

Break Down the Spiritual Mediocrity Mentality

Note: The following is an excerpt from Patrick Morley's 2012 book, Man Alive.

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

But something is blocking them.

With a few inspiring exceptions, most men I talk to are confused about what a powerful, transformed life really looks like. They have high hopes for what Christianity offers but little to show for it.

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

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

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

Do you feel the angst? Do you see yourself on this list?

The High Cost of Being Half Alive

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

Despite their good intentions, after they “walk the aisle” and “pray the sinner’s prayer,” most men return to their seats and resume their former lives. They don’t take the next steps.

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

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

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

The collateral damage is staggering. Tonight, one-third of America’s 72 million children will go to bed in a home without their biological dad. But perhaps the greatest cost to the physical absence of fathers is the practical absence of mothers. Essentially, one person must now do the work of two. As a young woman who grew up without a dad said, “When my mom and dad divorced, I didn’t just lose my dad. I also lost my mom because she had to work long hours to support us.”

There has to be a better way.

What a Man Alive Does Differently

We all know a handful of Christian men we admire more than others. Their faith has become robust and powerful. They’re living lives of influence because their primal needs have been fulfilled. They feel alive. Perhaps you have even witnessed their transformation from spiritual mediocrity. Likewise,

you've known men who never seem to be able to get it together spiritually. What makes the difference?

What are the guys who really have it together doing that the guys who live in spiritual mediocrity don't do? What differentiates strong men from those guys who always seem to be on the outside looking in? What do successful Christian men do that unsuccessful Christian men fail to do?

What's Going On?

Consider Jesus' well-known parable of the four soils. A sower went out and scattered the seed of God's Word on four kinds of soil: the hard path, the rocky soil, the thorny ground, and the good soil.

Most men today would recognize themselves in the first three soils where the seeds don't grow. Yet they honestly want to be like the good soil where the fourth seed fell—to be men “who truly hear and understand God's word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted” (Matthews 13:23).

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

Jesus gave us another insight when He was speaking to a group of confused religious men. He said, “Your mistake is that you don't know the Scriptures, and you don't know the power of God” (Matthew 22:29).

Do you see it? Jesus made a direct connection between knowing the Bible and leading a powerful life. Lukewarm men are in error because they “don't know the Scriptures” and therefore “don't know the power of God.” Their capabilities don't equal their intentions.

On the other hand, transformed men “truly hear and understand God's word and produce a harvest.” Digging into the Word of

God is easily the number one factor that differentiates men who have tapped into God's power.

A Powerful Life

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

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

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

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

That's the kind of immense, versatile power that Jesus envisioned in making the statement in Matthew 22:29. In the Scriptures and in the Holy Spirit, you already have at your disposal the power—the dynamite—of God to change your life.

Where Do We Go from Here?

God gives us a huge promise in His Word. Jesus said it Himself: "My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life." (John 10:10)

You don't have to settle for being half alive. You can heal each of your inner aches and pains. You can be the good soil. You can be transformed. God will change your life, one verse at a time.

It's not self-indulgent for you to become the man God created you to be. In fact, it's your destiny to lead a powerful life

transformed by Christ—not without ongoing opposition, but equipped and trained with the power to prevail. You don't have to settle for being half alive.

We are part of something bigger than ourselves, you and I. We share a common bond. And there are others too—millions of us everywhere. Men unwilling to settle for spiritual mediocrity. Men unwilling to settle for anything less than becoming fully alive.

For three decades, **Patrick Morley** has been regarded as one of America's most respected authorities on the unique challenges and opportunities that men face. In 1989, he wrote *The Man in the Mirror*, a landmark book that poured from his own search for meaning, purpose, and a deeper relationship with God. With over 3,000,000 copies, this best-selling book has captured the imaginations men worldwide, and was selected as one of the 100 most influential Christian books of the twentieth century.