



STEPPING UP

A CALL TO COURAGEOUS MANHOOD

— DENNIS RAINES —



STEPPING UP



STEPPING UP

A CALL TO COURAGEOUS MANHOOD

— DENNIS RAINNEY —



FAMILYLIFE®

Little Rock, Arkansas

STEPPING UP: A CALL TO COURAGEOUS MANHOOD EXCERPT BOOKLET

FamilyLife Publishing®

5800 Ranch Drive

Little Rock, Arkansas 72223

1-800-FL-TODAY • FamilyLife.com

FLTI, d/b/a FamilyLife®, is a ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ International®

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are taken from the New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org)

Names and details in some anecdotes and stories have been changed to protect the identities of the persons involved.

ISBN: 978-1-60200-231-9

Excerpted from the book STEPPING UP © 2011 by Dennis Rainey

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. Requests for permission to make copies of any part of this publication should be sent to: permissions@FamilyLife.com.

Design: Brand Navigation, LLC

Printed in the United States of America

2011—Second Edition Excerpt Booklet

15 14 13 12 11 2 3 4 5 6

FAMILYLIFE®

Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.

CONTENTS

Foreword by Crawford Loritts	vii
------------------------------	-----

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE A MAN?

1 I Call It Courage	3
2 Courage in the Valley	10
3 Time to Step Up	19
4 What Robs Men of Courage?	26

THE FIRST STEP: BOYHOOD

An Age of Exploration and Discovery

5 "That Bear's Going to Maul My Son"
6 What Every Boy Needs
7 Stepping Up as a Dad
8 You Can Do It!

THE SECOND STEP: ADOLESCENCE

An Age of Pushing and Pulling

9 The Wilderness Years
10 Understanding the Landscape
11 What Every Teenage Boy Needs
12 Every Man's Battle

THE THIRD STEP: MANHOOD

An Age of Stepping Up Again and Again

13 A Man of Endurance
14 The Courage to Initiate

- 15 The Courage to Protect
- 16 The Courage to Resist Temptation
- 17 The Courage to Believe

THE FOURTH STEP: MENTOR

An Age of Investment and Impact

- 18 A Major League Trailblazer
- 19 Men Need Other Men
- 20 Becoming a Generational Messenger

THE FIFTH STEP: PATRIARCH

An Age of Influence and Relevance

- 21 Left Behind
- 22 Are You Done Making a Difference?
- 23 Qualities of a Patriarch
- 24 Finishing Well
- 25 It's Time

Knowing God Personally

Notes

FOREWORD

When I was twelve years old, I experienced a “defining moment.” Don’t get me wrong; it wasn’t some uncommon, extraordinary experience. It wasn’t a brush with death. I hadn’t contracted some debilitating disease. Neither had I been traumatized by some predator. It was what my father did and what my mother stopped doing that marked me deeply for the rest of my life. And it happened in less than five minutes.

It all had to do with painting. The family who rented a property my parents owned moved out, and there was some “fixing up” and painting that needed to be done before the new tenants moved in. My father thought this would be a great project for the entire family to tackle, so on a Saturday morning, my dad, my mother, my two older sisters, and yours truly reported for duty. Mom and my sisters were working on the first floor, and my job was to help Pop paint on the second floor. And that was the problem. I never did like to paint. I didn’t then, and I don’t now.

So I had to somehow figure out a way to be free of what I thought was an unnecessary burden. My “ace in the hole” was my mother. Mom was always more sympathetic to her precious little boy than Dad was, and I knew that if I pressed the right buttons, she would rescue her one and only son from spending his Saturday doing something he didn’t want to do. So under the guise of having to use the bathroom, I went downstairs and began to complain to Mom.

While I was in the middle of convincing my mother that I needed to take off and play with my friends, Pop showed up. As I write these words, I am vividly remembering and reliving that moment.

My mother said to my father, “Crawford, CW (my childhood nickname) is only twelve years old, and he doesn’t need to be here with us all day. He needs to be enjoying himself with his friends.”

Then my father said, “Sylvia, I got this. That boy one day is going to be somebody’s husband and somebody’s father. There are going to be people depending on him. He has got to learn how to do what he *has* to do and not what he *wants* to do.”

To my mother’s credit, she looked at me and then at my father, nodded in agreement, and turned away. Pop then turned to me and said, “You take yourself upstairs and paint until I tell you to stop.”

And I did.

Even at twelve years old, I knew that something important had just happened. It wasn’t that I had just lost a little skirmish, and this time I wasn’t going to get my way. The words “somebody’s husband . . . somebody’s father” and “He has got to learn how to do what he *has* to do and not what he *wants* to do” kept replaying in my mind. Of course I wasn’t fully aware of the weight of what had happened. In fact, it would be years before I fully appreciated the significance of that Saturday morning. But I did have the sense that what just happened was a game changer.

My mother knew that in order for her boy to become a man, the most important man in his life needed to shape him. Pop knew that in order for his son to provide leadership and stability to those who would count on him one day, “CW” needed to embrace core lessons in manhood, obligation, and responsibility.

A transition took place that day, and I’m so glad it did. In a very real sense, it was what some would call a “rite of passage.” My dad knew that in order for me not to become a fifty-year-old adolescent, I needed to make some intentional steps toward manhood. I can’t tell you how grateful I am to God for the gift of Pop’s courage, and that he wasn’t passive when it came to my development.

Some years back when I heard my good friend Dennis Rainey give a talk that formed the outline of this book, not only did it bring to mind that Saturday morning almost fifty years ago, but it resonated deeply within me.

The message that Dennis unpacks in this compelling book is core and critical to the direction of our families, our churches, and our nation. Perhaps you think that statement is a bit overblown. I can assure you that it isn't. As a pastor, I witness daily the void and dysfunction caused by men who don't really know who and what a man is. They're not to blame. When men do not step up to and embrace the seasons of their lives, it damages hope for those who are following and limits the impact these men will have during their moment in history.

All of us need help in this journey toward authentic, intentional manhood. Thank you, Dennis, for giving us such a powerful, engaging resource that helps us and inspires us to keep moving with courage toward being the men that we can be and that indeed God has called us to be.

—CRAWFORD LORITTS
Atlanta, Georgia



**WHAT DOES IT TAKE
TO BE A MAN?**



1

**I CALL IT
COURAGE**

*Courage is not the absence of fear,
but rather the judgment that something
else is more important.*

—AMBROSE REDMOON

It lasted only twenty seconds, but in that short period of time, Gene “Red” Erwin embodied the courage of an ancient warrior.¹

Gene—called “Red” by his buddies because of his wavy auburn hair—was part of an eleven-man crew on board the *City of Los Angeles*, a B-29 Superfortress. On April 12, 1945, their plane was part of a bombing raid on a Japanese chemical plant in Koriyama. One of Red’s jobs was to launch white phosphorous smoke bombs to help the other planes on the raid draw a bead on and follow the *City of Los Angeles*, the lead bomber on the mission.

This was Red’s eighteenth mission, so he knew the drill: open the chute, pull the pin, and release the canister. Eight seconds later, the bomb would ignite when well clear of the aircraft.

But not this time.

For some unknown reason, the first smoke bomb exploded in the drop chute, caroming back into the hull . . . back into Red’s face. White-hot phosphorous, burning at 1,300 degrees, blasted smoke throughout the cabin and raised torturous havoc on Red’s eyes and skin.

Red was literally on fire, and the entire crew was in danger. The smoke bomb itself was eating through the metal of the bulkhead, where the real bombs were stored. There were two options: watch the fire spread to the

other munitions in the bomb bay, or crash into the ocean before everything totally blew up.

Or maybe there was a third alternative, if a man had the courage.

Grabbing the white-hot canister in his right hand, Red Erwin stumbled to the front of the aircraft, weaving blindly by instinct toward the cockpit window. Suddenly, he collided with the navigator's table that blocked his path to the cockpit. Still afire, he wedged the bomb between his forearm and rib cage, grappling with the spring latch on the table that required both hands to release and lift it. With a last surge of energy, Red scrambled into the cockpit and flung the glowing fireball through the open portal and out into the waiting waters of the Pacific. And then he collapsed in a sizzling heap.

By the time the smoke subsided enough for the cockpit panel to become readable again, the instruments confirmed that the plane was a mere three hundred feet above the ocean's surface. A few more seconds, and any attempt to pull out of the nosedive would have been too late.

Every man on board was saved, but Red Erwin's life hung by a thread.

A month after the accident, his body was still smoldering, the phosphorous reigniting from oxygen exposure each time doctors scraped another embedded fleck from his skin. He spent a solid year with his eyes sown shut and endured more than forty surgeries.

**EVERY MAN ON BOARD WAS
SAVED, BUT RED ERWIN'S
LIFE HUNG BY A THREAD.**

Even with a Congressional Medal of Honor hanging around his neck, he would always bear the limitations of a body seared by unimaginable heat.

Yet Red Erwin would live to father four children and hold seven grandchildren in his lap. He would also coach Little League teams, follow Alabama Crimson Tide football, go to church on Sundays, and retire from a long career with the Veterans Administration.

DUTY UNDER FIRE

I've always loved stories about courage. My favorites are those about men who executed the impossible on a dangerous battlefield or accomplished great things despite obstacles and indescribable hardship—*men who did their duty under fire*.

I believe there's something in the chest of a man that responds in a unique way to stories of courage. There's a piece of every man's heart that longs to be courageous, to be bold and gutsy and etch a masculine mark of bravery on the human landscape. In our hearts, we know that a part of the core of true manhood is courage.

But many men don't realize that although most of us have not fought on a grisly, smoke-filled battlefield, all of us face battles in life that demand courage.

When you read books or watch documentaries about men who, like Red Erwin, were presented the highest award a soldier can receive—the Congressional Medal of Honor—you notice that the phrase most often repeated by these decorated warriors is “I was just doing my duty.” They don’t consider themselves heroes. They just did their duty in the face of danger. They were scared, but they acted anyway.

“Courage is doing what you’re afraid to do,” said World War I flying ace Eddie Rickenbacker. “There can be no courage unless you’re scared.”

Real courage is doing your duty under fire. And we all face situations throughout our lives that require that type of courage. Valor at home,

protecting our wives and children. Moral courage in the marketplace. Becoming the men God created us to be, despite whatever pressures we face in the world.

STEPPING UP MEANS OWNING UP

It's never too late to step up, even when that means—especially when that means—facing our own failures and setting things right with the ones we've wounded. No one knows this better than Michael.

Married less than eighteen months, Michael was already cheating on his wife. He hadn't held high expectations when he and Angela married; he only hoped their marriage would last longer than his parents' had—seven years. But he was on course to break that record, in a bad way.

Michael knew his life was a wreck, so he decided that suicide was the way out. Only he couldn't go through with it. He made it to the bridge, and to the railing, but looking at the swirling water below, he changed his mind and went home.

But his heart hadn't changed. Soon after his near-suicide attempt, Michael announced he was going to leave. "I told Angela that I didn't want to have anything to do with her or our marriage," he says. "I just really wanted to end it."

Michael moved out, and the next time Angela saw him was when they met at the courthouse to file the divorce papers. They discovered that a paper was missing, so they didn't file for divorce that day. And then, instead of continuing with the divorce proceedings, Michael started visiting his wife at the apartment.

"We talked a lot," Angela says, "and he shared more of what he was feeling."

Michael ended the affair. Angela forgave him. They gave their marriage another try. They even moved to another city to begin a new life together.

Angela was confident that her husband's infidelity would never happen again.

Sadly, she was wrong. Angela was six months pregnant when Michael confessed his second affair in two years. It had been going on for about four months. He said, again, that he wanted a divorce and that she should go live with her mom and dad.

A month or so after Angela and Michael separated for the second time, Angela's mother heard a radio advertisement for our Weekend to Remember® marriage getaway and offered to send Michael and Angela. At first Michael said he didn't want to attend. The divorce papers had already been completed. He just wasn't interested. But a few days later, after seeing the ultrasound pictures of their baby girl, Michael agreed to give it a try. The realities of fatherhood awakened something in him, calling him to stay rather than run.

**THE REALITIES OF FATHERHOOD
AWAKENED SOMETHING IN HIM, CALLING
HIM TO STAY RATHER THAN RUN.**

At the conference, "the walls came down" for Michael. He had allowed pent-up resentment to form a barrier between himself and his wife. "I didn't understand a lot of what God's purpose was for my life," he says, "and I definitely couldn't understand what His love meant." When the speakers discussed the difference that Christ can make in a person's life, Michael recalls, "For the first time I decided to trust Jesus Christ with my life and marriage."

Michael began taking steps of courage, one after another. On the Saturday night of the conference weekend, he called Angela's parents and apologized for the poor decisions he had made and for what he had put them through. Then, several months later and after intense rebuilding of

trust, he and Angela renewed their wedding vows. Sometimes it takes courage to do what's right.

Red Erwin's and Michael's stories are about courage. Both men stepped up. Red's bravery might be more obvious and celebrated, but Michael's is no less heroic. Despite his failures, Michael owned his responsibility and rescued his marriage. Asking forgiveness and becoming a responsible husband and father was a brave, bold step, and it worked.

AN INVITATION TO THE JOURNEY OF A LIFETIME

In the pages that follow, I'm going to give you a very simple yet powerful vision for what it means to be a man all the way to the finish line. I'm going to challenge you with critical decisions that every man must make during five distinct stages or "steps" of manhood. For those of you who are stuck on one of the "lower" steps, I'll share practical ways you can get unstuck and step up to the next level. And I'll talk about what every boy and young man needs from a dad, a grandfather, an uncle, a brother, or an older man.

I'm even going to talk about a sensitive subject for some of you: how a man is designed to relate to God.

Be prepared for some conflicting thoughts and emotions as you wade through this book. A friend who read an early version of this manuscript wrote to tell me that reading it "forced me to walk down four parallel paths at the same time."

The first path, he said, involved looking at his own life and his father's interactions with him. On the second path, he thought about "the man I was, the man I am, and the man I hope to be one day." The third path required examining his relationship with God. He realized where he fell short but was reminded of God's love and forgiveness.

The fourth path, he said, was the most important for him. It meant

looking at the legacy he would leave behind. “What will my children say about me, my life, my purpose, and my relationship with God? The question is, am I living for me, money, or God? Do I really put Him first, or is that just religious talk?” He realized he was living too much for himself—and he was grateful to learn that lesson before it was too late.

You may find yourself digesting this book in much the same way. You will think about your own childhood, about your father, and about the good and not-so-good choices you’ve made over your lifetime. My hope is that by the time you finish, you will be encouraged to *step up* and be the man on your battlefield.

But you may not have as much time to prepare as you think. Your battle could be right around the corner.

Want to think about *Stepping Up* a little more or discuss it with your friends? Visit FamilyLife.com/Resources for a list of questions and talking points.

2

COURAGE IN THE VALLEY

*The moment you enter the Valley of the Shadow of Death,
things change. You discover that Christianity is not
something doughy, passive, pious, and soft. . . .*

*The life of belief teems with thrills, boldness, danger,
shocks, reversals, triumphs, and epiphanies.*

—TONY SNOW, “CANCER’S
UNEXPECTED BLESSINGS”

There are the moments and seasons in life that a man can’t possibly prepare for. He is dropped into combat without warning. The greatest tests for a man come in these valleys—grim and gray times of hardship, loss, suffering, and sorrow. The birth of our thirteenth grandchild was one of those experiences.

Our daughter Rebecca, who lives in another state, went into labor at night, just as Barbara and I were going to bed. We prayed for her and went to sleep knowing that she and her husband, Jake, would contact us when the baby was born.

So when I rolled over in bed and noticed that the clock read 4:00 a.m., I thought I’d just shoot a text message off to Jake: “What’s up?”

Almost instantly the reply came, “She’s pushing.”

At 5:45 a.m. I was awakened by another text: “It’s a girl!” I smiled and went back to sleep, knowing they’d call when they were able.

There was silence for ninety minutes.

Then their call came.

We learned that after Molly was born, she didn’t cry for four minutes.

The doctors were suspicious of a heart murmur, and Molly had been whisked away to the neonatal intensive-care unit at the Children's Hospital in Denver. Not the news we expected.

“SOMETHING IS WRONG”

We made travel arrangements, and twelve hours later we walked into the Children's Hospital waiting area, where we were greeted by Jake. And then we heard the words, “Something is wrong with Molly’s brain.”

I immediately thought, *Fixing a heart is one thing. That’s dangerous enough. But brain surgery? That’s much more serious.*

We made our way to Molly’s room, wrapped our arms around Rebecca, glanced over at Molly, and immediately began to weep. She had tubes and wires attached to seemingly every part of her body. We were stunned as we watched her tiny chest heaving, laboring to breathe. Jake was so proud of her, and he wanted to be the first to introduce us to our granddaughter.

**INSTANTLY, WHAT WAS SUPPOSED
TO HAVE BEEN A YOUNG COUPLE’S
MOUNTAINTOP CELEBRATION OF NEW
LIFE BECAME INSTEAD A FREE FALL
INTO A DARK, CAVERNOUS VALLEY.**

During the next twenty-four hours, we watched helplessly as Jake and Rebecca received the news that Molly had a massive brain aneurysm. They were told that since the seventh week of development, the vein of Galen (the major vein that carries blood to the center of the brain) had delivered five times the amount of blood that a normal brain receives, and that as a result, much of Molly’s brain was gone.

Instantly, what was supposed to have been a young couple's mountain-top celebration of new life became instead a free fall into a dark, cavernous valley—the valley of the shadow of death.

They weren't the only ones reeling. I had never experienced anything like this. What could prepare a man, a father, a grandfather for a crisis like this? How does a man face his own fears of inadequacy and grief, plus provide the love and comfort his family needs?

COURAGE IN THE VALLEY

I had been thrown into a battle that I didn't sign up for. I was being given a duty as a man that I hadn't anticipated. In the process of stepping into this pain-filled valley, I was about to discover a different kind of courage. There were moments when I had more questions and fears than courage. How does a man step up and lead appropriately as he watches the hearts of the ones he loves the most shatter?

Fortunately I was joined by another man—Jake's father, Bill Mutz. Bill is a good man and has been married to Pam since 1977. They had been through the valley before when he and Pam lost their firstborn son, seven-month-old Jonathan, who drowned in a bathtub.

One day at a time, Bill and I did our duty. Some were the mundane duties of getting lunch, running errands, calling family and friends, and picking up family members at the airport. Other moments were anything but routine. Molly's seven-day life was marked by the most unimaginable, freeze-framed snapshots we could ever conceive. Like sitting in a cold conference room with our wives and watching Jake and Rebecca receive the news from doctors that Molly would likely die quickly if taken off life support. That she would require fifteen to twenty life-threatening surgeries, and even if through some miraculous means she survived, she would be

blind. Molly would never speak. She would likely never hear, never walk, never . . . The descriptions crushed hearts and hope.

As Bill would later recall, “One of the most difficult things for me as a man and father was remaining silent as Rebecca and Jake weighed their grim choices. It was their decision, not mine.” Both of us learned that it takes courage to be silent.

THE FINAL DAY

Those seven days of Molly’s life were the most challenging moments of my life. Nothing comes close. Buckets of tears. Holding my wife, daughter, and Jake while they sobbed. And as unimaginable as it sounds, there were occasions when weeping and laughter mingled.

The last day of Molly’s earthly life was unforgettable.

Around noon, Rebecca and Jake honored all of us as grandparents by giving us the privilege of holding Molly and saying good-bye. None of us expected we’d get that treat. We didn’t want to rob them of one moment with their precious daughter.

Barbara was first. It was quite a maneuver to make sure all the wires and tubes that were supporting Molly’s life didn’t get tangled, but finally there she was in her arms. Barbara kept saying how much of an honor it was hold this little princess of the King. She held her close and cooed words of love and admiration over her beautiful face. Holding back tears was impossible.

Jake’s parents soaked in all of her they could. When it was Bill’s turn, he stroked her face, tenderly whispered his love for her, and shared his favorite scriptures with her. Pam beamed as she gently rocked Molly and sang “Jesus Loves Me” to her. Both Bill and Pam just held her, kissing her face, holding her little hands, and weeping as they said good-bye.

As Molly was placed in my arms, she felt so warm, just like every other

newborn. I tried to sing to her, and I doubt that she recognized “Jesus Loves Me” as I choked out a few words through tears.

Jake, who was videotaping, asked me, “Papa, why don’t you tell Molly a story . . . one of your ‘Speck People’ stories?” These are adventure stories of tiny little people and equally tiny little creatures who live in a make-believe, microscopic world, facing any number of challenges that demand courage and faith. Our kids were enthralled with these tiny-people stories, and now I am telling them to my grandkids. The stories always take the Speck People to the very edge of danger . . . and then I close by saying, “And you’ll have to wait until tomorrow night to hear the rest of the story.”

I responded to Jake, “You aren’t going to ask me to do that after I’ve just blubbered my way through a simple song like “Jesus Loves Me,” are you?” Jake was joined by Rebecca in saying a resounding yes—they wouldn’t let me off the hook.

So Rebecca and Barbara surrounded me as I held little Molly, looked into her face, and began my story: “A Speck grandfather and his Speck granddaughter went fishing for tiny Speck fish . . .” My story was less than sixty seconds long, and when I looked up into Rebecca’s face, she had the biggest grin, dimples and all. She was loving the moment.

As I concluded my story, I told Molly, “The Speck grandfather and granddaughter took their fish and ate them, and then they encountered something you would never expect or believe . . . and you will have to wait until I get to heaven to hear the rest of the story.”

At this point I was sobbing, but I got the words out . . . and Rebecca and Jake started laughing. Rebecca’s laughter has always been contagious, and I, too, began to really laugh.

One other detail of importance is that all of us had been gingerly holding Molly, afraid that the stress of handling her might be more than her little body could take. So as I began laughing, Jake and I looked at the heart and oxygen monitor to see if it was stressing her system, but the opposite

was happening. Her oxygen saturation, which had been at 80 percent, shot up to 92 percent, and then 94, 97, 98, 99 . . . We just kept laughing, and her oxygen level climbed to 100 percent, a level it hadn't reached in twenty-four hours. All four of us cheered for Molly.

It was a moment of sheer delight and mystery. A small thing, perhaps? Yes, no doubt. But at the entrance to the valley of the shadow of death, God gave us laughter.

**THE LAUGHTER STOPPED, AND THE
TEARS FLOWED AGAIN AS I WAS TOLD IT
WAS TIME FOR ME TO SAY GOOD-BYE.**

Christians are the only people who can laugh in the midst of such a crisis without despair—we know where we are headed. Heaven is certain because of what Jesus Christ did for us through His death for our sins. Because He lives, we who believe and place our personal trust in Him have the hope of life after death. If a man places faith in Christ for forgiveness of his sins and surrenders his life to the Lord, then he can be certain of heaven too. It's the ultimate reason why death is different for a true follower of Christ. And it's why we could laugh as our beloved Molly was about to leave us.

The laughter stopped, and the tears flowed again as I was told it was time for me to say good-bye. Rebecca was now holding Molly. Barbara and I knelt beside her as I read her a good-bye letter:

Mighty Molly

I just met you—I feel cheated.

I don't want to say good-bye.

I know I'll likely see you in a couple of decades or so—in light
of eternity, it won't be long, really.

Still I don't want to say good-bye.
You will always be my Molly, my granddaughter.
I'm really sad that I won't be getting to spoil you
with a doll, or go sneak chocolate,
or take you on ice-cream dates,
and eat chocolate pie and pudding.
Laughing all the time at what your mommy and daddy would say
if they knew what we were doing.

I don't want to say good-bye.

Your seven days sure brought a lot of joy to your mom and dad's
faces. I've watched them drink you in with their eyes, kiss you
from head to foot, stroke and caress you.

Your parents loved you well—God couldn't have given you better
parents. Courageous parents.

They have loved you with a sacrificial love that only a very few little
girls like you ever get to experience.

Because it hurts their hearts so much,
oh, how I really don't want to say good-bye.

And so, sweet Molly, until that day in heaven
when we will celebrate the greatness of our God together,
(then we will go sneak chocolate and go on an ice-cream date)

I MUST say good-bye.

Good-bye, Molly Ann.

I love you, Papa.

LESSONS FROM THE VALLEY

Reflecting back on those emotion-packed, ever-so-short seven days, I now
realize I learned a lot about being a man and stepping up in the valley. With-

out trying to explain every point, I'd like to summarize the lessons from my journey.

- In order for a man to be courageous, he must know the truth about who God is. Courage that overcomes fear comes from convictions, and convictions about life and death come from the truth of Scripture.
- The easiest thing for a man to do in a devastating crisis is to move into denial and do nothing.
- Another good man standing alongside you will help you be courageous when journeying through the valley. Bill Mutz was that man in my valley.
- It takes repeated acts of courage for a man to truly face and process his emotions. The natural tendency is to run away from them or deny they exist or to think you will be less of a man because you sob uncontrollably. Pleasure and pain were both meant to be experienced by men. For me, that took courage.
- It takes repeated acts of courage for a man to give others freedom to process their emotions differently from him and not be at the same place he is.
- A man is no less courageous if faced with a situation that he can't fix and about which he doesn't know what to do, but cries out to God in prayer, "Help me, God!"
- A man can have doubts and still step up.
- A man doesn't have to understand all of God's purposes to step up and be His man.

A number of years ago, Barbara and I were vacationing in southwest England and stumbled upon the little town of Saint Buryan, a crossroad in

the country with a pub, a decaying church, and a graveyard. We stopped and read a few of the gravestones. One that was barely legible commemorated a family that lived in the 1600s. Buried beneath the stone were the mother, who gave birth to a son and died just ten days later at the age of twenty-four; her son, who lived thirteen months; and the father, who died a few days later at age twenty-five.

The faded words on that weathered limestone grave marker moved us so deeply that today they are etched on Molly's headstone:

*We cannot, Lord, Thy purpose see
But all is well that's done by Thee.*

A man doesn't have to understand God's purposes to be God's man, if he knows who God is and trusts Him.

Want to think about *Stepping Up* a little more or discuss it with your friends? Visit FamilyLife.com/Resources for a list of questions and talking points.

3

TIME TO STEP UP

*Life shrinks or expands in
proportion to one's courage.*

—ANAI S NIN

A few years ago, I was sitting at dinner with about eight other men who had invited me to their duck-hunting club. Everything about the lodge oozed with rustic manhood. Thick four-foot logs blazed and snapped in the fireplace. Above the massive mantle, a half-dozen mounted mallards were “cupped,” ready for landing in a watery thicket. The meal set before us was—what else?—meaty, succulent servings of waterfowl. A glance in any direction revealed a whole roomful of boots, belt buckles, and boisterous laughter.

The group at our table, like most of the others, consisted of guys who didn’t know each other. Many hadn’t met before this night. So the conversation, not unexpectedly, gravitated toward thoughts on the next day’s hunt to highlights of previous exploits, embellished with all kinds of noises and sweeping arm gestures, the stories growing bigger with the telling.

Sure, there was some male bonding going on. We were partners in forks and knives, soon to be shotguns and hunting vests. And though the conversation was a little more interesting than everyday talk, it was still exactly what you’d have predicted. Bring any bunch of guys into this same setting, and the only difference would be in the details. Different faces talking the same stuff.

Maybe it’s because I’m in my sixties and can get away with it, or maybe it’s because I’ve heard all of this before, but I’ve found that as I grow older,

I tire of disposable small talk much more easily. So after asking permission of our host, I popped out with a question I knew would change the tone around the table. It's a question I love asking men: *What's the most courageous thing you've ever done?*

When a man pulls back the veneer and asks a penetrating question like this, an awkward silence can suddenly descend, sucking the words right out of the room. Men's brains sort of catch and hang up. You can almost see them spinning and searching, trying to process. And yet I've discovered that even though the responses are often slow in coming, it's a question men truly love to answer.

I've heard stirring stories of men doing their duty at key points in their lives. Being faithful to their wives when nobody was looking. Giving up pornography and confessing to their wives. Tackling difficult issues with their children. Doing what is right in the workplace, even when it's not convenient or profitable.

**THE MAN WHO CLAIMS HE'S
NEVER DONE ANYTHING
COURAGEOUS DOESN'T UNDERSTAND
WHAT COURAGE REALLY IS.**

Many men have told about conquering their fears to step up and square their relationships with their fathers: looking a father in the eyes and forgiving him, honoring a father who didn't always deserve it, disagreeing with a father on a major decision, and standing their ground.

And yes, I've heard some phenomenal stories of war—heroic soldiers who grabbed grenades in midair and threw them back at the enemy!

I've determined that the man who claims he's never done anything courageous doesn't understand what courage really is—or how often he faces decisions that require courage.

It takes courage to step up.

FIVE STEPS OF A MAN'S JOURNEY

A number of years ago, I was asked to give a “man-up” wheel alignment to a group of 125 guys. A number had been acting like teenagers, and I was asked by the leadership of the organization that they were part of to call them to step up to their responsibilities as men.

I spoke to these men about the five stages of a man’s journey through life—boyhood, adolescence, manhood, mentor, and patriarch—and his responsibilities at each stage. Sensing that these men needed a visual illustration of my message, I decided to talk about the first stage—boyhood—while standing on the first step of the stairs that led upward to a platform behind me. As I continued through my message, I moved up a step when I described each new stage.

As I spoke I could tell that the men were really connecting with this concept of stepping up. By the time I finished my message with a challenge to continue leaving a legacy even during the final stage of life, I found myself standing on the top step. Without having planned it, I’d given these men a simple visual illustration and vision for being a man.

The group morphed before my eyes. Slouching men were now sitting up straight. Heads up. Jaws set. Chests out. Somehow these good guys were being encouraged to become better men. Courageous men.

In the remainder of this book, I will talk more about these five stages of manhood. Each step offers its own set of challenges and opportunities, but one thing remains the same: no matter where you are in life, God calls you to do your duty, sometimes under fire. He calls you to courageously set aside

any obstacle—your fears, your insecurities, your selfishness and sin—and step up to fulfill the responsibilities He has given you.

A NORTH STAR

As I've studied the subject of manhood over the past three decades, I've looked for the very finest definitions of true manhood. If a man is going to step up to manhood, he needs to understand what he's stepping up to be and do.

Two of my favorite definitions offer men a "North Star" to navigate through life. The first is from my friend Robert Lewis, founder of Men's Fraternity, a modern-day men's movement being used in thousands of churches, businesses, and prisons. Robert provides a working definition of *manhood* as the foundation for his curriculum: "A real man rejects passivity, accepts responsibility, leads courageously, and expects God's greater reward."

The other definition comes from pastor and author John Piper: "At the heart of mature masculinity is a sense of benevolent responsibility to lead, provide for, and protect women in ways appropriate to man's differing relationships."¹

AT ITS CORE, PASSIVITY IS COWARDICE.

Note that each writer emphasizes that a real man is active in fulfilling his responsibilities. Initiative is at the heart of manhood.

That's why I talk about stepping up to your responsibilities as a man. When you step up, you assume responsibility for your family and for the assignment God has given you. It means you are an initiator, setting aside whatever inhibits you and passionately seizing your assignment.

What's the opposite of stepping up? Standing still . . . lying down . . . becoming a couch potato. Male passivity is a disease that robs a man of his purpose while it destroys marriages, ruins families, and spoils legacies. A

passive man doesn't engage; he retreats. He neglects personal responsibility. At its core, passivity is cowardice.

Interesting, isn't it, that we don't talk much about cowards? No man wants to be labeled a coward. Instead, we instinctively value and appreciate men who seize the moment and take action—men who step up to responsibility and inspire others in the process. We cheer the quarterback who leads his team to a comeback in the fourth quarter, the firefighter or police officer who rescues others at his own peril, the businessman who elevates integrity over profit, and the dad who takes a stand and protects his family.

MANLY MEN

In the days that followed the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, I was impressed by the stories of courageous men who ran toward those burning twin towers and risked or sacrificed their lives to help others. Peggy Noonan nailed it in her piece for the *Wall Street Journal* when she wrote that “men are back”:

A certain style of manliness is once again being honored and celebrated in our country since Sept. 11.... I am speaking of masculine men, men who push things and pull things and haul things and build things, men who charge up the stairs in a hundred pounds of gear and tell everyone else where to go to be safe. Men who are welders, who do construction, men who are cops and firemen. They are all of them, one way or another, the men who put the fire out, the men who are digging the rubble out, and the men who will build whatever takes its place.

And their style is back in style. We are experiencing a new respect for their old-fashioned masculinity, a new respect for

physical courage, for strength and for the willingness to use both for the good of others.

You didn't have to be a fireman to be one of the manly men of Sept. 11. Those businessmen on flight 93, which was supposed to hit Washington, the businessmen who didn't live by their hands or their backs but who found out what was happening to their country, said goodbye to the people they loved, snapped the cell phone shut and said, "Let's roll." Those were tough men, the ones who forced that plane down in Pennsylvania. They were tough, brave guys.²

Those days didn't last long, but for a time, men were revered and honored for being manly. We had been attacked, and men did what men do: They protected and defended, and they took on the enemy. They enlisted. They fought. Many gave their lives.

Bob Peterson, my father-in-law and a World War II veteran who earned a Purple Heart, wanted to go fight the enemy. Even at age eighty he said, "I wish I could re-enlist and go fight for my country."

SEIZE THE MOMENT

Men today are realizing that another crisis is upon us. There are no bullets or bombs, but we are on a battlefield all the same. It's a fight for our families and our future. And for this fight we need men who are willing to bravely step up and be the tough, courageous men God has designed them to be.

Winston Churchill is often quoted as saying, "There comes into the life of every man a task for which he and he alone is uniquely suited. What a shame if that moment finds him either unwilling or unprepared for that which would become his finest hour."

Every man has a task for which he is uniquely suited. You may have already discovered this—or you may be yearning for purpose or direction.

Whether you are a young man or are nearing the end of your life, my charge to you is this: press into the battle, fill your lungs with smoke from the front lines, and finish strong. Be prepared to shine when presented with your finest hour.

Want to think about *Stepping Up* a little more or discuss it with your friends? Visit FamilyLife.com/Resources for a list of questions and talking points.

4

WHAT ROBS MEN OF COURAGE?

*Most of our obstacles would melt away if,
instead of cowering before them, we should make
up our minds to walk boldly through them.*

—ORISON SWETT MARDEN

In 2003, Hurricane Isabel slammed into the East Coast of the United States, lashing North Carolina and Virginia, then moving northward all the way to Canada, leaving sixteen dead and cutting power to six million homes. The edges of the hurricane passed through Washington, DC, prompting the president and members of Congress to find safer quarters.

That was not the case at Arlington National Cemetery, where guards have relentlessly stood vigil at the Tomb of the Unknowns every hour of every day since July 1, 1937. When the hurricane hit, the soldiers remained at their posts even though they were given permission to seek shelter.¹

That's what a soldier does. He acknowledges the storm, but he doesn't give in to it. He stands firm.

As a friend told me, "If these men can stand guard over the dead, how much more important is it that I stand guard over the living—my wife and children?"

Like these soldiers, we are called to stand and do our duty while staring down the very storms that seek to rob us of courage, taunting and tempting us to neglect our duty and abandon our posts. These storms are packing some power. Are you ready for them?

STORM NO. 1: DAMNABLE TRAINING BY FATHERS

I once met a man who grew up in a remote section of our country. He admitted that the only advice he received as a boy from his father about women was

Get 'em young.

Treat 'em rough.

Tell 'em nothing.

I wonder how that advice worked for him in his marriage.

You could say this is a legacy of the “strong, silent, tough man” image often passed down from father to son. This is the type of misguided training in manhood that has corrupted so many men as the leaders in their homes—selfish men who control their wives and children so that their own needs are met.

And that’s just one part of the problem. Many boys grow up with fathers who are distant and passive. Fathers who rarely engage their families, and when they do, their half-hearted attempts to train their sons may promote irresponsible, or even immoral, behavior. Like the father whose idea of sex education for his twelve-year-old son was to take him to a strip joint. There they sat for three hours as the women did their thing onstage. No words were spoken. When they arrived home later that night, the dad told his wife, “There, I did it! Now I’m going to bed.”

Another son told me about the knock at his door as he packed to go to college. His father handed him a small paper bag with this sage advice, “Don’t be foolish son—use ‘em.”

You could likely tell your own story of how you were trained or abandoned by your father. Too many men today were raised by fathers who

didn't step up to their responsibilities. Is it any wonder we have a generation of men who feel lost and aimless, not knowing how to face their fears or think rightly about themselves, women, and their own passions?

STORM NO. 2: FATHERLESS FAMILIES

The relentless, howling winds of a culture of divorce have uprooted the family tree, and with it at least two generations of men. With our high divorce rates and the increasing number of births to single women (nearly four out of ten children are born to an unwed mother²), the number of children in the United States who live in a single-parent household has more than doubled since 1978.³

Children are the innocent victims of this raging storm. The bottom line: dad is AWOL in far too many homes today. This phenomenon has prompted David Blankenhorn, founder of the Institute for American Values, to pronounce that the fatherless family "is a social invention of the most daring and untested design. It represents a radical departure from virtually all of human history and experience."⁴

**THE GREATEST PREDICTOR OF A CHILD
DROPPING OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL,
COMMITTING A CRIME, AND GOING TO
PRISON IS A HOME WITHOUT A DAD.**

The social implications of fatherless families are endless. For example, the greatest predictor of a child dropping out of high school, committing a crime, and going to prison is a home without a dad. Many young people grow up today in areas where the only adult male role models they know are

live-in boyfriends or gang leaders. The fallout has only just begun: a crop of weak young men and frustrated women who are looking for real men.

One of the greatest challenges any boy could endure is trying to become a man without a father to show him how. How can a boy know what it looks like to behave as a man, love like a man, and be a man in the battle if the main man in his life has abandoned him?

My friend Crawford Loritts works with young men to build their skills as leaders. He writes that the issue of courage keeps coming up in their conversations:

Many of [these young men] grapple with fear. . . . I think that the dismantling of our families over the past fifty years or so has almost institutionalized fear and uncertainty. Divorce, the rise of single-parent households, and the tragic assortment of abuse and dysfunction in our families have produced a generation with many young people who are afraid of risk, and afraid to make mistakes.

So many of our young men grew up in homes in which they had limited or no contact with their fathers, or they had dads who were detached and didn't provide any meaningful leadership. We are left with a legacy of men who in varying degrees have been feminized. They are uncertain about who and what a man is, and how a man acts and behaves. They are fearful of assuming responsibility and taking the initiative in charting direction.⁵

STORM NO. 3: A CULTURE OF CONFUSION

My son came home one weekend from his university—a large southern school not exactly known for being the center for liberal thought—and

shared with me that he had been taught in class that there weren't two sexes but five: male, female, homosexual male, homosexual female, and transgender. No wonder young men are confused and young women are left wondering where the real men are! We're living in a multiple-choice culture: are you an A, B, C, D, or E? Male sexuality and identity have become a bewildering array of options.

Think of what it must be like for young boys growing up today. Media outlets and educational elites attack the traditional roles of men and claim that a man who seeks to be a leader in his family is actually oppressing his wife and children. Our culture is permeated with sexuality, where children are exposed to explicit messages and distorted images at a far younger age than their parents were. The educational system doesn't seem to know how to teach boys, and as a result, girls are leaping ahead in test scores, college enrollment, and graduation rates. Boys are increasingly medicated because their parents don't know how to channel their masculinity, adventure, and drive.

Is it any wonder that boys grow up so confused?

“I DON’T KNOW HOW TO DO FAMILY”

In the wake of these storms lies a generation of men who don't know how to be men. They don't know how to have real relationships—with women, with their children, or with other men. And many grow up with what I call a courage deficit—they have little idea what courage looks like in a man, or what types of courageous choices they need to make as they move through their lives.

One of these men came to my front door one Saturday morning. I'll never forget him standing sheepishly in the doorway. “Mr. Rainey, in the past couple of years, I've gotten married and had two children,” he said, “and I've determined that I don't know how to do marriage. And I don't know how to do family. Could you help me?”

This young man articulated what millions of young men are feeling today—inadequate, fearful, angry, and in desperate need of manhood training and vision.

STEPPING UP

The Bible tells many stories of good men behaving badly—single men, married men, and fathers gone mild or gone wild through compromise, lust, murder, jealousy, anger, passivity, or cowardice. Scripture paints men as they really are, hiding none of their blemishes or barbaric ways. The honesty of Scripture is one of the reasons I knew that the Bible would be the place to go to learn what a real man should be and do. I began looking through the Scriptures, focusing on passages that talk about men and manhood, and along the way, I discovered five prevailing themes.

1. A man controls his emotions and passions. Whether single or married, a real man tames his passions. He doesn't abuse women and children; he protects them. He keeps his hands off a woman who is not his wife, and he treats his wife with love, respect, and dignity. He keeps his eyes off pornographic images. He protects a single woman's virginity and innocence. He's not a jerk defined by his exploits below the waist. He's a man with a heart, head, and conscience.

2. A man provides for his family. First Timothy 5:8 exhorts us, "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." These are strident words. When a man doesn't work and provide for his family, he feels a sense of shame. His self-worth sinks. A man who doesn't work, who can't keep a job, who moves from job to job, or who refuses to assume his responsibility creates insecurity in his wife and children. Every man needs to provide for his family.

I find that most men feel a natural sense of responsibility in this area, but many don't seem to understand that providing for their family means more than meeting physical needs. It also means taking responsibility to provide for emotional and spiritual needs. A father should train his children and prepare them to become responsible adults who know how to negotiate the swift and sometimes evil currents of culture.

3. A man protects his family. To borrow an illustration from John Piper and Wayne Grudem on the essence of masculinity: When you are lying in bed with your wife, and you hear the sound of a window being opened in your kitchen at 3:00 a.m., do you shake her awake and say, “The last time this occurred, I was the one who took our baseball bat and investigated to see if someone was breaking into our house. Now it's your turn, sweetheart. Here's the bat!”?⁶

No! That's when the man gets up.

But being a protector calls for more than ensuring physical safety. Proverbs 4:10–15 describes a father who protects his son by passing on wisdom, helping him build godly character, and teaching him to reject the lies and temptations of the world. This father is protecting not only his son but the generations to follow as the wisdom he shares gets passed on and on.

4. A man serves and leads his family. Those two words—*serve* and *lead*—may seem like a contradiction, but they are inseparable according to Scripture.

While the apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 5:23 that “the husband is the head of the wife,” he quickly puts to rest any notions that this leadership allows any form of selfish male dominance. He completes the sentence with “as Christ also is the head of the church.” Then the passage goes on to say that husbands should love their wives “just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her” (verse 25).

This paints a picture of leadership that is contrary to how the world views it. A man is called to be a servant-leader—to take responsibility for

his wife and children and to put their needs ahead of his own. He is called to demonstrate selfless, sacrificial love—the type of love we see in God toward His children.

5. A man follows God's design for true masculinity. Micah 6:8 tells us, "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

The core of a man's life should be his relationship with God. The man who walks humbly with God is motivated and empowered to step up and assume the difficult responsibilities that come his way.

You see, a courageous man is never off duty.

Want to think about *Stepping Up* a little more or discuss it with your friends? Visit FamilyLife.com/Resources for a list of questions and talking points.

NOTES

Chapter 1

1. The story of Eugene “Red” Erwin is retold by the author based on the information found in “Master Sgt. Henry E. ‘Red’ Erwin,” Air Force Enlisted Heritage Institute, <http://www.af.mil/information/heritage/person.asp?dec=&pid=123006484>; and John L. Frisbee, “Red Erwin’s Personal Purgatory,” *Air Force Magazine* 72, no. 10 (October 1989), <http://www.airforce-magazine.com/MagazineArchive/Pages/1989/October%201989/1089valor.aspx>.

Chapter 3

1. John Piper, *What’s the Difference: Manhood and Womanhood Defined According to the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 19.
2. Peggy Noonan, “Welcome Back, Duke,” *Opinion Journal, Wall Street Journal*, October 12, 2001.

Chapter 4

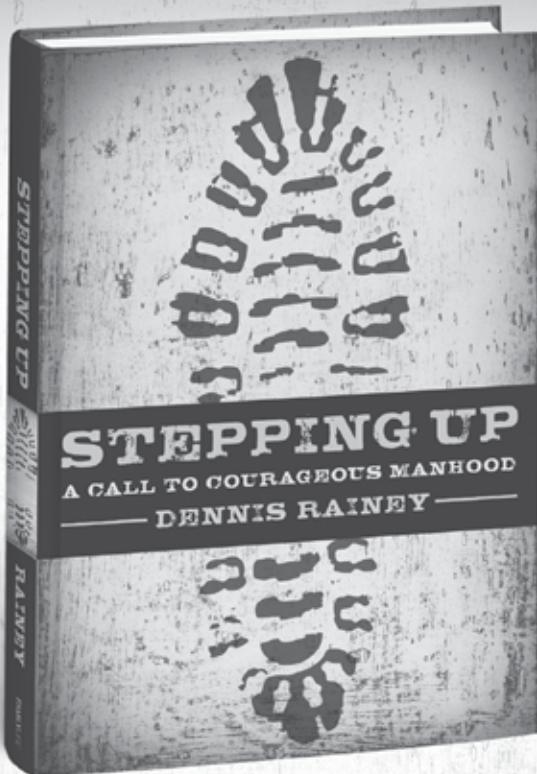
1. Steve Vogel, “Tomb Guards Stand Sentinel Through Isabel’s Threatening Sweep,” *Washington Post*, October 2, 2003.
2. Data from Natality Data Sets, National Vital Statistics System, cited in Stephanie J. Ventura, “Changing Patterns of Nonmarital Childbearing in the United States,” *National Center for Health Statistics Data Brief*, no. 18 (May 2009).
3. U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey, reported in “Living Arrangements of Children in the United States over Time,” National Healthy Marriage Resource Center, accessed December 15, 2010, www.healthymarriageinfo.org.

4. David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1996), 49.
5. Crawford Loritts, *Leadership as an Identity: The Four Traits of Those Who Wield Lasting Influence* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009), 185.
6. Adapted from John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006), 43.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dennis Rainey is the president and CEO of FamilyLife (a ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ) and a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary. For more than thirty-five years, he has been speaking and writing on marriage and family issues. Since 1976, he has overseen the development of FamilyLife's numerous outreaches, including the popular Weekend to Remember marriage getaway. He is also the daily host of the nationally syndicated radio program *FamilyLife Today*®. He and his wife, Barbara, reside in Little Rock, Arkansas, and have six adult children and seventeen grandchildren.



For years, Dennis Rainey's favorite question to men has been . . .

**"WHAT'S THE MOST COURAGEOUS
THING YOU'VE EVER DONE?"**

As men, all of us face decisions in life that demand courage. Big or little, complex or straightforward, these choices—let's call them battles—matter a great deal. One courageous choice leads to another; tomorrow's integrity depends on today's bravery.

Renowned author, speaker, and radio host Dennis Rainey tackles the call to living, breathing manhood head-on, offering a simple yet powerful vision for what it means to be a man who truly conquers, and truly wins.

To order, call **1-800-FL-TODAY**
or visit **ShopFamilyLife.com**

FAMILY LIFE[®]

5800 RANCH DRIVE
LITTLE ROCK, AR 72223

ID# BKL16177