

MAN ALIVE

TRANSFORMING YOUR 7 PRIMAL NEEDS
INTO A POWERFUL SPIRITUAL LIFE

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BEST-SELLING AUTHOR OF
THE MAN IN THE MIRROR



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P R E S S

MAN ALIVE

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Details in some anecdotes and stories have been changed to protect the identities of the persons involved.

A few concepts in *Man Alive* have appeared in various stages of development in earlier books, especially *Pastoring Men*, copyright © 2008, published by Moody, and *The Man in the Mirror*, copyright © 2000, published by Zondervan.

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*To Ed Cole, Hal Wilson, and Randy Chrastina,
my father-in-law and two brothers-in-law,
each uniquely a “man alive.”*

“Dr. Patrick Morley is arguably the world’s expert on what makes men tick. His thirty years of research on ministry to men in thousands of churches has given him a rich perspective on what it takes to build a powerful disciple-making ministry to men.”

—LEARY GATES, president, National Coalition of
Ministries to Men, and founder, Boldpath Life
Strategies

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POWERFUL, TRANSFORMED YOU

As stories began to emerge after the collapse of the World Trade Center towers, several survivors from the South Tower mentioned a courageous young man who mysteriously appeared from the smoke and led them to safety. They did not know who this man was who saved their lives, but this they remembered: wrapped over his mouth and nose was a red bandanna.

For seventy-six minutes the man in the red bandanna shouted orders and led people down a stairwell to safety. "I found the stairs. Follow me," he would say. He carried one woman down fifteen flights of stairs on his back. He set her down and urged others to help her and keep moving down. Then he headed back up.

A badly injured woman was sitting on a radiator waiting for help when the man with the red bandanna over his face came running across the room. "Follow me," he told her. "I know the way out. I will lead you to safety." He guided her and another group through the mayhem to the stairwell, got them started down toward freedom, and then disappeared back up into the smoke.

He was never seen again.

Six months later, on March 19, 2002, the body of the man with the red bandanna was found intact alongside firefighters in a

makeshift command center in the South Tower lobby under 110 stories of rubble.

Slowly the story began to come out. His name was Welles Crowther. In high school he was the kid who would feed the puck to the hockey team's worst player, hoping to give his teammate that first goal. He became a junior volunteer firefighter in Upper Nyack, New York, following in his dad's footsteps.

He was willing to go up
while everyone else was coming down.

Welles graduated from Boston College, where he played lacrosse, always with his trademark red bandanna. His father had always carried a blue bandanna.

After college he worked as an analyst on the 104th floor of the South Tower. He had a habit of putting change in his pocket in the morning to give to street people on his way to work.

Not long before September 11, Welles told his mother, "I don't know how much longer I can keep doing this work." He was restless for more. Crunching numbers for invisible clients just didn't seem like what he was born to do. He dreamed of becoming a firefighter or public servant.

On September 11, 2001, at the age of twenty-four, Welles Crowther became both. And also a hero, because he was willing to go up while everyone else was coming down.

THERE MUST BE MORE

This story touches a need deep inside me—something so primal that I find it hard to put into words. But it makes me yearn to feel more alive. And every man with whom I’ve ever shared it has felt the same way.

Like Welles, we all want to make a contribution and leave the world a better place. It is a primal need—one among many. By “primal,” I mean that as men we have a raw, restless energy that’s different from women. It needs to be channeled, chiseled, transformed.

Over the last four decades, I’ve met one-on-one with thousands of men over coffee, in restaurants, in offices, online, after Bible studies, or just hanging out at the racetrack—men like you. I’ve listened to their stories. I’ve heard what they said and didn’t say. Christian men know—or strongly sense—that we were created to lead powerful lives transformed by Christ.

But something is blocking them.

As men we have a raw, restless energy that’s different from women. It needs to be channeled, chiseled, transformed.

With a few inspiring exceptions, most men I talk to are confused about what a powerful, transformed life really looks like,

regardless of how much “I love Jesus” they’ve got. They have high hopes for what Christianity offers but little to show for it.

Their instincts are screaming, *There must be more!*

When men try to put into words what keeps them from feeling fully alive, they invariably describe one or more of these seven symptoms:

- “I just feel like I am in this thing all alone.”
- “I don’t feel like God cares about me *personally*, not really.”
- “I don’t feel like my life has a purpose—it seems random.”
- “I have a lot of destructive behaviors that keep dragging me down.”
- “My soul feels dry.”
- “My most important relationships are not working.”
- “I don’t feel like I’m doing anything that will make a difference and leave the world a better place.”

Do you feel the angst? Do you see yourself on this list? As you can see, as men our similarities dwarf our differences.

These inner aches and pains—these yearnings—correspond to the seven primal needs we’ll be exploring in this book.

THE HIGH COST OF BEING HALF ALIVE

I’d estimate that as many as 90 percent of Christian men lead lukewarm, often defeated, lives. They’re mired in spiritual mediocrity—and they hate it.

Despite their good intentions, after they “walk the aisle” and “pray the sinner’s prayer,” most men return to their seats and resume their former lives. They don’t take the next steps. Almost imperceptibly, one disappointment at a time, the world sucks out their new-found joy and passion for life in Christ.

Men lose heart, go silent, and anesthetize their pain. Then they give up, burn out, drop out, or just slowly drift away. It’s not just getting older—it’s an assassination of the soul.

Almost imperceptibly, one disappointment at a time, the world sucks out their newfound joy and passion for life in Christ.

And isn’t that exactly what the enemy of our souls wants? As Jesus said, referring to the devil, “The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy” (John 10:10).

No man fails on purpose. None of us woke up this morning and thought, *I wonder what I can do today to irritate my wife, neglect my kids, work too much, and have a moral failure.* But many of us will.

The statistics are jarring:

- 80 percent of men are so emotionally impaired that not only are they unable to *express* their feelings but they are even unable to *identify* their feelings.
- 60 percent of men are in financial trouble, paying only the monthly minimums on their credit card balances.
- 50 percent of men who attend church actively seek out pornography.

- 40 percent of men get divorced, affecting 1 million children each year.

The collateral damage is staggering. Tonight, one-third of America's seventy-two million children will go to bed in a home without their biological dad. But perhaps the greatest cost to the *physical* absence of fathers is the *practical* absence of mothers. Essentially, one person must now do the work of two. As a young woman who grew up without a dad said, "When my mom and dad divorced, I didn't just lose my dad. I also lost my mom because she had to work long hours to support us."

A man leaves. A woman weeps herself to sleep. A little girl prays, "God, why is my daddy always so angry with me?" The "men problem" has made Dr. Phil a very rich man.

There has to be a better way.

WHAT A MAN ALIVE DOES DIFFERENTLY

We all know a handful of Christian men we admire more than others. Their faith has become robust and powerful. They're living lives of influence because their primal needs have been fulfilled. They feel alive. Perhaps you have even witnessed their transformation from spiritual mediocrity. Likewise, you've known men who never seem to be able to get it together spiritually. What makes the difference?

To ask "What do men who lead powerful, transformed lives do?" would be misleading. Why? Because lukewarm men are just

as likely to do a lot of those same things—things like attend church, serve on a committee, and send kids to youth group.

The right question to ask is “What do men who lead powerful, transformed lives do *differently* than their lukewarm counterparts?” In business we call these the differentiated success factors.

The right question to ask is
“What do men who lead powerful,
transformed lives do *differently*
than their lukewarm counterparts?”

To imitate what *most* professing Christian men do wouldn't be helpful. What we want to know is “What are the guys who really have it together doing that the guys who live in spiritual mediocrity don't do?” What differentiates strong men from those guys who always seem to be on the outside looking in? What do successful Christian men do that unsuccessful Christian men fail to do?

WHAT'S GOING ON?

Jesus gave us a picture of both the problem and the solution in His well-known parable of the four soils. A sower went out and scattered the seed of God's Word on four kinds of soil: the hard path, the rocky soil, the thorny ground, and the good soil.

Most men today would recognize themselves in the first three soils where the seeds don't grow. Yet they honestly want to be like the

good soil where the fourth seed fell—to be men “who truly hear and understand God’s word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted” (Matthews 13:23).

What is keeping men’s lives hard, rocky, and choked with thorns when so many urgently want more and when God created us for more—much more?

Digging into the Word of God is easily the number one factor that differentiates men who have tapped into God’s power.

And positively, what do men who lead powerful, 100x lives do differently than their mediocre counterparts do? Jesus gave us an insight when He was speaking to a group of confused religious men. He said,

Your mistake is that you don’t know the Scriptures, and you don’t know the power of God. (Matthew 22:29)

Do you see it? Jesus made a direct connection between knowing the Bible and leading a powerful life. Lukewarm men are in error because they “don’t know the Scriptures” and therefore “don’t know the power of God.” Their *capabilities* don’t equal their *intentions*. Without the right training, their soil remains bare, stony, and full of weeds. And as you’ll soon see, by “know the Scriptures,” Jesus was talking about a lot more than mere head knowledge.

On the other hand, transformed men “truly hear and understand God’s word and produce a harvest.” Digging into the Word of God is easily the number one factor that differentiates men who have tapped into God’s power.

A POWERFUL LIFE

The word “power” in the Bible is the Greek word *dunamis*, from which we get *dynamite*.

An Army chaplain had a huge boulder in his backyard that he wanted to get rid of. He knew an Army explosives expert, so he asked for help. The chaplain suggested they put some dynamite on top of the rock to break it up.

The explosives expert laughed. He said, “If we just detonated explosives on top of the rock, it would barely take a chip out of the rock—and we would shatter every window within a two-block radius!

“But I can do anything with that rock you want. I can leave the rock intact and throw it anywhere in your backyard you want. If you want it split in two, I can do that. If you want me to pulverize it, I can make that happen. You just tell me what you want, and I can shape a charge that will direct the power of the blast to do whatever you want.”

That’s the kind of immense, versatile power that Jesus envisioned in making the statement in Matthew 22:29. He had the same thought in mind later when He said, “You will receive *power*

when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8, NIV, emphasis added).

In the Scriptures and in the Holy Spirit, you already have at your disposal the power—the dynamite—of God to change your life.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

What I’m proposing in this book is a huge promise—not from me, but from God’s Word. Jesus said it Himself:

My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.
(John 10:10)

That’s quite a promise.

The premise of this book is that you don’t have to settle for being half alive. You can heal each of your inner aches and pains. You can be the good soil. You can be transformed. God will change your life, one verse at a time.

It’s not self-indulgent for you to become the man God created you to be. In fact, it’s your destiny to lead a powerful life transformed by Christ—not without ongoing opposition, but equipped and trained with the power to prevail.

You don’t have to settle for being half alive.

I'm going to show you how God has provided ways for you to transform that raw, restless energy you feel into a powerful spiritual life. In each of the following chapters we're going to flesh out one of these seven primal needs:

1. To not feel like you have to do this alone.
2. To believe—really believe—that God loves and cares about you personally.
3. To understand how your life has a purpose—that your life is not random.
4. To break free from the destructive behaviors that keep dragging you down.
5. To satisfy your soul's thirst for transcendence, awe, and communion.
6. To love and be loved without reservation.
7. To make a contribution and leave the world a better place.

We'll explore how it feels when it's not going right, what makes it so hard, and what to do about it.

We are men unwilling to settle
for spiritual mediocrity.

I'm praying that God will satisfy your hunger for a powerful, transformed life and supernaturally elevate you to a whole new level of feeling alive from which you refuse to return.

We are part of something bigger than ourselves, you and I. We share a common bond. And there are others too—millions of us.

Everywhere. Men unwilling to settle for spiritual mediocrity. Men unwilling to settle for anything less than becoming fully alive.

Let's go get it.

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. "As men we have a raw, restless energy that's different from women. It needs to be channeled, chiseled, transformed" (page 5). Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer.
2. In your experience, what do men who lead powerful, transformed lives do differently than men who are stuck in spiritual mediocrity?
3. The promise of this book is that you can lead a powerful life transformed by Christ—you don't have to settle. Which of the seven "symptoms" (page 13) do you most identify with, and what would you like to see change?

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