



MAP RISING

The Epic Battle for the Most
Fatherless Generation in History

KRIS VALLOTTON

“This might be the most important book of the decade.”
—John Eldredge, bestselling author of *Wild at Heart*

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Fatherless Generation in History

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Chosen

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Minneapolis, Minnesota

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I dedicate this book to

My father, Bill Vallotton,
who passed away when I was three years old. I know you are
watching me from heaven. I have carried you in
my heart my whole life.

Art Kipperman,
my first spiritual father, who taught me how to follow Jesus.
I miss you!

Bill Derryberry,
who has discipled me for the last forty years and taught me how to
be a man. I live forever in your debt.

Bill Johnson,
who has inspired and empowered me to change the world!
Thank you for believing in me before I deserved it.

My heavenly Father,
who has loved me and protected me my whole life.
My prayer is that I would be a blessing to You, and that
You would be proud to call me Your son.

The Malachi Mandate

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.

Malachi 4:5-6 ESV

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INTRODUCTION

In some ways, I have been preparing to write this book for most of my life. My father drowned when I was three years old, and I have spent much of my life longing for him. The truth is, I never really understood what I was longing for until our first child, Jaime, turned four years old. I will never forget that moment. I was pushing her down a hill on her tricycle, and we both were laughing wildly. Suddenly, this thought came to my mind: *My daddy was gone by this time in my life. There was no laughter in my life at four years old, only loneliness and confusion.*

Every day since that tricycle ride has been a continued revelation of my life, absent of fatherhood. I am 66 years old at the writing of this book, and I can't remember a day when I didn't miss my dad. Every time I have had a crisis in my life, I have had the thought, *I wish my dad were here. He would know what to do.* My office is filled with mementos of places I've been, books I've written and things I've accomplished. On the entry wall of my office is a picture of my dad. I hung it there strategically so I could remind myself that my father would be proud of me if he could see the man I've become.

We live in the most fatherless generation in the history of the world. For me, this statement isn't just a commentary on society; it's personal . . . painfully personal! Over half of the children in America today are born out of wedlock . . . left alone, with no daddy! Furthermore, there's an entire movement that is trying to "normalize" having two mommies

and no daddy, or having two daddies and no mommy. It's hard to stand by in silence when you have lived the deep pain of a dysfunctional family

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and understand the plight of losing a parent. Yet our society is trying to normalize brokenness that's so deep it defies logical explanation. The hope is that normalizing immoral lifestyles will remove the intense shame of living in sin.

That's like saying if people would stop shaming you for smoking, then you wouldn't get lung cancer. Society has become convinced that the guilt of immorality is externally generated and will lift when the world around immoral people agrees with their behavior. Yet Jesus said that the Holy Spirit is the one who convicts the world from the inside out. Read it for yourself:

But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.

John 16:7–8

In other words, we can run, but we can't hide.


The Malachi Mandate

In the book of Nehemiah, the walls of Jerusalem had been broken down for 141 years, and the Jews had been unsuccessful in rebuilding the walls for 94 years. But what the Israelites couldn't do in 94 years, Nehemiah did in 52 days!


How did he do it? you ask. That's a great question. First, he surveyed the walls and developed a strategy to rebuild them. But what he did next is stunning. He made the reconstruction of the walls a family affair! He put families to work together on the section of the wall closest to their houses. One day, half of each family worked on the wall near them, while the other half

protected their workers with weapons of warfare. The next day the halves would switch, and the family members who had posted guard duty the day before would work on the wall, while those who had worked the day before would protect the family workers.

Like Nehemiah, in this book I will first survey the broken walls of this generation. I will describe the side effects of what has become the new PC (politically correct) culture, along with looking at the resultant deconstruction of the family unit. But the ultimate purpose of this book is to inspire the Malachi Mandate—to build bridges of reconciliation between the generations that will facilitate the restoration of fathers and their families.



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ONE

Where It All Began

LEWISTON IS A TINY TOWN of 900 people nestled in the Trinity Alps of California. A single subdivision is home to about 750 Lewiston residents. This subdivision was built in 1960 to house the laborers who worked on the Lewiston Dam project. A couple of decades later, Lewiston became a breeding ground for drugs and prostitution, drawing many kids and teenagers into its clutches, ultimately stealing their innocence and destroying their purity. Consequently, what looked like a sleepy, peaceful mountain community on the outside was a town steeped in addiction and wallowing in abuse and dysfunction.

The Trinity County Probation Department became so inundated with the impact this community was having on the entire county that its workers decided to become proactive and go after the root system of brokenness. They discovered in their analysis that all the juveniles on probation in Trinity County came from shattered families. Furthermore, a high percentage of the juveniles in Lewiston had violated their probation. Based on these findings, the probation department decided to make a decree that *all the parents* of kids who had violated probation would be required to take a parenting class twice a week for three months, or they would face their children going back to juvenile hall.

This is where my story begins. Because I was a volunteer youth pastor for nine years at Mountain Chapel, I came to know Dick, the head of the probation department. I had stepped aside from the youth pastor role for about a year and was waiting for a new assignment from the Lord. Dick called me one winter day during this time, in November 1987, and said, “Kris, I’m requiring the parents of all the juvenile probation violators to take a three-month parenting class. It’s twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I was hoping you could work with the kids while my team does some parenting classes with their folks. I’ll get you access to the old gym in Lewiston; maybe you could do some activities with the kids and then share a positive message with them a couple of times a week. And Kris, I know you’re a Christian, but I can’t have you banging the kids with the Bible because I’m requiring them to come to your meeting. You know about the separation of church and state stuff, right, buddy?”

“Yeah, Dick . . . well, this could be amazing! Okay, I’ll do it,” I responded.

Honestly, I had *no idea* what I had just said yes to! That week, I got the keys to the old, dilapidated gym, which hadn’t been opened in years. It had

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no insulation, leaked like a sieve in the rain and had no heat or air conditioning. I unlocked the huge metal double doors and forced them open against their rusty hinges as they groaned in protest. Then I stood in the doorway and tried to absorb the scene in front of me. The place was

filled with spiderwebs hanging everywhere, like a horror scene in a haunted house movie. The floor was covered in dirt, and garbage was slung all over the place. Bird crap ran down the walls like rain as rats scurried for cover. The stench of rat feces rolled out of the doorway like cigarette smoke.

“Yikes!” I said out loud, trying to prepare my family, who were in tow, for the view ahead. Kathy and the kids joined me in the doorway in complete silence. Frankly, I was afraid to ask them what they were thinking . . . or maybe it was just that I could read the sense of utter surprise on their faces. Whatever the case, we all grabbed brooms and went to work. We spent the next couple of weeks cleaning out the gym, making it ready for its maiden voyage.

Gym 1.0

Finally, the big day arrived. Kathy baked cookies and brought enough soda for 35 kids (the number we were told to expect). We loaded up our three kids (thirteen, eleven and nine years old) and headed for the gym. The 30-minute ride there was unusually quiet; you could cut the anxiety in the car with a knife. Somehow, in spite of the dark cloud that settled on us, I had a vivid, fictitious story come to my mind on the way there about the value of virginity.

We arrived at the gym, but there was no way to prepare for what we were about to experience. We got there 20 minutes early, yet there were already kids waiting to get in. I wasn't sure what their expectation was for the night or if they even knew who we were, but we were about to find out. I greeted them with a "Yo!" that they ignored completely. I promptly unlocked the gym door, and they rushed in like a bunch of wild animals, pushing and shoving each other to get in first, nearly ripping the doors off their hinges. They passed me as if I were invisible, practically running over my kids and me. "Yikes!" I gasped again.

We had wanted to be there early enough to set up the gym with games and organize the night, but the waiting kids trampled that plan in the first few minutes. I tried desperately to get their attention and give them some brief instructions for the evening, but they just flipped me off and yelled obscenities at my family and me. Kathy ignored their insults, grabbed a volleyball and organized a game on the fly. I followed suit, brought out a basketball (which attracted their attention like moths to a flame) and tried to create some structure.

It was a zoo! A few minutes after our arrival, two teenagers got into a full-on fistfight, surrounded by kids yelling and screaming at them. I shouted at the top of my lungs for them to *STOP!* But it was no use. I was nearly paralyzed with fear. My heart was pounding, sweat poured down my face and my hands shook in terror. But there was no one there to bail us out. We were 30 minutes into the first night, and the kids had literally taken over the building. Somehow, I had to take control and turn this whole thing around before it was too late. I rushed into the fight and managed to get both guys in a headlock and wrestle them to the ground, pinning them to the floor. For the first time, the gym went completely silent.

“Listen to me,” I said, struggling to hold both guys on the ground. “This stops *now*, or you can take your skinny little butts home and fight in your driveway. This is my gym, and if you want it open, then we play by my rules—or I lock the freakin’ place up and never come back. *Is that clear?*”

There was no reply, but the silence was encouraging. I let the two tough guys go. They both jumped to their feet, staring at each other right in the eyes, as if to taunt one another. I got between them and shouted, “*Knock it off or get out of my gym NOW!*” A few seconds later, they were back in the basketball game. (But I would break up five more fights before the night was over.)

Finally, it was “halftime,” and we gathered up the balls and demanded that everyone sit on the benches assembled against one wall of the gym. We bribed the kids with cookies and drinks. They shouted obscenities at us in return and screamed, “*How long is this going to take? Hey, man, what’s going on? . . . Let’s play ball . . . what the %@\$&*!*”

By some near miracle, we managed to get the 37 kids who had shown up seated. I immediately started telling the fictitious story the Lord had given me on the way to the gym about a teenager who worked for a ring for “the woman of his dreams.”¹ For the first five minutes, the kids cursed, sneered and harassed me while I struggled to recount the story. But then suddenly, something happened. Somehow they got into the story, and the place became completely silent.

I continued with the story about how this guy worked all through high school, six days a week, for three years to buy this ring for “the woman of his dreams.” I wove the ring story around the young man who worked and fought for the ring, even taking it with him to the Vietnam War, in which he was nearly killed trying to retrieve it from the battlefield. The 20-minute story climaxed with the guy finally marrying “the woman of his dreams” and presenting her with the ring on their honeymoon night.

The next morning, however, this newlywed wife lost the ring by carelessly wearing it in the ocean where they went swimming. The young wife couldn’t understand her new husband’s complete brokenness over the loss. She had come from a rich family, and she thought the value of the ring was in the gold and the diamonds. What she didn’t understand was that the true value of the ring was in the blood, sweat and tears it had taken her new

husband to get the ring from the battlefield all the way to the honeymoon suite, so that on the night he first lay with his lover he had something valuable to give her. Because anyone can give away something expensive, but only those who understand sacrifice can give away something truly valuable.

Here comes the punch line I delivered to that gym full of tough teens: “The ring is your virginity, and the reason you have a sex drive years before God wants you to have sex inside marriage is because the value of your virginity is in the battle it takes to get your virginity from the battlefield all the way to the honeymoon suite.”

At that point, every kid in the gym was hanging his or her head, and their tears fell to the gym floor like rain. A few seconds passed before, finally, the toughest kid in the gym (the instigator of most of the fights that night) broke the silence. He said in a sad voice, “No one ever %#\$*&@ told me about this!”

A sixteen-year-old girl who had been behaving seductively all night shouted, “Me neither!”

The other kids just moaned in agreement as we all sat there in silence. I didn’t know how to close the message since I had been forbidden to give an “altar call.”

The kids got up from the benches and started playing again, and although they still cussed, yelled and even fought the rest of the night, there was a noticeable crack in their armor. I can’t really describe it, but I could feel it in the air. I knew that God had given us these kids, and I was convinced that, in time, we were going to make a huge impact on them.

When the night was finally over, I locked the gym doors over the protests of the kids, and we began our journey home. Our car was buzzing with conversation as everyone told “war stories” of our first night from hell (or a tough night from heaven). The jury was out!

When Thursday rolled around, fear gripped my soul as I envisioned another out-of-control night with our gang of juvenile delinquents. I

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valuable.**

wondered how we were going to endure three months of sheer trauma, yet I was determined to keep my word to Dick. We arrived at the gym and found the same familiar scene as the first time—except that there were twice as many kids waiting to get in the doors. I reassured myself that we knew what to expect and that we mustn't let the kids take control of the night. I told my family that we needed to be much firmer, but still be loving and compassionate.

As soon as we turned the lights on, the place went ballistic with energy . . . kids shouting, running around chasing each other, the overall feeling of chaos back in full force. We somehow managed to organize a full-court game of basketball (more like jungle ball), with about twenty people on the court at any given time, and a volleyball game with the same sort of overcrowded scenario. The arguing and fighting continued as we worked to build a connection with the kids. I picked out the five oldest, toughest kids in the building and determined to build trust with them. There was no way to develop a quick connection with that many broken and unruly kids, but all the kids respected (mostly feared) these five older kids.

The group grew larger every week, and several older, gangster-looking twentysomethings joined us. The rough-and-tumble dynamic continued, and my concern and fear escalated as I began to see drug deals going down in the gym and guys carrying weapons. At last, our three-month commitment was over. But personally, I was just beginning to bond with the kids. Furthermore, there were at least a hundred kids a night coming to the gym. I reasoned, *Without the probation department's oversight, my 30-minute inspirational talks could include Jesus messages and altar calls.* I talked to Dick and asked him if I could continue meeting with the kids at the gym on my own. He was excited about me continuing, as long as I took full responsibility for the gatherings.

The next week, I invited my five older tough kids to a meeting and pitched them an idea. (I asked these guys to meet with me because all the other kids respected them.) I told them I would continue to open the gym twice a week, providing that they policed the nights. I said, "You guys have to keep the drugs and weapons out of the gym, and you must break up all the fights. If there's one more drug deal in or around the gym, or

if anyone brings another weapon into the gym, I am done *forever!* You understand this?”

“Yeah, dude . . . we get it.” They shrugged and began to walk away.

“Yo, guys, do we have a deal or not?” I pressed. “I want your word . . . you have mine.”

They looked at each other and nodded yes.

“Is that a *YES?* I want you to give me your word,” I insisted.

“Yeah, dude, we’re in,” they said with sarcastic smirks on their faces. (I honestly don’t think these kids had ever been trusted before, so they weren’t quite sure how to respond.)

When we are leading people (especially broken people), it’s important that we set well-articulated boundaries with them and clearly communicate the ramifications of violating those expectations. In this case, the risk of having kids with guns, knives and drugs in the gym, with no security or police protection present, was incredibly dangerous. We had to find a solution that really worked, and I knew how much these guys were loving the gatherings at the gym, so I was pretty confident they would do anything to keep it open.

Gym 2.0

My hunch turned out to be right. The next Tuesday, we opened the gym, and I gathered everyone around me as the five tough kids I had met with shouted for everyone to “*Shut the %@\$&* up!*” It wasn’t quite the opening I had in mind, but I have to say, it was effective. I shared the new deal with everyone and made it clear that they *must* police the gym themselves or I was *gone forever!*

Everything changed that day, although it took about a year to completely eradicate the attempts to bring in drugs and weapons. When new people came into the building and tried to do a drug deal with our kids, the tough guys would gather around them and usher them out of the gym. The kids created a place off the premises to hide their drugs and weapons, so they could ditch them there, come in and play ball.

At halftime, the kids could grab some snacks, sit on the benches and listen to me teach, or they could go outside for 30 minutes, until I was

done. Snacks were included either way. At first, about 70 percent of them went outside with the “cool kids” and listened at the open windows (actually, the air vents). But the first snow drove them all inside, and from then on, even the cool kids stayed in the gym year-round. They grew to like my teaching (even though they tried not to show it). I was teaching

They grew to like my teaching (even though they tried not to show it).

. . . Little by little, we were becoming one big (slightly dysfunctional) family.

them practical life skills, along with the Gospel. Little by little, we were becoming one big (slightly dysfunctional) family.

It wasn't long before a local sheriff's deputy figured out that most of the young criminals the department was looking for were at my gatherings on Tuesday and Thursday nights. Consequently, the sheriffs started showing up and making arrests in the gym. Of course, this really had a negative effect on my kids. Many of them were already

terrified of cops. I got so mad that I finally went to meet the sheriff in person and explain the situation to him. He understood the positive impact we were having on the kids and on our county. He agreed to make the gym an asylum and to grant Tuesday and Thursday nights as arrest-free periods in Lewiston. (Otherwise, the sheriff's deputies would have been arresting our people on the way to or from our gym gatherings.)

The Rest of the Story

Weeks turned into months and months into years as we gathered kids at the gym, two nights a week, for five years. We won two community awards for our work with the kids, which inspired the Lions Club to sponsor us. Yet maybe the best thing that happened at the gatherings is that we met a thirteen-year-old boy named Gene, who became our fourth child through adoption.

But not everyone was happy with our work. Somewhere around the year-three mark, two Mormon missionaries dressed in slacks, white shirts and

ties rode into the gym on their bikes. (We live in the mountains . . . they might as well have landed in a flying saucer.) In a loud, authoritative voice, one of them demanded to speak to the leader. One of the kids grabbed me and said, “Those creeps are asking for you.”

“Hi, guys. What can I do for you?” I questioned.

“Are you the leader here?” one of them asked in an angry tone.

“Yep, what do you need?” I asked, with a hundred kids quickly gathering around.

“We’re getting this place shut down! This is a government building, and you’re using it for religious purposes,” they proclaimed.

I don’t think they understood the nature of the kids who were gathered there with us, or maybe they were just that clueless. Before I could answer, one of my tough kids said, “You better get the # % & * @ ! out of here before we beat your # * & ! % and shove these bikes up your butts!”

Then the rest of the kids ran toward them, yelling and screaming threats. Both the Mormon men panicked and nearly fell off their bikes trying to get out of there. Truth is, they never returned!

Every gym night had a crisis. For instance, there was another incident in which a younger teenage boy was screaming at Kathy and calling her filthy names. He was mad because she had made him wait his turn to play a game. He continued yelling for several minutes, screaming at the top of his lungs like a crazy person. I finally went over to him and told him to leave. (The rule was, you screw up and you’re out of the gym for one full week.) He refused to leave even after several requests, so I took him by the neck and ushered him out the door. He was resisting, of course, which made it harder to get him past the threshold.

About a half hour later, his mother showed up with the boy at her side and a bunch of neighbors in tow carrying rakes and shovels. They all demanded that I meet them outside. I went out, while at the same time trying to convince the other kids to stay in the gym. The boy’s mother brought him over, showed me two red marks on his neck and asked, “Did you do this to my son?”

I have to admit that I must have been holding him tighter than I thought I was. “Yes, ma’am, it looks as if I did.”

She went ballistic! Her neighbors began threatening me as I tried desperately to calm them all down. Finally, I just turned around and walked back into the gym, where I knew I was safe.

The woman shouted that I'd better not walk away from her, and her neighbors echoed her demand.

"If you would like to have a conversation with me, I'm glad to accommodate you, but I'm *not* going to let you intimidate me with your armed militia," I shouted in reply from inside the threshold of the gym doors.

The group out there finally calmed down, so I went back outside and told her my side of the story, while her neighbors stood there glaring at me.

She turned and yelled at her son this time, demanding to know if he had called my wife those dirty names and then refused to leave when I told him to go home.

The boy managed to squeal out a "Yes . . ."

"Get home!" she commanded. As he walked toward the street, she turned to me and apologized, and then kicked him in the butt not just once, but several times as they headed down the street toward their house.

I was just beginning to understand the level of abuse these kids were often exposed to. I had to find another method myself for removing the kids from the gym. I certainly couldn't call the police! A little side note: That young boy came back to the gym the next week, apologized to Kathy and spent the next five years honoring us. I also apologized to him for hurting him. It certainly wasn't my intent, and I never was mad at him. He turned out to be a great young man.

Broken Families Raise Broken Kids

About the third year of the gym gatherings, I decided to try a more holistic approach to helping all these kids become healthy. I wanted to start meeting with their parents to develop a plan for the well-being of their kids. I asked one of the kids, "Is it all right if I follow you home to meet with your folks?"

"I guess so," he replied reluctantly.

We walked down the street to his house, and the first thing I noticed was that his yard was littered with junk, the house windows were broken out,

the door was wide open and dope smoke was pouring out of the doorway. My heart pounded with anxiety and sweat poured off my head as I neared the threshold. I hesitated for a minute, trying to reassure myself that it would be all right. I followed the boy inside to a dark, tiny front room. I stood there for a moment scoping out the space, trying to understand the scene unfolding in front of me. I observed that there was no furniture in the room except a mattress on the floor. The electricity was off in the house, and the place reeked of marijuana.

The boy introduced me to his mother, who was sitting on the floor in the corner of the front room, all drugged out. I somehow squeaked out a “Hi,” and then just turned around and walked back to the gym. I never talked to the young man about his mom again.

As time went on, I learned that only one of the more than 130 kids we ministered to even had a father at home (a good father, a bad father or any father at all in the house). In a surrogate way, Kathy and I became these kids’ mom and dad. In most cases, we were the only healthy adults in their lives. Over the next few years, slowly our kids began to get whole, in spite of their broken homes. Many of the drug dealers got saved, and most of the kids began respecting themselves and started to embrace a sense of nobility, living lives that demonstrated honor, respect and character. We taught them how to have self-control and gave them tools to deal with their conflicts. Over time the fighting stopped, and the gym became a fun, peaceful, healthy environment full of laughter. (In chapter 6, I’ll share more about our experience with the Lewiston girls.)

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adults in their lives.**

The Power of Compassion

Our influence on the hearts of the youth had a huge impact on everyone in the community. As our young people in Lewiston got healthy, crime

plummeted, and the entire community was slowly transformed. People started taking more pride in their homes and yards, and even in their town.

The greatest miracle of all was taking place not in the kids around me, or even in the town we were in, but in the Kingdom within me.

In fact, if you drive through Lewiston now, you'll see a quaint mountain town. The homes are nicer, the yards are better kept, the gym is remodeled and there is a great ballpark that was once a field overgrown with weeds.

Yet the greatest miracle of all was taking place not in the kids around me, or even in the town we were in, but in the Kingdom within me. Five years of wrestling with abandoned kids besieged with broken hearts, shattered dreams and wounded souls left an impression branded on my mind that would shape my worldview for decades. I spent many sleepless nights processing the fatherless nature of the world around me, wondering how to take the things I had learned in this tiny Lewiston community and apply them to the rest of the world.

To be honest, I wonder if the Lewiston experience mirrored in any way the challenges the nations of the world are facing today. What I have discovered in two decades of research is heart-wrenching . . . even shocking. In the following chapters, I will unfold what I have learned. *Be prepared* to be awakened to a world in serious trouble, and to the Kingdom with righteous solutions!

EPIC TAKEAWAYS

- The gym and the Gospel: I had no idea what I had just said yes to!
- The ring story: Anyone can give away something expensive, but only those who understand sacrifice can give away something truly valuable.
- Five years “parenting” the tough kids: In a surrogate way, Kathy and I became these kids’ mom and dad. In most cases, we were the only healthy adults in their lives.
- Every night a crisis, every year more whole: As our young people in Lewiston got healthy, crime plummeted, and the entire community was slowly transformed.
- The power of compassion: The greatest miracle of all was taking place not in the kids around me, or even in the town we were in, but in the Kingdom within me.
- *Be prepared*: The world is in serious trouble, but the Kingdom of God holds the righteous solutions!