

WANTED: CHRISTIAN MEN

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In this work the author writes about a search, a search for Christian men, about a vision, servant leadership, and being a warrior, about men who have the vertical relationship with the Lord and the horizontal relationships with our wives and children properly established, about men servant leaders, who are warriors to the end.

Today I'm going to talk about a search, a search for Christian men. And in that talk, we'll discuss vision, servant leadership, and being a warrior. But first, I don't know about you guys, but I'm busy. It seems like there's always something to do, and it never ends. It starts early in the morning and lasts longer than I want it to in the evening. Some weeks I have dinners, receptions, or meetings until late into the evening numerous times a week.

It's as if my job, my work, has taken over my life. It has a grasp on me, my family, my soul. Can any of you relate to this? Are you experiencing the same type of thing?

And you know what? This isn't the way it should be. It's wrong, completely upside down. I really like my job. But I love my family and I love the Lord. Why in the world am I letting this happen? Why are my priorities, at least based upon where I spend most of my time, so inverted?

How many of you have heard the story about the frog and hot water? If you heat up water and make it real hot, and throw a frog in, it'll jump out immediately. However, if you set a frog in a pan of water at room temperature and then heat it up so it becomes real hot, the frog just sits there and boils. Sometimes I feel I'm that second frog, just sitting there in my own pot of hot water, my job, and unable to do the other things I'm supposed to do as a Christian man, husband, and father.

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Over the last 5-6 months I've been meeting with some men a couple of times a month for breakfast and fellowship. We only meet for about an hour and have been studying the book of Judges in the Old Testament. This has generated some great discussion, particularly when we read Judges Chapter 4 about Deborah, a judge, and Barak, a local leader.

Starting in verse 6: "She (Deborah) sent for Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, "The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you: 'Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead the way to Mount Tabor. Vs 7: I will lure Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands.'"

Well, this sounds like a guaranteed victory, right? The Lord said it, I believe it. Pretty easy to be a man of God I'd think. But, do you know what Barak said? In Vs 8: Barak said to her, "if you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go." Huh?? What kind of response is that? Is he afraid? Is he a "chicken"?

Does he not trust in the Lord? Does he not believe in the Lord? Does he not believe the Lord? Would you have gone if you were Barak? Why didn't the Lord tell Barak directly, instead of going thru Deborah? Was he not listening in the past?

And, why is the judge a woman? Where are the men? We have a woman judge and a man who won't do what the Lord commands unless the woman goes with him. So again, where are the men? Where are the men leaders? Where are the men who are willing to do what the Lord commands? Where are the men who WANT to do what the Lord commands, whatever the cost?

Just to drive the point home about Barak's refusing to go unless Deborah goes with him, Deborah says, in vs 9: "Very well, I will go with you. But because of the way you are going about this, the honor will not be yours, for the Lord will hand Sisera over to a woman." Eventually Barak does meet Sisera and his 900 chariots on the field of battle and Sisera is routed – not a man was left except Sisera, who escaped on foot. He fled to the tent of a woman named Jael, whom Sisera mistakenly believed was a friend. In vs 21 we read that she killed him while he slept in her tent, fulfilling what Deborah had told Barak in vs 9. How do you think Barak felt when he showed up at Jael's tent, saw Sisera laying there dead, and remembered what Deborah said about the honor not going to him but to a woman? Again, where are the men? Why aren't they acting like men?

A couple of years ago I read a book titled "Wild at Heart" written by John Eldredge. In it he says there are 3 things which drive men. First, a beauty to save. Second, an adventure to live. And third, a battle to win.

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As I thought about my life, I believe the author is correct. As a boy, I was definitely into the second two, the adventure and battle, but not too much into the beauty to save. That came later as I grew up into a young man. My playmates and I would play cowboys and Indians, or army, for hours on end, beating all odds to be victorious, always being courageous and brave, and sometimes dying a glorious death.

When I watch my son Justin who's 8 years old, he's definitely into the adventure and the battle. I imagine those of you blessed with sons see it too. For Justin, nearly everything he puts in his hands is a weapon – a sword, a gun, a knife, and everything to him is black or white, good or evil. There is very little gray in his world.

The premise of this book “Wild at Heart” is that of the story in Judges of Barak and Deborah. Where are the men? More importantly, where are the Godly men? Where, when, and why, during our lives, do we stop being “male”, the way God made us? Certainly our “adventures” and “battles” as men are different than as boys. Yet, they're still there. They're not the fantasies and mock battles with plastic and wooden swords and guns, but real adventures and battles.

Why are we not carrying that mantle of manhood, of leadership, of honor and responsibility that we're supposed to? God made us men. Men we must be. Men of leadership, honor, responsibility, and integrity. Strong in the Lord, the husbands and fathers the Lord commands us to be. Leaders in the community and work, displaying strong Christian ideals.

We don't want to be Baraks. All of us need help in getting our priorities in the right order, and keeping them there. Those priorities should be God, our spouse, and then our families, in that order. Work, finances, our “toys”, and everything else we do and have falls in line in some order behind those top three. If we get the vertical relationship correct with the Lord, and the horizontal relationship correct with our spouse and families, the Lord will bless us and everything else will fall in line in accordance with His will.

So, where and how do we stop being “men” the way God intended? When do we lose that vision? What happens? I'll tell you what happens, and it's just one word. Life. Life happens. As we grow older and become adults we take on more and more responsibility such as a job, get married, have children, get an apartment or a house, a car, our “vision” of the adventure to live and battle to win starts to diminish. It starts to decrease. Instead of looking up to the Lord for His guidance, His strength, His adventure, we start to look to ourselves, our own strength, and our own intelligence. Instead of living for God and His greatness, we live for ourselves, and there is no way any “greatness” conceived by man can compare to the

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greatness of the Lord. How do I know this? Because I've lived it. I've been at a place where I only had 90 Lei to buy food for two weeks for my wife and I. I've been at a place where we had no money, and there was absolutely no food in the house to feed me, my wife, and our infant daughter. Absolutely none. But God met us there, met our need, and put food into the cupboard to get us through. The vision I had, which had been smoldering, caught fire and burned brightly. I saw God move. I saw His love for us. I knew that where I wanted to be, was where He was. I wanted to live the adventure he had for me, and have Him beside me when fighting the battles. I want to keep my eyes on Him. Do you remember one of the adventures the apostle Peter lived? He actually walked on water. Wouldn't that be great? What an adventure that would be. He takes some heat for losing faith and sinking, but I'll tell you what, he was the only one with the faith and courage to get out of that boat and take that first step. It was only when his vision was distracted and not focused on Christ, but focused on life around him, that he started to sink. Come on guys, be a man. Don't be a Barak. Catch the vision, God's vision for your life. Have the courage to get out of the boat. Take the first step.

Once you've grabbed onto that vision, you know what happens? You become a leader. People will see you're not in it for yourself, but for others. They'll want what you have. They'll want to be associated with you and follow you. You're leading by example. Christ didn't come for himself, but for us. The Son of God came and served others. He was the ultimate example of the servant leadership style. He took care of His people, even to the point of humbling himself and washing the feet of His disciples. Can you imagine that? He taught people. He mentored people. He met their needs. That's the type of leader we need to be. A servant leader. Does your unit have a mission? Yes it does. Does your unit have people? Yes it does. My experience, throughout all the positions of leadership I've had, is that if I take care of my people, they'll take care of the mission. If I work with them, mentor them, teach them, help take care of their families, let them do the work, expect some mistakes and not fire them when they err, the mission gets done. And oftentimes differently than the way I would have expected or done it myself. As leaders we don't need to be dictators. We don't need to be slave drivers. We certainly can't be ruthless and intolerant. We can be more effective and efficient leaders by taking care of the people around us, both those subordinate to us and those superior to us. Serve them, meet their needs, and they'll take care of you and the mission.

Finally, we in the military are all warriors. What kind of a warrior must we be? One with a cause greater than us. Remember that battle to win? That's us. Exodus 15:3 says: The Lord is a warrior, and Genesis says we're made in God's

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image. The motto for the US Marine Corps is “A few good men”. The Lord wants something better than just good men. He wants good Christian men. If the Lord is a warrior and we’re made in His image, then we can truly be great warriors. Warriors prepared for battle. Not just for the battles where blood is shed, lives are lost, and the fate of nations determined, but also the battles for justice, for good over evil. To do what is right, no matter what the cost. To set the standard, and maintain it. We must fight to keep our integrity, for it is not something which can be taken from us, but is something we give away. Warriors fighting for a righteous cause don’t give up, they don’t give in. We must be good warriors for our nation and our service. But, we must also be good warriors fighting to maintain the Christian ideals which are so important to how we live our lives daily.

As I said at the beginning, I’m busy. We’re all busy. But I also want to be one to answer the call when it goes out: Wanted, Christian men. Men who have the vertical relationship with the Lord and the horizontal relationships with our wives and children properly established. And men who have a vision, servant leaders, who are warriors to the end. You can do it. I know you can. Answer the call. Take that bold, first step out of the boat.

