



# SUMMONS

A Publication by *Be the Men*

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Editor: Mark Quaranta  
Pastoral Review: Rev. Daniel Kravatz  
Contact: [admin@bethemen.com](mailto:admin@bethemen.com)

## **FROM THE EDITOR**

Thank you so much for picking up this copy of *Summons*. This is our 16th issue of *Summons*, and I have to say, I am so proud of this one. I think the team of writers really put together some fantastic work. In these pages, you'll find advice from the Saints, rallying words for family men, an article on a virtue that I honestly didn't know, and more. I want to briefly thank all of our Patrons, without them, you wouldn't be holding this issue. If you're curious about how you can join the mission of *Be The Men*, feel free to reach out. But, one of the biggest things you can do is simply pass this issue on to a friend or family member. Thanks and God Bless!

+ Mark

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# FACE OF GOD

*Mark Ivankovits, Staff Writer*

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Being Catholic (and I'm assuming if you're reading this you are) your ultimate goal should be to see the Face of God. To look upon that Face smiling at you with a love you could only imagine, or perhaps never fathom, and being immersed in a state of euphoria everyone on the planet chases but never achieves. In this world of fallen grace, misery, and despair, the Face of God seems light-years away, and at times, unattainable. But I'm telling you: He's not light-years away nor is He unattainable. I had Him looking at me for over forty years with that look, though at the time I never knew or recognized it. But looking back I can see it now so clearly. Let me explain.

My maternal grandmother was such a gift. Born along the Austrian/Hungarian border she lived through a worldwide depression, World War II, and after living for five years at the foot of the Iron Curtain (the Communists were shooting at them) left the world she knew and loved and came to this country with her husband and two children. Here they faced some not so welcoming natives and managed to start over. I came along eleven years later and since my parents couldn't rub two nickels together I spent a lot of my infancy being cared for by my grandmother. Needless to say she considered me "her boy."

As with all of her grandchildren, she doted on me and was always concerned about my wellbeing. An excellent cook, she never tired of and truly relished in feeding us. You never

left that house hungry or feeling bad about the visit. She and my grandfather were the only two people who NEVER lied to me. It was truly an experience immersed in love.

So, what does this have to do with the Face of God? Well, every time I entered that house and looked upon her face I received a look of total acceptance and love crowned with warm happy eyes and a wide approving grin. I never asked for it and never expected it, but there it was no matter how she felt or what she was doing. She always gave me that smile. And the most beautiful and wondrous aspect of it was I just had to be. I didn't have to show up with a bouquet of flowers or a box of candy. I didn't have to perform a certain task or dress a certain way. I didn't have to do anything or say anything. In fact it didn't matter whether I was bad or good, all I had to do was walk in the door. I was the gift, the bouquet, the candy. And she at that moment was content.

It took some time to contemplate it a few years after she passed but I can't help but see God's Face when I remember the way my grandmother looked at me. The same way she looked at me is the same way Our Father looks when we turn to Him. And we don't have to do anything or offer anything...except ourselves, the way we are, sins and all. We have terrible habits, lean on sin way too often. We tend to be self-centered and greedy, and with all of that we feel far from God and unworthy of any look, let alone a loving one. But in spite of all of our many shortcomings, when we do turn to Him we *will* get that warm, loving, accepting, welcoming look. That perfect love always comes shining through, just like my grandmothers' face when I walked

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*"Holiness consists simply in doing God's will, and being just what God wants us to be."*

*– Saint Thérèse of Lisieux*

in the door. That love deserves our attention, our appreciation, and our reciprocation. How could we not? God so desperately loves you and desperately wants your love in return. He even sent His Son to show us how. Walk in Jesus' footsteps and you too will see that Face light up, broad smile and warm eyes, welcoming you to be together forever. I don't know about you but that would put a permanent smile on my face. Surely, my smile will be just like my grandmothers'. I'm betting yours will be as well.

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## WHAT IS LIBERALITY?

*Steve Rohe, Staff Writer*

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The word *liberality* comes from that Latin *liberat*, which means "free." To be liberal, then, is to be free to let go of our money or material goods in order to give them to our neighbors in need. "Liberality is also called open-handedness [*largitas*]," wrote St. Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa Theologica*, "because that which is open does not withhold things, but parts from them."

As we grow and mature, one of the things we must learn to manage well is our finances. It is the virtue of liberality which aids us in moderating our relationship with money and how we distribute it; to freely distribute our money at the right time, in the right way, and to the right people. "Parting with money by giving it to others," St. Thomas Aquinas wrote, "proceeds from a greater virtue than when we spend it ourselves." In his famous sermon

titled *To the Rich*, St. Basil said that we should "regard the use of money as a matter of stewardship, not of selfish enjoyment."

The key to liberality is not the quantity of money given away, but the freedom from attachment to money in the heart of the giver. If we have a disordered love or desire for money then we will not have the interior freedom to be generous with it. As St. Ambrose aptly stated, "it is the heart that makes a gift rich or poor, and gives things their value."

To be clear, the virtue of liberality never involves giving away so much to others that we are unable to financially support ourselves or those in our own household. After all, our first duty of justice is to our family. Nevertheless, the virtuous man spends what is had in excess with prudence, which is then united with generosity. And so we are obligated to assist the poor and needy among our relatives first, before giving to those outside of our families. Liberality also does *not* mean simply doing for others what they can do for themselves. Generosity can easily be taken advantage of, and rather than helping people, it can enable them to become idle.

Throughout sacred Scripture we learn that the poor use of money can be detrimental to our spiritual life. Our Blessed Lord warned us of this when He said, "[I]t is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God" (Mt. 19:24). St. Paul gave the same warning to St. Timothy: "[T]he love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their

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*eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith*" (1 Tim. 6:10). Sacred Scripture also tells us that *"Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and will be repaid in full"* (Prov. 19), and *"If you close your ear to the cry of the poor, you will cry out and not be heard"* (Prov. 21:13). It is no wonder, then, that for the past two thousand years one of the hallmarks of devout Christians has been their generosity to the poor. Indeed, Christians throughout the centuries have endeavored to live out our Blessed Lord's admonition: *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth...but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven...For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"* (Mt. 6:19-21).

Avarice (i.e., greediness) and prodigality (i.e., wastefulness) are the two vices which are opposed to the virtue of liberality. Simply put, both vices commit sins against rest. The ancients used to say that avarice makes a rich man poor, which is to say that the avaricious man, even as he receives something good, cannot fully enjoy it because he's thinking about the next thing he needs before he can rest from desire. He is akin to a child who leaves the toy store, fists full of good things, talking about what he will buy when he returns. The avaricious man therefore makes himself poor, becoming incapable of enjoying even the wealth he possesses. He cannot think about anything except the wealth he does not yet have or the wealth he could potentially lose.

While the miserly man can never rest in the good things he possesses, because he is constantly trying to save up more against

some unforeseen disaster, the prodigal man, in a similar way, is never at rest either, because he is addicted to the roller-coaster ride of pleasures, moving from one sensational experience to the next. Consequently, both groups become blind to what beautiful things wealth could potentially bring, because they are incapable of using well what they currently possess.

Avarice and prodigality, those who hoard wealth out of fear of losing it and those who waste through lavish spending, are, paradoxically, often placed in the same circle. On the surface it would seem that these two sins would be the exact opposite and thus might merit different places of punishment. But the classical tradition, extending as far back as Cicero and Seneca, has seen a secret connection between them. In his epic poem *The Divine Comedy* (c. 1320), widely considered to be the pre-eminent work in Italian literature and one of the greatest works of world literature, Dante Alighieri neatly captures the burden of things by describing the punishment of these kinds of sinners: they are made to heave and lift huge boulders and push them forward, assuming at all moments that everyone else is out to take their large rocks. They were idolatrous in life, assuming that their earthly happiness would come from material things, and that narrowness of vision is here sadly embodied in their pathetically intense game of lifting worthless earth.

St. Elizabeth of Hungary (1207 – 1231) is an excellent role model for anyone struggling with the virtue of liberality, as this particular virtue shone brightly in the life of this great

saint. Elizabeth was born the daughter of renowned King Andrew of Hungary and his wife Gertrude, a descendant of Charlemagne. Nevertheless, she showed a very special love for the poor from an early age. When she earned prizes for the children's games played at court, she would give her winnings to poor children. Until the time of her marriage she spent the money provided by her father to better use by giving to the poor instead of unnecessary pomp and finery. In this manner she gradually distanced herself from frivolous amusements and devoted herself more to the things of God. These and other acts, however, were considered unbecoming of a princess in training to be the future duchess of one of the most magnificent kingdoms in all of Europe.

A few years after her marriage to the Duke of Thuringia, a series of natural disasters struck Thuringia, causing widespread famine. Her husband was away in Italy on an extended mission from the Roman Emperor, and it was therefore up to Elizabeth to manage the needs of the kingdom in his absence, and to provide for those who were severely affected with hunger. Elizabeth drew liberally from the royal treasury and emptied all the corn from the storehouses, upsetting the nobles with the extent of her generosity. The courtiers wrote to the Duke, complaining about what they believed to be Elizabeth's mismanagement of the royal provisions. However, the Duke declared that Elizabeth's generosity to the poor would ensure God's providence for their country, and if they prevented her their situation would become worse, not better.

Elizabeth's path to sanctity was her generosity to the poor, and she suffered for it dearly. Nevertheless, she was able to endure the sacrifices of her generosity because she, one of the richest women of her day, detached herself from her wealth. She put her treasure with the poor, and it was there that she found the treasure of Christ. Elizabeth was generous to the poor, but this was always guided by prudence. The nobles complained of her generosity, but Thuringia was exorbitantly wealthy and had the means to support her liberality.

Liberality, like all the virtues, helps us in the pursuit of authentic human happiness. One does not need to be rich in order to build the virtue of liberality. We, too, can begin to practice this virtue. In fact, even the poor can give to one another according to their means, as our Blessed Lord taught in the example of "the widow's offering" (cf. Lk. 21:1-4). This is because liberality does not refer to the *quantity* given but to the *intention* behind the gift.

To be successful in our endeavor we must first remember the heart of liberality: freedom from love of money. Little by little we can begin to let go of unnecessary luxuries in our life and to use their value to give to someone who is in need of something more essential. Furthermore, we, like St. Elizabeth of Hungary, must remember that we can be generous with the people of our own region. There may be people we know – in our families, neighborhoods, or parishes – who are suffering under financial burdens such as the sickness or death of a loved one; someone

who is injured or someone who has lost their job; or even a young family struggling to pay their bills. We can help each of these people in a small way, remembering that it is not the quantity of the gift but the heart with which it is given.

St. Elizabeth of Hungary, pray for us!

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## ARE WE FOCUSED ON GOD

*Andrew Ivankovits, Staff Writer*

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Conforming our lives to Christ is hard. Think back to when you were in high school. Maybe you were involved in sports and clubs, or maybe you focused on academics. Maybe you were popular, or maybe you were unpopular. But regardless of who you were in high school, take a moment to try and think back to all the things you worried about then; what your friends would say about you, what to wear, or maybe how to talk to your crush. How much of those things do you worry about today? Probably none of them. Different times in our lives demand different levels of focus from us. But what do people tend to worry about at the end of their lives? Popular lists like this usually cite things like “I wish I focused less on work,” “I wish I spent more time with the people I love,” “I wish I worried less,” or “I wish I forgave more”.

What are you really worried about? Who are you trying to impress? Is what you’re focused on really that important in the long run? This

may be a roundabout way of saying that we should focus on God in all things and the rest falls into place. But, if you read what the Saints have written, this theme of letting go of most of what we occupy ourselves with and focusing on God bubbles up over and over again.

St. Teresa of Ávila said “He who possesses God lacks nothing: God alone suffices”. Similarly, St Jane de Chantal writes “Hold your eyes on God and leave the doing to Him. That is all the doing you have to worry about”. And St. Catherine of Siena, a beautiful example for our times, said “If you are what you should be, you will set the whole world ablaze!” All of this is true, but for most of us these quotations don’t penetrate our hearts as they should. I am just a layman, and I can’t pretend to speak with any other authority aside from my faith in Jesus Christ, but if there’s anything that I share with you today, let it be the joy and hope that I’ve found in the words of those saints that have gone before us, and the great voices of our world today.

The idea that underpins all of these great quotations from the saints is something a friend shared with me recently. As we talked about what true growth in sanctity entails, he recalled a quotation from a saint, the name of whom he had long forgotten, but who’s words struck him (and struck me enough to write this article): “the saint is someone who is focused solely on God”.

I apologize if you read that and know which saint said it, but after some moderate research I wasn’t able to find a saint to whom I could attribute this idea. However, the longer I

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– Saint Thérèse of Lisieux

researched the more I kept coming across quotations from many different saints that all seemed to say the same thing - just in different ways. I think that's the whole point that the Church tries to make by holding these individuals up as examples; each of them exercised many different gifts and talents, but throughout their lives it was all about loving God and doing His will.

I don't spell this out to sound cliché. Conforming yourself to Christ as the saints describe involves throwing away most of what we concern ourselves with; perhaps even doing as St. Paul instructs the Ephesians: "Put off the old man that belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new man, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4: 22-24). We may not worry what the other kids in school think of us anymore, or if we have the right clothes, or the most popular friends, but that same triviality permeates our lives in different ways. Maybe we're tempted to compare the car we drive to our neighbors,' or do something for a friend in hopes that they'll do something for us, or to silently judge a colleague or supervisors' approach to a problem and pridefully retort "I wouldn't have done it that way." All of these movements of the heart are motivated by pride and are self-centered. The witness borne by the lives of the saints call us not just to be self-less, but to be "Christ-centered," which stands in direct opposition to most of what we have likely learned from our culture and grown up doing (myself included.) Conversion is indeed a radical reorientation

toward Christ and His Church, and is a near constant process. If you think you've "made it" and can sit back and relax, the Saints will be the first to tell you there's always something else you could be doing to show God how much you love Him. Yet, while letting go of all of those self-centered concerns may sound impossibly hard and unimaginable, St. Paul again reminds us that this type of conversion isn't accomplished under our own power, rather it is simply our greater cooperation with and response to the grace of God already present in our lives when he writes "I can do all things in Him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

I am by no means a saint, so the best that I can do is point you to the men and women that have come before me who bear that title (as well as some contemporaries) and let them teach you how to love God. I pray that this idea of focusing on loving God and cooperating more with God's grace will rattle around in your head enough to penetrate your heart as it did mine. I'll leave you with a recommendation to pick up St. Francis de Sales' book *The Art of Loving God*, as well as some more quotations that struck me as I researched this article. Conforming our lives to Christ may be hard, but the Saints did it joyfully - I think there's a lesson to be learned there too.

"I am who I am before God, no more and no less." – St. Francis of Assisi

"Walk with your feet on earth, but in your heart be in heaven." – St. John Bosco

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“We become what we love and who we love shapes what we become. If we love things, we become a thing. If we love nothing, we become nothing. Imitation is not a literal mimicking of Christ, rather it means becoming the image of the beloved, an image disclosed through transformation. This means we are to become vessels of God’s compassionate love for others. ” – St. Clare of Assisi

“If you learn everything except Christ, you learn nothing. If you learn nothing except Christ, you learn everything.” – St. Bonaventure

“Here is a rule for everyday life: Do not do anything which you cannot offer to God.” – St. John Vianney

“You cannot be half a saint. You must be a whole saint or no saint at all.” – Saint Thérèse of Lisieux

“Be a saint! What else is there?” – Patrick Coffin

“There is nothing more practical than love. Love will determine how you spend your time. Love will determine what movies you watch. Love will determine what kinds of things you laugh at. Love will determine what kind of music you listen to. If we truly love Jesus, it has to change our choices.” – Father Mike Schmitz

“If you want to get wet, go out to where it is raining; If you want to be a saint, find one and hang out with him.” – Peter Kreeft

“Why don’t you give yourself to God once and for all... really... NOW!” – Saint Josemaría Escrivá

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## LISTENING TO LUCY

*Kyle McLemore, Staff Writer*

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I’m sure you, like any practicing Catholic, have found the last year hard to deal with. There has been scandal after scandal and all of the time it seems that more and more issues are popping up. From former Cardinal McCarrick, to Cardinal Bernardine and potential coverups in the hierarchy we’re surrounded by scandal. Not only that, but it seems that confirmed Doctrines of the Church, such as a male only clergy and priestly celibacy, are potentially changing to “get with the times and the needs of the church.” It’s all very confusing and downright infuriating at times. God grants us a righteous anger to move us to action and we shouldn’t ignore that. However, we must watch it and not allow what starts as righteous anger to fester into sinful pride and self righteous indignation. We can become too bogged down in our anger at the state of the Church and the world that we forget the call to personal conversion. Sr. Lucia dos Santos, one of the Fatima visionaries, says, “The devil does all in his power to distract us and to take away from us the love for prayer; *we shall be saved together or we shall be damned together.*”

In times as tumultuous as these it’s all too easy to wonder what we must do and what action we can take. While many practical measures are necessary we cannot forget the

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primary call from Our Lady of Fatima: penance and prayer. Our Blessed Mother asked us to perform penance for ourselves and the salvation of others as well as to pray the Rosary every day. “It is necessary for each one of us to begin to reform himself spiritually. Each person must not only save his own soul but also all the souls that God has placed on our path.”

We cannot wait on those in positions of power, those who have so recently betrayed the Church in many ways, to lead this call to conversion and penance. If they do lead the call, then it is ideal, but as Sr. Lucia says, “We should not wait for an appeal to the world to come from Rome on the part of the Holy Father, to do penance. Nor should we wait for the call to penance to come from our bishops in our diocese, nor from the religious congregations. No! Our Lord has already very often used these means and the world has not paid attention.” Instead, as Sr. Lucia said earlier, it is up to each and every one of us to perform penance for our salvation, the salvation of our families and of the whole world. What more noble work could there be for us men to accomplish? What more challenging role could we accept in this world? The world, Mammon, offers power, prestige, sex and glamour. Our Lord offers His glory but it is only manifested through the denial of self for the salvation of others. He asks us to pick up our cross and follow him, *daily*.

If you’re willing to take up that cross I would make a few recommendations for you. These recommendations come according to your current state of grace and experience so pick

and choose accordingly. But whatever you choose, commit. There’s no room for waffling.

### **Struggling with Mortal Sin**

- Commit to avoiding your temptations. If this is pornography, commit to purchasing a blocking software such as Covenant Eyes.
- Commit to reading one chapter of the Gospels every day.
- Commit to daily exercise -- you need an outlet and to cultivate discipline.
- When confronted with your temptations, repeat the Jesus Prayer, “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner.”
- Commit to your Sunday Mass obligation.
- Attend confession WEEKLY.
- Get a spiritual director.

### **Novice**

- Commit to praying two “Hours” (only takes 20 minutes) of the Divine Office every day.
- Give up sugar in your coffee or some other small sacrifice.
- Read works of theology or a spiritual diary such as St. Faustina’s diary.
- Take cold showers.
- Pray the Divine Mercy chaplet every day.

### **Intermediate**

- Pray the Rosary every day.
- Read scripture every day.
- Attend daily Mass.

- Attend routine adoration or spend time in front of the tabernacle every week.
- Skip a meal or two in a day and offer it as penance.

### Advanced

- Commit to 20-30 minutes of meditation every day, focusing on Christ and a particular virtue and the corresponding vice to rid yourself of and virtue to practice. Write it down.
- Consecrate yourself to the Immaculate Heart.
- If you have a family, enthrone the Sacred Heart in your house and develop a household devotion
- Fast 1-2 times per week; literally no food for a period of time or all day. The Flame of Love devotion recommends Monday's and offering your fasts for priests, particularly those in purgatory.

None of these are hard and fast rules and certainly a novice could pick up the Rosary and someone who is "advanced" could pray the Jesus prayer in times of temptation. There are also plenty of other devotions outside of these suggestions that are efficacious and Holy Mother Church has no shortage of instruments of grace. Use them. Our Lady of Fatima's message was one of penance and urgency for our salvation and to avoid the loss of many souls. Let's listen to Mom and make sure that we do our part as husbands, fathers or spiritual fathers to take up our devotions, particularly penance and prayer, for others.

Strive for perfection in all that you do but understand that you will fail and that's okay. What is not okay is to give up the fight just

because we struggle at times. Too much depends on it. Vince Lombardi, not only a famous coach but a daily communicant, once said that if you, "strive for perfection, you catch excellence." How perfectly true that is of the Catholic life. Strive, and when you fail, go to confession. Strive to be perfect in devotion and in leading our families in prayer and penance. Take up your cross daily, persevere and realize that every sacrifice you make here on earth brings joy to God in Heaven and we, and everyone we know, will reap the benefit in the life to come. As Christ tells us, "Be Perfect, just as your Heavenly Father is perfect."

And lest you think perfection is still some insurmountable task I would leave you with the words of Blessed Cardinal Newman. "If you ask me what you are to do in order to be perfect, I say, first — Do not lie in bed beyond the due time of rising; give your first thoughts to God; make a good visit to the Blessed Sacrament; say the Angelus devoutly; eat and drink to God's glory; say the Rosary well; be recollected; keep out bad thoughts; make your evening meditation well; examine yourself daily; go to bed in good time, and you are already perfect."

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## THE GLORY DAYS

*Mark Quaranta, Staff Writer*

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It seems like just yesterday I was sitting in Room 117 with my college roommate, Karl. Chances are we were watching some movie for the 100th time, doing Econ homework, listening to music, chatting on Facebook, wondering what was going on this

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weekend, and if baseball practice was going to be rained out. The room looked like you'd expect for two 18 year old ball players -- two beds, a futon, dirty uniforms, baseball gloves, movie posters, an ATM sign we got from Goodwill (had to), and maybe a takeout box or two.

Fast forward ten years, and, I take a look around. Karl moved out. My college girlfriend is now my wife. The futon is long gone, but we added a crib, then another crib, now another. Bats and gloves were replaced with LEGO pieces, Batman cars, and kids books. Instead of cleats, tiny shoes. And, piles of dirty uniforms gave way for piles of clean clothes for all of my three year old's wardrobe changes. That ATM sign had to go, but now we have a Mickey Mouse Christmas blow up in our living room because my son has a mild obsession.

I'm sure some guys from college think that the tradeoffs were a bad deal. That my best days are behind me. *"If only we could go back to those college days."* I'll admit, every time I pick up a sock that wouldn't fit my big toe or a dozen Polly Pocket shoes and accessories, I can't help but think -- what the heck happened?

The answer is simple. Fatherhood, that's what happened. And despite what our popular culture tells us, these are the Glory Days.

Every season of life presents its own challenges, but as a father of young kids, it's hard to imagine a season where I'm needed more. As a provider, protector, spiritual leader, mentor, guide, teacher -- being a dad requires the most of us. And, problems arise when men are afraid to step up to the plate. So many men are not only afraid to step up, they're oblivious that the game's being played.

The Devil often works by distraction. This has been a devastating tactic against men. We get caught up in problems a thousand miles away,

blind to the issues in our own homes. We get more angry about new rules in Major League Baseball than the new rules in our kids' schools. We are more passionate watching sports than we are when we are playing with our kids. We relive what we think are the glory days, and miss the new memories made every day.

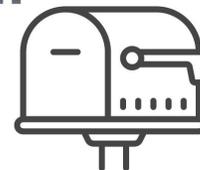
We're being distracted. Because the Devil knows a focused and disciplined man is dangerous. He's a man on a mission. And for those of us called to fatherhood (which is every man in one way or another), this mission requires more of us than ever before. Fathering a child is easy. Being a Dad is the hardest thing you'll ever do. Which means it's probably the most worthwhile thing you'll ever do.

God willing, my wife and I will grow old together, each new day better than the last. But, if there would be a time that old man Mark would go back to, I'm confident it would be right now. Back to long days and wakeful nights, back to diaper changes and scuffed knees, first days of school and "just one more time, Dad." Even though they're hard, these are the Glory Days.

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**YOU'VE BEEN SUMMONED.**

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