UNDERSTANDING
the Purpose and Power of
Men
a book for men and the women who love them

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DEDICATION

To my beloved son, Chairo, with a hope that the content and principles of this book will become the quality of your character and the story of your life.

To Paul, forever my brother in this life and the next. May your memory live on through the things you taught me as a real male-man.

To my beloved dad, Matt Munroe—my male mentor.

To the men of BFM Fellowship’s Real Men Ministry—your passion for truth inspires.

To males of every race, culture, creed, and nation in your struggle to discover and master the mystery of being a man.

To the Third-World man in his pursuit to recover his lost identity.

To the Manufacturer of the man and the male.
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O ur natural conception and birth is a result of human cooperation and established the priority the Creator places on our dependency on others for success and personal progress. This work is a testimony to this cooperation and confirms the reality that we are a sum total of all the contributions made to our lives by the people we have had the privilege to encounter on the journey of life. I am deeply grateful for the inspiration and wisdom of the men and women, both past and present, who, through their lives, instructions, corrections, challenges, commitment, and example, stirred gifts within me that I did not know I had.

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The twenty-first century male is in crisis. Throughout the nations of our global village, the prisons are filled with multitudes of men. Compared to their counterpart, women, they are responsible for a vast majority of the criminal behavior worldwide. They are also victims of drug abuse and the principal carriers of the dreaded AIDS virus. Many have found a home in subculture gangs, instigating antisocial activities that wreak havoc on the social order. Men revel in the oppression of women and perpetuate domestic violence.

In every culture and social system, men are struggling to find their place in a fast-changing world. In many societies, the dramatic change in the status of women, the workplace, and traditional cultural roles has left a significant number of men confused, disillusioned, angry, frustrated, and traumatized. Yes, the male of this cyber-technical, Internet-driven, postmodern world is caught in a worldwide web of confusion. Men are in trouble but are afraid to admit it. They are lost in a maze of new paradigms and the uncharted waters of social and cultural convergence.

Change is often the source of uncertainty and a measure of fear and anxiety. For many, this type of fear is difficult to manage, and it causes varying reactions. Some negative reactions to change include denial, ignorance, isolation, anger, resistance, and resentment. These reactions can cause serious effects on the environment in which the change is taking place. The result can be oppression, suppression, violence, and the spirit of control.

A brief study of the behavior of the male-factor in many nations today, including yours, will reveal such reactions to cultural changes. The drastic transitions taking place in social structures and the shifting of long-held beliefs are destroying the defining lines and the very definitions of our lives. For the male in most societies and cultures, this redefinition is traumatic and has rendered many men without a clear definition of manhood, masculinity, and fatherhood.
The impact of the confusion on women, the family, and society is also frightening. Many women suffer the violence of angry men. Children are victims of abuse and resentment, and society bears the scars of social deterioration. Governments are helpless to respond to this phenomenon. They find their ideas, laws, and social programs ineffective in addressing it. Men are clearly in trouble.

So what is a man to do? The number one challenge to the male is his identity crisis. The average man is confused about his manhood, masculinity, and sexuality. He doesn't have a clear definition of what a man is supposed to be. Some men have confused their cultural, social, and traditional roles with the definition of manhood. However, this has proven to be one of the major causes of the problem because, as the roles change, so does a man’s image of himself.

How do we measure a man? What is true manhood? How do you define masculinity? What is true male sexuality? What is the true purpose of the male in relation to the female? Is there a universal definition of manhood? Can it be attained? Where do we go to get this definition?

This book addresses answers to these critical questions from the perspective of the male. The purpose and role of the male in the scheme of human experience is explored through returning to the original process of his creation, based on the premise that no one knows the product like the manufacturer. No product can understand its identity by asking the customer, because only the manufacturer knows the original purpose and potential of his product. Therefore, it is imperative that the male rediscover his original purpose and understand his true potential, as well as gain a clear understanding of his principal function within the human family.

The male is the key to building strong, enduring social infrastructures, stable families, sane societies, and secure nations. It is critical that the subject of the male’s crisis be a priority for men, women, and national governments, so that we can secure progressive social developments within the countries of the world. Let us begin our journey through the land of cultural confusion to rediscover the purpose and power of the real male.
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The male holds the key to the nations—and our nations are in crisis. As the man goes, so goes the family, society, and the world. The problem is, men don’t have a clear idea of where they’re going anymore. They are suffering from a lost sense of identity—and the consequences for their families, communities, and nations are far-reaching.

Conflicting Views of Manhood

Traditional male roles once gave men continuity and balance from generation to generation. Males are suffering a lost sense of identity. Today, many men are questioning who they are and what roles they are to play in life. On the surface, they may be following customary life pursuits, such as working, marrying, and having a family. Yet they have an inner uncertainty about what it means to be a man, a husband, and a father.

What is causing this uncertainty? A major reason is that society is sending out conflicting signals about what it means to be a man. Traditional views of masculinity compete side by side with new ideas of manhood in the marketplace of ideas—each vying for supremacy.

A Clash of Old and New Ideas

This contest of ideas is being played out as we absorb the vast social and political changes that have taken place over the last forty years. On both national and international levels, cultures and ideas are colliding. As a result, people are reevaluating what it means to be human, what it means to be a man or a woman, and what it means to be a country. Some of these developments are:
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• the movement for women’s equality,
• the exportation of Western culture in the world,
• the fall of Communism,
• the global marketplace,
• a growing interconnectedness between nations.

Whether worldwide or locally, our world is rapidly changing before our eyes, and the social transformation accompanying it can often be painful. The clash of old and new ideas has left many men perplexed and frustrated in regard to their identity. How do their new roles (for example, equal partnership with women) play out against more traditional ones (such as breadwinner and protector)? Men are feeling compelled to redefine their roles as they attempt to adapt to these changing social expectations. This adjustment is disrupting both their professional and personal lives. It is altering their relationships with women. It is transforming family life.

Yet the lines of these new roles look blurry to men as traditional and contemporary ideas eclipse—overshadowing one another—and then separate again. For example, on the one hand, men are told there is no real difference between males and females and that they are to consider women as equals. On the other hand, they are encouraged to treat women with special care and courtesy—but when they do, they are often accused of chauvinism.

THE MALE IN CRISIS

Historically, men have defined their manhood by the various roles they have fulfilled for their families and for society. Now that these roles are in transition, they don’t have a solid definition of masculinity to give them a cultural context for life. As a result, many men believe they have lost part of themselves, but they don’t have anything concrete with which to replace it. Often, they don’t even feel wanted or needed by women any longer. They used to have clear direction about where they were going as men. Now, it’s as if they’re trapped in a maze, frustrated and unable to move forward purposefully in life.
Understanding the Purpose and Power of Men

Some men have reacted angrily against the women’s movement and other social changes. They have no intention of adapting. Instead, they have reasserted or tightened their traditional dominance over women because they are afraid of losing control. They have reacted by being either competitive or isolationist. They are domineering or even abusive to their families. In certain countries, men have aggressively fought back on a national level. They have countered the advancement of women’s equality with severe restrictions on the lifestyle and freedoms of women because they perceive these changes to be part of the Westernization of their societies—a moral corruption that is harming their way of life.

A Crucial Crossroads

Why is the male’s crisis of purpose such a pivotal issue? For one thing, it attacks the core of who men are, leaving them indecisive and foundationally weak. For another, it reflects a breakdown in understanding, communication, and cooperation between men and women that is unnatural and unhealthy. Males are at a crucial crossroads, and where they go from here will have a serious effect on the course of society. The crisis of purpose they are experiencing will escalate if they continue to live in an uncertain or defensive state of mind. They will remain frustrated and will live at a level far below their potential. Moreover, the cracks in the foundation of society will grow dangerously wider.

What should men do? Should they hold on to traditional roles and ways of thinking, or should they follow the road being paved by new concepts of maleness?

It would be difficult to stop the flow of change, and we would not want to return to tradition merely for the sake of tradition. The old system did not reflect the full purpose and potential of men, and women were often devalued under it.

Yet contemporary concepts of maleness are often ambiguous. They also tend to focus on roles rather than on the
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male’s underlying purpose and identity (a crucial distinction that this book explores). What kind of world will we have if we keep following this new path? We already have some idea of the negative effects that a continuing male crisis of purpose would bring. Many of our current social problems, such as teenage pregnancy, crime, and poverty, flow from purposelessness and rootlessness among men.

The majority of crimes worldwide are committed by men. Ninety to ninety-five percent of those in prison in the United States are males. Recently, I have been amazed at the increasing numbers of boys who are involved in crime. We are seeing more and more criminal activity by males between the ages of nine and eighteen. In London, a five-year-old boy was murdered by an eleven-year-old boy. In Chicago, a six-year-old girl was murdered by a nine-year-old boy. I remember when criminals used to be old men.

How often do you see a list of crimes that were committed during a given week in which 50 percent of the culprits were women? Never. It’s really a male issue.

Whether we’re talking about a broken home, an abused wife, an abandoned child, or a crime, we are looking primarily at a male problem that stems from a misguided purpose or a lack of true identity.

THE ISSUE IS PURPOSE, NOT MALENESS

Why are many social ills caused by men? It may be tempting for some to dismiss males as hopelessly aggressive and domineering, with an essential nature in need of an overhaul. I’d like to present an alternative perspective: the problem is not a biological one of maleness—but a spiritual one of identity. Male identity is not essentially a matter of roles, which vary with culture and shift with changing times—it is a matter of inherent purpose.

Therefore, to address the problems of our society and the world, we must start with the male and how he perceives himself. If men knew who they really are and their true reason for being, then their confusion, anger, and destructive behavior could be replaced with purposefulness, confidence,
and a building up of society. It’s when men don’t know who they are and what purpose they have in this world that we experience a myriad of cultural problems.

While society is feeling the effects of the male’s dilemma, it is also apparently contributing to it by presenting incomplete or confusing ideas of manhood. In this way, society is unknowingly bringing trouble upon itself. This double-edged sword is not new to our generation or our world.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF IGNORANCE OF PURPOSE

The crisis we are seeing today is actually a contemporary version of an age-old dilemma. Men and women alike lost their concept of what it truly means to be human—male and female—a long time ago. The problem is also not confined to particular cultures. The question of identity is a global problem. I have traveled to many nations, and I have concluded that most of the world is suffering from what I call the “consequences of ignorance of purpose.” In every nation, in every community, no matter what language the citizens speak or what color their skin is, people are experiencing a common dilemma. They are suffering the debilitating effects of a misconception of purpose. They don’t understand who they really are and therefore aren’t living up to their full potential in life.

In my earlier book, Understanding the Purpose and Power of Woman, I showed how humanity’s ignorance of purpose has historically degraded women. (I recommend that book to men, just as I recommend this one to women.) I talked about how we can alleviate the pain and unfulfilled potential this misunderstanding of purpose has caused women over the centuries so they can be free to become all they were meant to be.

However, neither males nor females will ever be fully actualized if the crisis of the male is not addressed, since men have a primary influence on the tone and direction of society. This influence is meant to be used for good. However, as we saw in regard to many of the social problems we are facing, it can have exactly the opposite effect if it’s not understood or if
it’s abused. There is no way that we can have a safe and productive world as long as humanity as a whole doesn’t know its reason for existence—and men in particular don’t have a clear idea of their identity.

People can go for years without realizing they aren’t fulfilling their true purpose. Both individuals and cultures can become comfortable following established roles without questioning their validity. However, our socially turbulent society is forcing us to examine the underlying foundation of our concepts of maleness and femaleness. In this sense, we can look at this crisis as a powerful opportunity for self-discovery and self-actualization. It is up to us to make accurate tests of the soundness of both traditional and contemporary ideas of what it means to be male and female, and then to relay a strong foundation for society.

The purpose of this book is to give us principles for making that assessment and fulfilling our true purpose as human beings.

A Rediscovery of Purpose

Therefore, to rediscover the masculine identity, we need to address these questions:

- How can men gain their footing in the ever-shifting environment of cultural expectations?
- What does it mean to be male?
- What definition of masculinity should men adopt?
- Why is a male’s self-concept so important to the foundation of society?
- What roles should men fulfill—in the workplace and in the home?
- What do gender roles have to do with the male’s purpose?
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• What are the differences between males and females?
• How are men and women meant to relate to one another?
• How can a man build a better life for himself, his family, and the world?

In the following pages, I will explore these questions in a very straightforward and practical way. Join me for a rediscovery of purpose: the man as he was meant to be.
What Is a Real Man?

Men Need a God-Given Identity if They Are to Fulfill Their True Purpose.

Imagine that you are watching a television show similar to To Tell the Truth. Several contestants try to convince you that they are the Real Man. You have to guess which one is authentic and which ones are the imposters.

Contestant #1 tells you he is the Real Man because he fills the traditional male role: he supports his family financially while his wife cares for the children and the home. As long as he provides a roof over their heads and food for them to eat, he’s fulfilling his duty as a husband and father. This man doesn’t consider his wife to be his true equal.

Contestant #2 says he is the Real Man because he has a culturally progressive role: he shares household and child-rearing responsibilities with his wife while they both pursue careers. He thinks of his wife as his equal.

Contestant #3 explains that he is the Real Man because he has been freed from male stereotypes and has decided to take on the nurturer role of caring for the children and home while his wife goes to work. He considers his wife equal to himself—or maybe even better, since she has a more compassionate, sensitive nature than he does.

These are some of the images of manhood that are competing for men’s acceptance today. Many men feel as if they’re being asked to guess what a real man is by determining which “contestant” has the most convincing facial expressions and answers. Yet there seems to be no clear-cut
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winner. In addition, society keeps mixing and matching these images until men don’t know what’s expected of them anymore. They are confused and frustrated as they try to sort through their own expectations for manhood while feeling pressure from the various segments of society that are promoting these images—or an impossible combination of them. Meanwhile, Hollywood is flooding society with intriguing icons of masculinity, such as James Bond and Rambo. Even though these images are superheroes rather than real men, it’s sometimes hard to escape their allure. It’s difficult not to start thinking that a real man should somehow imitate the power and resourcefulness they exhibit.

A Crisis of Roles

What makes our current cultural situation unsettling for men is that males have traditionally defined their manhood by their roles: the functions they perform for their families and in society. However, there’s been a major shift in the roles of both males and females. The rules of society are changing. This has happened just in the last forty years or so. We’re in the middle of a cultural transition, and competing ideas of masculinity are causing perplexing problems for men. They are being pulled in several directions at once while they try to figure out what it means to be a real man in today’s world.

In recent years, literature focusing on changes in men’s lives has indicated that the male is in a state of crisis and internal conflict. An array of studies are telling us that males aren’t quite sure who they are or what women expect from them. Without a clear idea of their identity, men are trying to cope with the collision of new societal expectations and traditional ideas of what a man should be, which they have internalized through family, culture, or natural inclination.

Men’s basic conceptions of manhood are therefore being disrupted. They feel displaced. They are either frustrated and struggling to adapt to a new but vague concept of who they are, or they’re angry and trying to reverse the flow of change.
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Are traditional roles to be totally abandoned? If so, what will replace them? Many men have unanswered questions, such as these:

1. *Is a man still supposed to be the breadwinner and protector?* Today, the woman goes out and makes her own bread and says she doesn’t need protection. A man isn’t sure what he’s supposed to do for a woman anymore.

2. *Is a man still the leader and authority in the home?* This isn’t clear anymore. The woman says, “You’re not my authority. I’m not a slave. I make my own money and my own decisions. I do what I want to. I’ll call you when I’m ready for you.” A man doesn’t know how he’s supposed to relate to a woman any longer.

3. *Should a man still show chivalry?* Should he open the door for a woman, escort her, pay for her meal on a date, and so on? A man will pull out a chair for a woman and she’ll say, “That’s all right. Thank you very much, but I’ll pull my own chair out.” Sometimes a man will open a door for a woman and she’ll be offended. “Do you think I’m crippled?” she’ll demand. If a woman walks into a room and a man stands up out of respect, she might look at him as if he’s crazy. A man isn’t sure if he should be nice to a woman anymore.

4. *Is a man still the defender of his family, property, and country?* More women are entering law enforcement and the armed forces and are carrying guns. Some men don’t know how to react to these changes. A woman walks into the house with her uniform on and her husband is scared to say hello to her. He’ll jump up and say, “Sergeant!” Many men are thinking, “She really doesn’t require me to protect her.” Men don’t know if women even need them anymore.

Is there anything now that marks a man as different from his female counterpart? Based on the above scenarios, that’s a difficult question to answer. Males and females are in a state of gender upheaval and confusion.
So what do you do in order to be a man in the twenty-first century? Who are men in relation to women? How are men to sort out the various versions of masculinity that are being promoted in the world?

If you are a male and feel that your work, your relationships, and your view of the world are being turned upside down, you’re not alone. This is the most complex time in the world to be a man. Men of all ages are grappling with competing views and values of manhood.

What has happened?

**THOUSANDS OF YEARS OF TRADITION SET ASIDE**

Males used to acquire their ideas of manhood from observing their fathers or from longstanding cultural traditions. There was a continuity of masculine roles from generation to generation. Things are different now. Hundreds, even thousands, of years of tradition have been set aside in just one or two generations. This shift may have started in Western and industrialized nations with the women’s movement and other cultural changes, but its influence is being felt in one way or another all over the world.

For example, my life is completely different from my father’s life. I can’t use the way my father did things as a model for myself, and my sisters can’t use the environment in which my mother functioned as an example for themselves. Our parents lived not only in a different generation, but also with different concepts of maleness and femaleness. Historically speaking, until recently, the man had certain accepted roles and the woman had certain accepted roles, and they didn’t usually overlap.

**HISTORICAL ROLES**

You can go back fifty, one hundred, five hundred, two thousand, four thousand years, and you’ll find a fairly consistent pattern of roles for men and women that were
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acknowledged and valued. There were some very practical reasons for this longstanding pattern. There have always been certain exceptions to the pattern among individuals and cultures, but the following is the way most families conducted themselves for generations. This traditional pattern continues to have an influence on male-female relationships today.

There Was a Biological Determination of Roles

In pre-modern times, biology contributed largely to the roles of men and women. Males are generally physically stronger than women, so the men were the ones who went out to hunt and provide for the family. Females are biologically equipped to have babies, so they cared for the children. In general, there were no birth control options and no abortion alternatives with which a woman could supersede biology. A man didn’t have to wonder whether he or his wife would stay home and raise the children. Roles were less complicated because they were predetermined by biology.

Everyday Living Was a Struggle for Survival

In addition, people lived in a more hostile physical environment in which day-to-day living was a struggle for survival. This was another reason why the man, who was physically stronger, naturally became the provider and protector of the family.

At that time, making a living was an especially precarious job. The man literally had to risk his life to take care of his family. This caused his wife and children to look to him for leadership and to value his crucial contribution to their survival. They depended on him.

When a man went out to get food for his family, there was no guarantee that he would come back alive. He might be fatally wounded by an animal or die of exposure. Therefore, the woman rejoiced to see him come home again. The
same basic attitude held true in our parents’ and grandparents’ time when most husbands were the sole breadwinners of their families and their wives stayed at home. In the evening, the whole family was happy that the father had returned. Why? He had been out there in a risky world trying to make a living. Sometimes jobs were hard to come by. Sometimes the only job a man could get was working long hours in the fields or underground in a coal mine. When a man came home limping, his wife knew he had risked his health or even his life to keep bread on the table.

The family that I grew up in was a typical family of the not-so-distant past. I am one of eleven children. My father rose in the morning before we children got up, and he came home after we had gone to bed. He spent his whole life working, trying to feed almost a dozen children, keeping a roof over our heads and clothes on our backs. It was a twenty-four-hour-a-day job. My mother had to stay home, and her job was as hard as his. She had to take care of all eleven of us—cooking the meals, bathing us, washing our clothes, getting us off to school, making sure we did our homework, disciplining us. It was a very hard life. It was survival.

**Roles and Skills Became Established**

The basic needs of survival required men and women to develop specific roles and skills, which were passed along to succeeding generations. Up until your grandparents’ time or even your parents’ time, everybody knew his or her role and had skills that were equal to it. The husband knew what he needed to do, and he did it; the wife knew what she had to do, and she did it.

In this way, although survival was difficult, relationships were comparatively easy because there was no confusion over gender roles. A man and a woman didn’t have to wonder whether one was infringing on the other’s territory. Her role was to keep the house, cook the food, and care for the children. His job was to hunt or harvest the crops and build a dwelling in order to provide food and shelter for the family.