

YOU'RE **NOT** DEAD YET



From the author of *Manhood Journey* and *Being God's Man*

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The Bible is God's Truth

We believe that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God. The Bible verses that are included are used in the following ways: to include direct quotes from scripture; to support a specific point; to provide an example from Biblical history; to provide a Biblical foundation for what is being discussed; to stimulate your thinking about a related concept. The Bible is infallible; our human understanding of its use is not. Every effort has been made to interpret the Bible accurately; we recommend that you look up each verse, read it and consider how it applies to what you are reading and to your manhood journey.

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Preface

This preface needs to be short—our memory can be poor, our eyesight is failing, we are likely to nod off to sleep, the bathroom calls—frequently, our body aches, our hearing is shot and, sometimes, the responses we get from others indicate that we could be dead in the next second.

You're Not Dead Yet is a book written for men, age 50 and older. It is dedicated to you, to inspire you to use your power and influence as a force for positive change within your relationships and across the world. The challenge is not only to read this book and discuss it with your manhood team; I also want you to join me as we apply our collective strengths to the fulfillment of God's plan. As each of us follows God and the individual plan He has for our lives, *we will change the world!*

As the founder of Knights of the 21st Century and the author of several men's curriculum/DVD programs, I ask you to join me in becoming part of an army of Christian men and fight for the cultural change that our world needs. Your family, church and community need what you can contribute. Your adventure will begin when you recognize that you're not dead yet—choose to grow strong in God's Word, find the passion deep within you and allow God to empower you to carry out His will. Get ready for the miraculous, life-changing process of discovering all that God has planned for your future. Let the adventure begin!

Chapter 1

Why?

There are two tough questions we want to ask ourselves as we consider the ways that God relates to our lives. **Am I breathing?** Take some time to think about your answer to this question because it affects your answer to the next question. God created everything that has life (Colossians 1:16); your life comes from Him.

Assuming you were able to answer the first question, you are ready for a more challenging question: **Why?** There are several passages in the Bible which make it clear that God plans, even before we are born, exactly how long we will live (Psalm 139:16). He knows when our lives will begin, and He creates us at that point in time; He also knows when our lives will end, and He is in control of when we will take our last breath. His knowledge is infinite—He knows what we are going to do before we do it. Frankly, it is a bit scary to know that we can't hide anything from Him (Jeremiah 23:24).

If God determines when we will die, why hasn't it happened yet? Let's face it—there are a lot of things that we, as God's children, do that do not make Him proud of us. He does not allow us to keep living simply because of our perfect record or because we always do what He wants or because of our charm, good looks and brilliance. God Almighty has a reason for keeping us here, and His reason is the answer to your “why.”

What does the realization that God has a purpose for continuing your existence mean to you? Do you look for answers to your “why”? Do you attempt to honor God by putting your “why” into action, or do you do nothing, waiting for God to determine when your last day will be? Are you interested in figuring out why God is allowing you to continue to live? Do you want to finish life's race

with your head held high (Hebrews 12:1), or will you simply drop out when God decides you're done?

A man who chooses to have a relationship with Jesus will naturally want to know God's "why" for his life. Manhood requires you to know which parts of who you are increase your ability to reach your God-given potential. God created you to act in intentional ways which express His design. You demonstrate the passion of your heart by actively working on the goals you have established. The focus of your energy and the direction of your goals reflect your values and the importance of God in your life. Do you care about the same areas of your life that God cares about? A man focuses on God's purpose because it is through his relationship with God that he receives a vital source of guidance for his manhood journey. Men who choose to believe in God are blessed when they listen to His instructions; as they listen to God's Spirit within them, they learn how to live in ways that honor Him. As you mature spiritually, God's desire for your life becomes your desire for your life (Psalm 37:4).

We want our lives to be meaningful. When we follow God's will for our lives, we find true meaning. *You're Not Dead Yet* explores what men who are age 50 and older can offer the world and the reasons God might have for keeping us around. God wants each man to live His "why" in the here and now, regardless of his age. He has a specific plan for each of us; He knows what He wants us to be and what He wants us to do—we are still breathing because of these reasons (Jeremiah 29:11). Only you can decide how you will spend the rest of your life: do you want to fulfill God's plan for your life *now*, or do you want to wait until another day? This book encourages you to be your best by acting like God's man—starting today! You can learn how to use your unique history and manly presence to make a spiritual difference in the lives of others.

As the CEO and Founder of Pennsylvania Counseling Services—a company, which provides a broad range of counseling services “to help children, adults and families discover their greatness”—I am acquainted with the many ways that people struggle with life. Every day is an “adventure.” Writing books for men, including several men’s ministry curriculum programs for Knights of the 21st Century, seems to be part of my “why,” as God continues to allow me to breathe; He has called me to challenge you, as I am also challenged, to end this race called life well (1 Corinthians 9:24)!

One of the motivating factors for my writing, which I am emotionally passionate about, is my fear for the future of our world. Every year I say to myself, “It can’t get worse”; then, I turn on the TV and quickly realize it has. The destructive events and actions that are occurring more and more frequently in our world indicate a downward cultural slide that is picking up steam. I see more and more people who are making choices that quite frankly scare me. As human beings, we seem to be discovering crazier and more violent ways of ignoring God’s presence in our lives, and we are participating in destructive behaviors that harm ourselves, our environment and others.

This fear is not for my own life—because with an imperfect heart and a weak genetic history, I am not sure how many days I have left on earth. My fear is about the negative effects of the overall state of the world and the negative impact it will have on my kids, my potential grandchildren, my nieces and nephews, the children of my friends and the youngsters in my church, on the streets and in my country. I look at every person I interact with as having amazing Godly potential. Sadly, instead of their God-given potential being developed, it is often being destroyed (Ephesians 2:10).

As imperfect as the world was while I was growing up, it seems to be getting even worse. I find myself saying, “I remember when...”

just like I used to hear “old guys” say when I was a youngster. Many of the memories from my youth seem more pleasant, wholesome and edifying than what I am experiencing now. The imperfect world I grew up in is being further corrupted by the lack of values, the meaninglessness of life, the manipulation of true spirituality, the death of churches, the corruption of truth, the disregard for human life and the popularity of an “anything goes” attitude (Jude 1:4).

Romans 8:22-26 describes both the groaning of the world and the groaning that comes from deep inside each person. Many of you have likely been groaning about the state of the world as well; it is time to recognize our discomfort and seek healing from God. Like a ship that creaks because of the pressure of the water around it, you are hurting because of the negative influences of our culture, both direct and indirect, which pressure you to compromise your character and abandon your integrity.

Focusing simply on what is wrong in the world is a useless endeavor (Philippians 4:8). It does not encourage us to make positive changes; instead, it allows us to portray ourselves as victims of the world, which keeps us from applying our God-given talents to the problems around us (Isaiah 41:10). When we find ourselves complaining, we must be proactive by taking action and making positive changes. God has called us to step up, fulfill our warrior destiny (Matthew 10:34) and make a difference. He does not want us to be a bunch of Christian males, passively sitting around whining (Ezekiel 22:30). We must overcome our passive male tendencies; we do not know how much time God will give us to fulfill His plan for our lives; our days are numbered and only God knows how long we will live (Job 14:1-6).

As males, we often want to isolate ourselves from others, which limits our ability to enact positive change (Proverbs 18:1). We allow our interactions with other men to be choreographed in simplistic

ways. We limit our conversations with other men to a narrow range of subjects (work, the government, sports, women, money), and we rarely participate in conversations that do not have predictable outcomes. We usually have a specific purpose when we talk, and when it is achieved, we are done talking. We have become comfortable with feeling interpersonally disconnected, and we have trained ourselves to ignore feelings of loneliness. Often, one day runs into the next without an exciting new adventure or challenge crossing our path (Jeremiah 1:18-19). As males, we like to follow certain patterns, and we are comfortable with these behavioral ruts for decades. Eventually, an event in our life, a midlife crisis or a reminder of our aging process wakes us up; we wonder where our lives have gone and what we have accomplished. God's "why" for our lives does not destine us to continue to make the same choices (1 Peter 5:8-9).

When we find ourselves complaining mutually about a specific problem in the world, it demonstrates the significance of the problems; unfortunately, our tendency to isolate ourselves keeps us from working together to solve the more difficult issues of life, which is when it is the most important to work together. We use excuses, which is a way of claiming that the problems are bigger than what we are capable of fixing. *We have given up our hope for a heroic leader who is willing to create a social movement to change what is wrong in our world.* Because we continue to expect someone else to implement change, we are discouraged (1 Corinthians 15:58). If we stay in this rut throughout our lives, we will spend our last days alone and unhappy. Individually, we need to discover God's "why" for our lives, and then collectively, we need to positively influence the world. C.S. Lewis wrote, "Crying is all right in its way while it lasts. But you have to stop sooner or later, and then you still have to decide what to do."¹

1 C.S. Lewis, *The Silver Chair* (New York: HarperCollins, 1981), 19.

Ironically, men often have few close relationships because the creation of a trusting relationship requires vulnerability. Since vulnerability can make a man uncomfortable or, at times, get him killed, he creates distance between himself and other men. Is a male's tendency to isolate himself something a man does? No, it is not! Men work hard to develop supportive relationships with one another—a band of brothers (2 Samuel 10:17-19). Like Jesus modeled, men develop an internal openness to relationships with others and are willing to establish relationships with a diverse group of people; they work through the individual differences that challenge them, which allows them to form trusting relationships. They have relationships with others who will provide encouragement, congratulation, confrontation and accountability (James 5:16). Unfortunately, relationships like these are rare. Our choice to ignore our need to accept Jesus as our personal Savior and ask Him to forgive our sins is the primary detrimental cause for our culture's current problems; added to this is the lack of manhood and the availability of the manly leadership that is needed to impact the culture positively (Ephesians 5:25).

The Knights of the 21st Century men's ministry program asks, "If life suddenly crashed down upon you, could you give me the names of six men you could call and know, without a doubt, that they would support you?" Most men cannot name more than one. Most women can name six. When males isolate themselves from one another, it negatively impacts their ability to pursue manhood at foundational levels, which limits their ability to fulfill God's plan for their lives. This negative male tendency, which causes a man to ignore God's "why" for his life, must become a focal point for making positive manly changes. If not, this mindset will inhibit the development of his full potential and his ability to connect with other men who, collectively, can make a positive difference. Each chapter ends with discussion questions which can help facilitate

your conversations with other men about life and God and help you build these important relationship skills.

As a man who has frequently traveled throughout the country, spending time with various groups of men, it is shocking to discover how little time men spend together, either inside or outside of a church environment. This perpetuates the negative trends in our culture, as many church-going males are ill-prepared to defend their beliefs and values (1 Peter 3:15) or to develop the interpersonal skills that create beneficial relationships with others. Funding for men's ministry programs is minimal; pastors often appear to be threatened by the idea of men's ministry, or they are hopeless regarding the development of a program that encourages men to meet regularly. Men have not learned how essential an accountability group is (Hebrews 10:25) to developing and maintaining a strong character.

If we do not overcome our tendency to isolate ourselves, we will never fulfill God's "why" for our lives. We need support, feedback and guidance from others, and we need the encouragement of a team. Often, we must ignore the status quo (ruts) and do what may feel uncomfortable—we must spend time together, connect with each other and serve each other (Mark 10:45).

The fact that many of us have given up hope for a heroic leader who will change our world saddens me terribly. We should all want to be that manly leader. As men who follow God, we cannot sit idly, doing nothing about the negative forces around us (Romans 12:11). As young men, we were passionate about achieving difficult tasks: we tried to catch that elusive giant fish, beat that unbeatable team and date that unattainable beautiful woman. In our youth, we were less defensive with other guys because we recognized our need for each other. We needed other guys to fill the positions on our baseball team; we worked together to fight the latest giant.

David may have been willing to volunteer to fight Goliath because of his youthful energy and the fact that he hadn't yet learned to avoid challenges or to attempt to limit God's power in his life. His faith was pure; the values he fought for were clear. Didn't we like ourselves better when our idealistic passion pushed us to attempt the impossible and when dreaming big was a normal part of our nature (Galatians 5:13)?

Sadly, by age 50, most of us have stopped attempting to understand the disintegration of life around us—we just accept it. We have been domesticated; the spiritual fire in our bellies has been extinguished (2 Chronicles 15:7). Our gradual resignation to the state of the world ensures that life's problems will continue to exist. We have lost the "edge" and the motivation we had in our youth, when we were on the track team, building a tree fort or working at our first job. Our continual boredom and lack of ambition causes us to approach life as if waiting is our only option. We are deeply disappointed with our lives; we often wonder what happened to our courage and our willingness to take risks. We expect God to raise up warriors, but we don't bother to learn how to become warriors ourselves. What will it take for us to step up and put God's "why" into action (Luke 6:38)?

We continue to wait for a leader to take courage while we ignore our own God-given gifts of leadership and influence (Colossians 3:16). We falsely believe that our glory days are finished, and the only thing we have to look forward to is a rocking chair and time to reflect. When we look back, we will see a man who lived to age 74, but exhausted his energy by age 50; a man who had a family, provided for them and then stepped back passively, letting them attempt to survive alone in a destructive culture; or a man who complained and always allowed someone else to lead.

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lead; struggle against authority, structure or rules; remain isolated; complain, while doing nothing; be afraid to admit we need help; and fail to rekindle the energy we had as youths to pursue God's ideal (Ecclesiastes 12:1). I hope you will join me as we each seek God's "why" for our lives. Together, we can make every day we have left count for God, the One who has given us so much and has the power to help us change the world (Ephesians 3:20). You can succeed at this challenge—you're not dead yet!

Group Discussion: Share your answers with your group.

1. Briefly talk about your week, sharing the highlights or the concerns you may have.
2. Share a thought or an idea from this chapter that caught your attention. How does it relate to your life?
3. Explain how you feel about the following statements:
 - Your days are numbered.
 - God has a specific reason, or "why," for allowing you to continue to live and breathe.
4. Are you motivated to find God's "why" for your life? Do you have a plan for doing it?
5. What future plans do you think God has for you?
6. How can others help you discover and fulfill God's "why" for your life?

7. Hebrews 12:1 states: "A huge crowd of witnesses is all around us. So let us throw off everything that stands in our way. Let us throw off any sin that holds on to us so tightly. And let us keep on running the race marked out for us." How does this Bible verse relate to your manhood journey?

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Our Team

Author: Dr. Roy Smith has worked for over 30 years as a psychologist/counselor to men and their families. He developed the Knights of the 21st Century program to help men grow, which helps them learn how to lead more effectively and contributes to the over-reaching goal of positively changing our culture. Roy has a Master of Divinity degree and a Master's and a Doctorate degree in Clinical Psychology. Roy is married to Jan, who is also a psychologist; they have two children.

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There's an important question that every man over the age of 50 should answer:
If God, who is in charge of my days,
has allowed me to keep living
my life—WHY?
Discover God's "why" for the
second half of your life.



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