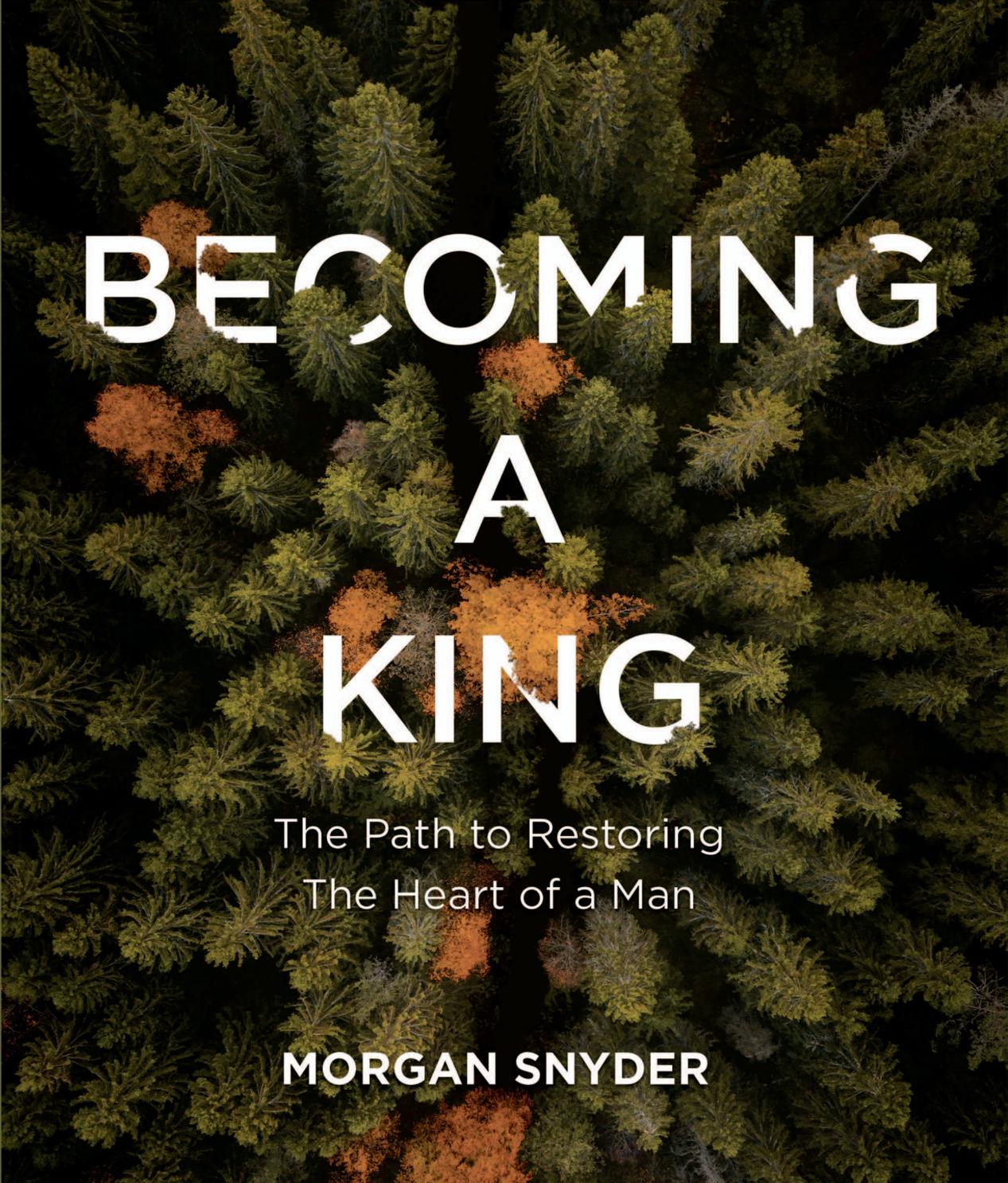


STUDY GUIDE

SIX SESSIONS



BECOMING A KING

The Path to Restoring
The Heart of a Man

MORGAN SNYDER

BECOMING A KING

The Path to Restoring
the Heart of Man

Study Guide | Six Sessions

MORGAN SNYDER



W PUBLISHING GROUP

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Becoming a King Study Guide

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WELCOME



Though it may not be clear yet, you've been led to a map, to a narrow path that leads to rediscovering something essential—a treasure that most of us have forgotten.

Perhaps better said, something essential has been lost, stolen, assaulted, and even surrendered in each of our lives. That something is your heart, *as a man*.

But all is not lost. God is engaged in a recovery mission, inviting you to participate in an adventure that has the possibility to uncover more life than you have ever imagined.

Make no mistake, this narrow path is for the few.

Take heart, for it has *always* been so. G. K. Chesterton suggests that every generation loses the gospel and every generation is charged with its recovery. I want to suggest that this recovery—this epic and intimate mission of the heart of God to restore all things—doesn't begin on a global or even national scale. It begins intimately and so very personally in the heart of every man and woman.

It begins with you.

What you are holding in your hands is a way back to becoming whole-hearted, becoming strong, and becoming everything God meant when he meant *you*—when he dreamed up who you could become.

INTRODUCTION

At the heart of Reality is God's intention to empower humans and entrust them to participate in the ongoing creativity of the universe.

Power-sharing is God's design, desire, and intention.

But that is hardly the story at hand.

What's gone wrong? When can you entrust a man with power?

We tend to think the problems in our lives are external, like the broken truck, the broken job, or the broken marriage. Yet if we dig deeper, these external problems reveal internal fissures; we are men in need of excavation and reconstruction. Jesus of Nazareth offers to meet us in the heart of our need. He promises a way forward and invites us to follow him into the kingdom of our Father.

Yet so often we are unsure of the way *in* to this new way of life.

I've created this study guide and companion six-session video series as a way for us to engage more deeply together in the message of *Becoming a King*. My desire is that you, both personally and collectively with other like-hearted men, will risk believing that more restoration for your masculine heart is available. This study guide, together with the book and video series, offers a reliable map to the ancient path of *becoming*, becoming the kind of trustworthy king to whom God can entrust the care of his kingdom.

For over a decade, courageous men just like you have been orienting their lives around becoming a king. Even as the world grows darker in some significant aspects, a relentless light grows brighter in the hearts of some men. It's time to brighten the fire even further. I'm honored to invite you to receive and share in the treasure I too have been seeking and recovering for quite some time.

There's much more to say regarding this mission's backstory; you'll find that content in the *Becoming a King* book. I designed this study guide around reading the corresponding chapters of *Becoming a King* **beforehand** and watching the video **during** this experience. I'll give you a heads up as we make our way through this study guide so that you'll know which chapters of the book will prepare you to engage in each section of the journey. Remember, we're in this together.

Engaging This Treasure Hunt

This guide can be tailored for several primary uses. If you're an individual wanting to dig deeper, use it as a guide to mine the treasures explored in *Becoming a King*. It also works great in a smaller setting of men seeking personal restoration together—perhaps as a weekly or monthly study, over a couple of pints or an evening campfire, or even in a church setting. Or it can be used as six sessions of a men's retreat. Be creative. Walk with God. So long as you have the book, the video series, and a heart willing to risk, you'll be armed to dig in, to dare greatly, and to join the courageous men who have gone before us.

A Few Words of Counsel as You Begin

Trust the Process

Reading the text of nature reminds us that the most important things in life take time. Ultimately, the treasure at the end of this journey is worth any cost that comes along the way. Being honest with yourself and others and allowing your current circumstances to access the life of your heart is where you want to begin. If you are oriented in a life-giving direction, you can trust confidently that you will, in God's time, find the destination you seek.

Don't Rush

If you want the abridged experience, you can binge and crank through all the content. But you'll miss the treasures found all along the path. If you want the abundance God has for you, go slow. Slower than you think. Agree with the portion and pace God has for you in this.

Don't Go Alone

The best things in life are meant to be shared. We are relational to our core, and you will experience much more fruit if you share this journey with other like-hearted allies. If you choose to use this as a personal study, find a buddy who will do it independently but alongside you, and plan some rally points along the way to compare field notes, celebrate discoveries, and share battle scars. Better yet, share the experience with a group of men and stack hands on choosing some intentional life together. And remember, confidentiality is essential; you must know your story is safe with the men with whom you engage in this treasure hunt.

Digging Deeper

The *Digging Deeper* section of this study guide is meant to be engaged over time and is far more than you could cover in a single sitting or gathering. The reflection questions and recommended resources found in the *Digging Deeper* sections of each session will equip you to go as deep as you want in this message. For your first pass through this study guide, I recommend saving most if not all of the *Digging Deeper* content for later and initially focusing on the selected *Discussion Questions*, which follow the *Big Ideas*. Once you have taken a pass through all six guided chapters and videos and read *Becoming a King* in its entirety, go back and explore the *Digging Deeper* sections in more depth.

Very few men ever take a risk of excavation and discovery like this. You are already among the few. In your choosing to risk, I count you as an ally. And rest assured, when the going gets tough, hold fast to the words of Teddy Roosevelt:

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and short-coming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.*

God, I consecrate this journey to you. I bring every aspect of this experience under your care and into honest and transparent connection with you. I declare your rule and authority over my life and every man participating in this adventure. I pray that you would make known your true heart. I choose to give you permission and access to my heart. I pray that you would raise up prayer warriors on my behalf, led by the Spirit of God, to agree with the full portion you have for me as a man in this. I choose to risk engaging with curiosity, an open heart, and an honest desire to become the man you meant when you meant me. I open my soul to you and ask that you break every limit I have placed on who you can be, what you can do, and how you can do it. I agree with who you are, what you are doing, and how you are doing it. I want more of me to be given more fully over to more of you. I choose to give you a chance to speak and move and breathe your breath into me through this experience. And I am asking that you would lead me as I consent to a process and choose to respond to your invitation to risk in courage, vulnerability, and love. I want my whole heart back. I invite you to anoint this time with your presence, your power, and your favor. And I ask that you reveal where and how you are leading me to become the kind of king to whom you can gladly entrust the care of your kingdom. Amen.

* Teddy Roosevelt speech, delivered in Paris in 1910, known to most of us as “The Man in the Arena.”

Session 1

BECOMING POWERFUL

The great problem of the earth and the great
aim of the masculine journey boil down to this:
when can you trust a man with power?

-John Eldredge

A thirty-year-old man is like a densely
populated city; nothing new can be built . . .
without something else being torn down.

-Mike Mason

Stand at the crossroads and look;
ask for the ancient paths,
ask where the good way is, and walk in it,
and you will find rest for your souls.

-Jeremiah 6:16

Introduction

Do you remember a moment when you were entrusted with power? Think of a childhood adventure where you felt like you were handed over the keys to the kingdom.

While riding bikes with my daughter yesterday, I had a visceral memory of the first time I was turned loose as a young boy to head off by myself on my bike into the neighborhood beyond our street. I remembered the power I felt in that moment years ago. Memories like this whisper to us a secret that is waiting to be recovered.

I've spent the last two decades excavating this desire for power in my heart and in the hearts of many men. With intense curiosity I've sought to discover where this desire comes from and why it so often ends up leading a man sideways. As I scan the landscape of my own life and those of other men, I notice far too many stories of men being entrusted with power only to have that power bring harm to themselves and others.

Is there another way? Is there a path to becoming the kind of wholehearted man who can be entrusted with power and have it turn out for good? As I spent years leaning into the wisdom of contemporary sages as well as the wisdom of sages from millennia past, a path began to take shape. In time that path revealed a process of transformation to become the kind of man to whom God can entrust his power.

In session one, I invite you to risk recovering your God-given desire to be powerful. Where has this desire surfaced in your masculine heart over the years? Where has it led you to places you never wanted to go? And what might the path look like to restoring your masculine heart and, in time, becoming the kind of man who can wield power well? What if you could have your heart fully restored, your power refueled and seated in a life worth living? Let's dig in.

Watch Session One Video: Becoming Powerful

Two-Minute Pause

One of the core beliefs behind this series is that God is the initiator and we have the role of responding and participating. In each session, I invite you to choose a two-minute pause. Whether you are watching these videos alone, in a small group setting, or at a retreat, make room for the message to soak into your soul, for the questions to rise up, and for God to shine his light. Let the silence and room to breathe pave the way for courage, and let vulnerability be the atmosphere with which you engage.

God, I invite you into this space to participate in stillness with you. Here and now, I choose to recover my breath. I turn my attention and affection toward you, God, and what you have prepared for me in this time. I choose two minutes to breathe and center on you.

Consecration Prayer

You'll find the following prayer within each session of the study guide. I encourage you to revisit it after watching each video session, before moving to conversation. It will serve both as a powerful practice to bring everything under God's care and direction as well as an essential opportunity to continually give God permission and access to guide us through this journey.

God, I consecrate this journey to you. I bring every aspect of this experience under your care and into honest and transparent connection with you. I declare your rule and authority over my life and over every man participating in this adventure. I pray that you would make known your true heart. I choose to give you permission and access to my heart. I pray that you would raise up prayer warriors on my behalf, led by the Spirit of God, to agree with the full portion you have for me as a man in this. I choose to risk engaging with curiosity, an open heart, and an honest desire to become the man you meant when you meant me. I open my soul to you and ask that you break every limit I have placed on who you can be, what you can do, and how you can do it. I agree with who you are, what you are doing, and how you are doing it. I want more of me to be given more fully over to more of you. I choose to give you a chance to speak and move and breathe your breath into me through this experience. And I am asking that you would lead me as I consent to a process and choose to respond to your invitation to risk in courage, vulnerability, and love. I want my whole heart back. I invite you to anoint this time with your presence, your power, and your favor. And I ask that you reveal where and how you are leading me to become the kind of king to whom you can gladly entrust the care of your kingdom. Amen.

Big Ideas

Desire reveals design. Design reveals destiny.

The primary work of God is finding men to whom he can entrust his power. And the story of most men is being entrusted with power and it bringing harm to themselves and those under their care. -Dallas Willard

The most important thing about a person is not what he does. It is who he becomes. -Dallas Willard

The masculine journey consists of a **process** of becoming the kind of man to whom God can gladly entrust the care of his kingdom.

Discussion Questions

1. Think back to your childhood. What are some of your earliest memories of feeling powerful?

2. Describe a good king. Think of an example of a particular man (past or present) who, in your mind, is a compelling model. List the specific qualities you admire in him. Also ask yourself what qualities he is missing that would add even more to what you esteem as the kind of man who can be entrusted with the care of a kingdom.

3. In the video I explain how each man is entrusted with a particular kingdom. Describe the aspects and scope of your personal kingdom as you see it.

4. Think of the people entrusted to your care. Call to mind a few specific faces and put words to what you hope they would one day be able to say about the impact of your life on theirs. Take time to write this down.

5. How is your kingdom? Put words to the condition of your kingdom currently. How are the people doing whom you've been entrusted to care for in this season of your life?

Closing Prayer

God, to be entrusted with power is a sacred responsibility, fraught with the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat. Thank you for leading me to this journey and assuring me that there are other like-hearted men who want to become the kind of man to whom you can gladly entrust the care of your kingdom. I consent to this process. Reveal what is next and align me with your pace and portion as we dig deeper. I consecrate my masculine soul to you. I celebrate that the most important thing about me is that I have been created as your masterpiece, from your image. I am made in your likeness. And you are inviting me to partner with you in the process of the restoration of my heart as a man. I give you permission and access once again. I want my whole heart back. I choose to trust your leadership. Give me eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart filled with courage to go with you, wherever you want to lead me.

DIGGING DEEPER

How has the storyline of wanting to be powerful played out in your life?

Think through your childhood years, into middle school, high school, and beyond, as you stepped out into your story as a young man. Describe how this desire to be powerful has played out over the various seasons of your life.

Describe a moment you felt like you were at your very best, when you found yourself acting true and bringing a genuine strength, a moment when you felt deeply alive.

What has been the impact, on your own heart and on those around you, of the longing to be powerful?

G. K. Chesterton reminded us, “We all feel the riddle of the earth without anyone to point it out. The mystery of life is the plainest part of it. . . . Every stone or flower is a hieroglyphic of which we have lost the key; with every step of our lives we enter into the middle of a story..”*

Story is the fundamental shape of our lives. And central to the mid-chapters of any story are unresolved questions. Since it is the restoration of the masculine heart set within us that God is most after, an essential way of beginning this process is with some orienting questions. We remember what Henri Nouwen observed: “Answers before questions do harm to the soul.”

What are your questions at this point in your story? Take a few moments to see what surfaces now and even notice your reaction to the question. Hold onto this for the next week and notice what questions surface in the days ahead that you aren’t able to put words to at this point.

Pausing to connect with the deep questions of your heart is paramount to this process of restoration. As Isaiah suggested thousands of years ago, one of the great tragedies of humanity is that we do not take the time and space to pause and think with our hearts. Richard Foster suggested that “the curse of our age is superficiality.” We fail to quiet ourselves long enough to hear our souls speak. We fail to become conscious of the very present questions our hearts are asking.

As a heroic step of recovery, pause with me. Literally. Let’s take an additional moment of silence in this time. Pause long enough to notice your breath. Notice yourself breathing in and out. Notice your heart, as a man, before you proceed. Notice the questions that rise. Let’s pause here . . .

* G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (Scott Valley, CA: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015), 55.

What are the questions surfacing in your heart? Perhaps triggered by the season of life in which you find yourself. The relationships you are navigating. Decisions you are facing. Failures with which you need to contend.

Take some time to linger here as your soul finds its voice, and list your questions as they arise.

Describe the man you are today. When you look in the mirror, who and what do you see? Body, soul and spirit, heart, mind, imagination. How are the myriad facets of you doing?

In chapter one of *Becoming a King*, I introduce the concept of the iceberg as a way to begin unearthing the motives deep below our external behavior. Remember, as Dallas Willard suggests, “Actions reveal beliefs one hundred percent of the time.” Our credal statements or our religious ideologies sometimes serve to disconnect us from what is really going on within us. In contrast to abstract ideologies, God is always present with us where we really are, not where we think we should be.

Make a list of specific habitual behaviors you have observed in yourself in the past twenty-four hours. Here are some examples:

- Checking your phone within moments of waking up to see what emails and texts were waiting for you
- Using food, exercise, or alcohol as medicine in an attempt to change how you feel in the current moment
- Biting your nails
- Needing to drive in the fast lane
- Finding yourself rushing, trying to get more accomplished than is realistic
- Needing to constantly be heard or have the last word in a conversation

Pause here for a few minutes and take an inventory. Don’t overthink it. Nothing is too big or too small to note. Simply observe.

Now write a list of observable behaviors in the chart to the right.

Observable Habit	Motives	Core Belief

Next to each habit you wrote on your list, try to put words to the honest motives at play directly beneath the behavior you manifested. Next to each motive, try to access a single core belief that is being expressed through the related motive and the external behavior. Don't get hung up on what you ought to believe; let's get to the heart of things. Take the time. Be honest with yourself. I assure you that in time it will lead to life.

Now go back and read all ten behaviors, motives, and core beliefs. Pause and consider what this says about how you are doing, right now, on the inside.

**LET'S GO EVEN
DEEPER.**

Describe your life in simple terms, **above** the waterline. This is the part people see. It's what you do—external activities, roles, responsibilities, etc.

Describe your life in simple terms, **below** the waterline. This is where we get to motives. How are you feeling? What surfaces within you as you do the things above the waterline? What are the motives at play—the **why**—behind what you do?

Deeper still are the core beliefs at work. Again, this isn't your stated belief system, but rather your very pragmatic operational beliefs. I confess, by way of example, that I'm a very skilled bargain hunter when it comes to big purchases. From a vehicle to a vacation, I can typically find a great value. Part of that is because I'm a strategist and can maximize an opportunity. But when I'm honest, another part that is often at play is a feeling of financial scarcity and terror that rises up from a young, orphaned place in my heart that has yet to be healed and initiated into manhood.

So take a swing. Below the waterline, what are your primary motives, fears, and energies—the why behind what you do externally? And what are the core beliefs associated with these motives?

Step back for a moment. Well done. That takes courage. Now, as we will do often in this process, pause and review what you've written. What is your reaction? What does your heart do with this? How is it informing you here and now?

Let's keep going as we orient ourselves with this big idea from Dallas Willard: "The primary work of God is finding men to whom he can entrust his power. And the story of most men is being entrusted with power and bringing harm to themselves and those under their care."

Risk being honest. Where do you see this idea currently playing out in the world at large? How about in your world?

What would you say is working really well in your life?

What is not working in your life?

What feels unresolved and unfinished within you as a man?

Where specifically do you feel worn out?

Where do you feel alone or isolated?

Where and in what ways do you feel misunderstood?

What are the biggest fears at play in your life right now?

What did you expect to be that you are not? What did you expect to **not** be that you are?

What did you expect to have that you do not? What did you expect to **not** have that you do?

Describe an early experience where you remember feeling, for perhaps the first time, like your life choices had direct impact on other people, that your choices had high-stakes consequences.

What was your internal reaction at the time?

What is your reaction now?

You are brave to consider these questions. It is a good practice to exercise your courage. Remember C. S. Lewis said that courage is not simply one of the virtues but the form of every virtue at the testing point. And Maya Angelou reminds us, “Courage is the most important of all the virtues, because without courage you can’t practice any other virtue consistently. You can practice any virtue erratically, but nothing consistently without courage.” Courage in this journey will take us a long way and bear much fruit.

Now, as we move from inward to beyond our own life, let's consider together the lives of other men. Leaders we have encountered in our politics, places of work, schools, or sports teams. Men in some position of influence who have not withstood the tests and trials. Fallen kings and fallen kingdoms.

Make a list of men you have experienced as fallen kings, men who experienced profound failure financially, emotionally, relationally, morally, or beyond.

What was entrusted to their care?

As best as you can tell, where do you sense that things went sideways?

Think about the men in authority over you in your various roles and responsibilities. What is it like to live under their leadership? What are the blessings? What are the challenges? Describe their personal blind spots and how those affect the way they offer leadership.

In *Becoming a King*, I suggest that to be made in the image of God is to be designed to become a king. In *Waking the Dead*, John Eldredge explains that we were meant to exercise a fierce mastery over our domain. “Like a foreman runs a ranch or like a skipper runs his ship. Better still, like a king rules a kingdom, God appoints us as the governors of his domain. We were created to be the kings and queens of the earth (small *k*, small *q*).”**

We were all meant to rule over the realm in which we have say. Beginning with our own bodies, minds, and souls and expanding to the geography, relationships, and assignments entrusted to our care. Big or small, we all have a kingdom.

How is your kingdom? Take some time to sincerely describe the state of the current kingdom entrusted to your care in as much detail as possible.

** John Eldredge, *Waking the Dead* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2016), 174.

How is the condition of your kingdom?

How are the hearts of those entrusted to your care?

Call to mind a place in your kingdom—a relationship or a role—that is not going well. Describe the situation.

What does it feel like to put words to that?

In our day and age, convenience often takes center stage. Many things we want seem to come quick and easy. Yet this thinking does injustice to the masculine soul and the process required for restoration. The best things in life aren't quick, cheap, or easy. Like a fine single-malt scotch, anything precious takes time, hard work, great care, and a participation with something greater than ourselves.

Make no mistake: the treasure at the end of this quest is worth every bit of energy invested. But it will take time, perhaps much more than you want or are willing to commit right now. A decade of transformation is a lot to ask of a man. Yet as I have spent over two decades sitting in the presence and counsel of older men much farther down the narrow road, what I consistently hear is that a decade of doing the work to become wholehearted is a small investment compared to the vibrant life that will come in its wake.

For now, I simply want to celebrate how far we have come. The trail goes as far and deep as you want to go. And surely it goes farther beyond my view. Again, I invite you to give yourself to this. You've come this far. You have a sense of both the quest's scope and the prize at the end. Don't shrink back. It's worth it.

Father, Jeremiah was one of your wild-eyed prophets entrusted with your message at a time in history when his civilization had, in very significant and heart-wrenching ways, lost its way. He cried out to those willing to listen,

Stand at the crossroads and look;
ask for the ancient paths,
ask where the good way is, and walk in it,
and you will find rest for your souls.
—Jeremiah 6:16

God, I confess I want more life. I want a life that is truly life. I want to know the good way. I want to walk a path that promises rest for my soul and an abundance of love, presence, and strength to offer those around me. I want to receive the restoration of my masculine soul. I want to risk trusting that my desire to be powerful is from you. It is the image of God set within me, as surely as the oak tree is set in the heart of the acorn. God, I ask that you would use this quest to restore my heart as a man. I want to become the kind of man to whom you, the Living God, can entrust the care of your kingdom. I give you permission to go every place you want to go in my life and my story for this quest. I give you access to every part of me. I choose to risk agreeing with who you are, what you are doing, and how you are doing it, beyond the ways I have come to know you up to this point. I give more of me to belong to more of you. I will take this risk, trusting that you will come and restore the man you meant when you meant me.

Further Excavation

(For a complete list of recommendations and links, go to BecomeGoodSoil.com/FurtherExcavation.)

Books:

David Brooks, *The Road to Character*
Richard Rohr, *Adam's Return*
Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*

Film/Video:

Bruce Almighty
Chernobyl
City Slickers
Mr. Holland's Opus
The Lion King
The Mask of Zorro
The Men Who Built America

BecomeGoodSoil.com Blogs:

“A Powerful Life”
“Breaking the Limits Placed on God in Our Lives”
“The Decade of 10,000 Hours”
“Fallen Kings, Fallen Kingdoms”
“Propped Up Kingdoms”
“What Did You Believe When You Woke Up This Morning?”

BecomeGoodSoil.com Podcasts:

040—Intensive Series (Episode 1 of 8)

Session 2

BECOMING A SON

Since we are the sons of God, we must
become the sons of God.

-George MacDonald

So that we would know for sure we are his true children,
God released the Spirit of Sonship into our hearts. . . . And
because we're his, we can access everything our Father has.

-Galatians 4:6-7, TPT

So don't you see that we don't owe this old do-it-yourself
life one red cent. There's nothing in it for us, nothing at
all. The best thing to do is give it a decent burial and
get on with your new life. God's Spirit beckons. . . . This
resurrection life you received from God is not a timid,
grave-tending life. It's adventurously expectant, greeting
God with a childlike, "What's next, Papa?" God's Spirit
touches our spirits and confirms who we really are.

-Romans 8:12-16, *The Message*

How have we learned the Father? It would be better for us
to know nothing about him than to have learned him wrong.

-George MacDonald

Introduction

Whatever else we encounter when we engage the life of Jesus, we encounter a man who is living fully as a Son. Sonship is the foundation of Jesus' life and it is intended to be the foundation of ours. Because of its foundational place, our identity as the beloved son is often the thread in our story where we endured the greatest harm and greatest loss. Simultaneously, experiencing God's love for us as his beloved sons is a frontier of the greatest possibility.

As we experience our secure place in our Father's heart, we will be able to bring our strength—rather than our questions—to the world.

Let's risk recovering this lost treasure of sonship along the ancient path of becoming a king.

Watch Session Two: Becoming A Son

Two-Minute Pause

God, I invite you into this space to participate in stillness with you. Here and now, I choose to recover my breath. I turn my attention and affection toward you, God, and what you have prepared for me in this time. I choose two minutes to breathe and center on you.

Consecration Prayer

God, I consecrate this journey to you. I bring every aspect of this experience under your care and into honest and transparent connection with you. I declare your rule and authority over my life and over every man participating in this adventure. I pray that you would make known your true heart. I choose to give you permission and access to my heart. I pray that you would raise up prayer warriors on my behalf, led by the Spirit of God, to agree with the full portion you have for me as a man in this. I choose to risk engaging with curiosity, an open heart, and an honest desire to become the man you meant when you meant me. I open my soul to you and ask that you break every limit I have placed on who you can be, what you can do, and how you can do it. I agree with who you are, what you are doing, and how you are doing it. I want more of me to be given more fully over to more of you. I choose to give you a chance to speak and move and breathe your breath into me through this experience. And I am asking that you would lead me as I consent to a process and choose to respond to your invitation to risk in courage, vulnerability, and love. I want my whole heart back. I invite you to anoint this time with your presence, your power, and your favor. And I ask that you reveal where and how you are leading me to become the kind of king to whom you can gladly entrust the care of your kingdom. Amen.

Big Ideas

“The hardest, gladdest thing in the world is to cry *Father!* from a full heart. . . . The refusal to look up to God as our Father is the one central wrong in the whole human affair; the inability, the one central misery.” –George MacDonald

Security in our identity as the beloved son of a Good Father is the core of masculine strength.

Our identity as sons has been assaulted in terrible and personal ways. Recovering our place of sonship is the foundation of becoming a trustworthy king.

Discussion Questions

1. George MacDonald suggests, “The hardest, gladdest thing in the world is to cry *Father!* from a full heart. . . . The refusal to look up to God as our Father is the one central wrong in the whole human affair; the inability, the one central misery.” Unpack this. How could crying out to God as Father be both the hardest and gladdest thing? What are the risks and what are the rewards of turning to God as Father?

2. How have you learned “father”? Take an honest inventory. Think of the male figures in your life growing up. The good and the bad, including your father and/or stepfather, your coaches, teachers, pastors, men held out as role models in media, perhaps fathers of your friends. Call to mind and make a list of the men who surrounded you. Without editing or filtering, what words would you use to describe the traits you found in those men?

3. How has God raised the condition of fatherlessness in your heart? Notice “what is not working” in your life as a signpost to the feeling of fatherlessness. What have you done with this part of your story?

4. What if it wasn't fundamentally up to you to make life work? If you knew that below and behind every challenge there was Someone stronger whose primary mission was to stand by you at the ready to offer strength, power, protection, provision, affection, and leadership—all from a place of intimate connection and genuine care—how would that change the way you are living today?

5. Pause for a few moments and think back over your story from the last decade or so. What are several examples of ways that God was working to father you, even if at the time you may not have had the capacity to receive or respond as a son?

Closing Prayer

Jesus, by your power and authority I break the agreements I have made with the lies in my story that are set against the truth of who you are. I break agreement with the lie that I am an orphan, that I deserve to be alone, that I am too weak of a man to be desired as a son, that I am a disappointment of a son to my Father in heaven.

[Pause and observe what other lies come to your mind that you want to renounce.]

And in the place of these lies, I agree with the truth of who you truly are and who you long to be in my life. I receive afresh a spirit of sonship. I crucify the self-sufficient life, and I crucify independence. I choose instead to receive the resurrection life of Jesus Christ and union with you. I choose to become what I already am, your beloved son. I choose to receive you as my True Father. I unite my heart with your heart and receive the full portion of my inheritance as your son. In the place of fear, I receive an increase of faith. In the place of scarcity, I receive your abundance. In the place of self-sufficiency, I receive the strength of total dependency upon your Life rising up within me. I choose to be infused with the same love you offer your son, Jesus Christ. I am your son. You are my Father. I receive you as my Father and ask that you would father me today and every day going forward.

Amen.

DIGGING DEEPER

In order to excavate how we have learned father in our soul, we must increase in awareness and take stock of our response to this question: “What’s not working?” This often leads to a treasure trail of symptoms that, when deeply excavated, will expose the condition of fatherlessness that exists in the depths of our core beliefs.

No doubt woven through many men’s stories are positive pieces of healthy and true fathering. Yet in order to restore the full portion of what God intended for us as his sons, we have to be both courageous and honest to take full inventory of what has been lost, stolen, and surrendered in this category of “father.” Remember, as I unpack more deeply in the book, the primary place we establish our core beliefs about God as our father is how our earthly Father responded to us when we did something wrong.

For this exercise, start with your observations regarding “what’s not working” in your life. Put words to the message that has seated in your soul below the specific response to something not working. Next, go deeper still, identifying how this particular message was delivered to you or enforced in your life by a particular man in your story. Take an inventory of your story and what comes to mind.

What’s Not Working?	What Core Message Is Below This?	What Man in My Life Contributed to This Message?
<i>I feel fat, weak, and behind in my health and fitness</i>	<i>I am only a real man if I am in excellent physical shape</i>	<i>Elementary gym teacher / baseball coach</i>

Where and when, if ever, did fatherlessness enter your story?

What experiences in your life have surfaced the feeling of fatherlessness?

One close friend confessed, "I feel behind just about everywhere. I feel behind in my marriage, behind in my finances. I even feel behind in my landscaping!" It was a courageous confession of a sentiment that whispers and even taunts the hearts of men. How about you? Where do you feel behind?

Consider your relationship with your heavenly Father as it is today. How would you describe your level of daily intimacy and friendship with God as Father and your reliance on him and his leadership?

What is the Father wanting to say to you today as his son? Pause right now to ask. **Father, what would you like to say to me? How do you see me right now?**

How regularly and to what degree do you anticipate your Father's goodness coming to you? In other words, when something goes sideways, what is your knee-jerk reaction, emotionally and internally?

Pay attention to the thoughts that run through your head and the sentences that leave your mouth. What do they tell you about the degree to which you are feeling unfathered?

How often do you have a profound, confident, and even overwhelming sense of God's goodness, provision, and abundance coming for you just around the corner?

Think of a moment in your life when you experienced deep and true affection. How regularly and to what degree do you experience that kind of affection toward you now, in a way that you would directly attribute to the Father-heart of God pursuing you?

Try to describe how Jesus experienced the Father as shared in chapter two of *Becoming a King*.

Describe what you believe to be God's **intention** in being a Father to you. Start with a list of attributes you would hope would be associated with the **best** version of father you can imagine.

Contrast this to how you live day to day. Describe the way you currently believe God to be as a Father based on the choices you make and the details of your actions. Perhaps it's a fierce commitment to refuse help from anyone. Perhaps it's allowing success or failure in your work to be the most powerful variable in how you view yourself as a man. Perhaps it's how you feel about your sexuality and a struggle to bring integrity and intimacy in relationship. Describe the disparity between your experience of life and the description you wrote of God as an ideal Father.

Let's go deeper still. What if God as Father is, even in this very moment, wanting to bring a deeper revelation of his true heart to your deepest need, fear, and shame? Let's start with this simple onramp: what are you shouldering in your life right now? Make a list of every person and everything you currently feel like you need to carry.

Once you have thoroughly completed that list, pause for sixty seconds. Take it in.

Father, what are you wanting to say to me about this list, both generally and specifically?

Before we move on, it would be both courageous and cunning to make an honest effort to forgive the wrongdoing of specific men who have caused harm in our lives and receive forgiveness for what we have done to ourselves and to others in response to how we were failed. Forgiveness is one of the greatest weapons for unleashing God's power and removing the shackles the adversary intends to use to keep our masculine hearts pinned down.

Brothers, we must choose to risk believing more deeply that we are the chosen, sought-after, sons of God the Father. If, starting today, you believed you were a son and chose to respond to the Father's pursuit and truly become a son, what would change?

[Important note: Friends, for some of you, this deep work may surface not only places where you lacked fathering, but also places where you lacked mothering. Sonship is rooted in receiving both the fathering and the mothering we so deeply need from God. Fathering is intended to heal the deep need for validation. And it is only through this doorway that we can then explore receiving mothering and healing the deep need for self-worth. It will all come, in time. And rest assured, I provide more resources in *Further Excavation* below. However, for now, I invite you to stay in this and receive the full portion God has for you in receiving God as Father.]

We'll finish this together.

In the remarkable relationship between a determined athlete named Derek Redmond and his father, Jim, we have a modern-day parable of the eternal reality of sonship. From the mid-1980s to the early '90s, Derek Redmond was one of the fastest runners in the world. In 1985, at the age of nineteen, he smashed the British national record in the four-hundred-meter race. Equally remarkable to Derek's track-and-field story is his relationship with his father. Jim not only trained and coached his son, he was also his closest friend.

Derek's greatest dream was to win an Olympic medal—any medal—but repeated injuries encumbered his quest. Despite tremendous adversity, Derek was undaunted in his pursuit. In 1992, he achieved the honor of representing Britain in the Olympics in Barcelona. Given his age and the extent of his injuries, this would be his last chance to realize the elusive dream of an Olympic medal.

Advancing toward the finals, Derek's body was holding up well enough and his great heart was carrying him forward; there was just four hundred more meters between him and achieving his dream.

Picture him in your mind's eye poised at the starting blocks in front of 65,000 fans, awaiting the report of the starter's gun. His father, Jim, is positioned at the very top of the stadium for the best view of his son and this final race.

The starter's gun fires and Derek quickly seizes the lead. He rounds the first bend and heads down the backstretch. Given his speed and the size of his lead, it looks like he will be a shoo-in for the gold.

Suddenly, Derek hears a pop in his right hamstring. His body instantly recoils, and—in the words of the ESPN coverage of the race—it looks as if he has been shot. Derek collapses in a heap on the track, clutching his torn right hamstring. In a moment, all hopes of any Olympic medal evaporate. A medical personnel unit quickly makes its way to an injured Redmond. And then, we have this:

At the same time, Derek's father, Jim, seeing his son in trouble, races down from the top row of the stands, sidestepping people, bumping into others. He has no credentials to be on the track, but all he thinks about is getting to his son, to help him up. "I wasn't going to be stopped by anyone," he later tells the media.

As his father rushes toward the track, Derek begins to rise. All the other runners have long since completed the race, but he is determined to finish. With his great heart lifting his broken body to his feet, Derek begins hobbling down the back stretch. The crowd that had been silent begins to rise as well, until the crowd is on its feet—tears and cheers fill the stadium as all hearts rally behind this one man.

Derek's father finally reaches the brink of the stadium floor. He hurdles over the barricade and runs to the aid of his son. Security guards immediately respond in force, endeavoring to overtake him and block his path, but Jim won't be stopped. "That's my son out there, and I'm going to help him."

The intimacy of what follows can barely be captured in words. Derek's father reaches him on the final turn toward the finish line. Jim wraps his arms around his son's waist. Derek turns to his dad, sobbing. Jim whispers in the tender and strong love of a father, "I'm here, son. We'll finish this together."

After the race, reporters clamor for an interview with Derek and Jim. With tear-filled eyes, Jim shares his heart for his son: "I'm prouder of him than I would have been if he had won the gold medal. It took a lot of guts for him to do what he did."*

* Rick Weinsberg, "94: Derek and Dad Finish Olympic 400 Together." ESPN.com. <http://www.espn.com/espn/espn25/story?page=moments/94> (retrieved May 29, 2018).

Pause and let the significance of this story sink into yours. This is a picture of your Father and his heart for you. Your Father who will stop at nothing to meet you in your ache and need. He will disregard all religious protocol and every obstacle in your story that contradicts his love in order to find you, to come alongside you, and to walk with you as together you finish the ancient path that leads to life.

ASSIGNMENT: Access a link to this story of Derek Redmond's final Olympic race at BecomeGoodSoil.com/Redmond. Watch the video to experience the pursuit of Derek Redmond's father as a doorway to receive the fathering heart of God acting with the same loving strength on your behalf. Pause after watching and take a few minutes of stillness to receive the Father's invitation to *finish this together*.

When the student is ready, the teacher will appear. When the *son* is ready, the *Father* will appear. The Scriptures offer an onramp to life as it was meant to be. "I will be a Father to you and you will be my son." He is initiating this invitation to sonship, simply hoping you will respond.

* 2 Corinthians 6:18.

What if your Father is saying, **"Son, are you ready to become who you were born to be? We can finish this together."** What would it look like right here in your present circumstances to make a greater shift to becoming a son and to receiving God as Father?

In *Becoming a King*, I share one of the most transformational moments of my life when, in the midst of a terrible crisis, I chose to risk becoming a son and opening my heart to receive God as Father for the very first time. I made a specific commitment to pray every day for 365 days, “God, I am your son and you are my Father. I invite you to father me today.”

While it was over a decade ago, I have yet to miss a day asking God to father me.

I want to invite you to take this bold and risky step down the ancient path of becoming. To pray, right here and now, risking to receive God as your True Father. Let this prayer be an actionable way for you to receive love, provision, affection, and care more deeply than you ever have.

Father, I am aware that I have learned you wrong in many ways. I have been unable to receive you as you truly are and as you long to be in my life. I break the agreements I have made with lies about what you are like.

[Take some time to pray into these agreements as they surface, agreements about being an orphan or a slave.]

I break agreements with believing that life is up to me. I break the agreement that I am on my own. I break the agreement that I have to come through for people so that I can be loved. I break the agreement that it is too late. I break the agreement that I'll never be free from addiction. I break the agreement that I will never be free from fear.

These are examples. Let your heart speak. What are the agreements that need to be broken in your life? Pause, name them here, and break agreement with them through the authority of Jesus Christ.

Since we are the sons of God, we must indeed become the sons of God.

Father, since we are the sons of God, I choose to risk believing you are opening a path for us to become the sons of God. I confess I have needs and questions, and I want to risk believing that you have answers and even more, a home for my masculine heart. So many parts of me don't yet know how to live as a son and don't yet know how to respond to and receive a father. I choose to venture into the unfamiliar and I'm asking you to give me the grace for more of my heart as a son to come home to more of you as my Father.

I confess I've taken hits in the seat of "father" in my story and in my soul. There has been a war against my soul and against the seat of sonship in my heart. God, I choose to forgive, and through granting forgiveness, release those who have failed me through omission, withholding, misunderstanding, violence, and abuse. [Allow your heart to come up; be honest with the loss. Forgiveness is a powerful force; it's the power of heaven to release the sentence and the claims against us, to free our hearts to know God and continue on the journey. Be specific in praying through who and what need to be forgiven in the seat of father in your story.] I choose to forgive, not to minimize but to forgive and entrust these men and these pieces of my story to you. Every one of those men needed a father, and has a story, much of which I do not know; but I release them to you, God.

I break the agreements I have made with every lie in this place in my masculine soul. I break the agreement that I'm on my own. I break the agreement that it's all up to me. I break the agreement that it's too late, or that you are not enough for me, God. I break the agreement that I'm not enough. I break the agreement that the chasm between me and you, much of which I've contributed to, is beyond repair. I break the agreement that I will never be understood, that I'm alone. I break every agreement that is not true to who you are and who you want to be in my life, and in those places I agree to learn you as you truly are. I ask that I would unlearn the ways I've learned you at the hands of evil and brokenness. And I ask, God, that you would teach me to know you as you are; that I would be your son and you would be my Father; that you would restore the gladness that is available—modeled in Jesus' life and made available through this all-surpassing power through his death and resurrection. I choose to risk opening my heart to you. I claim this promise:

I can know for sure that I have been adopted as God's very own son, because he has sent his Spirit to me, who empowers me to cry out in need of a father. Father, I confess I do need you. And I celebrate the promise, that this privilege of intimate conversation with you, God, makes it plain that I am not an orphan and I am not a slave. I am a child of God. And even more than being a son, I am an heir, and through Christ I am given complete access to your inheritance! (my paraphrasing from Galatians 4:5–7)

Therefore, I put off the self life. I choose to reject self-sufficiency, self-determination. In their place I am asking for strength through dependency. I ask that you would replace fear and shame with confidence in my full rights and privileges as your son. I am asking for restored relationship with you. Father, I ask for increasing trueness and authentic relationship with myself; with you, Father; and with others. I ask that you would unite my heart with your heart, that we would be one, Father, as you are one with Jesus; that I would see what you're doing, and through your power and strength I would live as you live and have the joy that you have. Father, I pray that you would give me the capacity to see myself as you see me. Lead me in a fresh and invigorating season of sonship. I ask that, in particular and unique ways, you would reveal the path of increasing capacity to become the son I was intended to be. And give me the eyes to see the ways you have been fathering me, the pieces that have come to me over the years, some of which I've missed. Let me see the treasures. Show me the way. I am your son. You are my Father, and I ask that you would father me today.

Further Excavation

(For a complete list of recommendations and links, go to BecomeGoodSoil.com/FurtherExcavation.)

Books:

Brennan Manning, *Abba's Child*

Robert Ruark, *The Old Man and the Boy*

Film/Video:

The Encounter Collection

<https://www.danielchesnut.com/Encounter-Collection>

The Important Places

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aSE28DSsgz0>

WildAtHeartBASIC.com, Session 10, "Sonship"

BecomeGoodSoil.com Blogs:

"The Decade of Sonship"

"How Have You Learned the Father?"

"Quick"

BecomeGoodSoil.com Podcasts:

013—Quick

Session 3

BECOMING THE MAN YOU WERE BORN TO BE

There are many people who think they want to be matadors, only to find themselves in the ring with two thousand pounds of bull bearing down on them, and then discover that what they really wanted was to wear tight pants and hear the crowd roar.

-Terry Pearce

We are all under the same mental calamity; we have all forgotten our names. We have all forgotten what we really are.

-G. K. Chesterton

Let him call me what he will. The name shall be precious as my life. I seek no more.

-George MacDonald in *Unspoken Sermons*

It is the image of God reflected in you that so enrages hell; it is this at which the demons hurl their mightiest weapons.

-William Gurnall

What can be more a man's own than this new name which even in eternity remains a secret between God and him? And what shall we take this secrecy to mean? Surely, that each of the redeemed shall forever know and praise some one aspect of the Divine beauty better than any other creature can.

-C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*

The giving of the white stone with the new name is the communication of what God thinks about the man to the man. . . . The true name is one which expresses the character, the nature, the meaning of the person who bears it. It is the man's own symbol—his soul's picture, in a word—the sign which belongs to him and to no one else. Who can give a man this, his own name? God alone.

-George MacDonald, *An Anthology*

We were built to count, as water is made to run downhill. We are placed in a specific context to count in ways no one else does. That is our destiny.

-Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*

Introduction

After the fall of humanity, Adam confesses, “I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid” (Genesis 3:10). Adam’s story is every man’s story. Much of who we have become is who we are not. We are haunted by fear of failure and exposure. In response to an often unnamed dread, we form caricatures to help us deny our vulnerability and survive through self-sufficiency.

Yet the self-protective men we have become are not the truest us. The truest reality of the masculine soul is that we are inheritors of original goodness, magnificently made in the image of God. The ancient path of becoming a king invites us to an ever-deepening awareness of the self-protective man, so that what is fear-based in us can be put to death. It is only in the process of putting to death our false self that we can become the men we were made to be. *Who am I becoming?* is one of the central questions we must ask in order to get to the heart of the matter.

What if the details of our image-bearing have been forged as a unique masterpiece? What if we reflect aspects of God’s heart that no one else exactly reflects, a destiny to offer a unique strength to our community and beyond? What a treasure this would be, indeed.

In Revelation, John describes a vision of a white stone with a new name written upon it, a true name from God, a name that expresses the totality of who each human is, before and beyond this age of history. If we are to ever become who we were meant to be, we must become our true name. Recovering our Name delivers us from the agony of an unvalidated soul and releases within us a true and genuine strength to bring to the world. Jesus promised that from the death of the false man emerges a greater life, an indestructible life, a life of ever-deepening union with God. A life worth living. A life of becoming a king by becoming our true name.

Watch Session Three Video: Becoming the Man You Were Born to Be

Two-Minute Pause

God, I invite you into this space to participate in stillness with you. Here and now, I choose to recover my breath. I turn my attention and affection toward you, God, and what you have prepared for me in this time. I choose two minutes to breathe and center on you.

Consecration Prayer

God, I consecrate this journey to you. I bring every aspect of this experience under your care and into honest and transparent connection with you. I declare your rule and authority over my life and over every man participating in this adventure. I pray that you would make known your true heart. I choose to give you permission and access to my heart. I pray that you would raise up prayer warriors on my behalf, led by the Spirit of God, to agree with the full portion you have for me as a man in this. I choose to risk engaging with curiosity, an open heart, and an honest desire to become the man you meant when you meant me. I open my soul to you and ask that you break every limit I have placed on who you can be, what you can do, and how you can do it. I agree with who you are, what you are doing, and how you are doing it. I want more of me to be given more fully over to more of you. I choose to give you a chance to speak and move and breathe your breath into me through this experience. And I am asking that you would lead me as I consent to a process and choose to respond to your invitation to risk in courage, vulnerability, and love. I want my whole heart back. I invite you to anoint this time with your presence, your power, and your favor. And I ask that you reveal where and how you are leading me to become the kind of king to whom you can gladly entrust the care of your kingdom. Amen.

Big Ideas

Driven by the fear of being exposed as less than we think we should be, we manufacture a false self to avoid shame and secure some sense of power and validation.

This false self, commonly known as “the poser,” is an elaborate fig leaf, self-constructed, which allows us to arrange for a life apart from needing God.

Through opening ourselves to being fully known, fully seen, and fully loved by God, we can dismantle the poser and become our true name, recovering both wholeheartedness and a life rooted and empowered through ever-growing union with God himself. Becoming our True Name is the next step in recovering our strength and finding deep and lasting joy.

Discussion Questions

1. Describe your false self, or yourself as “the poser.” How and where do you hide?

2. What do you fear the people closest to you would say if they were asked to describe you?

3. Where are you bringing your question “Am I a real man?” to be answered by the people and roles you have within your kingdom?

4. Observe your motives and how you are currently engaging with your family, in your work, and beyond. Where are you living *for* identity and where are you living *from* it?

5. Describe your true self. Who is the man you are meant to be but are not yet? What is he like?

Closing Prayer

Jesus, the apostle Paul declares in Ephesians that through your death and resurrection there is incomparably great power at work in our land. It is a mighty strength that was released when you conquered death for our sake. Scripture assures us that you, God, are seated far and above every ruler and authority of this world. You are seated above every power and dominion of this world. And you hold the power to name us, above every name or title that can be given, not only in this world but in the world to come.

Jesus, you alone have the power to bestow my true name. I am asking to participate with you in the courageous work of dismantling my false self and recovering my true self, the true name you intended since before the creation of the world. God, I want to become the kind of person who can declare with confidence, I open my soul to you and you alone to receive my true name. And I ask you for the grace to participate with you in the life-transforming process of becoming my true name.

DIGGING DEEPER

IDENTITY "I AM"	VALIDATION "I CAN"
SHAME "I'M NOT"	FEAR "I CAN'T"

As I unpacked further in the *Becoming a King* book, we are designed with an inherent need for validation and identity from a God eager and willing to bestow it. The masculine soul is asking two fundamental questions that God intends to answer with a resounding YES:

- "Yes, my son, you do have what it takes. Yes, you are the real deal."
- "Yes, son, you bear my image. I see me in you."

Validation

Let's unpack the concept of validation.

Consider the question, "Do I have what it takes?" How and when have you brought this question to your world, looking for an answer?

Where has fear compelled you to believe that the answer to that core question is, “No, you don’t have what it takes”?

In what ways have you organized your life around the core fear that you do not have what it takes?

In contrast, how has your masculine soul been positively validated? In what ways has God shown you that you **do** have what it takes?

Call to mind a moment when you offered genuine strength from a place of secure validation. Capture that experience in a few words below. What was that moment like for you as a man?

Identity

Think of the questions, “Am I the real deal? Am I worthy of love and belonging?” How or when have you brought these questions to your world looking for an answer?

In what ways has **shame** compelled you to believe that the answer to that question is, “No, you are not the real deal; you are not worthy of love and belonging”? Remember that a nagging lack of self-worth almost always accompanies shame.

Call to mind a memory when you felt ashamed of being exposed as “less than” or “lacking.”

Now consider how God has revealed your worthiness of love and belonging. When have you had your question “Am I the real deal?” answered positively by God?

Call to mind a moment when you offered your strength from a place of pervasive self-worth and secure belonging. Capture that experience in some words below. What was it like for you as a man?

The False Self and the True Self

Describe your true self—the good and true man you know you are meant to be but have yet to fully become. What is he like?

ASSIGNMENT: Watch *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*. This brilliant film chronicles the story of a man becoming aware of his false self and, through encounter and process, becoming the true man he was born to be. Once you watch the film, come back to these questions:

1. Describe the Walter Mitty that you meet at the beginning of the film.

2. What are some ways in which you act or feel in the same manner as he seems to experience life?

3. What is his impact on others?

4. What elements in his childhood seem to contribute to the formation of his false self?

5. In what ways and through what means does he transform from his false self to his true self?

6. What is his impact on people in his world when he chooses to operate in love, from his true self?

The chart on the right side is a loose collection of words associated with the true self or the false self. Different teachers have used different words, all of which touch on the same essence. While some words might not be familiar, take some time to study this list. Read through the words one by one and wonder how they might relate to the ways the false self and true self find expression in your current story.

FALSE SELF	TRUE SELF
Poser	True man
Old man	New man
Bringing my question	Bringing my strength
Hiding to avoid fear and shame	Authentically risking being myself and being known
Love to get something	Love from overflow
Manipulates to control outcomes	Courage unhinged from outcomes
Fear of man	Courage in the face of fear
Change circumstances	Change me
Foundation is self	Foundation is God
Center of gravity is self	Center of gravity is God
Never enough	A peace that surpasses understanding
Lives outside to inside	Lives inside to outside
Unbridled strength	Strength under reign
Strength in service of self	Strength in service of God
Divergent in most of its ways	Convergent in most of its ways
Tends toward complexity	Matures toward simplicity
Idealized image of self	True self-awareness
Lives practical atheism in the self-life	Lives present-tense union with God
Programmed and habitual	Free to respond to God's initiative
Lives from a gifting model to earn love	Lives with wisdom's long view and a life rooted in God
Has a fixed mindset	Has a growth mindset
Concerned with externals	Oriented by motives of the heart
Lives reactively to circumstances	Lives out of deepening response to God and participates with him and his kingdom

When are you most operating out of the false self?

What do you hide behind?

When are you most operating out of the true self?

What “works” well for you that is primarily motivated by avoiding fear? By avoiding shame?

How have you been validated as a man? What things, people, or places have made you feel strong, powerful, and confident in who you are and what you bring?

How have you been invalidated or disqualified as a man?

In order to transition from the false self to the true self, it is helpful to think in these four categories:

- Awareness* of both the false and true self within us
- Disentangling* the false self from the true self
- Dismantling* the false self
- Restoring* the true self

In chapter three of *Becoming a King*, I shared the story of my intensity as a way of illustrating this critical concept: often both the true self and the false self express essential aspects of the image of God set within us. I explained that years of trying and failing to repent of my intensity helped me identify that this attribute of my personality is rooted in the unique *Imago Dei*, the image of God as it expresses itself in me.

I cannot repent of who I truly am in Christ. But I can repent of the false motives that energize a distorted expression of who I am meant to be. And through this repentance I can free my true self to live out of union with God and not in the service of self but rather in the service of love.

When the false self is co-opting the gift of my intensity, it leads to exhaustion, frustration, and self-hatred. When my true self is offering intensity in union with God, the fruit is forward movement in noble kingdom assignments and heroic love in relationship. The challenge is learning how to honor this God-given attribute while becoming more astute at recognizing when my false self is seizing control of its expression.

How about you? Take some time to think about several stories or illustrations of how a unique part of you has been expressed by your true self. Where have you seen that aspect of your character operate from a place of union with God in love?

Now think about several stories or illustrations of how the false self has controlled that aspect of your character. Where has your gifting operated self-sufficiently in an attempt to gain validation or make life work apart from union with God?

As we come to understand more and more the civil war between the true self and the false self, we begin to both appreciate and gain much insight from Paul's letter to the church in Rome.

I've taken Paul's remarkable passage in Romans 7 and 8 and inserted the terms "false self" and "true self" to help us see this civil war more clearly. Set aside time now to read this passage aloud twice.

After you have read it, use it as a guided prayer, asking the Spirit of God to speak to both the false self and the true self you find at work within you.

Romans 7:14–25; 8:1–4

(PARAPHRASE — THE MESSAGE)

My **FALSE SELF** is full of itself—after all, I’ve spent a long time in sin’s prison. What I don’t understand about myself is that my **TRUE SELF** decides one way, but then the **FALSE SELF** acts another, doing things I absolutely despise. So if my **FALSE SELF** can’t be trusted to figure out what is best for myself and then do it, it becomes obvious that God’s command is necessary.

I need something more! For if I know the law but still can’t keep it, and if the power of the **FALSE SELF** within me keeps sabotaging the best intentions of my **TRUE SELF**, I obviously need help! I realize that my **FALSE SELF** doesn’t have what it takes. My **FALSE SELF** can will it, but my **FALSE SELF** can’t do it. My **TRUE SELF** decides to do good, but my **FALSE SELF** doesn’t really do it; my **TRUE SELF** decides not to do bad, but then my **FALSE SELF** does it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don’t result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and my **FALSE SELF** gets the better of me every time.

It happens so regularly that it’s predictable. It’s reactive and deeply habitual. The moment my **TRUE SELF** decides to do good, my **FALSE SELF** is there to trip me up. My truest self truly delight in God’s commands, but it’s pretty obvious that the parts of me that are still the **FALSE SELF** do not join in that delight. My **FALSE SELF** covertly rebels, and just when my **TRUE SELF** least expects it, my **FALSE SELF** takes charge.

I’ve tried everything in my own strength and will, and nothing helps. I’m at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn’t that the real question?

The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does. He acted to set things right in this life of contradictions, this divided soul, where my truest self wants to serve God with all my heart and mind, but my **TRUE SELF** is pulled by the influence of **FALSE SELF** to do something totally different.

With the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah, that fateful dilemma is resolved. The soul is integrated and made true. Those who enter into Christ’s being-here-for-us no longer have to live under a continuous, low-lying black cloud. A new power is in operation. The Spirit of life in Christ, like a strong wind, has magnificently cleared the air, freeing you from a fated lifetime of brutal tyranny at the hands of death through the **FALSE SELF**.

God went for the jugular when he sent his own Son. He didn’t deal with the problem as something remote and unimportant. In his Son, Jesus, he personally took on the human condition, entered the disordered mess of struggling humanity in order to set it right once and for all. . . .

Becoming Your True Name

Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it.
 –Revelation 2:17

Let's risk exploring your name in God's kingdom. What makes you come alive? What stories? What adventures? What roles? What experiences have moved you most in your life? When have you felt most **you**?

In order to recover our true name, we must also dismantle the lies that have been spoken over us. Remember, we cannot live beyond our identity. In the long run, we will become who and what we have come to believe about ourselves. As we venture out to become our True Name, we must also become astute students of the false names and false identities we have lived under, identities like "I am an addict" or "It's too late." These simply are not true.

What false names and false identities have you come to believe about yourself and now live under?

I remember watching the film *Dances with Wolves* for the first time. It spoke to me deeper than words. I couldn't have told you at the time, but God was validating a part of my true self that I had yet to recover. Over a decade later, I found myself on an archery hunt deep in the wilderness of Colorado, walking through an untouched high western meadow. My heart leapt as I realized I felt like I had walked into the landscape of that film. It was another moment when God was reminding me who he uniquely made me to be.

God is always working to recover what has been lost. Over the past two decades, God has steadily engaged me in the process of recovering my true name. Speaking through historical figures, films, biblical stories, chance encounters with strangers, and landscapes that have resonated deep within my soul, he is steadily revealing the white stone with a new name written upon it: my soul's picture, intended to be known between God and me alone.

What do you hope people would say of the man you are becoming and your impact in the world?

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,
 for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet,
 till her vindication shines out like the dawn,
 her salvation like a blazing torch.
 The nations will see your vindication,
 and all kings your glory;
 you will be called by a new name
 that the mouth of the LORD will bestow.
 —Isaiah 62:1–2

ASSIGNMENT: Take time to gather representative images or words through which God has spoken to you regarding your true name. Either in physical form or digital, begin to create a portrait of your white stone. Begin with the characters who most deeply strike you in the movies you love. Perhaps it's a picture of someone from a compelling historical narrative, a Bible verse, an awe-inspiring landscape, or words of affirmation shared with you by another. Beginning with the first part of my name spoken by God through a historical narrative, I created a specific journal dedicated to collecting these treasures over time. This is an ongoing process which can be contributed to in the years ahead. But for now, what stories, pictures, experiences, Scriptures, dreams, heroes, films, and words have been whispered to you by God in your inmost places? Take the time to establish the beginnings of recovering your new name in some particular place which you can return to over time.

Further Excavation

(For a complete list of recommendations and links, go to BecomeGoodSoil.com/FurtherExcavation.)

Books:

Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly*
Frederick Buechner, *Son of Laughter*
John Eldredge, *Waking the Dead*
Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*
C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*
C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*
George MacDonald, *Unspoken Sermons*
Parker Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*

Film/Video:

The Secret Life of Walter Mitty

Wild at Heart BASIC—Session 5

WildAtHeartBASIC.com

The Kid

The Last Samurai

Dances with Wolves

Jerry McGuire

Les Misérables

Groundhog Day

Patch Adams

Gladiator

BecomeGoodSoil.com Blogs:

“Cultivating a Love Language” (video)

“The Gospel as Initiation” (video)

“I Am His Favorite”

“Impossible Possible”

“What Is Your Epitaph?”

“Who Are You Becoming?”

“Wild, Unfettered, and Free”

BecomeGoodSoil.com Podcasts:

003—Your Question or Your Strength?

012—Your New Name

016 - Dismantling the Fig Leaf (Episode 1 of 2)

017 - Dismantling the Fig Leaf (Episode 2 of 2)

041—Intensive Series (Episode 2 of 8)