

THE REAL MAN

SPIRITUAL LEADER

BLUEPRINT



21 PRACTICAL WAYS TO LOVE AND
LEAD YOUR FAMILY

Dr. Joe Martin

The Real Men Spiritual Leader Blueprint ©

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This is NOT a book, this is a blueprint. And your time is important to me, so let's cut right to the chase and get to the point. **A man was created (by God) to be the head, master, and leader of his home.** We were specifically and purposefully built and designed to lead our family. It's not an option; so we might as well accept it. So we have a choice, either we're going to lead our family effectively or we're going to lead them poorly; but either way, we ARE going to lead.

In today's society, many would disagree that we should be the head, master, and leader of our homes. But truth doesn't change just because it isn't popular. And since we, as Christian men, believe the Bible is the truth, God's Word isn't up for debate or a vote.

So right now I have a decision to make; I can spend the next few minutes (or pages) trying to convince you that God intended for you to lead your family, or we can save a lot of time and accept God at His Word and follow a plan on how to do it. It's your choice? I'll give you a minute to decide.

Go ahead, take a minute.

Okay, great! You decided to save us both some time and accept God's Word as truth. Smart choice.

Whenever I'm invited to speak to an audience about the role of husbands and the importance of fathers in the household, I often confess that **I didn't become a man myself until I was 33 years old.** It was at that age that I met a "real man" for the first time in my life. Now that doesn't mean I hadn't met a good or even a Godly man before then; but when I refer to a "real man," I'm referring to the kind of man who was willing to take me under his wing, show me the ropes, and disciple me into Biblical manhood and show me how to spiritually lead my family.

Before that point and time in my life, I had been living as a male, trying to become a man by trial and error; and my ex-wife and my son had become the guinea pigs. I say that, not as a slight to my family, but as an honest admission of my spiritual immaturity.

Although I "succeeded" in the role as a male, given the fact that I had been raised by a 16-year old, single mother in the ghettos of Miami, Florida, I ultimately failed in my role as a man, husband, and father. On the surface, I had achieved the success that most young males in my hood could've only dreamed of. I was the first in my family to graduate from high school, attend college, graduate from college (early, at the top of my class), purchased my first home before I graduated from college, started my first business at the age of 22, became the youngest professor in my state by the age of 24, worked for the Governor's Office, had a masters and a doctorate degree, and was earning a six-digit income all before the age of 30. In addition, I was happily married and had a son of my own.

So you may be asking, how did I fail as a man? Even though I had given my life to the Lord (at age 27), attended church regularly, and was active in my church, like many men, I played the role of "Christian" very well. Based on my many accomplishments, everyone just assumed I had it all together. I never even questioned my own spiritual maturity. I assumed that since I had "made it" out of the hood, I didn't think I needed to learn "how to be Godly man." And no one, not even my Christian brothers, challenged me on this assumption.

I thought once you received salvation, you became a Godly man by default. But once I started experiencing struggles in my marriage, career, and finances, that assumption made me vulnerable to the enemy's attack, and eventually led me down the road to addiction, adultery, anger, pridefulness, selfishness, and no male accountability. Lead my family spiritually? Are you kidding me, I thought I was already a leader. I had position, power, prestige, money, and the respect of everyone who I deemed important, except for my wife.

My work, my career, and my wealth took priority over everything in my life, including my wife and my spiritual growth. That's when I learned that **getting out of God's divine order will eventually lead you to a life of "disorder."** I also learned that there's no success in the world that can ever compensate for failure in the home. And if you're not growing in Christ, daily, you're probably dying in Christ, slowly.

But it wasn't until I was 33 years old when I met a man who was able to look past my worldly success and see my spiritual deficiency that I had my "Road to Damascus" experience. Although he had eight children of his own, and had been happily married for more than two decades, he voluntarily "stepped up" and started discipling me and showing me, with his life, how a "real man" spiritually leads a household. He also opened my eyes to help me realize that **every man, without exception, needs at least three (3) types of men in his life: (1) a Paul - an older man to teach him the way, (2) a Barnabas - a man his age to hold him accountable to the way, and (3) a Timothy - a younger man he can show the way.**

I had operated without a Paul for 33 years, and as a result, my wife and my family suffered for it. But since I've been discipled, my life hasn't been the same. God has faithfully restored everything I allowed the enemy to steal from me, and He has graciously positioned me to help reach and disciple other men like myself. I now lead a men's small group, called Brothers' Keepers; I'm part of a men's accountability group, and I serve as a Field Representative with Man in the Mirror Ministries. I'm also the creator and founder of RealMenConnect.com, an online mentoring and discipleship community for Christian men, and the site from which you downloaded this document. I'm also host a top-rated podcast on iTunes for Christian men called "[Real Men Connect](#)," where I interview some of the nation's most respected and accomplished men of faith who are successful husbands, great fathers, and extraordinary leaders.

It's now my personal mission to **see every good man mentored and every great man multiplied**, all for God's glory. And *The Real Men Spiritual Leader Blueprint* is part of that mission.

When it comes to spiritual leadership, and the man's role in the Christian family, the Bible makes it very clear:

Ephesians 5:22-33 ESV - Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word.

1 Peter 3:7 ESV - Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

1 Corinthians 11:2-16 ESV - Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you. But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

From an outside observer, it would appear that men have been given a lot of authority. But we also know, even if you're not a Christian, with authority also comes a greater amount of responsibility. And here the Bible is also very clear of what's expected of men:

Matthew 23:11-12 ESV - The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Luke 12:47-48 ESV - And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.

James 4:17 ESV - So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

As if that wasn't enough, we're also given the additional responsibility to raise, train, and lead our children in the admonition of the Lord. Again, God's Word is very clear on this:

Proverbs 22:6 ESV - Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 ESV - And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

Ephesians 6:4 ESV - Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

However, as daunting as this task of spiritual leadership may seem, God never intended for us (men) to do it on our own or to learn like I did, by "trial and error." We were supposed to be taught, shown, and lead by other men, all under the direction of the Holy Spirit. As men, we have a lot of questions, and the Bible provides several answers, but **we can't fulfill God's call and command to spiritually lead our families outside of relationship with other men.** It just won't work. Even Jesus Christ himself, who was perfect in every way, did not do manhood alone. Not only did he depend on God (as his head), he had 12 disciples (who he taught), including an "inner circle" of three men he depended on for support: Peter, James, and John. I believe Jesus did this, not because he needed to, but rather to give us a model for spiritual leadership.

Being a spiritual leader, whether in your home, in your church, or on your job, is a huge responsibility. Check out what the Bible says in *1 Timothy 3:1-7 ESV - The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?*

In other words, if we as men can't successfully lead our homes, what chance do we have at successfully leading others spiritually in Christ?

Although I call this the Real Men "Blueprint," it's really nothing more than a suggested outline compiled from several Godly men who've spiritually poured into my life over the past 18 years of my spiritual walk. I've humbly listened to their advice, but more importantly, I've faithfully applied their advice after watching them "walk out" their faith in front of me. See, this is the key to the Real Men Blueprint; **as the spiritual head of your household, you can't just lead with your words, you have to live out the Word of God in front of your family.** In other words, you have to lead by example, not excuses.

Having been given the responsibility to lead a men's small group at my church and serve as the Field Representative with Man in the Mirror Ministries, I've had the privilege to learn from, disciple, mentor, and coach men (from ages 18-83) under my spiritual leadership. And now with my [Real Men podcast](#) I've been able to interview literally dozens (and counting) of spiritually mature men who've successfully learned how to navigate the role of "spiritual head" of their household.

But as a ministry leader, the number one question I get asked by new or even seasoned Believers is **"Joe, how do I begin to spiritually lead my family if I've never been taught? Where do I even start?"** And that's why I decided to put together this so-called "blueprint." This outline is not exhaustive or all-inclusive by any means, nor is it guaranteed to work, but it's definitely a great place to start.

But I believe having a plan is better than having no plan at all. And in many churches today, not only are men not given a plan for spiritual leadership, most men don't even know they need one. But the truth of the matter is, we all do. As the old saying goes, "Most men don't plan to fail, they just fail to plan." So here's the **Real Men Spiritual Leader Blueprint: 21 Practical Ways to Love and Lead Your Family**. I hope it blesses you as much as it has blessed me and my family.

1. Get in God's order. This is a mindset and game changer for your life and your family.

The Bible says in *Joshua 24:15 ESV - And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."*

Unfortunately, for a lot of us, we weren't taught (or shown) God's order for our home and our family. That order is listed below:

- 1.) **Christ** (your Lord & Savior)
- 2.) **Covenant** (your marriage)
- 3.) **Children** (your offspring)
- 4.) **Community** (your extended family, friends, acquaintances, others, etc.)
- 5.) **Career** (your job, business, ministry)

Although some may debate the order of #4 and #5; however, 1, 2, and 3 aren't up for debate, and 1 Timothy 3:1-7 confirms this. First and foremost, your marriage is your first ministry; it reflects God's order as expressed in Ephesians 5:22-33.

When it comes to spiritually leading your home, putting God first is easier said than done. But it has to be done. Jesus can't just be your Savior for eternity. He has to be the Lord of your life right now. which means He should govern how you lead your family, make decisions, treat your wife, and train your children. No exceptions. Likewise, your marriage should also take priority over your children.

No exceptions. If we fail, as men, to model God's divine order in our household, we put ourselves and future generations at risk.

2. Bless your wife and your children. In the Bible, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all passed down blessings to their children. As the spiritual head of your family, you are expected to do the same. This is a chance to pass down generational blessings to your children and your children's children. Blessing your family allows you to serve as the prophet and priest of your household. To "bless your family" is to speak God's Word over them and into their lives and their future. You should do it for your wife as well as your children. Below is a copy of the blessings I prepared for my wife and my son. I presented these blessings to them (as well one to my daughter) as a framed, Christmas gift. The blessing you speak over your family will out-live you and serve as an example for generations to come.

Joseph's Blessing for Tonya

You are my divine soul mate, and you're God's promised fulfilled...to me. You were set apart for God's divine purpose to know Him and to make Him known to the lost. You're a living, breathing example of God's grace and His mercy, and He calls you His own. You are beautifully and wonderfully made in His image, but that beauty goes well beyond the physical. You are a reflection of God's love with skin on it.

God has equipped you and given you a ministry to give hope to the hurting and to give help to the hopeless. He has forgiven you, so you can show others how to forgive. He has loved you, so you can show others how to love. And he has been merciful to you, so you can show others how to be merciful. You are God's divine canvass that He wants to use to demonstrate His faithfulness, patience, kindness, long-suffering, hospitality, and compassion towards His people.

You are a faithful wife, a loving mother, and an honest businesswoman, the essence of a Proverbs 31 woman. Through your transparency, others are able to see how good God is; and because of this, He is well pleased with you. Even when you're afraid, your love for God's keeps you secure, and it provides you shelter and safety from the storms.

You honor God with your tithes, and you give more than He requires because you love Him so. He calls you His good steward, and you are blessed and highly favored. He assures you that all of your needs will be supplied according to His riches and glory. You and I will walk in the favor of good health with years of longevity, as we prepare to meet our grandchildren and great grandchildren with strong bodies and a sound mind.

Your family, and generations that you don't even know of, will be blessed because of the seeds you've faithfully planted in others in God's name. The treasures God has stored for you in Heaven will far outweigh the ones you've thanked Him for here on earth.

Every day you are growing stronger in your walk with Christ. And every year your hunger and thirst for God's Word is increasing. As a result, you are always looking for a reason to honor and praise Him. And because you have sacrificially given back to God every blessing He has given you – including me, our children, and your personal desires, He will continue to pour out His blessings upon you and our family.

You love us, and you faithfully cover us with your prayers and hold us spiritually accountable to honoring God in all our ways. God delights in faithfully keeping His promises to you and our family, so He will continue to prosper you and give you hope and a good future. He will bless our marriage, protect our children, provide for our home, and grow our ministry as you continue to worship and serve Him with all of your heart, mind, soul, and strength. All of this we declare and give thanks in the mighty name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Amen

Dad's Blessing for Kendall

You are a mighty warrior made in the image of our Almighty God. You wouldn't be here if it wasn't for His divine mercy and grace. You will never forget all of the good things God has done for you. You know He will never leave nor forsake you. You will look for God's fingerprint on everything around you, even those things you don't understand. In this way, you will always give thanks to Him, in good times and in bad.

No matter what people think or say, you know that God loves you; so you always seek God's approval over man's applause; His glory over your own. You love His people as He commands you, but you never place anyone or anything above Him.

Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, you will stand up for God's truth with courage, even when it's not popular. And just like your earthly father, you are a man of conviction and integrity and you will stand by what you believe, even if you have to stand alone, and especially when you're afraid.

You're a man after God's own heart and you hunger and thirst for a closer relationship with Him. Every day, you seek God first and read His Word, in order to learn more about Him, strengthen your faith, and to look for new ways to please Him.

The daily time you spend with God is your way of personally thanking Him for all He's done for you. And because you seek Him daily, you honor Him by being a good, faithful steward of your time, talent, and treasure.

You set and act on your priorities by doing what's most important first. Each day you improve your life by taking advantage of your time like Jesus did. And just like Jesus, no opportunity in your day is ever wasted. You give a tenth or more of everything you earn back to God, and you honor Him by using your God-given gifts to achieve God-given goals to serve Him and others.

Every day, your mind is being renewed. Therefore, your thoughts are on those things that are pure, right, true, and pleasing to God, especially when it comes to women. You treat women like God commanded you to, as His own daughters, because they are your sisters in Christ. And because of your love for God, you stand for righteousness and you flee from sexual temptation and impure images of women.

You will only pursue and marry the kind of woman God has chosen for you; one that loves Him more than she loves you; one that strengthens your walk with Him; and one who will love you unconditionally like Christ loved us.

You will faithfully love and lead your family according to God's Word, and you will seek His will above your own. You will reflect to your wife and children a Godly man who is humble, obedient, and wise – who trusts God in all things. And just like Abraham, you will leave a legacy of faith for generations to follow; and because of that, your children, and your children's children will be blessed because of your faithfulness.

You are, can, and will do all of these things and even more through the strength of the Holy Spirit God has given you through His Son Jesus Christ.

Amen

3. Recruit a mentor/spiritual father. I mentioned earlier that every man, without exception needs three (3) types of men in his life: a Paul (*an older man to teach him the way*), a Barnabas (*a man his age to hold him accountable to the way*), and a Timothy (*a younger man he can show the way*). Each of these men serve a vital role in our lives and our development as men; however, if you're not a mature Christian, finding these men may prove to be tougher than it initially appears. That's why if you want to effectively lead your family, God's way, I believe you have to intentionally and deliberately recruit these type of men, especially a Paul (*i.e., mentor/spiritual father*).

Meeting a Barnabas and Timothy will often happen naturally as you continue to grow in Christ. However, unless you were blessed to grow up with a Godly father, finding a Paul can be quite challenging. I think the best way to recruit a Paul is to keep your eyes open for him. I didn't find my Paul until I was 33, and since that time, I've met at least three others who I believe could fulfill that role in my life if necessary.

In hindsight, to find a Paul sooner, I should've intentionally put myself in the company of potential Pauls by looking toward the elders at my church, attending local Rotary Club meetings, or joining the men's ministry at my church. The key is to position yourself in the right place, and be humble enough to approach a Paul and simply ask, *"Could I meet with you for coffee every now and then to ask you questions about life and marriage?"* Nine times out of 10, the man you ask will say, *"Yes, I would be honored."*

4. Read the "Power of a Praying Husband" by Stormie Omartian and The Five Love Languages by Gary Chapman. No man can lead his wife without first protecting (*praying for her*) and leading her heart (*praying with her*). *The Power of a Praying Husband* is a great place to start in understanding the heart of the woman you love and how to pray for and with her. It's not as difficult as you may think.

When I was dating my wife (Tonya), we were both recovering and rebuilding from a divorce, and we both had scars and wounds from our previous marriage. Trying desperately not to repeat the mistakes of the past, I was at a loss on how to pray for her and pray with her. Then a good friend recommended Stormie's book, and it blessed my life beyond words. For the first time, I started to understand the emotional nuances and spiritual battles of women. *I learned that women weren't emotionally weak, they were just emotionally different.*

As I read through Stormie's book, I identified things about Tonya, emotionally, I had never understood before. With this new insight, I purposefully left prayers on Tonya's voice mail (because we lived in separate states) addressing some of her emotional struggles as well as past pains, so she could listen to them anytime the enemy tried to attack her heart and mind. Also, recording the prayers (and personalizing it) also gave her the reassurance of my love for her. It was a win-win.

As for Gary Chapman's book, *"The Five Love Languages,"* if you haven't heard about this book, what rock have you been hiding under? If you want to love your wife better, you can't afford not to have this book. I tell men that it's not enough to just love our wives, we have to learn our wives. And Gary's book teaches you how to love your wife in a way she knows she's loved and adored by you.

The book is an easy read, and it's very practical. And if you're like most men who've read Gary's book, you'll find yourself saying over and over again, **"Oh, so that's why my wife acts that way."**

5. Read "Dad in the Mirror" by Patrick Morley, and "Raising a Modern Day Knight" by Robert Lewis. If you're a dad, and you have a desire to spiritually lead your children, but you don't quite know where to start, I would recommend these two (2) books: Patrick Morley's *Dad in the Mirror*; and if you're concerned especially about helping your son become a man, I would recommend *Raising a Modern Day Knight* by Robert Lewis. Both of these books were recommended to me, one by a friend and the other by my spiritual father.

To tell you that both of these books were life changers for me would be an understatement. Not having my father in my life when I grew up, *Dad in the Mirror* gave me the confidence that I could be what my son needed me to be; and *Raising a Modern Day Knight* gave me the blueprint on how to do it and how to coach my son through manhood. My spiritual father has five (5) sons, and he took each of them through the process outlined in this phenomenal book. I highly recommend it.

6. Read "For Husbands Only" by Dr. Tony Evans and watch Voddie Baucham's "Love & Marriage" video series. What *Dad in the Mirror* and *Raising a Modern Day Knight* did for me as a father, Tony Evan's book did for me as a husband. This tiny little book, by far, is the best book (*other than the Bible*) I've ever read about the true role of a Godly husband. Not only did it improve my marriage, I purchased several copies and sent them to my male friends as Christmas gifts. That was years ago, and I still haven't read a book that comes close to clearly communicating what we're called to do and be as husbands. I try to read it at least once a year. I'm in the process of re-ordering some more to give away to the new men in my life and maybe give some away to those who choose to financially support my ministry.

On the other hand, the only thing, in my opinion, that's as powerful as Tony Evan's little book is Voddie Baucham's video series called "Love and Marriage." This series is so good that it should come with a disclaimer. Because it's not for the timid or faint of heart; it will shake you up. It's tough, biblical truth about marriage, and I think it should be watched by EVERY man (*and woman*) BEFORE they get married. But it's not too late even if you're already married, because it will make you evaluate your marriage. Take my word for it, it's potentially life changing. You can find it on YouTube if you search for it or just [CLICK HERE - Love & Marriage](#) to check it out. There are four (4) videos in the series, but it's definitely worth the time investment in watching it. But just know, you've been warned.

7. Read "88 Great Daddy-Daughter Dates" by Rob & Joanna Teigen. When I decided to get married again, after a 16-year failed marriage, I instantly found myself as the father of a 10-year-old daughter. At the time, I had only had experience in raising a son, and I had no clue how to be a father to a little girl. However, after several talks with my spiritual father and other men who had successfully fathered girls, the consensus was that I needed to "date" my daughter and, by example, show her how a young man, and future husband, is suppose to treat her.

88 Great Daddy-Daughter Dates was exactly what I needed to show me "how to" date my daughter, by not only giving me 88 wonderful date ideas I could plan with her, but how to get the most out of those dates and use it as a teaching tool to also disciple her. I gave it to my daughter as a Christmas gift, and I let her pick out the dates we would go on. This is a must-have resource for any dad serious about spending "quality time" with his daughter. Trust me, she'll thank you for it years after she's outgrown the book.

8. Join/start a Men's Accountability Group. One of the best decisions you can ever make for your marriage and your family, other than giving your life to Christ, is to join a spiritual accountability group (*made up of all men*). A men's accountability group is your insurance policy against stupidity. I know that sounds a little harsh, but it's true. See, it's one thing to have a woman confront you about something; but it's another to have a group of men you respect do it.

As men, we're only as spiritually strong as the level of accountability we have in our lives. Think about it, you've never heard a man ever say, *"I think I have too many Godly men in my life; I may need to cut a few loose."* My point being, you can NEVER have too many Godly men speaking into your life; the only risk is NOT having enough.

A spiritually strong accountability group should consist of 4 to 6 men (ideally), but no more than eight. Your small group should be made up of men who you admire, respect, and who have strong character. And they shouldn't be afraid to speak truth to you, even if it hurts. You should meet as often as you realistically can, but at least once a month. The group should be informal, but informative, very supportive, and a safe place to share, meaning confidentiality and compassion are mandatory.

When I lived in Florida, I was part of a weekly group for 7 years before relocating to Tennessee and starting my own group. If you'd like to learn more about how to set up your own accountability group, just email me at realmenconnect@gmail.com. Starting a men's accountability group was one of the best decisions I've ever made. And you know why? Because my wife said so. Enough said.

9. Join the Couple's Ministry at your church. If joining a men's accountability group is wise, joining the couple's ministry at your church is a no-brainer. Usually more formal, and maybe not as powerful as a men's group, due to the level of comfort in sharing (*for most men*), a couple's ministry is necessary for strengthening your marriage and learning your wife. Couple's ministry gives you a chance to get together with other couples and learn what God says about marriage and how to apply those principles in your marriage. You get to see that you're not alone when it comes to dealing with the challenges of married life and parenthood. Personally, I think couple's ministry is also a great place to recruit men for your accountability group. I'm just saying.

10. Join the Men's Ministry at your church. I know what you're thinking, *"Joe, why do I need to be in a men's accountability group AND join the men's ministry at my church?"* First of all, they're not the same. An accountability group is smaller and more personal, and it lends itself to being more relaxed, and there's an established feeling of trust among the group. Accountability groups are less about church and studying the Bible, and more about you, work, family, and life.

On the other hand, men's ministry is designed (*or should be*) to specifically focus on the spiritual needs of men and what the Bible has to say about spiritually leading your family. There's more structure in men's ministry, and it's a great opportunity to fellowship with other men at your church who you would probably never meet otherwise. In a men's ministry group you get to worship, pray, and study together, as well as spiritually sharpen one another. I used to lead the men's ministry at my church and we met once a week on Saturday mornings.

Personally, I believe a church is only as strong as its men's ministry. And any man who is serious about spiritually leading his family needs to be plugged into his church's men's ministry. If you're not yet a member of a church, and you're having trouble finding a strong men's ministry, you're welcome to drop in and visit us for **Brothers' Keepers** (a group I started on my own) on Saturday mornings (if you live in Chattanooga, TN) until you find one. Just email me at realmenconnect@gmail.com for details.

11. Spend quiet time with God every day. Even though this is listed as #11, if this list was being prioritized, this would be THE FIRST (#1) STEP.

My wife owns a fitness business called B.U.S.Y. Body Fitness, and she says the number one excuse people use for not exercising is they don't have enough time. That's why she leaves a message on her voice mail that says, "You won't ever FIND time to exercise; if you want time you have to MAKE time." Well, that's also true if you want to be a godly man and spiritually lead your family. It takes time to read good books, study the Bible, meet with other men at your church, get mentored, among other things. But at the top of the list should be you intentionally spending time with God every single day. Simply put, there's no possible way you can become a godly man without developing a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. And as you know, a relationship takes time. And like my wife says, you won't ever find time for it, you have to make time for it.

Now please don't over-spiritualize what I'm saying about "quiet time" with God. It's not that complicated, and it's not that deep. You simply set aside some time (*for me, as soon as I wake up in the morning*) and fellowship with him. How and for how long, you ask? That's totally up to you. God's not picky, He just desires your willingness to be in His presence. You don't have to wait for Him to show up, He's already there waiting on you.

Here are some of the things I, as well as my friends and family, have done to "make time" for God on a daily basis:

- Read Bible (from a verse a day to a chapter or more a day)
- Pray (for yourself, your wife, your family, and others)
- Write in a journal
- Listen to praise and worship music

- Sing praise songs to God
- Listen to a sermon
- Read a devotional
- Sit in solitude and just listen to God
- Read God's promises
- Walk and talk to God
- Watch a sermon on video/or a TV evangelist
- Memorize Bible verses

If you want a more-detailed plan of how to have an “effective” quiet time with God, just click the link below and download my free guide:

<http://realmenconnect.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/SPACE-QT-Outline.docx>

And email me at realmenconnect@gmail.com if you have any questions.

Yes, developing an “effective quiet time” is a skill you can learn (*just like loving your wife or teaching your children*), but unfortunately, this is another one of those skills most men weren’t taught HOW to do.

12. Be present in the presence of your children. When I talk about “being present” in the presence of your children, I’m talking about being 100% fully engaged when they’re in your presence. In other words, eliminate all distractions whenever possible when talking or spending time with your children. The truth is, we can’t possibly “lead” them if we’re not fully “listening” to them (without distraction).

Whenever I’m in the car with my son (*who’s now in college*) or my daughter (*who’s in middle school*), I make sure I’m not talking on my cell phone and I’m not listening to anything on the radio - and neither are they. So what are we doing if we’re not occupying our time with music and cell phones? We’re actually talking and listening to each other. I know it sounds crazy, but it works. It’s now expected behavior whenever we’re driving in the car.

Being present means, no television watching when they need to talk to you about something. No working on the computer while they’re talking to you. No side conversations when they need your undivided attention. I know this sounds a little impractical, but it’s better to tell your child “*Daddy’s busy right now Sweet Pea, but as soon as I’m done I will give you my full attention,*” than to non-verbally communicate to them they’re not important enough to receive ALL of your attention. I will confess, this is still a constant struggle for me; so I try to be very intentional about it.

Being present also means purposefully having dinner with your children (*at least twice a week*) and engaging them in meaningful conversation at the dinner table. Is this going a little overboard? Probably so, but trust me, your children won't think so. In fact, they'll never forget it when they're older. And if they see how much you value the family, they'll hopefully see the importance of valuing theirs.

Another way to be fully present with your children is to pray for them and pray with them. Ask them to pray out loud and ask them what would they like you to pray for them about. I believe every child should hear and know their parents are praying for them. Your prayers don't have to be long and eloquent, they just have to be honest and sincere. This is also a great time to teach your children how to pray.

13. Spend time reading God's Word every day. Even though reading God's Word should be included in your "quiet time" with God, it cannot be overstated how important this is in spiritually leading your household. Ephesians 5:25 says not only are we to love of our wives, but we are, according to verses 26 & 27, *...to sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.* But we can't wash or lead our wives in God's Word if we don't know the Word ourselves. I'm not talking about becoming a Bible scholar or being able to quote hundreds of Bible verses. I'm talking about using it on a daily basis when it comes to loving God and learning how to properly love your wife the way He commands us to.

The Bible is the "true blueprint" on how to be a Godly man. You "wash your wife" in the word by reading the word, sharing the word, speaking the word, and praying the word over her. You don't have to know everything in the Bible, but at least learn how to find what you're looking for and how to apply it in your home and in your marriage. Use your uncertainty to discuss the Bible with your wife, so both of you can help each other discover God's truth.

14. Three to six times a year, read a chapter a day in Proverbs. This could also go in the category of spending quiet time with God, but I think it's worth separating. The book of Proverbs is filled with so much wisdom that even if you're not a Christian, I would recommend reading it. There are 31 chapters in the book of Proverbs, so that means you can literally read one a day for a full month. However, I recommend reading all 31 chapters at least three, if not six times a year. Why? Because you can never have too much wisdom, right?

And while you at it, I would suggest reading the book of James at least twice year. The book of James is considered, by many Bible scholars, as "the Proverbs of the New Testament." It talks about how to put your faith in action. And the good thing is, the book of James is only five (5) chapters long, so reading it twice isn't difficult at all.

And if you really want to get serious about the book of Proverbs, check out my podcast interview with Mitch Kruse, author of *Street Smarts from Proverbs*. Just click on the link below:

http://traffic.libsyn.com/realmenconnect/EP_184_Street_Smarts_for_Real_Men.mp3

15. Read a devotional with your children. If you want to get your children to develop a love for God's Word, don't depend on the church and the "Children's Ministry" to do it. As the spiritual head, you must take the lead; it's your job to disciple, as well as discipline, your own children. There are literally hundreds of children devotionals you can buy and use, so I would recommend getting one that appeals to the interest of your child or children. There are tons to choose from. And don't just hand it to them to read; you read it with them.

Most of the children's devotionals come with discussion questions, so you don't even have to struggle on what to talk about. But you may be asking, *"But Joe, what if my child ask me a question about the Bible I can't answer?"* Then simply do what I do, tell them you don't know the answer, and say, *"That's a good question; let's see if we can look that up."* Trust me, your children won't think any less of you because you don't have all the answers. In fact, it's the perfect time to exalt God by reminding your children that He's the only One who does.

When my son was younger, he was notorious for asking me tough questions during devotional time. After a while he realized that's why we were BOTH studying the Bible, in order to learn more about God. Use your own inadequacies to reveal God's sufficiency. When your children realize how much you depend on God's Word, they'll be more inclined to see why they must also.

So how long should you do devotional reading with your children? Until they stop showing up for it. Seriously. You'll be surprised, as I was, that if you make it a joy and not a job, they actually want to do devotional reading with you. If you'd like to find out HOW I do it with my children, just email me at realmenconnect@gmail.com or you can just listen to my podcast interview with Bill Delvaux (*Overcoming the Fear of Family Devotionals*):

http://traffic.libsyn.com/realmenconnect/Episode-156-Bill_Delvaux.mp3

16. Read a good men's devotional. In addition to reading a good children's devotional with your children, I highly recommend you add a good men's devotional to your own library. Again, there are literally thousands of men's devotionals out there, so I suggest you pick one that resonates with your spirit and personal journey. Personally, I've read dozens, but my favorite is Patrick Morley's *"Devotions for Man in the Mirror."* Patrick's devotional was one of the reasons I decided to pursue men's ministry. I'm not saying it's the perfect devotional, but it was perfect for me, and I've read through it several times.

The point isn't the type of men's devotional you choose, but the point is that you choose one (at least to start). Devotional reading can be incorporated into your quiet time with God, and most devotionals usually take 5-10 minutes to read. So there are no excuses. And if you have children, you can pass that devotional along to them when they're ready to graduate from the children's devotional.

17. Get a great Study Bible. Since I mentioned earlier about reading God's Word every day, this may seem a little redundant, but it's not. It's one thing to "read" the Bible, but it's another thing to "study" the Bible. And I will be the first to admit that I'm not a Bible scholar or theologian - not by a long shot - but when I'm reading the Bible, just like my children, I have A LOT of questions; and I want answers. But what I soon realized as I continued to read God's Word, is that not all bibles are the same. I'm not even talking about the different translations; that's another topic in itself. Rather, I'm talking about different commentaries, concordances, and Bible dictionaries that offer clarification on the Bible. I find it fascinating, but others just find it confusing.

Again, there are too many Bible studies to list. But if you do a little research, you won't go wrong in picking one. But for now, a study bible I would recommend for men like myself, who are not scholars and are not trying to enter the Bible Olympics, is the *Life Application Study Bible* or *The Blue Letter Bible App*. *The Life Application Study Bible* is the one I started reading 18 years ago, and I still refer to it even to this day. It's easy to understand and it's highly practical as the name implies. It's simply the Bible applied to "real life."

18. Demonstrate submission to your wife. I know this is a touchy subject, so let me start with a few assumptions. One, I assume you already are a blood-bought, born again Christian and you understand what "submission" means. Two, I assume that you understand that your wife will only submit to you to the degree that you submit to God. In other words, if you're not following God yourself, where are you leading her? And three, I assume you don't see your role as the spiritual head in your family as a position over your wife, but rather as a responsibility under God.

With that being said, and I know that's a lot of assumptions, let me explain what I mean by "demonstrate submission." The truth of the matter is most women and most husbands were never taught "how to" properly submit to anyone, let alone a spouse. As the spiritual head of your family, it's your responsibility to "go first" and show your wife and your children what submission looks like in real time. Trust me, you will have more opportunities than you want to get it right, so don't beat yourself up too bad if you get it "wrong."

Submission isn't about thinking less of yourself, it's about thinking of yourself less (*mainly your ego and pride*). So when you and your wife have to make an important decision on a spiritual, financial, family, social, or other matter that doesn't include an option to sin, tell your wife you will take it to God in prayer and return to let her know what you've decided. And after you humbly and obediently do that (*seek the Holy Spirit*), let her know what you've decided. And this is when the real "fun" begins.

If she disagrees with your decision, then you "demonstrate" submission on this matter (*I repeat: as long as her option isn't a sin*) by telling her, you will go along with her decision, even though you don't agree (*according to the Holy Spirit's leading*), and you will do it out of your love and respect for her. Will this always work? Not necessarily, but if you do it consistently, God and the Holy Spirit will supernaturally and surely turn your wife's heart towards submission, and He will reward your obedience. You just have to trust Him to complete the work He's started in her (Phil 1:6). God wants your family in right order, but it will be a process if your wife wasn't raised in a home that demonstrated God's order of submission. Just be patient with her.

So what if what your wife wants to do IS a sin? That's entirely another topic. But you can always email me (realmenconnect@gmail.com) with your specific situation, and I will respond personally to you.

19. Watch the movie *Courageous with your family*. If you haven't heard about or watched this movie already, where have you been hiding? No seriously, if you haven't sat down and watched this movie with your family, do it now, especially if you have a daughter. You will learn why it's so important for men to step up as the spiritual leaders God has called us to be. By watching it with your children, they will see that you're not trying to be a dictator or drill sergeant in your family; instead, you're just doing what God has commanded you to do when it comes to protecting, providing, and serving your family. *Courageous* will also spark a great discussion if you have middle-to-high school-aged children. If you want to leverage your time, schedule it as a date night with your daughter.

20. Find a Timothy to mentor. Not only does every man need a mentor, every man needs to mentor another man. Jesus commanded us in Matthew 28:19-20 to "*Go and make disciples.*" If you're anything like me, taking a young man who's not your son under your wing and showing him how to faithfully follow Christ probably makes you a little nervous. Questions like: "*What if he has questions I can't answer?*" "*What if I'm having trouble following Christ myself?*" "*What if I screw up this young man?*" or "*What if I don't know what to do or what to say?*" will inevitably come up. But I'm here to tell you from experience, that's the just the enemy trying to prevent you from "stepping up." I believe the reason Jesus's last words were to "*Go and make disciples.*" was because that's probably the last thing Satan wants us to do.

So what do you do when you don't believe you're spiritually qualified to lead someone else? You simply stop focusing on what you "don't know" and walk in what you "do know" about following Christ. Whatever you do, just do it humbly and with a desire to bring glory to God. Trust me, God's grace is sufficient, and he won't even allow you to "screw it up." Being a spiritual mentor doesn't require perfection, a theology degree, or special biblical credentials. However, it does require humility, honesty, transparency, compassion, and a sincere desire to please God.

Just allow your "Timothy" to peek (see) into your life when it comes to you being a husband, father, and leader – mistakes, faults, flaws, and all. Because in the end, you will teach him more by what you do in front of him than what you actually say to him.

The hidden benefit of adopting a "Timothy" is that you've added another man in your life who will hold you accountable to continue to grow in Christ. Remember, just like your wife, if you're not following Christ, then where are you leading him? So trust God, because you have what it takes to lead and disciple others. You just need to be bold and do it!

21. Create a Spiritual Board of Directors. I know this sounds complicated. Don't worry, it's not; I'm just making it sound fancy. A Spiritual Board of Directors is just a small group of people (usually 4-6) in your life (men and women) who, beyond your spiritual father, will hold you accountable to doing what it takes to properly lead your family. I mention this last, but this is actually where I started. It's not even necessary that all of these people know each other. They don't even have to live in the same city. That's how they differ from a Men's Accountability group; your SBOD probably won't physically see you on a regular basis. And they don't have to be all men.

The only things this group needs to have in common is that they are spiritually mature, they love you, and they will always speak truth to you, even if it hurts.

To make this even easier to accomplish, you can include your spiritual father and your wife as part of your Spiritual Board. I have six (6) on my team (3 men and 3 women) and none of them have ever physically met each other (*at the time I wrote this*), and they're spread out all over the country.

If you find yourself having trouble building your Board, I'll give you the same advice I gave my wife when I was dating her, *"Become the kind of person you'd like to have on your Board, and you will attract them faster than you could imagine."* I don't want to even imagine what my life would be without my Spiritual Board. They protect me from me even on my worst days. In its simplest terms, a Spiritual Board is a small group of friends who are "soul-ed" out for the Lord and they know how messed up you are and they love you anyway.

So there you have it, **21 ways to help you spiritually love and lead your family.** Like I said earlier, this list of "to do's" isn't exhaustive; it's just a good place to start. Feel free to add to it, and eat it like fish; swallow the meat and spit out the bones. Even feel free to [email me](#) some suggestions to add to the list when we revise it. Just your sincere desire alone to be a strong spiritual leader for your family means you're already on the right path. Remember, God's grace is sufficient. So anything you need along this journey, He will supply.

When an older gentleman mentored me several years ago, he would always give me the same advice whenever I was facing a problem or a crisis. He would simply quote Matthew 6:33 **“Seek ye first the kingdom of Heaven and His righteousness, and ALL things will be added to you.”** And that’s exactly the advice I’m giving you as you seek to “step up” as the spiritual leader of your household:

Seek Him as you lead them, and I promise you, you won’t go wrong.

So let me close by praying with you:

“Heavenly gracious Father, we humble ourselves before you in total surrender as we begin, and continue, this journey of spiritual leadership in our homes. You called us to sanctify our wives with the washing of Your Word, and you commanded us to train up our children in the way they should go. And we thank You for entrusting this responsibility to us. But we also realize that we cannot accomplish this by ourselves. We need the help of your Holy Spirit to lead us and guide us as we lead and guide our families.

So Abba Father, we ask that you empower us and equip us by surrounding us with other Godly men who will strengthen and support us in our efforts to walk in obedience and righteousness; and surround us with Godly men who will gently restore us whenever we step out of Your will.

Let us love our wives like Your Son loved the church and gave His life for her. And let us be like Abraham and faithfully leave a legacy of blessings for generations to come.

And when all is said and done, let us present our wives and our families to you without spot, wrinkle, or blemish as a love offering acceptable in Your sight. We ask for all of this so we may glorify You, in your precious Son Jesus name. Amen.”

If you would like to support us in our ministry efforts to **reach, mentor and disciple every man** by making resources like this one, as well as the other ones referenced in this report, available to every man for FREE, please prayerfully consider becoming a ministry partner with us by donating.

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Joe A. Martin, Ed.D.
*Founder & Creator of RealMenConnect.com
and Host of The Real Men Connect Podcast (on iTunes)*

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