



REAL MAN

POWER UP LEGENDARY MANHOOD



RESOLUTE BOOKS

Southlake, Texas

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**REAL MAN:
Power Up Legendary Manhood**

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Foreword by ROBERT MORRIS

In 2001, just one year into the planting of Gateway Church, I walked into a Starbucks in Southlake, Texas, feeling a bit low. I was a praying man, but when God tells you He's going to build a church of 30,000 and you can barely meet the demands of ministering to 100 people, it can be a bit discouraging. I had put everything on the line—my family, my ministry, my manhood. That morning, I was struggling with the weight of it.

As I turned around to leave with my coffee, I saw that in a plump corner chair sat the men's minister, Dr. Edwin Louis Cole. He had a big cup of coffee and a morning newspaper. He saw me at the same time and invited me to sit down. We talked for a short time. He encouraged me and I left reinvigorated. The rest became history, as Gateway went on to grow into the outrageous proportions God had told me it would. And, Dr. Cole left for Heaven less than a year later. That impromptu meeting was the last time I saw him.

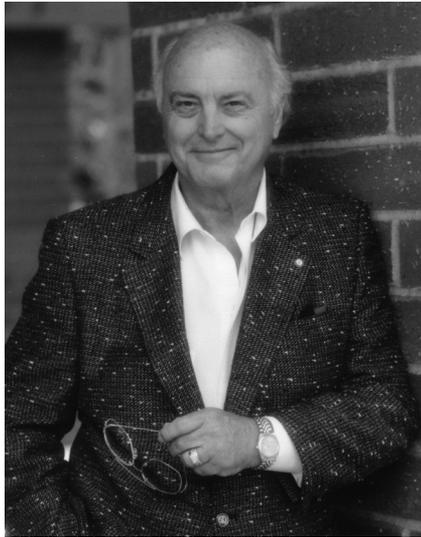
For years, I had sat in different men's gatherings listening to Dr. Cole. My pastor, Olen Griffing, was one of the "early adopters" of Dr. Cole's ministry to men, the Christian Men's Network. Dr. Cole came every year to our church for a men-only meeting where he would take the stage alone and talk about the principles of the Bible. Hundreds of men would sit for hours, drinking in every word. I was one of them.

In a recent book called *The Blessed Church*, I wrote about master builders. They build according to a blueprint, with great quality, with love, and they are ready for a fight as they build. Dr. Cole exhibited all of the traits of the master builder. His ability to distill complex Biblical principles into memorable sentences made him not just a "leader" of men but also a "feeder" of men. The quality of his message and his life was freely imparted to all. The love with which he shared the message was evident. It's the same caring love that he exhibited to a young struggling pastor by giving me his time that morning in Starbucks. And, Ed Cole was a man's man, ready to stand up for what he believed—a real man.

Today, no man alive can do what I did on that morning—walk into a coffee shop and bump into Ed Cole. He's left this earth now. But, the beauty of Ed's life is that he left so much of his life and wisdom behind. Any man, at any stage in life, can just pour a cup of coffee, turn the pages of this book and imbibe what I received on that wonderful morning with Ed. I encourage you to do just that. And as you read it, apply it. It will challenge your manhood, and make you more of a Real Man.

Part 1

The Masculinity Maze



The Masculinity Crisis

I LOVE BEING A MAN.

I don't feel ashamed, embarrassed, intimidated or guilty about it. But I know I'm not what I shall be. I am what I am, and I'm more than I was. But I'm not all the man I can be.

Today I know where I'm headed with my masculinity. For years, I floundered in my attempts at manhood, never having been taught how to be a man. Through the struggles and difficulties, successes and rewards, I learned much of what being a man really means. Now I can say it's been a wonderful life in many ways. I have a wife I love deeply, children who have matured successfully, a career that—although erratic in some ways—is now a worldwide influence for good and God.

Many people recognize a current crisis in manhood and are trying to correct it. A headline in the *Boston Globe* read: "Wanted: Some Stouthearted Men." The article began with the question "What's wrong with America?" and gave this answer: "Lousy leadership. Not just in government or politics, but in business and labor, service and manufacturing, education and other big institutions, and the media, too."¹

Caustic and critical, but is it true? Most Americans would agree. We have a crisis in leadership and productivity—but this stems basically from a crisis in manhood. Our manhood has been emasculated, and that has sterilized our ability to reproduce.

The U.S. is not the only country suffering such problems. Scores of problems confront men in every nation under the sun. For example:

- South America's runaway inflation has sapped its countries' vitality, creating a fatalistic approach to life in its citizens. Young men feel they have nothing to look forward to and are helpless to do anything about the problem. Their crisis is not simply economic. It is a crisis in manhood.
- On my last visit to England, a major newspaper noted five million people were "on the dole." The article stated that the present generation of youth was without ambition or hope—they were gripped by a welfare mentality.
- Italian youth admire Mafia members more than government, religious or industry leaders, according to a recent report. Their next preference, after criminal celebrities, is entertainers. The reporter concluded that young people seem to lack any understanding of the normal values that undergird a productive society.
- When I was in Germany, its citizens said theirs is a "fatherless nation" because of the monumental loss of men in World War II.
- For the same reason, Russia is called a "nation without grandfathers." After World War II, only seventeen in a thousand Russians returned from battle, and only three of those seventeen were not wounded or maimed.²
- In Scotland, male depression runs rampant.
- In Australia and Central America, the "macho male" mentality has created problems in industry and family relationships.
- South African men still suffer from the awful legacy of apartheid.
- The Philippines endure a matriarchal society that has contributed to a high incidence of homosexuality among men.
- Reports of Nigerian men flagrantly brutalizing women have created a national concern and international embarrassment.

WHAT MAKES A MAN REAL?

People are motivated by what they *think* is important, whether or not that perception is true. The Bible puts it: “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.”³ Perceptions of manhood, gleaned from society’s role models—both good and bad—motivate men in behaviors that are both positive and negative. These society-dictated perceptions distort true manhood and create confusion. For example:

- Feminists rage against maleness, creating a new perception of the word *man*, and cry out to replace gender-specific terms with neuter terms.
- Gay-rights activists rage against heterosexuality and parade with “I hate straight” banners.
- Movies, television and entertainment give a perception of men as either stupid bunglers or super-macho heroes. Even “family” television programs show ineffective men depending on competent women to help them through life.
- Books and periodicals routinely criticize men for not spending enough time with the family, not doing their fair share of the work at home, not being sensitive to their wives. The list goes on.
- In the work place, other standards apply. Men are to behave aggressively—perfecting the art of the deal, making the sale, creating the new project, winning the contract, negotiating to the last penny. They are to compete through any available means—moral or otherwise.

Average men have tried to cope with these conflicting messages by trying to please everyone. They end up castrating their identity, becoming ineffective and sterile males. They hardly please anyone, instead becoming objects of displeasure. *No wonder men today are confused about manhood.*

In conferences and conventions, on radio and television programs, wherever I have ministered to men, one basic question consistently pops up: *What is a real man?*

Is a man to be like the actor, John Wayne, the swaggering, tough icon of old Hollywood’s manliness—tall, strong, loyal to friends and a terror to enemies, always standing for right (always knowing what right is!), attractive to women, feared and respected by other men?

Or is a man to be like a talk-show host, television’s answers to the feminist movement—sympathetic, emotional, sensitive, harmless? Or are men to revert to the idea of a “Renaissance man”? Or are men to be like Nelson Mandela, Michael Jackson, Arnold Schwarzenegger or Nolan Ryan?

What is a real man? What is he like?

Answers spring from every sector—religion, philosophy, mythology, sociology, psychology, pop culture, education, government—everyone has an answer, but not every answer is true. Where, then, should we turn?

The answer to the masculinity crisis is the same answer given for every world crisis from the creation of time: the intervention of the Creator God. In the case of male identity and role, the answer is found in God as He revealed Himself on earth in the manhood of Jesus Christ.

Through Jesus, God showed us by example how to live as real men here on earth. God revealed to us in physical form what He had already said, that He created man in His image and for His purposes. Consequently *the essence of real manhood is found not in how a man looks or in what a man does but in who a man is.*

But this leads us to another problem that men have grappled with now for two thousand years. How do we approach this God-man, Jesus Christ? How could we even begin to emulate the deity of a holy God revealed on earth as a man? I admit I still don’t have all the answers. But I *have* discovered numerous truths that I now teach around the world, and I *can* tell you that the results of applying these truths border on the incredible.

We have a crisis in leadership and productivity—but this stems basically from a crisis in manhood.

CHRISTLIKE MANHOOD

At one particular meeting, more than two thousand men crowded into an auditorium in Boston. Many of those attending would eventually take the patterns and principles I taught, embrace them, then teach other men, who, in turn, would teach others, and so the truth spreads. But on that day, as I spoke to those assembled, the revelation of Who Jesus really is and what He did for us as men seemed to pierce the minds and hearts of every man there. The weight of truth brought a quiet hush among them which, after several minutes, erupted into an enthusiastic expression of joy.

I stopped speaking to give an opportunity for the men who had never committed themselves to “real” manhood to come to the front and publicly make their stand. As hundreds came forward, the others spontaneously began to yell in unison, “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!”

As they shouted, a conviction set in that was almost palpable. Men, who one minute had a perception of manhood gleaned from a lifetime of movies, magazines and ungodly mentors, suddenly realized that true manhood really meant being like Jesus, the only Man Who ever lived exactly as God had created Him to live. Convicted of their lack of manliness, their “wimpiness” in following the crowd, men began to rush the stage to throw down vestiges of a man’s life gone wrong—drugs, cigarettes, chains, keys to girlfriends’ apartments, flasks of alcohol, lottery tickets, brass knuckles. In about fifteen minutes, the stage was littered with the symbols of worldly manhood.

Then the noise died down and the men began to sing. What a sound! It was as if the top had been lifted off that building and the sounds of a heavenly choir of male voices were wafting down from the corridors of Heaven.

There were no drums to beat, no scoreboard to read, but right there in the heart of Boston, right in the heart of Urban USA, men were set free. Free to be men!

There is no greater joy or fulfillment for any man than to be brought up to the level of Christlike manhood—“real” manhood.

This was just one day in those men's lives. What would they do from there? I know from experience, and from the hundreds of letters I receive, that men who grasp what real manhood is and begin to walk in that awareness—committing themselves to becoming real men each day—see a consistent, dramatic change in their lives from the very moment of their commitment.

Real manhood cannot be found in just a moment's emotional outburst. Neither is real manhood found in the image of physical prowess and handsomeness. Nor in personality, talent, intelligence, performance or profession. Real manhood is found within the heart of a man, the "inner man," his moral character, the "real man" that exudes beyond all external devices for the rest of the world to see.

Men cannot mature in moral distinctiveness with mere "head knowledge" or an "emotional catharsis," but we must constantly be evolving, purifying, changing the inmost parts of our beings. These inward elements create true quality in every part of life; not the exterior of a product, but the interior; not the polish on a chrome bumper, but the smooth purr of a well-tuned engine; not the talent on a ball field, but the citizenship and integrity when the spotlights go out. The quality of the inner man makes a man "real."

I was pastoring a church in San Bruno, California, just after World War II, when I began to learn what a real man is. Babies were "booming," former soldiers resumed their careers, suburbs sprang up, and congregations rapidly built and enlarged churches to accommodate everyone.

When Nancy and I accepted the church's call to ministry, only the unfinished shell of a building stood on the property. There were bare walls, a concrete floor and old wooden benches inside. We tried to remodel the building with volunteer labor, small amounts of cash and donated or used materials. Most of the volunteers were just that—they had little or no experience in the construction business but wanted to give their time. Scientists painted wood trim, teachers laid tile, preachers moved scaffolding and homemakers nailed plywood. Everybody worked hard.

We did have a few genuine craftsmen, however. One of them was Paul, a contractor, carpenter and a craftsman of the highest degree. His woodwork was in great demand in San Francisco. During the week, he built high-quality (and high-priced) houses, but he spent his Saturdays helping us complete our building.

Paul's final task was to put a wooden veneer on the wall directly behind the sanctuary's pulpit. As he labored, the rest of us were awed by the difference his exquisite work made in our building. We were proud—thrilled that he had come to help us and eager to tell everyone of his accomplishments. So it came as a shock when, the day Paul finished, he took me aside and asked me not to tell anyone he had done the woodwork.

"Paul, why?" I asked. "You have worked so hard and done such a beautiful thing for us! I want to tell everyone what a great job you've done."

"Please don't," he said. "I'll show you why."

He proceeded to show me where the wood grain did not match exactly, where the miter was not perfectly joined and the levels were off a fraction of an inch—things I would never have noticed if he had not pointed them out.

"I was glad to help," he said. "However, this work is not really up to my standard, and I would rather not have people know I did it."

Then he hit me with it.

"I could have done a better job if the material we used had been of better quality."

I never forgot that lesson: The quality of the product depends on the quality of the material used.

Its corollary is equally true: The cheaper the merchandise, the higher the gloss.

When the quality of the material is inferior, high gloss is necessary to camouflage the real product.

Furniture made from quality wood generally has only some polish to burnish

In the case of male identity and role, the answer is found in God as He revealed Himself on earth in the manhood of Jesus Christ.

it and bring out the excellence of the piece. However, furniture made from inferior woods generally has layers of lacquer or paint applied to give it a gloss that conceals the poor quality.

Knives made of tempered steel and a bone handle usually have nothing but a stamp on the blade designating the temper of the steel, and the bone is used in its natural state. However, knives made of plastic and pot metal most often have chrome on the blade and paint on the handle to give them a gloss that hides the cheap quality. The cheaper the merchandise, the higher the gloss.

True of furniture.

True of knives.

True of women ...

Prostitutes adorn themselves with flashy external accoutrements to hide the cheapness of their character. They put on layers of paint, clothing, cars, jewelry. High gloss for cheap merchandise.

... And true of men.

Con artists, whether in the ghetto or the executive board room, are slick and sophisticated, trying to impress people with outward show to disguise their fraudulent practices.

A man of cheap character always tries to associate with, gain identity from or control people of great talent or character. He vicariously draws upon others' identities to compensate for his own lack of integrity. Whatever he has is by association with others. Since his name is untrustworthy, he is always a name-dropper. By contrast, the quality of the material used in becoming a "real man" results in high quality.

A real man's strength of character can be relied upon. He doesn't defraud others for money, recognition or even the respect of his family. He is real in every area of life, in every facet of his being.

QUALITY MANHOOD

Every man is limited in life by three things:

- (1) the knowledge of his own mind
- (2) the worth of his own character
- (3) the principles upon which he builds his own life⁴

These things shape a man within, for better or worse. They define the quality of his life. *Quality is always internal, not external.*

The quality of nations depends on the moral character of their people and the principles upon which they build their individual lives. The truth of this shines clearly in the history of Israel. They had a crisis in leadership and manhood that parallels ours today.

During the period of the judges, Gideon led Israel for a season. He died, leaving seventy sons. One was named Jotham. Governmental leaders crowned Jotham's half-brother, Abimelech, king and allowed him to kill all his brothers to secure the kingdom. Only Jotham escaped.

After the massacre, Jotham stood at a safe distance and called out the parable of the bramble bush as an indictment against the leaders. In the parable, the olive, fig and grapevine all refused to become king of the trees because they were content with their private lives. So the trees asked the bramble bush to be king. The bramble accepted, but with arrogant demands that far exceeded its worth, saying the other trees must humble themselves and bow down beneath it or fire would come out of it to destroy them.⁵

Jotham used the parable to prophesy how Abimelech and his aides, who were to be the nation's leaders, would become enemies because they lacked the qualities necessary to lead. This story illustrates how qualified would-be leaders refuse

The quality of the product depends on the quality of the material used. The cheaper the merchandise, the higher the gloss.

public service because they are content with, and want to retain, their wealth and positions. Even today we find high-caliber men who won't serve in public office. Vain, ambitious men fill the leadership vacuum and arrogantly demand much from the people they are called to serve. The "bramble bush" problem has existed in every society, including ours.

In the U.S., some leaders cavort drunkenly in public, are indicted for illicit or immoral acts, engage in fraud and mismanagement and yet maintain it is none of the public's business how they conduct themselves in private. *The truth is, whatever a man is in private—what he believes, practices and has built into his character—determines the actions and decisions he makes in public.*

Not just politicians, but some ministers need to correct the same erroneous thinking. *Private philosophy determines public performance.*

Not every man with character and integrity has the calling or capacity to serve in public office, but those who do must carefully consider the need, instead of flippantly dismissing the idea. The world depends on them.

One of the wisest men I ever met taught me a great lesson about the importance of building good character. I was a young man just starting out in ministry when Rev. W. T. Gaston, a greatly admired senior clergyman, came to help me with a visit to a wealthy woman. We were told she may be inclined to give a sizable offering toward a charity we worked with.

We met the rich, obese woman, sitting in a rocking chair in the living room of her comfortable home, surrounded by her many cats, who had the run of the place. In talking with her, we realized she was living a miserly existence, consumed with personal concern for her money and cats, had no intention of giving to a charity, and she let us know in no uncertain terms that her money was to be a legacy to her cats.

"What did you make of that?" I asked as we drove away.

"Well, Son," he said, "When the charm wears off, you have nothing but character left."

Charm is for the instant, character is constant.

Charm deals with the external, character with the internal. Charming manners that disguise a poor character will one day vanish, revealing the truth underneath.

One problem contributing to the crisis in men today is the reward system offered for presenting a great exterior. Cultural psychology advises: Present yourself well, and you'll be rewarded, regardless of your character (at least for a while).

The "problem" professional athletes of today promenade through their colleges being lauded, compensated and rewarded for their talent, not their manhood. Once into the high-pressured world of professional sports, they do not have the inner strength to withstand the adversities, pressures and temptations confronting them. They use drugs, alcohol, gambling, violence and sex for escape, comfort, nurture and relief from tensions and anxieties. Many end up addicted and some even expelled from the sport they love. By contrast, some of the great athletes of all time we remember because of their charity, citizenship and integrity.

Fame can come in a moment, but greatness comes with longevity. I spoke on this topic at a National Football League team chapel. The head coach quoted it to the press the next day, and his quotation went out on the Associated Press wire service. A year later, a sportscaster repeated it on television. They remember it and repeat it because they recognize its validity in the sports world. It's true in every way. Greatness comes over the course of time. Those becoming real men build not on what they can gain from the moment, but on what will benefit for life. *Life is composed of our choices, constructed by our words and revealed by our character.*

PITCH PERSONALITY, BUILD CHARACTER

Consider Abraham and Lot. When God called Abraham out from Ur of the Chaldees, Abraham took along his nephew Lot, and they traveled to a new land. Standing on a hillside and looking across a valley, Abraham gave Lot first

choice of the land. Lot looked at the well-watered, verdant orchards and the alabaster-white houses in the valley before him and chose it over the rock-strewn mountains. But behind those alabaster-white walls, and lying in the midst of those lush fields, lay the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Abraham chose what Lot rejected, the terrain of Canaan with all its unproven but promised worth and value. Years later, when Abraham was prospering and Lot had moved inside the city limits of Sodom, Abraham had to rescue Lot and intercede with God to send angels to rescue Lot again just before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.⁶ Lot's pivotal choice sprang from his day-to-day decisions.

The Bible recounts that everywhere Abraham went, he pitched his tents and built his altars. He concentrated on the permanent issues of life, constructed his character and developed a lasting relationship with God. He understood the transient status of life. Lot, however, built an altar only after irreparable harm had come to him and his family.

In a perverted society, men “pitch” their altars and “build” their tents. In other words, they “pitch” their character and “build” their personality. Wrong strategy. Poor results.

Build your character on the foundation of truth, use faithfulness as its cornerstone, making righteousness its walls, and your good character will be known by all. Good character will stand the test of time.

Trying to develop a godly character apart from God will fail. Developing Christlikeness from a heart turned toward God will cause a man to stand for all eternity. God alone makes this so. We go as far as we can in ourselves, but ultimately, God must make up the difference for us. This is why Jesus had to die for our sins, for we could not compensate for our own lack of godliness.

When the charm wears off, you have nothing but character left.

Jesus said that only God was “good” and that He did only those things God told Him to do. We must study Jesus’ character and attributes, our model of “real” manhood, to discover how to

become the men God created us to be. More than putting on a veneer of Christlike manhood, Jesus' character and attributes must be rooted deep within us, so we can grow in our relationship with Him.

Becoming a real man requires an ongoing, purifying change in the inmost parts of a man's being. Only God knows the hearts of men. We can depend on Him to reveal our hearts to us, do a purifying work within us and cause us to become Christlike—"real men."

We live in a world that tries to accomplish life's superior purposes with inferior ways. We must reject second-rate substitutes and contend with things that are real.