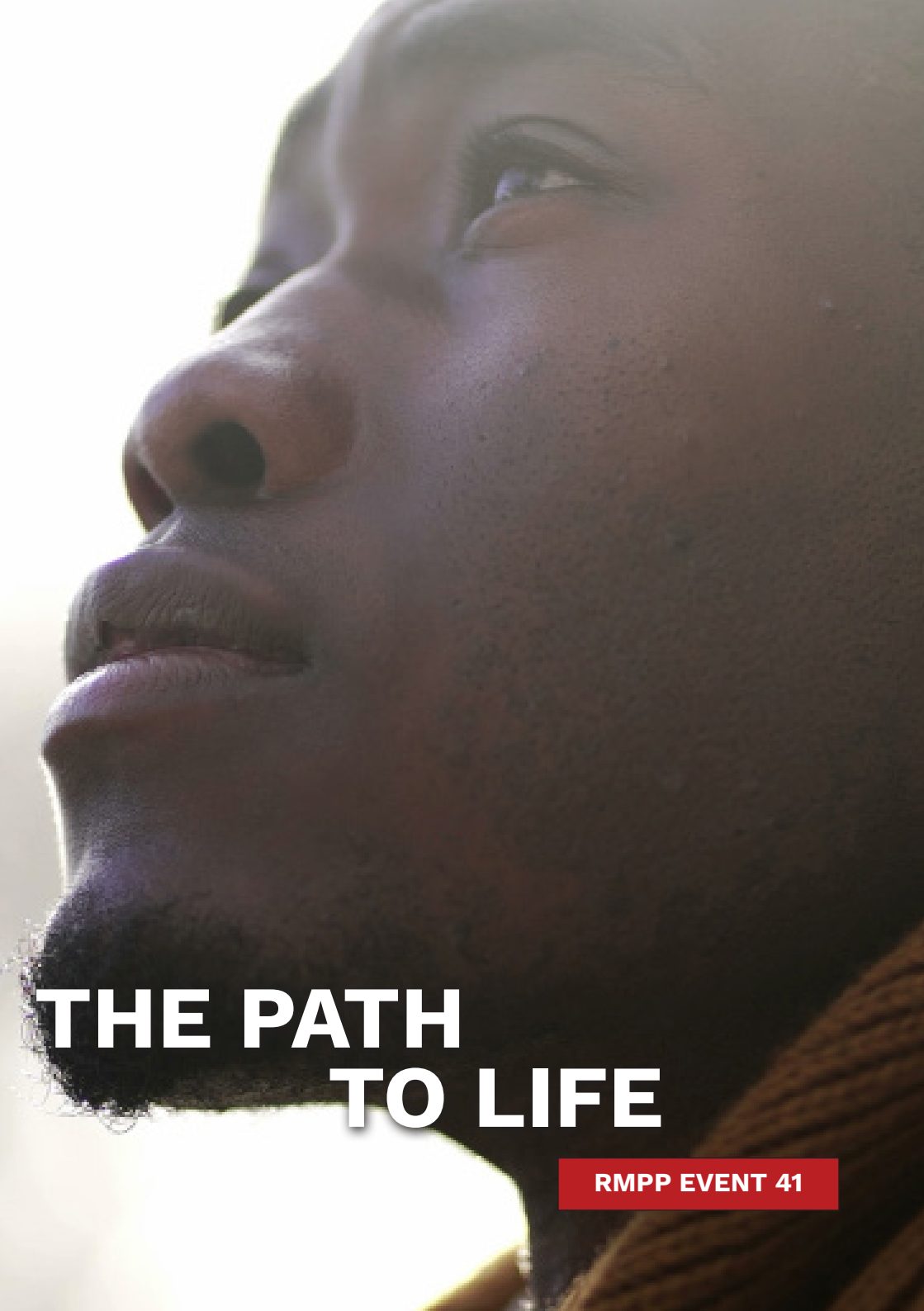

THE PATH TO LIFE

RMPP EVENT 41

SCHEDULE

Welcome and Zoom Etiquette

Opening Prayer

Speaker Introduction

Message: *The Path to Life*

Q&A and Discussion

Breakout Rooms

Closing Prayer

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THE PATH TO LIFE

SYNOPSIS

The path to life - what kind of life do you imagine when you think of that? An easy life? A comfortable and convenient one? While all of our lives will have unique challenges, Jesus promises an abundant life to all who follow Him. But is He talking about abundance, accumulation, or something far more satisfying?

| *Event Messages and Devotional Booklets*

You can find RMPP messages and devotional booklets from events past and present, including this one, on our website at: themstproject.com/real-men-pursuing-purity

| *Scripture Reflection*

This is what the Lord says: "Stop at the crossroads and look around. Ask for the old, godly way, and walk in it. Travel its path, and you will find rest for your souls. But you reply, 'No, that's not the road we want!' - *Jeremiah 6:16 (NLT)*

Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. - *John 14:6 (NLT)*

EVENT 41

| *Personal Reflection*

1. What kind of life is your heart yearning for?

2. How does knowing that Jesus brings abundant life impact your life?

| *Personal Application*

1. What must you do to get on to the path of life?

2. How will you help your workmate to get onto the path of life?

| *Recommended Reading*

The Purpose Driven Life: *Rick Warren*
In the Footsteps of the Savior: *Max Lucado*
The Way: Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus: *Adam Hamilton*

NOTES

A WORD FROM...

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

The path to life - what kind of life do you imagine when you think of that? An easy life? A comfortable and convenient one? A life that never ends? Or perhaps you would feel more comfortable if we talked rather of a highway to life since that might offer more options and is easier to take? When Jesus says that He is both the way (read "path") and the life, how does that impact the way you live? In fact the Bible tells us that Jesus brings abundant life to all who believe in Him. But is He talking about a trouble-free life of abundance, accumulation, or something far more satisfying? Come to think of it, could anything be more satisfying?

When we are lost physically, we place a lot of faith in our GPS to find us the right direction. Well, Jesus doesn't point the way, He is the Way and in fact the ONLY way to the Father. He has all the answers. But does it make you uneasy, to think that there is no other route to our heavenly Father? Most of us would like to go to heaven, but many hesitate as to the way there.

Jesus not only opened a way to heaven, to eternal life, but the Bible tells us that "In him was life". He is the means to as well as the source of life. Does it ever occur to you that Jesus was born with the specific purpose of dying. He came to give His life so that we might have life and have it in abundance.

If you are not yet on this path to life, because you are hesitating to make the decision, what is pulling you back? Could it be the material things of this world, doubt, fear, resentment at God? If, however, you are already on the path to life (real life), why not share with a neighbour, a friend, a workmate who is still searching, so that they too might experience the abundant life only Jesus can provide?

Steve Odera

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

DEVOTIONAL 1

The path to life - what does God's Word tell us about this path, how do we enter it, and how do we stay on track?

"Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. But the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find this gate (Matthew 7:13-14)."

Two gates to choose from. Each gate has its own pathway and destination. The narrow gate sounds like the better option, but how do you enter through this gate, and how do you stay on its path? And what exactly is this "life" that Jesus is talking about?

What is This Life?

John 3:16 describes this life as being "eternal." But more than merely its length, it's the quality of this life that matters. Jesus defines eternal life as knowing Him and knowing His Father (John 17:3). Eternal life involves having an intimate

relationship with Jesus and His Heavenly Father throughout eternity, starting from the day in which you put your complete trust in Jesus Christ.

Obtaining This Life

Eternal life is only obtained by entering in through the narrow gate. Jesus is the gate by which you must enter (John 10:9). "There is salvation in no one else. For there is no other name given under heaven…by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12)." Only by the name and person of Jesus Christ.

You enter through the narrow gate by reaching out to Jesus and trusting Him as your Lord and Savior. Jesus is the gate, but He is also the life itself (John 1:4, John 11:25, John 14:6). By believing and trusting in Jesus' ability to save you, you receive eternal life (John 3:16, John 3:36, Acts 16:31).

Walking This Path

For many years I desired Christ's abiding presence in my life. But if I'm honest, I thought I could compromise with Jesus, obeying Him in the "big" areas of my life, hoping He would overlook the "small" areas I wanted to keep for myself. What was I thinking? God does not compromise - not in His relationship with me, and not in His relationship with you.

The fullness of Christ's abiding presence requires full submission to Him.

I also thought my lack in experiencing Christ's presence was due to me not "doing enough." But in the same way I cannot save myself, I cannot abide in Christ by my own efforts. I go to Jesus and grasp onto Him, but He is the One who saves me, gives me His rest, and enables me to abide in Him and thereby experience real life.

I like this simplified translation of Philippians 3:12 - "I press on to take hold of Christ Jesus, in the same way that He has already taken hold of me." Ultimately, the prize Paul was seeking (Philippians 3:14) was unlimited intimacy with Christ with Paul abiding in Christ, and Christ abiding in Him. Because Paul knew that Christ had already grabbed ahold of him, Paul would do his utmost to grab onto Jesus and not let go. This is how you abide - you fully surrender yourself to Christ, and you trust Him to enable you to continually abide in Him.

What was Paul's greatest desire? "That I may know Him, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship (experience) of His sufferings (Philippians 3:10)." "I am willing to give up all other things, in order to obtain the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. (Philippians 3:8)"

Jesus is reaching out to you now: "Abide in Me, and I in you… abide in My love…and you will have fullness of joy. (John 15:4-11)" Will you this day grasp the hand of Jesus and fully trust in Him? If you do this, He will abide in you, and He will enable you to abide in Him. This is how you enter in through the narrow gate and keep on the path which leads to eternal life.

After a wide-ranging career, Roger with his wife Sini are now retired and living in Bangkok, Thailand. Roger continues to leam more and more about walking and abiding in Jesus…

| *Discussion Questions*

1. Eternal life is knowing Jesus and knowing your Heavenly Father. Are you experiencing this now, or what is lacking?
2. What is your greatest challenge in keeping to the path of eternal life? How do you think Jesus can help you with this?
3. Are you trying to compromise with Jesus? In what areas?

| *Read*

Luke 6:46

| *Reflect on This*

"Show me a person who is not living in close fellowship with God, and I will show you a person who is on the way to bigger problems. It is only a matter of time. The best antidote to the allurements and temptations of this world is a passionate love relationship with Jesus Christ." - *Greg Laurie*

GIVE ME, GIVE ME, GIVE ME

DEVOTIONAL 2

Are you allowing the temptations of worldly accumulation and the pursuit of material abundance to distract you from the abundant life of a Christ-follower?

As we walk the path of life, we encounter many different situations, signs and choices (forks) in the road. I wrote this devotional at Algonquin National Park in Canada, while contemplating whether we allow the temptations of worldly accumulation and the pursuit of material abundance to distract us from the abundant life of a Christ-follower. We enjoy hiking as one of the forms of being present in Gods beauty. We enjoy different kinds of paths in all 4 seasons and encounter many distractions: temperature changes, differences in elevation, path variation, weather, grade change, fallen trees, animals, etc. In life, how we prepare to be present in abundance is just as important as the journey itself and we use the Bible as our compass to plan the route of engagement.

When we become engaged with the world and find difficulty or blurriness between distractions (with particular focus on me, me, me!) and God's truth, we may become disillusioned in the description and importance of abundant living - societal materialism vs spirituality direction. In life, we can parallel similar distractions to hiking that we need to address both internally and externally.

Different path variations can be represented by internal thoughts, emotions, and behaviors of the inner critic created from past experiences, traumas and misguided direction. Direction and reason for a particular path can have external influences from the pursuit of relationships for position / power, social abundance, cars, bikes, houses, clothes, stuff and even experiences like dream vacation destinations, etc.

An Alternative to Worldly (me, me, me) Abundant Pursuit. As a foundation, abundance is used in the Bible 231 times and partially defined as a state of plenty. Since Israel was often restricted in resources, abundance was an important feature of her future hope, and it became a symbol of spiritual well-being. "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work." (2 Corinthians

9:8 ESV). According to Daniel-Joelson-Niranjan, this verse promises that God has the power to provide an abundance of grace, enabling us to always have sufficiency in all things. The implication is that when we rely on God's resources, we will not merely scrape by, but will have more than enough to not only meet our needs, but to abound in every good work.

When we prepare to walk, how does abundance fit into our preparation regarding the kind of life you imagine? Do we rely on God or our own desire for gain based on societal status, expectation or accumulation? "Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart." (Psalm 37:4, ESV). When we read this passage, we really need to look at the condition of our heart. God will answer the deepest cries of our hearts if the desires are in line with His desires and purposes. Romans 2:4 says, "Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?" At times the path is not an easy life; there are pitfalls of sinful / selfish living. "But as for me, my prayer is to you, O LORD. At an acceptable time, O God, in the abundance of your steadfast love answer me in your saving faithfulness." (Psalms 69:13, ESV). We are to rely on God during the trials and tribulations as opposed to a life of comfort, convenience, and self-indulgence. God offers us a life of spiritual unity, abundance and prosperity. "For you know the grace of our

Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich." (2 Corinthians 8:9, ESV).

In conclusion, I would like you to imagine a cup. When a cup is spilled, it spills out its continents. If it is filled with the stress and anxiety of chasing worldly things, that's what will spill out. Stress, anxiety, depression and lack of empathy for our fellow human being. If it's filled with faith, hope and love, that is what will spill out. We are that cup that can be filled with abundance. The heart is the center of our being: what we pursue, what we cherish, how we adjust to the path. What we believe to be important inwardly will determine our outward expression towards choice of abundance. Luke 6:45 sums up our discussion, "The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."

James Klassen is the founder and director of Next Steps Psychotherapy in Ontario, Canada. James became a psychotherapist out of the desire to help others in a Biblically professional way after struggling with addiction for over three decades, and now has achieved sobriety for over a decade by Gods' grace.

| *Discussion Questions*

1. What does abundance in life mean for you? How do we obtain abundance?
2. How do we maintain abundance?
3. How can we share in abundance?

| *Read*

Ephesians 6:10-18

| *Reflect on This*

"How wonderful and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony! For harmony is as precious as the anointing oil that was poured over Aaron's head, that ran down his beard and onto the border of his robe. Harmony is as refreshing as the dew from Mount Hermon that falls on the mountains of Zion. And there the Lord has pronounced his blessing, even life everlasting." - *Psalm 133*

LIFE ISN'T FAIR!

DEVOTIONAL 3

An abundant life is not the promise of a trouble-free life. What does the abundant life look like amid trials, hurts, and suffering?

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." (James 1:2 NIV)

You have probably heard it said, "You are either going through a valley or getting ready to go thru a valley." If you have been walking in God's creation long enough, you know this to be true. Jesus said "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble." (John 16:33 NIV). There is a lot of pain and suffering that goes on in the world. Broken relationships or families, addictions and illnesses, just to name a few. When you see people out and about in your day-to-day activities, chances are a lot of them

are going through "valleys" or some type of struggle. But God uses our valleys.

One year ago, while on a vacation to the mountains, I had a massive heart attack. It has been one of the biggest challenges I have dealt with in my life. It changed my life in so many ways. While in the "valley" I struggled with anxiety. Worrying about my family and my long-term health started to overwhelm me. Worry about finances became crippling. But in the long term, what I have found is that God used that circumstance to mold me. Mold me in areas I just wasn't focused on like healthy eating, exercise and stress management. But mostly, I changed my perspective on how much I needed my Heavenly Father. It was also a good reminder that God is always greater than any circumstance we may be facing.

Much like a diamond has to go through so much chiseling and polishing to bring out its sparkle, when we go thru pain it is good to remember that pain has a purpose. In Romans 5:3 Paul states, "We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation." (Romans 5:3 NLT) Our pain may feel heavy, but the purpose can drive us to a deeper relationship with God and open up our minds to the life he intends for us. An abundant life. Our Father is the only

One who has the power to take our broken pieces and create something beautiful!

Here are some verses that can encourage you as you face trials, hurts, or suffering.

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. - James 1:12 (ESV)

Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. - Romans 12:12 (ESV)

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds. - James 1:12 (ESV)

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. - Romans 8:18 (ESV)

So that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. - 1 Peter 1:7 (ESV)

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation,

or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? - Romans 8:35 (ESV)

For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. - 2 Corinthians 12:10 (ESV)

Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!- 1 Chronicles 16:11

Jeff McMullen is the CFO of Office Pride Commercial Cleaning Services in Palm Harbor Florida. Jeff and his family have lived in the Tampa Florida area for 12+ years.

| *Discussion Questions*

1. What are some examples of "valleys" in your life? Either present or past.
2. How has God molded you through these trials?
3. Knowing these truths, how does it prepare you for the next trials that will come your way?

| *Read*

Hebrews 4:15

| *Reflect on This*

"Suffering is unbearable if you aren't certain that God is for you and with you." - *Tim Keller*

GUARD YOUR HEART

DEVOTIONAL 4

When we compare ourselves to others and what they have, we lose sight of the abundant life and open the door of our hearts to greed, envy, and jealousy.

On a recent flight I had the opportunity to watch a documentary about a man I had always greatly admired, Anthony Bourdain. For the uninitiated, Bourdain was a chef at the exclusive Les Halles restaurant in New York City, a best seller author and the host of multiple famous television shows on world travel. His shows always had the same basic premise: he would travel to exotic and wonderful places around the world and share luxurious meals with some of the most successful and influential people on the planet. In addition, Bourdain was a naturally gifted writer who wrote with a gritty, cynical but humorous prose that propelled his first novel, Kitchen Confidential, to the top of the New York Times Bestseller List. As a fledgling world traveler and amateur writer myself, I attempted to model my own life experiences in the same

vein. I would read his books, watch his travel shows, go to the places and do the things that Anthony Bourdain would do. I would write and dream of having my own bestseller one day. To me, at the time, this man had it all. He must have, I thought, lived in a perpetual state of bliss while writing, travelling and eating. The sense of disappointment I felt when comparing my life, writing and travels with his would be apparent every time I found myself in some interesting or exotic place in the world. Despite my best efforts, nothing I could do would ever compare to the fascinating life experiences and natural writing talent of Anthony Bourdain. In some odd, distant way, I lived in the shadow of comparison to this man.

Comparison naturally seems to breed a certain amount of internal discontentment with one's own life. It's a subtle poison that saps our satisfaction with what God has already graciously provided us with. Comparison is the thief of joy, as they say, stealing from the present and always putting true peace and joy just out of reach. Comparison says, "If only I had what they have, if only I could be them…then and only then will I be satisfied." What a tremendous liar comparison can be. The truth about Anthony Bourdain was actually quite far from what I had assumed. As I discovered, Bourdain was a perpetually unhappy person. He overtly rejected the idea of God in his own cynically dismissive style. A staunch atheist,

Bourdain lived an extremely broken and clinically depressed life, despite being infused with the greatest things this world can offer. He committed suicide on June 8, 2018 after a failed relationship. I had found it so easy to compare what I perceived as lack in my own life and experiences only to find out that even if I could trade lives with Anthony Bourdain, I would not want to.

While comparison seems to come naturally to many of us, we, as Christians, are called to something so much higher. The call of the Lord for our lives always remains the same. Die to yourself so that in turn, you can truly come alive. We can rejoice in the fact that we are saved by God's grace and mercy and as a result are free to enter into God's kingdom. Only here can one find rest for their soul. Therefore, instead of living in comparison, Jesus, in Matthew 11:28-30 admonishes us:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Sadly, Anthony Bourdain was a man who did not live with the "easy yoke" that Christ offers us. He is a primary example, about how comparison is an exercise in futility.

Thankfully, instead of living a life of dissatisfied comparison, the Lord calls each of us to come to him to find the light burden, the easy yoke and ultimate rest for our souls.

Rob Thomas lives in a suburb outside of Toronto, Canada. An avid backpacker, Rob funds his world travels by working as a full time paramedic in his hometown. He is on the journey towards deeper relationship with Jesus along with his friends and brothers at The MST Project.

| *Discussion Questions*

1. Can you identify an area of your life where you have fallen into the trap of comparison? Be specific with your example.
2. Has there ever been a time when you have compared yourself to someone only to discover that the opposite of what you thought was true? Provide an example.
3. What does having a "light burden and easy yoke" mean? Describe what is meant by this imagery that Jesus uses in Matthew 11:28.

| *Read*

John 7:37-39

| *Reflect on This*

"To depart from righteousness is choose a life of crushing burdens, failures, and disappointments, a life caught in the toils of endless problems that are never resolved." - *Dallas Willard*

LIKE PAUL, I HAVE LEARNED...

DEVOTIONAL 5

What role does contentment play in recognizing the abundant life that Jesus promises His followers?

Contentment may be one of the few common pursuits of all mankind, both past and present. Regardless of nationality, ethnicity, religion, or culture, everyone desires to be content. However, an experience our readers may relate to is how, more often than not, we are prone to think of what we are discontented about instead of what things we are content with! We all know how it feels to be discontent, to not be totally happy. I myself work on my family farm, and farming often seems to be riddled with discontentment. For example, yesterday I was seeding wheat when it started to rain, so I had to stop. Despite the fact that we really needed this rain, my first thought was, "If only the rain came after I finished this field!" Or just earlier today I was thinking, "If only we had this certain piece of machinery (it of course needed to be from the high-quality and expensive John Deere brand), things would be easier and work better!" Apart from farming, life in

general looks as if it is bent on discontentment as it seems to be the condition of the human heart. The synopsis for this devotional asks the question, "What role does contentment play in recognizing the abundant life that Jesus promises His followers?" John 10:10 says, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." This passage is the foundation of this entire series and it asks the very important question of "What did Jesus mean by the abundant life?" And today our question is, "What role does contentment play in the abundant life?" Paul says in Philippians 4:11-13 that he has "learned in whatever situation [he is] to be content". What did contentment look like for Paul, and what should it look like for us?

I would like to pose a situation that describes what we often think of contentment. Suppose you are walking by a big shiny mall in one of the megacities of the world, and in the window, you happen to see a fancy new wrist watch. You look down at your wrist where you are wearing your old worn out wrist watch and you think to yourself, "Wow, I would really love a new watch, but I don't have the money and therefore I should be 'content' with what I have." And you walk away in disappointment of what could have been, but will never be, and your solution is to 'learn to be content.' This is often how we describe contentment to ourselves, and although this is

not wrong, is this what Paul means when he says that he has learned to be content? I think the Bible has more to say about contentment. Jesus said to the woman at the well, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again" (John 4:13-14). The point Jesus was making is that the well of this world will never satisfy. In this case, in John 4:18, Jesus knew, without the woman telling him, (I changed the word from "prophetically" as it seemed more appropriate) that she was pursuing relationships to make her happy. But in this story, what does Jesus say satisfies? Is it health, or wealth, prosperity, or a fancy new wrist watch? No, he says it is something far greater: Jesus himself. Whoever drinks of the water that He gives will 'never be thirsty' again! Do we really believe that anyone who drinks of Jesus will never thirst again?

Paul did. That's why he said, "I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." It is through Christ that we see that this world is momentary and Jesus is forever (2 Corinthians 4:18). Paul counted "everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:8)" The fact that we have received the greatest treasure that anyone could ever receive, a treasure that guarantees that we would never need to thirst for anything in this life again. Instead, it continually moves us to a place where we are not

desperate for the things of this world. We can lose everything, and consider it "gain" because we've received Jesus.

Join me in my journey to learn more about contentment: I am realizing that when I am discontent, it's not because I don't need to desire things so badly. I don't need to kill my desire for a nice watch, as we talked about earlier, or for a bumper crop in my farm situation. What I do need to realize is that we already have the greatest treasure of all time and history, here, as our very own. We have a great inheritance (1 Peter 1:4), and we can live out what the old hymn says "And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace." When we do this, our desires of this world do not go away, but they are put in the place where they are supposed to be. Some things of this world are good, but not the ultimate thing. We have the ultimate thing, Jesus, and therefore we can be content.

Peter has been a part of RMPP since 2019 after six months of serving with The MST Project in Thailand as part of a college internship. He currently works on his family farm in Alberta, Canada, where he continues to serve the Lord.

| *Discussion Questions*

1. Do you see Jesus as a precious jewel, something worth more than anything in this world? Or is He a means to get what you want, whether it be health, wealth, or prosperity?
2. Why does Paul say he 'learned' what it is to be content in any situation?
3. What is one area in your life that you need to let go of and allow yourself to see Jesus as greater and better than this desire?

| *Read*

Psalm 63:3

| *Reflect on This*

"So be satisfied and quiet, be contented with your contentment. I lack certain things that others have, but blessed be God, I have a contented heart which others have not." - *Jeremiah Burroughs (1599-1646)*

TRUST IS THE ANSWER

DEVOTIONAL 6

Regardless of what you have, what you have gone through, or whatever you may encounter in the future, Jesus promises you an abundant life - and to experience that in fullness comes down to trust. Do you trust what Jesus promises?

Trust in Jesus is relational; it isn't abstract. We are not being asked to trust in a force (like gravity), or a set of principles (like forgiveness). We are being invited to trust in a person - The Living One. And He is someone who actually knows us! Think of his initial invitation to Peter: a tired fisherman who had fished all night without catching anything, but was asked to cast his nets again (by a construction worker who shouldn't know much about fishing). Peter highly doubts that it will be effective, but he says, "if You say so…" and immediately, he had a miraculous catch. Then an invitation is given: Come, follow Me, and you will now fish for people (you could read it all in Luke 5:1-11).

Trust is relational, and it is built one step at a time. His first command was to "cast your nets again." This meant a few hours of

extra work at the risk of frustration and public embarrassment, but hey, Jesus is the one asking after all. And Jesus didn't waste Peter's yes. When He invited Peter to do something that didn't look to him like it would "work", Jesus knew something that Peter didn't. There was no way he could've known that there was a miraculous catch just waiting at that particular place and moment. Peter had to trust Jesus by acting on his invitation.

I remember one of the very first *The MST Project On the Street* explorations I joined. Our group of four prayed and invited Jesus to lead us to any place He wanted us to be in Bangkok. One young man felt a nudge, "does Street 23 mean anything to anyone?" It did indeed. We went to stand on a corner outside of one particular red-light district and waited, seeking to engage men in conversation, and for 45 minutes nothing seemed to happen. Suddenly a taxi cab pulled up to where we were standing and, to my great surprise, I recognized the man man who got! He was someone I had gone to college with on the West Coast of the USA. As we reconnected, we had a mutually transformative conversation that led him away from the red-light district that night and me into a greater place of trust. Later in my journey of "fishing for people", Jesus has continued to invite me to trust Him with greater and riskier things than showing me which street corner to stand on. He invited my wife and I to trust Him with our birth control journey – resulting

in six amazing children who stretch us and challenge us and reveal Jesus to us daily. At one point, He led us to fish for people in Bangkok where we lived for 14 years. Afterwards, He led us to return to America where we have now been for 2 years. We didn't like that invitation and it didn't make sense at first. But Bangkok had become our comfort zone, and we needed to follow Jesus to America. This very week He is inviting us to say "no" to a ministry invitation that is deeply affirming. However, as we discern the situation through the Lord's eyes, it feels much more like a test than an invitation. And as we pray and seek counsel, the most trusting response is to stay put in the smaller, less-exciting community we have been invited to live in. The only rule is this: *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take." (Proverbs 3:5-6).*

Jesus didn't say to Peter on day one, "Come follow me and you will die like I do, hanging on a cross, because you will be unwilling to deny that your allegiance to me is more important than your allegiance to the Roman Empire." That ask came later, after an intensely intimate restoration with the risen Jesus on the beach following a life-halting betrayal, a death and a resurrection. "Come, become like me." So how does this work today? How do we develop the sort of trust that will lead us to stand on street corners, or adjust where we live, or how we live, or even be willing to say personally challenging invitations in

order to faithfully finish the work that He is inviting us to do?

First, we need to understand who Jesus is and what He is inviting us into. He is the good shepherd who speaks to His sheep who then learn to recognize His voice (John 10). He is the vine, and we are branches who find our sustenance only in Him. He calls us friends, and tells us that relationship with Him (not a goal or a ministry or a purpose or a principle or a plan) is the Way to where we are going (John 14 & 15). We cultivate that relationship as we spend time with Him. As we ask Him to speak to us as the Living Word when we read scripture. As we ask Him to make himself known to us as we pray. To reveal Himself in our circumstances. To show Himself to us through others in His body, those whom He calls His own. The abundant life that Jesus promises us is found in Him. We are told that "And this is eternal life: to know You, the only true and real God, and to know Him, Jesus Christ Whom You have sent. (John 17:3) The end of the story is an endlessly intimate relationship. And where was God in the midst of our own past traumas and hurts? He was with us!

Iven and his family lived in Bangkok, Thailand for many years, working especially with those on the margins of society. These days they are living in Washington state, called to be friends of Jesus and seeking to support others on the journey of belovedness.

| *Discussion Questions*

1. Read all of John 14 slowly and out loud. Is there a word or phrase that speaks to your heart to encourage or deepen your trust in Jesus? Write it down and pray it back to Him.
2. Is there a particular nudge that you have been noticing where He is inviting you to a particular action of trust? How risky does it feel?
3. What is one thing you are tightly holding on to that keeps your hands clenched so that you are unable to receive from Jesus? An attitude, mindset, or "no" in your life that keeps you away from His abundant life? Could you offer it up to Him today?

| *Read*

Psalm 37:3–5

| *Reflect on This*

"Pray, and let God worry." - *Martin Luther*

LOOKING BACK...

DEVOTIONALS 1-6

During this connect group cycle, we pray that you have been challenged, encouraged, and inspired as you pursue greater sexual purity, spiritual wholeness, and Christlike maturity in your life. We want to encourage you to now take some time to reflect on the last six devotionals and see how you can consistently apply the many truths that have been shared and that you have learned in your life.

Devotional 1

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life? Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 2

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life? Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 3

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life? Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 4

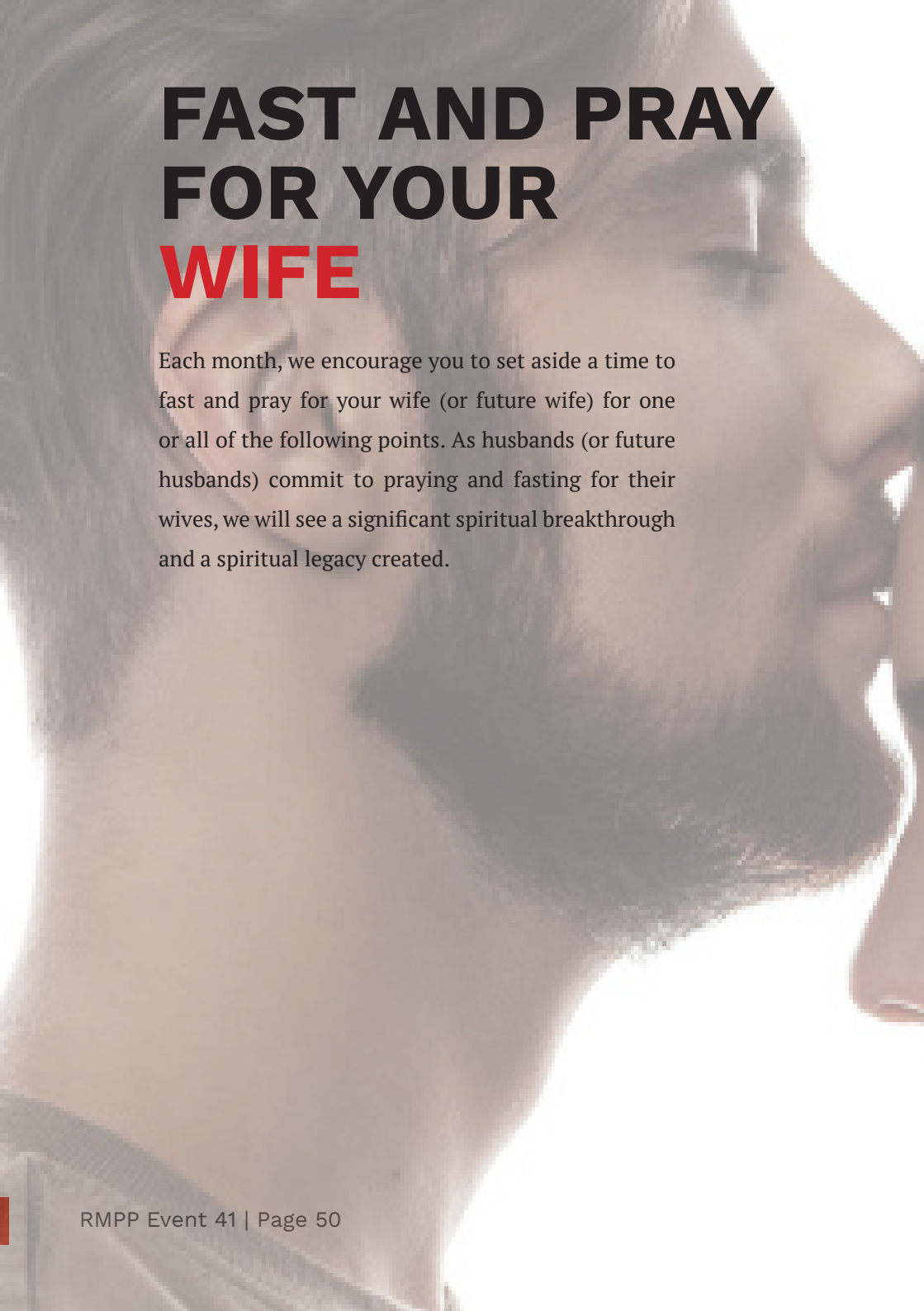
What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life? Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 5

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life? Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

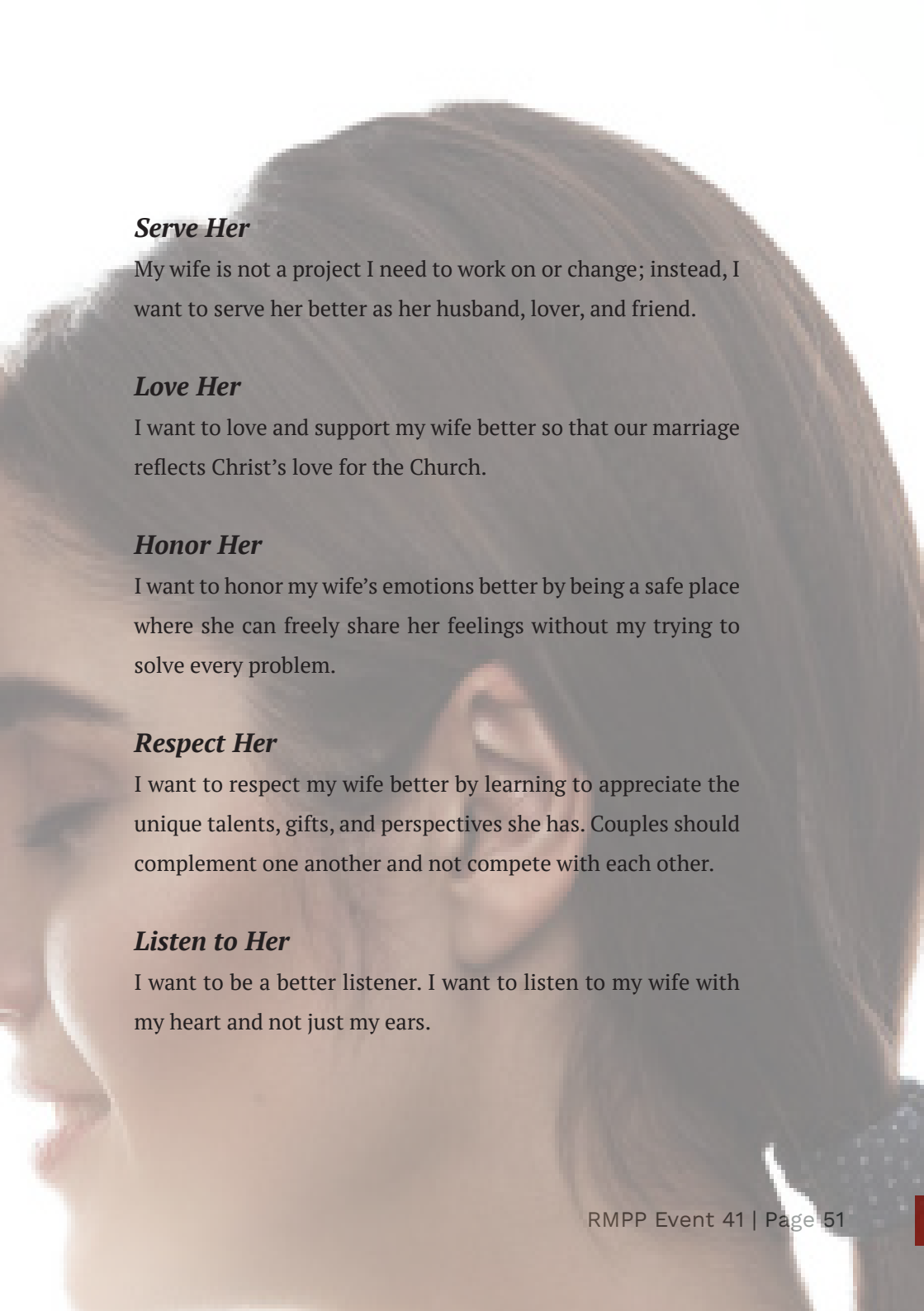
Devotional 6

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life? Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.



FAST AND PRAY FOR YOUR WIFE

Each month, we encourage you to set aside a time to fast and pray for your wife (or future wife) for one or all of the following points. As husbands (or future husbands) commit to praying and fasting for their wives, we will see a significant spiritual breakthrough and a spiritual legacy created.



Serve Her

My wife is not a project I need to work on or change; instead, I want to serve her better as her husband, lover, and friend.

Love Her

I want to love and support my wife better so that our marriage reflects Christ's love for the Church.

Honor Her

I want to honor my wife's emotions better by being a safe place where she can freely share her feelings without my trying to solve every problem.

Respect Her

I want to respect my wife better by learning to appreciate the unique talents, gifts, and perspectives she has. Couples should complement one another and not compete with each other.

Listen to Her

I want to be a better listener. I want to listen to my wife with my heart and not just my ears.

INTRODUCING RMPP

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

| *What Is RMPP?*

Real Men Pursuing Purity (RMPP) is a community of men who are committed to growing in integrity, purity and wholeness through relevant teachings, accountability, mentoring and honest dialogue. You might not be sure that you really need to be part of a community like this because you don't struggle with compulsive addictions or sexual sin. While it is very important for many men to focus primarily on resisting sexual temptation and sin, we want to inspire and challenge you to pursue more. Although growing in purity is a big part of the vision for RMPP, it's much more than that. It's also learning about deep-rooted insecurities, developing proper work boundaries, embracing our identity in Christ, confronting fears and anxiety, expressing ourselves emotionally in a healthy way, and pursuing holiness in a safe environment with like-minded brothers. We believe that when we invite Him into these areas, He will extend His healing hand and bring about wholeness. Max Lucado says this very well.

EST. 2014

"Our Savior kneels down and gazes upon the darkest acts of our lives. But rather than recoil in horror, he reaches out in kindness and says, "I can clean that if you want."

We are men who are not willing to settle for a life of spiritual mediocrity. We choose to relentlessly pursue greater depths of purity and wholeness for ourselves and for our families. Welcome to the RMPP community.

| *How does RMPP support the local church?*

RMPP does not intend to replace or represent a church; it only creates a safe place for men who want to stay active in their own church community. When a man joins the RMPP community he joins other like-minded men who desire to pursue greater spiritual growth and Christ-likeness. He is choosing to walk out in greater honesty and vulnerability. He is choosing to pursue purity in all aspects of his life. Aspects such as deep-rooted insecurities, developing proper work

boundaries, embracing our identity in Christ, confronting fears and anxiety, expressing ourselves emotionally in a healthy way, and pursuing holiness in a safe environment.

We then pray that as these men grow in greater maturity that they would influence their families. That they would impact their communities and their work places, and that they would be an example for other men in their home church. We believe that as men take hold of the awesome and holy call to live lives that reflect Christ, that the church will be inspired and the world will take notice.

| *What happens next?*

If you have ever attended a men's retreat, you probably remember being deeply impacted by worship, challenged by teaching, and being in community with many men who shared your excitement and enthusiasm for growth and change. A few weeks or months down the road, the gathering became a distant memory as you settled back into the routines of daily life. We don't want to create just another mountain top experience. We are committed to creating a long-term mentoring relationship for everyone who attends an event. That is why you are holding this devotional book in your hands. As you flip through these pages you will see that there devotionals with corresponding

questions. Each devotional is meant to solidify the teaching of the event by encouraging and challenging you, as well as helping to stimulate discussion through thought provoking questions, verses and quotes.

| *Who writes the devotionals?*

Christian men from around the world have written these devotionals and have overcome real issues in their life through God's grace, goodness, mercy and love. We hope and pray that their testimonies and stories inspire, challenge and point you to Christ.

| *What are RMPP connect groups?*

RMPP connect groups are a safe place for men to pursue both purity and wholeness within an environment of peer support and encouragement. The journey to greater purity and wholeness is a journey that involves inviting other men to walk alongside of you. It is a place where you can share your prayer requests, victories, and struggles and where you can be heard, prayed for and challenged to grow in all areas of life. A connect group is designed to be a support system for you for as long as you want.

During your time in a connect group you will be:

***Challenged*:** You will be challenged to grow in your love for Biblical truth. The men in your group will challenge you to grow in your knowledge and application of God's Word thereby enabling you to stand firm in the midst of life's trials.

***Encouraged*:** You will be encouraged to persevere when life, work, and numerous responsibilities may seem overwhelming. The men in your group will support you through prayer, encouragement and a listening ear.

***Inspired*:** You will be inspired to pursue greater spiritual growth and Christ-likeness. While pursuing Christ-likeness may not always be easy, it will also be worth it. The men in your group will be there to inspire you on that journey.

***Accountable*:** The men in your group, as well as your group leader, will support you and hold you accountable as you pursue greater freedom and victory. Be assured that whatever you share in your group will be strictly confidential.

| *When are the events held?*

RMPP events are held online 4x a year in February, May, August, and November.

| *Who can attend?*

RMPP events are open to all men worldwide.

| *What about privacy?*

Because of the sensitive nature of RMPP events, video or audio recording by participants is not allowed. Also, details of personal testimonies are not to be published via email, social media, or in any other form. Thank you for contributing to a safe and secure environment that helps build honesty and vulnerability.

| *Who started RMPP?*

Real Men Pursuing Purity was founded in 2014 and is an initiative of The MST Project.

MEET THE TEAM

THE MST GLOBAL BOARD

Christian Lenty is the founder and director of The MST Project, a ministry that seeks to mentor men into a pursuit of sexual purity, spiritual wholeness, and Christlike maturity. Christian has lived in Thailand for over 21 years and resides in Bangkok with his wife.

Rex DeKoning is the 60-year old husband and father of a large family. A former nurse and pastor, he now works in Thailand with New Counseling Service as a counselor. Rex has experienced great healing of addictive behaviors after he confessed everything and began to live an accountable life. Rex is highly motivated to inspire other men to seek out a mentor, as it has helped him to walk freely, build honesty and vulnerability.

Nick Chilver is married and is part of a blended family containing 6 children. He is grateful for the people God has brought into his life and across his path. And as he continues to learn to better reflect Him, it is his prayer that God will grant

him the privilege of helping others on the path to freedom and into the Light. He resides in Thailand with his wife.

Mike B. Wood is married to his wonderful wife of 28 years. He is a Pastoral Counselor in the area of sexual recovery therapy. He is a man in process, passionate about bringing men together to share life together. This is where we study God's Word together and share the challenges we face. This inspires us to accept what God has freely given us: His love, mercy, grace and acceptance. He and his wife have lived in Thailand for 18 years.

Steve Odera...bio coming soon.

EVENT DATES AND RESOURCES

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

| *2024 Event Dates and Zoom ID*

Mark your calendars, plan to attend, and invite a friend to one or all of the events below.

Event 42: August 17-18
Event 43: November 16-17
Zoom ID for all events: 561 433 8821

| *The Pursuit of Purity*

The book, The Pursuit of Purity, is meant to transform the way you think and live, putting you on a lifetime path of purity and wholeness leading to consistent victory.

***W*:** themstproject.com/pathway-to-purity
***E*:** hello@themstproject.com

THANK YOU

| *With Gratitude*

We would like say thank you to the following for their contribution to RMPP.

Financial Donors

Thank you for generously providing funding that allows for RMPP events, seminars, and translation of materials.

Devotional Authors

Thank you for writing devotionals that inspire, encourage and challenge each of us to pursue greater sexual purity, spiritual wholeness and Christlike maturity.

| *Scriptural Oversight Team*

RMPP has a Scriptural Oversight Team consisting of several pastors from local churches that review all devotionals for theological integrity.

CONNECT GROUPS

RMPP connect groups are a safe place for men to pursue sexual purity, spiritual wholeness, and Christlike maturity within an environment of peer support, encouragement, and accountability.

Connect groups are held worldwide on a weekly basis. To inquire about joining a group or to find out more information please email **hello@themstproject.com**.

If you are interested in starting an RMPP connect group at your church, men's ministry, Bible study, college group, etc., please contact us. We'd love to support you and have the resources to help you.

JOIN ONE
TODAY!

MAY 2024