

STUDY GUIDE

SIX SESSIONS



BECOMING A KING

The Path to Restoring
The Heart of a Man

MORGAN SNYDER

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The Path to Restoring
the Heart of Man

Study Guide | Six Sessions

MORGAN SNYDER



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Becoming a King Study Guide

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WELCOME

Though it may not be clear yet, you've been led to a map, to a narrow path that leads to rediscovering something essential—a treasure that most of us have forgotten.

Perhaps better said, something essential has been lost, stolen, assaulted, and even surrendered in each of our lives. That something is your heart, *as a man*.

But all is not lost. God is engaged in a recovery mission, inviting you to participate in an adventure that has the possibility to uncover more life than you have ever imagined.

Make no mistake, this narrow path is for the few.

Take heart, for it has *always* been so. G. K. Chesterton suggests that every generation loses the gospel and every generation is charged with its recovery. I want to suggest that this recovery—this epic and intimate mission of the heart of God to restore all things—doesn't begin on a global or even national scale. It begins intimately and so very personally in the heart of every man and woman.

It begins with you.

What you are holding in your hands is a way back to becoming whole-hearted, becoming strong, and becoming everything God meant when he meant *you*—when he dreamed up who you could become.

INTRODUCTION

At the heart of Reality is God's intention to empower humans and entrust them to participate in the ongoing creativity of the universe.

Power-sharing is God's design, desire, and intention.

But that is hardly the story at hand.

What's gone wrong? When can you entrust a man with power?

We tend to think the problems in our lives are external, like the broken truck, the broken job, or the broken marriage. Yet if we dig deeper, these external problems reveal internal fissures; we are men in need of excavation and reconstruction. Jesus of Nazareth offers to meet us in the heart of our need. He promises a way forward and invites us to follow him into the kingdom of our Father.

Yet so often we are unsure of the way *in* to this new way of life.

I've created this study guide and companion six-session video series as a way for us to engage more deeply together in the message of *Becoming a King*. My desire is that you, both personally and collectively with other like-hearted men, will risk believing that more restoration for your masculine heart is available. This study guide, together with the book and video series, offers a reliable map to the ancient path of *becoming*, becoming the kind of trustworthy king to whom God can entrust the care of his kingdom.

For over a decade, courageous men just like you have been orienting their lives around becoming a king. Even as the world grows darker in some significant aspects, a relentless light grows brighter in the hearts of some men. It's time to brighten the fire even further. I'm honored to invite you to receive and share in the treasure I too have been seeking and recovering for quite some time.

There's much more to say regarding this mission's backstory; you'll find that content in the *Becoming a King* book. I designed this study guide around reading the corresponding chapters of *Becoming a King* **beforehand** and watching the video **during** this experience. I'll give you a heads up as we make our way through this study guide so that you'll know which chapters of the book will prepare you to engage in each section of the journey. Remember, we're in this together.

Engaging This Treasure Hunt

This guide can be tailored for several primary uses. If you're an individual wanting to dig deeper, use it as a guide to mine the treasures explored in *Becoming a King*. It also works great in a smaller setting of men seeking personal restoration together—perhaps as a weekly or monthly study, over a couple of pints or an evening campfire, or even in a church setting. Or it can be used as six sessions of a men's retreat. Be creative. Walk with God. So long as you have the book, the video series, and a heart willing to risk, you'll be armed to dig in, to dare greatly, and to join the courageous men who have gone before us.

A Few Words of Counsel as You Begin

Trust the Process

Reading the text of nature reminds us that the most important things in life take time. Ultimately, the treasure at the end of this journey is worth any cost that comes along the way. Being honest with yourself and others and allowing your current circumstances to access the life of your heart is where you want to begin. If you are oriented in a life-giving direction, you can trust confidently that you will, in God's time, find the destination you seek.

Don't Rush

If you want the abridged experience, you can binge and crank through all the content. But you'll miss the treasures found all along the path. If you want the abundance God has for you, go slow. Slower than you think. Agree with the portion and pace God has for you in this.

Don't Go Alone

The best things in life are meant to be shared. We are relational to our core, and you will experience much more fruit if you share this journey with other like-hearted allies. If you choose to use this as a personal study, find a buddy who will do it independently but alongside you, and plan some rally points along the way to compare field notes, celebrate discoveries, and share battle scars. Better yet, share the experience with a group of men and stack hands on choosing some intentional life together. And remember, confidentiality is essential; you must know your story is safe with the men with whom you engage in this treasure hunt.

Digging Deeper

The *Digging Deeper* section of this study guide is meant to be engaged over time and is far more than you could cover in a single sitting or gathering. The reflection questions and recommended resources found in the *Digging Deeper* sections of each session will equip you to go as deep as you want in this message. For your first pass through this study guide, I recommend saving most if not all of the *Digging Deeper* content for later and initially focusing on the selected *Discussion Questions*, which follow the *Big Ideas*. Once you have taken a pass through all six guided chapters and videos and read *Becoming a King* in its entirety, go back and explore the *Digging Deeper* sections in more depth.

Very few men ever take a risk of excavation and discovery like this. You are already among the few. In your choosing to risk, I count you as an ally. And rest assured, when the going gets tough, hold fast to the words of Teddy Roosevelt:

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.*

God, I consecrate this journey to you. I bring every aspect of this experience under your care and into honest and transparent connection with you. I declare your rule and authority over my life and every man participating in this adventure. I pray that you would make known your true heart. I choose to give you permission and access to my heart. I pray that you would raise up prayer warriors on my behalf, led by the Spirit of God, to agree with the full portion you have for me as a man in this. I choose to risk engaging with curiosity, an open heart, and an honest desire to become the man you meant when you meant me. I open my soul to you and ask that you break every limit I have placed on who you can be, what you can do, and how you can do it. I agree with who you are, what you are doing, and how you are doing it. I want more of me to be given more fully over to more of you. I choose to give you a chance to speak and move and breathe your breath into me through this experience. And I am asking that you would lead me as I consent to a process and choose to respond to your invitation to risk in courage, vulnerability, and love. I want my whole heart back. I invite you to anoint this time with your presence, your power, and your favor. And I ask that you reveal where and how you are leading me to become the kind of king to whom you can gladly entrust the care of your kingdom. Amen.

* Teddy Roosevelt speech, delivered in Paris in 1910, known to most of us as “The Man in the Arena.”

Session 1

BECOMING POWERFUL

The great problem of the earth and the great
aim of the masculine journey boil down to this:
when can you trust a man with power?

-John Eldredge

A thirty-year-old man is like a densely
populated city; nothing new can be built . . .
without something else being torn down.

-Mike Mason

Stand at the crossroads and look;
ask for the ancient paths,
ask where the good way is, and walk in it,
and you will find rest for your souls.

-Jeremiah 6:16

Introduction

Do you remember a moment when you were entrusted with power? Think of a childhood adventure where you felt like you were handed over the keys to the kingdom.

While riding bikes with my daughter yesterday, I had a visceral memory of the first time I was turned loose as a young boy to head off by myself on my bike into the neighborhood beyond our street. I remembered the power I felt in that moment years ago. Memories like this whisper to us a secret that is waiting to be recovered.

I've spent the last two decades excavating this desire for power in my heart and in the hearts of many men. With intense curiosity I've sought to discover where this desire comes from and why it so often ends up leading a man sideways. As I scan the landscape of my own life and those of other men, I notice far too many stories of men being entrusted with power only to have that power bring harm to themselves and others.

Is there another way? Is there a path to becoming the kind of wholehearted man who can be entrusted with power and have it turn out for good? As I spent years leaning into the wisdom of contemporary sages as well as the wisdom of sages from millennia past, a path began to take shape. In time that path revealed a process of transformation to become the kind of man to whom God can entrust his power.

In session one, I invite you to risk recovering your God-given desire to be powerful. Where has this desire surfaced in your masculine heart over the years? Where has it led you to places you never wanted to go? And what might the path look like to restoring your masculine heart and, in time, becoming the kind of man who can wield power well? What if you could have your heart fully restored, your power refueled and seated in a life worth living? Let's dig in.

Watch Session One Video: Becoming Powerful

Two-Minute Pause

One of the core beliefs behind this series is that God is the initiator and we have the role of responding and participating. In each session, I invite you to choose a two-minute pause. Whether you are watching these videos alone, in a small group setting, or at a retreat, make room for the message to soak into your soul, for the questions to rise up, and for God to shine his light. Let the silence and room to breathe pave the way for courage, and let vulnerability be the atmosphere with which you engage.

God, I invite you into this space to participate in stillness with you. Here and now, I choose to recover my breath. I turn my attention and affection toward you, God, and what you have prepared for me in this time. I choose two minutes to breathe and center on you.

Consecration Prayer

You'll find the following prayer within each session of the study guide. I encourage you to revisit it after watching each video session, before moving to conversation. It will serve both as a powerful practice to bring everything under God's care and direction as well as an essential opportunity to continually give God permission and access to guide us through this journey.

God, I consecrate this journey to you. I bring every aspect of this experience under your care and into honest and transparent connection with you. I declare your rule and authority over my life and over every man participating in this adventure. I pray that you would make known your true heart. I choose to give you permission and access to my heart. I pray that you would raise up prayer warriors on my behalf, led by the Spirit of God, to agree with the full portion you have for me as a man in this. I choose to risk engaging with curiosity, an open heart, and an honest desire to become the man you meant when you meant me. I open my soul to you and ask that you break every limit I have placed on who you can be, what you can do, and how you can do it. I agree with who you are, what you are doing, and how you are doing it. I want more of me to be given more fully over to more of you. I choose to give you a chance to speak and move and breathe your breath into me through this experience. And I am asking that you would lead me as I consent to a process and choose to respond to your invitation to risk in courage, vulnerability, and love. I want my whole heart back. I invite you to anoint this time with your presence, your power, and your favor. And I ask that you reveal where and how you are leading me to become the kind of king to whom you can gladly entrust the care of your kingdom. Amen.

Big Ideas

Desire reveals design. Design reveals destiny.

The primary work of God is finding men to whom he can entrust his power. And the story of most men is being entrusted with power and it bringing harm to themselves and those under their care. -Dallas Willard

The most important thing about a person is not what he does. It is who he becomes. -Dallas Willard

The masculine journey consists of a **process** of becoming the kind of man to whom God can gladly entrust the care of his kingdom.

Notes

[illegible]

Discussion Questions

1. Think back to your childhood. What are some of your earliest memories of feeling powerful?

2. Describe a good king. Think of an example of a particular man (past or present) who, in your mind, is a compelling model. List the specific qualities you admire in him. Also ask yourself what qualities he is missing that would add even more to what you esteem as the kind of man who can be entrusted with the care of a kingdom.

3. In the video I explain how each man is entrusted with a particular kingdom. Describe the aspects and scope of your personal kingdom as you see it.

4. Think of the people entrusted to your care. Call to mind a few specific faces and put words to what you hope they would one day be able to say about the impact of your life on theirs. Take time to write this down.

5. How is your kingdom? Put words to the condition of your kingdom currently. How are the people doing whom you've been entrusted to care for in this season of your life?

Closing Prayer

God, to be entrusted with power is a sacred responsibility, fraught with the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat. Thank you for leading me to this journey and assuring me that there are other like-hearted men who want to become the kind of man to whom you can gladly entrust the care of your kingdom. I consent to this process. Reveal what is next and align me with your pace and portion as we dig deeper. I consecrate my masculine soul to you. I celebrate that the most important thing about me is that I have been created as your masterpiece, from your image. I am made in your likeness. And you are inviting me to partner with you in the process of the restoration of my heart as a man. I give you permission and access once again. I want my whole heart back. I choose to trust your leadership. Give me eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart filled with courage to go with you, wherever you want to lead me.

DIGGING DEEPER

How has the storyline of wanting to be powerful played out in your life?

Think through your childhood years, into middle school, high school, and beyond, as you stepped out into your story as a young man. Describe how this desire to be powerful has played out over the various seasons of your life.

Describe a moment you felt like you were at your very best, when you found yourself acting true and bringing a genuine strength, a moment when you felt deeply alive.

What has been the impact, on your own heart and on those around you, of the longing to be powerful?

G. K. Chesterton reminded us, “We all feel the riddle of the earth without anyone to point it out. The mystery of life is the plainest part of it. . . . Every stone or flower is a hieroglyphic of which we have lost the key; with every step of our lives we enter into the middle of a story...”*

Story is the fundamental shape of our lives. And central to the mid-chapters of any story are unresolved questions. Since it is the restoration of the masculine heart set within us that God is most after, an essential way of beginning this process is with some orienting questions. We remember what Henri Nouwen observed: “Answers before questions do harm to the soul.”

What are your questions at this point in your story? Take a few moments to see what surfaces now and even notice your reaction to the question. Hold onto this for the next week and notice what questions surface in the days ahead that you aren’t able to put words to at this point.

Pausing to connect with the deep questions of your heart is paramount to this process of restoration. As Isaiah suggested thousands of years ago, one of the great tragedies of humanity is that we do not take the time and space to pause and think with our hearts. Richard Foster suggested that “the curse of our age is superficiality.” We fail to quiet ourselves long enough to hear our souls speak. We fail to become conscious of the very present questions our hearts are asking.

As a heroic step of recovery, pause with me. Literally. Let’s take an additional moment of silence in this time. Pause long enough to notice your breath. Notice yourself breathing in and out. Notice your heart, as a man, before you proceed. Notice the questions that rise. Let’s pause here . . .

* G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (Scott Valley, CA: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015), 55.

What are the questions surfacing in your heart? Perhaps triggered by the season of life in which you find yourself. The relationships you are navigating. Decisions you are facing. Failures with which you need to contend.

Take some time to linger here as your soul finds its voice, and list your questions as they arise.

Describe the man you are today. When you look in the mirror, who and what do you see? Body, soul and spirit, heart, mind, imagination. How are the myriad facets of you doing?

In chapter one of *Becoming a King*, I introduce the concept of the iceberg as a way to begin unearthing the motives deep below our external behavior. Remember, as Dallas Willard suggests, “Actions reveal beliefs one hundred percent of the time.” Our credal statements or our religious ideologies sometimes serve to disconnect us from what is really going on within us. In contrast to abstract ideologies, God is always present with us where we really are, not where we think we should be.

Make a list of specific habitual behaviors you have observed in yourself in the past twenty-four hours. Here are some examples:

- Checking your phone within moments of waking up to see what emails and texts were waiting for you
- Using food, exercise, or alcohol as medicine in an attempt to change how you feel in the current moment
- Biting your nails
- Needing to drive in the fast lane
- Finding yourself rushing, trying to get more accomplished than is realistic
- Needing to constantly be heard or have the last word in a conversation

Pause here for a few minutes and take an inventory. Don’t overthink it. Nothing is too big or too small to note. Simply observe.

Now write a list of observable behaviors in the chart to the right.

Observable Habit	Motives	Core Belief

Next to each habit you wrote on your list, try to put words to the honest motives at play directly beneath the behavior you manifested. Next to each motive, try to access a single core belief that is being expressed through the related motive and the external behavior. Don't get hung up on what you ought to believe; let's get to the heart of things. Take the time. Be honest with yourself. I assure you that in time it will lead to life.

Now go back and read all ten behaviors, motives, and core beliefs. Pause and consider what this says about how you are doing, right now, on the inside.

**LET'S GO EVEN
DEEPER.**

Describe your life in simple terms, **above** the waterline. This is the part people see. It's what you do—external activities, roles, responsibilities, etc.

Describe your life in simple terms, **below** the waterline. This is where we get to motives. How are you feeling? What surfaces within you as you do the things above the waterline? What are the motives at play—the **why**—behind what you do?

Deeper still are the core beliefs at work. Again, this isn't your stated belief system, but rather your very pragmatic operational beliefs. I confess, by way of example, that I'm a very skilled bargain hunter when it comes to big purchases. From a vehicle to a vacation, I can typically find a great value. Part of that is because I'm a strategist and can maximize an opportunity. But when I'm honest, another part that is often at play is a feeling of financial scarcity and terror that rises up from a young, orphaned place in my heart that has yet to be healed and initiated into manhood.

So take a swing. Below the waterline, what are your primary motives, fears, and energies—the why behind what you do externally? And what are the core beliefs associated with these motives?

Step back for a moment. Well done. That takes courage. Now, as we will do often in this process, pause and review what you've written. What is your reaction? What does your heart do with this? How is it informing you here and now?

Let's keep going as we orient ourselves with this big idea from Dallas Willard: "The primary work of God is finding men to whom he can entrust his power. And the story of most men is being entrusted with power and bringing harm to themselves and those under their care."

Risk being honest. Where do you see this idea currently playing out in the world at large? How about in your world?

What would you say is working really well in your life?

What is not working in your life?

What feels unresolved and unfinished within you as a man?

Where specifically do you feel worn out?

Where do you feel alone or isolated?

Where and in what ways do you feel misunderstood?

What are the biggest fears at play in your life right now?

What did you expect to be that you are not? What did you expect to **not** be that you are?

What did you expect to have that you do not? What did you expect to **not** have that you do?

Describe an early experience where you remember feeling, for perhaps the first time, like your life choices had direct impact on other people, that your choices had high-stakes consequences.

What was your internal reaction at the time?

What is your reaction now?

You are brave to consider these questions. It is a good practice to exercise your courage. Remember C. S. Lewis said that courage is not simply one of the virtues but the form of every virtue at the testing point. And Maya Angelou reminds us, “Courage is the most important of all the virtues, because without courage you can’t practice any other virtue consistently. You can practice any virtue erratically, but nothing consistently without courage.” Courage in this journey will take us a long way and bear much fruit.

Now, as we move from inward to beyond our own life, let's consider together the lives of other men. Leaders we have encountered in our politics, places of work, schools, or sports teams. Men in some position of influence who have not withstood the tests and trials. Fallen kings and fallen kingdoms.

Make a list of men you have experienced as fallen kings, men who experienced profound failure financially, emotionally, relationally, morally, or beyond.

What was entrusted to their care?

As best as you can tell, where do you sense that things went sideways?

Think about the men in authority over you in your various roles and responsibilities. What is it like to live under their leadership? What are the blessings? What are the challenges? Describe their personal blind spots and how those affect the way they offer leadership.

In *Becoming a King*, I suggest that to be made in the image of God is to be designed to become a king. In *Waking the Dead*, John Eldredge explains that we were meant to exercise a fierce mastery over our domain. “Like a foreman runs a ranch or like a skipper runs his ship. Better still, like a king rules a kingdom, God appoints us as the governors of his domain. We were created to be the kings and queens of the earth (small *k*, small *q*).”**

We were all meant to rule over the realm in which we have say. Beginning with our own bodies, minds, and souls and expanding to the geography, relationships, and assignments entrusted to our care. Big or small, we all have a kingdom.

How is your kingdom? Take some time to sincerely describe the state of the current kingdom entrusted to your care in as much detail as possible.

** John Eldredge, *Waking the Dead* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2016), 174.

How is the condition of your kingdom?

How are the hearts of those entrusted to your care?

Call to mind a place in your kingdom—a relationship or a role—that is not going well. Describe the situation.

What does it feel like to put words to that?

In our day and age, convenience often takes center stage. Many things we want seem to come quick and easy. Yet this thinking does injustice to the masculine soul and the process required for restoration. The best things in life aren't quick, cheap, or easy. Like a fine single-malt scotch, anything precious takes time, hard work, great care, and a participation with something greater than ourselves.

Make no mistake: the treasure at the end of this quest is worth every bit of energy invested. But it will take time, perhaps much more than you want or are willing to commit right now. A decade of transformation is a lot to ask of a man. Yet as I have spent over two decades sitting in the presence and counsel of older men much farther down the narrow road, what I consistently hear is that a decade of doing the work to become wholehearted is a small investment compared to the vibrant life that will come in its wake.

For now, I simply want to celebrate how far we have come. The trail goes as far and deep as you want to go. And surely it goes farther beyond my view. Again, I invite you to give yourself to this. You've come this far. You have a sense of both the quest's scope and the prize at the end. Don't shrink back. It's worth it.

Father, Jeremiah was one of your wild-eyed prophets entrusted with your message at a time in history when his civilization had, in very significant and heart-wrenching ways, lost its way. He cried out to those willing to listen,

Stand at the crossroads and look;
ask for the ancient paths,
ask where the good way is, and walk in it,
and you will find rest for your souls.
—Jeremiah 6:16

God, I confess I want more life. I want a life that is truly life. I want to know the good way. I want to walk a path that promises rest for my soul and an abundance of love, presence, and strength to offer those around me. I want to receive the restoration of my masculine soul. I want to risk trusting that my desire to be powerful is from you. It is the image of God set within me, as surely as the oak tree is set in the heart of the acorn. God, I ask that you would use this quest to restore my heart as a man. I want to become the kind of man to whom you, the Living God, can entrust the care of your kingdom. I give you permission to go every place you want to go in my life and my story for this quest. I give you access to every part of me. I choose to risk agreeing with who you are, what you are doing, and how you are doing it, beyond the ways I have come to know you up to this point. I give more of me to belong to more of you. I will take this risk, trusting that you will come and restore the man you meant when you meant me.

Further Excavation

(For a complete list of recommendations and links, go to BecomeGoodSoil.com/FurtherExcavation.)

Books:

David Brooks, *The Road to Character*

Richard Rohr, *Adam's Return*

Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*

Film/Video:

Bruce Almighty

Chernobyl

City Slickers

Mr. Holland's Opus

The Lion King

The Mask of Zorro

The Men Who Built America

BecomeGoodSoil.com Blogs:

"A Powerful Life"

"Breaking the Limits Placed on God in Our Lives"

"The Decade of 10,000 Hours"

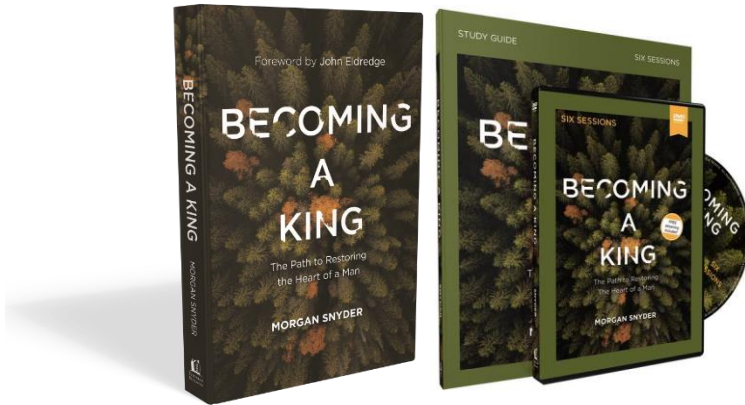
"Fallen Kings, Fallen Kingdoms"

"Propped Up Kingdoms"

"What Did You Believe When You Woke Up This Morning?"

BecomeGoodSoil.com Podcasts:

040—Intensive Series (Episode 1 of 8)



BECOMING A KING

BY MORGAN SNYDER

Masculinity is in need of restoration. But how do you become the kind of man – the kind of king – to whom God can entrust his kingdom?

A look at our history and the world around us shows that the story of most men is being entrusted with power and having that power bring harm to themselves and those under their care.

What's gone wrong? When can you entrust a man with power?

In *Becoming a King*, Morgan has curated and mined discoveries from the lives of over seventy-five sages who have gone before us, and we journey with him on an ancient and reliable path to restoring the heart of a man and becoming the kind of man who can wield power for good. Speaking unabashedly to men, Morgan invites us to a rare and remarkable fellowship of like-hearted kings and an honest conversation about what power and responsibility look like for men in our world today.

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