

The R.I.S.E. Framework

A timeless roadmap for men today

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ABSTRACT

The R.I.S.E. Framework is a four-stage model designed to guide Christian men, husbands, and fathers in stepping into their God-given strength and purpose. The framework consists of **Recognize**, where men gain clarity on their identity in Christ and deepest desires; **Initiate**, where they reject passivity and take bold action in leadership, relationships, and mission; **Sacrifice**, where they learn to offer their strength and surrender for a greater purpose without burnout; and **Enjoy**, where they embrace rest, renewal, and joy as men fully alive in God's glory. Rooted in biblical principles and embodied wisdom, R.I.S.E. equips men to break free from stagnation, lead with conviction, and bring more life and goodness into the world. This model can be implemented in men's groups, coaching, and structured curricula, providing a transformative path to masculine formation.

Keywords: Christian masculinity, leadership, spiritual formation, men's discipleship, biblical manhood, embodiment

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An Ongoing Crisis in Masculinity

A crisis in masculinity is undeniable, and Christian men are not immune to its effects. *What does it mean to be a man in modern society? And as a disciple of Christ?* Our culture is in the throes of gender confusion—pushing ideologies that blur the unique distinctions of masculinity and femininity. Androgyny is favored, in which individuals are gender-fluid, neither fitting neatly into male or female categories. While this allows for transcending unnecessary stereotypes, chaos reigns when we deny God’s created order.

Unfortunately, the church has not fared much better. While lip service is given to our created design, an egalitarian philosophy still threatens to erase meaningful gender distinctions in practice. Even complementary approaches rarely offer men an aspirational and uniquely masculine ethic. Instead, a neutered spirituality is presented, making it difficult to embody. Many men feel guilty and inadequate for not attaining a desired level of spirituality. This sense of failure can lead to frustration within their families and communities. The root of this issue often lies in the lack of a compelling vision of spiritual growth that does not require men to reject their inherent masculinity. True spiritual maturity integrates all aspects of a man’s being, including his masculinity. Godly men are called to use their strength of body, soul, and spirit in service of God’s kingdom, which cannot be done when there is a disdain for the way God has crafted them. Men cannot become the men, husbands, and fathers God has called them to be without respecting the essence of their masculinity.

The need to guide and train men in the way of being men is nothing new. Thankfully, even in this generation, there are many who have sought to provide men with maps to help them find their way. Numerous books, podcasts, coaching programs, and other resources exist to help men become better men in general and godly men in particular. This demonstrates a clear need and hunger for masculine development.

With so many resources available, one might rightly question the need for yet another. However, as Christ reminded us, the harvest is great, but the workers are few. The current need for masculine formation remains far greater than the many wonderful resources available. Additionally, basic principles often resonate differently when presented in a new way or by a different person. Like languages, a core message may be the same, but we hear it best in our own native tongue. The particular images, stories, and frameworks used to inspire masculine development will resonate differently with each man, even when universal truths are being presented. Some men appreciate sports imagery, others resonate with the warrior archetype, some prefer the wild outdoors, while others connect with leadership language from the business world. All of these images can be helpful, and men are free to utilize whatever language helps them move toward God’s best.

Rationale for the R.I.S.E. Framework

The R.I.S.E. framework borrows from the male body and sexual response cycle, providing men with a map to reconnect with their masculine strength and duty to bring more life and goodness into the world. In short, it is a framework for masculine formation, guiding men to become the men, husbands, and fathers God has called them to be while courageously fulfilling their mission. In other words, it is a refusal to be passive or otherwise impotent.

The Apostle Paul declares that God’s eternal power and divine nature are evident through creation (Romans 1:20), including our very bodies. This means our bodies reveal invisible qualities of God, leaving people without excuse for not knowing Him. God, in His grace, has written profound truths about Himself into our

very bodies as males and females—if we have the eyes to see and the ears to hear. Using the body as a template makes this model accessible to all, as every man has a body.

Rather than appealing to modern sensibilities or pop psychology, this framework contemplates how God designed the male body to respond and participate in the process of conceiving new life. This biological reality sheds light on what it means to be a man—not because man has determined it so, but because God has carved this truth into his body. The sex act is how life is conceived and passed to the next generation. This embodied truth holds wisdom for all men, even those who have not fathered children.

The male body, despite variations in shape, size, and color, shares a common form and function. Men can therefore gain insight into God’s divine wisdom by observing their own bodies, as the Apostle Paul suggests. Regardless of age, marital status, profession, or personal strengths, all men carry this timeless wisdom stamped within them. The only requirement is to listen and comprehend this inherent knowledge.

The Male Factor in Conception

For biological conception to occur, both male and female have their respective roles to play. The man must have the ability to achieve and maintain an erection with sufficient rigidity for penetration. He must then allow himself to become aroused enough to reach an orgasmic threshold and ejaculate semen into the woman’s vaginal canal. It is highly unlikely for conception to take place without these elements in place, and exceptions do not change the rule. For the male, he must rise to the occasion, offer his strength, and spill his seed for new life to emerge.

This is about more than just biological realities. God is telling us a story about masculinity through the very design of the male body. This truth is evident even at the cellular level. The sperm, produced in the testes, must travel through the male reproductive system, be expelled into the woman’s, and then navigate numerous obstacles before reaching the egg. Out of the millions of sperm released, only the fastest and strongest reach the egg to begin new life.

The necessity of masculine strength in conception is clear at both the genital and cellular levels, each providing concrete illustrations for the ethics of manhood. While both levels offer valuable insights, the sexual response cycle provides the most fitting foundation for articulating a framework for men.

Sexual Response Cycle and Disorders

The sexual response cycle consists of four stages: Desire, Arousal, Climax, and Resolution.

- **Desire** is experienced as a surge of sexual energy or a deep ache to connect with a partner, motivating one to either initiate or be receptive to intimacy.
- **Arousal** in men is marked by an erection, making penetration and intercourse possible.
- **Climax** occurs with orgasm and ejaculation.
- **Resolution** follows, bringing a refractory period, which varies in length from one encounter to the next. This period ends as desire is once again stirred.

Since the cycle is fueled by desire, a lack of desire is one of the most challenging clinical issues to treat. It is far easier to steer a moving ship than to create movement where there is none. While various techniques exist to address arousal and climax concerns, cultivating desire is complex. Any combination of biological, psychological, social, and spiritual factors may contribute to a man's lack of desire.

There is also the issue of disordered desires—when desire is present but directed toward illicit or inappropriate outlets. This requires discipline and, often, costly obedience. However, since a form of desire exists, it can serve as a catalyst for uncovering one's deeper, truer desires—the original goodness that sin has perverted.

Arousal generally follows desire, whether triggered externally or internally. It can be frustrating, painful, and even a little blue to have pent-up desire without an outlet for expression. Few things affirm a man's masculinity more than freely embracing arousal and enjoying the pleasure of his erection. An erection is a physical sign of manhood—one strong enough for penetration and intercourse.

Of course, potential strength is not the same as actualized strength. A flaccid penis has potential, while an erect penis demonstrates that potential. However, an erection alone is not the goal; its excellence is realized through its ability to penetrate the reality of another. This requires vulnerability and courage. Questions naturally arise: *How will I be received? Do I have what it takes to bring joy and delight? Or will I be found lacking?* Insecurities, fear, and shame often underlie erectile difficulties. On some level, a man may no longer believe he measures up, and it may feel easier to avoid arousal than to risk feeling like a failure.

Reaching the orgasmic threshold requires sufficient physical and psychological arousal. Many men struggle with premature climax, reaching this stage sooner than they would like. This is often tied to difficulty in tuning into and regulating one's arousal, which is particularly pronounced in those who rely primarily on external stimuli. Disconnected from their inner world, they depend on external factors for climax rather than a conscious surrender to the experience.

For many, premature climax is also a learned response. Adolescent habits of chasing quick orgasms can condition a man's body to seek immediate release rather than tolerate deeper pleasure. The intensity of climax follows suit—the difference between jumping off a curb and skydiving. The more arousal builds, the more powerful the climax. Many men have never moved beyond the childhood joy of jumping off a curb.

On the other hand, some men experience difficulty reaching climax despite prolonged arousal. This can stem from a mismatch between external and internal pleasure. Occasionally, it is an issue of technique and learning how to provide sufficient stimulation, especially with age. More often, however, the culprit is a lack of harmony between a man's inner and outer world. No amount of physical stimulation can compensate when his mind, heart, and spirit are not fully present. Sexual responses are frequently hindered when inner peace is lacking.

For others, delayed climax stems from anxiety and fear of surrender. This might manifest as a general discomfort with losing control or a more specific fear of being seen as vulnerable in intimacy. Some men even experience subconscious disgust with bodily fluids—avoiding climax to avoid ejaculation itself.

Physically, the male body enters a refractory period after ejaculation. This is a time for rest and replenishment before responding to desire again. However, this period is often not fully honored. Rather than a time of basking in gratitude, it is frequently overlooked or anxiously rushed through in pursuit of the next task. This neglect robs the sexual experience of its joy and introduces an undercurrent of performance anxiety into the rest of the cycle.

The R.I.S.E. Framework

The R.I.S.E. framework follows the four stages of the sexual response cycle. The first stage is **Recognize**, which involves becoming aware of our internal desires and true identity. **Initiate** names our need to courageously step forward and offer our strength in meaningful action. The third stage, **Sacrifice**, demonstrates our need to surrender to God's larger story. Finally, **Enjoy** reminds us of the necessity of rest and renewal before answering the call of desire once again.

Recognize

As with sexuality, desire is the spark that ignites our journey of masculine formation. However, a solid sense of identity provides the foundation upon which we stand. By the time sexual desire awakens in a young man, he has typically developed at least an elementary understanding of his male body and how his personhood differs from others. His desires are personal—stemming from his very self. Since desire is inherently relational, understanding desire requires understanding the one who desires. Therefore, the first step in this journey is simply recognizing and remembering who we are.

Identity

Our biological identity as males should not be taken for granted. In the beginning, God created man in His image as male and female. This distinction matters. It is helpful to consider the divine intentions behind the male frame. As previously discussed, we can clearly see the role men play in procreation. Additionally, the male body testifies to general strength, as men tend to have more muscle mass than women. This is not merely about brute physical strength but about the expectation that men will use their strength to protect and provide for their communities. Whether in battles to fight, wars to win, heights to scale, or hard work to accomplish, societies naturally look to men to take on these challenges. This is part of the general identity of all men before considering the unique identity and strengths of each individual.

Our relational identities also serve as a foundation for manhood. These might include our roles as sons, brothers, friends, husbands, fathers, and more. Much like the office of a president, these are not roles we define for ourselves, though they are shaped by our personalities and temperaments. We must turn to Scripture to understand how to faithfully embody the roles of husband or father, for example. In these cases, identity and responsibility are synonymous—we cannot rightly claim an identity without assuming the duty that accompanies it. Understanding our duty helps us fully embrace our identity.

Our relationship with God is the ultimate identity that informs all others. We have been declared sons of God, co-heirs with Christ, beloved, saints, and new creations. These are not identities we earn but ones given

to us through the work of Jesus Christ. Like our other relational identities, we do not define the terms of these roles—our task is to understand and live in the truth of them.

Each of us has also been given gifts to do certain things well. These gifts contribute to our identity formation. Some are called to be teachers, counselors, warriors, leaders, or encouragers. Recognizing the unique strength God has given us shapes our understanding of ourselves and our role in His larger story.

Identity is multilayered and complex. Personality types, temperaments, cultural backgrounds, and national identities all contribute to our sense of self. Restoration and healing may be necessary at any level. However, within the R.I.S.E. framework, it is particularly helpful to consider a man's overall way of being in the world—how he identifies in his work, social networks, home life, sexuality, and spiritual walk. These spheres often overlap, and some may require more attention than others, depending on a man's particular journey of masculine formation.

The goal is not to adopt labels that merely serve as masks. Too often, these labels become fig leaves that hide rather than reveal our true selves. The identity we seek is the discovery of our True Self—the original glory God intended before knitting us together in our mother's womb. This contrasts with the False Self (or “They-Self”), which lives primarily in reaction to others—either appeasing (Mr. Nice Guy), rejecting (Mr. Loner), or attempting to dominate (Mr. Bully). The False Self is concerned with self-image and pride rather than reflecting divine truth and goodness.

Finding our True Self requires listening to and discerning who God has called us to be, rather than striving to make a name for ourselves or seeking approval from others. This process is deeply exposing—stripping away societal pretenses and standing naked in who God has created us to be. Yet, in our True Self, such nakedness is freeing and without shame, even if it appears peculiar compared to others.

Desire

Once we establish a solid sense of who we are, we are better positioned to discern our desires. General questions about desire now become focused on particular domains—what we want as a husband or father, in our career and calling, as a friend, or in our relationship with God. Likewise, when we feel restless, we can resist distractions and the temptation to settle for superficial pursuits. Our identity provides a stable framework for contemplation—helping us to recognize the deep movements of our hearts and what we truly desire.

At this point, it is crucial to remember our identity in Christ. We often assume our desires are inherently sinful and selfish. However, in Christ, we have been washed, made new, and given a new heart. Our bodies are temples in which the Holy Spirit dwells. As such, we do not need to suppress our desires outright. Instead, we can recognize that many of them have been placed in us by God for His glory.

Of course, discernment is still required. As Jesus taught, the wheat and weeds grow together for now, meaning good desires may be mixed with sinful ones. However, wise discernment does not require suppression. If we deny desire altogether, we become like the proverbial Tin Man—going through the motions of life without heart or passion. We become cold and distant, unable to name why we feel disconnected from others and even from ourselves. We have lost heart. Maturity requires us to wrestle with our desires, separating the good from the evil and even distinguishing between what is good, better, and best.

Desire is not merely about naming the things we want. It is about recovering our hearts and rekindling the spark that makes us feel alive. Desire allows us to love deeply and live passionately. It may take the form of an energetic call to action or a quiet ache longing to be fulfilled. Either way, desire signifies that we are fully alive. Whether at work, home, or elsewhere, we seek to experience life flowing through us as we participate in generating new life ourselves.

For many, desire arises spontaneously, especially as it begins to solidify. At other times, it must be excavated. The soul holds deep and true desires, but they may have been neglected or choked out by superficial distractions. For instance, when we assume our deepest longing is for material things—a boat, a luxury vacation, or financial success—we may be missing the deeper calling beneath the surface. While elements of truth may exist in these surface-level desires, God has created us for much more.

Recovering our heart's desires gives us permission to dream again. It is here that we discover our vision and calling. We now know who we are, and we are gaining a sense of what we have been called to do. This vision becomes our unique seed for bringing more life and goodness into the world. Rising to the occasion without offering anything of substance is meaningless. A man must carry within him the seed of life to offer.

Beauty

Our identities and desires are shaped by our responses to beauty and suffering, which Simone Weil identifies as the only two things capable of truly touching us. Our sense of self is forged in response to these potent realities rather than in isolation.

Life is full of suffering, pain, and hardship. We do not have to seek out tragedy or wounds—they will find us. Our only real choice when they arrive is how we respond. We can allow grief to transform us for the better, or we can let it turn us bitter, cold, and cynical. Traditional therapy services often focus on helping us heal from life's afflictions, but these services are typically sought reactively—when wounds become pervasive or debilitating. Of course, this is a valuable service, but healing does not have to be our only path to growth.

While suffering is loud and difficult to ignore, beauty is often subtler. We can become so distracted that we miss the generous doses of beauty God provides daily. Yet, beauty's quiet nature does not diminish its power. Beauty has the ability to comfort and inspire, to nourish our souls, and to leave us completely undone in its glory. Art, literature, and film all pay tribute to the transformative power of beauty: the heroism of valiant acts, the tender embrace of a mother, the steadfastness of loyalty and friendship, resilience in the face of trials, the majesty of sunsets and mountaintops, the passion of romance, and the physical embodiment of another. Each of these has the profound ability to leave an enduring mark on our souls.

However, while beauty has the power to change us, it will not force us to pay attention. We must learn to stand in the path of beauty, to seek it out and allow it to shape us. Just as suffering has the power to refine us, so does beauty—but we must actively pursue it. This is the work of spiritual formation, and in this context, masculine formation. It is not enough to passively wait for beauty to move us; we must cultivate an appreciation for it, making it a central part of our journey. By doing so, we better recognize who God has called us to be and the desires He has placed in our hearts.

While beauty can be encountered in solitude, God often uses relational contexts to impress its truth and goodness upon our souls. This requires us to seek out trusted others who can offer both encouragement and refinement throughout this journey of formation.

Summary

The first and perhaps most important steps in our journey of masculine formation are recognizing our true identity and deep desires. More time will likely be spent here than in any other stage, as it serves as the foundation for the rest. It is crucial to note that this is not merely about deciding how we want to be known by others or naming our life goals. Rather, this is the work of soul excavation—peeling back layers of false identities and misplaced desires to discover the true identity God has given us and the role He has assigned to us in His larger story.

Certainly, much will be forged through our responses to suffering and the healing of our wounds. However, maturity also calls us to be proactive in our growth. Regularly seeking beauty is not a luxury but an essential part of forming our souls. It is through this pursuit that we cultivate the strength, vision, and purpose needed to rise into the fullness of our calling as men.

Initiate

Once we recognize our identity and desires, we must then initiate meaningful action. In the sexual response cycle, this corresponds to achieving an erection sufficient for penetration and engaging in the act of intercourse. Nothing remains hidden—potential becomes actualized. Here, we move from vision to mission, from simply knowing who we are to actively doing the work God has called us to do. While the specifics will vary depending on the sphere of life being considered, certain themes and principles remain universal. We must be willing to take that initial step into the unknown, fully embrace the mystery, and endure. There is confidence in offering our strength without arrogance. We present ourselves boldly, yet with grace and humility, rather than with force or demand.

Mission

A man remains lost without a mission to accomplish, and potential is meaningless unless it is realized. To find our mission is to find our excellence—the highest good for which we were created. It is not enough for an eagle to simply know it is a bird. It embraces its excellence as it soars high in the sky, fully displaying the glory God has given it. Likewise, the butcher works with meat, the baker bakes, and the candlestick maker makes candlesticks. Whatever our calling, meaningful action flows from our identity, just as our identity is revealed through our actions. They are two sides of the same coin.

As Christians, we are commissioned as disciples of Jesus, called to make disciples as we go into all the world. This is a universal calling for every believer. However, within this overarching framework, we each have a unique role to play. *How will we use the talents, gifts, and abilities God has given us to fulfill the Great Commission?* The body of Christ consists of many members. Not everyone is an eye, a hand, or a foot. As kingdom men, we become ineffective when we lack clarity about the specific role we are called to fulfill.

Discovering our mission involves engaging with those around us, identifying the issues that ignite our compassion, and utilizing our strengths to address the concerns God has placed on our hearts. Often, discovering our purpose reveals that it is something we have already been doing. For example, fishing was nothing new for Peter, but with Christ, he began fishing for men. Similarly, we may not initially recognize our unique gift, but once we do, it feels like coming home to our true selves—knowing this is what we were created to do.

Having a life mission provides us with a true north. It offers direction as we navigate decisions about careers, relationships, finances, and other aspects of life. By filtering our choices through the lens of our unique calling, we can confidently embrace opportunities that align with God's purpose and decline those that do not. Like the apostles, we must learn to distinguish between good and better options, remaining focused on our God-given mission without being sidetracked by the good works others are called to pursue.

First Steps

We naturally pursue areas where we feel confident and tend to avoid those in which we are uncertain. Athletes gravitate toward athletics, while scholars toward academic pursuits. Much of this reflects our natural gifting. However, what is often overlooked—particularly in adulthood—is the ongoing need to learn and grow in unfamiliar areas. Too often, we assume we are not good at something when, in reality, we simply lack sufficient practice. Even star athletes, despite their natural talent, must dedicate countless hours to training over several years to excel in their sport. They must start somewhere—taking an initial step toward their future greatness.

We see this principle in babies learning to walk. On the one hand, a baby is destined to walk and run; it is part of his design. Yet, he must still learn how to do it. His first steps are wobbly at best, marked by countless failures. He stumbles, trips, and falls repeatedly as he develops his balance. Even after taking his first step, he does not suddenly become an expert. He steps, falls, crawls, and tries again. Over time, there is less crawling and more walking, but it remains a process that requires patience.

Parents delight in this process, celebrating every small step forward. However, this same principle is much harder for us to accept in our own endeavors. Whether in our work, relationships, or spiritual life, we must start somewhere. Our first steps will likely be shaky, accompanied by failures. Yet, it is through these failures that we learn and grow. Faith and humility are essential. It is not enough to know who we are and the life mission God has given us—we must also have the courage to take the first step toward fulfilling that mission, no matter how uncertain or unsteady it may feel.

Penetration

At some point, we must fully respond to our calling. This can be compared to sexual intercourse, as it requires moving beyond mere desire and initiation to full engagement. In an act of extreme vulnerability, we enter into a reality outside of ourselves. This is a step of faith into the mysterious unknown. Similar to marriage vows, it is a commitment to the unknown—a promise to love and cherish through all circumstances, good or bad. Despite not knowing future challenges, we take this step in faith, embracing the uncertainty and committing ourselves wholeheartedly. To fulfill God's mission for our lives requires a similar type of

commitment. We are signing up for a wild adventure filled with unpredictable twists and turns, and this cannot be done with a halfhearted approach.

Christ Himself shows us the way. The Eternal Word becoming flesh is the ultimate example of penetration. He humbled Himself—gestating for nine months in Mary’s womb—and was then born as a baby in a manger. Yet, this humility was in no way passive or timid. Nothing was held back as He entered into our reality. He was all in—fully embracing life as a human male without forgetting his identity as God’s beloved Son. Through this dual reality, He accomplished the work His Father had given Him to do.

In the same way, we are called to fully offer ourselves to the purpose God has destined for us. This cannot be done from the sidelines or through mere words—just as there is a profound difference between talking about sex and having sex. The mission God has given us requires wholehearted, embodied engagement—stepping into a reality outside of ourselves while remaining true to our identity.

Endurance

As much as we might like to show up once in a grand and glorious fashion and then be done, this is not generally how life works. We must keep showing up, time and time again, until the fullness of our time is complete. We are prone to settle for mediocrity when we give up prematurely. Like King Jehoshaphat, who limited his impact by striking the ground only three times instead of achieving total victory, we often fail to fully utilize our God-given potential. To achieve complete victory, we must develop self-mastery, fully harness our abilities, and remain disciplined and focused. Learning to tolerate tension and push through difficulty is essential for accomplishing our objectives.

There comes a point to surrender, but it must be preceded by perseverance. We can cause just as much heartache and grief by stubbornly continuing the same ineffective actions as we can by giving up too soon. The necessity of sacrifice—which will be discussed below—follows meaningful endurance, just as the cross followed Gethsemane.

Unforced Rhythms of Grace

We are called to make a positive impact in the world around us, but we must not get ahead of ourselves or force the good we want to do. Just as we cannot force a physical erection but can act confidently when one occurs naturally, so too must we learn to boldly take on the work God has given us when the opportunity arises—while also knowing when to yield and allow God to open doors. We must learn to embrace unforced rhythms of grace.

This is again the example set by Christ. It was a bold move for the eternal Word to enter into our world and walk among us. At the same time, His entrance was marked by humility and grace, not force and demands. In no way was His action passive, yet there was a gentleness that tempered His power. Even now, He stands at the door and knocks—never forcing His way in, but confidently waiting for the hearts of men to open.

We are called to embrace our strength and calling in the same way. Too often, we are disconnected from our hearts and from who God has called us to be. This leaves us drifting through life, functionally castrated in our ability to bring life and goodness to others. We must recover our true identity and divine purpose. However, this is not an excuse to become a bull in a china shop. While it is important to know who we are and feel

confident in the strength God has given us, we must wield this power with grace and humility. This means not assuming, demanding, or forcing our way into situations. Certainly, intentionality and effort are required, but when we feel we must desperately arrange opportunities to bear our strength, it is often pride and entitlement at work rather than faith and patience. We must trust God to open the right doors at the right time.

Summary

Initiation moves beyond personal reflection, propelling us into action and transforming our vision into a lived mission. This leap of faith requires stepping out of our comfort zone and into the messy reality of others, which can be inherently risky. However, by wholeheartedly, patiently, and humbly dedicating ourselves to the work God has entrusted to us throughout our lives and relationships, we fulfill our duty as kingdom men—to bring more life and goodness into the world.

Sacrifice

The act of procreation requires a man to sacrifice his seed, giving of himself to create life. This includes the expenditure of energy during sexual intercourse, culminating in orgasm—often referred to as "the little death"—signifying a temporary loss of erection, desire, and vitality. However, on a deeper level, this sacrificial death symbolizes surrendering ourselves to a higher purpose. It is not dying for the sake of dying but dying so that others might live. Even for ourselves, we die in hope, knowing the power of the resurrection. Within the R.I.S.E. framework, Sacrifice involves surrendering our own understanding and yielding to God's plan. By relinquishing control and embracing the mystery of God's work, we are transformed and empowered to live a new life in Christ. This entails accepting death to self and following Christ, allowing Him to produce new life through us.

Death and Surrender

Jesus taught His disciples that a grain of wheat must fall to the ground and die before it can produce a harvest of new life. This pattern finds its fulfillment in His own death, burial, and resurrection—a pattern we are also called to emulate. It is natural to become preoccupied with our own desires, whether they involve professional success, recognition, financial stability, or comfort. While these pursuits are not inherently bad, they do not always benefit others and can leave us feeling unfulfilled. We may attempt to find meaning by redoubling our efforts, but the answer lies in sacrifice, not in simply trying harder. By letting go of our usual ways and allowing our hearts to change, we can discover a deeper and more satisfying life. As Christ taught, holding onto our worldly life results in loss, while sacrificing it for His sake leads to true life.

In Gethsemane, Jesus prayed for His cup of suffering to be taken from Him, but in the end, He surrendered to the Father's will rather than His own. Likewise, we are called to surrender. The life we live is no longer about us; we are living sacrifices in God's greater story. Giving up control of our lives is humbling and will likely include suffering, but in the grand scheme, it is a sweet death.

Surrender means yielding to God's mystery and grace. It is relinquishing control and allowing Him to work in us. Just as we cannot force arousal or orgasm but can only create conditions that allow them to happen, we cannot arrange life on our terms—we must allow God to move. Our task is simply to remain open to Him.

Premature Sacrifice

To truly surrender, we must first have a self and a reasonable measure of control to give up. Sacrificing ourselves to every new idea that comes our way is not meaningful sacrifice; it is simply chasing trends and giving ourselves away prematurely. Even Christ came "at the fullness of time." His incarnation and sacrifice were not rushed, nor something to get over as soon as possible. He took His time and gave His life at the right moment.

Similarly, we must have the wisdom to discern what to give ourselves to and when. As the apostles demonstrated, not every good work is meant for us. If we say "yes" to every cause that stirs our hearts, we risk acting prematurely. Discipline is required to hold back until we can fully commit ourselves to the mission God has given us. Likewise, if we know we are called to a particular work but the time is not yet right, pushing ahead too soon only leads to frustration for ourselves and others. Without self-control, our sacrifices will miss the mark and fail to produce the results God intends, leaving us indulging in shallow pursuits with unsatisfying outcomes.

Delayed Sacrifice

On the other side of the spectrum are those who hold on too long before letting go. This may stem from a misalignment between identity and mission. While they may deeply desire to give themselves to something greater, this lack of congruence prevents them from being fully present in their efforts. These individuals must revisit the Recognize and Initiate stages before they are truly free to offer themselves in Sacrifice.

For others, the fear of surrendering control holds them back—a fear rooted in a lack of faith and hope. To sacrifice is to surrender to the unknown, requiring a step of faith. However, it is also a surrender in hope, trusting that good is on the other side. Without faith and hope firmly intact, we anxiously cling to what we can control. Even our "good works" can become a form of pride if they are done in reliance on our own efforts rather than on God's work through us. Constant striving without surrender will eventually lead to burnout, frustration, and strained relationships. While others may applaud our work ethic and endurance, without a noble sacrifice, our efforts remain fruitless. Like a grain of wheat, we ultimately remain alone and barren unless we fall to the ground and die.

Embracing the Messiness

Many people who fear death are not afraid of death itself but of the process of dying. They may even look forward to what comes after death but dread the experience of getting there. Similarly, some men struggle with the messiness of sexual intercourse, finding aspects such as their own ejaculate unpleasant. For others, the challenge lies in the vulnerability of surrender—letting go of composure, control, and the refined image they have constructed for themselves. This sense of discomfort or shame can prevent them from fully engaging in the experience.

As the old hymn reminds us, Jesus died on an old rugged cross, not the polished symbols we display today. His death was gruesome, but He was willing to get His hands dirty for our sake. Likewise, we must embrace the messiness of sacrifice—whether it is the financial struggles of starting a new venture, the difficult conversations required to thrive in marriage, or the humbling confessions needed to forge deeper friendships with other men.

Summary

Sacrifice means surrendering our work and very selves to God and His kingdom. We take up our cross and die with Jesus, trusting that we will also be raised with Him to walk in the newness of life. Sacrifice keeps us from being self-absorbed and merely pushing our own agenda—no matter how good it may seem. Instead, we live within God's story and must surrender our will to His.

This surrender is neither rushed nor indefinitely delayed. Instead, it occurs in God's perfect timing. Sacrifice is not an easy road—it is often messy and demanding—but the new life it produces makes it worth the cost.

Enjoy

The wisdom of God's design is evident in the male body's refractory period following ejaculation. This built-in system enforces a pause, requiring us to temporarily refrain from sexual activity. Ideally, this is a time to bask in the joy of our release, allowing our bodies to rest and recover. This period is not about begrudgingly waiting but about reflecting on and celebrating the wonder of what we have just experienced with immense gratitude.

In the life of Christ, we tend to focus more on His death and resurrection, yet Scripture does not overlook His burial. Holy Saturday—the time between His death on Good Friday and His resurrection on Easter Sunday—is a period of rest. The work of the cross is finished, but it is not yet time to rise. This pattern is reflected in nature as well. Summer is followed by fall and winter before spring comes again. Nature does not jump from one summer to the next; instead, it is given a season of rest before renewing.

In a similar way, the Enjoy stage of the R.I.S.E. framework should not be overlooked. A kingdom man is defined not only by his hard work and sacrifice but also by his ability to fully embrace and experience the life Christ offers. This is achieved through deliberate moments of rest, renewal, recovery, and restoration—allowing us to wait patiently while remaining responsive to the stirring of desire once again.

Rest

Immediately following an intense experience, we often need a moment to simply catch our breath. We have been spent and now require time to stabilize and recover. God Himself rested on the seventh day after six days of creation, establishing the Sabbath as an essential rhythm for His people. As such, rest should be viewed as a sacred practice.

This might include resting in the evenings after a long day of work, taking breaks on weekends, or setting aside time for vacations. It may also involve a sabbatical—a longer, intentional period of rest and renewal. However it looks, we can embrace these seasons without guilt. Rest is not laziness; it is stewardship. We

neglect our well-being when we feel the need to constantly grind without pause. God teaches us through the sexual response cycle that we must pause and rest before gearing up for the next round of work.

Reflect and Celebrate

The afterglow period following sexual climax is also an opportunity to fully relish the joy of the experience. This is a time to look back with awe and deep gratitude—humbled and blessed by the gift of transcendence. It is a valuable practice to extend beyond the bedroom as well.

Rest is not simply the absence of work; it is a chance to reflect on our accomplishments and affirm their goodness, just as God did with His creation. This principle is embedded in our holidays, which break from routine to commemorate and celebrate important events in history. Even somber holidays serve as moments to remember and honor significant milestones.

Taking time to reflect and celebrate our achievements are just as vital as finding regular rhythms of rest after exertion. It keeps us aware and grateful as we participate in God's unfolding story.

Restore and Reawaken

The refractory period is also a time for our bodies to replenish and reset. Physically, this may look like a post-workout recovery meal or a restorative night of sleep. Relationally, it could mean spending time with friends or planning a weekend getaway with our spouse. We might also feed our souls with a good book, a meaningful film, or time in nature.

In many ways, this is about intentionally placing ourselves in the path of beauty and drinking deeply from what it offers. Just as beauty stirs our initial desires, it plays a crucial role in restoring vitality to our souls. This restoration then allows us to start the cycle again—reawakening to the deep desires of our hearts.

Some seasons of restoration last longer than others. However, if we remain in a perpetual refractory period, we risk stagnation. We need time to rest, reflect, and be restored so that we can reawaken to whatever adventures God has for us next. Without these regular moments of refreshment, our efforts become stale and ineffective.

Summary

There is a time to work and a time to rest. This is not optional when it comes to our refractory period following sexual release, and it is equally wise to apply this principle to other areas of life—especially after intense seasons of engagement and sacrifice. The Enjoy stage is an intentional period of recovery, allowing our bodies, souls, and spirits to be renewed.

This should not be seen as an end state but as a necessary reset before reengaging and starting the cycle again. At the same time, it is not to be downplayed or ignored. As the saying goes, "Never give a sword to a man who cannot dance." Failing to fully embrace this stage can make us ineffective or even dangerous to ourselves and others.

Open to conception

When we do not rise to the occasion, offer our strength, and spill ourselves, conception does not take place. However, as many couples trying to conceive quickly learn, being open to conception does not guarantee it. While we have our part to play, much remains beyond our control. Ultimately, it is God who determines if and when our seed will generate new life. This is not a point of despair or powerlessness but a reminder that our strength gains its vitality only through the power and grace of God.

We do all we can and leave the outcome to Him, much like a farmer who toils diligently but acknowledges that the harvest is ultimately in God's hands. While we reject passivity in every form, we also resist pride, avoiding the assumption that we have more control than we actually possess. We rise to the occasion and trust in God's wisdom and timing to bring more life and goodness into the world through our humble efforts. Being open to conception means exactly that—being open. We must show up, but we cannot force or arrange the outcome.

Impotence

A man who is unable to achieve and maintain an erection sufficient for sexual intercourse is considered impotent. To be impotent is to be powerless—unable to take effective action. Of course, occasional difficulties with erections are not uncommon, especially with age. But the true mark of manhood lies in our ability to rise to the occasion and offer our strength throughout our lives and relationships—not just in the bedroom.

We have a role to play in bringing more life and beauty into the world. Our impotence allows the world to remain dark and barren. Therefore, we must stay alert and watchful, resisting anything that seeks to diminish our vitality. This could come from well-meaning family and friends who believe our desires are unrealistic and would prefer us to keep things as they are. It might also come from society or even the church, which may try to confine us to a box of their own making rather than helping us discover God's best. Likewise, our own fears, doubts, and shame can hold us back.

When we merely have the appearance of masculinity without its function, we are like clouds without rain or trees without fruit. While potential is good, we miss the mark if we are not generating new life. Much of this struggle can be attributed to the shortcomings of a fallen world, but we must not ignore the reality of spiritual warfare. We have an enemy who seeks to kill, steal, and destroy our vitality as men—to render us effectively impotent. Distractions, apathy, cowardice, and similar forces are not benign; they are tactics used by evil to take us out.

Our ability to R.I.S.E. is a battlefield—not merely for our personal happiness but to ensure our generative power remains intact and that we fulfill our duty to bring more life and goodness into the world.

Application and Limitations

The R.I.S.E. framework is not intended to encompass every aspect of masculine development. Rather, it serves as a conceptual model—a map—for men as they navigate their journey. Although grounded in the realities of the male sexual response cycle, the framework does not address every facet necessary for growth into manhood. Likewise, while it follows a natural progression from Recognize to Enjoy, it functions as a cycle, and men may need to enter at different points depending on their circumstances.

For example, a man drifting aimlessly through life would benefit from starting at the Recognize stage—discovering his true identity and the deep desires of his heart. Without this foundation, he would struggle to initiate anything meaningful. Another man may already have a sense of who he is and what he desires but is held back by fear, shame, or disappointment. For him, beginning with Initiate—finding the inner resolve and faith to take those first steps—is essential. A man who is working hard yet feels like his efforts are meaningless may need to start with Sacrifice—learning to offer his work and strength for a higher purpose. If his hard work is merely a function of his False Self, he may actually need to return to Recognize first. Those experiencing burnout will likely need to prioritize Enjoy—seeking rest and restoration before engaging in further self-discovery or action. Others may need to simply normalize and honor this stage when it naturally occurs, rather than feeling anxious or restless for not doing more.

Generally, when a man engages with this framework, it is assumed he is not in immediate crisis. Just as our bodies do not typically experience sexual desire in the midst of an emergency, a man dealing with acute hardships is unlikely to be in the right mental space for the reflection and contemplation this model requires. This does not mean his life must be free of all difficulties. In fact, hardship may be the catalyst that prompts him to pursue deeper masculine formation. However, his life must be stable enough to allow for meaningful reflection, rather than seeking immediate fixes to pressing problems. For instance, traditional therapy services would be necessary to address issues such as addiction, infidelity, or a marriage on the brink of divorce before engaging with this framework.

The flexibility of the R.I.S.E. framework allows it to be applied across multiple aspects of a man's life, including his profession, marriage, friendships, parenting, and faith. It empowers him to meet the demands of each sphere with masculine strength. While this framework is not intended to be diagnostic or exhaustive, it is adaptable and beneficial for men across various walks and seasons of life.

Conclusion

The breakdown of the family and many societal issues can be traced back to men being left to navigate life's challenges alone, resulting in immense suffering within our communities. While men must be held accountable for their sins, many good men simply lack the guidance needed to use their freedom and power responsibly in their roles as husbands, fathers, and leaders. This creates a ripple effect—marriages and families cannot shine as lights in a dark world when men are unequipped to fulfill their responsibilities.

The R.I.S.E. framework does not attempt to resolve every issue facing men but instead provides them with a map for their journey of masculine formation. Our souls are shaped toward God's best as we learn to Recognize, Initiate, Sacrifice, and Enjoy—following the wisdom God has written into our very bodies. This

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approach makes the framework accessible to all men. Not every man is an athlete, a soldier, or a CEO, but every man has a body and an innate awareness of how it functions. Therefore, growth into manhood does not require special knowledge or experience—only a willingness to contemplate our own embodied design as men.

The framework is designed to help men discover greater freedom, power, and love throughout their life and relationships. However, it is not intended to diagnose or treat pathology. It is best viewed as a developmental model rather than a clinical tool, with the goal of maturing the masculine soul rather than merely healing wounds. While healing will naturally take place, the focus remains on who we are becoming as men, rather than simply restoring basic functioning. Major wounds or constraints must be addressed first to allow men the bandwidth to deeply engage with the reflections and issues presented here.

Remaining impotent allows the forces of evil to reign—bringing darkness, destruction, and death. As men, we have been equipped and called to rise to the occasion, not just for personal satisfaction but to bless our families, communities, and the world. We R.I.S.E. to bring more life and goodness into the world—and we do not have to look far to see how desperately this is needed.