

MAN ENOUGH — TO — FORGIVE[®]

Healing the Wounds of Fatherhood Abandonment



John J. Smithbaker

Founding Servant, *Fathers in the Field*

with Rob Goff

MAN ENOUGH TO FORGIVE®

Copyrights © and Trademarks ® 2023 by John Smithbaker

ISBN 978-1-952144-16-5

All rights reserved worldwide.

First Edition

Bible passages are taken from either the New American Standard, New International Version and each of their respective copyrights.

No portion of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except as provided for by the USA copyright law.

For information about permission to reproduce selection from this book must be in writing. Written permissions must be from John J. Smithbaker.

For information about special discounts for bulk purchases, please contact John Smithbaker at 844-472-4241, or info@fathersinthefield.com.



Published by Dunham Books
6111 W. Plano Pkwy., Suite 2200
Plano, TX 75093
www.dunhamandcompany.com

Printed in the United States of America

Journey Steps

CONTENTS

Prelude:	Why Write Man Enough to Forgive?	8
Foreword:	Onward Christian Soldier: Lt. Col. Allen West	12
Welcome:	Introduction	17
Series One:	<i>The Father Wound</i>	24
Chapter 1:	The King David in You	26
Chapter 2:	Biblical Forgiveness	45
Chapter 3:	Defining Fatherhood Abandonment	62
Series Two:	<i>The Battle for the Truth</i>	85
Chapter 4:	The Lies of Fatherlessness	87
Chapter 5:	The Truth about How My Heavenly Father Sees Me	101
Chapter 6:	The Fatherless Man I Became	113
Series Three:	<i>The Walking Wounded</i>	126
Chapter 7:	Understanding Unforgiveness	128
Chapter 8:	My Fatherlessness Affects/Affected Everyone around Me	141
Chapter 9:	Dealing with the Emotional Hurts	163
Series Four:	<i>The Man God Intended You to Be</i>	183
Chapter 10:	Following Jesus – Forgiving Your Father	185
Chapter 11:	Being the Man of God You Were Created to Be	204
Chapter 12:	Your Forgiveness Letter	222
Appendix:	Forgiveness Letter example	234
	Personal Study Journal	238



Prelude

Why Write *Man Enough to Forgive*?

Perhaps more than ever in the history of our nation, Jesus Christ's Word and wisdom are counter-cultural. Man's "reason" is ruling the day.

At every turn the world is actively pushing aside, ignoring, and with an incomprehensible arrogance trying to manipulate Almighty God's unchanging Truths.

Today, absolute Truth has no place in our broken and fallen land. Instead, Americans are largely deluded by self-reliance and distracted by the service of other masters. Both are false idols.

I was compelled to write this book from the insights gained in pursuit of healing my own heart-wrenching soul wound and the lessons learned coming alongside boys and men across the country who share this crippling burden.

Man Enough to Forgive needed to be written to specifically address the #1 societal issue of our time - the **FATHERLESSNESS** caused by divorce or the abandonment, absenteeism, neglect, or indifference of a boy's God-ordained Pastor, Provider, and Protector – his father.

This endeavor is specifically for MEN, presented in a style geared for courageous and counter-cultural MEN. Straight forward and unvarnished for the masculine spirit, this book is inspired by the bold and unerring Truth of the Creator of Men - the genesis of Truth.

Men were born for a glorious and mission-oriented purpose.

Masculinity is God's gift to the world, to women and to children. God Himself defined men's specific purpose in the family. These roles are steeped in His Truth and do not change even amongst all the brokenness around us.

As I have traveled this remarkable country of ours to lead the national ministry of *Fathers in the Field*, we charge straight into the heart of the fatherlessness battle. We march behind enemy lines into the trenches of the broken. I have witnessed firsthand how generational fatherlessness destroys families and is fundamentally weakening our nation.

Our mission is to earnestly search for and rescue the desperately hurt, the angry, the lonely, and those pleading voices of the precious fatherless who are crying for help.

I am unabashed about calling out the spiritual battle that is being waged. We at *Fathers in the Field* are laser-focused on the deep and transformational healing that is possible through Christ Jesus, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the mobilization of the local biblical church.

Men – Look around you!

We cannot escape today's reality. Witness the carnage that constant and brutal cultural attacks on Godly masculinity and the principles of biblical fatherhood have on the next generation of men - our precious boys - while eroding the masculine identity that is critical to a healthy and thriving society.

The Heavenly Father called men to action – not to indifference or surrender.

I was forged for this war through my own growth and restoration from the fatherless wounds inflicted while growing up. Today we are strengthened by these battle scars while our ministry takes direct aim at the enemy. Make no mistake, the Devil knows what he's doing and seeks the destruction of fatherhood in route to the decimation of the family.

Victories won through faithful service and obedience to the Heavenly Father provide the inspiration to share God's bold Truth that the world tries to pervert.

Through our ministry to men and boys, including this book, we have the joy of reaching and helping heal one fatherless boy (and man) at a time. MEN get to be the strong and tender hands and feet of Jesus in communities through the local Bible-honoring church. MEN get to mobilize their unique and masculine gifts in service to God's Kingdom.

Pastors universally acknowledge that their churches are being overwhelmed with the symptoms of fatherlessness both among boys and men. Into adulthood and left undealt with, the wounds and consequences of father absence is sidelining many men from their true purpose in their families and from having impact in ministry.

Even as we serve to turn the tide of broken hearts in fatherless boys, for more than a decade I've fielded an unending stream of requests from Pastors to also help come alongside and heal *adult* fatherless boys who persist in carrying deep father wounds.

This urgent charter stems from Pastors witnessing the undeniable transformation in young boys following the steps is the key to healing – what we call the **forgiveness journey**.

Praise God for this call to extend our proven process to MEN so they too can experience restoration.

In this book and the available companion workbook journal, the ministry's proven and successful multi-year forgiveness curriculum, developed from my forgiveness journey, has now been adapted and contextualized for MEN.

Direct and to the point, *Man Enough to Forgive* is presented in the language of REAL MEN, those who don't seek excuses and those who can face the hard-truths and decisions that are presented squarely front and center. You are now at a crossroad. It's time to GET BUSY!

Prelude

Will you join me in this battle for truth in pursuit of masculine righteousness through forgiveness?

Do you understand that “qualified” answers are half-hearted, rebellious, and lack commitment? **Let your Yes be Yes** so as to bring honor to God Almighty.

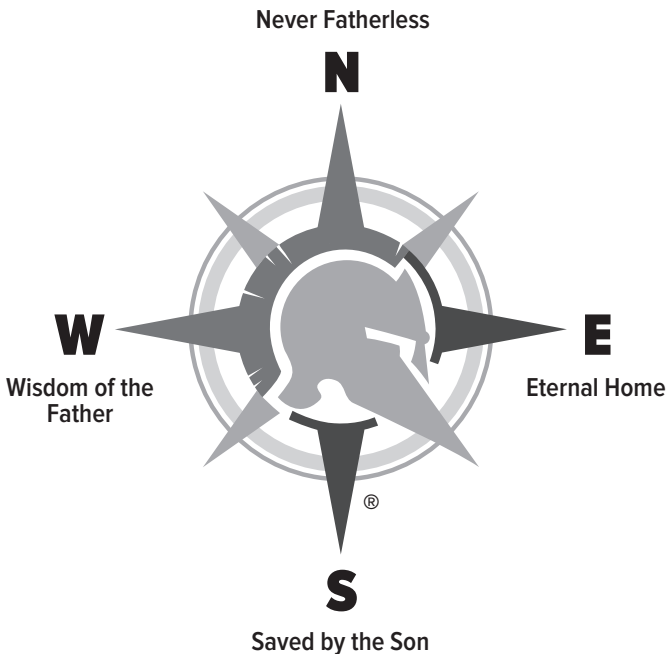
The Babylonians are at the gate. We face a cruel adversary.

Righteous MEN are needed. Forgiveness is our battle cry!

Put on the full armor of God!

Charge!

John Smithbaker
Founding Servant,
Fathers in the Field Ministry

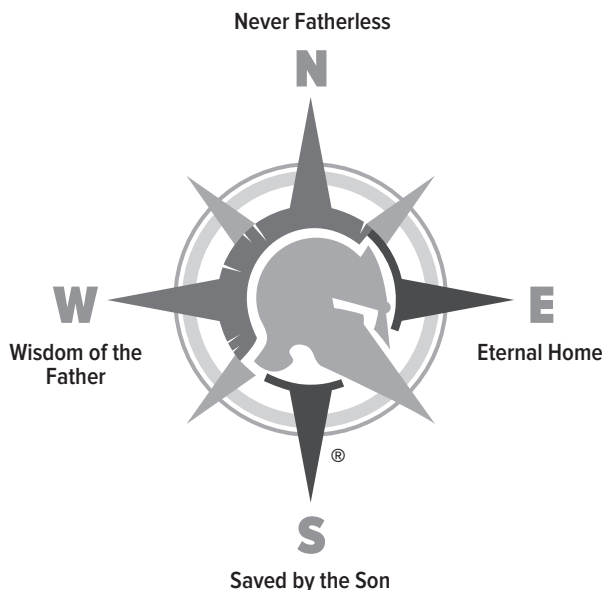


The Father Wound

SERIES ONE

Stop the Excuses!

Taking Bold Action to Become the Man God Intended You to Be.



CHAPTER ONE

The King David in You

*“For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, **“Abba! Father!”**”* Romans 8:15 (NASB)

| **Quick Start** |

Generational fatherlessness and the impact of boys carrying debilitating wounds into adulthood is a bigger problem today than ever. However, it’s not a contemporary condition or one manifest solely in Western society. It’s an issue as old as humanity itself.

You need not look far in the Bible to find evidence of this sin and how it not only impacts families, but whole lineages of people from the earliest tribes of Israel to today. You might be surprised by some of the non-obvious examples and how the fatherhood wound is present in even some of history’s most revered Christian warrior men.

Take David for example. Yes, *that* David; King David whom the Heavenly Father calls “a man after God’s own heart” - *twice*.

David wrote most of the Psalms and one in particular stands out as he cries out to his Heavenly Father to not turn from him, not to hide His face from him. Psalms 27:10 ESV.

“For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me in.”

Knowing as we do that David *also* had major life blunders, significant sin for which he had to repent and be forgiven before *he* could be the man God called him to be, it is clear that being a person after God’s own heart does not mean perfection. Nobody is perfect, except Jesus.

David’s father wound began early in his story. Imagine living in David’s day and the importance of men’s role as leaders in the family, in the tribe, and even ruling over kingdoms.

As Jesse considered whom among his sons had the “right stuff” and would be considered by Samuel to potentially to serve as king, he called his sons to the front line but abandoned David, leaving him behind.

David, young and diminutive, wasn’t even considered. Did not make the list. Imagine that, in perhaps a young man’s most important moment he was completely overlooked by his father. Jesse didn’t see in David what God did.

That event alone could be enough to define a young man, instilling in him a fierce bitterness that could cripple his self-worth forevermore. God had other plans though. God gave David a heart of forgiveness (David did whatever God wanted him to do. Part of God’s Will is to have us forgive. Acts 13:22), so David could recognize and address the wounds, even unforgiveness; thereby, he could overcome them. The Holy Spirit came over David and he was blessed.

In David’s story it is important to recognize that spiritual maturation and becoming the man God meant you to be isn’t a one-and-done process. While David forgave his earthly father and opened himself to the Lord’s vision for his life, he still messed up – big time.

Like each of us men, David’s first and most crucial ministry obligation was to be the Pastor, Provider, and Protector of his family. Just because the Lord bestowed kingship over Israel, victory over his enemies, and used David in and through his sins, does not mean there were not severe conse-

quences to David's unrighteous, out-of-God's-will actions. David carried his father wound and sin into his kingship, marriage, fatherhood, family, friendships, and leadership.

Have you thought critically about the devastating consequences of a father's sin and how it affects a family, a son, a community, a nation, and the next generation? By any standards, let alone the standards of God Almighty, King David was a *terrible* father, and it had a profound impact on his family, his children, and on Israel.

David was a selfish father. David was an absent father. David was an adulterer. David was a weak father. David provoked anger in his children. In many ways, David was a poor role model.

How more obvious can it be? When families tear apart and so-called modern wisdom drifts from biblical standards, it has grave effects extending far beyond our own families.

For your good and the good of this and future generations of your family, repent of your sins. Through earnest prayer ask God to open your mind and heart and receive His kingdom wisdom concerning the devastating and inevitable consequences of sin when His most holy plan for marriage and fatherhood are not followed.

David is no different than YOU. David is no different than YOUR father.

King David and those closest to David did not escape those consequences. David's son and all his children did not escape the consequences of their father's sin. God is not a liar.

There are always consequences to sin. Always.

The David in You

Just as God allows evil in the world, he allows us to be healed and restored. He helps us to be redeemed before the witness of others. Men look at outside appearances. God looks at the heart and what we do to live in His blessing and to make true His vision.

In this broken and fallen world you too can be a David. Hear the words, well done good and faithful servant. We're all capable of it. Forgiveness was fundamental to David's legacy, as it is to yours. David forgave much and was forgiven much. Same for you.

That's what *Man Enough to Forgive* is all about. It's not just about knowing how to forgive. Knowledge is earthly. But wisdom... wisdom comes from God. My greatest prayer is that you hear the Lord's heart here because you are man enough. I'm asking you to look beyond worldly knowledge so you can receive and act upon that spiritual wisdom.

| Road Map |

There are always consequences to sin. ALWAYS.

We often hear that "God can do anything." In actuality, this casually accepted premise is not accurate at all and undergirds the premise of how we and our culture view men, masculinity, the precious role of fathers, husbands, and the father wound.

One thing that God, the Heavenly Father, cannot do - is lie.

"I am *fine*." In their bravado, I hear this from men all the time. By stating this we are indirectly shouting out to the world that Jesus is not a Man of His word. We are calling God a Liar. Worse, we are minimizing the need for Jesus' painful death on the cross.

The purpose of *Man Enough to Forgive* is to boldly deal with our wounds and to forgive our earthly father.

As we consider how to do this, have you ever thought about the father wound that King David had to endure? David even cried out in anguish to the Lord that his father had forsaken him (Psalm 27:10). How it shaped him as a man? How it affected his mindset and behavior from fatherhood to marriage? How it impacted his family's generational legacy?

to view life and eternity from God's perspective and you will emerge victorious through the Abba Father-and-son relationship through the re-birth, being born-again.

Repent and forgive. You can be the man God intended you to be.

I believe in you!

| Chapter 1: Study |

NEXT STEPS: Working through the chapter

- a. How can you relate to King David's story?
- b. Have you grieved the wound(s) your father gave you?
- c. Was God wrong in choosing David, who he knew would sin greatly *even after* he was anointed? Was GOD wrong in knowing that David would become forevermore a model of faithfulness, of godly masculinity, of repentance, and of what it looks like to be a man after God's heart?
- d. What "truths" about *you* were formed by your earthly father's opinion of you?
- e. What are some of your non-obvious David-like traits that are beneath the surface and can be unburdened by your obedience and forgiveness of your father?
- f. What can you do now to both respond to God's calling in your life and to avoid the sin that keeps you trapped in the shadows of the past?

GET ROLLING with the Companion Guide: Preparation to write a *Forgiveness Letter*:

- Utilize the *Man Enough to Forgive* Personal Study Journal workbook

CHAPTER TWO

Biblical Forgiveness

“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you”

Colossians 3:12-13 (NASB)

| Quick Start |

To be clear, this book was written with Christians in mind. What do I mean by this? *Man Enough to Forgive* is built on the premise that you have to experience true biblical forgiveness prior to your being able to truly forgive your earthly father.

Truth #1: Biblical forgiveness is unmerited, undeserved and unearned by our actions, and is completely contingent on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Bible tells us that all people have sinned, doing what goes against God’s nature, and that the punishment for sin is death.

This references not just physical and spiritual death but extends to physical and spiritual punishment in Hell for the rest of eternity. The Bible directs that if we have not received God’s forgiveness in this life on earth that we will suffer the punishment for sin in the next life – via a very real and painful, never-ending existence. At death we don’t cease to exist, nor do all people automatically get to go to heaven.

There are actual consequences for the entirety of our actions.

Further, the Bible tells us that our good deeds cannot offset sin. By contrast, God loved His children so much that He sent His Son to become a man, to live the perfect life that we can only aspire to, to die the death we deserve, and to demonstrate His divinity by rising from the dead. By repenting and confessing our sins and asking God to forgive us, in Christ we can have new life.

When an individual is converted and has repented of their sins and placed their hope for salvation in Jesus Christ alone, they receive the Holy Spirit. With the Holy Spirit living within the believer's heart and mind they may truly grasp the depth of Christ's forgiveness of them. This understanding, in turn, show them the path of obedience to Christ's commands to forgive others in our life. One of the most fundamental and important of these commands is to forgive everyone who has wronged you.

When questioned by His disciples on how to pray, Jesus responded by telling them to:

*“Pray, then, in this way:
‘Our Father who is in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
‘Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
‘Give us this day our daily bread.
‘And **forgive** us our debts, as we also have **forgiven** our debtors.
‘And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.”

Matthew 6:9-15 (NASB)

Jesus notes in this guided and perfect prayer that we are to request that God forgive us our trespasses (sins) or debts to Him in the same way that we forgive those in debt to us. Imagine if God *only* forgave your lies, hatred, lust, deceit, etc. in the same way you forgive those who have hated, lied, and mistreated you! What a terrifying thought.

Jesus was perfectly clear in what followed - if you refuse to forgive, don't expect God to forgive you.

Do you see? Forgiveness is essential.

While you don't earn forgiveness or salvation, you do play an active role in your Christian maturity, otherwise known as sanctification.

That's GOOD NEWS, right?! There's something to do here. We men love to *do* stuff!

Without the power of the Holy Spirit in your life you could never fathom how much God has forgiven you, let alone forgive others in the same way. In this, Jesus Christ stands as our example of both Godly forgiveness and human forgiveness. Being *Man Enough to Forgive* means understanding both biblical forgiveness and imitating Jesus - the model of perfect manhood. When Jesus hung on the cross for the sins of the world, He demonstrated total forgiveness and set an example for all who would call themselves His disciples.

This is why your Christian faith is fundamental to the ability to truly forgive, and thereby responding to Christ's command. And this is why this book is for you.

| Road Map |

As Christians we believe that the Bible is God's Word and that it contains everything we need to know to internalize who God is and who we are in relation to Him. The Bible tells us that God created humans in His own image (Genesis 1:26-30) and were placed in the Garden of Eden to glorify God and learn obedience. This requirement of obedience was first intro-

Praise for the “Man Enough to Forgive”

DR. TIM CLINTON - President of the American Association of Christian Counselors, Co-host Dr. James Dobson’s Family Talk radio broadcast, professor of Counselling and Pastoral Care

“John’s ministry to the fatherless is the real deal. He was fatherless, knows the fatherless issues, and his ministry of nearly two decades is impacting lives, one soul at a time.”

DR. MEG MEEKER, MD – Best-selling author, pediatrician, international speaker, and mentor to many NFL fathers

“As a pediatrician for thirty years, I’ve seen hundreds of suffering boys in my office who are bearing the pain and consequences of fatherlessness. From eating disorders to destructive social behavior, failure at school and violence, to sexual promiscuity, and even attempted suicide - the absence of a father in the home impacts healthy psychological, physical, social, and spiritual development in all boys.

“With unwavering commitment and a process for restoration that works, John Smithbaker and Fathers in the Field leads both boys and men on a path to faith and freedom from the destruction of fatherlessness.”

PASTOR LEE EVANS – Local Bible church pastor proclaiming God’s Truths since 1983 in Texas. Head Shepherd at West Lake Baptist, and married to a precious helpmate, Cindy for 42 years.

“Forgiveness is a choice we each make to surrender our hurt to God for healing and turnover our violator to God for redemption or retribution.”

MICHAEL TOMLINSON - President and CEO, BDI a national rescue mission agency.

“Authenticity, Truth, and Impact: These three words best describe “Fathers in the Field”, “Man Enough to Forgive”, and John Smithbaker. For years I’ve seen the Fathers in the Field ministry empower the local church, rally men of faith, and literally change the destiny of emotionally crippled fatherless boys. But what about all the men that grow up without the helping leadership of mentors, an understanding of God’s healing grace, and freedom from the prison of hate and dysfunction born in their youth?

John’s passion is authentic, his commitment to God’s truth is unwavering, and the impact of the message he brings is life-transformational. Too many men think they’ve transcended childhood hurts and simply moved on productively with life, but in reality, they have yet to forgive as the Heavenly Father commands. As a result, they cannot fully embrace the Lord’s forgiveness. This too is my testimony.”

DR. DAVE WHITE - Pastor, Renowned Speaker, Life Coach and NCAA Men’s Basketball Referee, Alpha Male Advocate.

“Courageous, Insightful, Practical and Manful! John is a man’s man, a rare faith warrior, and a redeemed luminary on this critical issue. Welcome his wisdom and be transformed!”

