

OUT OF THE WILD



Becoming Men On A Mission From God

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Out of the Wild: Becoming Men On A Mission From God
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◆ CHAPTER ONE ◆**INTRODUCTION**

From the very beginning, all men were created by God for a purpose. Throughout our lives, we are shaped by experiences comprised of victories, struggles, joy and sadness. It is within these experiences that God develops the characteristics that can be used for His purposes.

They *can* be used. It is not guaranteed that they *will* be.

When we begin life God provides all of us with two incredible gifts – a life to live and free will to make our own choices.

Of the choices that we make throughout our lives, there is one choice that comes directly from Him and has eternal consequences. Our response to this choice determines to what extent, if any, God will use our lives to impact others in a way that is eternally significant.

The choice that He presents to us is incredibly important. It is, in fact, a matter of life and death.

God asks us to choose to live for Him by accepting Christ as our savior. If we do this, He in turn allows us to make an impact on others that transcends this life. God also provides a place for us in heaven when our days here are over. Choosing to reject Christ completely separates us from God and prevents us from serving Him on earth as well as joining Him in heaven.

Why? If we break it down a bit, it will make perfect sense. In the Bible we learn of an epic struggle that is taking place. This struggle has only two sides, those who are for God and those who are against Him. When we choose Christ, we are signing up to stand with God. When we make a choice to go against God or if we refuse to make a choice at all, we have just joined the enemy's camp. There is no middle ground in this fight.

If you want a part in this battle, if you want to be a difference-maker in this world and carry out assignments that will have eternal significance, you have to sign up for it! Think about this for a moment. If God is going to work through somebody and we all have free will to make choices, to whom is He going to turn? Is He going to work through a man who has committed himself to God and pledged to follow Him or through a man who has not taken this first step? The answer is obvious. Just like any leader, God will give orders to those who have pledged to carry them out. You have to choose to follow Him.

If you have never accepted Christ as your savior, please turn to Appendix B in the back of this book. You will find a brief explanation of the choice God would have you make.

That is your first step as a man, accepting Christ as your savior. Taking this first step is crucial because in order to play the game you must be eligible.

If you have taken this first step, fantastic! For many men, though, that is as far as their life in Christ goes. Satisfied that their eternal future is secure, they simply sail through life paying lip service to Christ. They may be good men, perhaps even great men, but the eternal significance of their actions is small. If you are one of these men, you remain a part of God's army. The challenge for you is to shake off the fatigue of daily life and rise up to take the second step in your walk.

To take the second step you must become not just a convert to Christianity, but a disciple of Christ. Believers who take this next step take time to understand their faith, learn how to share

that faith with others and develop basic spiritual practices that will follow them throughout their lives. To take this step you must be willing to develop some spiritual discipline, learn about scripture and prayer, and start the process of integrating God into your daily life.

Why do you need to take this step?

If you stepped out onto a basketball court for the first time, you wouldn't expect to be able to play well without first learning the mechanics of ball handling and understanding the rules of the game. The same holds true of your walk with Christ, you will not be as effective for Him without taking this second step.

Taking this step also ensures that you are well equipped to take your third and final step. This is the step that very few reach, not because it is difficult to get to, but because few of us have been told it is there and even fewer have made the basic effort it takes to achieve it.

This book is about that third step. It focuses on how we can go from everyday church-going Christian men, stumbling through life, to men leading exciting and fulfilling lives for Christ. The third step is becoming men on a mission from God.

Before we wrap up this discussion and move to the next section, lets think about why we would even want to consider taking this final step.

If you have been a believer for some time, you are familiar with mountain-top experiences, those feelings you get when some event connects you to God in a more intimate way than is typical to your day-to-day walk.

This experience is common at a retreat or conference because you have been temporarily removed from "real life" and placed in a setting where anything and everything seems possible. While having a mountain-top experience, you feel that you are connected with God and the fire that may have been missing since you became a new believer is restored. When you are in

this state, you are ready to take on the world, change your old habits and become a new man!

The problem occurs when you come back to the world right after the retreat or conference and realize that your responsibilities and life are the same. You return to your routines and that experience fades as you eventually move back into your valleys.

Why does this happen to us? Why are our day-to-day lives not operating at this mountain-top level? It doesn't take a whole lot of looking to notice that something is missing in the lives of men today.

Life for many has become boring and stale with our spiritual life leading the way. We are sleepwalking through it and will wake up one day old and gray with very little accomplished that will be eternally significant. We are forced to ask ourselves if accepting Christ was the beginning or the end of our walk.

Tell me, where is the excitement of knowing God? Where is the thrill of having communication with our Creator? At what point did our eternal significance become simply another sermon note? Men, you matter! If you are not making a contribution that has a lasting impact in this world and eternally, it is *not* because God has nothing greater planned for you.

When you think of on-fire, committed believers who are making a real impact, how many men can you list? Take away from that list anyone you do not personally know. Now take pastors off of that list. *How many men are left?* If you have more than one or two names on your list, you have been blessed. The rest of us are left to ask why our lists don't include all of our Christian friends!

When we consider this, the first obvious question is what is a Christian man? Well, by definition, a Christian man is a follower of Christ. In theory, that means that there should be a resemblance to Christ that is hard to miss. In practice though, many of us miss the mark by quite a wide margin. Men in

church today are frequently the lukewarm Christians that Jesus talks about in Revelation.

Revelation 3:15-16

"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth."

We attend church, talk the talk, but we fail in our walk. There are the intermittent men's retreats, studies and conferences that provide mountain-top experiences, but in our daily lives we do nothing to distinguish ourselves in His service. In truth, there is not much of a difference between us and men who are fully in the world.

It is not enough for us to simply be good men or to just get by, yet that is exactly what many of us are doing. Is that how you want to live your life? Just getting by? When the pastor steps forward to eulogize at your funeral should he simply tell people that you were a good man? Do you want him to say there was no difference between how you lived your life and how the rest of the world does? That would be a very sad statement.

I don't believe that is how we want to exist and I *know* that is not how I want to be remembered.

Here is the bottom line, the truth that you do not often hear in church. The world has enough good men and God is not looking for you to simply join their ranks. God is not trying to create more good men for the world and being good does not, of itself, please Him. What God desires are *committed* men who are dedicated to carrying out His will. Men who are on a mission from God.

If you, like me, wish to become one of those men and make a lasting impact in this world, you need some answers to some very basic questions. What does a Christian man look like?

What does Jesus desire of my life? How do I find and understand my mission in life?

The good news is that the answers to these questions exist in the Bible. So let's walk together and spend some time finding the answers that will transform us from stumbling children into powerful men of God who are making a strong impact on this world for Christ.

A word of warning as we proceed though. Do not settle back for a good read. This book is not passive. Out of the Wild is designed to challenge you to seek after God and acknowledge His claim to your life, assist you in finding your unique calling and provide you some guidance once you have found it. It is no magic bullet, however, and simply reading it will not ensure your success. Your success is up to your willingness to follow Him.

As you complete each section, you are encouraged to turn to Appendix C at the end of the book. There you will find questions designed to focus your thoughts on the issues raised in each section. Leaders will also find material that will help to guide and facilitate small group discussion.