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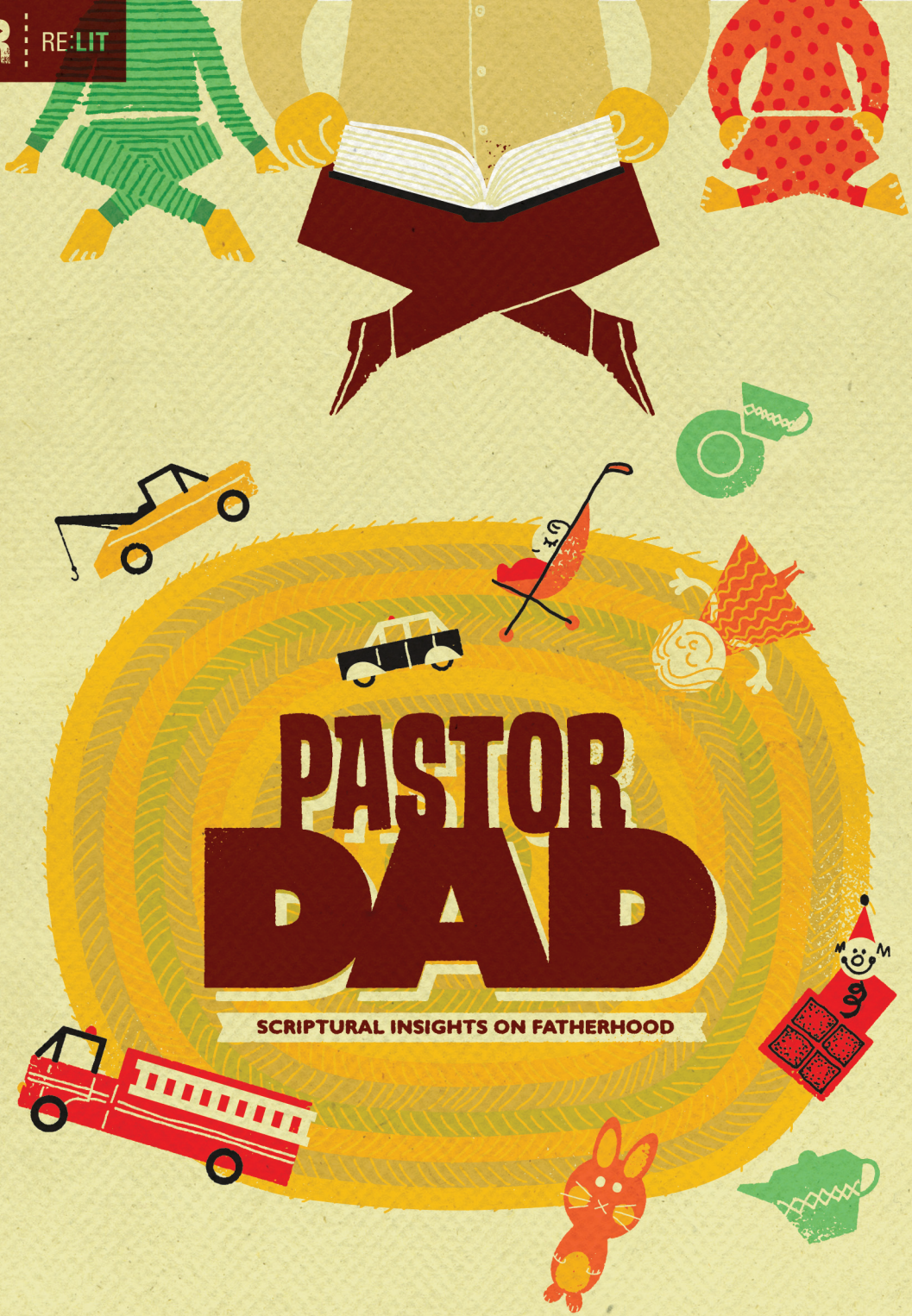

PASTOR DAD

SCRIPTURAL INSIGHTS ON FATHERHOOD

MARK DRISCOLL

This ebook is also

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

3 PREFACE

5 THE GOOD LIFE

7 WORSHIPING THE GOD OF OUR FATHERS

13 THE FRUITFUL VINE

19 CULTIVATING KIDS

23 THE MASCULINE DUTY TO PROVIDE

27 INSTRUCTION FOLLOWED BY CORRECTION

33 PROTECTING FROM SIN AND FOLLY

39 COUNTERING CULTURE

PREFACE

This small book is the edited transcript of an eighty-one-minute sermon I preached in 2001. At the time, I was thirty-one years of age and the father of Ashley Marisa and Zachariah Blaise. My wife, Grace, and I have since added Calvin Martin, Alexie Grace, and Gideon Joseph to round out the Fantastic Five, and I have included a few illustrations from life with them. This book is a simple attempt to help God's men be a "poppa daddy," as my kids call me. Some day when my children are older, I hope to, by God's grace, write a more thorough book on fatherhood, since I expect to learn from my mistakes and gather more wisdom on fathering in the ensuing years. Until then, I hope this book can be of some service to the men to whom God has entrusted children, for God's glory, the children's good, mom's gratefulness, and dad's gladness.

Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD,
who walks in his ways!
You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands;
you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you.
Your wife will be like a fruitful vine
within your house;
your children will be like olive shoots
around your table.
Behold, thus shall the man be blessed
who fears the LORD.
The LORD bless you from Zion!
. . . May you see your children's children!
– Psalm 128:1–6

THE GOOD LIFE

CHAPTER ONE

According to the Psalmist, the good life for a man is to be blessed by God. That blessing includes fearing God, walking in his ways, working an honest job to provide for his family, enjoying his believing wife, eating dinner around his table surrounded with children, and living long enough to buy ice cream for his grandkids.

The means to this end is simply the grace of God. The first thing we must note is that before a man can be a good father, he has to be a good Christian. To be a good Christian he must realize that God is his Father, as Jesus taught us to pray.

WORSHIPING THE GOD OF OUR FATHERS

CHAPTER TWO

We learn how to be fathers to our own children as we seek to treat our kids the way our perfect Dad has treated us, his sons. Our ultimate goal must be that our children would grow to love and worship our God. This simple refrain is repeated on a multitude of occasions throughout Scripture, where it says that a particular generation worshiped the God of their fathers, because God intends for children to worship the same God as their dads.

For example, Christians worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They are a father, son, and grandson. In the same way, my father's name is Joseph, my name is Mark, and my sons' names are Zachariah, Calvin, and Gideon. We are all praying that when my grandson is born to Zac one day (for example), he will worship the God of Joseph, Mark, and Zac. As a Christian father, we should long to see our children worship the same God we do. To pursue that goal, we must worship that God first. I must worship the one true God as my Father, by repenting of my sin and coming to him by faith for grace to love him, as an example and pattern for my sons and, God willing, grandsons. As I daily commit myself to his ways and being his son, I am being instructed on how to care for my children and lead them to worship God with me.

The wisdom for Christian fathering is scattered throughout Scripture and concentrated most particularly in Proverbs. In Proverbs 3:11–12 the father says, "My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights." Before any father disciplines his children, he is commanded to delight in them. Practically, this means that most of a father's time is spent enjoying his children, encouraging his children, laughing with his children, being affectionate with his children, and enjoying his children so that there is a deep bond of love and joy between the children and their dad.

Part of that love includes a father disciplining his children as needed to keep them on a path of wisdom and righteousness. This pattern is to be modeled by the father who has God as his Father and gladly receives instruction and correction from God the Father and other authorities God has placed over him (e.g., church elders and other leaders). Therefore, a godly father models submission to authority and the welcoming of correction by repenting of his own sin, receiving forgiveness, and walking in restored intimacy with God the Father by empowering grace. All of this is the essence of love, as sin leads to death and hell, and discipline leads to repentance, which points us back to life and God. Practically, this means that a good father lives out the gospel every day in fellowship with God and his child, and that he knows what to do about sin in the life of his child because he's been dealing with his own sin in his own life first.

Proverbs 14:26 says, "In the fear of the LORD one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge." Sadly, our world is not a very safe place for children, as the statistics on neglect, abuse, molestation, fornication, and rape indicate. But God says that the safest place for children is with a man who fears the Lord. Men who fear God take God's wisdom and use their masculine strength to create a fortress of protection and provision around their homes so that their wives and children can live freely and happily under their care. Practically, this means that a godly father does not allow his children to be unsupervised at the homes of people he does not know, is very careful to oversee any dating done by his daughters, and goes to great lengths to ensure that safety is pursued in everything from where the family lives to who they are in close friendship with and who is welcomed into their home.

Proverbs 20:7 says, "The righteous who walks in his integrity—blessed are his children after him!" Similarly, Paul tells the Corinthians that when he was a boy he acted like one, but when he became a man he put childish ways behind him (1 Cor. 13:11). It is imperative that Christian fathers repent of their childish ways (i.e., laziness, lust, whining, drunkenness, juvenile antics, neglecting family in the pursuit of hobbies, foolish spending, and so on) because their sins impinge upon the lives of their children and grandchildren. A Christian

father should aspire to live in such a way as to be a righteous example to his children, which produces a path of blessing that flows to the children from the faithfulness of their father as they follow his loving leadership.

Lazy fathers are disobedient to God but want to have children who are obedient to them. Such fathers may speak good wisdom, but it is overshadowed by the loudness of the foolish hypocrisy in their lives. Proverbs 26:7 stands as a warning to such men, saying, "Like a lame man's legs, which hang useless, is a proverb in the mouth of fools." Wisdom is not merely what a father says, but also his lifestyle and the degree of congruence between his words and his actions. Foolish fathers say things such as, "Well, don't do as I do, do as I say." What they mean is, "I'm a complete hypocrite, but do what I tell you to do anyways." Proverbs says that these men speak with no authority and so their children ignore them or mock them as funny and foolish hypocrites. Tragically, these children often face the most devastating teen years because they have no wise father to turn to in a culture of folly, and themselves fall prey to many sins and pains.

While fools are consumed with the present, wisdom looks to the future. Proverbs 17:6 leans us into the future, saying, "Grandchildren are the crown of the aged, and the glory of children is their fathers." The point God is teaching here is that young men should be thinking about what kind of grandfather they aspire to be before they even take a wife, because they have a lot of work to do to get there. Godly men aspire to be both good fathers and good grandfathers, like Jonathan Edwards, America's greatest theologian, who prayed each day for five generations of his offspring in hopes of being a patriarch like Abraham. Wisdom enables a father to see that the way he lives affects the kind of children he raises, which affects the kind of children they raise, and so on.

Likewise, in this Proverb, we are told that the way grandfathers and grandmothers enjoy their grandchildren is the same way that children should feel about their own parents. Thankfully, my wife, Grace, and I live near our parents, who are wonderful grandparents to our children. What we continually see is that godly grandparents receive tremendous joy from their grandchildren. But this Proverb also teaches that in the same way that you see grandparents loving, adoring, and boasting about their grandkids, well-parented children will act likewise toward their own parents. Sons and daughters should look at their father and say proudly, "That's my dad!" with gratitude for the kind of dad God gave them, even though there will undoubtedly be occasions when they think otherwise, until any distance between them created by sin is removed by the gospel.

Therefore, if a man is going to be a good father, he needs to start by living in such a way that his children will celebrate his life and respect him

as a respectable man. Likewise, his grandchildren will later follow suit, and generations will speak well of him long after he has passed. In this way, a father begins to reflect, even in a fallen or limited degree, God who is his Father. For example, one of the highest compliments anyone has ever paid me came from my daughter Ashley, who at the age of four told me, “I’m very lucky to have two daddies. You are my daddy and God is my daddy.” When she said that, I was struck by the incredible privilege of sharing the very honorable title of “father” with God in the mind of my little girl. When God shares his name with us, it is a sacred matter that we must take very seriously.

THE FRUITFUL VINE

CHAPTER THREE

The whole matter began in Genesis, where God formed the first man, our father Adam, and told him to be fruitful and multiply. This means that godly men desire to have children and that those children would have much fruit in their lives with God. To be a godly father, therefore, means more than simply having a lot of children; it includes shaping those children to have fruitful lives.

To achieve fruitful multiplication, Genesis 2:24 tells us that a young man must leave his father and mother to grow up, become a man, start a career, and learn to govern his own life before he assumes the responsibilities of a husband and father. Once he has accomplished those tasks, a man is then qualified to pursue a young woman through her father (if the father is godly and involved), who lovingly protects her from the wrong men and gives the man permission to woo and marry the woman he loves. The two then become one flesh and make the Song of Songs sing again in hopes of having children.

In our godless world, the entire process is inverted and has subsequently caused much trouble. Young men continue to live at home, freeloading off their parents as boys who can shave, while they have sex with girlfriends that they one day may shack up with, and use birth control to prevent pregnancy or

abortion to murder their own child because fools see children as a burden and not a blessing.

As a general rule, single men should aspire to marriage and fatherhood, and if they do not there is something seriously wrong with them. Such men aspiring to be fathers should, after cultivating their own souls and being lovers of God, be instructed by the older men in their church to pursue a godly woman as a wife and mother. This is considerably different than a good time, girlfriend, or date. Wise young men pursue a woman they can both love as a wife and see as the mother of their children. I met my wife when I was seventeen years old, and I did aspire to be a husband and father and was seeking a wife rather than a girlfriend. When I met my wife, Grace, I adored her and soon asked her how she felt about children, because if she was not interested in being a wife and mother who desired to stay home and raise her children, I was not interested in pursuing a relationship with her and did not want to waste my time.

Since marrying Grace in 1992, I have had the privilege of pastoring literally thousands and thousands of single young men. Many of them have asked me, "What does your wife do?" I tell them that although she has a degree in Public Relations and had a good job at a large media company, she got off the corporate ladder to stay at home as a wife and mother. They often then ask curiously, "How did you get her to do that?" as if we arm-wrestled and I won, thereby permitting me to tell her what to do for the rest of her life. I explain to them that I did not "make" my wife do anything. Instead, I simply married a woman who agreed with me about the beauty of raising a family, because it was much easier than fighting.

As a young man, I wanted to have children and be a father who was the sole economic provider so that my wife could stay home with the children. So what was I seeking? A wife who wanted to be the mother of a lot of children and be happily married to a husband who appreciated her staying home to raise children while he worked outside the home to pay the bills. But to marry someone who agrees with him, a man must first know what the Bible says he should seek in a wife so that he is clear about what type of woman he's looking for, because some women are a crown upon a man's head, while others are rottenness in his bones (Prov. 12:4). A foolish man chooses a woman without considering his life and legacy with her fifty years later.

A wife who is a crown joyfully embraces her role as daughter of God, wife of her husband, and mother to her children, and she orients herself homeward. Proverbs 14:1 says, "The wisest of women builds her house, but folly with her own hands tears it down." A good father chooses and nurtures a wife who is ambitious about building a home, because over their lifetime that household will cultivate future generations, spend millions of dollars, and minister to countless

numbers of people. Likewise, the wise woman of Proverbs 31:26–28 "opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her." Her children praise her because she is a wise Bible teacher who spends her time working hard to build their home and bless their father. This theme is echoed in the New Testament in Titus 2:3–5, which says,

Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

Proverbs 19:13 further stresses the correlation between the type of mother you choose for your children and the kind of children you will have, saying, "A foolish son is ruin to his father, and a wife's quarreling is a continual dripping of rain." These two miseries simply go together. If a wife is a nag who disrespects her husband by chirping at him all the time, then the children in that home will follow her example and become fools who ruin their lives by similarly disobeying and dishonoring their dad. Wicked women not only fail to restrain their tongues in front of their children, but often intentionally attack their husbands in an effort to get their children's allegiance, undermine the authority of their father, and bring anarchy to the home. Proverbs rightly calls this rottenness in the bones.

By the way, this is how we have arrived at our present culture. Carolyn Graglia, the author of Domestic Tranquility, writes that in the 1950s, men were not doing a good job of leading and loving their families, but that the wives did not have the power and authority to overthrow their husbands and rule the families as they desired. So the wives simply recruited their children as allies against their husbands. If they could undermine the father's authority and respect in the home, then the wife and children could control and manipulate and drive out the husbands and rule over the family. Brilliantly, Proverbs 19:13 explains how we got from the 1950s to the anarchy of the 1960s—namely, foolish men married godless women who recruited their own children to overthrow their fathers and usher in anarchy. Anyone doubting this descent would be well served to simply watch one of the innumerable popular sitcoms on television where the husband is an idiot and the wife trash-talks him in front of the children, and ask themselves why anyone finds that funny.

Whose responsibility is it? Ultimately, it is men who are responsible because they chose their wives, they let them continue in sin, and they let them destroy their children. Hence, it is important that a man first love God and

then seek a woman who loves God and will respect him and love his children, because he is ultimately responsible as the head of his home. Does this mean that the wife can never speak to her husband honestly? No, but if she is angry or the conversation will be tense, she should speak to her husband privately and respectfully and not in front of his children. This does not mean that the parents never disagree or resolve conflict in front of the children. The children need to see their parents resolve their differences, and this should be done in a godly way in front of the children and taken in private if things are not being handled well. Some of you grew up in homes where mom continually cut the knees off of dad right in front of you. And you learned to dishonor your father. Wise men seek to avoid this at all costs by marrying wisely.

CULTIVATING KIDS

CHAPTER FOUR

We will now examine some of the scriptural duties of a father. We have already established that a good father must first be a good Christian and, second, marry a woman who loves the Lord and respects him.

Central to the Bible's teachings on the duties of a father is Ephesians 6:1–4, which says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother' (this is the first commandment with a promise), 'that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.' Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

Scripture clearly teaches that the father is ultimately responsible for the cultivating of his children along with his wife. In addition, other institutions, such as the church and school, assist in instructing the children under the headship of the father. The honoring of one's father is so vital to rightly ordering the home, church, and society that in the Old Testament if children verbally cursed or physically attacked a parent, they could be put to death. Paul commands children to honor their parents so that their life will be long and good upon the earth.

But Paul is also aware that some fathers have a tendency to be harsh, mean, overbearing, or intimidating with their children. This sort of frightening and provoking fathering exasperates, frustrates, and angers children. The biblical goal of a father is not to crush his children but to cultivate them. A father's goal is not to punish his children, but instead to correct them. On the other hand, some fathers are so fearful of frustrating their children that they fail to discipline them at all, which is a cowardly overreaction to child abuse and is abusive in its own right. Instead of abusing children or abandoning them by failing to correct them, a godly father brings his children up with wise training and instruction in the Lord. The ancient Greeks who heard Paul's words would have understood his language as referring to the total shaping of a person that includes their education, spirituality, work ethic, vocation, social skills, and so on.

Therefore, the father's duty is to cultivate all aspects of his child to maturity in the Lord. Practically, this means that everything in the life of the child is ultimately the responsibility of the father. This is a particularly radical idea in our day, when more than one in three births are to unmarried women and more than one in three children do not live with their biological father . Because of the sins of failed fathers, the responsibility for raising children has increasingly fallen on government institutions.

One practical part of this cultivation is that a father needs to think through the education of his children and have a theology of childhood education. The first question a father must resolve is, what is the purpose of an education? Paul tells us that the goal is that the child would become mature "in the Lord," and Proverbs teaches that the goal of all instruction must be a redeemed heart that fears the Lord. The second question is, which educational option will help cultivate my child in the Lord? Since each child is different, there are multiple answers to this question, and the father, in conjunction with the mother, is best suited to make the decision between home schooling, public schooling, private schooling, and Christian schooling. As the father, you will also need to determine how you will make enough money to educate your children.

As a father, you must recognize that if your child will be sitting in a classroom for six or eight hours a day, for twelve years, you must know the teachers, their curriculum, and the goal of that education, because you are responsible before God for the cultivation of your child. Children need to learn math, English, history, and the like, but these subjects must be connected to the Lord and must help children see how they are connected to the Lord. Wise fathers know that just because a school has "Christian" in the name does not guarantee that Jesus rules in the curriculum. Fathers must do their

homework before sending their children to school to do their own. Idealistic fathers tend to be legalistic fathers and the truth is there is no single decision that is right for every child every year. Therefore, the educational options need to be reconsidered every year for every child, depending upon the various circumstances that the parents are dealing with.

Many fathers in our day seemingly expect the public schools to raise their children for them, and the increase in before-school and after-school programming, and life issue training on sexuality and morality seems to bear this expectation out. However, public education in our country is only a few hundred years old. In fact, only with the spread of Christianity, particularly of a Calvinistic bent, has there been an increase in literacy and education, because Christians wanted their children to be literate so they could read the Bible. But as non-Christians grew wary of having their children attend Christian schools, public education was birthed by atheists such as John Dewey and Horace Mann. In conjunction with their erroneous beliefs in sinless human nature and the propensity of children to behave out of their intrinsic goodness, public schools give permission, freedom, encouragement, and esteem to small sinners who now have high self-esteem and low test scores. Even the focus has changed, as students are less inclined to write papers about people they admire than they are to write about themselves. If you are a father who was raised in this philosophy, it is imperative that you examine all of your presuppositions and beliefs through Scripture so that you can renew your mind as needed and be a godly father. And no matter which educational option you choose for your children, you and your wife must be their primary influence and instructors.

THE MASCULINE DUTY TO PROVIDE

CHAPTER FIVE

Godly fathers consider it a masculine honor to provide for their wives' and children's needs. First, a godly father gives spiritual sustenance to his children. It is dad who should also be reading the Bible with his kids, praying with them, and answering their questions—not just mom, the church Sunday school teacher, or the youth pastor. Second, a godly father provides for the physical needs of his children. This point may seem obvious to some, but it is apparently lost in our culture, where children are the most likely people to live in poverty, and elementary schools now serve breakfast to children because many of them were not eating breakfast and were falling asleep in class as a result. My point is simply this: if you want to be a godly man who provides for his wife and children, you will need to out-work and out-earn other men and take to heart Paul's words from 1 Timothy 5:8: "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

Men are supposed to work and provide for their families. Before sin even entered the world, we read in Genesis 2:15, "The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it." Work is for a man an act

of worship, just as his wife's work is worshipful for her. This does not mean that it is a sin for a wife to work when a couple is first married, as they are getting ready to begin their family, or for a wife to make money on the side as a secondary priority while remaining at home with the children, or even for her to work once the children are grown if the motives are pure and her primary duties are not neglected. Furthermore, the masculine duty to provide does not mean that under extenuating circumstances a wife does not need to work, such as if a husband is hospitalized with an illness or injury and is completely unable to work. As an aside, a wise husband also has savings, disability, and life insurance to provide for his family even in the direst of circumstances.

Nonetheless, there is no way anyone could read the Bible and wind up with the silly notion that both the husband and the wife are to be providers and that daycares or relatives are supposed to raise the children of a Christian couple. Furthermore, it is completely impossible to read the Bible and wind up with the inane idea that a Christian father can be a stay-at-home dad while mom goes to work. Anyone who thinks these things are acceptable is by definition worldly.

Practically speaking, making money to provide for your family is not the same thing as spending it wisely. Proverbs 28:25 says, "A greedy man stirs up strife." The greedy dad is the one with lots of toys and hobbies that take his free time and money away from the needs of his wife and children. While it is not a sin for a man to have nice things, it is a sin if he habitually gets nice things for himself before tithing to the Lord and being generous with his family as a demonstration of the gospel of grace.

Proverbs 19:14 goes even further by teaching that, "House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the LORD." Again, wisdom lives from generation to generation, while folly lives from paycheck to paycheck and racks up credit cards without concern while driving around in a car with the bumper sticker that brags, "We're spending our children's inheritance."

Proverbs 13:22 goes further still: "A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children." A wise father first cultivates himself, then cultivates a godly relationship with a wise woman, cultivates his children, and anticipates that his wisdom will be passed on to his grandchildren, who will love God and pursue life and ministry with ambition. Subsequently, a wise man begins investing for his grandchildren long before they are born, trusting by faith that they will need his college fund to further their wisdom and his tithe money to fund their ministry. In Ecclesiastes 10:19 Solomon ironically says that "money answers everything," and a godly father aspiring to be a godly grandfather knows what that verse means in this fallen world, where everything from a decent

education to the startup funds for a church plant would ideally come, at least in part, from godly fathers and grandfathers.

In addition to spiritual and financial provision, a godly father also provides socially for his children by bringing them into a healthy church community. Since the father is the head of his home, he is wise to see the benefits of a wide social network of friends and family for his wife and children. One of Paul's favorite metaphors for the church in the New Testament is that Christians are a family by spiritual, rather than physical, birth. This web of relationships should support the father in his task of training and cultivating his children in the Lord.

Because of this, Proverbs teaches that a wise father selects his friends carefully. The alternate reading of Proverbs 12:26 in the ESV says, "The righteous chooses his friends carefully." Additionally, Proverbs 27:10 says, "Do not forsake your friend and your father's friend, and do not go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity. Better is a neighbor who is near than a brother who is far away."

Friends who love God and live righteously are wonderful influences upon a child. Your children will benefit from playing with their children and seeing their marriages. A wise father will not tuck his children away to be hidden and uninvolved in the life of his church and friends, but rather integrate them into the church community, developing friendships with people of all ages, thereby reinforcing his instruction as they see the benefits of wisdom in the lives of many people.

One night while tucking my daughter Ashley into bed, I asked her, "What should a good daddy do?" Putting her finger on her chin to think, she said, "A daddy should make a lot of money, a daddy should read his Bible, a daddy should teach his kids, a daddy should love his kids, and a daddy should be silly and have lots of fun." It was a good list for her mere four years of age at the time. I was so impressed with her insight that I asked why she chose these items, and she told me that those were the things that she had seen daddies in our church do when she played with their children at their homes.

Lastly, as a father cultivates his child in these ways, he is intentionally setting for them a course of life that will continue into adulthood. Proverbs 22:6 explains it this way: "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it." This is not a promise, but rather a truism: Training a child in a God-ward direction sets for them a course of life. Sadly, the converse is also true: a foolish father sets his child on the path of folly, and many do not turn from it in repentance. Therefore, it is imperative for a wise father to get his child going in the right direction and by God's grace help them continue forward in wisdom and holiness.

INSTRUCTION FOLLOWED BY CORRECTION

CHAPTER SIX

In Proverbs 4:1–2 the father says, “Hear, O sons, a father’s instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight, for I give you good precepts; do not forsake my teaching.” Throughout Proverbs we see the wise and loving father continually teaching his children, and his teaching is very practical and integrated into the teachable moments that invariably come up through the course of each day.

In this way, every dad spends his time with his children like Jesus did with his disciples, making the most of every opportunity to teach through the providentially provided moments of life. This is also a sharp rebuke to those fathers who rob the Scriptures of their joy by teaching in a cruel or overly regimented and legalistic manner. One little girl I know who has this type of father lamented prayer and Bible study time with her dad because it took so long and was so structured that she could see no value in it. This sort of fatherly instruction is not merely a failure, it is also a sin.

To be a good teacher, dad should use his imagination, particularly when his children are small. A wise dad makes up fun Bible questions for the kids to answer and buys props and secondhand clothes so that his children can dress

up in costumes and act out the Bible stories with full drama while he serves as the narrator.

A wise dad may realize that a personal quiet time for himself is unwise; rather than hiding away in a quiet place to read the Bible, it is often best to do so in the noisy living room where the kids can see and climb on their dad while he reads his Bible. Also, if dad frequently has his Bible open, his children will be more likely to ask him questions about God and life because they see that he possesses answers from God's Word.

Additionally, a wise father has a good set of Bible reference books on the shelf or software on the computer. In addition to using such resources himself, he teaches his children how to use them so that they too can enjoy studying Scripture and growing in wisdom and knowledge as Jesus did when a boy. For example, as a pastor I have my books and study at home rather than at the church for this very reason. It has been wonderful to see my children borrow my books. The first to do so was my oldest child, Ashley, who at age nine borrowed my commentaries on Ruth to study the book during her summer break. She also likes reading the biographies from my library.

Proverbs 1:4 says that says the book was written "to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth." While fathers must avoid dumping too much spiritual expectation on their children, they must also avoid expecting too little of them. As a new father, I was amazed to see my first two children begin praying on their own to Jesus at eighteen months of age, and the other three have followed suit. The first time Ashley prayed on her own was when I was lying in bed sick, and she put her hand on me and prayed for my healing because she had seen her mother do the same thing. At the young age of two, my son Zachariah would bring me his kids' Bible and ask me to read for extended periods of time, as his mind was fascinated with the images of war, kings, dragons, swords, shepherd boys, and miracles. As I read to him about Goliath, Nebuchadnezzar, and Pharaoh, he kept asking questions about why they did not love God, and we began discussing very significant theology together at the tender age of two. This same pattern has continued with each of our children.

A wise father follows the example of Proverbs and repeats himself often because children are prone to forgetfulness. Proverbs 13:1 says, "A wise son hears his father's instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke." Proverbs 19:27 says, "Cease to hear instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge." And Proverbs 23:19 says, "Hear, my son, and be wise, and direct your heart in the way." To accomplish this, a father must not only instruct, he must make sure that his kids don't mock him. He must make sure that they don't stray from his teaching, but instead keep on the right path. Some men

wrongly think that because they have taught something once to their children, it will stick forever. But instruction is not a onetime event, but rather a lifetime endeavor. This explains why Proverbs often repeats the same themes and even the same verses. Children need repetition.

In addition to instruction, a father must discipline his children. Instruction comes first, and then comes discipline. Some men spank their kids and their kids don't know why, which is atrocious. A father must first teach his children what they are to do and not do, then teach them consequences if they disobey, and then enforce his teaching so that they do not consider him a liar. This is exactly how God works with us. In Genesis he told Adam, "Don't eat from this tree or you will die." God was very simple and very clear about the command and the consequence if it was disobeyed. The purpose of discipline is not to punish children but to correct them. Since Jesus died for sin, to punish children for sin would be to give them a false gospel. Furthermore, correction is not to be done in anger, violence, or retribution, but must be loving and calm to associate negative consequences with sin as a loving incentive for the children to choose holiness.

Through discipline, the father is seeking to cultivate his children so that they can become self-disciplined and not continually need a wooden spoon or jail cell to keep them in line. Proverbs 3:11–12 says, "My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights." The principle here is that only those people who lovingly delight in their children have earned the right to discipline them. Fathers who don't delight in and love their children while disciplining them are just being mean and angry and violent. Proverbs 13:24 says, "Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him." A father must be careful to discipline his children. Proverbs 23:13–14 says, "Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol." The issue is this: If you wait too long to discipline your children, they may die before they are corrected, and then all hope is extinguished by tragic circumstances, like what happened to my high school friend whose funeral I attended because of her drug overdose. Another example of the consequences of lack of discipline comes from my mom, who worked as a secretary at a public high school where teenage girls wore surveillance monitors on their legs because they were under constant police scrutiny. According to Proverbs, someone should have disciplined these girls while there was more hope for them to live self-disciplined lives.

Some fathers wait too long to teach and correct their children and then try to fly in like a superhero at the last minute to save the day. Their children

often pepper such fathers with questions about why they have been negligent and why the child should listen to what they now demand, since no loving relationship has been built. Proverbs 29:17 says, “Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart.” That’s what a godly father deeply desires. You want discipline that causes peace between you and your children so you can delight in and enjoy your children.

Fathers must do this without pushing the entire burden onto their wives. While mom is home with the children teaching and disciplining each day, there is a propensity for the father to come home from work and refuse to discipline the children, either because he’s tired or because he tries to be the good and fun parent, thus painting mom as the bad and mean parent. In these homes, mom will discipline the kids for getting out of control only to have dad overrule her and tell the kids to do whatever they want. These fathers wrongly think that they are loving their kids, because their kids really like them. But their kids only like them in the same way an alcoholic likes a liquor store. A wise father gives his children what they need, which is not always what they want. Rather than being complicit in anarchy, a wise father honors the mother of his children so that they will also honor her.

PROTECTING FROM SIN AND FOLLY

CHAPTER SEVEN

In addition to discipline for sin, a father is to provide protection from sin for his children. This is particularly true of sexual sin, from molestation when they are little to fornication and date rape when they are older. Deuteronomy 22 tells a particularly sobering story for fathers: a young woman is married to a man who claims that she was not a virgin on their wedding night, and so he wants a divorce. Basically a judicial court hearing is held, the woman and her husband are brought in, and they need someone to testify as to the condition of her sexual history. Her father is brought in as the expert witness because he knows her best, loves her most, and has protected her to the degree that he can ensure the court that she has not been with another man. Today that kind of father would be labeled as unloving and overly protective, because the fools are winning.

One of the dumbest conversations I've ever had on this topic was with a pastor. He asked me to pray for his teenage daughter, who claimed to be a Christian but was dating and having sex with a non-Christian teenage boy. I asked him what specifically I should pray for—that God would give him a steady trigger finger? He told me that he had never told her not to have sex because

she was an adult, and he did not want to pry into her personal life. I told the man that I would not pray that God would give his daughter wisdom, because God had already given that wisdom to her father, who did not lovingly dispense it to his daughter, and that he was a wicked man who apparently hated his daughter and was a coward unfit for the pastorate. Any man who allows his daughter to sin and be sinned against in the name of loving her knows little of God's love.

Deuteronomy 22 also tells the story of a girl who commits adultery with a married man, and she is sentenced to death by stoning. They put her to death on the steps of her father's home, because she is his responsibility and he has failed in his duties to lovingly instruct, correct, and protect her. Dads are supposed to know that their blossoming daughters are often the objects of lust for sinful men, and unless they stand between their daughters and men, the men will use them for sexual sin, even telling these vulnerable young women that they love them if it helps soften them up for sin. Daddies with daughters who are boy crazy and flirtatious have to labor even more diligently to oversee the purity of their daughters.

I can still recall one occasion when I was doing a wedding in the California Napa Valley. Before the wedding, I took some time to take my daughter Ashley on a shoeless walk through the vineyards as I was dressed in my suit and she was looking cute in a dress. She was nearly three years old at the time and as we held hands and walked, she looked at me and said, "Daddy, some day I will be married." I said, "Yes, you will, sweetheart." I then asked her, "How will you know who you are supposed to marry?" She said, "You and mommy will help decide," and then she giggled. As her father, I am called by God to be the biggest man in her life until her husband earns her love and my approval. Every girl needs a Christian daddy who loves her, snuggles with her, encourages her, compliments her, protects her, and enjoys "daddy dates" with her where they go out to have fun together.

Furthermore, throughout Proverbs (e.g., chapters 2, 5, and 7) the father also speaks very frankly to his son about hot women with necklines that plunge down to hell. Rather than encouraging porn, the wise father encourages his son who is not built for abstinence to get married young and enjoy his wife's body. The wise father knows that the ultimate goal for his son is a faithful marriage, and so he encourages his son's sexual desires toward marriage.

To best protect his children from folly and harm, a father must teach his children how to repent of their sin. In Job 1:1–4 we are told that Job was a noble man who loved God and walked blamelessly because he continually confessed his sins to God. Job's children occasionally threw parties, and Job was so concerned about their possible sin that he would repent on their behalf. Job 1:5 says,

When the days of the feast had run their course, Job would send and consecrate them [his children], and he would rise early in the morning [he dealt with things quickly] and offer burnt offerings [this is worship] according to the number of them all. For Job said, "It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did continually.

Job was a wonderful father. Job knew what his children were doing, he knew when it was possible that sin had occurred, and he confessed the probable sin before the sun came up the next morning. Perhaps the worst thing a father can do to very young children when they have sinned is send them to their room without instruction about why they are going there. If they have not been taught how to repent of sin and ask God for a changed heart, they will see their time as either punishment or playtime. This is because if they don't know how to confess, repent, and pray, they don't know what to do about their sin. You're just punishing them. What a father should do is repent for his children and thereby model for them how to deal with sin.

I'll give you an example from when Zac was two. To be honest, he is usually a wonderful son and I enjoy him immensely and we are very close. Still, one day he was not obeying, he was not being respectful, he was tormenting his sister, and he was overwhelming his mother. When I walked in the door from work, my wife and daughter looked as if they had just run a marathon. When I disciplined him, it just increased his anger and defiance. His attitude grew meaner until he tried to punch me, a move Proverbs refers to as folly that is bound up in the heart of a child. Ephesians 6:4 came to mind, and I felt that I was exasperating my son. As I prayed, God brought Job 1:5 to mind, and so I picked up my son, who was thrashing his body wildly, and carried him upstairs so we could be alone.

I lay down on my bed with my son on my chest and held him as I began to pray for him. The first thing I prayed for was that the Holy Spirit would come and convict Zac of his sins. I then prayed that Jesus would take the anger out of his heart and give him a new heart of love and obedience. I then started repenting of Zac's sins for him, naming each of them he had committed that day in great detail. As I held him, I rubbed his back, which calmed him down, and I asked God to forgive him for his sins and give me wisdom to be a good father.

My son broke in a way I had never seen. His crying was so deep that he heaved on my chest for over ten minutes, covering me in his tears and having difficulty breathing through his crying. He was repentant, and he was broken. He realized that he was sinning against his family and he was sinning against God. He also realized that I was responsible for him and that he was implicating me

in his sin. Eventually, he lifted his head to look me in the eye and said, "Daddy, I'm sorry."

I am not claiming to be a genius, but I am claiming that the Bible is both true and helpful. In Romans 2:4 Paul teaches that it is God's kindness that breaks our heart and brings us to repentance. What this means is that fathers are to lovingly lead their children toward heartfelt repentance of sin. If children will not repent of their sin, then their father, like Job, should repent for them with tender kindness that loves them until they change by grace through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. As parents repent of their sins and the sins of their children, they are training their children in repentance so that as the children get older, the gospel becomes their natural and heartfelt response.

Children who are loved, instructed, corrected, provided for, and repentant when they sin live sweeter lives. Proverbs 24:13–14 says, "My son, eat honey, for it is good, and the drippings of the honeycomb are sweet to your taste. Know that wisdom is such to your soul; if you find it, there will be a future, and your hope will not be cut off." Fathers who have done their jobs well have hope for the future because their children have acquired a taste for wisdom, which they enjoy as much as candy. Therefore, a wise father will cultivate an appetite for wisdom that leads to joyous living, so that as the child ages there is ever-growing hope for increased wisdom and joy.

The joy of wisdom not only tastes sweet to the child, but tastes sweet to the father as well. Proverbs 23:15–16 says, "My son, if your heart is wise, my heart too will be glad. My inmost being will exult when your lips speak what is right." Nothing is sweeter to a father than seeing his own children grow in wisdom, speak their own biblical convictions, and articulate their personal love for Jesus.

Lastly, Proverbs 23:24–25 says, "The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice; he who fathers a wise son will be glad in him. Let your father and mother be glad; let her who bore you rejoice." Hope, gladness, rejoicing, joy, delighting—these are the goals every father has for his relationship with his children. The means to these ends are God's grace and dads who know how to use it in the cultivation of their children in the Lord as they wrestle, take walks, swing, cuddle, pray, swim, play catch, and laugh together.

COUNTERING CULTURE

CHAPTER EIGHT

To many Christians, the principles I have articulated may seem obvious, but they are nothing short of revolutionary in our day. Instead of enjoying the good life Scripture speaks of, many people are practicing the hookup-shackup-breakup game of death. Birth control is their savior, keeping them from the hell of marriage, children, and obligation. If that fails, abortive murder often suffices. People love sex, but they don't love marriage; they love sex, but they don't love children. This is because they don't love God.

Subsequently, they have separated children, marriage, and sex into three issues that are not necessarily related. This folly has even infected the church, where there is little clear authoritative teaching on dating, sex, marriage, and children beyond the obligatory rant against a few common sins like premarital sex and adultery. Even rarer still is any form of church discipline exercised on anyone claiming faith but living folly.

Contrary to this laissez-faire attitude, there is much we can do. We can preach the gospel, teach the Bible, and call the men to love women and children. We can compel Christian men to be godly and leave childish ways behind them. As a preventive measure, we can begin with young men, before

they have ruined their lives, devastated women, and aborted their children. We can encourage young men to have visions beyond merely getting a vasectomy, thinking that they can have a lifetime of sex without worrying about becoming a father. We can point them to Proverbs, by which they will become wise men who think about the joy of playing with their grandkids one day rather than being yet another dirty old man sitting in the corner of some dingy strip club by himself on Christmas Day.

We can also encourage God's men to be about redemption and marry godly single mothers, to love them and adopt their children like Joseph did our Lord Jesus. Children of single mothers are five times more likely to be poor and ten times more likely to be extremely poor. They're more likely to drop out of school, use drugs and alcohol, engage in sex and become unmarried teenage parents, perform crimes, suffer from mental illness, and commit suicide. Subsequently, we have an entire social service army, including prisons and psychiatrists prescribing countless medications, to try to cope with this crisis. Over 60 percent of the nation's mothers work outside the home, and in cities like mine, more children are admitted to hospital emergency rooms for mental than for physical health issues.

Married men who have sex outside their marriage, single men who fool around rather than seeking wives, fathers who walk out on their kids, and fathers who are too lazy to work hard and pay the bills all hate children by their actions. And because God is a father to the fatherless, they have made themselves enemies of God.

As Christians, we do not emulate these men in any way. They are the world, and we are the church. In the church, things are different because Jesus and his men are our example. Repentant men who desire to walk with Jesus, love women, and love children with masculine dignity are welcome. But men who want to abuse our sisters in Christ and ignore their responsibilities are unwelcome. Simply, churches must demand that sinful men change or leave.

Our only hope is men meeting Jesus and obeying his Word. We want the men to be different kinds of men, we want them to have different kinds of marriages, and we want them to have different kinds of children because they are sons of the King of Kings and that means something. And by different we mean holy.

Jeremiah called the men in his day to a similar calling. God's men were in exile in a godless pagan city called Babylon. Surveying the sickness of their city, the young men began wondering if it would not be better for them to not marry, not have children, and not get involved in the transformation of Babylon, because it was beyond hope and a tough place to be a son of God, a husband, and a father. In Jeremiah 29:4–7 God says,

Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

What a dark city like Babylon or your town needs is good men who love their wives and have lots of kids, adopt lots of kids, and raise them up as preachers and lovers of the gospel, living out its truth every day.

There are two groups that are intentionally having children. Do you know who they are? Mormons and Muslims. They plan on changing the world by raising up children and thinking multiple generations into the future. They took that principle from our Bible: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen. 1:28). I have heard some men say foolish things like, "I don't want to be a husband and a father because I want to do ministry." This is simply silly. Wisdom leans into the future, and I pray that my sons and grandsons and great-grandsons worship the same God, preach the same gospel, and teach the same Bible so that the work of the gospel outlives me. I can assuredly get more gospel work done with children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren than I can by myself.

All of this begins with the elders. Practically, the road to the pastorate passes through the home. Every man in the church is supposed to conduct himself as a pastor in his home. Those men who do this the very best are then qualified to become church pastors because they manage their households well, as 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9 require. Any man desiring to be a pastor must begin by cultivating himself, his bride if married, and his children if he is so blessed so that they love the Lord and respect him in word and deed. Any notion of avoiding marriage and parenting to do ministry is simply antithetical to biblical thinking because those things both train and qualify a man.

Your children and your wife are your first ministry. You must begin at home. Then you can work out from your home to invite strangers in to see the difference Jesus makes in the life of a man, his wife, and their children. Isaiah 8:18 says, "Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are signs and portents in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion." Isaiah rightly understood that in dark days, it is men who love God, love their wives, and raise their children with wisdom, grace, and joy who shine forth like the first rays of dawn.

More than bigger governments, bigger schools, more free school lunches, more child therapists, more child medications, more daycares, more prisons, and more birth control, we need more godly men who raise their sons to be godly men who raise their sons to be godly men who raise their sons to be godly men (Ps. 78:5–8).

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

MARK DRISCOLL

Mark Driscoll was born on October 11, 1970, and graduated from Highline High School in Seattle. Raised Catholic, he became a Christian as a college freshman in the fall of 1989 at Washington State University, where he received a B.A. in Speech Communications. In 1992 he married his high school sweetheart, Grace, whom he had dated since 1988.

Pastor Mark and Grace founded Mars Hill Church in Seattle in October 1996. The church started as a small Bible study in their living room and has since grown to include over six thousand people. The church meets in seven different locations throughout the Puget Sound region, with twenty weekly services broadcast via satellite from the Ballard campus. In 2008, Outreach magazine named Mars Hill Church the second most innovative church in America.

Pastor Mark co-founded and is president of the Acts 29 Church Planting Network, which plants churches in the U.S. and internationally. Outreach magazine has ranked Mars Hill Church as the second most prolific church planting church in America.

Pastor Mark also founded the Resurgence, an organization that hosts conferences and provides theological training for pastors, church planters, and

other Christian leaders. The cooperative's website, theresurgence.com, has become a major source for news and theology within the missional, emerging, and reformed communities.

He has received accolades from a variety of sources. Seattle magazine named Pastor Mark one of the twenty-five most powerful people in Seattle, ironically one of the least-churched cities in America. The Church Report and Christianity Today have recognized Pastor Mark as one of the most influential pastors in America.

Media coverage of Pastor Mark varies just as widely, including such outlets as National Public Radio, The Bible Answer Man, Mother Jones magazine, the Associated Press, USA Today, the New York Times, Blender music magazine, Outreach magazine, Preaching Today, Leadership magazine, and ABC Television.

Pastor Mark has published many books, including The Radical Reformission: Reaching Out Without Selling Out and Confessions of a Reformission Rev.: Hard Lessons from an Emerging Missional Church. In 2008 he published Vintage Jesus: Timeless Answers to Timely Questions, Death by Love: Letters from the Cross, and four books in the new series called "A Book You'll Actually Read": On the Old Testament, On the New Testament, On Who Is God? and On Church Leadership. He has also contributed to the books The Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World, edited by John Piper and Justin Taylor, and Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches, edited by Robert Webber. In 2009 he will be publishing the books Vintage Church, Religion Saves, and Doctrine.

Pastor Mark reaches a global audience as his sermons are given away free on the Internet and are downloaded millions of times a year from around the world, including iTunes, where he is usually among the top ten Religion and Spirituality podcasts. In addition, Pastor Mark helps train other leaders through speaking trips around the country and internationally. In 2008, he spoke across the U.K. and Australia on two separate occasions, equipping and teaching pastors and church leaders about the centrality of the Gospel, the necessity of understanding culture, and the changing face of the contemporary church, with attendance reaching ten thousand people per event.

Pastor Mark holds a master's degree in Exegetical Theology from Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon. He is also considering pursuing a Ph.D. in biblical studies.

Most enjoyably, Pastor Mark and his high school sweetheart, Grace, delight in raising their three sons and two daughters, playing baseball with the boys and accompanying the girls on "daddy dates."

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