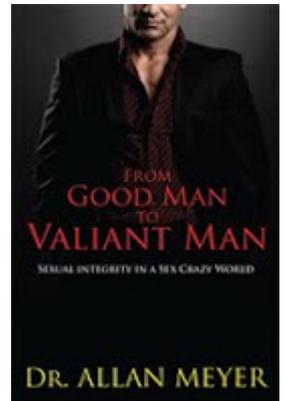


# Review: From Good Man to Valiant Man

We use some of the Careforce Lifekeys courses in our church. They are a useful tool for discipleship and the promoting of a practical spiritual engagement with real life. *From Good Man to Valiant Man* has been written by Careforce's Allan Meyer and is closely tied to the "Valiant Man" Lifekeys course which concentrates on the sexual discipleship of men.



The sub-title of the book says it all: the aim of both course and book is to promote "Sexual integrity in a sex crazy world."

The discipling of the sexual man is a topic gaining significant ground in recent times. Driscoll's *Porn-Again Christian* is an obvious example of someone unafraid to deal with issues surrounding sexuality and holiness and robustly calls men to responsibility. I also recently scanned through a Tim Challies ebook called *Sexual Detox* that covers very similar ground to Meyer albeit less thoroughly. Tellingly, both Driscoll and Challies provide their material freely online where it can be of the best use. Meyer doesn't but that does not prevent his book from being a worthy contribution.

The framework of the book is, unsurprisingly, shaped around the Lifekeys course structure – inviting people to discover the blessing of recovery by entering the "arena of healing" (Page 38). While the related exegesis of the beattitudes may be weak, the application of the "eight attitudes" of humility, emotional honesty, teachability, proactivity, forgiveness, pure motive, healing love, and courage is helpful. It means that the substantial topic can be approached from the point of view of a man as a man – not a man within distracting contexts

of relationship fraught with the tendency to blameshift.

Meyer makes the framework specific in two ways. Firstly, through a metaphor for masculinity which is, once again exegetically weak but practically useful. This metaphor is the four faces of a man as an “ox” (provider), “lion” (protector), “eagle” (spiritual leader), and man (sexual, physical person). The fundamental thrust is to promote masculinity as servant-heartedness and self-sacrifice – for instance the basis of headship in a marriage relationship is boiled down to “you die first.” (Page 23).

Secondly, and much more usefully, Meyer unpacks the physical, psychological and neurological aspects of masculine sexuality. He describes the chemical mechanics of sexual development and physical attraction and makes the most valuable point of the entire book: **“You renew your mind biologically not just spiritually”** (Page 175). This shows how the task of holiness and goodness is so clearly a masculine endeavour – earthy, practical, not a task relegated to the effeminately, ethereally spiritual. Neural pathways built from years of fantasy, pornography and masturbation can be retrained and bypassed by those willing to walk that path.

*Retraining the brain requires that you deliberately judge your thought patterns, build an off-ramp, and take your thoughts to godly places.” (Page 179)*

This is a call to holiness in grace not shame – an exhortation, a championing for men to succeed in sexual purity and so find the blessing of right-living in themselves and the ones close to them. It is helpful.

Other aspects are less robust. The “ewe-lamb principle” (Page 146) which encourages a husband to consider their wife in terms of the 2 Samuel 12 parable of a “ewe-lamb” in need of their tender protection is not necessarily invalid, but it doesn’t avoid paternalism and doesn’t interact with the

reality of diverse personalities. How would a phlegmatic man married to a choleric wife apply this principle? Our wives are not children in need of father, but women in need of a godly husband.

This book obviously derives from years of experience as a man and a pastor and from a wealth of research and pastoral care.

The content is practical and educational. It will need to be unpacked for some – but that's our job. I will be using many of the principles in this book in my own discipleship and in the discipling of others.

