

WINNING LIFE'S TOUGHEST BATTLES

COURAGE



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COURAGE

EDWIN LOUIS COLE



WHITAKER
HOUSE

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COURAGE:
Winning Life's Toughest Battles

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DEDICATION

This book, though devoted to men who desire to be champions, is dedicated to three people who are.

PAUL LOUIS COLE

LOIS COLE CRASE

JOANN COLE WEBSTER

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Foreword by

DR. CASEY TREAT

*Founding Pastor, Christian Faith Center
Seattle, Washington*

I was surprised when Ed Cole used me as an example in the last chapter of this bestselling book *Courage*. But Dr. Cole had always surprised me.

As a young man, I landed in a rehabilitation clinic to recover from drug abuse. While there, Jesus became my savior and God renewed my mind. As a result, I saw myself becoming a leader, so I went to a local Bible college.

As I grew in Christ, Dr. Cole's teachings really affected my life, so it was natural that I wanted him to speak to our little congregation of about 100 people when my wife Wendy and I first started out in ministry. We didn't dream that he would accept an invitation from such a small church, but he did, and he received the first offering ever for our church to move into our own building.

The encouragement Dr. Cole gave us still encourages thousands of people through books like the one you hold today. The six steps for following God's

will that I've taught all over the world is to pursue the vision God has for you, meditate on God's Word to renew your mind, find a role model, talk with Christians of character about what God is doing in your life, own the vision God gives you, and then, as Dr. Cole teaches in this book, write the vision down.

Whether you are taking the first step to pursue God's will and desire for your life, or the last step to write it down, I encourage you to read Dr. Cole's words. I trust this book will give you the courage you need to live the life God has for you, and the courage to tell others about the Christ Who saved you and lives in you.

INTRODUCTION

THE PATTERN FOR MINISTRY

For four years, I had been crisscrossing America, ministering to men. It was the most satisfying work I had ever done in my life. But in the midst of preparing for the greatest ministry event to that point, the first National Christian Men's Event, I realized something was missing. As the days went by, the missing element finally became clear.

For years before this, as I prepared for each new year, a new emphasis and direction was impressed upon me by the Lord in December. It was as though God had a divine timetable and wanted it fulfilled. In His faithfulness, He prepared me for the next step year after year. The pattern started when He gave me five words which would be the basis for starting a ministry that majored in men:

- *Sanctify* yourself.
- *Preach* the Word.
- *Go*, doubting nothing.
- *Use* the gold, but don't touch the glory.

- *Pray* this prayer: “Grant to thy servant great boldness in preaching, send forth your healing power, and may signs, wonders and miracles be done in the name of your Holy Servant Jesus,” from Acts 4:29–30.

In successive years, the Lord would add to these, establishing a pattern and emphasizing what was to come next.

For four years in this ministry to men, I watched men in action. I had worked with, ministered to and counseled with men for years as a senior pastor, on television and radio and in various aspects of ministry. As I continued this while moving in the new direction God was leading me, there was a fresh, constant flow of truth, insights, information and understanding that was changing men’s lives by the thousands.

Just months before that first National Christian Men’s Event, in December, God revealed to me what was missing. The new emphasis for the ministry was to teach young men to become identified with what God wanted to do in their lives as *men*. The result of this has become the Global Fatherhood Initiative,

an outreach to train fathers and father figures like the Apostle Paul, who was determined to see his young protégé Timothy become a great man of God.

The goal of the Global Fatherhood Initiative is to reach young men in their teens and early twenties with the truth that “Manhood and Christlikeness are synonymous.” To some, that won’t seem young at all. A Jewish boy is readied for manhood for four years before his Bar Mitzvah at age 13—when he is considered to be entering manhood.

Pornographers have adopted the philosophy that hooking a child early means when he is old he will not depart from it. Pornography is a multi-billion dollar global enterprise, often aimed at young men. The purveyors care only about the money—not about the lives they destroy along the way.

What was happening in my ministry was that in announcing “Men’s Meetings,” very few high school and college men were attending. I was speaking mainly to married men or older singles who perhaps had been married. What was bothering me had finally come to light. Throughout our nation, especially in churches, young men in high

school are called “youths.” When entering college, they are referred to as “young adults.” They’re not called “men.” Just “youths.” And “young adults.”

No wonder young women today ask, “Where are all the men?” Young men don’t think of themselves as men because they have never been called “men.” So, when a “Men’s Meeting” is announced, the young men stay home.

There were almost 8,000 of us at Hofheinz Pavilion on the University of Houston campus for the first National Christian Men’s Event. All men. It had been a great day, and we were reaching a peak moment. Because the Lord made us recognize the absence of young men in our meetings, we had begun our efforts to bring them to this men’s event. The final call that day was a challenge directed at the young men.

“Aren’t there any young men of high school or college age that have the guts or courage to do more than wallow around in the moral morass of mediocrity to which so many have sunk?

“Aren’t there any young men anywhere who want to be champions for God? Have they all succumbed to the world?

“Isn’t there anyone anywhere who wants to stand up for God, admit that he wants to be a man of God and pay the price of championship by developing a godly character?”

“If there is ...”

Before the statement could be finished, hundreds of young men leaped from their chairs and began to run for the front, some jumping the walls on the bottom of that basketball arena to race to center court where they stood, 400 strong, declaring their allegiance to Jesus Christ. As they ran, the other men stood and applauded them, some of them weeping as they watched these young men who were not ashamed to be called “Men of God.”

It was explosive.

One young man, in the intensity of the moment, threw his vial of cocaine on the platform. Others threw things from their pockets that signified their rejection of the uncleanness in their lives.

The average age of maturation in most developed cultures is well past twenty-five. This global crisis of arrested adolescence means men stay childish years after childhood. But thank God for young men today who have a burning desire to be outstanding ...

men who are willing to pay the price for the true manhood which is Christlikeness ... single men who realize they need to grow and mature as men *now*, not wait until they are married.

Thank God for you, as you read this book.

You may not have an aisle to run down or a wall to leap over or a platform to stand in front of, but at least, right now, you can finish this sentence, lay down the book and look toward God as you admit your desire to become a MAN OF GOD.

“DESPISE NOT THY YOUTH”

This is not a book of “how to.”

It is a book of “why not?”

This book is not a manual for living.

It is an exhortation to live.

I’m writing it to tell you:

“YOU ARE A MAN!”

Don’t waste your youth.

The strength of your youth is your glory.

Don’t let anyone despise it.

But don’t let anyone diminish your masculinity either.

- Joseph was seventeen when God gave him the dream that would be his life’s motivation and was prophetically fulfilled by the Lord later in life.

- David was a teenager when he faced the giant Goliath.
- Daniel and his three Hebrew friends were about that same age when they determined to make a stand for God before the Babylonian king.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ was only twelve when we have a glimpse of Him in the Temple and hear Him saying that He must be about His Father's business while confounding the teachers with His wisdom.

There are advantages in youth that allow for great things to be done. Strength is one advantage.

Never be ashamed of your youth.

Acknowledge it.

Channel it.

Use it.

Turn it toward God and revel in it.

Sure, some men are late bloomers. But there is a great advantage to the fertile mind, the quick ability to learn, the ready molding of character and the physical energy which never can be recaptured later in life. You must realize and capitalize on those



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qualities and refuse to let an intimidating world hinder you.

I don't wonder that modern man has problems, is confused, drained of morals and dead in spirit. It's a marvel he isn't worse off. Look at what men have had to contend with during the last few years.

Consider the array of forces of every kind and description battling for your mind, soul and body. Sexists, communists, psychologists, humanists, cultists, religionists, hedonists, geneticists, Satanists, pacifists and all other kinds of "ists." Is it any wonder that some men are confused?

Add to that the daily barrage of news and social media, dulling men's sensibilities, seducing their spirits and hampering them mentally, physically, culturally and spiritually. Look at what you've been up against. The so-called "Me Generation" was the product of a philosophy advocating a lifestyle that says, "If it feels good—do it." That philosophy sowed many of the seeds of anarchy, rebellion and rioting in our world.

For years there has been what is known as the "antihero" syndrome at work in our society. Its product was a textbook genocide that killed off heroes and even patriotism for at least a decade. A new

"species" of man has developed from these trends. "Wimps: Made in America" are the modern men who are unable to appreciate their own masculinity, who are insecure, inferior, insipid and inadequate.

From another angle, a barrage of intimidation was leveled at men, labeling them as "toxic masculinity." Soft males and hard females decry the male image. The women's movement started out rightfully as a rejection of men's double standards, extremes of attitudes and ignorance of responsibility, but degenerated into a rebellion, unleashing the fury of its hostility against manhood.

"Gender rights" advocates present a feminized image that, to them, represents manhood at its finest. How demeaning to real men!

Single-parent households with no father figure at home raise young men without a male role model or male discipline. Subconscious resentments built up toward an absentee father are often manifested in anarchistic behavior toward authority in the classroom and community.

Prisons, crack houses, crisis pregnancy centers, gangs, rehabilitation homes, terrorist camps are filled with men who did not have a father at home. No wonder fatherlessness is the curse of our day.

Today's gender-neutral appeal is the result of yesterday's "free sex" movement. But the blending of male and female results in gender castration. Gender confusion is found in ads, art, media, textbooks, with no real standard for what a man is, or what authentic manhood looks like.

For decades, the media has presented fathers as bumbling idiots, marriage as warfare, and women as sex objects. Heroes are considered old-fashioned. Most male characters resolve conflict only through compromised morals or violence.

For years men have been bombarded from every side, and the beating has taken its toll. Men either give in to the new stereotypes, abandon their ideals, or lash out at women. Men's frustrations have resulted in efforts to legalize incest, feature rape in movies, exploit women in pornography, and depict rape victims as villains.

Even in the Church there are problems. The tendency is for pastors to pontificate, youth leaders to placate, and elders to unduly criticize young people.

Priests minister from the people to the Lord, while prophets minister from the Lord to the people. Men need to be able to function in both roles as God directs them.

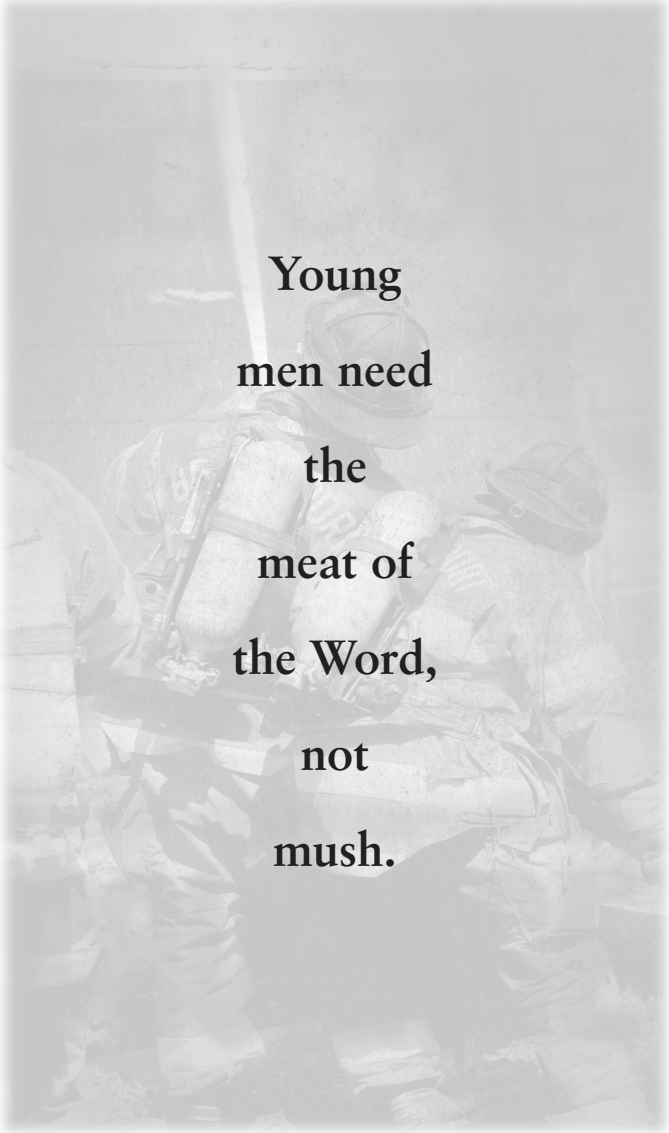
Our world needs prophets. Prophets desire to emphasize that specific word or truth given to them. But they would be unbalanced without pastors. Pastors balance the truth with the total life of their congregations.

The great tragedy so often is when pastors reject the revelation rather than refine it. *There is a difference between being a covering and being a lid.*

Listen to me. If you, as a young man, want to live a powerful and victorious life for God, but you attend meetings led by a weak student pastor whose main concern is his own ego—find another church. Hang out with men who are building strength of heart and boldness in action.

If you are a youth pastor and are offended by that, it's too bad. All you have to do is change, ask God to forgive you, and you won't be offended anymore. Many youth leaders are concerned only about the Big Three: recreation, entertainment and social activities. They would be much happier working as cruise directors on some ship—and probably would get more done.

Intercessory prayer, exercising faith, witnessing Christ and intensive Word study seem to suffer from indifference or unbelief with these men. They seem



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to care more about status symbols than spirituality. Young men need the meat of the Word, not mush. The great commission is to make disciples as Jesus did—to train by example.

Thank God, though, for the pastors and youth pastors who have a godly concern for the discipling process and make every effort to achieve it. What a refreshing joy to find such men and associate with them! If your pastor is one like that, get next to him, learn from him, let him disciple you. It’s God’s plan.

Senior pastors also need to realize that discipling their youth pastor as the Apostle Paul disciplined Timothy is their God-given trust and responsibility. Too often, senior pastors feel threatened by the success of the younger man and the “Saul Syndrome” sets in.

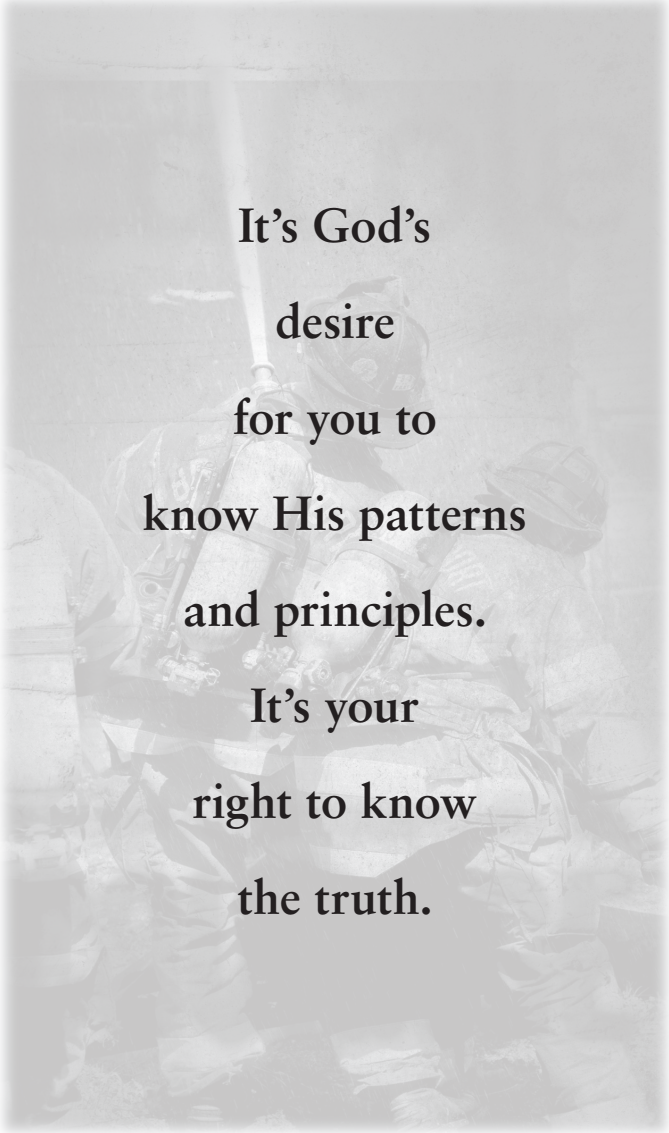
The “Saul Syndrome” is my description of the Biblical account of King Saul’s attitude toward King David. It says that when the people sang the praises of the two men, they sang of Saul overcoming thousands but David overcoming ten-thousands. Saul’s pride could not admit that David had greater exploits, and his jealousy turned both venomous and murderous. He could not stand the younger man doing greater exploits than he had done.

Contrast that with the relationship between Paul and Timothy. Paul recognized the great potential in Timothy and determined not only to teach him, but to train and disciple him to become a great man of God.

Senior pastors must realize that discipling a young man to do greater things than they have done is a glory to them, not a threat. Youth pastors and associates need to learn that when a senior pastor has the desire to disciple them and give them the benefit of his years of experience, it isn't a time for usurping and undermining his authority as Absalom did to his father, King David.

The characteristics of a kingdom emanate from the character of the king. This is true in a nation, church, classroom, home, sports team. The characteristics of a congregation emanate from the character of the pastor. Like begets like. A pastor whose characteristic is the love of the truth will have a congregation that loves the truth.

This is one of the principles God gives in His Word, on which you can base your life: like begets like. God has given you the power to overcome any obstacle, enemy or attack through the truth of His patterns and principles. It's God's desire for you to



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know His patterns and principles. It's your right to know the truth.

Every man needs to understand the pattern in the parable of the prodigal son. It contains regenerative principles that are life changing. The prodigal son demanded his inheritance from his father then squandered it foolishly on personal pleasure. He is a perfect example of the high cost of low living. In his moment of desperation, when he had lost everything, the only place he could turn was to a father's love and dependence upon his mercy. Through the faithfulness of his father, he was saved from the devastation of his own folly.

The pattern Jesus gave us in the parable is:

- Rebellion
- Ruin
- Repentance
- Reconciliation
- Restoration

The pivotal point between ruin and reconciliation is repentance. That has never changed. It's an eternal truth.

The prodigal began his ruin with two words: "Give me." He did not care that he broke his mother's heart, denied his father's will and rejected his brother's affection. Sin never cares about anything except gratifying its own desires. It pays no heed to consequences.

"Make me" were the words that changed his life. When the prodigal returned after his ruinous choices he asked his father to "make me" one of the servants. Those two words showed the son's submission to authority, his willingness to change and an acceptance of personal responsibility for his actions. That's the beginning of real manhood.

God will move Heaven to Earth for that man.

Are you ready to be that man?