

What Are the Men in Your Church Looking For?

I am often asked, “Why are the men leaving the church today?” Sometimes it comes out as, “What can we do to keep the men of this church?” or “How can our church reach more men?”

There is no easy answer, but in this article, I would like to provide some basic principles that will help you develop a male-friendly church.

The overriding principle is simply this: The environment you develop is more important than the events or programs you put on. A man is looking for an environment that is consistent with who he is as a man and is a place where he feels comfortable belonging and becoming the man God wants him to be.

1. Men are looking for relevance. Most men in our society today do not see the value in going to church because it is not speaking their language and it is not addressing the issues they face. For example, a recent survey showed that 92 percent of churchgoing men have never heard a sermon on the subject of work.

The unspoken message is, “What you do for 60 to 70 hours a week does not relate to what you do on Sunday mornings.” The most important issues for men are their work, family, marriage, sexuality and finances—and rarely are these addressed from the pulpit today.

Some of the key questions men are asking are:

- What is true masculinity?
- What is success?
- How do I deal with guilt feelings?
- What is male sexuality?

- Is purity possible today?
- What does a healthy marriage look like?
- How can I raise my children to be successful?
- How can I be a man of integrity in the workplace?
- How can I be a leader in the home, church, workplace and world?
- What is my purpose in life?

2. Men want to be involved in a cause greater than themselves.

Men want to be involved in something driven by a compelling vision. They want to know what hill the church is climbing, where we are going and what we are about. The church has the greatest and most far-reaching mission on earth, and we should not be bashful about challenging the men of our congregation with it.

3. Men want a shot at greatness. I have never met a man who wanted to be a failure or a loser. Men want to win. They want to be heroes. They want to come in first. Unfortunately, it seems the church today wants nice men, not great men.

4. Men want to be challenged. Men tend to view the world around them as something to be overcome or conquered. It's high time we told them they do not have to check their competitive drive at the door of the church. If they are seeking risk, adventure, change, competition and expansion, tell them how to find it within the mission of Jesus!

5. Men are looking for action. Men today are looking for something to do; they do not like sitting around and theorizing about the 27 views of the Second Coming of Christ! Men measure themselves by productivity and gain a portion of their self-image based on what they do. Their desire for adventure is often expressed in the desire to be on the solution side of things. Many churches today are in maintenance mode rather than missional mode.

6. Men are looking for leaders, and they want to be

leaders. This principle is simple: Men do not follow programs; they follow men. They want to follow a bold, courageous, visionary leader. Establish an environment where strong leadership is attractive. Not only are men looking for a leader to follow, but they also want to become leaders themselves. They want to lead in their family, workplace, church, community and world. One of the things you can do is equip them to lead.

7. Men are looking to have fun. If men walk into a church and see a bunch of serious, stoic-looking people, shouldn't they wonder if Christianity really is a killjoy? The world is a serious place; men are looking to laugh and have fun to balance that reality. They love a good joke, funny story or movie. I encourage you to develop a ministry environment in which men have fun together.

8. Men are looking for brothers. Most men have many acquaintances, but very few men have a good friend. According to statistics, the average man over 35 years old does not have one close friend. Men need teaching on how to develop and strengthen friendships and an environment where they can find genuine male friends.

9. Men are looking for healing. Many are using socially unacceptable means to deal with the pain—making their work or their hobbies their life or misusing sex, drugs or alcohol. Unless these wounds and hurts are dealt with in a healthy way, they will never become the men God wants them to be. They will never be able to have healthy relationships or move on from childish behavior.

I hope some of these insights from my own ministry to men will serve you well as you seek to minister more effectively to the men in your church and community.

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Elmbrook Church in Brookfield, Wis., and the author of How to Build a Life-Changing Men's Ministry.

For the original article, visit .

4 Reasons to Eat With the Seasons

Birds are singing, flowers are blooming, action-packed blockbusters are opening, and ah, yes...the allergies are attacking! This could all mean only one thing: Spring has sprung! And along with the tulips and azaleas, delicious fruits and vegetables like strawberries and Swiss chard are bursting from the soil, eager to be transported to a grocery store or farmers' market near you.

If you don't typically buy in-season produce, here are the top four reasons why you should consider starting this spring:

1. Great for Your Wallet

- Seasonal foods don't require nearly as much effort to produce as out-of-season produce. Many in-seasonal foods can grow virtually on their own, which of course requires far less labor and time than procuring food out of season.
- Also noteworthy, when foods are in season, there's more of them! You may find some great supermarket deals as well as two-for-one offers!
- When foods are grown in hot houses or another part of the world, the taste will inevitably be affected. Anyone who has tasted a dark red August tomato, fresh off the vine, and compared it with a sickly-looking winter

wannabe knows what I'm talking about!

2. Great for Your Taste Buds

- Foods that are chilled and handled frequently while being shipped lose flavor with every mile. Fresh and locally harvested foods keep their rich flavors intact.
- In addition, I personally think pumpkin pie at Thanksgiving is infinitely more satisfying and enjoyable than it would be, say, on the 4th of July. Tastes and smells do, after all, have the mysterious ability to conjure vivid memories.

3. Great for Your Body

- When fruits and vegetables are left to ripen on the plant, they will contain more nutrients and offer far better flavor than food that is harvested early and ripened artificially.
- Seasonal foods have fewer chemicals. Foods that have been picked too early and travel long distances won't look as appealing as the seasonal ones that grew to their peak. So, to make them look more attractive, they're often injected with chemical ripening agents, wax coatings, and other preservatives. Yuck!

Fit Fact: Eating spinach in season provides up to three times more Vitamin C than eating it out of season.

4. Great for Our Planet

- Seasonal and local foods travel much shorter distances than non-local fruits and vegetables, which may have to go thousands of miles to get to our local supermarkets. Food that is air-mile free means less or even no emissions were involved to get it into our freezers and fridges.

Okay, time to go shopping! Here's a list of in-season foods

that are ripe for the picking this spring:

May

Apricots, artichokes, asparagus, cherries, lettuce, mangoes, okra, pineapples, radishes, rhubarb, spring peas, strawberries, Swiss chard, zucchini

June

Apricots, blueberries, cantaloupe, cherries, kiwi, lettuce, mangoes, peaches, strawberries, Swiss chard, watermelon, zucchini

The Dirty Dozen

Below is a list of the 12 most contaminated fruits and vegetables according to the Environmental Working Group. So, whether you're on a budget and need to prioritize your organic purchases, or you would simply like to know which type of produce has the highest pesticide residues, this is a great help:

- Peaches
- Apples
- Sweet Bell Peppers
- Celery
- Nectarines
- Strawberries
- Cherries
- Pears
- Grapes (Imported)
- Spinach
- Lettuce
- Potatoes

Stay Fit, stay faithful.

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website can be found at , and she is the owner and a coach at CrossFit 925. Diana can be reached on Twitter.

For the original article, visit .

What is Your Heart Condition?

Every occupation has tools of the trade: a hammer for the carpenter, a calculator for the accountant, and pills for the health care provider. While there are a wide variety of treatment options, medications remain a valuable tool for health care professionals.

Yet, since no tool is perfect, one of the most troubling challenges of prescription medications is possible side effects.

Another problem is that many are prohibitively expensive. A third barrier is the serious problem of health illiteracy, which includes the ability to interpret, analyze, and evaluate health information; to clearly articulate health concerns; and to understand medical advice and directions for treatment. And we can't overlook another major barrier—the fact that many people simply don't want our tools.

So while we have a vast array of tools, success doesn't come easily. However, a free medication exists that features no side effects and is never a source of confusion. That prescription is for a “merry heart,” which according to Proverbs 17:22 works just like medicine.

“A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones.” (Proverbs 17:22)

Webster's Dictionary says *merry* means to be full of gaiety and

high spirits, to be festive and jovial. The connotations carry a hint of conditional happiness, though. However, this is not the essence of the word used in Proverbs. The Hebrew word is *sameach*, which means *bless* or *blessed*. So a merry heart is a blessed heart. *Blessed* literally means happy, fortunate, and blissful.

This state of blessedness is not contingent on our circumstances, nor is it governed by our emotions. It refers to a status God divinely grants to those who are faithful. We choose faithfulness, and in return God makes our hearts merry. So how do we go about getting this prescription filled?

Proverbs 3:13 says, "Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding." This verse speaks of divine wisdom, which is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy" (James 3:17). This is the wisdom Solomon repeatedly encourages us to embrace in the fourth chapter of Proverbs: the wisdom personified by God. Even Paul refers to Christ as "wisdom from God" (1 Corinthians 1:30). As we pursue divine wisdom, we will reap the benefits of a happy heart.

Proverbs also tells us that being happy, or blessed, depends on how we treat others: "He who has mercy on the poor, happy is he" (Proverbs 14:21). This biblical happiness is diametrically opposed to happiness as defined by worldly values, which emphasize pleasing self.

✘ But true happiness comes from taking on the attributes of Christ, who "made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant" (Philippians 2:7, niv). In doing so, He showed us mercy. When we strive to be more like Jesus, we treat others the way He treated us. We show kindness, compassion, and generosity, and place others' needs above our own. This is how we fill the prescription for a merry heart.

According to Proverbs, a merry heart trusts God: “Whoever trusts in the Lord, happy is he” (Proverbs 16:20). The kingdom of God has no place for worry. If a merry heart is like a medicine, then one way to void this divine prescription is through worry.

Indeed, a merry heart is therapeutic. Growing in wisdom, showing mercy, and learning to trust God rather than worrying will lead to blessings. When we comply with the orders of Jesus—the Great Physician—we will reap the rewards He promised.

The preceding is an excerpt from Spiritual Secrets to a Healthy Heart by Kara Davis, M.D. You can purchase the book from , or .

10 Ways to Bring Joy Into Your Life

We are all usually our own worst critics. That is a good thing. It brings about self-awareness, progress and personal improvement.

However, at the end of the day, you need to be able to look in the mirror and smile at the guy looking back at you.

How do we bring joy into the forefront of our lives? How can we shake off the stress and strain every day can bring and discover true happiness? Here are a few ideas to get you started on the path to robust joy.

1. Simplify. We all have that closet at home—the one that you can barely get the door shut because it’s so overstuffed. You

can't possibly fit one more shirt on the rack. We clean that closet out and donate the clothes to charity, right? The streamlined result brings about big smiles.

Your life is the same way. Over time, we become maxed out in capacity. This leaves us stressed and unable to be productive. Streamline your life on occasion, the same as you would that closet. Drop the things you are holding on to that are no longer necessary or fit who you are. Time is limited, and so are you. Simplify your priorities to a level where you shine to the brightest of your abilities.

2. New perspective. Life is filled with blessings. The sound of your children laughing. The look in your wife's eyes. The deep feeling of satisfaction that comes with hard work. At times we tend to only see the negative things around us. Gain a new perspective and really start picking out all the blessings you have been given. Joy surrounds us even at our darkest moments. Open your senses and receive it. Cultivate thankfulness.

3. Get outside. The smell of newly cut grass on a summer morning. The exploding blends of color all about as spring arrives. Fresh fallen snow creating a storybook landscape. The rich sights and crisp feelings of autumn. During any season, no matter where you are, nature always leaves an open door, asking you to enter and experience her wonders. Go hiking, ride a bike, or simply walk hand-in-hand with your beautiful wife. Get outside and fill your spirit and lungs with this amazing creation we call earth.

4. Come down to your child's level. One thing children are very good at is finding ways to have fun. They can take a simple cardboard box and turn it into Disney World. You still have that same ability inside you—it just got stuffed way down inside after too many boardroom meetings and mortgage payments. Unleash him! Get in there and mix it up with your kids. Make funny noises. Laugh at ridiculous things. Smile so

big your cheeks hurt.

5. Passion. Passion equals joy. Always. We are not all fortunate enough to make a living doing a job we feel deep passion for. That's OK. Find your passion elsewhere. Anything that will make you come alive and stirs your mind into full activation counts. Joy will always follow. This is a family website, but suffice it to say, passion with your wife is included. Skip paying the bills on a Saturday morning and instead grab her and go sneak off somewhere. You get the picture.

6. Lay your burdens down. Worries can be awfully heavy. This new century certainly has no shortage of them. Without warning, they can begin to drag you down as they accumulate. Yes, it is important to be aware of the world around you, to know the issues that are bigger than ourselves. It is equally important to balance that awareness with reality. You are not Superman, and you do not own a cape. Do what you can do and let it go. As Mom used to say, "Look on the bright side of things." Optimism is essential to happiness.

7. With a little help from your friends. We are social creatures. It might seem impossible in this day and age, but some people can feel isolated and alone. There is no need to feel that way. Social opportunities are everywhere. The explosion of online networking sites provides a great way to connect with friends old and new, to express who you are as a person. People are ready to love you if you give them the chance. Make time for your friends on a regular basis, and connect with them openly. Life is meant to be shared.

8. When the rain falls. The world is not out to get you. It only seems that way sometimes. The car broke down on the interstate. You did not get the raise in pay you need. Your teenager just told you he hates you. Life happens. In order for a beautiful flower to reach full glory, it must endure a good amount of rain. When rain falls in your life, realize

that it is designed to help you grow. Use those moments to strengthen your character. See them as the challenge they truly are. Soon the rainbow will appear as the sun breaks free from the clouds.

9. Rise up. You were in the office for 10 hours. You drove home in horrible traffic for another hour. All you want to do is crumble in a heap on the couch. That is OK from time to time. Watch a great movie and order take-out. This can be very therapeutic as long as it doesn't become habit. The couch potato is rarely a happy soul. Rise up! Go throw the football outside with your son. Take your daughter to get ice cream after dinner, and then window shop with her. Work out. Take a walk. Get the blood flowing and the pearly whites shining.

10. Seek a personal relationship with God. We have a Father in heaven who loves us, who cares for us, just as you do with your own children. He is always outside of our door, knocking. Open the door. Talk to God about your life. Seek His will on direction and purpose. God desires His joy to permeate your life.

All Pro Dad is Family First's innovative and unique program for every father. Their aim is to interlock the hearts of the fathers with their children and, as a byproduct, the hearts of the children with their dads. At , dads in any stage of fatherhood can find helpful resources to aid in their parenting. Resources include daily emails, blogs, Top 10 lists, articles, printable tools, videos and eBooks. From , fathers can join the highly engaged All Pro Dad social media communities on **Facebook, Twitter, YouTube** and **Instagram**.

Top 10 High-Energy Foods

Do you feel tired all the time and low on energy? You might be running low on the vitamins and minerals necessary to help your body convert food into energy.

With a busy schedule, you need energy and lots of it. You can't afford to put low quality fuel into your body.

Asking your body to maintain a busy schedule while eating a poor diet is like asking a car to run the Indianapolis 500 with sugar in the gas tank. You just aren't going to get very far! You'll be exhausted and irritable all the time. You also won't be able to enjoy your life to the fullest.

Below is my list of top 10 high-energy foods. OK, I cheated a little on No. 10 because it isn't a food, but still very important to maintaining your energy levels.

After the list, I will explain why these foods and others like them are important for energy production. I listed them in order—those that contain the most energy-building vitamins and minerals to the least:

- Whole Grains
- Fatty fish (especially Salmon and Tuna*)
- Sunflower seeds
- Dairy products (Milk and Yogurt)
- Chicken
- Eggs
- Nuts
- Mushrooms
- Beef
- Water

If you are pregnant or nursing, limit your tuna servings to two a week due to concerns with mercury in this type of fish.

Vitamins and minerals are organic nutrients that the body uses to maintain normal metabolism and health. Vitamins function as chemical partners for the enzymes involved in cell production and tissue repair. Minerals help facilitate the absorption of vitamins.

The food you eat is the primary source for these elements since most cannot be manufactured in the body. Let's focus on the vitamins and minerals responsible for energy maintenance.

Vitamins That Enhance Energy

- Thiamin (Vitamin B1) is essential for helping the body convert carbohydrates into energy. Foods that are good sources of thiamin are beans and peas, whole grains, brewer's yeast, and sunflower seeds.
- Riboflavin (Vitamin B2) and Niacin also help us use the energy obtained from our food more effectively. Sources of Riboflavin include milk, yogurt, mushrooms, and whole grains. Niacin food sources are mushrooms, whole grains, tuna, salmon, chicken, and beef.
- Pyridoxine (Vitamin B6) assists in protein metabolism. Foods high in Pyridoxine include spinach, bananas, soybeans, sunflower seeds, tuna and beef.

Minerals That Enhance Energy

Several minerals also assist in energy metabolism. These minerals are Phosphorus, Zinc, Iodine, Copper, and Chromium. Here are the food sources for these minerals:

- Phosphorus: Dairy products, poultry, fish, eggs, whole grains, nuts, seeds
- Zinc: Poultry, fish, eggs, whole grains
- Iodine: Salt-water fish, dairy products
- Copper: Seafood, nuts, seeds
- Chromium: Egg yolks, whole grains

In addition to these foods, you want to maintain a varied diet

of fruit and vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein sources for good health and energy. With all of these foods, you want to use moderation in your portion sizes since overeating also drains your energy.

Let's not forget the most important nutrient of all—water. Your body is composed of 60 to 70 percent water. Because so many of our bodily functions depend on water, it is estimated that you can only live for four days without it. Your body does not have a mechanism to store excess water, so you must take certain measures to ensure that you maintain an adequate water intake.

You lose up to 12 cups of water per day through various means, so you need a continual supply of fresh, clean water to keep your system flushed and running cleanly. Another good reason to drink plenty of water is that when you become dehydrated, your thinking becomes impaired. Lack of adequate water also has a profound effect on your energy levels.

So how much water should you drink per day? Most experts recommend that you take your body weight and divide that number by two (half) to determine how many ounces of water you need to consume per day. For example, if you weigh 160 pounds, you would need 80 ounces of water per day, which would translate into 10 8-oz. glasses of water daily. At the very least, strive for 8 glasses of water per day.

Be blessed in health, healing, and wholeness.

Kimberly Taylor *is a certified wellness coach and author of the ebook Take Back Your Temple.*

For the original article, visit .

6 Winning Ideas for Daddy-Daughter Date Night

A note to dads who really like the idea of “dating” their daughters but don’t know where to start:

Guys, you’re probably making it more complicated than it has to be.

The idea is simply to enter her world and enjoy your time together. You can’t force deep, meaningful, life-changing conversations. But if you keep showing up ... they’ll happen. And you’ll be glad you were there.

If she’s a toddler, it’s pretty easy. Ten minutes lying in the grass, rustling in the leaves or making snow angels.

If she’s five, it’s still pretty easy. Invest a half-hour or so and go ahead and start calling your time together a “date.” Go for ice cream, McDonald’s, donuts and juice or a bike ride around the block. The idea is to be intentional about leaving the house—just you and her. Of course, you should still spend time goofing with your little girl in the driveway with a hula hoop, basketball, bubbles or sidewalk chalk. But a date should have a plan and a destination.

About third grade or so, start thinking about kicking it up a notch—movie dates, lunch dates, library dates. To make sure it becomes a habit, try connecting your daddy-daughter dates with her other scheduled activities. Pick her up after a practice or rehearsal and stop someplace on the way home. Maybe take a class together. If you’re really gutsy, do something girls typically do with their moms, like pottery painting, jewelry making or calligraphy.

Do stuff she likes. Do stuff you like. There is window-shopping, mini-golf and Frisbee golf. Visit a museum. Visit a

pet store—pet a puppy, talk to a parrot or buy a reptile without mom’s permission.) Go ice skating. Visit an apple orchard. Make a pie. Go horseback riding. Bowling. Bird watching. Browse a bookstore. And don’t think only boys can enjoy sports. Take your daughter to an NFL, NHL, MLB or NBA game. Or save a few bucks and go to a minor-league or semi-pro game. Each time, remember to thank her for the “date.”

One annual date you don’t want to miss is the daddy-daughter dance presented by your church, school or park district. You might even make it a double-date with your daughter’s best friend and her dad. That’s a chance to connect with another dad—which is always a good thing—and see how your daughter interacts with her peers.

Once you’ve established your daddy-daughter date routine, look for a chance to add one more strategic lesson: In the middle of your time together, hope something goes terribly wrong. The bowling alley is overbooked with leagues. The restaurant wait is 90 minutes. The skating rink is closed for repairs. You get a flat tire. Ants overrun the picnic. You lock your keys in the car.

With any of these minor catastrophes, you have a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate patience, resourcefulness and a sense of humor. These are all traits your daughter should expect in any fellow who takes her out. Of course, I’m not suggesting you orchestrate any near-calamities on your daddy-daughter dates, but I’m not ruling it out either.

Here’s the point. The primary purpose of dating your daughter is to make memories and cement your lifetime connection. But there’s another huge benefit to showing up on time, opening her car door, treating her with respect and handling any mishaps with grace and a smile: You’re modeling for your daughter the way any boy should act when she goes out on any date at any time.

If and when some “unworthy weasel” takes her out, she won’t put up with any nonsense because her dad—that’s you—taught her how a gentleman acts on a date.

Finally, when your daughter does start dating boys her own age, that doesn’t mean your dates with her should stop. Actually, that’s the season in life when you want to spend *more* time with her, not less. You may have to work a little harder to get on her busy social calendar. But if you ask nicely, she just might fit you in.

Oh, yeah. And Dad, don’t forget to date your wife, too.

Five Bonus Strategies for Entering Your Teenage Daughter’s World

1. Give yourselves a mutual mission. Asking a young person’s opinion is surprising and empowering. “For Christmas, should I get Mom the amethyst or opal earrings?” “What should we do for Grandpa’s birthday this year?” “We need some new patio chairs. What are your thoughts?”

2. Treat her as an authority. Suddenly, she’s the teacher and you’re the student. “Hey, Sara, can I send a photo on my iPhone that’s 1.8 megabytes?” “I’m designing a flyer for the block party. Can you take a look at this font?” “Bill from work wants to recommend some summer reading for his daughter who’s eight. Any ideas?”

3. Volunteer at one of her events. Initially, she may not be happy you signed up for that chaperone assignment, church event or fundraiser. But if you don’t embarrass her and stay in your assigned zone, she’ll be glad you’re there. Also, make sure you give her plenty of notice. “The Zimmermans asked us to help out at the Christmas dance. I guess we’re in charge of the punch bowl.” “Just letting you know, I’m driving one of the vans for the weekend retreat. And I’m staying in the boy’s cabin.”

4. Get her attention. Figure out what middle school girls like—specifically your daughter and her friends—and give it to her. “Let’s get a puppy.” “Don’t know what got into me, but I bought a Groupon for horseback riding.” “When that movie comes out from that book you read, let’s take some of your friends to the midnight show.” “Pizza’s here!”

5. Tell her you miss her. If you haven’t had a good conversation in a couple weeks, you’re both feeling the same way. “Hey, kiddo. We have both been so busy. Let’s do something this weekend. Maybe brunch after church. Or we could go to the flea market. What’s your schedule?” “You know, I’m reading a book for dads of daughters and it says I’m supposed to ask you out on a date. So pick a night. Any night!”

*The preceding is a guest blog from **Jay Payleitner**—a best-selling author, speaker and good friend of the National Center for Fathering who has written a new book called 52 Things Daughters Need From Their Dads. This blog was adapted from one of the 52 chapters.*

For the original article, visit [.](#)

Rediscover Your Spirit of Adventure

Within every man is a spirit of adventure.

You were made out of the dirt, molded from the clay, and that’s also where you are called to return. It’s where you relate—the field of contest—whether it’s a football field, a baseball field, a golf course or even a battlefield.

It's on the field of contest that man clashes with other men, sharpening his skills and strengthening his resolve.

Women relate face-to-face sharing feelings; men relate shoulder-to-shoulder facing challenges. A woman tells you what she feels; a man tells you what he thinks.

The Bible says, "Iron sharpens iron, a man sharpens another man." Iron does not sharpen with a caress but with a clash. You become a better man by the competition. The struggle strengthens you.

Do you always win?

No. But you become a better man. The competition conditions you.

The field of contest has always been in the heart of a man. Early man left the home to hunt in the field, to kill a wild beast and to bring it home as a prize for his family. The family celebrated his victory by cooking and feasting on his conquest. At dinner, he was served first, because he was "the man"!

Even though we still leave the house to enter the field of contest and return with provisions, something seems lost in translation when all we bring home is a paycheck. The family doesn't celebrate dad's victories anymore. Celebration has become expectation.

The family feels cheated if the money isn't there when they want the latest cultural phenomenon. The husband/father no longer receives honor for being the provider. The dignity of vocation no longer commands respect.

"Adventure, with all its requisite danger and wildness, is a deeply spiritual longing written into the soul of man." –John Eldredge

The adventurous spirit slowly dies when a man has to live his

whole life refined in designer clothes. Sometimes a man needs to get back out into the dirt and play as he did when he was a child.

So how about it, men? What do you do to get your “fingers in the dirt” and reclaim the adventurous spirit?

Note: This article is an excerpt from Neil Kennedy's book Fivestarman: The Five Passions of Authentic Manhood. To learn more about the Fivestarman ministry or to order your copy of the book, please visit .

*Fivestarman was founded in 2008 by **Neil Kennedy**. Kennedy has passionately promoted God's Word for 25-plus years of ministry. He is known for practically applying biblical principles that elevate people to a new level of living. As a business, church, ministry and life consultant, Kennedy has helped others strategize the necessary steps to reach their full potential.*

Israelis Can Take Chuck Hagel at His Word, For Now

After surviving a bruising confirmation battle over allegations he was anti-Israel, this week new U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel made his first visit to the Jewish nation as Obama's top military adviser.

Hagel got a formal military greeting by the Israeli Defense Forces and had seemingly cordial and productive meetings with Israel's prime minister and president.

Hagel's visit is just the latest by the Obama administration.

Secretary of State John Kerry seems to live in the Middle East lately, and of course President Obama was here just weeks ago.

But Secretary Hagel didn't just come to assure us he really doesn't hate Israel as much as Republicans wanted us to believe during his confirmation hearings. He also came to bring us lots of gifts. According to the *Times of Israel*:

"The Israeli Air Force will receive advanced radar systems, missiles, refueling planes and V-22 planes, Hagel told reporters after a meeting with Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon. The V-22 planes, which can take off vertically, are something no country outside the U.S. has, Hagel noted, adding that the aid package would vouchsafe Israel's 'military superiority over any enemy state, non-state or coalition,' and expand its ability to operate far from the country."

But interestingly, there was one piece of U.S. military hardware Hagel was not willing to share. According to *The New York Times*:

"The Israeli Air Force will not get bunker-busting bombs, which can pierce layers of cement at underground sites. These bombs are considered integral to a successful attack on Iran's underground nuclear facilities."

It's not clear if Israel had requested the bombs again (we were denied them in the past), and it's true that at this point the Israeli Air Force does not currently possess jets capable of carrying the bombs. But it's strange that the one piece of technology we surely need to destroy Iran's underground nuke facilities, the U.S. isn't selling to us.

All in all, Hagel's inaugural trip was a mixed bag. He curiously seemed stupefied by Israeli confirmation of chemical weapons use by Syria—something that President Obama said would be a "game-changer" in terms of U.S. involvement in the Syrian civil war.

After leaving Israel to meet with Egyptian officials, Hagel was asked about reports that Israel had confirmed that Syria did indeed use chemical weapons on its own people.

Hagel's response, according to the Associated Press, was that "Washington is looking for 'real intelligence' on the issue of Syrian chemical weapon use."

"Suspicions are one thing. Evidence is another," he said. "I think we have to be very careful here before we make any conclusions, draw any conclusions, based on real intelligence."

Hagel said his comments should not be interpreting as questioning the validity of other countries' intelligence on Syria. The important point, he said, is that "the United States relies on its own intelligence—and must."

Still, there were encouraging moments. Hagel visited the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial center, and during his meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu, Hagel said:

"Israel is a model for the world, and the relationship between our two countries ... is as strong as it's ever been."

For now, I guess we'll have to take him at his word.

Bone Up on Your Health

Milk isn't just for kids. Nutrition experts say calcium from dairy foods is important for bone health throughout our lives.

But most of us don't get enough. According to United States Department of Agriculture surveys, about three-fourths of adult women and half of adult men don't get the recommended

amount of dietary calcium.

The Calcium Inside You

About 99 percent of your body's calcium is in your skeleton. The other 1 percent helps regulate your heartbeat, muscle contractions, nerve transmissions, blood clotting, and other functions vital to health.

When your blood or tissues need more calcium, your body has two ways to get it—either absorb it from your diet or steal it from your bones. If you don't eat or drink enough calcium, your body makes a "withdrawal" from your bone bank. Over time, frequent withdrawals of calcium can weaken bones and lead to osteoporosis. This sneaky disease threatens 34 million Americans and causes 1.5 million fractures per year, according to the National Institutes of Health (NIH.)

What About Vitamin D?

Vitamin D is critical to bone health and osteoporosis prevention because it helps the body absorb calcium. We get vitamin D two ways: from sunlight and food. Our skin can synthesize vitamin D when exposed to adequate sunlight. For most people, experts suggest about 15 minutes of sunlight several days a week, with hands and face exposed.

Our requirements for vitamin D increase as we age because our bodies become less efficient at making it.

Practical food sources include milk, yogurt, and some breakfast cereals that are fortified with vitamin D. It also occurs naturally in cod liver oil, tuna, salmon, sardines, and mackerel, but most people don't eat these foods every day. Dairy products made from milk, like cheese and ice cream, usually contain very little vitamin D. For many people, drinking milk with meals provides enough vitamin D for the day.

Are you getting enough? Check this chart to see how much of the bone-building nutrients you need.

Source: Dietary Reference Intakes for Calcium, Phosphorus, Magnesium, Vitamin D, and Fluoride. Institute of Medicine, Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 1997.

Tips for Nourishing Your Bones

1. Shoot for three. Aim for a serving of dairy at each meal. One serving is 8 ounces of yogurt or milk or 1 1/2 ounces of cheese. To decrease fat intake, use low fat or skim milk. And remember to enjoy a variety of dairy foods. Getting your calcium isn't a good excuse to indulge in high fat cheese at every meal!

2. Don't skip breakfast. The morning meal is a great opportunity to start the day by feeding your bones. Your digestive tract can absorb only a limited amount of calcium at one time, so taking in smaller doses spread over three meals allows greater absorption.

3. Go "calcium-fortified." Manufacturers add calcium to a variety of foods like oatmeal, bread, cereal bars, cold cereals, and even dairy products. To see how much calcium is in a serving, check the nutrition label. Calcium is listed as "%DV" or percent Daily Value. Simply add a zero to the percent to get the number of milligrams of calcium. So 30 percent DV = 300 milligrams of calcium. When you start checking labels, you will notice some dairy products have extra calcium added, bringing their total to as high as 400-500 milligrams per serving.

With fortified beverages like soy milk and orange juice, the calcium may settle to the bottom, so be sure to shake the cartons before pouring. Calcium in the bottom of your glass won't do your bones any good.

WARNING: Your calcium intake should not exceed 2,500

milligrams per day.

Source: Calcium & Vitamin D: Essential Nutrients for Bone Health. Nutrition Fact Sheet. American Dietetic Association, 2006.

Can't Tolerate Dairy?

People with lactose intolerance lack the enzyme for digesting milk sugar, or lactose. If you are lactose-intolerant, try milk with added lactase enzyme or the lactase pills you swallow with dairy foods. Since there are varying degrees of lactase deficiency, some people can tolerate yogurt and cheese or small amounts of milk with meals.

If you have a true allergy to casein, the protein in milk, dairy products are not an option for you. Try to eat non-dairy food sources of calcium and discuss calcium supplementation with your doctor.

What About Supplements?

Calcium carbonate is probably the most common form available. It requires extra stomach acid for absorption, so it should be taken with meals. In general, calcium carbonate supplements provide more elemental calcium per pill than calcium citrate. Calcium citrate doesn't require extra stomach acid for absorption, so it can be taken with or without food.

Steer clear of bone meal, dolomite, or oyster shell calcium supplements because they may contain lead or heavy metals.

Vitamin D is measured in international units, or IUs. The most potent form is vitamin D3, not D2. Many supplements pair up vitamin D and calcium in one tablet. Look for the United States Pharmacopeia (USP) symbol on the label, which means the supplement has met the USP standards.

Call Your Doctor

Always check with your doctor before starting on any nutritional supplements. If you take prescription or over-the-counter medications, ask the doctor or pharmacist about possible interactions between your meds and the supplements. For instance, calcium can decrease the effectiveness of some thyroid medications if taken too close together.

In addition, a recent study suggested a link between calcium supplements and increased risk of cardiovascular problems in postmenopausal women. It's only one study and much more research is needed before recommendations on calcium supplementation change. But it's a compelling reason to consider getting your calcium from foods.

The Bottom Line

You can't change the genetics of whether you're predisposed to osteoporosis or not. But you can control your diet and exercise. Weight-bearing exercise, like walking, helps maximize bone density and strength. Your doctor can recommend a weight-bearing exercise that is right for you.

Getting calcium from dairy foods is probably the best bet for most people. First, research suggests that calcium from food is better absorbed. Second, milk provides other key nutrients your bones need—vitamin D, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium—all in one package. Third, milk is a natural food made by God ... and cows, of course.

What is the bottom line for building bones? Calcium, vitamin D, and weight-bearing exercise—every day.

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For the original article, visit .

Abbas' Terrorist-Release Demand Raises Red Flag

Ma'an News Agency has reported that the Palestinians claim zero progress was made toward restarting peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority when Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas met U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry in Turkey.

This is because the Istanbul meeting did not address the Palestinians' two main preconditions for restarting negotiations with Israel: halting construction of Jewish communities within Judea and Samaria and, even more disturbingly, the release of 4,500 Palestinian security prisoners held within Israeli jails.

According to an article on Israel's Homeland Security Home (IHSH), a website whose main focus is Israeli security, the Israeli Prison Service says that Abbas insists on the release of all Palestinian security prisoners, regardless of the fact that 50 percent of them have blood on their hands.

In fact, according to the IHSH, "Among the security prisoners one finds senior members of Palestinian terrorist organizations, terrorists who were on their way to a suicide mission and were apprehended by the defense forces; dispatchers; attack planners; those responsible for preparing the explosives, etc."

Nevertheless, Abbas has stated there will be no peace with Israel until these very terrorists are released. This demand in itself should be a red flag that Abbas is no true partner for peace.

Any careful examination of the biographies of various Palestinian terrorists serving time in Israeli prisons whom Abbas has personally praised should cause one to ponder whether Abbas is any better than his Hamas adversaries. For example, one of the Palestinian prisoners Abbas has praised is Marwan Barghouti, who is serving five life sentences for orchestrating suicide bombings against innocent civilians.

Some of the terror attacks for which Barghouti was directly responsible were the murder of a Greek Orthodox monk en route to Ma'ale Adumim; the slaughter of six Israelis celebrating a bar mitzvah in Hadera; a shooting spree on Jaffa Street in Jerusalem that resulted in the murder of two Israelis; the killing of an Israeli in a coffee factory in Jerusalem; the suicide bombing perpetrated by Darine Abu Aisha at the Maccabim checkpoint; a shooting spree at a Tel Aviv seafood restaurant that led to three Israeli deaths; and more.

Another Palestinian prisoner whom Abbas has praised is Abbas Al-Sayyid, who is serving 35 life sentences plus 150 years for planning suicide bombings. According to the Investigative Project on Terrorism, Al-Sayyid is responsible for the Passover Massacre, "a 2002 bombing of Netanya's Park Hotel that killed more than 30, mostly elderly Israelis attending a Seder. Al-Sayed had planned the Park Hotel bombing down to the minutest details ... helping bomber Abdel-Basset Odeh check his explosives, write a will, and make his 'martyrdom' video." Al-Sayyid also planned another suicide bombing in 2001, which killed five and wounded 100 others.

These are merely two of the many examples of Palestinian terrorists who have been honored by Mahmoud Abbas, who routinely not only praises Palestinian terrorists sitting in Israeli prisons, but also deceased Palestinian terrorists, the families of suicide bombers and recently released Palestinian terrorists.

For example, Samer Issawi, a Palestinian hunger-striker who is

going to be released, was imprisoned for violating the terms of his release as part of the Shalit prisoner swap deal. According to the Israeli Prison Service, Issawi was sentenced to 26 years for attempted murder, belonging to a terrorist organization and possessing weapons illegally.

Yet despite all of these facts, Abbas called out to the international community to assist all of the Palestinian hunger-strikers, including Issawi, asserting that their hunger strikes were “an honorable example of our people’s struggle for freedom and independence.” One must ponder, is it possible to strike a peace deal with people who view terrorists in such a manner?

For the original article, visit .