

How to Become a 'Man Alive'

As stories began to emerge after the collapse of the World Trade Center towers, several survivors from the South Tower mentioned a courageous young man who mysteriously appeared from the smoke and led them to safety. They did not know who this man was who saved their lives, but this they remembered: Wrapped over his mouth and nose was a red bandanna.

For 56 minutes, the man in the red bandanna shouted orders and led people down a stairwell to safety. "I found the stairs. Follow me," he would say. He carried one woman down 17 flights of stairs on his back. He set her down and urged others to help her and keep moving down. Then he headed back up.

A badly injured woman was sitting on a radiator, waiting for help, when the man with the red bandanna over his face came running across the room. "Follow me," he told her. "I know the way out. I will lead you to safety." He guided her and another group through the mayhem to the stairwell, got them started down toward freedom, and then disappeared back up into the smoke.

He was never seen again.

Six months later, on March 19, 2002, the body of the man with the red bandanna was found intact alongside firefighters in a makeshift command center in the South Tower lobby, buried under 110 stories of rubble.

Slowly, the story began to come out. His name was Welles Crowther. In high school, he was the kid who would feed the puck to the hockey team's worst player, hoping to give his teammate that first goal. He became a junior volunteer firefighter in Upper Nyack, N.Y., following in his dad's footsteps.

Crowther graduated from Boston College, where he played

lacrosse, always with his trademark red bandanna. His father had always carried a blue bandanna.

After college he worked as an equities trader on the 104th floor of the South Tower. He had a habit of putting change in his pocket in the morning to give to street people on his way to work.

Not long before Sept. 11, Crowther told his father, "I don't know how much longer I can keep doing this work." He was restless for more. Crunching numbers for invisible clients just didn't seem like what he was born to do. He dreamed of becoming a firefighter or public servant.

On Sept. 11, 2001, at the age of 24, Welles Crowther became both—and also a hero, because he was willing to go up while everyone else was coming down.

There Must Be More

This story touches a need deep inside me—something so primal that I find it hard to put into words. But it makes me yearn to feel more alive. And every man with whom I've ever shared it has felt the same way.

Like Crowther, we all want to make a contribution and leave the world a better place. It is a primal need—one among many. By "primal," I mean that as men, we have a raw, restless energy that's different from women. It needs to be channelled, chiseled, transformed.

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, regardless of how much “I love Jesus” they’ve got. They have high hopes for what Christianity offers but have 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:

1. “I just feel like I am in this thing all alone.”
2. “I don’t feel like God cares about me personally—not really.”
3. “I don’t feel like my life has a purpose. It seems random.”
4. “I have a lot of destructive behaviors that keep dragging me down.”
5. “My soul feels dry.”
6. “My most important relationships are not working.”
7. “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? As you can see, as men, our similarities dwarf our differences.

These inner aches and pains—these yearnings—correspond to the seven primal, instinctive needs of men.

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?

To ask, "What do men who lead powerful, transformed lives do?" would be misleading. Why? Because lukewarm men are just as likely to do a lot of those same things: attend church, serve on a committee and send kids to youth group.

The right question to ask is, "What do men who lead powerful, transformed lives do *differently* than their lukewarm counterparts?" In business, we call these the differentiated success factors.

To imitate what most professing Christian men do wouldn't be helpful. What we want to know is, "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 looking in from the outside? What do successful Christian men do that unsuccessful Christian men fail to do?"

Where Do We Go From Here?

What I'm proposing is a huge promise—not from me, but from God's Word. Jesus said it Himself: "My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life" (John 10:10).

That's quite a promise.

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.

I'm going to show you how God has provided ways for you to transform that raw, restless energy you feel into a powerful spiritual life. We're going to flesh out each one of these

seven primal needs:

1. To feel like you don't have to do life alone
2. To believe—really believe—that God loves and cares about you personally
3. To understand how your life has a purpose, that your life is not random
4. To break free from the destructive behaviors that keep dragging you down
5. To satisfy your soul's thirst for transcendence, awe, and communion
6. To love and be loved without reservation
7. To make a contribution and leave the world a better place

We'll explore how it feels when your life is not going right, what makes that so hard and what to do about it.

I'm praying that God will satisfy your hunger for a powerful, transformed life and will supernaturally elevate you to a whole new level of feeling alive ... from which you refuse to return.

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.

Let's go get it.

*Editor's Note: This article is an excerpt from chapter 1 of Man Alive, now available for **Father's Day** here.*