *Making Good in Management* (1964).

So, who is at fault for the crippled state of the family? We are! Men are! When you have the responsibility of leadership for your family, the buck stops with you. You can't blame your wives for filling a vacuum. The vacuum should not have existed to begin with. We must claim our position in the family and we must provide leadership, and we must love our wives as Christ loved the church.

It is not easy being a man. We have weighty responsibility of the family — crushing responsibility — but this is our job, our calling, and our mission. Stand tall and proud, young

men. Show the world what a real man is all about. Your manhood is not to be defined by women, or the circumstances of birth, wealth, power, strength, or stature. Your manhood is to be defined by God, who created you in His image to do His will on earth and with your family (just as a woman's femininity is, likewise, to be defined by God). Let the manifestations of your manhood be love, gentleness, strength of resolve, wisdom, leadership, protection, and provision.

Part Five: Confessions of a Father & Other Thoughts