

## Becoming an Honorable Man

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### Study Guide

*“Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them.”*

– William Shakespeare

**Discussion question: Identify some men, past or present, who have accomplished something great. Do you think they were born that way or did they rise to the occasion?** (Oscar Schindler, William Wallace, Martin Luther King Jr., Jackie Robinson, Franklin D. Roosevelt).

Read John 1:10-12 and John 12:36.

Teaching: As you read these passages, was there a word or phrase that caught your attention? Our study today focuses on King David. He was certainly one who achieved greatness. While he was certainly born with certain admirable qualities, it was the decisions he made in critical moments that allowed him to rise to greatness.

To this day, when an underdog faces a prohibitive favorite, we suggest it is a David versus Goliath contest. But as we look at the facts, we find that the common perception may not be accurate. David was far more agile than the giant and he carried a weapon with far greater killing range. If he kept some distance between himself and Goliath, his task would have been quite manageable. The point is that there were probably many among the soldiers of Saul who would have had the skill to defeat the giant. It was not simply David's skill that made him victorious over Goliath.

**Discussion question: If this is the case, what quality did David possess that the other soldiers lacked? How did this serve him when he stood against Goliath?** Key Answer: Faith in God gave David the confidence to step out and use the gifts God had given him.

**Discussion question: You will probably never have to go toe to toe in battle against a giant, but there will be situations in which you either can fold or rise up as a man of honor. In the context of your life, what are some situations that might call for you to rise up as a man of honor?**

### **Point #1 - Honorable men find strength in the Lord**

Teaching: The key text from the previous message in our men's series took us to the experience of David in 1 Samuel 30 his family and those of the men with him had been captured by an Amalekite raiding party. His men were so grieved that they spoke of stoning him. In 1 Samuel 30:6 we read, "But David strengthened himself in the Lord."

**Discussion question: What would have been the natural response in such a situation? In what practical ways can we find strength in the Lord in situations which might create anxiety?**

Read Psalm 27:13-14.

Teaching: In a previous study we looked at Jesus as the ultimate model for men. In Hebrews 12:1-2 we are encouraged to look to the way he endured the cross to help us "run with endurance the race set before us." We are told that he "for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross." The key that men like Jesus or David (the Psalmist) discovered was that they gained perspective beyond the moment. They saw beyond the struggle to the other side. For Jesus it was the joy of what would be accomplished beyond the cross. For David it was the simple belief that there would be good ahead. This hope kept them from descending into despair. You may not be a giant in the faith, but you can certainly believe that God has good things ahead for you.

**Discussion question: Has there been a time when the only thing that kept you from despair was the hope that things would get better?**

How do we find strength in the Lord? For the two men we just described, Jesus and David, faith was the key. It enabled them to see beyond the moment to what lay beyond. A second key to finding strength in the Lord is found at the tail end of the faith equation, as described by evangelist Leonard Ravenhill. He said, "Faith reckons, risks and rests."

Teaching: The word "reckon" is an accounting term. When you take care of your finances you will perhaps reconcile your checkbook. To reckon suggests that we do some math.

When God called Abraham to sacrifice his son, we read that he was willing to obey, "Accounting that

God was able to raise him up, even from the dead” (Hebrews 11:19, KJV). Another translation states that Abraham “reckoned that God is even able to raise a man from among the dead” (Weymouth). This is what we do when we first set out in faith. We do some math. “When I add what I know of God to what I know of this situation, I reckon that with God I can do this.”

**Read and discuss Luke 14:28-31.** Teacher note: You may consider pointing out that logical considerations do go into decisions of faith.

Once we have reckoned (see Luke 14:28), the next step in the progression of faith is risk. In Acts 16 we read of some accounting that Paul and Silas did. One night Paul had received a vision in which a man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." In Acts 16:10 we see that they reckoned that the Lord was calling them to this region. Was it a risky enterprise? So much so that on the previous trip John Mark had bailed shortly after they began. It was so risky that in 2 Corinthians 7:5 Paul wrote, "When we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears." In 2 Corinthians 1 Paul wrote that in one location "we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life."

**Risk is an inescapable element of faith. It is risky business.**

Recently my wife and I prepared to buy a different home. As we progressed I spent a bunch of time crunching numbers. Every time we would sit at a restaurant I would do some accounting on my napkin. We could save \$40 a month here by changing this. We can expect to make an extra \$80 a month if we do this. I tried to figure out a way to take a step forward with as little risk as possible. At the end of the day I realized no matter what I did I was going to need to step out in faith and take a little risk.

**Discussion: Describe an instance when you did some reckoning and determined that you were willing to take a risk and step out in faith.**

Teaching: The first two elements of the faith equation, to reckon and to risk, are relatively easy compared to the final, which is to rest. Why? Because in any endeavor requiring faith, there will always be obstacles which tempt us to look for an escape route. This is what Israel experienced as they left Egypt for the Promised Land. They left in faith but when they found that the food and water were in short supply they began looking for a route of retreat. They began to look for a way to return to Egypt.

This is a very real temptation for us. We start out in faith and have a few doors close in our face and what happens? We want to turn around. Or we start grumbling and complaining. We look for those who will sympathize with our plight. What would God have us do? Rest! Don't move. Don't complain. Just rest.

**Discussion question: Read Hebrews 4:11. What are some practical things we can do to enter into rest? Is there a situation in your life in which you are finding it difficult to rest in faith?**

Teaching: Hundreds of years after Israel had settled in the Promised Land, we find that they continued to struggle with the temptation to turn to Egypt in times of risk. In Isaiah 30:15 God responded to this by saying, “In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength.” He was saying retreat is not the answer. Rest in faith and you will be saved.

**Discussion question: Are there times when we must cut our losses and regroup? How do we balance this with the call to rest in faith?**

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

**Point #2 - Honorable men live out compassion**

**Read and discuss 2 Samuel 9:1-8. What can we learn about compassion from David?**

Teaching: In Matthew 6:2-4 Jesus tells of the way that the hypocrites do their charitable deeds to be seen by others. In so doing, He says, they have their reward. Rather we are instructed that when we give, “Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.” David’s act of compassion was motivated by his love for Jonathan. However, at this point, Jonathan had long been dead. There was no way that he could have been rewarded for what he had done. It was nothing more and nothing less than an act of love.

Consider also the fact that David expressed compassion to Mephibosheth, not on his account, but on account of his father Jonathan.

**Discussion question: What should motivate our acts of compassion?** Answer: We should look beyond the merit of the individual to Jesus, the One who loves them and died for them.

**Discussion question: Notice this description of David by the Apostle Paul; “He...served his own generation by the will of God” (Acts 13:16). Beyond demonstrating compassion, what might be some additional ways that God may call us to serve this generation?**

Teaching: Society glorifies the hard, selfish man through entertainment, but in real-life experiences, it is the one who demonstrates Christ-like qualities (such as compassion) who will be most highly honored. It is important to realize that even in an ungodly world the principles of God’s Word apply.

It is the humble leader of the football team who is honored more highly than egotist. It is the man who is known for his honesty who will be hired over the man known for his crooked ways. Just a thought: Would you really want to work for a company who would prefer a dishonest man over a man of integrity?

### **Point #3 – Honorable Men Fight for Their Families**

When I was in junior high, I had a classmate who made it his personal mission to bully me around. I recall one particular lunch hour sitting next to him, sporadically being punched in the arm. I didn't turn to him the other arm, but I did finally get up and leave. The minor harassment continued on and off for a couple years until one time I finally hit him back. After that he never touched me again.

Let's not speak more of this illustration, but use it to move into a review of a passage from the most recent Ultimate Man sermon: "Do not be afraid of (your enemies). Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses" (Nehemiah 4:14).

A man of honor does not always turn the other cheek. Sometimes he will stand and fight.

**Discussion question: In our generation, what are some things for which men commonly fight?**  
Possible Answers: Success, sports teams, wealth, etc. **What do you think makes something worth fighting for?**

**Discussion Question: In what ways might a man of honor need to fight for his family?**

A final thought...

Teaching: If you are looking for a call to be a man, you'll find no greater or exciting call than that found within the Bible. Nehemiah says here, "Think of the Lord and fight!" Elsewhere when threatened and warned that he should find a place of safety, Nehemiah countered, "Should such a man as I flee?" Solomon says to men, "Follow your heart and remember judgment is ahead." To this generation of men, Jesus says, "You yourselves be like men."

Think of the call to biblical manhood we have received...

- The man of God fights (Nehemiah 4:14)
- The man of God knows when to flee (Genesis 39:7-12)
- The man of God is passionate and wise (Ecclesiastes 11:9)

- The man of God loves sacrificially (Ephesians 5:25)
- The man of God knows there are times to submit (Ephesians 5:22)
- The man of God bears fruit in all seasons

In what way is God calling you to biblical manhood?