

# Stepdads Can Teach All Fathers Some Lessons

A study released earlier this year points out that being affirming and attentive is important for all dads, but particularly for stepdads. Researchers at the Institute of Education, University of London, found that stepdads are more likely than stepmoms to have conflict with a teenager.

The stepdads reported more behavioral problems in their teens, and they admitted that they spend less time praising their children in comparison to biological dads. Generally, the relationship is worse if the teen is a boy.

What the study does not tell us is the root of these issues: Do teen stepchildren behave worse, or are stepdads more critical and less encouraging of their stepchildren? Either way, it underscores the complexity of the challenges that stepfathers face. If you're a stepdad, remember to also understand the upside potential: the researchers found that being attentive to your children—stepchildren or not—can have a big, positive impact on them.

With all this in mind, here are three suggestions for stepdads—and we can all find something to apply here:

- **Set a positive tone.** Be proactive about it. Practice the discipline of putting yourself in your kids' situation; really consider what they are going through and, as the researchers said, be attentive to what they need from you.
- **Recognize the vital importance of communication.** The tension points are going to be there. Recognize them when they're still minor, bring them out in the open and talk them out in a healthy way. If this doesn't come naturally for you, or you don't really know how to do

it, make the effort to learn. Don't let minor conflicts become major.

- **Build strong teamwork with your wife.** Your marriage needs to be a source of stability for the kids. There should be no doubt that you're working together as parents to do what's best for them. There should be no inconsistencies or signs of doubt for the kids to exploit. Work out any parenting differences in private, so you can be united when dealing with the kids.

Many men have become huge, positive forces in the lives of their stepchildren, their teenagers, and in the face of other challenges. There's no reason you can't be a strong influence, too. Read more of our articles for dads in specific situations.

## **ACTION POINTS**

- Work on making positive comments to your children. Try to focus on the good that you do want from them, instead of the negative thing they need to avoid, or the negative thing they have already done.
- Whenever your children or stepchildren decide to talk, restrain yourself from correcting them. Just listen and get to know them.
- Let your stepchildren know that you aren't trying to replace their natural father, if he is still in their lives.
- Join your children and their mom in an activity they already enjoy doing together—maybe a game night or going to a favorite pizza place.
- Read a book about stepparenting with your wife. One great one is *Winning the Heart of Your Stepchild* by Bob Barnes.

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

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# Kenny Luck: Adult Entertainment, Old Flames and Intimacy

Because I speak everywhere to men, it's so funny whenever a guy starts off a conversation with me by saying: "What if a person, what if a friend of mine contacted his old girlfriend on Facebook?"

"You contacted your old girlfriend on Facebook, I reply, and you are all conflicted because you have a gold ring around your finger." They look at me like I'm Yoda. It is truly an epidemic.

As I have talked about many times with many men's groups, when you don't have the character to meet the reality of your current relationship, and you are not connecting physically in that relationship, then you are wide open to the danger of connecting with someone who doesn't demand any character from you in order to connect with them mentally, emotionally, spiritually and physically.

Why?

Because it feels better, it's that simple. When you feel bad, you want to feel better. Anyone who gives a man strokes when he's struggling to work something out, that's tough. That's why when guys travel, they turn on LodgeNet.

Have you guys ever been in a hotel room? It's "after hours" entertainment. You are there to attend a Christian men's conference, but now it's after hours. If you hear me speak at a Christian men's conference and things aren't going well at

home, are you more or less open to that? Are you open to that?

Then there's this whole issue of old girlfriends, old flames. Old flames will help you go down in flames. Even with new girls who are friends, there are opportunities for issues. Here we have these surveys saying that sexual satisfaction comes most often from one person and monogamy. And yet the caricature is that there is something so much more exciting and so much better outside of that.

Consider this. A total of 73 percent of men said that if male birth control was available, they would take it. One last statistic says that 100 percent of all men throughout history have masturbated at least one time. So, can we just get that on the table: whether you're single, married, or married a long time, you don't have to feel weird.

Let's talk about me for a second. If I'm going to talk about sex, the truth has to come out.

I'm from a Navy brat family of seven, and the son of a third generation alcoholic. My good friend down the block at age 10 had a tree fort in the creek, with a stack of *Playboys*. That was my first experience with anything sexual.

I have to tell you, and a lot of you guys know exactly what I'm talking about, that first experience of seeing the female form without clothes on was explosive. It's like crack. At 10 years old, it was a magnet pulling me to the "wow, look at this!" What is that? How do I relate to that? What do I do with that? What's going on down there? I had never felt that before in my life.

There's this thing called family formation, especially in a boy's relationship with his father. It's the male relationship in the family that is formative for sons and daughters. The love and approval expressed in the time, talk, and touch that goes from father to son and father to daughter forms their sexual identity.

It's that sexual identity and the understanding of themselves as male or female, socialized by gender, family relationships, anatomy and modeling, and if it is tenuous, then those children are very vulnerable to sexual exploitation and sexual experimentation at a very early age.

Now let's turn the microscope back on me. Last of seven kids, son of a third-generation alcoholic, my dad was a ghost, there's the tree fort, Calabasas Creek, *Playboys*. No wonder seeing that stuff for the very first time was so explosive for me.

Offers from peers at a very early age to experience sexuality—I'm talking about elementary school here—that's heavy stuff. But for the vulnerable child, who has had low time and touch with the father, to then have someone offering them a form of intimacy, it's very attractive. It's compelling.

Why? God made us to give and receive love, to experience it. When we are not experiencing love and affirmation, then we are open to experiencing it in an unhealthy way, and that's my story.

I was out in the neighborhood and very vulnerable. I got a job at age 14 at a liquor store after being exposed to pornography at a very early age. I was very vulnerable. I got a job at Oak Tree Liquors.

Why? My Dad was the number one customer at Oak Tree Liquors, and that's why I got the job. How many parents would let their kid work at a liquor store at the age of 14 being an eighth grader? In my family, there wasn't a healthy family formation. I'm bagging ice at Oak Tree Liquors. I'm a Navy brat and I know how to work. I'm feather dusting the beer and wine shelves before Sunday football games. I know how to tally the register, but unfortunately, on Sundays the liquor store is only busy prior to football game and at halftime.

It gets really slow in the afternoon. That's when you have your choice of magazines to "read" in the liquor store, at 14 years of age. Here I am developing sexually. No role model. No mentor. No messaging.

I never had the sex talk. I'm very vulnerable. I'm out there. I'm working. I'm being mentored by my peers instead of my parents. I'm having encounters with my peers as a young man. Culture is chasing me, even in that time. It's there with pornography and other distortions of sexual expressions.

This leads to sexual experimentation. In the ways that young boys growing into men do it, whether that is masturbating or dating relationships, you have to understand that below the waterline there is a man forming, a man who God has designed and given a gift to express himself sexually, who needs to understand it spiritually and emotionally. He puts me in a family to help form me, and to see how it's worked out, but because of sin and brokenness, the family is AWOL and broken. I'm like an orphan out there swimming in an ocean of desires, wants, acceptance and approval.

I get to junior high and high school. It might as well be college in junior high school. Why? God made me to give and receive love. He has made me a sexual creature. I'm developing anatomically and biologically with a lot of testosterone.

But I'm being mentored by my peers and by culture instead of by Christ and my father. And so, that leads to other encounters. Not because I wanted the sex, I just wanted the intimacy.

That's something fundamental that you have to understand as we approach this whole topic of sex. It's the difference between intimacy and sex. I just want to know that somebody cares about me. The fact that I had to do it in a certain way or had to experience it externally and internally in a certain way is not as consequential as the fact that God has built you to

give and receive love. He wants you to experience healthy expressions of that until your last heartbeat.

At seventeen, I become a Christian. I'm feeling a lot of the consequences of unhealthy sexual development and the guilt associated with that behavior. I asked Christ into my life and one of the best things about knowing Jesus is that he washes you clean. He washes you clean of everything at the cross.

It's a beautiful and glorious thing to know Jesus and to know that whatever sin and shame you carry around today, whatever hurt might have come to you or other people in your past, especially related to this issue of sexuality, that you are forgiven. When you see a living New Testament human being, you see a living God walking among men on earth and ministering to those who feel shame because of their sin, particularly the people who have sexual issues. I experienced the cleansing of Jesus.

I now have a new battle. I'm walking around not sure if I'm loved. I'm searching for it. I find a God who says he loves me unconditionally, and forgives me. He provides grace and mercy for my past. That's an awesome thing, and I get heaven thrown in too.

Now I'm going to start living for Him, but I still have this trailing deep hole in my soul with respect to intimacy. God is beginning to fill it, but I still have a long way to go before it goes from my head into my heart. I go to college and I start toeing the line living for God, but privately I'm still struggling with sexual addiction, masturbation, lust and fantasy. I'm a Christian. I love God and I'm struggling sexually, just as all normal 18- to 20-year olds do.

I married my college sweetheart, Chrissie Watson, and we've been married for more than 25 years now. Early on in the marriage, I'm walking around with some of these issues. I remember I discovered there is power in openness, power in

transparency, when it comes to this issue of sexuality, my mind, lust, and fantasy. Getting with a group of guys and talking about it, and not feeling so weird, but also getting some help and counsel from guys who have overcome.

I remember working through this little book. It asked about what is your greatest struggle and blah, blah, blah. I had it in my briefcase all the time. I was working on it and it was private.

I left the book on the counter and went on a business trip. Chrissie comes into the kitchen and says: "Huh, what's this?"

She breaks out with an "OH MY GOD!"

I come home from the business trip and guess who is standing on the porch as I get out of the car? Guess who is standing in the middle of the door holding the book? You know what the book says on the front of it now? NO SEX FOR YOU! No, it didn't say that, but I tell you what, talk about shrinkage, that was some major masculine shrinkage.

What was great about it was that it did open the door to talk about the issue. I said look, the reason that's stuff is in there because I am God's man, I love the Lord. I love you. I love our kids. I am battling to slay my demons. I don't look at women the way most men look at women. I'm really battling to win my heart, my mind, and my soul because I want the healthiest sexual experience in my life that shows love for God, love for you and love for my children.

As important as you are, Jesus Christ is more important to me, and my accountability is to Him. The first few seconds of my presence in His presence, I want as few things as possible in my life to dishonor Him. Do you know what she needed to hear? That I was working on it. She needed to hear that I was after it, that I wanted to honor God.

Let's talk about God for a second. Let's get some starter

thoughts going. The first starter thought in this whole sex series thing is GOD IS NOT AGAINST SEX: sexual expression, sexual fun, sexual pleasure.

He is against misusing it and misunderstanding it. Who does that apply to: if you are single and you're thinking about getting married? That definitely applies to you single men: body, mind and spirit.

Does it apply to you, married man? Absolutely. Newly married men, it applies to you, too. God wants a fulfilled life for you and all of your buddies who have been married 10, 20, 30 years. He wants a fulfilled sex, love and intimacy life for all married men for as long as humanly possible. That is His will. Hallelujah!

A lot of you reading this are really struggling with me saying this right now. When I talk to a man and I want to know the health of his marriage, a lot of times I go to the sex question. Healthy sexual expression in marriage follows healthy emotional connection, healthy aesthetic connection, and healthy spiritual connection. It's the light that comes on when other strong connections in a marital relationship need some work.

I realize that we are busy, ok? That also factors in here. God is not against sex. He's against misusing it. In 1 John 4:16, God says: "So we know and rely on the love that God has for us. God is love, whoever lives in love, lives in God, and God in them" (NIV).

God is love and He expects love to motivate us so that we can love Him, love others, and love ourselves in the right way. He knows that when we misuse His desire to give and receive love, it produces regret, guilt, shame and sin. God is love. He loves us; therefore He wants us to experience His gift of sex. We are called to love Him back and to love people.

That is why God is against misusing sex, as a single, married

or single-again man or woman, because it doesn't represent His best love toward you. It doesn't bring out your best love toward Him, others and yourself.

Jesus said to love the Lord your God in Matthew 22:37: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind."

Not only does God's expression of love toward you include wanting you to have a healthy sexual life. He wants you to show love back to Him and love Him in every area of your life: heart, mind, soul and strength. This is probably the number one issue for men, for all men: single, married or divorced.

God knows where your sex life exists on a practical level. Men are like icebergs. You only see the tip. The tip is our image, our projection; it's who we want people to perceive we are. Below the waterline is who we really are, and that's where the substance of an iceberg lies, beneath the waterline.

God knows you very specifically. Your savior Jesus, your maker Jesus, your Lord Jesus, your Messiah Jesus, knows where your sexuality exists on a practical level. Jesus says in Matthew 5:28 about knowing you at a deep level sexually: "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

Principally, that's Jesus going: "Hey guys, guess what, I know your culture. You have heard it said don't commit adultery, but I say to you, it's not what you are presenting out here whether you're a Christian or non-Christian, or whether you are Mr. Goody Two Shoes or Mr. Bad Boy. I know where you live sexually, and it's internal. It's an internal, spiritual, mental process and that's the area I'm looking at; whatever area you are throwing out there, it doesn't matter. I see what other people don't see about your sexually and that's the area I want to address."

So God knows. That's the second thought. First, God is not

against sex, He's against misusing it. Second, God knows where your sex life exists on a practical level. Single man, God knows where it exists in private. You know that room of your life, and you need to open the door to Him. I know it's private and personal. I know there's a lot of shame there. I know that there are a lot of emotions there. I know there are a lot of desires there.

Married men, He knows you have conflicts in marriage. He knows that you are married to a broken gal. She's broken like you are broken. He doesn't want you to take your ball off the sexual playground of your marriage just because you are working something out. Don't go from a 40-year-old back to a 14-year-old sexually, to porn or to other women.

For you divorced men, maybe there are some issues there with your first marriage. You know what, maybe you need to work on a few things so that the sexual expression in your life will be good. He knows where your sex life exists now.

You older brothers, you may have lost a little of your libido, but your mind is very alive. Just ask the girl in my wife's Bible study who works as a lifeguard at the Leisure World retirement community. She gets hit on by so many Leisure World guys it's unbelievable. So don't give me baloney about this, because it's not just external. It's internal. Jesus told us where it really exists and He wants to be Lord over that so you don't hurt yourself and other people.

Click to read [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#) of this series.

*Note: This is the third in a four-part series Every Man Ministries is calling "The Sex Series," where God's men receive the best from God's gift of sexual intimacy. Sex is physical, mental and spiritual, and God wants us to use this gift in the way He intended it to be enjoyed. This series will help you understand sex through the lens of Scripture. It will teach you to understand what God expects from His sons when it*

*comes to sex and sexual intimacy.*

**Kenny Luck** is the founder of Every Man Ministries and the men's pastor at Saddleback Church. His 20th book, *Sleeping Giant: No Movement of God Without Men of God*, is the proven blueprint for men's ministries and was recently released through B&H Publishing. Watch and read more of Kenny's teaching at [. Follow Every Man Ministries now on Facebook, Twitter \(@everyymm\) and YouTube.](#)

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## **Hidden Food Allergies Present Tricky Issues**

More than 50 percent of our immune system is found in our digestive tract, which is why it is important to have a properly functioning digestive system. Unfortunately, most doctors don't recognize how food sensitivities and food allergies can affect those who suffer with irritable bowel, celiac, Crohn's, rheumatoid arthritis, ulcerative colitis, eczema, psoriasis, fibromyalgia, lupus, MS, and heart disease.

People who struggle with bloating, gas, indigestion, reflux, and other irritable bowel problems may not realize that the root cause may be associated with hidden food allergies. These unknown allergens, if allowed to continue, will trigger inflammation and weaken the immune system. It is this constant exposure to allergens that overworks and confuses the immune system. The ultimate result can be autoimmune and heart diseases.

Food allergens irritate and inflame your intestinal lining, which compromises your health and digestion. First, allergens reduce your ability to absorb the nutrients in your food. Just because you ate it doesn't mean you absorbed the nutrients in the food. This is a critical step in healing, because the only way to heal and strengthen your body is to nourish it. If your digestive system is compromised, you won't provide your body with an adequate supply of nutrients.

Second, undigested food particles can leak across the intestinal wall and enter your systemic circulation. This is where the immune problem begins. These undigested food particles are looked upon as "foreign invaders" by your immune fighters. This triggers an antibody and histamine response to fight these foreign invaders.

This is why the immune system becomes confused. Your immune fighters—lymphocytes, macrophages, and other white blood cells that attack and destroy harmful invaders—become confused as to which are the harmful, bad guys and which aren't. These undigested food particles aren't supposed to be there and are looked upon as the enemy, just as viruses, bacteria, and other microbes are.

### **The Ill Effects of Stress**

Stress triggers cortisol, one of your primary stress hormones. Cortisol causes erosion of your intestinal lining, which can lead to ulcers. This erosion makes you more susceptible to food allergens and other harmful pathogens, such as yeast, fungus, candida, and parasites, which contributes to the bloating, gas, and indigestion. Can you see the vicious cycle?

Constant stress will also interfere with your body's ability to produce an adequate supply of digestive enzymes and hydrochloric acid (HCL). These two components are extremely important when it comes to good digestion. This is one of the main reasons I recommend a good digestive enzyme with HCL,

like 'Digest-Plus', for many of my patients who complain of indigestion and other irritable bowel problems. This is especially important for those of us in our 40s, 50s, and better, because as we age we produce less digestive enzymes and HCL.

To properly digest your food, you also need to be in your "resting-digesting" mode. Unfortunately, most people's lives are on the fast-track, which puts their bodies in the "fight or flight" mode. When you are constantly running from the 'saber-tooth tiger,' the last thing your body will do is digest your food.

This is why you need to eat your meals in a relaxed state—not in the car on the way to a meeting, during rush hour. This should also explain the fact that it's not too much acid that is causing all the digestive problems, but rather the lack of HCL, which is needed to break down protein.

Undigested protein begins to rot and putrefy in your tummy. It is those undigested protein molecules that cross over into your systemic circulation that cause all the tummy upset many Americans are complaining about. It's a vicious cycle.

### **The Inflammation Connection**

Heart disease is the number-one killer in America. The true cause of heart disease is inflammation. Inflammation also triggers an increase in cholesterol. Unfortunately, just lowering the cholesterol is like closing the barn door after the cows have gotten out. You need to be addressing the cause, which is inflammation.

The greatest source of inflammation for most Americans comes from their diet. Improperly digested food irritates and inflames the body. This causes the adrenal glands to produce more cortisol, which is needed to reduce the inflammation. This constant demand on the adrenal glands can easily overwork them and cause adrenal exhaustion and fatigue, which is a

primary contributor to so many health problems.

If you're suffering from arthritis, fibromyalgia, and joint pain, along with constant digestive problems, you can easily be causing so much inflammation in your body that your adrenal glands can't keep it under control. This could then cause an elevation of your cholesterol as a result of the inflammation. Are you seeing that vicious cycle now?

Don't forget, all the stress triggers increase production of adrenaline, cortisol, and norepinephrine, which causes your arteries to constrict, making your blood pressure go up. Additionally, the extra cortisol will trigger an increased production of insulin, which signals your body to start storing calories—*not* burn them! This will then take you down the road of cravings, weight gain, insulin resistance, and diabetes.

### **Calming Down the Intestines**

The first step in calming down your inflamed tummy is to stay away from *all* potentially irritating foods. No dairy, wheat, corn, soy, peanuts, coffee, artificial sweeteners, or MSG for two-four weeks. You need to remove all of these foods, because if you have more than one offending food and don't eliminate it from your diet, you may not give your digestive system a true chance to recover and repair. This is not a lifetime ban! In many cases, these foods can be re-introduced after your digestive system has quieted down and healed.

This elimination diet may cause some people to ask, "What am I supposed to eat? You've taken everything out of my diet." For some people who don't eat enough fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds, this elimination diet may make them feel like there aren't many choices. This is why I recommend the NatraLean Health Bars. They are hypoallergenic and contain no dairy, wheat, corn, soy, peanuts, artificial sweeteners, or trans fatty acids to irritate and inflame your tummy. They come with

8 grams of fiber and 7 grams of mono-unsaturated fats (the good fats), which are key in helping to reduce inflammation.

### **Breaking the Vicious Cycle**

The bottom line: Eliminating food allergies can not only help with allergies and sinusitis, but can also help with many of the other health complaints, including autoimmune and heart disease. If you're looking for a natural approach that targets the cause of your problem, eliminate those common food allergens, and add some digestive enzymes with HCL, fish oils, and nutrients to support your adrenal glands (I recommend Adrenal Fuel). You'll be amazed at how much better your body will begin to feel and function; and the better your body functions, the better it runs.

FYI ... One last piece of valuable information—an inflamed intestinal lining also hinders the production of serotonin, which is produced in the gut. Decreased serotonin levels are associated with depression, anxiety, insomnia, PMS, cravings, and ADD/ADHD.

**Dr. Len Lopez** is a nutrition and fitness expert and creator of The Work Horse Trainer. He speaks extensively on diet, exercise, and how stress can affect your overall health and wellness.

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

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## **Move Beyond a Free-Agent Friendship**

“I haven't had a friend in years.” The comment surprised me. I

knew it was (sort of) a joke, but there was enough truth in it to reveal the frustration.

In years of working with men, I've never had a guy say, "You know, I just have too many deep friendships." No, whenever I share about biblical friendship, guys almost always say, "I need friends like that."

It's important to think about how we define "friend." Several years ago, I was talking about a work relationship with a mentor, and he asked, "Is this person your friend because it's convenient, or is he really a friend?"

It is a good question. In various relationships, I've found a different answer to that question. Most of the time, it is easy to tell the difference, but I've had a few times when I've mistaken one for the other. Those are the ones that hurt. For some guys, those hurts pile up and eventually lead to withdrawal.

I think that is one reason that Proverbs 18:24 says, "A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (ESV). The reality is that many people are companions but very few are friends.

We need to distinguish between the two. In my experience working with men, I find that most men fill their calendar with companions. They have co-workers, neighbors and fantasy football buddies, but these are almost always companions rather than friends.

Companions are easy to find. Of course, they are also easy (and fairly painless) to lose. I refer to these as "free agent friends." They are happy to be your friend as long as it's convenient. But, like a football player seeking a better contract, they will take the best deal that comes along.

This isn't all bad. It's how the world works. We can't be great friends with everyone. We don't have the time or

emotional energy to even try. What concerns me, however, is that most men only have free-agent friendships, and they are missing out on the greatness of true friendship.

### **Seeking Faithful Friends**

The Bible says that “a friend loves at all times” (Prov. 17:17). This shows us both the kind of commitment and the quality of commitment a friend gives. Love is self-sacrificial action. This means you choose to absorb the needs of the other person. As followers of Jesus, we learn from Jesus what this means. He absorbed our sin so that we could receive his life. This remains the greatest self-sacrificial action that the world has ever known. A friend follows Jesus’ example by offering this kind of self-sacrificing love to another.

Looking back at Proverbs 17:17, note the little prepositional phrase “at all times.” This is the extent of the love that a friend offers. True friends become anchors for us during storms. They rise up when the need calls. They also rejoice when we succeed. They throw parties for us when it’s time to celebrate. In good and bad, they are present and acting on our behalf. Love is loyal.

I want to offer one other truth that distinguishes a mere companion from a loyal friend. When I said “love is loyal” above, you may have been tempted to hear “love always agrees with me.” But loyalty does not equal agreement. Because we are fallen and sinful men in constant need of repentance, we are sometimes deceived about ourselves. We need friends who love us enough to help us become more faithful followers of Jesus.

Proverbs 27:6 says, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend.” Out of love for us, true friends will speak the truth we need to hear, not just the words we want to hear. They seek our greatest good even when we aren’t seeking it for ourselves.

A companion may wound you by something they say, but it is not an act of loyal love. Wounds of a companion are often hurtful

rather than helpful. But when a loyal friend speaks hard truth to you, you can receive the wound knowing that it will bring out the best in you.

Still, it isn't easy. It is risky to trust. You might get hurt. Again. On the other hand, I'm convinced that this is a risk worth taking. The only way to find a true friend is to put yourself out there. The first time you share with a friend how you feel (and use a feeling word like, lonely or hurt or sad or angry or disappointed), you may feel unsure of yourself.

The first time you allow a friend to show you how you mishandled a situation, you will feel vulnerable. When you invite someone to do something fun on a Friday night, you may wonder whether or not they enjoyed the time.

Even considering these risks, I'm convinced that it is far more risky to move through life isolated, guarded and lonely. Life is too hard not to have someone in your corner, cheering you on as you enter another round of the battle. Friendship is worth it, but it will take commitment to make the jump from free-agent to faithful friendship.

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

**Jeff Lawrence** is founder and lead pastor of Redemption Church in Edmond, OK. Lawrence has been married for 18 years and is dad to three young sons and a little girl. He also writes regularly at [and](#) has written several articles for 33:The Series.

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# Discover the Source, Discover Your Potential

God has built into man the potential to produce all that He has purposed.

Many men wander blindly through life rather than stepping boldly into their destiny. It's not that they don't desire to live up to their potential—they simply don't know how to discover their potential. The key is found in knowing the Source.

I believe every man has a deposit from the Divine that guarantees him the ability to meet the needs of his life, grant the desires of his family and to finance his purpose.

God is just and will not demand anything from you that He hasn't given you the ability to produce.

Jesus taught this lesson in the parable of the talents. He tells the story of a man who goes on a journey. Before he departs, he entrusts his financial investments into the capable hands of men with proven ability. It is very important to recognize that each man received a sum equal to their experienced success. To the investor, results matter.

Two of the men immediately went to work seeking a good return and doubled the original investment. The third man, fearful of the demands of the investor, simply dug a hole to hide the money.

The response of the investor tells us a lot about the nature and character of God, whom this parable is describing. It also tells us how we should respond to the expectations of God. The two men who showed responsibility to their ability doubled their ability. The one who was lazy lost the ability he once had.

God has invested in you and we will give an account for what He has given us. He also shows anger at the laziness and fearfulness of the third man. God expects results.

As men, we should consistently seek the productivity of our potential. To do so, we must work responsibly and trust that our ability will prove fruitful, for God is the One who gave it to us. He is the Source.

Secondly, we will never fulfill God's expectations if we fear Him. If we think He is unjust in His accounting toward us, we will hide our potential.

You have ability within you. God placed it there. Live up to it and be faithful, and see your ability double.

*For the original article, visit [Fivestarman](#). Fivestarman was founded in 2008 by **Neil Kennedy**. He 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.*

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## **Kerry: Israeli-Palestinian Peace Agreement 'Achievable'**

Efforts to restart peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians continued on Monday, with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry meeting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for dinner in Jerusalem. Kerry and Netanyahu discussed the peace process with the Palestinians as well as other pressing issues.

Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon, Strategic Affairs, Intelligence and International Relations Minister Yuval Steinitz and Justice Minister Tzipi Livni also took part in the meeting.

Kerry was set to meet with Netanayhu again on Tuesday at the prime minister's residence in Jerusalem.

Kerry said on Monday that an Israel-Palestinian peace agreement is achievable.

"I am intensely focused on this issue and the region because it is vital really to American interests and regional interests to try and advance the peace process and because this festering absence of peace is used by groups everywhere to recruit and encourage extremism," Kerry said.

"Both sides mistrust each other deeply and there are reasons that mistrust has built up. I am convinced that we can break that down."

Before meeting with Israeli leaders on Monday, Kerry visited Ramallah on Sunday and held talks with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and other Palestinian officials.

During a meeting with Canadian Foreign Minister John Baird on Monday, Economy and Trade Minister Naftali Bennett expressed skepticism about peace talks with the Palestinian Authority.

"The negotiations with the Palestinians should start with the people," Bennett said. "A Palestinian state in the current framework will not be established, and if it is, it would be weak and hostile. It's time to move to Plan B, which will start with the people, not with diplomacy, the main principle being handling the Palestinian way of life and freedom of movement."

Meanwhile, it was revealed on Monday that planned talks between Israel and Turkey on the restoration of ties between

the two countries following Israel's apology over the May 2010 Gaza flotilla incident have been pushed back two weeks. The talks were originally set to start on Thursday in Ankara, but they have now been delayed to April 22.

Channel 2 reported on Monday that Israeli officials believe that the conduct of the U.S. on the North Korean issue is conveying a message of weakness toward Iran.

Before meeting with President Shimon Peres on Monday, Kerry reiterated his country's commitment to preventing Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons..

"As [U.S. President Barack Obama] has said many times, he doesn't bluff, he is serious. We will stand with Israel against this threat and with the rest of the world, who have underscored that all we are looking for is Iran to live up to its international obligations," Kerry said. "No option is off the table. No option will be taken off the table."

German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle said on Monday that talks with Iran on its nuclear program had not led to any progress toward solving the issue.

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## **Discipleship Moves Men Toward Christian Maturity**

There is raging in the cosmos and all around us a titanic battle between the forces of good and evil ... a battle for men's souls. This battle is raging out of control in neighborhoods across America—your neighborhood. Sound overstated?

Think for a moment about the casualties taking place on your street, where you work, even your church. Men leave, women weep, a little 12-year-old girl prays, "God, why is my daddy always so angry?"

This is a real battle. These are real men with real families. What is the solution?

### **The Greatest Speech in History**

The final marching orders from Jesus are, "Go and make disciples" (see Matt. 28:18-20). Those orders still stand. They have not been amended, altered or rescinded. The central mission of the church—the overarching goal—is to "make disciples." More millions of people and more billions of dollars have been mobilized by this brief message than any other speech in recorded history.

Discipleship is the process by which we become civilized. There is one, and only one, way any of us can win the battle for our soul. It is simple and concrete. We need to become disciples of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

### **What Is a Disciple?**

What does it mean to be a *disciple*? In the Bible, the word for disciple literally means "pupil" or "learner." When applied to the early Christians, it came to mean someone who declared a personal allegiance to the teachings and person of Jesus. The life of a disciple revolves around Jesus.

Here's a working definition you can build around: A disciple is someone *called* to live in Christ, *equipped* to live like Christ, and *sent* to live for Christ.

For example, in describing the man who built his house on the rock (i.e., a disciple), Jesus said, "I will show you what everyone is like who comes to me (*calling*) and hears my words (*equipping*) and obeys (*sending*)" (Luke 6:47, NCV, parenthetical comments added; for same three categories see also 2 Tim. 3:15-17).

**1. A disciple is called to live in Christ.** A disciple is *called* to profess faith in Jesus Christ (*evangelism*). I grew up in a “Christian home” that didn’t know Christ. We didn’t reject the gospel; we never heard it. Our church was focused on other things. In my early 20s, though, my soon-to-be wife, Patsy, explained the gospel of Jesus to me, and I soon embraced Christ as my Lord and Savior.

There are 108 million men in America, 15 years of age and older. Regrettably, 66 million of these men have made no profession of faith in Christ. That’s sad, because many of them (like me) would gladly receive Christ if engaged in a credible way. What’s even sadder, though, is how many men think they have tried Christianity, found it wanting, and rejected it, when in fact they have never properly understood it.

**2. A disciple is equipped to live like Christ.** A disciple is *equipped* in a process of ongoing spiritual growth and transformation (*teaching*). Picture yourself as the president of a law firm employing 100 attorneys. For years you have recruited lawyers, but then left them on their own. Without guidance and training, they have done more harm than good. Unresolved cases have piled up, other law firms consider your firm an embarrassment, and the public thinks you are incompetent.

Suppose you go to your board of directors and ask to hire another 20 lawyers. They would say, “Are you nuts? You haven’t trained the lawyers we have. Why would we let you hire more? We have a terrible reputation. In fact, several young people who interned with us have quit the law. You’re fired!”

When we don’t disciple (train and equip) a man who professes Christ, he will almost always become lukewarm in faith, worldly in behavior and hypocritical in witness.

**3. A disciple is sent to live for Christ.** A disciple is *sent*

to live for Christ by loving others, bearing much fruit and doing good deeds (*service*). Why do we equip men to live like Christ? So they can enjoy Christ by knowing Him better, but also so “that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:17, NKJV). Jesus told his disciples, “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you” (John 20:21).

Every man wants to give his life to a cause, to make a difference, to do something with his life. When you become a disciple, you will eventually want to make that difference for the glory of God: to “bear much fruit” and bear “fruit that should remain” (John 15:8,16).

Once you have been with Christ, experienced the joy of His grace, the warmth of His love, the cleansing of His forgiveness and the indwelling of His Spirit, you inevitably come to a point where you can no longer be happy unless you are serving the Lord.

### **How Do You Become a Disciple?**

Everything and anything that moves you toward Christian maturity is discipleship. The most often noted means for making disciples include preaching, teaching, literature, Bible study, private devotions, small groups, mentoring, prayer, seminars, activities, informal discussions, mission trips and leadership training. As you can see, there are many ways to become a disciple, but here are my top three picks:

- **First and foremost, the best way to become a disciple is to become actively involved in a disciple-making church.** A disciple-making church will have a plan to immerse you in the gospel at your own pace. Listen carefully to the sermons. Watch how the leaders conduct themselves. Don't merely observe, get involved.
- **Second, set aside 10, 20, 30 or 60 minutes a day to read, study and apply God's word for yourself.** Every year since 1988, I have read *The One Year Bible*,

although I have used a reading guide and my regular Bible a few times too. I also use this time to memorize meaningful verses, meditate, pray and sometimes even sing! Personally, I have never known a single man whose life has changed in any significant way apart from the regular study of God's Word. Pick up *The One Year Bible* online or at any Christian bookstore. There are 365 daily readings. You can read it in about 15 minutes a day. As an alternative, subscribe to *Equipping the Man in the Mirror* and follow the daily Bible reading schedule included with each day's devotion.

- **Third, become part of a small group, preferably men only, and do life together.** A small group is a dynamic way to become a disciple. Most meaningful change takes place in the context of small group relationships. As men tell their "stories," the truth of the gospel gets meaty and fleshy. Simply, I just "get it" (the gospel) better when I see it in your life!

**Pat Morley** is the Founder and CEO of *Man in the Mirror*. After building one of Florida's 100 largest privately held companies, in 1991, he founded *Man in the Mirror*, a non-profit organization to help men find meaning and purpose in life. Dr. Morley is the bestselling author of *The Man in the Mirror*, *No Man Left Behind*, *Dad in the Mirror*, and *A Man's Guide to the Spiritual Disciplines*.

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## How Adolf Eichmann Brought Healing to Israel

Sunday night began Holocaust Memorial Day in Israel. Ceremonies are scheduled all over the country, the stories of

people like Anne Frank and Elie Wiesel will be shared, and there was a siren in the morning that sounded throughout the country, at which, no matter where one was, he or she was instructed to stand in a moment of silence to remember those of our people—all six million—who were murdered in Nazi-occupied Europe.

### **Why Didn't You Fight Back?**

It wasn't always like this in Israel. When tens of thousands of Jews—survivors—began to populate the new nation of Israel, the native Israelis had great difficulty relating to the survivors. There was always one lingering, mostly unspoken question: "Why didn't you fight back?"

Tommy Lapid, Hungarian survivor and one of the most influential Israelis that immigrated from Europe, writes, "...back then, in the 1950s and 1960s, conventional thinkers and the general public treated us with condescension. 'Why didn't you fight back?' they would ask. 'Why did you go like sheep to the slaughter?' They were first-class Jews who took arms and fought, while we were second-class Yids (from Yiddish) whom the Germans could annihilate without encountering resistance."

Israelis, who have fought 14 wars (including conflicts in Gaza and the Intifadas) over the short span of the Jewish nation's 65 years, *are* fighters. Every day could be your last. Every able-bodied high school graduate goes into the army. And this was the mentality of the Chalutzim—the pioneers—who started this country. Every one of them was willing to die for the cause, and many did.

When they heard how the Jews of Europe surrendered without a fight (save a few uprisings), they could not comprehend it—it was a different language. "Could these people be our people?" was the silent (and sometimes not-so-silent thought).

Of course, this was before the Internet, and even television was extremely limited—no CNN, no Bernard Shaw and Peter Arnett

on the floor of a Bagdad hotel. Native Israelis did not know the whole story. Israelis fought every day for their existence and knew that the Arabs planned to “fill the Mediterranean with the blood of Zionists.” They were ready for war, whereas the Jews of Europe were simply living their life. Hitler wisely moved upon them little by little, so that by the time they realized his actual plan, they were too weak and outnumbered to fight back.

I know the history; I’ve seen *Schindler’s List* and read Elie Wiesel’s *Night*. But the native-born Israelis of the 1950s did not have this information—there were no Holocaust museums. And the survivors themselves did not feel like talking about it. Even children born to survivors here in Israel often judged their parents. And the parents never talked. Until ...

### **The Capture of Adolf Eichmann**

In mid-May 1960, Mossad agents captured the second most evil man of the Holocaust—Adolf Eichmann. Eichmann was the architect of Hitler’s “Final Solution.” He was in charge of deporting Jews to extermination camps and once boasted, “I will leap into my grave laughing because the feeling that I have five million human beings on my conscience is for me a source of extraordinary satisfaction.” He was off by a million.

After the war, he escaped to Argentina (as did many Nazis) and started a simple, anonymous life. “But in the autumn of 1957, Walter Eytan at the Israeli Foreign Ministry, got a call from Fritz Bauer, the public prosecutor of the province of Hesse, Germany. He told Eytan that Eichmann was alive and living in Argentina.”

The Mossad sprang into action and launched a lengthy investigation that resulted in the snatching up of Eichmann on Garibaldi Street in Buenos Aires as he got off his bus on May 11, 1960. After his detention he was drugged and secretly flown to Israel on May 20, to stand trial. The trial took

place nearly a year later, but the healing began as soon as news of his capture was public. Lapid remarks:

“His capture signified the end of the period of silence. This was a collective earthquake, the eruption of a volcano of emotions and flowing lava of memories. Fifteen years of mute silence had ended. The survivors began to speak out, at first hesitantly and then, in an unstoppable flood. Even the arrogance of the native-born Israelis disappeared as if it had never existed. At first it was replaced with shock, then understanding, and finally mute acknowledgement that there was no difference between us and them. For the first time, people asked me questions about what had transpired there, and for the first time, I answered.”

“Eichmann’s trial aroused international interest, bringing Nazi atrocities to the forefront of world news.” It was decided in Israel that numerous witnesses would be given the opportunity to testify against Eichmann. For many Israelis, even children of survivors, this would be the first time they would hear firsthand accounts of what really happened. While Eichmann sat protected by a bulletproof glass cage (which still sits in Israel’s Holocaust Museum), 112 survivors testified against him.

### **The Healing Begins**

“Testimonies of Holocaust survivors ... generated interest in Jewish resistance. The trial prompted a new openness in Israel; many Holocaust survivors felt able to share their experiences as the country confronted this traumatic chapter.”

Attorney General Gideon Hausner’s opening remarks began like this: “When I stand before you, oh judges of Israel, to lead the prosecution of Adolf Eichmann, I do not stand alone. With me here are six million accusers. But they cannot rise to their feet and point an accusing finger at the man in the dock with the cry ‘J’accuse!’ on their lips. For their ashes are piled high on the hills of Auschwitz and in the fields of

Treblinka and washed away in the rivers of Poland. Their graves are scattered throughout Europe. Their blood cries out, but their voices are not heard. Thus I shall speak for them. In their name, I shall unfold this terrible indictment.”

This was the first time that Israel as a nation fully comprehended the monstrous nature of Adolf Hitler. They finally understood what their European brethren had endured. And that merely *surviving*, during the Holocaust, was a violent act against the will of the Third Reich.

The 1961 trial of Adolf Eichmann marked a turning point in Israel’s history—a collective healing and reconciliation. While only 112 testified, it opened the door for other survivors who had been silent, to finally feel the freedom to share their stories without being judged.

Who would have dreamed that the demon-processed Eichmann, the architect of Israel’s would-be destruction, would be the catalyst for her national healing?

Monday, no one will remember those first 13 years before 1961, the year that Israel celebrated its bar mitzvah, if you will. The stories will be told and the children will listen. Survivors will be honored, not ridiculed ... thanks to Adolf Eichmann.

Eichmann was hung on May 31, 1962.

**Ron Cantor** is the director of Messiah’s Mandate International in Israel, a Messianic Ministry dedicated to taking the message of Jesus from Israel to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Ron also travels internationally teaching on the Jewish roots of the New Testament. He serves on the pastoral team of Tiferet Yeshua, a Hebrew-speaking congregation in Tel Aviv. His newest book, *Identity Theft*, will be released on April 16. Follow him at @RonSCantor on Twitter.

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# 7 Ways to Honor Your Father

You may remember the story of Butch O'Hare, the military hero we featured a few months ago. Well, several of our subscribers pointed us to who Butch's father was—Edward J. "Eddie" O'Hare.

Eddie was a lawyer who worked with Al Capone. Details to the extent of this relationship are uncertain. In 1930, Eddie began working with the IRS to help convict Capone of tax evasion, which led to Capone's sentence to Alcatraz in 1933. Some 10 days before Capone was to be released in 1939, Eddie was gunned down by Capone's men.

Eddie gave up his life for his principles. Butch, in turn, gave up his life not only for his principles, but for the sake of his country. We can't think of a better way to honor your father than by living (and dying) for what's right.

Consider the following seven ways to honor your father:

- 1. Learn your dad's story.** Get a digital recorder and interview your dad. This involves distraction-free listening. Learn what made/makes him tick. If he's passed away, then do the research.
- 2. Live out your dad's values.** Does/did your dad value hard work? Then live that value out loud. Does/did your dad earn respect as a fair businessman? Make fairness your motto. Does/did your dad support ministry to the homeless? Throw your weight into the cause too.
- 3. Spend quality time with your dad on a regular basis.** Honor your dad with the gift of your time. Demonstrate how much you care by literally being there. Visit often, treat him with

respect, and don't be afraid to tell him you love him.

**4. Love and respect your family.** Let your dad know how much he means to you by treating your mother with respect. Demonstrate care to your entire family—brothers and sisters too. When your dad sees how deeply you honor your family, his deepest love, you are honoring him.

**5. Build/give/name something in his memory.** Name a child after your dad. Establish a scholarship your dad would support in his name. Send money to his favorite cause and then write him a letter explaining why. Give your wife flowers and then call your dad to tell him you did it because he taught you to be a better man.

**6. Acknowledge your dad in your own achievements.** Maybe you are being honored or recognized at work, church, or in the community. Invite your dad and then share something you learned from him in your talk. Or, if you're interviewed, make sure the reporter mentions your dad in the story.

**7. Ask your dad for advice.** Show your dad how much his wisdom means to you by calling him and asking for counsel. Finances, parenting, work, community, faith. Don't call to whine and complain, but ask him as a serious resource reference. Tell him you're asking because you respect him so much.

Additional Resource: [A Father's Legacy](#)

We would love to hear about the ways you honor your father. Please share them with us below.

**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**.

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## **Fitness After 65 Is No One-Size-Fits-All Endeavor**

America's ageing population is posing special challenges, fitness experts say, because it is difficult to design effective workout routines for people with such a wide range of abilities.

For one 70-year-old, the goal may be to run a marathon, for another it's getting out of a chair.

"If you are teaching 10-year-olds, it's perfectly reasonable to do an activity that everybody would participate in," said Dr. Wojtek Chodzko-Zajko, an expert on aging with the American College of Sports Medicine. "But 20 80-year-olds could be as different as chalk and cheese."

Some baby boomer could be athletic, he explained, while others would be unable to get out of bed.

There are now more Americans age 65 and older than at any other time in U.S. history, according to Census Bureau figures. Some 40 million people age 65 and over lived in the United States in 2010, accounting for 13 percent of the total population. The older population grew from 3 million in 1900 to 40 million in 2010.

Older adults should be doing aerobic activity to help maintain body weight, strengthening exercises to develop and maintain muscle mass and some type of flexibility training, according

to Dr. James Graves, Dean of the College of Health at the University of Utah.

Physical activity can reduce the risk of diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and osteoporosis, he said, as well as improve the quality of life by maintaining functional capacity, such as the ability to climb stairs, open doors, and carry groceries.

“A very healthy 70-year-old can safely participate in high-intensity activity while a frail 60-year-old needs to lower the intensity,” said Graves. “My recommendation is to work with a personal trainer or group leader who has knowledge and qualifications to work with the elderly.”

Mary Ann Wilson is the creator and host of the “Sit and Be Fit,” a senior fitness program that has aired on U.S. public television since 1987.

The majority of her viewers are women over 65. For that population, she said, the goal of exercise is health and well-being, not physical prowess.

“Gravity has been working on them for 70 years,” said Wilson, a registered nurse who specialized in geriatrics. “Gravity is not our friend after many years of pulling our heads, shoulders and upper torsos forward and down.”

The 30-minute class includes warm-up, circulation and strength segments, a finger segment (for stiffness), standing for balance, and final relaxation.

Posture, breathing, balance, cognitive functioning and reaction time are among the most important—and neglected—components of elder fitness, she said.

“Focusing on gait is really important because as we age our gait changes,” said Wilson.

Karen Peterson, author of “Move with Balance: Healthy Aging

Activities for Brain and Body,” stresses a mind-body approach in workouts with seniors.

“In our society it seems people don’t really like to do things unless they’re good at it already,” said Peterson, a kinesiologist based in Maui. “But what the brain likes is to be challenged.”

Her exercises include tossing a bean bag to improve reaction time, walking a figure-eight pattern for balance, as well as eye stretches, jaw relaxers, childhood games and cognitive challenges to keep body and mind alert.

“We take balance exercises and add conversation or math problems,” she said. “The concept is to always progress, always get more challenging.”

To tackle the isolation and diversity of the older population, Peterson initiated a mentoring program in which the fitter seniors work with the frailer.

“Some partners will become friends,” she said. “They’ll get really turned on.”

Experts agree that it’s never too late to do something. “Exercise is effective even in the most frail individual,” Wilson said. “If they can wiggle their toes, they can exercise.”

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*(Editing by Patricia Reaney and Sandra Maler)*

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