

The Highest Honor to Which a Man Can Aspire

Not long after Jim and his wife moved to Orlando, his new neighbor invited him to attend The Man in the Mirror weekly men's Bible Study. For six months Jim never said a word—not one peep.

He later reminisced, "If my table leader had asked me to talk, I would've been out of there in a flash and never come back. Somehow he knew not to push me."

One day his table leader asked, "Who would like to close us in prayer today?"

Jim spoke up, "I don't have much experience, but I'd like to give it a try."

For decades, Jim has closed himself off to other people. He had been hurt so badly by his own mother and father that he said, "I had no friends. I was afraid that if I cared about someone they would just end up hurting me. So I walled myself in."

As Jim prayed, God took hold of his heart and began to change him. A couple of weeks later he asked, "Is there anything I can do to help around here?"

I said, "Well, I need someone to go around to the table leaders about five minutes before 8:00 a.m. and give them the "cut" sign so they can start wrapping it up."

"I can do that," he said.

A few weeks later Jim asked, "Is there anything else I can do?"

I said, "Well, the man who has been bringing the orange juice

can't do that anymore. Would you like to pick up the orange juice?"

"I can do that," he said.

Jim continued to ask for more assignments, and he was faithful with every one of them. After about a year I said, "Why don't you become the Bible study administrator? I'll be in charge of teaching, and you can be in charge of everything else." He liked that idea, and held that position for 17 years.

We decided to train our men how to share their personal faith stories and also how to lead a person to receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Jim ate it up. He aced the worksheet that showed him how to explain what his life was like before Jesus, how he came to put his faith in Jesus, and what his life has been like since. He learned how to read Campus Crusade's Four Spiritual Laws pamphlet to someone, and how to lead them in a sinner's prayer.

Jim had no idea that God would soon call upon him to put his new skills to use.

A few months later, Jim received a call that his estranged son was in the hospital and about to die from AIDS. He and his wife caught the next plane to Cincinnati.

When they arrived on the hospice ward of the hospital, they were shocked to see the gaunt, fragile silhouette of their prodigal son hooked up to a menacing array of IVs and medical devices. They regained their composure, and God then emboldened Jim to tell his son, "Tim, I love you very much." But Tim wasn't interested—he would have none of it.

Every morning for the next two weeks, Jim and his wife came to Tim's room. Every day, the first thing Jim did was to tell his son how much he loved him. They prayed for him, but he didn't participate. They told Tim how sorry they were and longed for

reconciliation. After many days of resistance, the wall of hostility began to crumble. Finally, Tim confessed to his mother, "Mom, I'm so sorry. I never gave Dad a chance."

After 10 days, the doctors told Jim and his wife the end was near. They, in turn, told their son he was about to die. Jim said, "Tim, God loves you and wants to forgive your sins and bring you to live with Him in heaven. If you ask Him to forgive your sins and ask Jesus to be your Savior, you can be with God when you die. Would you like to do that?" After some discussion, Tim asked God to forgive his sins and give him eternal life. That was on a Friday. He passed away on Sunday. Tim crucified his sins on Friday, and three days later, he was raised from the dead.

Jim said later, "Leading my son to Jesus is the greatest thing I've ever done. I shudder to think of what might have happened if I hadn't moved to Orlando, gotten into a Bible study and learned how to share my faith. When I look back, it's so clear that God had a plan, even though it felt pretty random at the time. Discipleship has changed my life. Praise God."

Being a disciple of Jesus is the highest honor to which a man can aspire. When Jesus called Peter, James, John and the others, He called them to become, what? Disciples. When Jesus left earth, the marching orders He left behind are to do, what? "Go and make disciples ... " (Matt. 28:19).

The word "disciple" comes from the Greek word *mathetes*, which means "pupil" or "learner." When used in conjunction with Jesus, it came to mean "an adherent to the person and teachings of Jesus." A disciple is called to live "in" Christ, equipped to live "like" Christ, and sent to live "for" Christ. Discipleship includes both the moment of salvation and the lifelong process of sanctification.

Everything we know about becoming a disciple, we know from the Bible. Jesus said, "Whoever comes to Me and hears My words and

does them, I will show whom he is like" (Luke 6:47). Disciples are born again. They have faith in Jesus. They lead lives of continual humility and repentance. They love the God who first loved them. They love one another. They become humble servants who put others first. They become holy, obedient vessels.

They make a full, total, complete surrender of all their dreams and ambitions to the lordship of Christ. With their whole heart, they commit to follow Jesus wherever, whenever, whatever. Disciples take hold of their new creation natures. They submissively allow the Holy Spirit to transform them into a certain kind of man in character and conduct. Their lives commend their message. They lead powerful lives transformed by Jesus.

We all admire the hero who makes the headlines for a single act of great courage. But let's also give a nod to the millions of men who, like Jim, are courageously living out God's plan each and every day in the details of their lives. {eoa}

Note: The preceding is an excerpt from Chapter 3 of Patrick Morley's book, The Fellowship of God's Big Holy Audacious Goal. The deeply felt need addressed in Chapter 3 is, "To believe that my life has a purpose—that my life is not random." {eoa}

After building one of Florida's 100 largest privately held companies, in 1991, **Dr. Patrick Morley** 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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