

PRAISE FOR *UNDERSTANDING THE PURPOSE AND POWER OF MEN*

Male maturity does not come with age; it comes with the acceptance of responsibility. One of the greatest barriers to the maturation process is a man's failure to resolve his identity crisis. Dr. Munroe succinctly addresses that crisis by giving a clear definition of man and his role in human society. By pointing to man's origin, Dr. Munroe brings clarity to a man's true purpose and destiny. A book for men that women ought to read, too.

—Dr. A. R. Bernard

Pastor, Christian Cultural Center, New York, NY

As one who has been enriched through the teachings and writings of Dr. Myles Munroe, I find the message in this book both significant and challenging. Dr. Munroe helps us to see that the problem facing men worldwide is not a biological one of maleness, but a spiritual one of identity. This book also helps us to rediscover the male's underlying purpose and gives us the principles for making that assessment.

This is an on-time and end-time book, not just to read, but to be used as a reference in charting our course for a better society and a richer life.

—Dr. Bill Winston

Pastor, Living Word Christian Center, Forest Park, IL

Christian Business Network is currently leading a collaborative Fatherhood Initiative with community, state, and federal governmental leaders, focusing on the skyrocketing crisis of urban fatherless homes. Dr. Myles Munroe's leadership approach regarding what it means to be a man has once again helped us evaluate the conflicting signals government programmatic systems have caused through statistical data. *Understanding the Purpose and Power of Men* must be the model used to help eliminate the \$150 billion per year that federal and state governments spend to subsidize and sustain single parent families.

This book helps males understand what it means to be a man, husband, and father so they can become change agents towards rebuilding families, communities, and ultimately a nation.

—Jerome Edmondson

President & Founder, Christian Business Network, Inc.
Southfield, MI

Dr. Myles Munroe

UNDERSTANDING THE

PURPOSE

AND

POWER

OF MEN

GOD'S DESIGN FOR MALE IDENTITY

Expanded Edition with Study Guide



WHITAKER
HOUSE

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UNDERSTANDING THE PURPOSE AND POWER OF MEN:
God's Design for Male Identity
(Expanded Edition with Study Guide)

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DEDICATION

To my beloved son, Chairó, with a hope that the content and principles of this book will become the quality of your character and the story of your life.

To Paul, forever my brother in this life and the next. May your memory live on through the things you taught me as a real male-man.

To my beloved dad, Matt Munroe—my male mentor.

To the men of BFM Fellowship's Real Men Ministry—your passion for truth inspires.

To males of every race, culture, creed, and nation in your struggle to discover and master the mystery of being a man.

To the Third-World man in his pursuit to recover his lost identity.

To the Manufacturer of the man and the male.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Our natural conception and birth is a result of human cooperation and established the priority the Creator places on our dependency on others for success and personal progress. This work is a testimony to this cooperation and confirms the reality that we are a sum total of all the contributions made to our lives by the people we have had the privilege to encounter on the journey of life. I am deeply grateful for the inspiration and wisdom of the men and women, both past and present, who, through their lives, instructions, corrections, challenges, commitment, and example, stirred gifts within me that I did not know I had.

I am also grateful to all the friends and colleagues of the International Third World Leaders Association who continue to inspire me to make a contribution to my generation and those to come.

For the development and production of this book itself, I feel a deep sense of gratitude to:

My precious wife, Ruth, and our children, Charisa and Chairio (Myles, Jr.), for their patience and support during my globe-trotting duties. Being your husband and father tested the reality of the principles in this book and has made me a real male-man. I love you all.

Lois Smith Puglisi, diligent and gifted editor and advisor, who shepherded this book from conception to its present form. You are a gift to any author, and may your gift continue to make a way for you in the world.

CONTENTS

Preface.....	9
Introduction	11
1. What Is a Real Man?	17
2. Seven Principles of Purpose.....	39
3. The Creation of Man	61
4. God’s Purpose for the Male.....	77
5. Dominion Versus Domination.....	107
6. The Male as Visionary and Leader	127
7. The Male as Teacher and Cultivator.....	145
8. The Male as Provider and Protector	165
9. A Man and His Sex Life	184
10. Male-Female Differences	207
11. How to Be a Good Father	224
12. Keys to Becoming a Real Man.....	242
A Word to Men of Third-World Nations	253
About the Author	255

PREFACE

The twenty-first century male is in crisis. Throughout the nations of our global village, the prisons are filled with multitudes of men. Compared to their counterpart, women, they are responsible for a vast majority of the criminal behavior worldwide. They are also victims of drug abuse and the principal carriers of the dreaded AIDS virus. Many have found a home in subculture gangs, instigating antisocial activities that wreak havoc on the social order. Men revel in the oppression of women and perpetuate domestic violence.

In every culture and social system, men are struggling to find their place in a fast-changing world. In many societies, the dramatic change in the status of women, the workplace, and traditional cultural roles has left a significant number of men confused, disillusioned, angry, frustrated, and traumatized. Yes, the male of this cyber-technical, Internet-driven, post-modern world is caught in a worldwide web of confusion. Men are in trouble but are afraid to admit it. They are lost in a maze of new paradigms and the uncharted waters of social and cultural convergence.

Change is often the source of uncertainty and a measure of fear and anxiety. For many, this type of fear is difficult to manage, and it causes varying reactions. Some negative reactions to change include denial, ignorance, isolation, anger, resistance, and resentment. These reactions can cause serious effects on the environment in which the change is taking place. The result can be oppression, suppression, violence, and the spirit of control.

A brief study of the behavior of the male-factor in many nations today, including yours, will reveal such reactions to cultural changes. The drastic transitions taking place in social structures and the shifting of long-held beliefs are destroying the defining lines and the very definitions of our lives.

For the male in most societies and cultures, this redefinition is traumatic and has rendered many men without a clear definition of manhood, masculinity, and fatherhood.

The impact of the confusion on women, the family, and society is also frightening. Many women suffer the violence of angry men. Children are victims of abuse and resentment, and society bears the scars of social deterioration. Governments are helpless to respond to this phenomenon. They find their ideas, laws, and social programs ineffective in addressing it. Men are clearly in trouble.

So what is a man to do? The number one challenge to the male is his identity crisis. The average man is confused about his manhood, masculinity, and sexuality. He doesn't have a clear definition of what a man is supposed to be. Some men have confused their cultural, social, and traditional roles with the definition of manhood. However, this has proven to be one of the major causes of the problem because, as the roles change, so does a man's image of himself.

How do we measure a man? What is true manhood? How do you define masculinity? What is true male sexuality? What is the true purpose of the male in relation to the female? Is there a universal definition of manhood? Can it be attained? Where do we go to get this definition?

This book addresses answers to these critical questions from the perspective of the male. The purpose and role of the male in the scheme of human experience is explored through returning to the original process of his creation, based on the premise that no one knows the product like the manufacturer. No product can understand its identity by asking the customer, because only the manufacturer knows the original purpose and potential of his product. Therefore, it is imperative that the male rediscover his original purpose and understand his true potential, as well as gain a clear understanding of his principal function within the human family.

The male is the key to building strong, enduring social infrastructures, stable families, sane societies, and secure nations. It is critical that the subject of the male's crisis be a priority for men, women, and national governments, so that we can secure progressive social developments within the countries of the world. Let us begin our journey through the land of cultural confusion to rediscover the purpose and power of the real male.

INTRODUCTION

The male holds the key to the nations—and our nations are in crisis. As the man goes, so goes the family, society, and the world. The problem is, men don't have a clear idea of where they're going anymore. They are suffering from a lost sense of identity—and the consequences for their families, communities, and nations are far-reaching.

CONFLICTING VIEWS OF MANHOOD

Traditional male roles once gave men continuity and balance from generation to generation. Today, many men are questioning who they are and what roles they are to play in life. On the surface, they may be following customary life pursuits, such as working, marrying, and having a family. Yet they have an inner uncertainty about what it means to be a man, a husband, and a father.

**MALES ARE SUFFERING
A LOST SENSE OF IDENTITY.**

What is causing this uncertainty? A major reason is that society is sending out conflicting signals about what it means to be a man. Traditional views of masculinity compete side by side with new ideas of manhood in the marketplace of ideas—each vying for supremacy.

A CLASH OF OLD AND NEW IDEAS

This contest of ideas is being played out as we absorb the vast social and political changes that have taken place over the last forty years. On both national and international levels, cultures and ideas are colliding. As a result, people are reevaluating what it means to be human, what it means

to be a man or a woman, and what it means to be a country. Some of these developments are:

- the movement for women's equality,
- the exportation of Western culture in the world,
- the fall of Communism,
- the global marketplace,
- a growing interconnectedness between nations.

Whether worldwide or locally, our world is rapidly changing before our eyes, and the social transformation accompanying it can often be painful. The clash of old and new ideas has left many men perplexed and frustrated in regard to their identity. How do their new roles (for example, equal partnership with women) play out against more traditional ones (such as breadwinner and protector)? Men are feeling compelled to redefine their roles as they attempt to adapt to these changing social expectations. This adjustment is disrupting both their professional and personal lives. It is altering their relationships with women. It is transforming family life.

Yet the lines of these new roles look blurry to men as traditional and contemporary ideas eclipse—overshadowing one another—and then separate again. For example, on the one hand, men are told there is no real difference between males and females and that they are to consider women as equals. On the other hand, they are encouraged to treat women with special care and courtesy—but when they do, they are often accused of chauvinism.

THE MALE IN CRISIS

Historically, men have defined their manhood by the various roles they have fulfilled for their families and for society. Now that these roles are in transition, they don't have a solid definition of masculinity to give them a cultural context for life. As a result, many men believe they have lost part of themselves, but they don't have anything concrete with which to replace it. Often, they don't even feel wanted or needed by women any longer. They used to have clear direction about where they were going as men. Now, it's as if they're trapped in a maze, frustrated and unable to move forward purposefully in life.

Some men have reacted angrily against the women's movement and other social changes. They have no intention of adapting. Instead, they have re-asserted or tightened their traditional dominance over women because they are afraid of losing control. They have reacted by being either competitive or isolationist. They are domineering or even abusive to their families. In certain countries, men have aggressively fought back on a national level. They have countered the advancement of women's equality with severe restrictions on the lifestyle and freedoms of women because they perceive these changes to be part of the Westernization of their societies—a moral corruption that is harming their way of life.

**MEN HAVE DEFINED THEIR
MANHOOD BY THEIR ROLES.**

A CRUCIAL CROSSROADS

Why is the male's crisis of purpose such a pivotal issue? For one thing, it attacks the core of who men are, leaving them indecisive and foundationally weak. For another, it reflects a breakdown in understanding, communication, and cooperation between men and women that is unnatural and unhealthy. Males are at a crucial crossroads, and where they go from here will have a serious effect on the course of society. The crisis of purpose they are experiencing will escalate if they continue to live in an uncertain or defensive state of mind. They will remain frustrated and will live at a level far below their potential. Moreover, the cracks in the foundation of society will grow dangerously wider.

What should men do? Should they hold on to traditional roles and ways of thinking, or should they follow the road being paved by new concepts of maleness?

It would be difficult to stop the flow of change, and we would not want to return to tradition merely for the sake of tradition. The old system did not reflect the full purpose and potential of men, and women were often devalued under it.

Yet contemporary concepts of maleness are often ambiguous. They also tend to focus on roles rather than on the male's underlying purpose and identity (a crucial distinction that this book explores). What kind of world

will we have if we keep following this new path? We already have some idea of the negative effects that a continuing male crisis of purpose would bring. Many of our current social problems, such as teenage pregnancy, crime, and poverty, flow from purposelessness and rootlessness among men.

The majority of crimes worldwide are committed by men. Ninety to ninety-five percent of those in prison in the United States are males. Recently, I have been amazed at the increasing numbers of boys who are involved in crime. We are seeing more and more criminal activity by males between the ages of nine and eighteen. In London, a five-year-old boy was murdered by an eleven-year-old boy. In Chicago, a six-year-old girl was murdered by a nine-year-old boy. I remember when criminals used to be old men.

How often do you see a list of crimes that were committed during a given week in which 50 percent of the culprits were women? Never. It's really a male issue.

Whether we're talking about a broken home, an abused wife, an abandoned child, or a crime, we are looking primarily at a male problem that stems from a misguided purpose or a lack of true identity.

THE ISSUE IS PURPOSE, NOT MALENESS

Why are many social ills caused by men? It may be tempting for some to dismiss males as hopelessly aggressive and domineering, with an essential nature in need of an overhaul. I'd like to present an alternative perspective: the problem is not a biological one of *maleness*—but a spiritual one of *identity*. Male identity is not essentially a matter of *roles*, which vary with culture and shift with changing times—it is a matter of *inherent purpose*.

Therefore, to address the problems of our society and the world, we must start with the male and how he perceives himself. If men knew who they really are and their true reason for being, then their confusion, anger, and destructive behavior could be replaced with purposefulness, confidence, and a building up of society. It's when men don't know who they are and what purpose they have in this world that we experience a myriad of cultural problems.

While society is feeling the effects of the male's dilemma, it is also apparently contributing to it by presenting incomplete or confusing ideas

of manhood. In this way, society is unknowingly bringing trouble upon itself. This double-edged sword is not new to our generation or our world.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF IGNORANCE OF PURPOSE

The crisis we are seeing today is actually a contemporary version of an age-old dilemma. Men and women alike lost their concept of what it truly means to be human—male and female—a long time ago. The problem is also not confined to particular cultures. The question of identity is a global problem. I have traveled to many nations, and I have concluded that most of the world is suffering from what I call the “consequences of ignorance of purpose.” In every nation, in every community, no matter what language the citizens speak or what color their skin is, people are experiencing a common dilemma. They are suffering the debilitating effects of a misconception of purpose. They don’t understand who they really are and therefore aren’t living up to their full potential in life.

In my earlier book, *Understanding the Purpose and Power of Woman*, I showed how humanity’s ignorance of purpose has historically degraded women. (I recommend that book to men, just as I recommend this one to women.) I talked about how we can alleviate the pain and unfulfilled potential this misunderstanding of purpose has caused women over the centuries so they can be free to become all they were meant to be.

However, neither males nor females will ever be fully actualized if the crisis of the male is not addressed, since men have a primary influence on the tone and direction of society. This influence is meant to be used for good. However, as we saw in regard to many of the social problems we are facing, it can have exactly the opposite effect if it’s not understood or if it’s abused. There is no way that we can have a safe and productive world as long as humanity as a whole doesn’t know its reason for existence—and men in particular don’t have a clear idea of their identity.

People can go for years without realizing they aren’t fulfilling their true purpose. Both individuals and cultures can become comfortable following established roles without questioning their validity. However, our socially turbulent society is forcing us to examine the

**OUR CRISIS OF IDENTITY IS A
POWERFUL OPPORTUNITY FOR
FINDING TRUE PURPOSE.**

underlying foundation of our concepts of maleness and femaleness. In this sense, we can look at this crisis as a powerful opportunity for self-discovery and self-actualization. It is up to us to make accurate tests of the soundness of both traditional and contemporary ideas of what it means to be male and female, and then to relay a strong foundation for society.

The purpose of this book is to give us principles for making that assessment and fulfilling our true purpose as human beings.

A REDISCOVERY OF PURPOSE

Therefore, to rediscover the masculine identity, we need to address these questions:

- ✦ How can men gain their footing in the ever-shifting environment of cultural expectations?
- ✦ What does it mean to be male?
- ✦ What definition of masculinity should men adopt?
- ✦ Why is a male's self-concept so important to the foundation of society?
- ✦ What roles should men fulfill—in the workplace and in the home?
- ✦ What do gender roles have to do with the male's purpose?
- ✦ What are the differences between males and females?
- ✦ How are men and women meant to relate to one another?
- ✦ How can a man build a better life for himself, his family, and the world?

In the following pages, I will explore these questions in a very straightforward and practical way. Join me for a rediscovery of purpose: the man as he was meant to be.

WHAT IS A REAL MAN?

MEN NEED A GOD-GIVEN IDENTITY IF THEY ARE TO FULFILL THEIR TRUE PURPOSE.

Imagine that you are watching a television show similar to *To Tell the Truth*. Several contestants try to convince you that they are the Real Man. You have to guess which one is authentic and which ones are the imposters.

Contestant #1 tells you he is the Real Man because he fills the traditional male role: he supports his family financially while his wife cares for the children and the home. As long as he provides a roof over their heads and food for them to eat, he's fulfilling his duty as a husband and father. This man doesn't consider his wife to be his true equal.

Contestant #2 says he is the Real Man because he has a culturally progressive role: he shares household and child-rearing responsibilities with his wife while they both pursue careers. He thinks of his wife as his equal.

Contestant #3 explains that he is the Real Man because he has been freed from male stereotypes and has decided to take on the nurturer role of caring for the children and home while his wife goes to work. He considers his wife equal to himself—or maybe even better, since she has a more compassionate, sensitive nature than he does.

These are some of the images of manhood that are competing for men's acceptance today. Many men feel as if they're being asked to guess what a real man is by determining which "contestant" has the most convincing facial expressions and answers. Yet there seems to be no clear-cut winner. In addition, society keeps mixing and matching these images until men don't know what's expected of them anymore. They are confused and frustrated as they try to sort through their own expectations for manhood while feeling pressure from the various segments of society that are promoting these images—or an impossible combination of them. Meanwhile,

Hollywood is flooding society with intriguing icons of masculinity, such as James Bond and Rambo. Even though these images are superheroes rather than real men, it's sometimes hard to escape their allure. It's difficult not to start thinking that a real man should somehow imitate the power and resourcefulness they exhibit.

A CRISIS OF ROLES

What makes our current cultural situation unsettling for men is that males have traditionally defined their manhood by their roles: the functions they perform for their families and in society. However, there's been a major shift in the roles of both males and females. The rules of society are changing. This has happened just in the last forty years or so. We're in the middle of a cultural transition, and competing ideas of masculinity are causing perplexing problems for men. They are being pulled in several directions at once while they try to figure out what it means to be a real man in today's world.

THE ROLES AND THE RULES OF SOCIETY ARE CHANGING.

In recent years, literature focusing on changes in men's lives has indicated that the male is in a state of crisis and internal conflict. An array of studies are telling us that males aren't quite sure who they are or what women expect from them. Without a clear idea of their identity, men are trying to cope with the collision of new societal expectations and traditional ideas of what a man should be, which they have internalized through family, culture, or natural inclination.

Men's basic conceptions of manhood are therefore being disrupted. They feel displaced. They are either frustrated and struggling to adapt to a new but vague concept of who they are, or they're angry and trying to reverse the flow of change.

Are traditional roles to be totally abandoned? If so, what will replace them? Many men have unanswered questions, such as these:

1. *Is a man still supposed to be the breadwinner and protector?* Today, the woman goes out and makes her own bread and says she doesn't

need protection. A man isn't sure what he's supposed to do for a woman anymore.

2. *Is a man still the leader and authority in the home?* This isn't clear anymore. The woman says, "You're not my authority. I'm not a slave. I make my own money and my own decisions. I do what I want to. I'll call you when I'm ready for you." A man doesn't know how he's supposed to relate to a woman any longer.
3. *Should a man still show chivalry?* Should he open the door for a woman, escort her, pay for her meal on a date, and so on? A man will pull out a chair for a woman and she'll say, "That's all right. Thank you very much, but I'll pull my own chair out." Sometimes a man will open a door for a woman and she'll be offended. "Do you think I'm crippled?" she'll demand. If a woman walks into a room and a man stands up out of respect, she might look at him as if he's crazy. A man isn't sure if he should be nice to a woman anymore.
4. *Is a man still the defender of his family, property, and country?* More women are entering law enforcement and the armed forces and are carrying guns. Some men don't know how to react to these changes. A woman walks into the house with her uniform on and her husband is scared to say hello to her. He'll jump up and say, "Sergeant!" Many men are thinking, "She really doesn't require me to protect her." Men don't know if women even need them anymore.

Is there anything now that marks a man as different from his female counterpart? Based on the above scenarios, that's a difficult question to answer. Males and females are in a state of gender upheaval and confusion.

So what do you do in order to be a man in the twenty-first century? Who are men in relation to women? How are men to sort out the various versions of masculinity that are being promoted in the world?

If you are a male and feel that your work, your relationships, and your view of the world are being turned upside down, you're not alone. This is the most complex time in the world to be a man. Men of all ages are grappling with competing views and values of manhood.

What has happened?

THOUSANDS OF YEARS OF TRADITION SET ASIDE

Males used to acquire their ideas of manhood from observing their fathers or from longstanding cultural traditions. There was a continuity of masculine roles from generation to generation. Things are different now. Hundreds, even thousands, of years of tradition have been set aside in just one or two generations. This shift may have started in Western and industrialized nations with the women's movement and other cultural changes, but its influence is being felt in one way or another all over the world.

MEN AND WOMEN HAD SPECIFIC ROLES THAT DID NOT OVERLAP.

For example, my life is completely different from my father's life. I can't use the way my father did things as a model for myself, and my sisters can't use the environment in which my mother functioned as an example for themselves. Our parents lived not only in a different generation, but also with different concepts of maleness and femaleness. Historically speaking, until recently, the man had certain accepted roles and the woman had certain accepted roles, and they didn't usually overlap.

HISTORICAL ROLES

You can go back fifty, one hundred, five hundred, two thousand, four thousand years, and you'll find a fairly consistent pattern of roles for men and women that were acknowledged and valued. There were some very practical reasons for this longstanding pattern. There have always been certain exceptions to the pattern among individuals and cultures, but the following is the way most families conducted themselves for generations. This traditional pattern continues to have an influence on male-female relationships today.

THERE WAS A BIOLOGICAL DETERMINATION OF ROLES

In premodern times, biology contributed largely to the roles of men and women. Males are generally physically stronger than women, so the men were the ones who went out to hunt and provide for the family. Females are biologically equipped to have babies, so they cared for the children. In

general, there were no birth control options and no abortion alternatives with which a woman could supersede biology. A man didn't have to wonder whether he or his wife would stay home and raise the children. Roles were less complicated because they were predetermined by biology.

EVERYDAY LIVING WAS A STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL

In addition, people lived in a more hostile physical environment in which day-to-day living was a struggle for survival. This was another reason why the man, who was physically stronger, naturally became the provider and protector of the family.

At that time, making a living was an especially precarious job. The man literally had to risk his life to take care of his family. This caused his wife and children to look to him for leadership and to value his crucial contribution to their survival. They depended on him.

**MEN HAD TO RISK THEIR LIVES
MAKING A LIVING.**

When a man went out to get food for his family, there was no guarantee that he would come back alive. He might be fatally wounded by an animal or die of exposure. Therefore, the woman rejoiced to see him come home again. The same basic attitude held true in our parents' and grandparents' time when most husbands were the sole bread-winners of their families and their wives stayed at home. In the evening, the whole family was happy that the father had returned. Why? He had been out there in a risky world trying to make a living. Sometimes jobs were hard to come by. Sometimes the only job a man could get was working long hours in the fields or underground in a coal mine. When a man came home limping, his wife knew he had risked his health or even his life to keep bread on the table.

The family that I grew up in was a typical family of the not-so-distant past. I am one of eleven children. My father rose in the morning before we children got up, and he came home after we had gone to bed. He spent his whole life working, trying to feed almost a dozen children, keeping a roof over our heads and clothes on our backs. It was a twenty-four-hour-a-day job. My mother had to stay home, and her job was as hard as his. She had to take care of all eleven of us—cooking the meals, bathing us, washing

our clothes, getting us off to school, making sure we did our homework, disciplining us. It was a very hard life. It was survival.

ROLES AND SKILLS BECAME ESTABLISHED

The basic needs of survival required men and women to develop specific roles and skills, which were passed along to succeeding generations. Up until your grandparents' time or even your parents' time, everybody knew his or her role and had skills that were equal to it. The husband knew what he needed to do, and he did it; the wife knew what she had to do, and she did it.

In this way, although survival was difficult, relationships were comparatively easy because there was no confusion over gender roles. A man and a woman didn't have to wonder whether one was infringing on the other's territory. Her role was to keep the house, cook the food, and care for the children. His job was to hunt or harvest the crops and build a dwelling in order to provide food and shelter for the family. Life was straightforward and so, in that sense, relationships were less complicated.

INTERDEPENDENCE CREATED A NATURAL APPRECIATION

This partnership in survival produced an interdependence between men and women that generated a mutual appreciation. Because they both worked so hard and did their individual parts, they respected one another. It was a natural appreciation. It was natural because their roles were very clear and were accepted as necessary and important.

In many of these marriages, there wasn't the kind of relationship between husband and wife that we know today. The man was motivated by simple things: food, sex, children, and security. He was not motivated by conversation and sentimental exchange, by emotional and psychological sensitivity. He came home when he wanted to meet basic needs.

For the most part, a man was honored and loved by his wife not because he was a good man or an affectionate companion, but because she knew he

**SURVIVAL MODE DIDN'T LEAVE
TIME FOR ROMANCE.**

risked his life to take care of her and the children. She loved him because of what he did for her. He didn't earn her honor and appreciation because he was a sentimental, romantic guy. She valued his

provision. If he didn't brave the elements and come back with fresh meat, she wouldn't respect him.

The woman spent time nurturing the children and creating a home, and she was respected and loved by the man for her contribution to the family. He didn't necessarily honor her because she was charming or because "the Word of God says to do so." He honored her because she bore his children and because he knew the value of the work that she was doing. He didn't worry about who was going to feed and clean the children or who was going to wash their clothing. His wife did all that, and he respected her for it.

This means that romance was not a significant part of the lives of many of our early forefathers. They were too busy trying to survive. When you're in survival mode, there isn't much time for sentiment.

It was much the same way for many married couples up until the relatively recent past. A man spent all day working. He was occupied with providing for and protecting his family. He didn't have time for romance when he came home. All he wanted was food and sex. He wasn't concerned about taking his wife out to dinner or on shopping outings or giving her money to spend. He had money only to survive. The relationship was simply, "Look, we have to survive and I have to protect you. Whatever I have to do to accomplish these things, that's life."

The man thought of his marriage as a partnership, but partnership didn't mean the same thing then that it does to us today. He didn't consider his wife to be equal to him or as good as he was. Instead, partnership meant that she had her part to play and he had his part. Men and women were taught this concept of marriage. A husband and wife honored each other because of their individual contributions to the partnership, not because they acknowledged that there is an equality between men and women.

This is where we came from as a society. However, things have changed.

CONTEMPORARY ROLES

Life is completely different for men and women now because we are no longer utterly dependent on one another for security and survival. Our roles and strategies have really changed.

Men no longer have the job that they held almost exclusively for centuries. They used to have a role that was very clear—one they didn't share with their wives. How was manhood measured? Young men were told, "Get a job, son, so you can provide for your family, and have some babies." Being the breadwinner and having the ability to procreate was the measure of a man. But the way society views men is in transition, and these are not considered the primary marks of manhood any longer. A number of families still follow the traditional pattern of the husband holding the job while the wife stays home with the children, especially while the children are young. However, even these marriages are usually influenced by contemporary rather than traditional ideas of how men and women are to relate to one another.

BIOLOGY IS NO LONGER AS GREAT A FACTOR

Biology doesn't determine male-female roles and functions the way it used to. Today, because of the prevalence of both dual careers and birth control, a husband and wife might choose not to have children. Also, because of the widespread idea that fertility is a woman's business alone, the woman will often tell the man when or if they will have a baby. Even if they do have a child, that doesn't necessarily mean that the wife will stay home to take care of the baby all day or every day. Daycare and other child-care options enable her to work at a job outside the home either part-time or full-time.

This change is bringing new kinds of stresses to the family. If daycare workers or nannies are bringing up the children, sometimes the children don't really know their parents. Also, the parents don't always know what the babysitter is doing or teaching the children while they are at work. Essentially, this means that the children are being brought up by people whom the parents cannot be sure of.

In addition, since a woman's childbearing and child-rearing was what formerly brought her respect from her husband, the man now has to find another way to honor his wife. Because of the traditional pattern, when a wife demands respect from her husband today, he sometimes thinks, "Well, what are you doing to earn it?"

Twenty-first-century relationships are difficult.

WE ARE NO LONGER IN SURVIVAL MODE

Most of us don't focus on survival and protection the way people used to. This is not to say that we don't face economic challenges and job-related stress, but the physical risk is not the same. We're not out hunting food and facing the elements just to stay alive. We have twenty-four-hour-a-day grocery stores and microwave ovens. While we live in an uncertain world where there are still dangers, the physical environment is much friendlier now than it was for our forefathers. Today, a man will leave the house in the morning dressed in his three-piece suit as he drives his Lexus to work—as a doctor in a fancy office. The physical risk is gone for most people.

One of the differences between the old and the new ways is that, when people get married, they often already have most of what they need, instead of having to struggle for it. Moreover, the woman is no longer dependent on the man to provide for her after they marry. Because the traditional role of provider is ingrained in many men, this situation can be unsettling to a man.

For example, a man will meet a woman and discover that she already owns material possessions. Because she has been working for a while, she makes more money than he does and drives an expensive car. She owns a condominium, a thirty-five inch television, a refrigerator, and the food in it. She can buy her own gas for her car. She has it all worked out, and then he says he wants to marry her and take care of her. How is she going to depend on him? She has money in the bank. What is the man going to give her? She isn't looking for survival and protection; she's independent, and so her expectations in regard to men and marriage are totally different.

WHAT CAN A MAN OFFER A WOMAN TODAY?

Some women wonder, "How am I supposed to be submissive when I make more money than my husband, and the house and furniture are mine?" In other words, she's saying to the man, "You have to earn the right for me to submit to you by giving me something I haven't already given you." That's a tough statement for a man to hear. So the man says, "Well, I can't give you anything because you owned more than I did from the very beginning." How does a woman submit to somebody whom she believes

she is supporting? It's a difficult situation for both men and women. But it's the world we live in.

Do you wonder why divorces are so common these days? One reason is that a woman can now tell a man straight and fast, "If you can't take care of this properly, I'm going to leave." My mother had eleven children. When she had a problem, she couldn't say to my father, "I'm going to leave you." Where was she going to go? She had no professional or academic training, no preparation for a job outside the home. The home was her life.

**WOMEN ARE BRINGING HOME
NOT ONLY THE
BACON BUT ALSO THE PIG!**

Independence is a relatively new situation for women, and men are still learning to cope with the change. In many ways, the woman has taken over not only the man's traditional role of provider, but also that of protector. She has mace, she has a gun in her purse, and she has a cell phone to call the police instantly. So what does the man do? He says, "I'm your protector," and she says, "I don't need you to protect me." It's a different world. Men don't know what they're supposed to do for women anymore.

ROLES AND SKILLS ARE LESS COMPARTMENTALIZED

Men and women used to exist in different spheres. A man's sphere was work and survival. The woman's world was the home and children. There was no confusion of roles. They knew exactly where they were supposed to be.

A woman leaving the home and entering the workplace means that the home is no longer kept by her specifically. The man isn't sure what his job in the home is, and the woman isn't sure what her job in the home is. They're confused.

Your father used to bring home the bacon, but now your wife is bringing home not only the bacon but the pig. Besides that, she owned two pigs before you married her. She doesn't want any bacon from you; she already has bacon.

If both husband and wife are now bringing home the bacon, then who's the provider? That's a problematic question for men. If both are paying

the mortgage, then who's putting the roof over their heads? Your father was considered the owner of his house because he bought and paid for it. Today, the house doesn't belong to the man. It belongs to both the man and the woman.

Some men wonder how their fathers used to be the "man of the house." Now, if a man puts his foot down, his wife will put her foot down, too. The things men were taught no longer work. Your father says, "Put her in her place." You say, "But the place belongs to her." "Show her who wears the pants in the family." "But she wears pants, too!"

Many couples face difficult economic situations that require both of them to work to make ends meet. However, the cultural shift of women going to college, pursuing careers, and delaying marriage has made significant changes in family life.

For example, a man may say, "Honey, you have to bring up the children," and she'll say, "No, I'm going to work." "Why?" "I want to use my education, and I want a certain standard of living that requires a double salary, so I'm going to work." He says, "But who will bring up the kids? You are the child-bearer and the child-nurturer." Her answer is, "My employer has a daycare center. I'm taking the job."

What does a man do when his wife makes more money than he does, and he believes he's supposed to be the provider and protector of the home? He's frustrated and even ashamed. That's one of the reasons why there's so much quarreling in our modern marriages. We keep arguing over who's supposed to do what.

These and other similar situations have changed our perspectives dramatically and altered our traditional roles. The male isn't sure what a man is anymore, and the female isn't sure what a woman is anymore. This change has caused tension for women as well as men.

For instance, some woman actually feel guilty when they say, "I'm a homemaker." Do you think that in your parents' or grandparents' time, people asked a woman, "So, what do you do?" The question never came up. But today, almost every woman is asked what she does. In other words, we know what she *doesn't* do. She doesn't just stay home and bring up children—with the implication that this is something to be ashamed of.

It used to be much easier for the woman who stayed at home with her children. She had support in this role because every woman in the neighborhood was at home. Today, people think something is wrong with a woman if she is a homemaker. They think things like: “What’s the matter with her? Is she lazy?” or “She’s not very creative,” or “She must not be smart enough to have a career,” or “She needs to get a life.” The idea is being promoted in society that “only dumb women stay home.”

The results of changing gender roles can be distressing for both men and women. People are confused about how to act in this new world. It has become a psychological dilemma for them. Many are feeling tense and displaced, and they are trying to figure out what is wrong with them. I’ll tell you right now what is wrong; it’s simply a different world.

INDEPENDENCE HAS CHANGED THE PARAMETERS OF APPRECIATION

Increasingly independent, self-sufficient, contemporary women no longer feel the need for men to provide for and protect them. This is a problem for men. They’re trying to get along in a relationship, and they’re not sure who is responsible for what. For example, a boy takes a girl out for lunch, and he looks at her and says, “Are you going to pay for yours?” Thirty years ago, the man automatically paid. Why? It was the man’s job to be the provider. But now if a man takes a woman to dinner, and he finds he doesn’t have enough money, she reaches into her purse and says, “I’ll make up for it.” He feels shame, but she’s not ashamed, because she has the money. And guess what? She still likes him. She likes him because she feels there aren’t too many good men around anyway.

The independence of women is diminishing men’s traditional value to them. Historically, men have always died at an earlier age than women. Why? They had to go out into the cold and sleet in the winter, even if they were coughing with tuberculosis, in order to provide for the family. They were the sole element of survival for the family. This is why women valued them. Sometimes, when a woman reveals that her husband is abusing her, and she’s asked, “Why don’t you leave him?” she’ll reply, “I can’t do that.” That’s a deep answer. There are certain things about him she values.

If a man spent every day risking his life to protect you and the children and to provide for you, then how are you going to feel about him?

Obviously, you are going to esteem him highly, because you know what he's doing to take care of the family. That is why it was natural for your mother, even when your father didn't always act right, to love and honor him. He was valuable to her.

Today, however, this is not necessarily the case. When a man shows interest in a woman, she may tell him, "Now, let me tell you this right up front: if you can't cut the mustard, you can leave whenever you're ready. And if we get married, I want you to sign a prenuptial agreement so that everything I bring into the marriage will stay mine if the marriage ends." Women don't value men in the way that they used to because the needs men used to supply are now being supplied by the women themselves. Some husbands are afraid of their wives because they think their wives don't need them.

**SOME MEN ARE AFRAID
THAT THEIR WIVES DON'T
NEED THEM.**

Another significant change is that, for the first time in recorded history, men and women look to one another primarily for love and companionship rather than survival and protection. Our priorities as human beings have changed. People are looking for something more in their relationships. Happiness, intimacy, and lasting passion are now requirements for a relationship. Yet understanding how to provide these things often does not come easy for a man.

HAPPINESS

The male's traditional roles are not enough to make his partner happy anymore. Women want companionship and attention in order to be happy. My father couldn't take my mother for walks or out to dinner at a restaurant. There was no time for it. He made my mother happy just by making sure that the family had clothing, running water, and so on.

What can men do to make women happy today? That's the challenge. Have you ever heard a man say, "What does a woman want?" In the past, men used to tell their wives, "Woman, what else do you want from me? I put a roof over your head and food in the kitchen." Remember when men said that? Those days are over.

INTIMACY

When the man risked his life to give his wife food and protection, then intimacy, sensitivity, and good communication skills were not an issue. The woman didn't say, "Honey, you have to learn the psychological and emotional instability of a woman going through menstruation." A man didn't have time to learn to get along with a woman. Again, when he arrived home, it was dark, he was tired, and all he wanted was food and sex. The house was his, the food was his, and the rationale was, "It's time to pay up."

**THE CAVEMAN DIDN'T
HAVE TIME TO LOOK AT HIS
WIFE'S DRESS.**

But nowadays, women want intimacy and communication. "Talk to me. You haven't told me you love me all day." That's the way women think today. "You looked at everybody else except me. You didn't notice my dress." Listen, the caveman didn't have time to look at any dress. He was too busy trying to survive. But the world has changed.

Did your parents or grandparents ever talk about PMS? They were probably too busy to talk about it, and people—even husbands and wives—weren't as open about such topics. Now, the social atmosphere has changed, and we have more time to think about these things. These days, a woman might say, "Don't touch me now; I'm going through my cycle. My hormones are out of balance." A man now has to study what "mood" his wife is in. When you're just trying to survive, you're not thinking in terms of moods. It wasn't necessarily a better way of life, but it was definitely a different way. Men are still trying to figure out how to build intimacy and communication into their relationships.

A woman may wonder why her husband has problems talking with her. He doesn't know what to say, and she doesn't realize what he's going through. For example, suppose she has a fantastic job—a leadership job, an administrative job—and he has a lesser job. She comes home and tries to talk to him at dinner. What do they talk about? She's conversing on a highly intellectual level, and he's not there yet, because his job doesn't require him to stretch that far. So she says a couple of sentences, and he's intimidated. He says to himself, "Oh, that's a big word she used." He doesn't know what to do, because his leadership role seems to have diminished.

In this challenging time in our culture, women need to show understanding to the men in their lives. For example, suppose a woman marries a man, and they are settled in their house, and she says to him, “Be a man.” He says, “Okay...how?” His back is against the wall. He used to know what that meant, but not any longer. So she says things like, “Be my spiritual head.” He looks at her blankly. “My father was a caveman. He taught me that the Bible and church are for weaklings. So I’m really not much into church. I’ll go to please you, but if that makes me a man, it’s going to take a while.” He doesn’t understand spiritual matters as well as she does because he was taught that religion is for women.

So she says, “Comfort me,” and he says, “How?” He didn’t receive that kind of training from his father. She says, “Show me affection,” and he says, “Oh, no. How do you spell that?” She says, “Be sentimental,” and he says, “Sentamen-who? What is that?” He doesn’t understand what she means.

What do many women do in this situation? They become angry. “Just be a man!” “How?” “Provide for me!” “But you make more money than I do.” The man is confused. He doesn’t realize she wants him to provide for her emotional needs—or if he does understand, he doesn’t know how to fulfill those needs. Men need patience and understanding from their wives.

PASSION

Passion is also necessary for today’s relationships.

Remember that, in the old days, the man would just ask, “Woman, are you ready or not?” There were no romantic preliminaries. He’d say, “Tarzan ready for Jane. Jane ready? Okay, bring it on.” That was it.

Now, however, women want men to turn the lights down, bring scented candles into the room, and put flowers everywhere. The men say, “What’s going on here?” You have to work for it now, men. It’s hard work!

These days, women want men to start romancing them in the morning—make them breakfast, run the bathwater for them, take them out to lunch, call them five times to tell them they love them, pick them up in a limousine and take them out for a nice dinner—then they might be rewarded that night. There’s no guarantee, but they won’t be rewarded without working for it.

MALE-FEMALE RELATIONSHIPS HAVE BECOME A MYSTERY

In many aspects of life, therefore, the roles and relationships of men and women have completely changed in the last few decades. This putting aside of traditional male roles seems frightening and even dangerous to many men because they don't know where it leaves them. They feel there's now a great deal of mystery in the relationships between men and women, and they don't know what to expect. I can empathize with what they're going through.

**CONFUSION OVER PURPOSE
WILL SIDELINE OR DESTROY
PEOPLE'S LIVES.**

Studying this topic has made me realize that we're really in a cultural dilemma. I feel for men. They don't know what to do. If you are a woman, you need to understand that men are really in trouble.

I have tried to give you a picture of what changing gender roles have done to throw men off balance, so that you can see the nature of the dilemma they're facing. Some of the scenarios I've given are humorous, but the problems males are facing are serious because they have to do with purpose and identity. They are serious because confusion over purpose will sideline and even destroy people's lives.

ROLES VERSUS PURPOSE

All this ultimately comes down to what males use as a basis for their self-worth and identity. Because men have linked their identity to their roles, now that the roles have changed, they have left themselves no basis for manhood. Whatever they replace their old idea of masculinity with may or may not be a true or fulfilling role for them. What is more troubling, when men don't understand their place in the world, they will often either withdraw from it or use their influence in harmful ways, such as committing crimes.

What can men do to regain their footing and identity?

First, they must adopt an entirely new way of thinking. They need to think in terms of *purpose* rather than *roles*. The reason they are having problems today is that they have been basing their worth on the wrong thing all along. Roles have never been the true basis of a male's identity and purpose. Roles can be helpful or harmful, but ultimately they merely reflect culture and tradition.

What men really need to discover is their underlying purpose, which transcends culture and tradition. A man's position and actions must flow out of his purpose, not the other way around. That is why the answer to the male's dilemma is not just to adjust to changing times—although some of this will be needed—but to discover the inherent purpose of the male. Since we live in a confused society, the knowledge of what it means to be a true man cannot be acquired by observing the culture around us. Males need an understanding of themselves that is not overly influenced by societal trends—in short, by someone else's image of them. Where, then, can we go for answers?

**MEN MUST THINK IN TERMS
OF PURPOSE RATHER
THAN ROLES.**

One of the themes we'll keep returning to in this book is that the purpose of something can be found only in the mind of its maker. Men therefore need a God-given identity if they are to fulfill their true purpose. We must learn what God originally intended for them. To do this, we must go back and rediscover the Creator's original plan for both men and women.

Once more, we must realize that when men are ignorant of their true identity, it affects not only their own callings and fulfillment, but also that of their families and of society as a whole. This is because God has given males a unique leadership influence. As the man goes, so goes the family, society, and the world. I believe that if we don't address the male's identity crisis, our whole generation is in trouble. There's no escaping this fact.

The answer for males in the twenty-first century is therefore to:

- ✦ Define their worth based on God's purpose, rather than society's roles.
- ✦ Learn God's vision for their lives.
- ✦ Continue to live in the truth of who they were created to be.

If males understand the purpose and responsibilities God has given them and the true design of their relationship with females, they can be free to fulfill their destiny and potential. They can be the men they were created to be.

If you are a man, you don't need to be confused about your identity and place in life, regardless of the conflicting signals society is currently sending

out. You will find fresh vision and direction in rediscovering God's purposes for both males and females. Through this knowledge, men can be and do more than they ever imagined, and women can gain a new understanding and appreciation for men while enabling them to fulfill their calling.

What is a "real man"? Someone who knows the reality of who he is and who lives in that reality. This knowledge starts with understanding the significance of being created purposefully by God.

PRINCIPLES

1. Males have traditionally defined their manhood by their roles.
2. Historically, men and women had established roles that didn't overlap.
3. Relationships are different for men and women now that we no longer depend on one another for security and survival.
4. Men are in a crisis of identity and purpose.
5. Confusion over purpose will sideline and even destroy a person's life.
6. If a man links his identity to his roles, when the roles change, he gives himself no basis for manhood.
7. A man's identity is found in his purpose, not in his roles.
8. Men's underlying purpose transcends culture and tradition.
9. Knowledge of what it means to be a true man cannot be acquired by observing the confused culture around us.
10. The purpose of something can be found only in the mind of its maker.
11. Men need a God-given identity if they are to fulfill their true purpose.
12. When men are ignorant of their true identity, it affects not only their own callings and fulfillment, but also that of their families and of society as a whole. This is because, as the man goes, so goes the family, society, and the world.
13. A real man is someone who knows the reality of who he is and who lives in that reality.

STUDY QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How would you define a “real man”?
2. From what or whom did you derive your idea of what a man should be (family background, cultural attitudes, friends, church, the media, etc.)?
3. Do you feel any confusion or frustration about what the roles and responsibilities of a male should be? Why or why not?

EXPLORING GOD’S PRINCIPLES AND PURPOSES

4. How have males traditionally defined their manhood? (p. 18)
5. Complete the following sentences:
In the last forty years or so, the roles of males and females have undergone a major _____ . (p. 18)

We are in the midst of a cultural _____ . (p. 18)

CONCLUSION

If males understand the purpose and responsibilities God has given them and the true design of their relationship with females, they can be free to fulfill their destiny and potential. They can be the men they were created to be.

Regardless of the conflicting signals society is currently sending out, men can find fresh vision and direction in rediscovering God's purposes for both males and females. Through this knowledge, they can be and do more than they ever imagined, and women can gain a new understanding and appreciation for men while enabling them to fulfill their calling.

APPLYING GOD'S PRINCIPLES TO YOUR LIFE

THINKING IT OVER

- How has your life been affected by the changing roles of males and females? How have you reacted to those changes?
- Have you linked your identity to the roles you fulfill (or have fulfilled in the past)?
- In what ways, if any, has your perspective of masculinity changed as a result of reading this chapter?

PRAYING ABOUT IT

- Pray that God will begin to renew your understanding of who He created the man to be in his purpose, design, needs, and roles.
- Ask God to show you a specific perspective on gender that you have accepted that is based on a false understanding of male-female roles rather than on God's purposes.

ACTING ON GOD'S TRUTH

- If you have experienced conflict over gender roles with a member of the opposite sex, seek reconciliation with the other party and commit to learning and putting into practice God's purpose and design for males and females.
- Write down your understanding of the roles and responsibilities of males in the family and in society. Keep this list in your study guide and compare what you have written with what you learn during the course of this study.