

"I gotta say, this is an awesome perspective for men to consider as well! We often don't realize the collateral damage our choices cost our families. This perspective inspires me to a more vigilant effort on behalf of the woman who has chosen to risk her future with me. I plan to read this aloud with my wife. It will strengthen our understanding of our relationship and where we take it from here."

—Bryan Duncan, recording artist and singer-songwriter

"Tina Samples, this time along with her husband, Dave, has done it again! *Messed Up Men of the Bible* is a fascinating and informative read. It reminds readers of all the 'messed up' men that God used throughout Scripture. We shouldn't be surprised that God uses the imperfect among us, though. Who else has He ever had to work with?"

—Martha Bolton, former staff writer for Bob Hope, playwright, and author of 88 books, including *Josiah for President*

"At one time in my life, I felt messed up and beyond hope. It was when I began to see my life from the Lord's perspective that He was able to begin cleaning up the mess I had made. Tina and Dave have taken episodes of messed up men of the Bible and revealed how God meets us right where we are but loves us enough not to leave us there. With clarity and vivid storytelling, they have written a book that beautifully illustrates just how amazing God is at cleaning up the messes we make of our lives and at the same time shows how able our God is to redeem and love us into our true callings. My takeaway? I see others differently and more hopefully now—and am able to see that our God wastes nothing! Reading these stories emboldens me to seek to be a man after God's own heart."

—Dennis Jernigan, husband, father, grandfather, worshiper, song receiver, and author of the autobiography *Sing Over Me*

"The Bible is brutally honest when it comes to the flaws and failures of God's great leaders, and Tina and Dave Samples, with transparency and authenticity, bring hope and encouragement to women with 'messed up men' in their lives, and men seeking to make a message out of a mess. Delightful, informative, and inspirational—this book is perfect to read on your own, with your spouse, or with a group!

—Rebecca Ashbrook Carrell, morning show cohost on 90.9 KCBI, blogger, and author of *Holy Jellybeans: Finding God Through Everyday Things*

“This book belongs on the nightstand of every wife who is searching her heart for answers. *Messed Up Men of the Bible* is woven with hard-won wisdom on how to love the messed up men in our lives with grace, courage, and compassion. Dave and Tina Samples have carefully adorned this valuable resource with practical tips, sage advice, and biblical stories that help us bring forth the purpose and potential in the men we love. Best of all, this book returns our fixation to God, the only one powerful enough to transform a wounded man into a warrior. My hope is that *Messed Up Men of the Bible* helps women be the kind and gentle spirits men need us to be as they battle through the trials of life, and that some day our men will look back and say, ‘It was *her* faith that inspired me to change for the better.’”

—Jennifer Strickland, former professional model, inspirational speaker, founder of URMore.org, and author of *Beautiful Lies* and *More Beautiful Than You Know*

“This is a wonderful book and study guide! Dave and Tina tag team to create a bridge between various men of the Bible, with their ‘messed up’ issues, and today’s men, who essentially face the same strengths and obstacles. This is a very encouraging, hopeful, and practical guide for letting Christ bring us to a place of understanding and maturity in our walk with Him and each other. There is a great weaving of personal stories, biblical accounts, and timely truth-filled commentary, helping us make sense of it all.”

—Jeff Nelson, producer and worship leader

*Messed Up*  
**MEN** *of the*  
**BIBLE**

*Seeing the Men in Your Life  
Through God's Eyes*



Tina Samples & Dave Samples

 **Kregel**  
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*For Dad.*

*I'm so thankful the messes didn't define you.  
I praise God for changing your life. Can't wait to see you.  
I love you always.*

*For Mom.*

*Thank you for what you taught me, for your example,  
and for allowing me to tell our story.  
I love you always.  
—Tina*



*Dedicated to Mom and Dad.*

*I'm grateful for your sacrifice, your example,  
your faith, and your love.  
—David*





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# Introduction

**TINA** ✨ In Job, it says, “Man is born for trouble, as sparks fly upward” (Job 5:7). We women have seen sparks fly upward, around, and upside down. We’ve seen the spark of love that ignites the beating of a heart and the spark of pain that stops it. We know the trouble we’ve had with man, and man with us. Even Adam and Eve understood that word, *trouble*. Yet we can’t seem to live without men. How many men are in your life? Boss, employee, coworker, grandfather, father, brother, uncle, close friend, dating partner, spouse, son? I’ve been surrounded by men my whole life. I grew up with eight brothers, married Dave, and had two sons. Even our dog is a male! Yes, there is too much testosterone flying around my house.

Having so many men in my life allowed me to experience male and female personality differences firsthand. Some men in my life remain quiet and keep their hearts tucked in deep places. Others open their chests, place their hearts on the table, and let it all out. I must say, I love men who do that. I’m not talking sappy moments but transparent moments; moments when a man risks it all to openly share his heart.

In high school I had more male than female friends. Yes, I was one of those girls. For some reason guys came to me with their problems. In high school the issues were all about girls, dating, and love, but college shed a different light. Men struggled with homosexuality, abuse, controlling parents, their value, purpose, addictions, and guilt.

Long ago I realized that men are just trying to figure out who they are and what they want out of life. Sound familiar? Women want the same. That task in itself is huge; without God in the center, it’s almost impossible to achieve.

I spent my honeymoon at an amusement park. Okay, I could have become a little upset about that one, but due to finances and our love for roller coasters, my husband thought an amusement park was a good idea. Sometimes men have a difficult time figuring women out. There were no fancy restaurants, and my hotel room wasn't adorned with fresh rose petals. My vision of softly glowing candles flickering in the room was just that—a vision. Yet even though our brief trip wasn't my idea of a luxurious honeymoon, our time playing together was joyous.

(Allow me to press the *pause* button and give my husband the shout-out he deserves. Twenty years later, he did take me on the honeymoon I never had—a lavish cruise to the Caribbean. Thank you, honey.)

Before long we had two sons and shared our love for the amusement park with them. But over time, I developed a fear of heights. One memorable day at the park impacted me in a profound way. Here's what happened.

"Okay, last ride call," said my husband. My oldest son decided he wanted to ride the Mind Eraser with me since I didn't get to ride it earlier.

I went through my symptoms of pulse racing, hands sweating, and head swimming. I was afraid. On the way up to the Mind Eraser, I asked, "Jaren, what can I expect from this ride?"

My eight-year-old son said, "Well, your head is going to bob this way and that way. We go up, around, and upside down. You lose your mind—but it only lasts three seconds."

*I lose my mind?* "Oh, give me strength, Lord," I mumbled. I sat in the seat, my heart sprinting—and I whined. I whined like a little baby. Out loud. "I can't do this!"

"Just close your eyes, Mom!" my son said as we buckled up. Something was wrong with this picture.

My son showed me how to buckle up, told me not to look down, and advised me to close my eyes. *How old am I?* Where had the mother in me gone? I looked over the edge for just a moment and reality hit. I was going to die.

"I can't do this!" I bellowed. At that moment, the coaster took off at

high speed. My feet dangled in midair. I thought my shoes might fly across the park and hit some poor elderly woman in the head.

I shut my eyes tight, and, just like my son warned, my head bobbed this way and that as if it had a mind of its own. Pain pounded in my ears. I screamed and screamed. *What happened to the three seconds?* I tried to yell “Help!” but couldn’t get even that much out intelligibly. I’m sure drool dripped down my chin.

And then I heard a voice from afar, piercing through the hundred-mile-an-hour rumble of the coaster wheels: “Mom! Press your head firmly into the headrest!”

*What? What was that?*

Again: “Mom! Press—your—head—firmly—into—the—headrest!”

A miracle! How did my son know I needed to do that? The seats were positioned so no one could see the person next to them due to the padding on the sides. Jaren must have seen my head bobbing out in front.

I immediately obeyed. I pressed my head firmly into the headrest, and with it came great relief. My head stopped bobbing, my body stabilized, and I felt more secure. Fear eased and the pain ceased because I wasn’t knocking myself out. In a few seconds we came to a stop and coasted into the area where others awaited their turn. After unsticking my eyelashes from squeezing my eyes so tight, I looked up. I was alive! I patted my limbs—*yes. I’m here.* I beamed at my genius and generous son, who thought of nothing more than taking care of his mom.

Our lives are very much like that moment. Riding through life with a messed up man can feel as if we’re on the biggest coaster in the world. Our feet dangle midair and we feel tossed and tattered. Through twists and turns, even spinning upside down at times, we scream, “Help! I can’t do this!” But oh, my friends, there is a voice calling in the chaos, trying to break through the sound barrier. You second-guess yourself: *What is that? What did I hear?* He calls again. The voice sounds and feels like it’s coming from a distance, but just as with my son calling to me from the next seat, the voice is actually coming from right beside you.

God sits with us. He encourages the faint of heart: “You can do it! It’s okay!”

Relationships can be messy and difficult, especially when you’re living with a messed up man. Trying to maneuver through life without losing your mind can feel overwhelming. When you find yourself on rough terrain, and when life feels as if it’s spiraling out of control, listen to the voice. Listen to God shout, “Press your head firmly into the headrest.”

*His rest. In Him.* The Bible says that in Him we find rest. In Christ we find stability, peace, and security to handle any ride ahead, especially with the messed up man in our life. And when we approach the ride as it should be ridden, it is exciting, enjoyable, and exhilarating. So get ready. Strap in. It’s go time.

**DAVE** ✂ This is not a book on how to fix your messed up man. It’s bigger than that. This is a book about how to join God in His mission of transforming your man to fit into God’s perfect plan and place. It is a hope-filled book overflowing with messed up men who had messy lives. Ironically, these were the kinds of men God chose to use for His great purposes and achievements. From their examples, you can learn how to live in a healthy way with your own messed up man. I know because I am one such man—messed up through and through.

Within these chapters, you will hear some of my stories, my struggles, and yes, even my successes. I see myself in so many of the biblical men. The point for you is not merely to discover that your man has much in common with the weaknesses of biblical men; more important, it is to see that he, like the men of the Bible, can rise above his man-made mess and fulfill his God-given destiny. This book is not as much about the messed up man in your life as it is about God opening your eyes to see that man differently—with infinitely more potential—than you see him now.

You will read incredible stories of men who are not superheroes or

spiritual giants but simple men, lacking in many areas yet still used mightily by God. You'll read about Peter, who had a hard time living consistently, one moment speaking for God and the next serving as a mouthpiece of Satan. You'll find that King David, the writer of most of the Psalms, was a lousy dad. You'll have a heart-to-heart moment with Gideon, who lacked courage, and you'll see how Nebuchadnezzar struggled with pride. Somewhere in these pages you will recognize the man in your life.

This book covers men who deal with anger, depression, and chronic illness. We will take a closer look at sexual integrity, at integrity in general, and at men who have a difficult time becoming the spiritual leaders of their homes.

At the end of each chapter, you will find a section called "Moving Beyond the Mess" for personal or group use. You can even sit with a friend and work through it over a warm cup of tea. And if your man is willing, what an amazing journey you can have when you work through it together!

My friends, be encouraged. God chooses to use messed up men. Their weaknesses, failures, and frailties are waiting to be transformed into promise and potential. Don't give up on your man before he becomes God's miracle. In the process, you might find a miracle within yourself.





# Peter

## *A Double-Minded Man*

*No good thing does He withhold from  
those who walk uprightly.*

PSALM 84:11

Betty twisted in the oversized chair, leaned into her husband's words, and clenched her jaw. One ear clung to his assurances while the other turned away; one part of her chose trust while the other fought to believe. She felt split down the middle.

Her mind drifted to moments when she had accepted his every sentence without hesitation, suspicion, or fear. She recalled never having reason to doubt his words or deeds. But as the years of their marriage progressed, she stumbled upon "little white lies"—minimized issues, storytelling, and broken truths.

Each lie thickened the glass wall separating the relationship. Betty wondered when the glass might finally shatter. He had done it so often now—inconsistencies in behavior and speech, pretending to be something he wasn't. Who was this man? How could she find confidence in him? Could the relationship be restored?

**TINA** ✨ Do you identify with Betty's story? I remember as a small girl losing confidence in my father's words. My moments of excitement at the thought of going somewhere or doing something with my dad were cruelly crushed when those plans fell to the ground. My father's inconsistent lifestyle failed to bring something a little girl needed—stability.

My dad was a huge mess, and his inconsistency weakened his character. He struggled with an alcohol addiction that led him to live an unpredictable lifestyle. When sober, he was caring and compassionate, but when he drank, he was cruel and unkind. Which of the two characters was my real father?

That is a question many women ask about the messed up man in their life: "Who are you?"

Women want to believe in their fathers as well as the other men in their lives. When fathers struggle with being authentic, they leave muddy footprints on little girls' hearts. We then grow up and enter relationships with messed up men who also struggle.

Chuck Colson said, "We must be the same person in private and in public. Only the Christian worldview gives us the basis for this kind of integrity."<sup>1</sup> But are we ever the same person in public that we are in private?

Men lacking authenticity isn't something new in today's world—even Jesus walked with those who struggled with honesty.

### Six Signs Someone Might Lack Authenticity

1. They behave differently in different crowds.
2. They aren't completely transparent. They may tell the truth but not the whole truth.
3. They change their values to fit others.
4. They are unstable and shaky when it comes to standing up for their Christian beliefs.
5. They are easily manipulated by others and make unhealthy compromises.
6. They often focus on self.



## Wooden Sticks and Steel Rods

**DAVE** 🌿 The apostle Peter is a man not unlike the men in your life. At times he attempts to be more than he is—more spiritual, more confident, more successful. Peter wants to be the best he can, but like all men, he isn't quite there. He teeter-totters between right and wrong. Let's look at a few examples.

In Matthew 16, Jesus asks a simple question: "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" Peter's spot-on answer, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," is met with Jesus's approval. Jesus responds, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven" (vv. 13–17).

Yet just six verses later, Peter receives Jesus's stern rebuke, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

The rebuke comes after Peter, alarmed at Jesus's prediction of His own impending death in Jerusalem, attempts to correct Jesus. In response, Jesus rebukes Peter for giving voice to Satan. Isn't that amazing! One moment, Peter is speaking the divine words of the Father; the very next, he is speaking the lying words of Satan.

Perhaps you've seen this in the men close to you. Sometimes they are brilliant and spiritual. But at other times, they seem filled with deceit and anything but God's words.

Paul relates another incident of Peter's inconsistency:

When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?" (Gal. 2:11–14)

Paul publicly condemned Peter for behaving one way around the Gentile believers and another around Jewish believers. We often call this inconsistent behavior a lack of integrity or lack of authenticity. Merriam-Webster defines *authentic*, the word from which *authenticity* derives, as “real or genuine . . . not false or imitation . . . true to one’s own personality, spirit, or character.”<sup>2</sup>

A steel rod is stronger than a wooden stick. The stick is no less authentic than the rod; it just has a different kind of authenticity. The stick has the authenticity of wood while the rod has the authenticity of steel. But what if the stick tried to pose as a steel rod? The stick would be pretending to be something it is not. It does not have the same strength or qualities as steel and will not hold up under the same pressures.

Now let’s look at the man in your life. If your messed up man tries to pose as something other than what he is, he lacks authenticity. Perhaps the man you believed to be steel has broken or is breaking under pressures that a wooden stick cannot possibly support. Peter experienced brokenness when his words shifted from a faith-filled confession to fear-filled caution. He was again broken when Paul confronted his shift in something as simple as food and drink. Is your man less than or other than who he says he is? Are there honesty issues in his life?

Here’s the good news: your messed up man is in the company of a great many biblical heroes, including Peter. You may have experienced the consequences of leaning on a stick that couldn’t support you the way you expected. The truth is, no human can ever support you fully. Only God can have that place in your life.

**TINA** ❧ I’m sitting here asking myself if I view Dave as a stick or an iron rod. Okay, I won’t answer that, but looking back, I clearly remember the stick breaking a time or two. Yet, I also remember my husband’s firm grasp on me and his family, grasps that could not be loosened or torn asunder. He was an iron rod in iron cladding. And oh,

how it melted my thick, scared walls as security brushed over me. Kind of like butter on a hot bun.

What is his true character? Sometimes men are inconsistent in their behaviors, actions, and ways of living. Of course, women are too. Perhaps some men, like some women, struggle to find authenticity, genuineness, and truthfulness, or to live a life consistent with who they really are.

Circumstances may play a role in a man's authenticity. Abraham told Sarah to pretend to be his sister in order to save his own life. Jacob's sons pretended to be one thing in front of their father and another to their brother, Joseph, whom they threw into a pit and sold into slavery. Were they loving and concerned brothers or jealous bullies?

When reading about Peter, we ponder the question, "Who are you?" Are you courageous or cowardly, a lover or fighter, a friend or foe, a Jew or Gentile, fearless or fearful, a believer or an unbeliever? Peter struggled with all of these matters. Authenticity is about being consistent with who one is.

Life is filled with decisions, and though we would like to help the men in our life make decisions, and good ones, that isn't our responsibility. Still, we try by picking out Sunday clothes, discouraging ice-cream runs, and distracting them while they pass by favorite fast-food restaurants. Who reminds them to get off their phones for family time, or that the doctor said not to do *that* because this *would* happen? Sometimes men don't do a very good job of making decisions, and we've experienced time and again how their bad decisions have impacted their lives. (Of course, we women have the same issue.)

Peter came to a point where his bad decision created a moment of weakness and failure. Jesus knew Peter would fail. Jesus didn't keep it a secret either; he told Peter he would fail. Can you imagine? How would it feel to have Jesus look you square in the eye and tell you when and how you're going to fail?

The moment arrived, a moment requiring a huge decision for Peter. Would he be authentic or not? Would he boldly declare who he really was—or hide it?

Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came to him and said, "You too were with Jesus the Galilean." But he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you are talking about." When he had gone out to the gateway, another servant-girl saw him and said to those who were there, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." And again he denied it with an oath, "I do not know the man." A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Surely you too are one of them; for even the way you talk gives you away." Then he began to curse and swear, "I do not know the man!" And immediately a rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, "Before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly. (Matt 26:69–75)

Can we attest to moments of blowing it? I'm not a very good cook. One day, while my husband and I worked upstairs in our home offices, I heard a loud pop. The pop sounded like a gun. We both jumped up and ran downstairs. I turned toward the kitchen and found our lab looking up at the stove, tail wagging as if to say, "Up there!" Upon further investigation, I realized I forgot that I had put eggs in a pot to boil. My forgetfulness created an unfolding of events that ultimately led to eggs exploding. Fragments of egg were everywhere! In my attempt to fix the situation, I grabbed the scalding pot and thrust it under cold water. My husband yelled, "No!"

You guessed it. When the water hit the eggs, those that hadn't already burst exploded at that very moment. Shrapnel of egg hit me square in the face, speckled my hair, and splattered my clothes. I stood dumbfounded—frozen as if I really were hit by shrapnel. I expected my husband to do what I felt Jesus would have done—grab a towel and help clean me up. Instead, he stood there, lips curled and eyebrows raised, and said, "You have egg on your face."

Isn't that what we often do when the men in our life mess up? Peter's embarrassment before the Lord was a gut-wrenching moment; a moment of recognition and realization. Sometimes our messes lead

to those moments; sometimes they leave us broken and weeping—or at the very least, with egg on our faces.

## Undeserved Grace

When moving, my family often stayed in old, abandoned homes. One particular home stands out in my mind, not because of its age but because of an incident that affected me in the house. My parents made arrangements to run to the grocery store, but before leaving, they warned us kids, “Whatever you do, don’t go upstairs.” The stairs were rotten, unsteady, and dangerous. (The fire department burned down the house a short time after we moved out because a young teen died going up those steps.)

After Mom and Dad left, my younger sister and I looked up the steps as if looking up a huge mountain. Perhaps hidden treasures lingered above! We had to find out. Boards creaked and cracked ominously with each step. Holding each other’s hand tightly, we kept climbing, side-stepping holes here and there.

Reaching the top felt like summiting Everest. Our feet shuffled down the hallway to the first room. Tense with anticipation, we peered in. Nothing. The empty room stared back at us. Each room resembled the previous.

Except the last one. A turn of the knob, and we stepped inside to find an old calendar hanging forlornly on the wall. The large image of Jesus caused our hearts to leap. Taking the calendar off the grimy wall, we cautiously made our way back downstairs and carried it around the rest of the afternoon.

Our excitement came to a halt when we heard the rumble of a vehicle pulling into the driveway. Squealing and shrieking, we scampered to find the perfect hiding spot for our treasure. Then we went off to play and forgot all about it—until . . .

“Tina! Tina and Pam!”

My mother’s tone could raise the hair on a pig’s back. We froze, our beating hearts pounding in our ears. One more call loosened our legs, and we ran like the wind to her.

“Did you go upstairs?” she asked, brows creased and lips pursed.

We shook our heads. “No ma’am. We didn’t go up the stairs.”

There was a silent pause. And that’s when I noticed the haze in the kitchen, with smoke wafting up toward the ceiling. Perhaps my sister and I had made a bad decision in hiding the calendar in the oven.

Our mother asked again, “Did you go upstairs?”

Caught. I opened my mouth and let the truth stumble out. I don’t recall all my words, but I remember saying, “We just wanted Jesus.”

My sister and I tensed and waited for the spanking of our lives. But something unexpected happened. There in the center of that smoke-filled, dirty kitchen, our mother dropped to her knees in front of us. Crying, she scooped us up in her arms and, pulling our dirty cheeks next to her wet face, she prayed. Her body trembled against ours. I don’t remember her words, but I’ll never forget her love and grace. Her embrace—and God’s.

A few years back, I asked Mom if she remembered what she prayed over us that day. She said, “I prayed you would come to know the real Jesus.” We did—and I became a pastor’s wife, and my sister became a missionary.

There’s nothing like big arms pulling a scared body into a warm, graceful hug. My mother’s embrace made me want to become more truthful with her, more consistent in walking a path of good and godly character. And that’s how it is with God and our messed up men. Whether we like it or not, or feel the man in our life deserves it, God embraces him.

Men fear the reactions of women, what we will think of them if we ever discover their lack of authenticity, and what that discovery might do to the relationship. Our own hurtful emotions as women get in the way of handing out undeserved embraces.

It isn’t the fault of women that men struggle. The question is, how can women embrace men during those vulnerable moments when men work to build honest character? How can we provide safe places for men to dwell in while God opens their eyes and hearts so they can become more like Him?

Peter failed Jesus. But Peter would later learn that Jesus takes the towel and wipes egg off our faces, picks us up, and embraces us—even in the midst of our failures.

### The Secret to Peter's Success

How do you picture Peter? I picture him as a strong, brawny man. When I look at the men in my family (and there are many), I envision Peter. I think of Peter as rough around the edges, maybe not up on his people skills, and not a frequent bather. I picture him as someone who loved the outdoors and fishing, and who spent too much time away from his family working and playing—a man who loved adventure. I think of someone who didn't always watch his language, acting one way in a crowd and quite another when out with the boys; as not always balanced in life and perhaps not always doing a good job of being the man of his home. Does that sound familiar?

While Peter's wife is unnamed in Scripture, Peter's writings give us a glimpse of her character. In 1 Peter 3:1–6, Peter addresses women. It's odd what he says to us: "Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives" (NIV).

Peter is saying to women, "You are more likely to change the messed up man in your life by your behavior than by your words." It's the old saying: "You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar." I can see your lips curve as I write. Those of you who sway the man in your life with honey know what I'm talking about. Men are influenced by the women in their circle. Men learn about women through their grandmothers, aunts, sisters, moms, dating partners, friends, and wives. Men learn about women not only from what men say about them and what they observe on the streets but also, and very importantly, from their interactions with women. Our lifestyle is a testament to men of what we believe.

But let's get real. Wouldn't it be nice to walk around the house with a perfect attitude? It's hard to do that, though, when our man doesn't

fulfill our desires. We want consistency in helping around the house and caring for the children. We want our man to be where he says he will be and do what he says he will do. Who's tired of "I'll do it tomorrow"? A man's inconsistency throws a trip wire right in the middle of our best attitudes. I've stubbed my toe and stumbled over my husband's words more times than I can count. I imagine multitudes of women walking around with bandaged toes. Our feet hurt!

So how did Peter's wife walk through life with him? Again, little is said of her in the Scriptures. There is, however, this vital point: she traveled with her husband.<sup>3</sup> And that is a huge testament to how she felt about Peter. Imagine how difficult it would be to roam the countryside with the man in your life if you didn't respect and admire him or his work. Conclusion: Peter's wife must have *believed in* and *supported* Peter.

Peter goes on to say that we will win over our messed up men not only with our behavior but also "when they see the purity and reverence of [our] lives" (1 Peter 3:2 NIV). Was Peter's wife the perfect example of this? In the midst of Peter's failures, did she continue to show her love by her actions and behavior? Did she continue to show Peter purity and reverence (*reverence* meaning "honor or respect that is felt for or shown to [someone or something]"<sup>4</sup>)? Wow! I need to meet Peter's wife!

Then again, Peter's wife could have been a nagging woman whose sole purpose of traveling with him was to make his life miserable. We don't really know. Peter could have written this entire chapter with that kind of wife in mind!

Peter continues, "Your beauty should not come from outward adornment. . . . Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight" (vv. 3–4 NIV). We know Peter's wife could have expressed her thoughts about his lack of integrity loud and clear (and maybe she did), but perhaps she did as Peter wrote. Though Peter may have deserved a tongue-lashing at times, maybe his wife radiated the "unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit." Peter understood the value of that; he said it "is of great worth in God's sight."

How do men understand the value of what women can give them? How do men understand anything from women unless men experience



it? Suppose Peter knew how it felt to be treated with a gentle and quiet spirit, and with a behavior that could win him over to change his life. Suppose he understood the value of these things because he received them. What if, in addressing how women and men should treat one another, Peter wrote not only from the wisdom and guidance of the Holy Spirit but also from personal familiarity?

I used to run around the house saying, “This is not a mess—not a mess,” but now I find myself saying, “Gentle and quiet spirit, Tina. Gentle and quiet spirit.” I don’t always get it right, but I am trying to remind myself when to hold my tongue and when to speak the truth in love.

That kind of character does not go unnoticed by God or by the man in your life. That kind of character has significance. And it carries a huge price tag. The word *worth* (as in, “of great worth in God’s sight”) is translated “precious” in the Greek and has the same meaning as in Mark 14: “There came a woman with an alabaster vial of *very costly* perfume of pure nard” (v. 3, emphasis mine). The perfume was priceless. And according to Peter, our gentle and quiet spirit is just as valuable in God’s eyes. It is precious.

In my life, there have been times I spoke when I should have been silent; times I addressed an issue when I should have left it alone; times I tried to fix something that wasn’t mine to fix. So I look not only at Peter’s words, but also into the life of his wife, a woman whose name I do not know, in order to envision what she may have been like. Perhaps part of Peter’s writing to women traces to one simple truth: Peter’s wife understood who Peter really was.

## Light Meets Dark

**DAVE** ✎ Imagine Peter’s despair as he attempts to get on with his life. The events of the past few days are confusing at best: the betrayal, the crucifixion, the empty tomb. I can relate to Peter’s shame and guilt as he plays over in his mind a hundred times the unfortunate decisions he made. How do you deny someone you love so much? How do you get so self-centered that you violate everything you believe in? I don’t understand it, but I’ve done it. And likely your own messed up man has failed as well, whether he talks about it or not.

John describes a beautiful picture of restoration in the final chapter of his gospel. Reading chapter 21 is worth your time before we continue. I'll wait . . .

Have you read it? Good. Let's summarize. Peter and the boys are fishing. It has been a long night of fruitless casts, but they are doing the thing they do best. Fishing often involves thinking, talking, laughing, dreaming, sometimes even crying. That's the scene when we hear the Savior's voice echo across the waters from the shore: "Hey, boys, you're not having any luck, are you? Maybe try the other side of the boat." They cast their net once more, and this time they find the mother lode. John understands and yells, "It's the Lord!" Peter dives in and swims for shore. Soon laughter explodes around a campfire breakfast, just like a hundred times before.

Jesus takes Peter aside and asks him three times (perhaps revisiting Peter's painful threefold betrayal), "Do you love me?" Buried in the Greek text is an interesting truth. You may already know that the Greek language in which the New Testament was written includes more than one word for love. When Jesus asks Peter in John 21:15, "Do you love Me more than these?" the Greek word used is *agapeo*, which is a sacrificial kind of love. Peter responds, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love You." But the word for "love" in Peter's response is *phileo*, meaning "brotherly love" (as in Philadelphia, "City of Brotherly Love"). The question and answer are repeated a second time in verse 16, using the same Greek words as in verse 15: "Do you *agapeo* Me?" "Yes, Lord, you know that I *phileo* you." In verse 17 we find the third exchange with a slight change of wording. Jesus asks, "Do you *phileo* Me?" Peter is grieved because Jesus has asked the third time, "Do you love [*phileo*] Me?" And Peter said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love [*phileo*] You."

Let me suggest that in the same way that Peter's three denials of Jesus revealed his lack of integrity, the answers to these three love questions reveal Peter's restoration of integrity: in other words, getting honest with himself and with Jesus. Peter boasted that he would be willing to die with Jesus. That boast proved to be a broken wooden stick. Peter

now understands and accepts his own weakness as the place where he really is. He really does love Jesus—just not enough to die for Him. At least, not yet. For Peter, this is where the healing begins. Jesus is meeting Peter where he's at, not where Peter wants to be. Integrity is honesty, even if it's not where we want to be. Don't worry, men; you have plenty of time to grow, but we dare not skip the honesty step. Ladies, just as Jesus embraced Peter, you too can lovingly accept your man's weakness without settling for a weak man. God wasn't finished with Peter, who would eventually die a martyr's death, demonstrating his *agapeo* love for Jesus to a watching world. Tradition tells us that Peter was crucified upside down, at his request, because he felt unworthy to die in the same way as his Lord. Your messed up man will likely find healing as well when the light meets the dark.

### Tools for Helping Light Meet the Dark

**Support.** Support your messed up man and his work. Travel with him, work with him, and let him know what he's doing right!

**Come alongside.** Willingly come alongside your messed up man and encourage him to be the leader God knows he can be.

**Talk less, act more.** Win over your messed up man by your godly behavior and character, not by your nagging.

**Be pure and reverent.** Respect your messed up man. Men need to feel respected.

**Listen.** A gentle and quiet spirit is key.

**Embrace with grace.** Embrace as God does, even when you feel your messed up man doesn't deserve it. God tells us to love one another.

**Pray.** Keep praying! Ask God to come in and change, convict, lead, and guide your messed up man.

**Wait.** Women often jump into "fix" mode. Let God do His work. I promise, the results will be much better than if you act on your own impulses.

## Moving Beyond the Mess

1. How would you define *authenticity*?
2. Consider what happens when men gather. It's not unusual for them to exaggerate. The fish gets bigger, and other stories improve in the telling. What is the difference between those moments and the times when a man really struggles with truthfulness?
3. Why do people in general struggle with acting the same in private as in public?
4. Read back through the first few verses of 1 Peter 3. How can Peter's writings help a woman live with a man who struggles to live a consistent life? How can she encourage her man in this area?
5. Take a look at Paul's authenticity. Read 2 Corinthians 1:12. What was the secret to his success in how he conducted himself?
6. *Moving to a healthier place*: What practical steps can women take that will help them move beyond a man's moments of lacking authenticity? See these verses for guidance: Ps. 130:6; Matt. 6:8; Eph. 4:14–15; 1 Thess. 5:11; Heb. 3:13; 1 Peter 5:6–7.

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*May you come to see your value and that what you have  
to offer messed up men is priceless.*