

Small Group Study Guide

STUDY

1. **Chris mentioned that his own father never had a conversation with him about what it means to be a man.** a) When you were growing up, where did the men around you seem to draw their sense of worth and identity from? b) How did your upbringing shape your understanding of manhood — for better or worse?

Engaging the Test

2. **Genesis 1:27-28 describes human beings as image-bearers of God, made to rule, subdue, and fill the earth.** What does it mean to you personally that your identity starts not with what you do, but with whose image you carry?
3. **The very first thing God does after creating humanity is bless them — before giving them any assignment or task.** Why do you think we, as a western society, tend to skip over that detail and rush to the commands? What does it say about us?
4. **There is a thread running through Genesis of men walking with God — Enoch, Noah, Abraham — and King David's charge to Solomon in 1 Kings 2:2-3 to "be strong, act like a man, walk in obedience to him."** What does walking with God actually look like in practical, daily terms for a man today?
5. **John 1:12 describes those who receive Jesus being given the right to become children of God.** How does being a son or daughter of God change the foundation from which a man lives and makes decisions?

Getting Honest

Henri Nouwen's five identity lies:

I am what I have
I am what I do
I am what others think or say about me
I am nothing more than my worst moment
I am nothing less than my best moment

6. Which of these do you find yourself most prone to? How has that shown up in your life — in your decisions, your relationships, or your fears?
7. **Deriving our identity from these lies can lead men either to make harmful decisions or to live with profound insecurities.** Can you think of a time — without necessarily sharing every detail — when one of these lies drove you to a decision or reaction you later regretted?
8. **The cultural moment we are in has produced both a wave of justified reckoning over male failure and a sweeping condemnation of masculinity in general.** a) How do you personally navigate that tension? b) Does it cause you to shrink back, to push back, or something else?

Living It Out

9. **Chris lists several ways that living from the blessing of God sets men free — *freedom to take risks, to fail and learn, to receive correction, to rest, to tell the truth, to be present for others.*** Which of those freedoms do you most need right now, and what is standing in the way of it?
10. **Chris shared a late-night moment of fear before the birth of his first son, and the thought that came to him from Jesus was this: "Focus on me — be like me."** Is there an area of your life right now where that same word might be exactly what you need to hear? What would it look like to act on it?
11. **The series is called "Man Down" — a term for someone who has fallen on a battlefield and needs help. Chris noted that women in the church are described in Genesis as "ezer" — strong allies, even rescuers.** How can the men and women in this group better support one another, particularly the men who may be struggling silently?

REFLECT

- **Walk with God.** Commit to a specific, daily rhythm of time with God this week — not out of obligation, but as a son/daughter walking alongside the One who made you. It does not have to be long - It just has to be real.
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PRAY

Close your time together by praying specifically for the men in your group and the men in your lives. You may want to pray through this framework:

- Thank God for the blessing He pronounced over humanity before we ever did anything to earn it.
- Ask God to breathe life into the men in your group — that they would walk with Him and grow into the men they are meant to be.