

MEN OF  
**HONOR**  
WOMEN OF  
**VIRTUE**

THE POWER OF RITES OF PASSAGE  
INTO GODLY ADULTHOOD

DR. CHUCK STECKER



**SEISMIC**  
PUBLISHING GROUP

DENVER NASHVILLE

# CONTENTS

---

Foreword by Dr. Patrick Morley .....	17
Acknowledgments .....	19
Introduction .....	23
Readers' Guide .....	31

## PART 1

### Where Are We and How Did We Get Here?

1. You Can't Give What You Don't Have ..... 35  
*Many parents feel spiritually trapped because they want to bless their children but have never known a father's blessing.*
2. "Houston, We Have a Problem" ..... 43  
*Parents are finding it more and more difficult to pass on their faith and values to their own children.*
3. Two Down and One to Go!..... 49  
*We have lost two generations from the church, and statistics indicate we are losing a third.*
4. If You Think You're Confused ..... 59  
*Since we aren't sure how to define godly adulthood ourselves, we wander aimlessly when it comes to bringing our children into adulthood.*
5. The (Much) Long(er) Road to Adulthood ..... 67  
*We have been deceived by the term "adolescence"—a concept created by psychologists and sociologists that contradicts and inhibits God's plan for bringing youth into adulthood.*

- 6. We Will Just Have to Do It for Ourselves..... 77  
*Numerous kinds of “rites of passage” are taking place in our country, as young men and women have a great need to be accepted as adults.*
- 7. “A Great Place to Raise Kids, but a Terrible Place to Raise Adults” ..... 87  
*When our children reach their young-adult years, they no longer find the church relevant because the church still treats them like kids.*

PART 2

Don't We Need to Know Where We're Going?

- 8. And How Would You Describe It? ..... 99  
*Allowing God to define “adulthood” is tough but necessary.*
- 9. You Have Got to Be Kidding Me!..... 107  
*If we are to understand “adulthood,” we must separate it from “maturity.”*
- 10. You Call This a Family? ..... 115  
*We must return to a church where all generations have clear pathways to acceptance, participation, ministry, and leadership.*
- 11. You Cannot Finish What You Do Not Start ..... 121  
*Before we can focus on getting our young people to the finish line, we have to get them to the starting line. An intentional rite of passage is that starting line.*

### PART 3

#### Can Anyone Tell Me How to Get There?

12. Raising Men of Honor and Women of Virtue..... 129  
*Understand the principles of launching our children into godly adulthood.*
13. Are You Ready? ..... 135  
*Hear God's heart for adulthood and how it conflicts with the world's view.*
14. Are You Able? ..... 141  
*We must challenge traditional thinking that young teens cannot be considered men and women.*
15. Are You Prepared? ..... 147  
*Young men and women are presented with hard-hitting spiritual and moral challenges.*
16. Are You Willing? ..... 157  
*Experience a ceremonial rite of passage that includes the participation of the entire church family.*
17. A Future and a Destiny ..... 167  
*Know the power of a father's blessing.*

### PART 4

#### "Even Generations Yet to Be Born ..."

18. Legacy or Just Another Legend? ..... 177  
*God's heart for us is to pass on the faith, not only to the next generation, but even to generations yet to be born.*

19. Bring Your Runners to the Starting Line .....	183
<i>Raising men of honor and women of virtue requires more than a ceremony.</i>	
20. Developing the Community of Coaches and Encouragers.....	189
<i>Successfully raising kids to keep their faith requires not only parents, but a network of “net-workers.”</i>	
21. Run the Race to the Finish Line .....	195
<i>Winning is not finishing first. It is completing the race.</i>	
22. Expect the Best .....	203
<i>Perhaps the greatest thing we can do for our children is to expect them to be the very best.</i>	
Appendix A: Additional Reading .....	207
Appendix B: A Chosen Generation Ministries and Resources.....	211
Notes .....	215
Get to Know the Author .....	219

# YOU CAN'T GIVE WHAT YOU DON'T HAVE

I remember that weekend as if it took place only a few days ago. We were at a Christian retreat site in the mountains of eastern Tennessee. A church had gathered its men and sons and asked me to be a

part of a rite of passage to help usher these young men into godly adulthood. This was the first rite of passage I had ever done. Although I have since come to believe that the rites of passage need to be conducted in the context of the entire church, this one was in an all-male environment.

Both of my sons accompanied me on this trip, and the older of the two would himself participate in this rite of passage into manhood. That alone would have been enough to chisel this weekend into my heart, but it wasn't the entire story.

I knew the mere sight of young men being blessed into godly adulthood might stir something in some of the older men who had never known that blessing in their own lives, so I spoke with the pastor ahead of time to prepare him for the possibilities. At the conclusion of the ceremonial rites of passage for seven young men, the pastor moved seamlessly into the next spiritual moment.

### The Father's Blessing

He invited any men who had never known their fathers' blessing before to receive that blessing as a son and a man. Without hesitation, nearly half the men stepped out of the room so they might be called in by name and received by the men of the church.

I immediately recognized the first man to step to the door. He was one of the fathers who had just called his own fifteen-year-old son out of childhood and into manhood. I had listened to him just a few minutes earlier struggle to get the words out. When he finally did, he began to weep. I thought at the time that he was overcome with emotion seeing his son being welcomed into manhood, but now I realized his tears had not been so much for his son as for himself. As he was calling his son into a season of life, he realized that he, as the father, had never known true godly manhood. I watched this man enter the room and walk between the two columns of the men of the church. He then knelt down before the pastors and elders of his church. It was in that moment I witnessed something I'm sure I will never forget.

Before any of the pastors or elders could pray for him, another

man stepped forward: His own fifteen-year-old son draped himself over his father's kneeling body on the floor. The opening words of his prayer still ring in my ears today: "My God, my God, you know how long I have waited for this moment!" From the mouth of his fifteen-year-old son came the truth. He had recognized the hole in his father's heart—the inadequacy his dad felt as a man. There before his very eyes he got to see the wounded heart of his father healed.

The following day we all came down from the mountain and attended church together. At the conclusion of the service a woman came directly toward me with tears in her eyes. These were not tears of pain; rather, there was a glow to her face. Without an introduction, she said, "I don't know what happened on that mountain this weekend, but I know this—I sent two boys to the mountains and God sent me back two men."

Now it registered. This was the wife of the man whose fifteen-year-old son had draped his body over his father's body to pray for him. She, indeed, had received back two men.

### A Neglected Necessity

In the eight years that have followed that initial rite of passage, I have watched pastors and elders, men and women, come to realize they had never known their fathers' blessing—and that, never having received that blessing, they had nothing to give. It was as if they were trying, in a spiritual sense, to write checks from a bank account that had been opened but in which a deposit had never been made.

Before you think that a person who's never known a father's blessing is a reflection of poor parenting, understand that for the most part, our parents have never known the blessing. It's been lost in our society, lost in our culture, and lost in our churches.

The words spoken to Jesus at his baptism—"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17 KJV)—have rarely been heard by today's generation of parents. How then, if we have never known our fathers' blessing, can we pass it on to another generation? We cannot give what we do not possess.

## Testimonies of Healing

I've watched one pastor stand before his congregation and openly confess that he had never known a father's blessing. He said, "I've known a father's *blasting*, yes, but never a father's *blessing*." He went on to share that as a result of his realization, he had just spent the previous thirty minutes in the prayer room with the elders of his church, who had prayed over him as fathers would pray over their own sons. He said that now, for the first time, he was able to pray as a father and not just as their pastor.

In another church, as the pastor prepared to invite anyone who had never known a father's blessing to come forward, he paused, and for a few moments couldn't even continue. Then he said to his congregation, "I can't do this—because I have nothing to give you." Turning to me, he said that his own father was with the Lord; would I stand in as a spiritual father to pass on to him the blessing his father was never able to give? Within moments his wife was kneeling next to him, for she, too, had never known a father's blessing.

When the pastor and his wife rose to their feet that night, amid the tears of his congregation, he told his church family he thought he had received the blessing through ordination and other achievements, but he knew now that wasn't true. That night God had first revealed the hole in his heart and then healed the hurt.

I suggest that the failure on the part of our parents to pass on a blessing to us is primarily based upon the fact that they themselves never received a blessing.

## My Own Story

It was September 24, 1994. I had been on staff with Promise Keepers as the new Regional Director for the South Central Region of the United States for a little more than three weeks. While in Knoxville, Tennessee, I heard of an event called "When Men Pray," led by Pastor Onnie Kirk, and decided to drive to Nashville. I found myself, that Saturday morning, at the Ryman Auditorium—better known as the Grand Ole Opry—with a group of more than four hundred men who had gathered to pray.

In the middle of our prayers, Pastor Kirk interrupted the gathering by saying, “There are men here who have never known their fathers’ blessing.” He went on to explain that as a result of having never known our fathers’ blessing, many of us were still seeking to earn or prove ourselves worthy of our earthly father’s love—even though nothing could be further from God’s plan. My eyes were suddenly opened to a new revelation. I had considered my heavenly Father’s love and my earthly father’s love as almost one and the same. If my earthly father did not love and bless me unconditionally, how could my heavenly Father? Pastor Kirk told us God loved us unconditionally, but many of us had never received that love. He gave a challenge: “If you are one of the men here who have never known the father’s blessing, stand to your feet.”

A rush of emotions came over me, and I knew immediately what had been missing in my life for so many years. I had spent my entire life trying to earn my earthly father’s love so I could feel worthy, and without realizing it, I was also trying to earn my heavenly Father’s love. Although I wasn’t the only one in the room to stand that morning, it wouldn’t have mattered if I had been. As I stood, the Reverend Don Finto and several other men gathered around me. Don took me in his arms and prayed a father’s blessing over me as if I were his only son. I was released! I had nothing else to prove! My heavenly Father’s love was unconditional—I couldn’t do anything that would make him love me more, and I couldn’t do anything that would make him love me less. For the first time, I felt I was, in fact, worthy to be called God’s valuable son.

In the months following my experience in Nashville, I located my dad in Wichita, Kansas, after a separation of twelve years. Within the few short years that followed our reunion, God opened the door for me to share with my own dad about God our Father and his Son who died on a cross that we might be free.

One month short of my father’s seventieth birthday, we knelt together in that small apartment in Wichita, where he asked Jesus Christ to be his Lord and Savior. Through that time together, God also revealed to me that my dad had never known a father’s blessing. My father had been adopted, and I can honestly say that until

that day in Wichita, he had lived with a birth certificate on which the word “unknown” was printed in the place where a father’s name would have been typed. On that day in March 1997, my dad realized he had a real Father who loved him unconditionally. My father was unable to pass on a blessing to me or my brothers or sisters because he himself had never known that blessing. He could not give what he did not possess, and it wasn’t his fault.

### It’s Not Too Late

The lack of blessing on the part of fathers is not limited only to their sons; many daughters as well have never known their fathers’ blessing. And the elements of the blessing are no different whether you are giving it or receiving it. But the spiritual implications are very simple: You cannot give what you do not possess.

I have come to believe that so much of our performance-driven lives is based on our need to be received unconditionally and blessed for who we are, not for what we do. In regard to growing our children in their faith, it’s been said that the acorn doesn’t fall far from the tree. If we parents cling tightly to the hurt in our own hearts due to the lack of a father’s blessing, it’s hard to imagine how we can help our children walk in the fullness of who God created them to be.

If you’re wondering where you are when it comes to the issue of your father’s blessing, ask yourself the following questions: Can you remember the day you got your driver’s license? Can you remember the day you graduated from high school? Can you remember the days you succeeded or failed at anything in life? Can you also remember the day your father took you in his arms, held you tightly, and proclaimed for you to know in heaven and on earth that you were his beloved son or daughter and that he blessed you unconditionally with a father’s love because of who you are and not for what you had done or even failed to do?

If you remember that day, you have something to give. If you can’t remember that day, you can do something about it.

## Take the Initiative

The first step for me was to release my dad. Notice I didn't say "forgive" him. My dad hadn't done anything that required me to forgive him. I had held him responsible for my desire to please him; that was my need—not his fault. This may sound really strange to you, but after not seeing my dad for more than twelve years, I asked him to forgive me for the bitterness and anger I felt toward him. As a son, I am required by God to honor my father and mother.

The second step was actually receiving the blessing. Pastor Onnie Kirk opened the door for me. If your father is still living and you can go directly to him for a blessing, I suggest you do so.

Some might think that those who've never known the father's blessing were probably raised in a non-Christian home. In *The Prayer of Jabez Devotional*, Bruce Wilkinson told the story of his own son asking for his blessing:

I remember the evening my son David asked me for a blessing....  
"Dad, I want to ask you a question. Will you bless me?"

His mom and sister stared at him. I stared at him as well, as his request appeared to drop out of the blue. "David, you know I do bless you," I said. "No, Dad. I want you to really bless me." Then he stood up, walked to the armchair where I was seated, and knelt in front of me. Then he waited, head bowed, without even looking up.

Do you know what flooded through my heart at that moment? I felt a tremendous desire to bestow on him every possible good thing. Here was my own child waiting at my feet, telling me by word and action what he wanted most was what only I, his father, could give him....

In Jesus' name, I poured blessing after blessing upon him. And I didn't stop until I was certain that he not only was blessed, but that he also felt blessed!<sup>1</sup>

When asked by their children to bless them, I have seen fathers respond with the most incredible love and prayer of blessings. I watched a man in his late forties ask his parents, who were in their seventies, for their blessing. They were completely overcome with

emotion and poured out blessings on their son.

In the event that your father is unavailable, God the Father is raising up spiritual fathers and mothers. Perhaps you could ask those who have been your “spiritual parents” to pray a blessing over you. Ideally, approach your pastor and ask him to bless you. Through no fault of their own, some pastors may not completely understand this concept. Remember that many have never received the blessing themselves. If your pastor needs some assistance, there are some very good resources that can help him. *The Blessing*, by Gary Smalley and John Trent, is the foundational source. I also recommend a wonderful book by Rolf Garborg titled *The Family Blessing*. Additional resources are listed in the back of this book.

This chapter has been difficult for some of you to read. I wish it could have been easier. If it was painful for you, remember this: We must find the source of our pain before the healing can begin.

I encourage you to ask yourself this question: What do I want to pass on to my children—wounds or health?

---

## FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION

---

1. Describe the day you received your driver's license.
2. Describe your high school graduation.
3. Describe the event that would most closely resemble a father's blessing in your life.
4. Have you received a blessing from a “spiritual father”? Describe the person and the circumstances.
5. If your own parents have not blessed you, can you release them without hurt and anger?

6. If you have never known that blessing, whom do you have in your life to stand in as a spiritual father to bless you? How and when will you ask that person?