

Former Promise Keepers President Still Working to Change Men's Hearts, Lives

Randy Phillips served as president of the Christian men's movement Promise Keepers during its heyday. The organization, founded by football coach Bill McCartney, held popular stadium events in the 1990s that brought tens of thousands of men to Christ and many more into a closer relationship with Him.

But although Phillips enjoys looking back at the great things God did during that time, he has made a commitment to minister to men through a new ministry, CORE, which has a fresh approach that touches what he says are their two primary struggles: isolation and disqualification.

"There's a direct connection in many ways, with some of the beauty of what God did and the move of God in those days [of Promise Keepers]. ... but also with a deeper level of understanding of what the heart of man's crying out for," Phillips says. He adds that after his ministry with Promise Keepers ended, he struggled. "I went through a long season of a real deep searching, where I never stopped in my love for Jesus, but my joy that I had, the sense of partnership with the Lord and all, became drier and drier. And I looked for ways to fix myself, and I really struggled for a lot of years."

His breakthrough began, Phillips says, when he was talking to a wise friend named Rick. He told Rick, "All my life, I think I've had a pretty good relationship with Jesus when it comes to thanking Him for the things that He's done in my life. I have a good relationship when it comes to facing challenges. ... [but] I've always struggled in my life when it comes to just waiting on Him and just loving Him for who He is."

And Phillips says Rick pointed out something that changed his life. "Randy, let me see if I get this right," Rick said. "When it comes to Jesus helping you do really, really important things and look good, you're great. But just loving Him because He deserves it? Not so much. So basically, am I hearing that you have an ego-centered relationship with Jesus?"

Phillips said this new realization began "a journey around a real shift around who I am and what validates me as a man." Ultimately, he and his team developed a resource called CORE that uses "the power of story to create environments where men have permission to be real about their own story. As they can engage with other guys, they find out they're not alone," he says.

"Stadium events, catalytic events are awesome," Phillips says. "Promise Keepers was a part of that; Sunday mornings are, in a sense, kind of about that. But it's really the power of community, of genuine connection, about being real. And the church subconsciously reinforces the idea that my spirituality is judged based upon my obedience, and the things that I'm doing well, and then I'm disqualified when I struggle."

Phillips says churches can use the CORE curriculum, which includes films as well as small-group resources, to create environments that connect with men at a heart level more than an intellectual one. "What we're wanting to create in groups of five to seven guys is not just a kind of visual that I'm not alone but an actual heart connection, to realize many of the struggles that we have and issues and doubts and all are part of the natural journey, and then how, through our common understanding of one another's story, we begin to see the kind of encouragement to face struggles and the kind of strength to fulfill dreams. ... creating environments where we can begin to trust and begin to deal with real-life issues," he says. "At that kind of level, that's where a breakthrough happens. The Holy Spirit's always orchestrating environments, our lives, to

show us our need for Him. And that's where the power of community really is at its best."

To learn more about Randy Phillips and CORE, listen to this entire episode of the *Strang Report* podcast here, and share it with friends who may want to know about this exciting new resource for men. Subscribe to *The Strang Report* and share it on Apple podcasts and at .