

52 Godly Men: The Gift of a Lifetime

By Craig Thompson

The energy in the crowd of 10,000 people was tangible as Zig Ziglar stepped up to the microphone: "Good morning, Nashville!" he shouted in his Southern drawl. His opening statement caught most of us by surprise as he asked, "How many people here today believe that you can do something in the next twenty-four hours which will absolutely, one hundred percent make your life *worse*?" The question elicited laughter from the crowd. After the collective pause, Ziglar then followed up by stating, "If you believe that you can do something to make your life worse, then you must also accept the truth that there is some action you can take, some decision you can make in the next twenty-four hours which will make your life *better*!"

A few years back, I made a parenting decision that would change the life of my son, David, dramatically for the better. I wanted to make his thirteenth birthday more of a rite of passage into manhood than just another birthday with bigger toys. Through what I believe was a divine inspiration, I came up with the concept that I labeled "52 Godly Men."

On David's birthday, I told him that for the next year, he would meet with a different Godly man every week. My job would be to pick the men, schedule the appointments, make arrangements to get him there, and generally oversee the process. His job would be to meet with the men, listen to their wisdom, and then write a blog article about each meeting.

So began a year of wisdom, insight, camaraderie, mentoring, and good old-fashioned fun. With Godly men at his side, David hiked, fished, and jumped into a river. He counted pills at a pharmacy, toured an airport under construction, and learned what goes into engineering a product. He helped build a barn, planted a garden, and helped work on an MG. He shot an AK-47 for the first time, helped review copy for a metro newspaper, and killed his first two deer. His Godly men helped him open his first savings account, gave him full-day access to see what goes into setting up a Christian concert, and taught him about frugality and the importance of standing up for a cause.

Every week, David wrote an article summarizing key life lessons. Every week, he learned a little bit more about what it means to be a man who wants to please God in a different profession. Every week, he knew that Dad was going to ask him, "What was the single most important lesson you learned from this man today?"

As time passed, my son changed in ways that I had not really imagined. I could envision that meeting many different men would force him to be more open to meeting new people. What I witnessed was far beyond that. His confidence level increased. His overall maturity that he displayed at home and at church shot up. He also began to be more comfortable in a leadership role—which is what he will need to assume as the head of a household.

The benefits extended far beyond my plans. David learned firsthand about quite a few jobs that he now knows he does *not* want to pursue. That saved him from wasting years of higher education like some people who pursue their dream career only to find out that they never looked closely enough at it to realize that they just would not like the day-to-day grind of their chosen profession. He learned some of the headaches of owning one's own business firsthand. He heard some great advice about picking a spouse and raising a family.

None of this would have happened if I had not taken the step of asking others to help mentor my son. The road to hell may be paved with good intentions, but the road to growth

is paved with intentionality. As the old adage goes, "The man on top of the mountain didn't fall there." Because I planned, acted, and followed through, my son benefited in a way that has helped to shape his present and his future.

We see intentionality commanded in the great passage of Deuteronomy 6. There, we who are the adults in the community of faith are commanded to teach God's commands diligently to our children. Most people won't teach a child something they are not passionate about. And what are people passionate about if not the deep life lessons that they have learned as they have traveled the path of life? These were the truths that I sought to have other men share with David.

How about your own child? Have you taken any intentional steps to promote his development through the mentoring gifts of others in the Body of Christ? Realistically, very few of us will have the blessing of someone coming to us out of the blue and offering to pour wisdom into our children's lives. Yet, all around us are powerful seeds that can be planted into the heart of our children if we are only willing to ask for them.

In my local church, one of my wife's friends was impacted by what she saw happening with my son. She decided that she wanted to give this same type of gift to her daughter when she turned 13. The response from the women she knew was overwhelming. She had more women wanting to be part of mentoring her daughter than she had time for. Now, her second daughter has turned 13 and is about to begin her own year of mentoring. You can do it too.

"That sounds like an awful lot of work!" may be the thought on your mind. Sure it is. And it's quite time-consuming. But I'd much rather be spending my time planning positive experiences for my son than spending that time hanging out at juvenile detention, drug rehab, or any number of other places where I could be trying to win him back or help him recover from wrong decisions.

You don't have to get hung up on the number 52 as some magic number. If you plan one appointment per month, your son or daughter will be richer for it after one or two years than if you had not taken the time to do it at all. Having done 52 straight weeks, I can testify that it's possible, but I wouldn't feel like a failure if we hadn't made it.

From the beginning of this project, I felt a nudge from God that this idea was given from Him in order to bless more than just my own children. As God has opened the door, I've shared what we've done in numerous venues. I see so many positive benefits to my son's life. Now, I encourage you—in the next twenty-four hours—to make a decision that will absolutely, positively make your child's life better. Start making a list today.

PS: I also invite you to visit David's website at www.52godlymen.com and read about his adventures, and when you do, please leave a comment for him. He will enjoy hearing from you.

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