

HEROIC

Expedition Guide
for Leaders

TRAIL NOTES TO EXPEDITION LEADERS

You are about to embark on an expedition with some men that will forever change all of you. Once a man receives and experiences the message of *Heroic*, it is nearly impossible to go back to life as it once was. Your work as a leader is to be a steady guide through all the twists and turns of the journey ahead. There will be bumps in the road as well as amazing breakthroughs. And through your encouragement and good hope, you can be a part of opening doors for men into lives that they didn't think were possible. I have had the joy of doing this for men, and I want you to experience that joy as well.

For those of you who may want to use this guide by yourself, I don't want to leave you out. The questions for each chapter can be used for personal journaling and inner reflection. I think writing out your thoughts brings clarity to the deep things in your soul. You can also write down prayers that come out of your reflections. Remember that the goal is not to finish all the questions. The goal is to get in touch with your heart and there experience the presence of the living Christ with you and in you.

Now for those of you who are leading groups of men, here are some guidelines to help:

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- *Heroic* is divided into thirteen chapters. It can easily fit into a fall or spring schedule, taking one chapter each week. Have a brief introductory meeting to hand out the books, give an overview, and take questions. That would make a total of fourteen weeks to meet.
- During the introductory meeting, I encourage you to ask the men to commit to the group for the whole thirteen weeks. Then I would ask for another commitment, one to confidentiality within the group. That means that whatever is said in the group stays there. It is important for men to hear this for two reasons. First, it will communicate to them that something important is going to happen here. Second, it will build trust among the men as they start the journey together.
- Also during that introductory meeting, let them know that your work here is not to fix each other, give advice, or, worse still, to criticize and argue. Your work here is to help each other find a voice to your hearts and listen to each other, in the confidence that Jesus will show up and meet you at your point of need.
- Suggested time for the thirteen regular meetings is sixty to ninety minutes, depending on schedules.
- The size of the group can vary widely. You can use this book with just one other man, either a peer or someone whom you mentor. On the other end of the spectrum, this expedition guide could work with groups of up to seven or eight. I don't suggest going larger than that, as it becomes more difficult for men to share the larger the group becomes.
- Each chapter in the *Expedition Guide* is divided into two sections. The first one, titled "The Landscape," summarizes the key ideas in that chapter. The second section, titled "Exploring the Landscape," gives a number of questions to start the conversation.
- These questions are not study guide questions and should not be seen as such. They are almost exclusively provocative questions. They are meant to help men verbalize their story and the deeper things in their hearts.

AS YOU MOVE OUT

- Assign the chapter that you will be working through the week before. If they are not able to read the chapter for some reason, it's still OK to come and be a part of the conversation.
- Suggested structure of each meeting is to start with a brief prayer and then give a general overview, reading the points out loud from "The Landscape" section. Then move right into your selected questions.
- There are many more questions given in each chapter than you will have time for in a given meeting. Choose four to five that you think may be best for your group and use those. Or just choose one question from each of the sub-sections. If you have time left over, there are many other questions you can use.
- Some questions require more risk in answering than others. You will need to make decisions about which questions to use based on your feel for the men. Some groups will need more time to move into riskier waters. Others not so much.
- Your job is not to get right answers. Your work is to be a steady guide to encourage men to speak about what is in their hearts. You can do that best by going first in answering the questions. It's not necessary to do that all the time, but it will set the tone for the group. If you are honest and real, it will encourage the other men to do the same.
- Make sure that everyone speaks during your time together, especially the quieter ones. It's OK to just ask someone who has not spoken yet to respond to a question. I actually like to have every man answer whatever questions I use. You don't get to probe as many questions, but you do get to hear from everyone.
- Some questions may provoke long conversations. Others not so much. Be willing to stay in places that seem to be energizing or revelatory to the group. Move on to the next question when it seems to wind down or you get off track. Again, the point is not to make it through all your selected questions, but to allow space and time for men to speak about these critical matters.
- Make sure you allow time at the end for a brief spoken prayer together. You can do that, or have another man offer it, or pray as a group. I also like to end the prayer time with a minute of silence, closing it with a spoken *Amen*. It's a moment when we can just be in the presence of Jesus together. It may seem a bit strange at first to the group, but men come to love that time of silence. I know that from my own experience of taking men into silence.
- There may be an issue that comes up in a man's life that needs immediate attention. Sometimes it comes up in a story he has never shared with anyone. Sometimes he may talk about an extremely difficult event in the past or present, uncontrollable emotions, or even suicidal thoughts. Never carry a burden like that by yourself. I would ask him to go with you to seek help from a pastor or a counselor. If he has no one in mind, suggest someone and then help him set up a time, checking back in to see that it has happened.

Finally, as the leader, you can best keep the expedition on course by your own dependence on Jesus as you enter silence with Him by yourself. Trust me, He wants to show up and work in your group. So talk to Him about how you feel about the group, about the obstacles you see, and the open doors you hope for. Pray for each man as you see fit and walk in the confidence that He is doing something. In the end, it's not about your preparation or leadership skills, however helpful those may be. It's about trusting that He is alive and well and working in these men. Expect Him to show His love for you in a deeper way. Expect Him to offer good things to the men. Expect great things from Him for all of you.

Final note: I want to thank Greg Davis from West End Community Church in Nashville, Tennessee, for helping me construct this guide. I could have never done it without his wisdom and thoughtfulness.

EXPEDITION GUIDE TO *HEROIC*

CHAPTER 1 • SEARCHING FOR HEROES

THE LANDSCAPE

- From boyhood into manhood, we are searching for three types of heroes: the strong man, the wise man, and the noble man.
- We idolize our chosen heroes with no encouragement or instruction, hoping to find true masculinity by connecting to those heroes.
- But our heroes always fail us at some point. They cannot stay on the pedestal we put them on. We are left feeling confused, cynical, or both.
- The Bible explains our hero worship as faint glimmers of the lost glory we once had as men. Because of the Fall in Genesis 3, we are shadows of our true selves.

EXPLORING THE LANDSCAPE

Introduction

- What was it like to hear the true story of George Reeves, the original Superman?

The Search Begins

- Bring up a memory of trying to be like a superhero. Whom did you pretend to be? How did you act or dress?
- What man did you admire as a boy? As a young man? What caused you to see him as a hero?
- Three types of heroes are mentioned: the strong man, the wise man, and the noble man. Name a characteristic of each. Then name a movie or book with each type of hero and explain why you picked it.
- Focus on the noble man: “But at some point, we are drawn to another type of hero, one who uses his strength and wisdom not for his own benefit but for others. We are looking for the noble man. Here is the quintessential hero, the one who lives for a transcendent purpose, not for his reputation. And he remains true to that purpose even when it costs him dearly. We are drawn to this warrior who fights for the good, precisely because he does it for everyone else.” What does the quote bring to mind for you?
- “That’s the power our heroes have on us. We put them up on a pedestal and worship them in wonder and adoration.” Do you agree or disagree? Why?
- “Finally, what is at the bottom of our search for the heroic? It is this. We are looking for the ideal man. We are looking for true masculinity. We know that we don’t have it, and we know that we must find a hero to get it.” How have you seen this work out in your life?

Troubles on the Trail

- How have your heroes failed you? Take an example and explain what happened. What did you feel? What did you do with your disappointment?
- “The stories of our failed heroes come in all shapes and sizes, of uncles discovered with pornography, of cousins who sexually abused, of coaches caught lying, of athletes cheating with drugs, of teachers living secret lives, of musicians using the stage to hide—all once admired, all now defrocked. You have heard these stories yourself. You have known these men yourself.” What stirs in you as you read this?
- Have your fallen heroes ruined the idea of the hero for you? Why or why not?

A Light in the Darkness

- According to the Bible, God’s glory can be seen both in creation and in us, created in His image. But we have lost that glory. The search for the hero is actually the search for lost glory. How does this change the way you see your heroes? The way you see yourself?
- “Yet we do not cease to exist, but live in a kind of shadow world, where we only half exist. We are not men, but phantoms of our true selves. We have lost *our* glory, and the penalty is the very lack of glory itself. We are left hungering for it.” React to this. How do you see this in men? In yourself?
- “We long for men to be more than what they are because they were *supposed to* be that way.” How have you sensed that longing in your life?

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CHAPTER 2 • THE FATHER EFFECT

THE LANDSCAPE

- Our fathers were meant to be the primary conduits of masculinity to us. They were to hand it on through verbal affirmation and active engagement.
- But the story of so many men is one of violent fathers who wound or silent fathers who offer nothing.
- The fallout on the sons is immense, disconnecting them from the masculine structure of the world. They will turn to any illicit or destructive behavior to try to feel masculine. And their views of God as Father are deeply tainted.
- Yet running away from our fathers only perpetuates the curse. The healing of the father/son relationship is a key part of the redemption through Christ.

EXPLORING THE LANDSCAPE

Introduction

- Tell about a happy memory with your father.
- The title of this chapter is “The Father Effect.” Describe in a few sentences how your father affected you as a boy and as a young man.
- “Out of this experience with my father, I intuited an idea that was to become bedrock truth for years: *I am on my own. There is no one to help me. This is the way life is.*” What bedrock truth about yourself, good or bad, have you derived from your father? Can you recall a story when that truth was formulated?

Our First Heroes

- How was your father’s father heroic to your father? How was your father heroic to you?
- “Every boy needs to feel settled inside of himself. He needs to feel OK in his skin. That interior assurance comes best by the affirming word of the father. This is the only way a boy can separate from his mother and enter the landscape of masculinity.” React to this.
- How have you seen fathers bless their sons with verbal affirmation?
- Did your father try to affirm you? If so, give an example or two.
- How did your father try to engage actively in your life? Give a couple of examples.
- “When a father chooses to play with his son and offer whatever skill he has, something is transmitted that can only come this way—the otherliness of masculinity. This otherliness is why fathers feel so heroic to boys. They are born with the distant echo of man’s untainted glory planted inside. But it is still latent and inaccessible to the son. The father becomes the primary way that sleeping memory is resurrected. The boy sees his dad in resonant color and feels masculinity strike inside of him. He awakens and longs to follow.” What does this quote stir up inside of you?

Violent and Silent

- What story about a violent or silent father most affected you?
- Whom do you know who had a violent or silent father? How did it affect him?
- How do you see your own father here?
- “When a son grows up with a violent father, there is no glow. There is no glory. There is a trail of devastation left running through his heart. But the silent father is just as destructive, maybe more so. Instead of engagement or affirmation, there is nothing at all. No voice. No presence. No touch. The silence is deafening.
- The father has no fire to give, and the son is left abandoned out in the cold to shiver.” Respond to this quote. Do you see any of your own story here.

The Fallout

- Imagine receiving ongoing engagement and affirmation from your father or a father figure. What would have been different about your story as a man?
- “In that struggle to survive, the son will turn anywhere to find something that feels masculine. It could be the reckless behavior of peers, even if it’s self-destructive. It could be playing the tough, angry guy that keeps everyone at bay. It could be turning to a woman and demanding that she make him feel like a man. It could be homosexual pursuits hoping to scavenge for his masculinity by sexual means.” How do you see any of this happening to young men you know? How have you seen it in your own life?
- How do you sense your relationship with God has been affected by your relationship with your father?

Running Away

- How have you tried to emulate the good qualities in your father? How have you tried to run away from him?
- “And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction” (Mal. 4:6). React to this. What is helpful about this Old Testament promise of Jesus? What questions does it bring up?
- Is there healing that needs to happen between you and your father? Put words to what you think that is.

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CHAPTER 3 • CHASING FALSE GLORY

THE LANDSCAPE

- We all attempt to be heroic, wanting to feel the greatness we saw in our heroes. We want to be seen as strong and wise and admired for it.
- We attempt to be that through our athletic achievements, career climbs, marriages, and through chasing fame, success, and power. Or we numb out when we fail at the attempt.
- The attempt to be heroic backfires. We end up in a constant state of comparing and competing, always trying to prove ourselves as men, and covering up our weaknesses. We become narcissists, warping reality around our needs.
- The Bible explains this attempt as trying to cover up our loss of glory, a loss experienced by us as shame. But we end up chasing false glory.

EXPLORING THE LANDSCAPE

Introduction

- Bill opened with his story of chasing fame. How can you relate to his story?
- “Every man chases after a greatness that eludes him.” Do you agree or disagree? Why?

A Host of Options

- There are many ways we chase after false glory to become the heroes of our own stories. Athletic prowess, career success, and marital bliss were mentioned. In addition, men chase after wealth, power, and reputation. Choose one primary way you have chased false glory. Describe how it has lured you and driven you.
- Can you think of other ways men chase after false glory?
- How has your chase for false glory affected you? Affected those close to you?

Going Underground

- If a man cannot find any way to achieve some sense of glory, however false, he will seek to attach himself to things that will give him some level of comfort. How have you seen pornography work this way in men's lives? How have you dealt with pornography?
- “Besides pornography, there are a host of other attachments men chase after for comfort—the next affair, the next workout, the next vacation, the next casino trip, the next dinner out. They vary in terms of social respectability, yet the energy behind them is the same.” What are some other attachments you have sought after?
- How have you seen substance abuse act as another way to find comfort? What about suicide?

The Mess Gets Messier

- “If our search for heroes lands us in confusion, our attempt to be one only makes the mess messier. Nothing turns out as we thought. It's a reverse-Midas touch. Nothing turns to gold. Everything we touch spoils ... There is a subtle but unmistakable shift that occurs when we pursue what we saw in our heroes.” Explain this shift.
- Along with this shift, men constantly are comparing and competing or are trying to prove themselves as men. Which one of these tends to be more dominant in your life? How does it happen to you?
- The cover-up is also mentioned as a part of the mess that occurs. Have you ever had a dream of being naked or underdressed in public? Describe it. What do our dreams here reveal about our fears?
- “The drive to compare, to prove ourselves, and to cover up has not turned us into noble men. It has made us into narcissists. We seem incurably bent on warping reality to meet the demands of our desolate souls. We are not heroes, offering life to those around. We are black holes, sucking life out of them.” Respond.
- How have you seen narcissism in men affect others?

Sorting The Mess Out

- How do you see the fall of Adam and Eve connected to our chase for false glory?
- “Shame is a sharp reminder of our loss of glory, like a splinter we cannot ignore or remove. Any sense of strength and wisdom we attain is only a covering for what we truly feel—weak and foolish. We are not men, and we know it.’ How do you see this in your own life?
- “We have to find a covering, and we have to find it now—whatever the means, whatever the cost.” What lengths have you seen men go to cover themselves? What about you?

A Picture of False Glory

- “Most of us are only ready to hear another option when we see the damage we have inflicted on others or reach a breaking point ourselves.” Describe your own sense of readiness to pursue another option rather than false glory.
- “‘Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,’ declares the Lord” (Jer. 9:23–24). Respond. What resonates with you in these verses? What questions do you have about them?

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CHAPTER 4 • A GLIMMER IN THE DARKNESS

THE LANDSCAPE

- Stories and movies have a resonance about them that mere concepts cannot convey. We just know that something true is being spoken to us through them.
- The heroic journey is the backbone of all myth and literature. The hero's discovery of his true identity and his quest are two major themes that guide all heroic journeys.
- The resonance we feel in story is a summons to take our own heroic journey, a prospect we both desire and fear.
- Despite our fall from God, the imprint of His glory still resides in us, even though faint. That imprint is felt in our deepest longings, ones that surface in the stories and movies we love.
- What we see in a hero is a fleeting glimpse of a real man untainted by the fall.
- Stories and movies can inspire us, but they cannot transform us into heroes.

EXPLORING THE LANDSCAPE

Introduction

- Because of our confusion with the heroic longing, we often just settle down and try to get by. How have you seen this work out in your life?
- Bill told the story of being jolted awake with the stories of Greek heroes. What story has jolted you awake? How did it awaken you?

The Resonance of Story

- What stories were you drawn to as a boy? As a young man? What about now?
- Take a hero you have loved from a story or a movie. What did you see in him that you wanted to imitate? What did his life teach you?
- Make a list of some of your favorite movies and characters. What common themes do you see in them?

The Story Behind the Story

- The basic components of the heroic journey are summarized at the top of p.64: the call to take the quest, the obstacles, the external enemies, the internal flaws, the defeats and victories, the final confrontation, and the accomplishment of the quest. Take one of the favorite movies you named above and describe how the heroic journey plays out in the plot.
- "Yet all of these journeys closely follow two thematic guideposts: identity and quest. Somewhere along the way, the hero accepts who he is and what he is to do. What makes the story grip us is his determination to live out that identity and quest, whatever the obstacles, whatever the sacrifices." How have you seen this work out in the stories that have gripped you?
- "When we see a heroic man in action, we don't just want to watch the story. We want to enter it. In that moment, we are being summoned. We are being called to take our own heroic journey." The idea of taking your own heroic journey can stir up hope, cynicism, fear, or other things. What does it stir up inside of you?
- "What every man longs to be is also his greatest fear." What are your fears about taking the heroic journey yourself? What may be the greatest fear?

Probing Deeper

- Explain what the heroic journey has to do with God, the Great Storyteller.
- “What the great stories do is give us a fleeting glimpse of a real man, one who seems untainted by the Fall. The imprint still left in us awakens at the sight of such a man. We tremble with hope and desire. In that moment, we are being called back home to our rightful selves. We also give that man a name. We call him a hero.” What new insights does this quote present for you?
- The story of Gideon was told as an example of the heroic journey in the Bible. What new insights did you glean from that example?
- “God is the great Hero, but He also calls men out to be heroic under His tutelage. He calls them out to taste their glory as men. That’s how He gets glory.” What would it be like for you to be under God’s tutelage? What would it be like for you to taste your glory as a man?

The Return to the Old Self

- Bill told about being inspired by the story of Eric Liddell, but it could not transform him. How have you seen that happen with the stories and movies you love?

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CHAPTER 5 • THE GREAT HERO

THE LANDSCAPE

- Men do not feel about Jesus the way they feel about their heroes.
- There are several reasons for this:
 - Jesus did not appear to be a warrior.
 - Our visual images of Jesus make Him look weak.
 - There are demonic forces seeking to blind men to His glory as a hero.
- But Jesus really is the great Hero. Here's why:
 - As God is the hero of the Old Testament, so is Jesus in the New Testament.
 - Jesus lived out the heroic journey in terms of His identity and quest.
 - His story is the one great heroic myth that actually happened in history.
- Finally, He came as a warrior incognito the first time, but when He comes again, it will be to conquer evil forever.

EXPLORING THE LANDSCAPE

Introduction

- How do you feel about being publicly associated with Jesus? How have you experienced shame over Him?
- “Many men in the church are conflicted about Him as well. We do not feel about Him the way we feel about our heroes. And we don't know why.” How do you see this in your own life?

The Hero We Love

- What new insights did you have into the movie *Braveheart*?
- Respond to this quote from Randall Wallace, who wrote *Braveheart*: “Jesus is the ultimate hero. His message in the face of unspeakable suffering—spiritual, physical and mental—was, ‘You can try to kill my body, but I will never deny who I am.’”

A Strange Disconnect

- “They may believe He is the Son of God and the Lord of their lives. They may worship Him at church and pray to Him at home. But to admire Jesus as the great Hero? To love Him as the ultimate noble Man? The idea feels strange, even alien.” Does it feel strange or alien to you? Why?
- Several reasons were given about our inability to see Jesus as heroic. Is there one of those that seemed especially true for you?

Sketching A Better Image

- Several points were made to help us see Jesus as heroic. Which one drew you in the most?
- “Great men have always left their mark, etching themselves into the hearts of others. Jesus was that greatest of men. Whatever He did, wherever He went, He marked others with the slap of His masculine vigor, His abounding energy, and His indomitable passion. If you spent any time with Him, you were marked forever. It was the mark of glory.” React to this.
- The story was mentioned of Jesus taking care of His mother as He was dying on the cross. How do you feel about the way Jesus walked through His torture and death?

The Warrior Incognito

- “Instead of a warrior, He came as a servant, one with the hidden strength of a warrior pulsating under the surface.” React to this.
- “We love the heroes we do only because they were a little like Him.” How have you experienced this with your heroes?
- How have you felt about William Wallace and his quest? What do you feel about Jesus and His quest?
- What does it feel like for you to say that you love Jesus?

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CHAPTER 6 • THE CALL OF THE COACH

THE LANDSCAPE

- Young men all long for a coach, a wise man who can guide them into manhood.
- All the heroic tales have a coach, a guide who speaks truth to the hero and prepares him for his quest.
- Jesus was also coached and guided by His Father. Yet He is also the great Hero who wants to coach men into the heroic life.
- Jesus coached His disciples by simply inviting them to come close to Him. That same invitation is extended to men today.

EXPLORING THE LANDSCAPE

Introduction

- Talk about an influential coach in your life. How heroic was he for you? What did you love about him? What has stayed with you from your time with him?
- Talk about your experience of being a coach, if you have been. What did you love about it?

Longing For A Coach

- “The coach fills that longing for a heroic mentor, a wise man he can follow. He longs for a guide through the mystery and turmoil of entering manhood.” How can you relate to this longing?
- How can you relate to Bill’s story of feeling uncoached in life?

Coaching in the Great Stories

- Have you ever thought about Jesus as a coach before? How does this change the way you see Him?
- “Could it be possible that Jesus knows our longing and wants us to become heroic like Him? It’s not only possible. It’s the whole point of Christianity.” React to this.
- A number of objections to the thought of being personally coached by Jesus were raised on the top of p. 96. Do you identify with any of those objections? Do you have another objection?

How Jesus Coached Men

- How did Jesus coach His disciples? Put words to some of the unique ways He did that using the story of Levi or the story of Peter and Andrew.
- What did Jesus do with His men then that you wish He would do for you now?

Tagging Along With The Hero

- Take one of your early heroes. What would it have been like to be invited to spend a day with him? To be trained by him in his craft?
- “The Coach of the ages calls men to come and tag along beside Him so that He can rub off onto them. The great Hero wants to train men today in the ways of the heroic.” React to this.

Stories of Personal Coaching

- “It is coaching born out of an intimate knowledge of your story—your wounds and your joys, your questions and your hopes. It comes directed to you, with what you need for that moment.” React to this description of Jesus’ personal coaching.
- A number of examples of personal coaching by Jesus were given. What intrigues you? What confuses you? What frightens you?
- What would you want to hear from Him as your Coach?

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CHAPTER 7 • INITIATION BY DEATH

THE LANDSCAPE

- Male initiation has always involved being tested, facing fear, and even confronting death.
- So much of the confusion among men today stems from being uninitiated. They have the bodies of men but the souls of boys.
- In the heroic journey in story, the hero is initiated by facing death in order to complete the quest.
- But the initiation Jesus offers is more complete than anything offered in initiation rites or heroic tales: He asks us to come and die so that we can follow Him.
- Despite our fear of entering death, we can trust Jesus here. He went before us and entered death, coming out more alive than ever.

EXPLORING THE LANDSCAPE

Introduction

- Tell a story of initiation into something. What happened? What fear did you face? What did you feel on the other side of it?

Male Initiation

- What male initiation rites from primitive cultures do you know something about?
- “We cannot just walk into manhood. We must fight and risk to enter it. However much we may fear the testing, we fear being left untested even more.” React to this quote.
- How have you seen the lack of initiation in so many men?

Initiation in Story

- Maximus, Luke Skywalker, and Frodo were all mentioned as heroic characters who chose what seemed like death in order to enter life. This was their initiation. Name another story or movie in which the hero faced a similar choice.
- How has the desire to be initiated been stirred in you through story? Is there a particular one you have in mind?

Initiation and Jesus

- What connection points do you see between male initiation and the call of Jesus?
- “Instead, to deny yourself is to refuse any more attempts at being your own hero. It is to let go of your agendas for fame, power, and success. It is a radical shift in the gravitational center of a man’s soul. We move from the narcissist to a noble man only by this reckless abandonment to God’s will.” Respond. How do you see this as initiation?
- “But if a man chooses to let his life go because of Jesus, if he chooses what all heroes at some point must choose, he has begun to step into the heroic life.” What does this quote stir in you?

Entering Death

- How have you discovered life by tasting death? Tell a story of your experience.
- What questions or doubts do you have about entering death as you follow Jesus? What fears do you have? What hopes?
- How might Jesus be trying to initiate you now? What death are you being asked to enter?
- How would it feel to be on your own heroic journey instead of just watching one on the outside in story?

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CHAPTER 8 • DETACHING

THE LANDSCAPE

- We are born with a deep need to attach. But we end up attaching to created things rather than the Creator. These become our idols and our addictions.
- We hope to find in our idols what we long for, but they only ruin us.
- In the experience of being loved by Jesus, we are given the grace to detach from our idols and attach to Him.
- When a man chooses to detach, it will feel at first like he is entering death.
- But attaching to Jesus will lead him to life and freedom to live heroically.

EXPLORING THE LANDSCAPE

The Power of Attachment

- What disordered attachments have you seen in men? Name some that are socially acceptable and some that aren't.
- The stories of Bill's and Alan's disordered attachments were told. What do you identify with in these stories?
- "We choose an idol, hoping to find life. Instead, we find death and lose even the power to choose." How have you seen this play out in your life?

The Death Grip of Idols

- Name some examples in the Bible of idolatry and its effects.
- "We have all been foolish men, auctioning our hearts off to idols, only to find that we cannot buy them back. Once attached, we do not know how to detach." Respond to this quote.

A Mythic Parallel

- "Every man finds a ring, calls it 'my precious,' and sells his soul for it, hoping to become heroic. Instead it castrates him, emotionally and spiritually. Now emasculated, he is shrunken to a pathetic state. He hides from others. He forgets his name. And he can't let it go." What might your "precious" be if you had to name it? How has it affected you?

The Grace to Detach

- What does attaching to Jesus look like for you?
- How does experiencing Jesus' love give us the grace to detach from idols?
- "Perhaps the first really heroic thing a man does is right here. It is an act of tremendous courage with a willingness to walk into the unknown. He chooses to enter the death of detachment. It is all part of his initiation." What surprises you about this quote? What encourages you?
- Stories of detachment were told in this section. What did you identify with?
- What idols have you already detached from?
- What idols do you know you are still attached to? How might Jesus be giving you the grace to detach?

Heroic Freedom

- What outcome to your life have you tried to plan?
- How does detachment give men the freedom to let go of certain outcomes?
- How could the greater cause of God's kingdom help you in the process of detaching?

EXPEDITION GUIDE TO *HEROIC*

CHAPTER 9 • UNMASKING

THE LANDSCAPE

- The experience of shame is universal, as well as our response: We cover and hide.
- As we hide our true selves, we construct a false self that is more presentable to the world.
- The tragedy of the false self is that it can never be heroic.
- Jesus calls us to enter death by unmasking the false self and facing our shame. Here we will find deep strength and wisdom.
- Jesus will also take us at some point into our core wound to heal it.

EXPLORING THE LANDSCAPE

Introduction

- Tell about someone you know who has overcome shame in his life.

The Power of Shame

- What do you think gives shame such power in our lives?
- How does shame give rise to the false self?
- Tell a story of experiencing shame in your life.

The Tragedy of the False Self

- “Here lies the tragedy of shame. Covering ourselves doesn’t feel like a choice but an escape from certain annihilation. It is a choice nonetheless. We choose to concoct what is not real, what can never be real, because it has no roots in God. It is a sham from start to finish.” React and respond to this passage.
- “Whatever the false self has relied on will collapse.” How have you seen this happen in men’s lives?
- “But the real tragedy of false self lies with the heroic longing. The false man can never be the noble man. He can never be heroic. That false man is forever running and hiding.” React and respond to this passage.

Discovering the True Self

- “When a man unmask before other men, there is respect and admiration. He has displayed courage. He has stared down the tyrant of shame and refused to cower. He is becoming heroic.” Tell a story of seeing a man do this before others. How did it impact you?
- Several Scripture passages were mentioned in this section: Eph. 4:22-24, I John 1:7, and I Cor. 1:24-25. Which one of these seems to speak most to you in terms of discovering your true self? How does it help you?

The Power of Transparency

- “What would your life be like if you had no secrets and no shame? What would it feel like to live each day out of your true self as a man?” React and respond to these questions.
- “Remember the whole point of His coming is to make us like Himself. He is the vanguard of the new creation. He is the pioneer of the new man.” What stirs in you when you think about becoming more like Christ in His transparency?
- Transparency gives permission for other men to follow suit and be transparent. What’s been your experience of this?

The Wound Behind the Shame

- “But if we are willing, the Healer of our souls will move into this carefully guarded space and speak into the wound. How He does this for each man will be different. There is no formula, for each man’s wound is unique.” What does this quote evoke in you? Fear, hope, agitation, excitement, something else?
- What wound has Jesus been revealing in your life? What wound has Jesus been healing in your life?

EXPEDITION GUIDE TO *HEROIC*

CHAPTER 10 • THE FIGHT FOR IDENTITY

THE LANDSCAPE

- Men find something to make them feel strong and affirmed and chain their identity to it.
- In addition, men carry so many negative statements about their identity.
- The identity truths of the New Testament give us needed ammo in the fight for our identity.
- The vicious fight will call out the warrior in us to stand in the truth.
- But we also need a personal renaming—a name that only God can speak to us.

EXPLORING THE LANDSCAPE

Introduction

- Describe something valuable to you that was lost and then found.
- The examples of Frodo and Neo were given to show how the heroic journey involves the revelation of a man's true identity. Can you think of other examples you love from stories or movies?

Lost in No-Man's Land

- “We find something that seems to make us feel strong, something that wins the respect of men and the love of a woman, and cobble together some sense of who we are from it. This is our fallen identity. The price tag for such a maneuver is huge: Our identity is forever chained to that role. When it changes, as it inevitably will, we are thrown back into the same no-man's land to wander again.” React to this quote.
- How have you tried to self-construct your sense of identity?
- Some toxic statements about our identity were listed on p. 153. What one or two toxic statements have lodged in your own heart?
- How has Satan used these statements to accuse you?

The Fight Begins

- Have you ever thought that your identity is a battlefield? Expand on this.
- A list of New Testament truths about our identity was offered on p. 154. Pick one that seems to speak strongest to you. Why do you think so?

Calling Forth the Warrior

- How is Jesus calling forth the warrior in you through this battle over identity?
- Several stories of the battle were recounted. How does your story relate to these?

The Renaming Begins

- What is the root meaning of your name? How has that influenced your identity?
- “It is here we find God revealing the mystery of a man's identity. He reveals it in a new name, a name that shows how God feels about him.” What would it feel like to be renamed by God?
- “A watershed is crossed when a man receives a new name . . . Hints of this watershed crossing happen whenever we are recast in the eyes of another.” Tell a story of feeling surprised at hearing how someone sees you.
- “But how do we find our true name? . . . We ask and stay open for the answer. There is no formula for how our names will come to us. I can't give you a set of steps to follow. God will approach each of us in the way we need.” Have you ever asked God for your true name? What have you learned?
- Do you know a man who has been renamed by God? What is his story?
- Imagine living from your true identity. What would change in your life?

EXPEDITION GUIDE TO *HEROIC*

CHAPTER 11 • THE SHAKING OF THIS WORLD

THE LANDSCAPE

- The idea of taking a quest is a fiery longing in a man's heart.
- Jesus will mark us with a quest to set us ablaze, but what that quest is and how it comes to us will be different for everyone.
- The quest will involve not only dangers and trials but also facing our deepest fears.
- The quest will also seem impossible so that we learn to rely on God's power.
- Taking the quest will give a man sharp focus, unexpected strength, and indomitable joy.

EXPLORING THE LANDSCAPE

Introduction

- What real-life heroes have inspired you with their quest in life? What was their quest? How has it inspired you?

Marked with a Quest

- Several examples of the quest were listed from stories and movies. Describe another epic quest that has stirred you.
- "To become a man, you must be propelled by a mission. To become heroic, you must be fueled by a quest." Respond/reflect.
- Tell a story about a time you felt propelled by a quest to do something or accomplish something. It could be an athletic quest, an adventure quest, a vocational quest, or something else.

Receiving a Quest

- "How does a man discover his unique part in this mission? How does he gain clarity about his role in advancing the Kingdom? The answer is surprisingly similar to finding one's identity. The quest is not something you find. It finds you. Your part is to start asking." Have you asked Jesus about your quest? What have you learned?
- A number of biblical examples were described on p. 170, showing different ways God gives a quest to a man. Can you think of any others from the Bible? Is there one you especially relate to? Why do you think so?
- How have you experienced the call of the quest from God in your past?

The Perils of the Quest

- Take the story of a quest you told above (in "Marked with a Quest") and describe the obstacles you had to face and overcome.
- "With such dangers all around, our response is understandable: hunker down, get rid of as much risk as possible, and protect yourself. We then try to construct a safe life for ourselves. It is this self-protective scheme that is upended by the quest." Respond.
- One universal peril of the quest is the prospect of facing our deepest fears. What are some of the fears you know you need to face?
- The other universal peril is that the quest God gives us appears impossible from the start. Besides the examples of Carey, Wilberforce, and Solzhenitsyn given in the chapter, do you know of someone who has taken a quest from God that seemed impossible?

What Happens to a Man on a Quest

- What is life like for a man without a quest? Then dream about your life with a God-given quest.
- “Along with the wildness, the quest will tap into an underground source of strength he didn’t know existed inside. That strength will become a massive flood bursting the dams of fear and shame that had bound him. As the dams crumble and wash away, he will experience the release of such a cleansing. It is the release of joy.” Reflect/respond.
- How have you viewed the idea of taking the quest God may give you? Joy, misery, fear, anxiety, something else?
- “Ignatius closed all of his letters the same way: ‘Go and set the world on fire.’ That’s what Paul did. That’s what the saints through the ages have done. That’s what every man can do who takes up his quest.” What does this stir in you?

EXPEDITION GUIDE TO *HEROIC*

CHAPTER 12 • THE SECRET OF GREATNESS

THE LANDSCAPE

- The secret of heroic greatness is a life of serving others.
- Men tend to think of being a servant as something weak, but it is the strength of every true warrior.
- Jesus was the great Warrior-Servant, letting His life go for our sakes.
- We enter the secret of heroic greatness by first letting Jesus serve us with His love.
- A man can become a warrior-servant in his marriage, in his family, and in every sphere of his life.

EXPLORING THE LANDSCAPE

Introduction

- Name and describe a man you know who lived by serving everyone around him.

Greatness Through Serving

- How does the idea of becoming heroic by serving others strike you?
- Talk about your experience of *It's A Wonderful Life*. How did the life of George Bailey impact you?

The Warrior As Servant

- How do the words *serve* or *servant* strike you? What images come to the surface?
- “Here lies the strength of a warrior. It comes from his willingness to let his life go for the sake of something higher. He submits his masculine energy to that which is greater than himself, to something both transcendent and honorable.” Respond to this quote.
- “A warrior-servant lives and dies by the quest with which he fully aligns himself.” Give some real-life examples or movies that exemplify this statement.

The Great Warrior-Servant

- How exactly did Jesus live His life as the great Warrior-Servant? What are you drawn to by His life?
- “Jesus wielded His strength in an unparalleled show of no force. The King let Himself go. He did it to serve us. In doing so, He honored the greatness inside each one of us.” React.

Entering the Secret

- How do you feel about others serving you? How do you feel about the idea of Jesus serving you?
- “The greatest effort a man must expend is to rest in His love.” Why do you think receiving Jesus’ personal love requires such intentional effort? What may be the first step for you?

Living the Secret

- When a warrior-servant lives the secret of greatness, what happens to others?
- Why is the warrior-servant so needed in marriage? How do you see your own marriage in this light?
- How do you see parenting in terms of being a warrior-servant? What about where you work? Where you go to church?

EXPEDITION GUIDE TO *HEROIC*

CHAPTER 12 • ENTERING THE SILENCE

THE LANDSCAPE

- The busyness of life and the constant noise of the world are killing us as men.
- All of our sins and dysfunctions come from our inability to access the reality that God is present and always working. We best access that reality in the silence.
- The heroic journey in story begins with a period of separation from the familiar world. This is exactly what happens when we enter silence and meet God.
- Jesus continually entered silence to meet His Father and gain daily strength for the quest.
- In the silence, we become heroic. In the silence, we gain glory.

EXPLORING THE LANDSCAPE

Introduction

- What happens to you when you think about the idea of entering silence: relief, fear, hope, anxiety, desire, something else?

Chasing and Running

- Take a minute to retrace today or yesterday. Note the activity and noise from hour to hour. What do you discover?
- “I firmly believe that our chief sin as men has nothing to do with our rampant sexual issues of whatever stripe or color. It’s our busyness. And it’s killing us.” Do you agree or disagree? Explain.

The Power of Silence

- Talk about your own experience of silence with God. What has been good? What has been hard? What questions do you have?
- “Undergirding the entire story of the Bible are two massive realities: God is always present and He is always working. All of our dysfunctions as men flow from our inability to live in these two realities. All of our fear and striving, all of our addictions and neuroses, all of our thoughtless acts and petty sins come out of a felt vacuum at our core.” Respond and reflect on this quotation.
- What helps you feel God’s presence? What helps you discover His activity in your life?

Becoming Heroic in the Silence

- “You won’t walk the heroic path by watching another hero at the movies or by reading about one in a story. You won’t even walk it by reading this book. A man becomes heroic only in the silence.” Respond and reflect on this quotation.
- What seems important to note in Jesus’ use of silence?

Stories of the Silence

- What stories connected with you? What stories intrigued you?
- “Men often tell me that they are terrible with silence. The mind wanders. The heart is agitated. The pressures of the world intrude. Then they feel bad that they can’t do silence. It’s easy to give up if it feels like another pass/fail performance.” How do you relate to this quote?
- The prayer of surrender was briefly described as one way to pray. Talk about how you try to practice prayer.

The Final Glory

- What are you drawn to in this last section?
- Now that we are at the end of the book, talk about your experience reading *Heroic*. What do you want to take with you? Choose two or three takeaways.
- What do you desire more of? What questions do you still have?