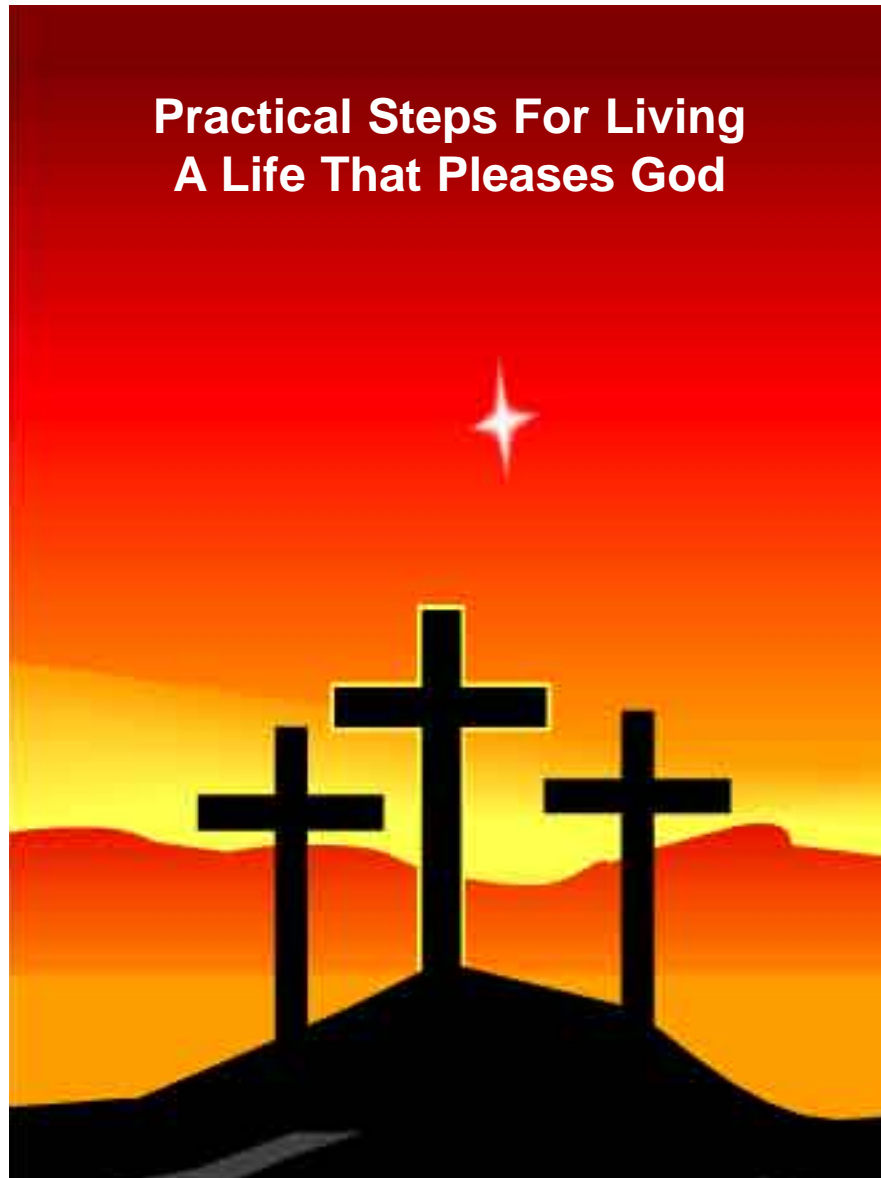


Lifebytes:

4. Blazing A Trail



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Dear Friends,

We hobbled down from the mountain ridge in painful baby steps. The three-thousand-foot climb was half of a 16-mile round trip. Eight hours of hiking had taken its toll on Sue and me. Each excruciating step marked another foot closer to the Perez home in Cimarron. A month earlier, Taylor Perez had taken me up the mountain on an ATV. The drive hadn't taken long, and with the motor doing all the work, the trip had been easy! But on this return visit, I wanted Sue to enjoy with me the panoramic beauty of the San Juan Mountains. So we had decided to hike to the top.

From the Perez's log home the hike began along a dirt road that passed through Ponderosa pine forests interspersed with vibrant, fall-colored aspen groves. Halfway up, we broke out onto a high prairie from which we could see for the first time our goal, the mountain crest. As we gazed up I told Sue, "The rest of the way will be the equivalent of climbing the World Trade Center to get there!"

We were already feeling the effects of effort and elevation. The ascent to come was steeper than anything we had yet encountered on the trail. But, as you may have experienced yourself, there is something that makes you want to *reach the goal*.

When you're still on the way up, you can always change your mind. It's on the return that you can't give up. With our combined ages of 114 years, we weren't sure we could still succeed. I was prepared to turn around any time Sue indicated she couldn't go on any further. But, if you know Sue, perseverance is her middle name.

Somewhere along the steep ascent, we got on the wrong trail. It was time to

pray for God's guidance. The rocky path kept leading us upward, yet further away laterally from our objective. We neared an impassible cliff that rose several hundred feet. Then, most unexpectedly, we spied another trail that led us along the base of the cliff. This narrow path intersected the original trail to the top we'd lost earlier! It was at this moment that the Holy Spirit gave us powerful insight into the Hebraic Restoration.

Breathing heavily but relieved to be back on the right trail, we could look down to where we had been several hours before. Then I heard in my spirit,

"Someone before you blazed these trails. They found the perfect places for the switch-backs to make the ascent easier. The continued use of the trails has kept them open for your use. Taylor showed you the top of the mountain and the way to get there. Now you are taking someone else. Even though you got off the right trail, you prayed for guidance and pressed on. Your Father has wonderfully guided you back to the correct and only trail to reach the top.

"This is the way it is for you as you share the truths of the Hebraic Restoration. You are blazing a trail for the Church as extended spiritual family that those who first trusted in Jesus experienced. Where you can, you try to make it easier for people to understand the facets. Now, others are walking in the relational foundations and priorities. And these followers of Jesus will keep the trail open for others to follow."

That revelation stirred us to really want to get to the top. The hike and our visit with different families during our week away from home also helped clarify a problem I've been facing with a number of men in their 40's and early 50's. If you've read our book, *Restoring the Early Church*, you may recount the stages men must go through in order to

be fully useful to our Father. It dawned on me how many men we are meeting are passing through the most difficult stage of their development, the Wounded Male. I needed to help blaze a trail for them through a season that every man must face.

[Adapted from *The Masculine Journey*
by Robert Hicks]

The Hebraic understanding of the stages of male development and the importance of wise response to aging are foreign to the Hellenist mindset found in the United States. Hellenists honor youth, energy, education, material success, and self-gratification.

To our Hebraic forefathers, manhood is reflected differently throughout the adult life cycle. “Adult life is not static,” writes Hicks. “It is a journey [a pilgrimage], and while on the journey the landscape is constantly changing... We expect our jobs, our marriages, even our faith to mean the same things as we get older. When we see changes in ourselves we think something is seriously wrong, rather than recognizing this is a normal part of the journey.”

Six distinct Hebrew words denoting “man” appear in the Older Testament. God addresses the individual to whom He is speaking by using a very particular Hebrew word for the stage the man is in.

Creational Male

The first stage, the **Creational Male** (*adam*), connotes mankind in general, both male and female. Having been made in the image of God, a person is fully capable of designing and creating what he puts his hand to. Due to his sin nature, however, his abilities can be used for evil as well as for noble intent.

Phallic Male

The **Phallic Male** (*zakar*) stage recognizes the innate sexual drive of maleness that impels and motivates a man toward an intimate relationship. God puts 10 times the testosterone in males that He does in females. A man’s true worship of God begins by not lusting after women, but holding himself for THE WOMAN our Lord gives him in covenant marriage.

This is a crucial stage for a man to learn complete responsibility to God. He must flee that which his hormones are driving him toward — sexual fulfillment — and wait for God’s gift in marriage. The degree to which a man learns this God-ordained lesson greatly affects his level of personal responsibility when he enters the later stages.

Men, Christians included, have squandered themselves in this stage to the extent that the end of adolescence, in which a man is considered ‘a responsible adult’, now extends into their mid-30’s. [In the 1960’s this stage ended about age 19.] And some men continue to be mired at this stage well into middle age!

The overwhelming prevalence of unrestrained sensuality in this culture has perpetuated the Phallic orientation. Too many men are mature in body but woefully immature in motivation, purpose and goals.

Warrior Male

The term *gibbor* as used in the Hebrew Scriptures refers to the **Warrior Male** who seeks to excel and to conquer. He is known by *what he does*. In our culture this generally represents a man from his late twenties into his forties — heading for the top in his occupation as he

scurries to acquire the trappings of recognition and material success. Without guidance from older mentors to refocus their energies onto relational priorities, the warrior male is often callous to the feelings of his wife and children. These relationships are sacrificed for pursuit of success in business and ministry. And emotional disregard can pave a direct path to the widespread anguish of divorce that often occurs during the Wounded Stage to follow.

Wounded Male

Eventually a man becomes a **Wounded Male** (*enosh*), especially as he enters his forties. Sadly, we've seen men fight on into their sixties, trampling everyone close to them. Although a certain amount of wounding does take place during the Warrior Stage, the Wounded Stage is that season during which God completes what He didn't accomplish in the man earlier.

For some men, especially those who have been blessed all along with wise counsel from older, wiser men, the wounding may be brief and mild. But ONLY through wounding can a man begin to understand the deep emotional needs of those around him. And ONLY through wounding can he become a loving servant who leads others in the character of Jesus.

Some refer to the hurt and confusion of the Wounded Stage as a mid-life crisis. But realize that this is a God-ordained season of transformation. It's like the process of a caterpillar becoming a butterfly. A number of symptoms epitomize a man in this stage:

- His marriage seems unfulfilling.
- His children don't seem to need him.
- His job is not satisfying.

- His body is starting to fall apart.
- He feels isolated and unloved.

Marooned in self-pity, he's often unable or even unwilling to reach out to those who could help him see God's purpose for this wounding. He's like a dog that's just been hit by a car. As you try to help him, you get snapped at. This season is truly his passage through the "*Valley of the Shadow of Death.*" And no man gets out of it until our Lord fulfills the changes He desires.

We've met men who have been in the Wounded Stage for over a decade. This is especially true for men who have anchored their identity in *what they do*, not in their love for their wife and family.

Men who have been in ministry during their Phallic and Warrior Stages find it extremely difficult to cooperate with the changes God is trying to make. Having been erroneously taught to identify themselves by "what they *do* for the Lord," their pride holds them in that mindset. No one can convince them that God needs to change their perspective and character. These men struggle to return to their Warrior identity because that's where their ego was most stroked.

The Wounded Male's wife is thoroughly mystified by this unknown quantity of dissatisfied, wallowing confusion, her husband. She may not have enjoyed his years as the driven warrior, but at least she'd learned to cope with him. But THIS is something new and probably very disturbing. So she tries to shore him up to be a warrior again, not realizing that that isn't God's plan.

Only by deferring to an older, wiser man who has already gone on to the succeeding stages can the Wounded Male come through with his family intact and

his availability to serve God's purposes in place. Who can help this needy man? Someone of experience who has either blazed the trail himself or has followed someone else's lead and pressed on to the succeeding stages can lead a younger man.

If you haven't dealt with unresolved bitterness against your earthly father before you enter the Wounded Stage, you'll be blasted by it soon. God will send older, wiser men to help you, but you'll drive them away by your lack of deference. Your bitterness toward your Dad will make it impossible for you to hear and follow the guidance they could give you. (More on this in a moment.)

Before we cover the Wounded Stage more completely, let's discuss briefly the last two stages God has planned for complete male development.

REMEMBER: NOT ALL MEN MAKE IT TO THE FINAL STAGES. STUBBORNNESS, REBELLION, AND JUST PLAIN FOOLISHNESS CAN HOLD THE MAJORITY SOME PLACE SHORT OF GOD'S PLAN. SOME KEEP GROWING OLDER BUT NEVER GET ANY WISER.

Mature Male

The Hebrew word *ish* defines the **Mature Male**. This reflects a man who has passed through his wounded period to become a person of dignity and integrity. At this stage of his life, a man is known by his character, by **who he is**. He is no longer known by **what he does**. Key qualities are recognizable in the Mature Male:

- He is genuinely sensitive to the feelings of others.
- When he sins he experiences heart sorrow for his actions and the hurt they have caused.
- He sacrifices for others with loving willingness.

- He is no longer the center of his own universe.
- He is dead to the ego gratification of the Warrior.
- He cooperates readily with other men to fulfill his role in the Kingdom.

Studies reveal that the frontal lobe of men's brains shrinks at about age 50. Therefore he is able to be more *affective*, or emotionally aware and expressive, in his motivation and responses. He's no longer as dogged about being right. Love, compassion, tenderness and mercy are regarded as valued character qualities. **This is the stage when all true ministry begins.**

A man entering the Mature Stage senses a renewal of life purpose. As mentioned earlier, he is no longer ruled by "what he does", but by "why" he should act or respond. No longer consumed by his own reputation, he doesn't fear what others think or say about him. **He lives 'prophetically', representing the interests of the Father as his character aligns more closely to the character of the Lord Jesus.**

Sage

A man addressed as a *zaken* or **Sage** is a gray-headed (or gray-bearded!) wise man, shepherd, or mentor respected for his judgments and sought out for guidance and understanding. Hebrew sages passed along wisdom in the *practical* realm, not the theoretical. They provided skillful advice for solving the current problems facing the community. In biblical times, arrival at the stage of sage represented culmination of a life worth living. This man's wife taught the younger women how to love their families (see Titus 2:3,4).

Sages are the men our Father chooses

to represent Him in caring for His children. As we wrote in our book, *[Pastoring By Elders](#)* (a free download), the sages were the pastor/shepherds of the earliest church. So developmental in wisdom and experience is a man's life journey that neither God nor those leading His sheep would entrust a man with representing the Father's loving concern at earlier stages.

Living as a sage is the pinnacle of a wise man's life. His has the privilege of walking as a physical representative of our Father's compassion for His people. Years of preparation through obedient trust and personal experience have equipped him to take on this responsibility.

Walking as a biblical elder, a sage, is not an "elected position", nor a hired vocation. Sages were already being sought for counsel and guidance, so that when Paul instructed Titus to appoint elders for the faith community, these men stood out as obvious candidates!

Blazing a Path Through the Wounded Stage

First, realize that no man gets through the Wounded Stage until all vestiges of strongholds are demolished in him. You can never fulfill the role of a Mature Man if footholds of Satan are still wrapped around your soul.

A sufficient fulfillment of the seven needs implanted within each person by God must be met in a man's life in God's way if he is to have capacity for others. The ruts of his old-nature motivation and enactment need to be filled in by wholehearted trust in Jesus and obedience to His will. [For further discussion, see our book, *[Demolishing Strongholds](#)*, a free download]. By the time he reaches

the Mature Stage, he no longer focuses on having his own needs met. Instead, he lives as a servant to others. In order to do this, he needs wholeness in our Lord.

What a Mature man does is no longer the driving force of his mind. His motives instead are directed by *why* he thinks and acts as he does. And, most importantly, his [love for God and for others will be his core value](#).

By the end of the Wounded Stage, a dramatic change has taken place in the way in which a man is used by God. Men who have been in ministry prior to the Mature Stage are involved in what we call "needs-based" ministries. Someone saw a need and developed an efficient system to meet that need. Needs-based ministries often recruit the Phallic and Warrior males for their energy, efficiency, and zealous eagerness, while Mature men and Sages are ignored as too old and lacking in innovation to "meet the need".

A Mature Male, however, is bent on being [obedience-based](#). His desire is, ["God, show me what You want, and I'll fulfill it."](#) The Mature and Sage ministry is based upon personal relationships, not organized systems. The counsel and care of the Mature man and the Sage flows out of his marriage. Others yearn to emulate the union and accord they see in him *and* his wife together. Their outreach begins with friendship and grows into true biblical fellowship.

Seven Realities To Experiencing God

[Adapted from *Experiencing God* by Henry Blackaby and Claude King]

A Mature man or Sage has built his trust in Jesus on the solid foundation of His Word. He's also taken the crucial step of *applying that Word* through the Spirit's

power to the situations and decisions in his life. This is far more than knowledge of Scripture. His wisdom has been nurtured to maturity in combining Scriptural truth with obedient trust.

These men have tasted God's mercy in forgiveness as they have humbled themselves before Him when they've fallen short of His will and His ways. They've rejoiced as they've seen Him use their lives to impact others for His praise.

A heart's understanding of the Seven Realities so clearly expounded by Blackaby and King in *Experiencing God* hallmark the walk of Mature Males and Sages. These two stages are wonderfully summarized in the following seven realities:

1. God is always at work around you.
2. God pursues a continuing love relationship with you that is real and personal.
3. God invites you to become involved with Him in His work.
4. God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways.
5. God's invitation for you to work with Him always leads you to a crisis of belief that requires faith and action.
6. You must make major adjustments in your life to join God in what He is doing.
7. You come to know God by experience as you obey Him and He accomplishes His work through you.

Over the years we've revisited the

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wisdom and hope so evident in this poem. We hope that it will capture for you the pilgrimage of the obedience-based man.

STEP BY STEP

"As thou goest, step by step I will open the way before thee" (Proverbs 4:12, New Translation).

Child of My love, fear not the unknown morrow,
Dread not the new demand life makes of thee;
Thy ignorance doth hold no cause for sorrow,
Since what thou knowest not is known to Me.

Thou canst not see today the hidden meaning
Of My Command, but thou the light shalt gain;
Walk on in faith, upon My promise leaning,
And as thou goest, all shall be made plain.

One step thou seest — then go forward boldly,
One step is far enough for faith to see;
Take that, and thy next duty shall be told thee,
For step by step thy Lord is leading thee.

Stand not in fear, thine adversaries counting,
Dare every peril, save to disobey;
Thou shalt march on, all obstacles surmounting,
For I, the Strong, will open up the way.

Wherefore go gladly to the task assigned thee,
Having My promise, needing nothing more
Than just to know, where'er the future find thee,
In all thy journeying I go before.

Frank J. Exley

Some Practical Steps for Warrior Men

When I was a new Naval Officer my first boss warned me, "Don't take your problems from work home with you." So when I had problems at work, I use to walk around outside our apartment building until I could clear my mind to

be Sue's husband and not a military man. The emotions you use up on your job can rob you of the emotional support your wife and family need.

It's critical that you ask God for discernment for why He gave you the job you have. You'll find that it has to do with you being *His servant* to the people you encounter in the course of your work.

I taught this principle to my son in the Spirit, Matt, while he was working in Atlanta. Matt, in turn, taught it to his co-worker and commuting buddy, Mark. As they drove out of Atlanta at the end of each work day, all thoughts of work ended at the toll booth eight exits from home. Mark's wife thanked Matt profusely that she and their kids could enjoy the *whole man* instead of a fretting job-occupied warrior.

During the Warrior Stage, success in the workplace often compels a man to use the same methods of organization and management at home. I tried that method with Sue when I was an up and coming Naval officer. Her response brought me up short: "I'm not one of your swabbies!" I never tried that again.

You *need* an older, wiser man in your life. In the Warrior and Wounded stages you are like a plane that's lost in the fog. Your over-emphasis on being known by what you accomplish is slowly destroying your intimate relationship with your wife and family. A lost plane depends on the help of radar to guide it. And *you* are that dependent on counsel and guidance from men who are in the Mature and Sage stages to help direct your path. (For expansion of this illustration, see our book, *Pastoring by Elders*, a free download.)

The need is so great yet so many older men are driven away by the lack of deference they deserve from younger

men. This is especially true of younger men who still have unresolved bitterness toward their earthly fathers. Too many tell me, "My Dad and I have straightened everything out." But I perceive the underlying agitation and tension in them. Deceiving themselves, these younger men resist the guidance older men would provide.

If you are one of these younger men, here's some breakthrough counsel for you: Go to your father, get on your face and ask his forgiveness for your attitudes. God NEVER made you judge of your Dad. Remember, you have the same strongholds that have hurt *his* relationships with others. You are *both* prisoners to the same demonic spirits. **HUMILITY, NOT JUDGMENT, WILL FREE YOU, AND POSSIBLY HIM AS WELL!** Isn't it time you were brothers in the Spirit?

Keep this in mind as well: It is *emotionally painful* for an older man to reach back to help younger men in the Wounded Stage and *not* receive the respect due him. That pain may ultimately cause him to give up trying to lend a hand.

Two passages of Scripture clearly address this issue:

*"We ask you, brothers, to **respect** those who are working hard among you, those who are **guiding** you in the Lord and **confronting** you in order to help you **change**"* (1 Thessalonians 5:12, JNT).

*"**Let yourself be persuaded** by the ones leading you and **submit** to them. They watch on behalf of your souls as those who will be **rendering an account**, in order that they may do this **with joy**, and **not groaning**, for this would be profitless to you"* (Hebrews 13:17, translated from Greek).

We want to conclude with this note:

The Wounded Stage is clearly

destroying so many households today. Hellenism has blinded those who yearn to follow Jesus to so much of what God has ordained for the development of males. But our Father in His mercy is illuminating the blazed trail back to what He requires of all men.

As an older man I can only do my best to share and role model the way back to what once was God's pattern of leading our families and faith communities. If you have been in ministry in the earlier stages or have your own business, you'll most likely find the Wounded Stage all the more dramatic and painful. BUT! Not impossible!

Your wife is a key indicator to your progress. If you humble yourself and purpose to walk with her in a way that

nurtures her feelings rather than trounces on them, your transformation will be that much easier. Also, older, wiser men are invaluable in your journey at this stage. Pray that our Father raise one or more up for you. If you find one, make it a joy for him to help you.

Please keep this in mind: All of our materials are designed to be *discussed with your spouse*, not just read on your own. Everyone who has discussed the materials *together* has found their cooperation with God's processes that much smoother. Those who have just read them alone, however, get nowhere!

Your servants,
Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz