

FACETS OF MANHOOD

Polishing Our Character

John W Nichols

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APPENDIX B

THE PERFECT TOOL KIT.

Have you considered the complete benefit package God makes available to those who join the family of God? It comes at no cost to us, though it cost Him dearly. God wants men to succeed in every facet of their existence, and He opens His riches to supply the resources we need to achieve that goal. In that toolbox we will find the following.

God's Son.

Jesus, God's Son, became a man, and no one is more qualified to understand our challenges. The unnamed writer of the New Testament book of Hebrews captured the overwhelming enormity of God's continued kindness to us.

Because God's children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying. We also know that the Son did not come to help angels; he came to help the descendants of Abraham. Therefore, it was necessary for him to be made in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. Then he could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people. Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested.

Hebrews 2:14-18 NLT

And Jesus did not stop with the cross and resurrection from the dead. He continues to pour His care on us from His exalted position as God's Son.

So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.
Hebrews 4:14-16 NLT

Jesus now intercedes for you and me. He talks to God on our behalf! I struggle to comprehend the staggering magnitude of help that He directs my way!

who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.
Romans 8:34

but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.
Hebrews 7:24-25

That term *intercede* implies that Jesus entreats God on our behalf. He pleads for us and makes petitions for us. I can't think of anyone better positioned to represent me before the Father. Can you?

But wait. There's more!

Jesus powered through His experiences in this world and completed His assignments so that you and I might become part of the family. We are in fact joint heirs with Christ to the riches of God's glory.

And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory...
Romans 8:17 NLT (Selected)

The Holy Spirit.

I believe that God exists as a Trinity, One Being manifested in three distinct Persons—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. I won't attempt to support my position here but inquiring minds can grab a copy of Charles Ryrie's excellent book, Basic Theology, for more background. I'm introducing the concept before I explain the next resource God makes available. The Holy Spirit brings four aspects to our lives when we join the family of God through faith.

1. He seals us. The Holy Spirit marks my life as belonging to God. The imagery is that of an engagement ring, a symbol of promise, that the bridegroom will one day return to take the bride as his wife. God's Word presents many instances of His promise to return for us, and the presence of the Holy Spirit is our earnest payment on that promise.

2. He indwells us. The idea of God living inside me hearing my every word and tapping into my every thought disconcerts me at times. Often, I would hope to hide from Him what I am thinking or perhaps whisper so that He does not hear my words. But you know what? He loves me anyway.

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.
Romans 8:11

3. He intercedes for us. Just as Jesus Christ intercedes for us so does the Holy Spirit. He speaks God's language because He is God. He knows how to word the prayer so that God is delighted to answer.

In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.
Romans 8:26-27

4. He guides us in truth.

I try to read three chapters in God's Word each morning though sometimes I miss the appointment. I've found more times than I can count that the words in the text speak directly to what I am facing in life. I find guidance, encouragement, and wise counsel, and in that moment, I sense that God is speaking to me. How could a book completed more than 2000 years ago be so applicable?

"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. "He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. "All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.
John 16:13-15

The leading of God's Spirit is the mark of assurance to every believer.

For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.
Romans 8:14

His voice is quiet and easy to miss in a world filled with noise and busyness. To hear Him we have to pause, wait in the silence with God's Word open and our hearts ready to listen.

Do not quench the Spirit;
1 Thessalonians 5:19

Believe it or not, you and I have the power to quench the Spirit's voice and to grieve Him. How? By rarely or never seeking His guidance. By ignoring His input. By adopting a lifestyle opposite to what God expects.

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.
Ephesians 4:30

Still with me? Getting excited about this stellar resource package? There's more!

The Bible.

The Old Testament character Joshua had big sandals to fill when he took the leadership reins from Moses. Moses was the guy who camped on Mt. Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments and the rest of the law from God. Moses held his staff over the Red Sea, and God parted the waters. Moses held that same staff during Israel's battle with Amalek, and as long as the staff was above his head Israel stomped the enemy. Moses was feared, respected and loved. Read this testimonial:

Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. . .

Exodus 33:11 (Selected)

Joshua faced formidable odds in the Canaanite people groups including well-outfitted armies and heavily fortified cities. First on the list was the walled city of Jericho, but before Joshua could take a step in that territory, he had to get bus-loads of people across the flooded Jordan River. It is in those challenging moments that many of us wrestle with feelings of inadequacy. "I can't do this!"

As Joshua pondered his assignment, God delivered word after word of encouragement (Joshua 1) and repeated one phrase over and over, "Be strong and courageous!" In the middle of the pep-talk God delivered the secret to success in this life. Ready for it?

"This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.

Joshua 1:8

Get in the Book consistently. Read it in whatever translation you like. Look up any unfamiliar words. Study it. Memorize it. Get with a group of guys to discuss it. Sit under the teaching of men who can break the Word down. Make God's Word your companion in life.

Common sense.

You and I are created in the image of God who is the most intelligent and capable Being in existence. God has given us minds with which to think, the capacity to reason, and for most of us, a healthy dose of common sense. I know that all stands in opposition to our tendency as guys to say, "Hey, you all. Watch this!" But God created us to think for ourselves.

Wise counselors.

We have to be careful here as some counselors will tell you what they need you to do to fulfill their personal agenda rather than what is best for your life. Some people unashamedly use others.

One huge blessing of having a friend is being able to bounce ideas off him. To gather his input. To listen to his advice. To hear

about his experiences. This represents an excellent learning opportunity with low to no-cost tuition.

Access to God via prayer.

We have God on speed-dial, 24x7x365. Any time. Any place. Any issue. We can even talk to Him just because, and He loves when we do that.

And best of all? Jesus lived here for thirty-three years, thirty of that lost in history and three of it detailed in four books (The Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) that stand the test of time. He faced it all, so we will not shock Him when we pour out the uncertainties of our hearts and situations.

Salvation.

The blessings of God in salvation are boundless. Author Tom Eisenman shares this list. Salvation brings:

1. Peace with God
2. Access to God's grace in which we now stand
3. Hope of realizing the glory intended for us
4. True developer of character leading to strength and endurance in suffering
5. Love empowered by the Holy Spirit as a new motivation for life
6. An ongoing experience of the risen Christ's sovereign care in our daily lives
7. The sustain joy of living fully in God¹²⁸

All we have to do, men, is accept God's offer of salvation and pick up the tools. God will help us learn to use them. He will guide us as we gain experience and expertise. But for crying out loud, we must start now.

Open the box and begin using the tools!

¹²⁸ Eisenman, Tom L. *Temptations Men Face*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press. 1990. p 23.