

**TONY EVANS**

BESTSELLING AUTHOR

**KINGDOM  
MEN  
RISING**

A small silhouette of a person in a thinking pose is integrated into the letter 'I' of the word 'RISING'.

**A CALL TO GROWTH AND GREATER INFLUENCE**

# KINGDOM MEN RISING

A CALL TO GROWTH AND GREATER INFLUENCE

# TONY EVANS



**BETHANYHOUSE**

*a division of Baker Publishing Group*

Minneapolis, Minnesota

Kingdom Men Rising • Dr. Tony Evans

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Published by Bethany House Publishers  
11400 Hampshire Avenue South  
Bloomington, Minnesota 55438  
www.bethanyhouse.com

Bethany House Publishers is a division of  
Baker Publishing Group, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Printed in the United States of America

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Evans, Tony, author.

Title: Kingdom men rising : a call to growth and greater influence / Tony Evans.

Description: Minneapolis, Minnesota : Bethany House, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2021. | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020046867 | ISBN 9780764237058 (cloth) | ISBN 9780764237065 (trade paperback) | ISBN 9781493430116 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Christian men—Religious life. | Spiritual formation. | Discipling (Christianity)

Classification: LCC BV4528.2 .E918 2021 | DDC 248.8/42—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020046867>

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Scripture quotations identified KJV are from the King James Version of the Bible.

Some material in chapter 2 adapted from Tony Evans, *America: Turning a Nation to God* (Chicago: Moody, 2015), chapter 2.

Portions of chapter 6 adapted from *30 Days to Overcoming Addictive Behavior*, Copyright © 2017 Tony Evans. Published by Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, Oregon 97408. [www.harvesthousepublishers.com](http://www.harvesthousepublishers.com)

Other material in chapter 6 adapted from *It's Not Too Late*, Copyright © 2012 Tony Evans. Published by Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, Oregon 97408. [www.harvesthousepublishers.com](http://www.harvesthousepublishers.com)

A segment of chapter 8 adapted from Tony Evans, *Oneness Embraced* (Chicago: Moody, 2015), chapter 2.

Some material in chapter 12 adapted from Tony Evans, *Raising Kingdom Kids: Giving Your Child a Living Faith* (Carol Stream, IL: Focus on the Family book published by Tyndale, 2014), chapter 11.

Cover design by Dan Pitts

21 22 23 24 25 26 27 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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This book is dedicated to my sons-in-law, Jerry Shirer and Jessie Hurst, who continue the process of messaging and modeling the principles of *Kingdom Men Rising* to my daughters, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank my friends at Baker Publishing Group for their interest and partnership in bringing my thoughts, study, and words to print on this valuable subject. I particularly want to thank Andy McGuire for leading the charge on this manuscript with Baker Publishing Group. It's been a pleasure working with Andy to see this through to print. I also want to publicly thank Sharon Hodge and Hannah Ahlfield. In addition, my appreciation goes out to Heather Hair for her skills and insights in writing and collaboration on not only this manuscript, but also on my book *Kingdom Man*.



# INTRODUCTION

When you purchase a game of checkers, you'll notice that on the top of each piece is the insignia of a crown. That is because each checker was created to become a king.

Once it is crowned because it has successfully made it to the other side of the board, it will have the right and authority to maneuver and function at a much higher level than it could prior to being crowned. The reality is, however, that most individual checkers will not successfully make it to the other end of the board to be crowned, because the opposition will jump them and knock them out of the game. Whether a checker achieves its created goal of being crowned as a king is fully determined by the moves that are made underneath the hand of the one controlling it.

When God created men, He created them with a crown because each man was made to rule under the authority of God. God created the man prior to creating the woman, like pouring a foundation first, because the success or failure of God's created purpose of building His kingdom in history would be directly related to a man's relationship with and submission to God's rule over his life. Foundations don't have to be fancy or pretty, but they do have to be strong. When a foundation is weak, everything resting on it is at risk. God holds the man ultimately responsible for keeping steady what He has entrusted to his care while simultaneously advancing His kingdom program.

However, as with the first man, Adam, Satan is seeking to "jump" men to keep us from fulfilling our divinely ordained kingdom purposes. He



goes to great lengths to remove us from functioning in alignment with God so that our families, churches, communities, and nation experience the negative consequences and confusion of men living independently of God.

It is evident that our spiritual energy has kept too many men in a cycle of defeat, discouragement, confusion, rebellion, addiction, and a myriad of other things that have resulted in the spiritual, social, racial, and political chaos we are experiencing today. Far too many men have become either neutered and domesticated or abusive and irresponsible, resulting in a society that is torn, tattered, and in utter dysfunction.

Yet, despite all we see around us, there remains hope. If God can get His men to rise up as the kingdom men He has created us to be—men who pursue an intimate relationship with Him while simultaneously representing Him in all we do—He will reverse the downward spiral of the culture. God is waiting on His kingdom men to rise from our spiritual slumber to accept the responsibility of reversing the decay and disunity that engulf us.

Just as the first Adam brought defeat to the human race, the last Adam, Jesus Christ, came to bring victory. It's time for God's men, under the lordship of Jesus Christ, to change the trajectory of our culture as we submit ourselves to Him and His kingdom agenda.

It is my goal, in *Kingdom Men Rising*, to challenge you and all of us as men to accept and implement the responsibility handed to us by our Creator. This responsibility involves not only rising to the challenges we face but also influencing a whole generation of men and boys to do the same. If God's kingdom men decide to rise up to fulfill our calling, we can see Him heal our hearts, our families, our churches, and our land.

It's time to join a new movement of men who long to see what God will do with the awakening of His kingdom men who lead their families and infiltrate the culture as kingdom citizens. Men who proudly and victoriously wear our crowns and are used by God to crown the next generation with kingdom values.

Dr. Tony Evans  
Dallas, Texas

PART ONE

**AWAKENING  
BIBLICAL  
MANHOOD**

# ONE

## CHOSEN FOR THE CHALLENGE

“A kingdom man is the kind of man that when his feet hit the floor each morning the devil says, ‘Oh crap, he’s up!’”

When I first wrote that line to open my book *Kingdom Man* nearly ten years ago, I had no idea how deeply I would be put to the test in living it out. But on New Year’s Eve 2019, I was scheduled to preach like I always do to usher in the New Year. But this night was unlike past New Year’s Eves.

Typically, these services ring loudly with cheer, great music, laughter, and fun. We hold two services so that thousands upon thousands can come. We always end the second service with a countdown to the New Year right at midnight. But this night was different. This night stared me straight in the face, daring me to stay down.

I had lain in my bed for the better part of that entire day, as well as the previous one. All lights had been turned out, curtains were closed, and I had pulled the covers up to my chin. My empty stare reflected the empty ache inside.

From time to time, one of the kids would come into the room to check on me and see if I needed anything to eat or drink. I did not. They asked me if I had gotten any sleep. I had not. They reminded me that I needed to try. I disagreed. Because all I needed right then was my wife.

But Lois had gone on to be with the Lord just the morning before. She’d asked me to let her go weeks earlier, since she could tell her time



had come, and I had sat by her bed weeping as I told her I could not. But a few more weeks of witnessing her suffer through the effects of the cancer that ravaged her once-vibrant life brought me to my knees. I relented. I surrendered. I told my bride of forty-nine and a half years I would let her go this time.

I told her she could go now and be with her parents, whom, in this final stage of her transition, she had seen appear in our room from time to time. I told her she could go be with Jesus, whom she loved so much that she had asked us to write His name down just because it made her happy to see it. I told her she could go get the award that the angels, she had found the strength to tell us, had said she was about to receive. “An award, an award,” she said a few days before she died. “They are going to give me an award.” Lois was ready, even if I was not.

I took comfort, though, knowing that she had been shown tremendous love and had taken great joy in our family surrounding her throughout her final months on earth. She had never been left alone. By and large, my work schedule had come to a near halt for the bulk of an entire year so that I could be there with her every step of the way. Each treatment. Each doctor visit. Each new meal of health-promising potential. Each prayer. Each day. Each tear. She had become my sole focus. She had become our sole focus as a family. But now, here I was, alone in a room I had shared with my best friend for decades. What’s more, I was scheduled to go preach.

Yet how could I even get up?

I knew that everyone would understand if I decided not to preach that night. No one would blame me for staying home to grieve. No one except Lois. Her faith in God propelled all that she did throughout our life together. I knew she’d want me there. In fact, earlier that year—on the very night we had gathered our four kids around us to tell them of the return of her cancer—she had reminded us all how to face this challenge.

This painful blow came the very same night I received the prestigious National Religious Broadcasters Hall of Fame Award. Our kids had flown with us to Los Angeles to witness me receive it. But now, only hours after the honor, we sat in a hotel room crying as a family.



After allowing each of us a moment to express our emotions at the telling of the doctors' news, Lois called us all back over to where she was seated and calmly said, "You do know what this is, don't you?"

We listened intently. "This is spiritual warfare," she continued. "We have already lost six close family members over the last year and a half. The enemy is attacking us. We must be doing something right, because the enemy is taking notice. God is allowing these things to happen. So remember this: When warfare comes against the Evans family, we do not tuck our tails and run. No, we prepare to fight."

Her words echoed loudly in my heart like a drumbeat stirring me to rise. "If you are called to preach," she had continued, "you preach. If you are called to write, you write. If you are called to sing, you sing. If you are called to lead a Bible study, you lead it." As you can see, I really didn't have much of a choice that New Year's Eve night. I had to go preach. Lois would have it no other way.

So I showed up. Because the first thing to do when you need to man up is to show up.

I had planned to preach on James chapter 4 and how life is a vapor. That Scripture was so relevant to me that night, in light of everything that had transpired, that it flowed fresh from my heart. I had planned to challenge the members to submit to the will of God in their lives, day in and day out, but now more than just telling them, I realized I was showing them too. And looking back, with all the uncertainty and destruction so many have faced in the year 2020, I now know people needed that message lived out. They needed to see someone taking God seriously when all hope had gone. They needed a witness of what it looks like to honor God even when life hurts the worst it ever has.

Also, because so many of our church members had walked this journey with us through prayer, faith, cards, calls, visits, food, and even hour-long daily prayer vigils outside of our home for the last few months of Lois's life, I knew that showing up helped them to know their prayers had made a difference. I was still trusting God in the midst of deep pain. I hoped that sharing this reality with those I shepherd might also encourage them to keep going when life gets tough. I wanted them to see that basing their decisions on the will of

God as the dominant force in their thoughts is simply how we are to live as His followers.

Thus, in the dark room with curtains drawn on that cold and lonely New Year's Eve, my feet hit the floor, firmly. I rose. I stood. And I'm sure the devil said, "Oh crap, he's up."

## **We Are in This Together**

Awakening our biblical manhood requires the commitment and the discipline to honor God in all we do. But what we often forget is that this determination is frequently formed in us over the course of our lives. It doesn't just magically appear.

I wasn't able to rise on my own strength alone that night during the most difficult time I have ever experienced. No, as I rose to go preach, all those who had poured their time and life into me over days, years, and decades were there helping me up. I felt their strength. I piggybacked on their faith. I heard them cheering me on. This is because nothing difficult we overcome ever rests solely on our own shoulders. That's one reason God emphasizes unity and the power of fellowship and discipleship throughout Scripture.

Growing up, I always had people in my life who invested in me in ways that allowed me to develop and mature into the man I am today. Early on, I had people who taught me a better way than what the urban atmosphere of Baltimore afforded me. They gave me a divine perspective as well as a broader viewpoint, which enabled me to go further than I thought I could on my own.

Most people who saw me growing up in a row house in urban Baltimore at the height of contemporary racial segregation may have written me off. But because some did not, and rather chose to invest in me through their own spiritual development and maturity, I was able to rise above the limitations society sought to impose.

God began this process by using my father's commitment to us as a family, especially when things got tough and money got tight. I also saw in him a profound dedication to the Word of God through his daily personal study, sharing it in prisons, handing out tracts on street corners,



listening to the radio Bible teachers all day every day in our home, and later leading a church.

Then, God introduced a Jewish mentor and friend named Martin Resnick into my life to expand my thinking even more. From the age of sixteen on, I was given a bigger vision of the world through that relationship and Martin's influence on me as I worked for him. He birthed this bigger vision as he allowed me to gain experience in many areas. He spoke about concepts and dreams that encouraged me to think beyond my limited understanding at that time. I had never even considered attending college until Martin brought it up and offered to pay for it.

Another man who left his indelible stamp on my life was B. Sam Hart. This man of God, nationally renowned for evangelism, influenced me early on to step out of the circles of my immediate surroundings. When I was just eighteen years old, he gave me great confidence when he had confidence enough in me to send me alone to Guyana in South America. He sent me there to conduct the pre-fieldwork for one of his upcoming evangelistic crusades. His trust in me grew my belief in what I could do. Not only that, but the act of flying from the inner city of Baltimore, where African Americans were racially oppressed in the mid-1960s, to a nation where blacks held all positions of power, influence, and leadership opened my eyes to what could be. I saw a nation being run well by people who resembled me, and this gave me a fresh vision and hope.

As a result of these men investing in me early on, plus countless others I could name, such as Tom Skinner, Charles Ryrrie, Zane Hodges, John Perkins, Charles Briscoe, Gene Getz, Ruben Conner, and Martin Hawkins, I became different from the culture at large. I began to be shaped by a kingdom world view that saw all of life falling under the overarching rule of God.

While my formative history is unique to me, my desire is that the principles in it would not be unique to many. Because what we need today are kingdom men who are willing to invest not only in their own personal growth and opportunities, but also in others. We need men who are willing to sacrifice the time and effort necessary to prioritize the unleashing of someone else's potential. We are in this thing called life together. That's

how we make it. That's how we man up. That's how we change the world for God and for good.

As a refresher, or if you haven't read *Kingdom Man*, the definition of a kingdom man is *a male who visibly and consistently submits to the comprehensive relationship and rule of God, underneath the lordship of Jesus Christ, in every area of life.*<sup>1</sup> That must be the mind-set. A kingdom man accepts his responsibilities under God and faithfully carries them out. When he is faithful, God moves even pagan powers and other forces on earth to support him in doing his kingdom business. Jesus is the perfect example of a kingdom man in His earthly ministry (see John 17:4; 19:30; Philipians 3:7–14; Exodus 34:23–24; 1 Corinthians 11:3; and Genesis 18:19).

When a kingdom man lives according to his designed purpose, he joins with other men in influencing culture, politics, entertainment, and more through a process of intentional discipleship. This process produces kingdom disciples who then go and do the same. The process becomes cyclical, leading to multigenerational impact. A kingdom disciple can be defined as *a believer who takes part in the spiritual development of progressively learning to live all of life under the lordship of Jesus Christ and then seeks to replicate that process in others.* As this is done, God's kingdom agenda marches forward on earth.

Unless we rise up as kingdom men and assist other men to rise up as well, the culture will continue to devolve into the disaster it is quickly becoming. The catastrophe of manhood has reached every segment of our society. I don't need to list a plethora of statistics or stories to convince you of that. Anyone with their eyes open can easily recognize the precarious ledge upon which our society now stands.

If we intend to reverse the trends and stem the tide, it will take a group effort. As kingdom men, we must grab hold of those who need to be shown a better way, rather than write them off. As Paul told Timothy and many others under his influence, they were to follow his example, as he followed Christ (see 1 Corinthians 11:1 and Philipians 3:17).

Keep in mind that to have an example to follow means you must have someone setting one. This requires living in a spiritually mature manner and guiding others in how to do likewise. It takes both: ongoing personal discipline and intentional investment in others.



## Why We Must Rise

Over and over God has called men to intervene on behalf of a dying land. Ezekiel 22:30 records it this way, “I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one.” The land had plenty of males, but God couldn’t find a man. There’s a big difference between being a male and being a kingdom man. You can be one without the other when you refuse to take responsibility under God.

While many of us are waiting on God to fix what is wrong, He is waiting on us to step up as men of faith and do what is right. He is waiting on men who don’t just talk about faith but also walk in it. These are the men whose actions demonstrate that they truly believe in the God they claim to worship.

One way we do this is through intentional investments in relationships, exemplified in my life as I have just shared, as well as mutual learning in a spiritual context. In Exodus 34, we see this modeled for us when God called the men to come and meet with Him three times a year. In today’s terminology, we could refer to this as a “Triannual Kingdom Conference.” He did this because He wanted to instruct the men on how to live and think according to His standards. God promised the men that if they would take these meetings seriously, He would bring heaven’s blessings of spiritual and physical prosperity into their lives, families, and nation (Exodus 23:17–31).

Following this collective time of mutual learning, they were sent back to their families and society in order to lead, defend, and influence it for God and for good.

God regularly instructed the men during times of convening on the crucial importance of both righteousness and justice. We will look at this

While many of us are waiting on God to fix what is wrong, He is waiting on us to step up as men of faith and do what is right.

more fully in chapter 8, “Get Along,” but for our purposes right now, I want to introduce it. Righteousness is the moral standard that should govern every man’s life and choices. Justice is the equitable application of God’s moral standard as demonstrated in society. Many people identify with and commend the need for righteousness. But not as many understand why justice is similarly as vital. This has caused a condensed approach to discipleship and cultural influence by believers today, resulting in little overall societal impact.

Men, it is our role to seek out the manifestation of justice in the culture we live in. We are to rise up for those who cannot do so on their own (Micah 6:8; Proverbs 31:8). We do this by ensuring fair treatment and equal opportunities for the meeting of basic human needs such as education and employment. Without opportunity, many people lose hope. And one of the primary problems we are facing today is an increased sense of hopelessness. When a man loses hope, everything has been ripped from him. To take a man’s hope is akin to taking his manhood. It cuts to the core of who we are as men because we have been designed to build, defend, create, cultivate, and govern (see Genesis 3).

That’s why we need men who will be committed not only to evangelizing people for heaven but also to improving people’s lives on earth. The kingdom of God involves both heaven and earth. We impact the spectrum of the culture at large when we influence individuals nearby.

In many ways, our failure to engage society strategically and spiritually has made us the cause of our own division, devolution, and destruction in our land, because we have not taken seriously this call to kingdom discipleship. But since we are the cause, we can also be the cure for the chaos we are experiencing today. If, and when, we rise up as kingdom men, we can usher in a new season of spiritual calm (see Leviticus 26:6; Judges 3:11).

## **Chosen for Greatness**

You have been created by God with a specific post He wants you to fulfill and a purpose He wants you to live out. He has scouted you, pursued you, and drafted you for His kingdom team. You have a divinely orchestrated



reason for your manhood. Now, I know the culture wants to give you a whole slew of other reasons for being a man, but God says clearly that He created you for something great. You have been drafted for the purposes of God. We gain insight into these purposes when we look at God's choosing of Abraham in Genesis 18:19 (NIV):

For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.

Just as God chose Abraham, He has chosen you. If you are saved and part of the body of Christ, God has a divine design for your life. This purpose will bring about the furtherance of His glory and the expansion of His kingdom.

Granted, that purpose may seem elusive right now. You may have to search for it as the Avengers searched for the Infinity Stones. But if you will search for it, you will find it. I'll give you a hint as to how. As you draw closer to God, He makes known His purposes for you. He enlightens you as to why you are here on earth and what role you are to play. Proverbs 20:5 (NIV) puts it like this: "The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out."

God has placed your purpose in you, in seed form. You grow that seed through an intentional pursuit of Him. Your purpose will be revealed to you only as you get to know God more fully. When you learn His ways like an athlete learns the plays, desires, and instincts of a coach, you will align yourself with all that is needed in order to maximize your potential.

Once you come to realize that God has already chosen you for success—He has given you your own number—you can take confidence in the assurance of His carrying it out. He has situated you to live victoriously as a kingdom man. Your effort involves aligning yourself within His grid and with His design.

God will bring about your greatness. You don't need to force it, manipulate to get it, or obsessively work toward it. God will do it himself. We see this principle play out in the latter part of the verse we just looked

at, Genesis 18:19 (NIV): “So that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.”

God will bring about for you what He has promised you as well. Your part involves alignment and obedience. God takes care of the rest. Even the greatness.

We see this in looking closely at what God promised Abraham in verses 17–18: “The LORD said, ‘Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed?’”

God’s promise for Abraham in two words? *Greatness* and *influence*. Through Abraham’s greatness, all the nations of the earth would be blessed. He became a multigenerational man of impact. God desires nothing less for you as well. In Christ, we are all recipients of Abraham’s purpose lived out in his promise. We read,

The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ.

Galatians 3:16 NIV

If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Galatians 3:29 NIV

Abraham’s promise of greatness and influence is ours as well. It’s yours. Own it. To be great under God naturally includes influencing all those around you. When you think of Tom Brady or Peyton Manning, you don’t just think of somebody who played football. You think of someone who influenced the entire game of football, and their team. Why? Because they left their mark. Their mere presence elevated the players around them, and as a result, all were able to achieve more individually and collectively than many thought they ever would.

We are to do the same.

I realize that many of you who have picked up this book may be at a place where you have made mistakes, you live with regret, or you have



simply failed to maximize the giftings and skills God has given you. It could be that life hasn't been fair. You read *Kingdom Man*. You understand a call to greatness. But you just don't know how you could possibly get there yourself, not with all that is missing or messed up in your life.

If that's you, I want to remind you that greatness has more to do with heart than skill, just as success in football has more to do with effort than talent. Those who put in the work rise to the top. Those who arrive early and stay late create the historic stories with their games. Those who don't allow personal disadvantages to play out as disadvantages are the ones we later refer to as legends.

Tom Brady didn't get drafted until the sixth round, but he has won six Super Bowl championships (at the time of this writing.) Brady didn't allow what people thought of him to determine the effort he would put into the game he calls his passion.

This principle ought to ring true for kingdom men too. It is your willingness to show up in life day in and day out, be present in relationships, put forth the effort on the job, commit, give, apply diligence, study the Word, invest in others, and the like that will shape your own legacy of distinction.

Show up.

Be present.

Stay consistent.

If you do those three things, you will leave a legacy of excellence. After all, legacy is the culmination of a million middle moments done well. It's not about that Hail Mary or kickoff return for a touchdown. It's the small things. The consistent conversations. The wise choices that add up over time. That's what creates the heritage you leave behind.

## Greatness Is Coming

You may not recognize the name Shaquem Griffin, but I imagine you'd recognize him if you saw him playing a game in the NFL. That's because Griffin was the first player to ever achieve something momentous in the

NFL, or any professional sport, by playing it without one of his hands. Shaquem lost his hand to amputation when he was only four years old.

He was born with amniotic band syndrome, and his family opted to remove his hand entirely after finding him in the kitchen one night trying to cut off his deformed, painful fingers with a knife. Not hesitating at all, his mom took him to the hospital the very next day for the surgery.<sup>2</sup>

While he was still in the womb, his parents had been given the option of having the doctors try to move the fibrous tissue wrapped around his hand. But they knew this could also lead to it wrapping around Shaquem's neck or possibly his twin brother Shaquill's. That was a risk they were not willing to take.<sup>3</sup> So they decided to keep it where it was and trust God.

Both parents made another decision at that time as well. As they later stated, they decided that they would not parent Shaquem any differently than their other children. They would "never let him consider his condition a hindrance."<sup>4</sup> That wise choice only strengthened him.

Yet, if we are honest, few of us might have been able to make that same choice Shaquem's parents did on how to raise him. Most of us may have sought to compensate somehow for his missing hand. And we wouldn't have blamed him for adopting a victim mind-set in life. In fact, many parents in that same situation might have gone on to adopt a victim mind-set for themselves as well.

Who would argue that navigating the daily demands of life without a hand might be considered justifiable grounds for blaming God, at least a little? Yet neither Shaquem nor his parents chose to live by that mentality. As a result, he not only became a great enough athlete to land a starting role in college, but he also created history when he went on to be drafted in the NFL.

The draft call came from the Seahawks while Shaquem was in the bathroom, fittingly enough. I say that it's fitting because the context of a bathroom is where many of us were first introduced to Shaquem and his inspirational story.

You may recognize him from the highly popular and inspirational commercial he did for Gillette after he was drafted. This commercial has evoked many tears in viewers over the years. It began with a scene portraying a much younger Shaquem and his dad in the bathroom as his dad taught



him how to shave with only one hand. The commercial then went on to show other scenes of his father teaching him how to do whatever else he needed to do in order to overcome and to achieve his dreams, including playing football. The title of the commercial is fitting as well: “Shaquem Griffin: Your Best Never Comes Easy.”<sup>5</sup>

What Shaquem’s father, and those around him, taught him obviously worked because Coach Carroll later had this to say on the Seahawks’ decision to draft a player without a hand:

“We looked at that very closely, to try to determine is there a factor that makes it obvious that maybe we shouldn’t take him. We thought he overcame all of the odds and was able to make the plays.”<sup>6</sup>

Shaquem had, against all odds, mastered a sport that sees less than 1 percent of high school senior players make it to the NFL.<sup>7</sup> A sport of dexterity, mobility, and the obvious use of players’ hands. But Shaquem knew his dream he had worked so hard to achieve was in God’s hands. He had this to say to an ESPN reporter when asked about the wait immediately after he got the call:

“It was tough—I’m not going to lie to you. . . . Seeing all them guys picked in front of me, and just falling back and knowing that . . . I did everything that I was supposed to do. But, you know, it was in God’s hands.”<sup>8</sup>

The reporter and crew from ESPN had gathered at Shaquem’s house the day of the draft in order to capture this momentous occasion, which he chose to share with his twin, Shaquill, already a cornerback for the Seahawks.

“What does it say that you’re gonna now have an opportunity to play with your brother Shaquill?” the reporter asked.

“It’s going to bring back everything we ever wanted,” Shaquem replied, tears in his eyes and, by his own admission, barely even able to speak or breathe. He continued, “This is everything we prayed for. This is everything we worked for. This is everything we stayed true to who we are [for]. And now that I got the opportunity to be back with him, it’s only going to mean greatness.”

The reporter then turned to his twin brother to hear from him. “Just to see us make it this far and to see where he’s going and where he’s about to go. It’s a humbling experience, and I’m definitely enjoying the ride,” Shaquill said as he stood there crying.

“Why is this emotional for you?” the reporter asked. He replied,

“A lot of people really don’t understand what we really went through, and you know, you hear the stories, you get a little brief summary, of what we talked about or what he kind of went through, but it’s so much more, and to see your dream come true . . . the way it did today? To get a chance to play with each other again, it means the world to me and I know it means the world to him. That’s why I’m so emotional. I don’t think I cried at my draft day, and I couldn’t hold it, I just couldn’t hold it. I’m excited.”

The reporter then asked the question meant for us all: “To all the people who are doubted in life, who are told that their dreams can’t come true, what would you say to them?”

Shaquem answered boldly, “Just keep working . . . if you keep working, your dream will come true. And this is not the end of my road; it’s only just the beginning, and I’m going to keep proving people wrong.”

I’m sure most of you will agree with me in saying that Shaquem has nothing left to prove. He has already proven plenty simply through this major overcoming accomplishment. Regardless, he keeps on fighting the odds. Staring down the opposition. Rising as a champion each day and every play. “Greatness is coming,” Shaquem managed to say as the interview came to a close.<sup>9</sup>

Yes, greatness is coming.

It’s a strong statement indicating future success. But I don’t think I’m going out on a limb to say that for many of us who have striven to leap the hurdles of hurt, loss, regret, and disadvantages in life, the statement might also be this:

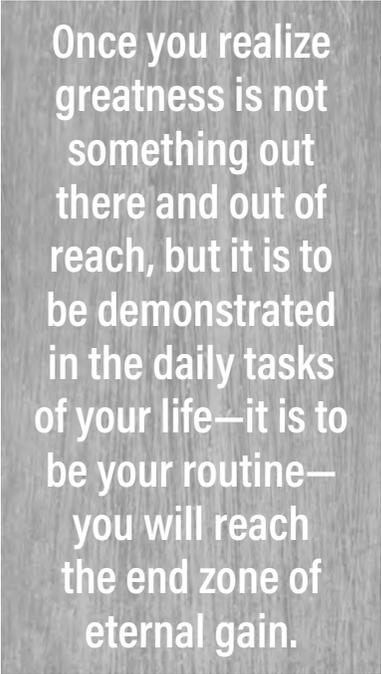
Greatness has already arrived.

It’s here. It’s in him. It’s in each of us. Right now. In fact, Shaquem Griffin wasn’t just chosen for the greatness to come, he was chosen because of the greatness already exhibited within him.



Greatness is in every one of you who has picked up this book, seeking to make your next decision better than your last. It's in each of you who strives to learn how to live life in wisdom while leaving a legacy of faith. It's in each of you who awakens to rise up in your God-given capacity to influence a world in desperate need of hope. Greatness is yours right now.

Every day, in every way, as you barrel through the enemy's line and tear through the opposition, greatness is yours to live out. Once you realize greatness is not something out there and out of reach, but it is to be demonstrated in the daily tasks of your life—it is to be your routine—you will reach the end zone of eternal gain.



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## Calling Our Culture to Rise Up

While my book *Kingdom Man* was written to challenge men to define manhood as God intended it to be, I'm writing this book both to equip men individually to overcome what is holding them back from living it out and to empower men collectively for multigenerational impact.

We will begin by identifying and addressing common issues that keep us down or limit the full expression of our potential. I'll spend time looking at this in the remainder of part one as well as part two. Then we will explore how to rise up collectively through principles of life impact and mutual investment and accountability, which we will look at together in part three.

I've chosen to focus so heavily on discipleship and authentic values transfer in this book because one of the ways Satan has successfully restrained forward momentum of kingdom warriors is by keeping us siloed.

We have embraced a compartmentalized view of Christianity, with each of us often focusing more on our own lives, plans, platforms, and personal desires. This leaves little room for any thought on the overarching kingdom agenda. I define the kingdom agenda as *the visible manifestation of the comprehensive rule of God over every area of life*.<sup>10</sup>

No war was ever won when soldiers fought separately based on their own goals and strategies. Until and unless we recognize and address this, we will stay stuck playing defense—never advancing the ball into the end zone of eternal impact.

I'm sure you are aware of the great strides many entities have made in our nation and around the world because they have united on a common message and goal. A 2017 Gallup poll reported that only 4.5 percent of all Americans identified openly as LGBT.<sup>11</sup> And yet that 4.5 percent has been hugely successful in pushing through policies, laws, and even overall cultural trends and messaging in arts, entertainment, and education. This intentional and highly partnered pursuit of promoting their unbiblical agenda has advanced their cause exponentially in a short time.

Compare this to a 2019 Pew Research study, which found that roughly 65 percent of Americans call themselves Christians.<sup>12</sup> And yet with such a high number, Christianity continues to face losses in our land as time moves on. Losses in influence, rights, and even perception.

I find it alarming that in America we have more Christian books than you could ever read, more Christian television than you could ever watch, more Christian radio than you could ever listen to, more Christian social media sites than you could ever visit, church services on Sunday and on Wednesday—and yet we are a nation of dry bones (see Ezekiel 37). We are a nation in a valley. We are a nation of mess—asleep, ineffective, and watching from the sidelines. The spiritual situation in our culture of men has led to vast social disintegration. We have dry men contributing to dry marriages composing dry families attending dry churches while living in a dry land.

And this is so because an authentic spiritual life doesn't come through rituals, budgets, programs, buildings, or even religion. Spiritual life, power, and strength come from the Spirit. The closer we are to the Spirit, the more abundant life we experience and the more influence we carry



out (John 10:10; 15:7). The further we are from Christ's Spirit, the more death and decay we experience.

Men, it's past time that we learn how to identify and heal from whatever it is that keeps us dry individually and segmented collectively. Both have made us ineffective for the kingdom of God. We must intentionally pursue personal growth and cross-relational discipleship if we are to have much left of our Christian heritage to leave as a legacy.

It is absolutely critical that we own the issues plaguing us on many fronts today. As kingdom men, we must own our roles in pointing each other to the one true King. We must own the responsibility of calling a culture in decline back to Christ. It's time we awaken not only ourselves but the culture at large, so we will take to the field and overcome the opposition at hand.

My challenge to you as we set out to go through this book and these life principles together is this: No matter how deep the pain or difficult the challenges, do not give in to apathy, disillusionment, or despair. Open the curtains of your soul. Let the light in. Sit up. Let your feet hit the floor, firmly. And then, stand. Let's make the devil mumble underneath his breath as he witnesses an army of kingdom men rising, "Oh crap, they're up."