WHAT YOUR HUSBAND ISN'T TELLING YOU

A GUIDED TOUR OF A MAN'S BODY, SOUL, and SPIRIT

DAVID MURROW

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Preface

The Iceberg

A renowned psychologist once compared the human mind to an iceberg. We see only the tip, while the bulk of our thought processes are invisible, submerged in a deep region known as the subconscious. This seems doubly true for men, who tend to be less aware of their feelings than women are.

There are a number of great books that examine the tip of the iceberg. Authors such as Stephen Arterburn and Shaunti Feldhahn have revealed much about men by simply asking them what they think—polling them scientifically and capturing their responses in bestselling books.

But this approach only reveals what men *consciously* think. If the shrinks are right, about 80 percent of a man's thought processes are opaque—even to him.

This is why committed family men suddenly leave their wives for no reason. Why deacons smile at church and then scream at their children in the car all the way home. Why men who are normally wise with money sink their cash into

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ridiculous Ponzi schemes. Why men who truly love their families suddenly abandon them—if not physically, then emotionally.

Oftentimes men have no idea why they do these things. Your man doesn't know what's going on under the waterline any more than you do.

In this book, we'll examine the tip of the iceberg (what men tell researchers) as well as its vast underside (what men feel but are unwilling or unable to put into words). By looking at the whole iceberg, you will emerge with a complete picture of what motivates your husband to do and think the things he does. Together, these are the things your husband isn't telling you.

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Introduction

What's Really Going On Inside Your Husband

Picture your husband standing in the middle of a swiftly flowing river. Every day a steady current of joys, frustrations, compulsions, temptations, and pressures comes flooding downstream and washes over his heart.

It's exhausting work, standing against this current. Some disciplined men are able to do it pretty well. Others try to dam the river—but frustration eventually spills over the top. Some men eventually drown, taken under by pressures and sorrows they cannot fathom.

Most men have no idea where these feelings come from. Many try not to feel anything at all. Some are so skilled at denying their emotions they aren't aware they have any. Rare is the man who knows how to deal with his feelings in a healthy way.

So instead of living fully and freely, the majority of men resort to survival strategies in order to stand against the current. Instead of being honest about what they feel and asking

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people to meet their needs, they learn destructive, manipulative ways of getting what they want. Game-playing. Displays of anger. Pointless bickering. Destructive behaviors. Habits they can't kick and don't even enjoy. It takes so much energy fighting back the current (or trying to control it) they can't be fully present in the moment. Many simply check out—becoming passive and unavailable to their loved ones. They veg out in front of the TV or computer—not because they don't care, but because there's nothing left to give.

Every man fights these currents. Even the good husbands. Even Christians.

I am such a man.

I'm what you'd call a nice Christian guy. I had it pretty good as a kid—middle-class upbringing, plenty to eat, a roof over my head. I made good grades in school and had lots of friends. But my mom and dad were caught in a spiral of codependence—he was a raging lion and she was a pacifying lamb. Dad was a ticking time bomb—and you could never predict when he would go off. Mom taught us various survival strategies: Don't upset your dad; be quiet; stay in your room; get outside; eat quickly; get good grades; be careful what you say; and most important, always be right.

I gave my life to Christ at age fifteen in large measure because I didn't want to become like my dad. I've been serving Jesus ever since. I went to a Christian university and married a Christian woman. We've been faithful churchgoers and have raised our three kids in Sunday school. God gave me the grace to forgive my father years ago, and when he died we were at peace.

But something still wasn't right.

For decades I did not know my own secrets. I could not explain the crazy dialogue that ran constantly through my head. I had a hard time expressing genuine grief or empathy. At times I felt so overwhelmed I could barely hold everything

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together. Although I was mostly satisfied with my life, I occasionally fantasized about leaving everything behind—or ending it altogether. A secret death wish lurked just beneath my consciousness.

Then, one year ago, I was taken under. I landed in a residential drug and alcohol treatment program three thousand miles from home. I was cut off from my family. My phone and computer were confiscated. I was placed in an apartment block with seven other men, most of whom were addicts who had lost nearly everything.

Now you're probably wondering, "What did Murrow do? Was he an alcoholic? A druggie? Violent?" Actually, I was none of those things. I've never smoked a cigarette. I've never been drunk or high in my life. Never touched an illegal substance. Never struck my wife or kids. No porn. One hundred percent faithful to my marriage vows.

Nevertheless, I found myself in a rehab program. My self-image as a good husband and better-than-average father lay shattered on the floor of my dorm room.

In times past, I'd have become angry about my false imprisonment. I'd resort to one of my survival strategies to get through the indignity of my situation. I'd tell myself that I was right—and everyone else was wrong. Or I'd try to work the system and gain the upper hand over my captors (in this case, counselors).

But instead, I gave in.

At the age of forty-nine, I finally began the process of meeting the real me. My counselors taught me to begin asking the foundational questions: *What's bothering me? Why do I feel so ignored? Why is there always tension in my house? Why am I so afraid to speak up for my own needs? Why do I feel like I'm disappearing—and another man is taking my place? And why is this happening to a born-again Christian man, who is not supposed to have these kinds of problems?*

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In terms of the river analogy, I finally stepped out of the current and climbed onto the bank. And I began the upstream trek to the headwaters of my soul. I went back to the source of my frustrations, wounds, and deadness of heart.

Once I discovered the source, the currents began to make sense. I realized I was still living out my survival strategies from childhood: Be quiet, stay in your room, get outside, eat quickly, be right. I was like a World War II Japanese soldier stranded on a remote island, fighting a war that's been over for decades.

Today the currents still buffet me, but they no longer overwhelm me. I know why I feel the way I do. I know who the real enemy is and how to fight him.

After seeing the change in my heart, my dear wife set off for the headwaters of her own soul. Turns out we were both in denial about how we were really feeling. We're getting healthy together. Instead of playing games or manipulating one another to get our needs met, we speak honestly and openly about what we truly think and feel. I'm finally willing to speak up—and she is finally willing to hear what I'm actually saying. Just as Jesus said, the truth is making us free.

Come with me to the headwaters. I want you to understand the powerful forces that shaped your man, and the currents that roil him every day. I want to teach you how to be honest with your husband as a way of helping him to be honest with you.

This book is so much more than a list of facts about men or the latest research on their attitudes (although I'll be quoting plenty of those). I want you to understand that thing that's bothering him. That thing that's motivating him. That thing that's frightening him. We're going back to the source.

And I do mean the source. For the next few chapters, I'll be taking you back to the dawn of mankind. I'll open the history books to show you how men became the way they are.

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At some point you may be wondering, *Why is he explaining tribal customs to me? I just want to know why my husband won't put his dishes in the sink!* Trust me. Your man is the product of thousands of years of cultural development. Modern men have only been modern for the last couple hundred years—but centuries of human experience has shaped who they are. You cannot understand your husband until you see how he and his father and his father's father became men. Please bear with me as I unpack the biblical, historic, and scientific origins of manhood. Once you understand these origins, you'll better understand your husband.

Reality check: If I had the luxury of speaking to you and your husband in person, I could much more accurately diagnose your particular situation. As the author of a book, that's not an option. So I have no choice but to speak in generalities about him. I guarantee that at some point you'll come across passages that are just flat wrong about your husband. You may be tempted to roll your eyes and say, "Murrow doesn't know what he's talking about. My husband is nothing like that!" And you're right. There are some things I'm going to get wrong about your man, because not all men are alike. I'm fully aware that certain men don't fit the norms I describe, and that's a good thing. So please don't dismiss the entire book because of the parts that may not apply to your guy.

You may also feel at some point I'm stereotyping the genders. Try to realize the bind I'm in—I can't very well write a book about men without drawing some general conclusions about them. This is a book about what average guys (Christian and non-Christian) think all the time but never tell their wives. It's a faithful attempt to describe the inner thoughts of the average, mentally stable male in modern Western society. If your husband is seriously disturbed or mentally ill, the

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principles I share in this book probably won't apply to him. If you're in an abusive relationship, you need far more help than this book can offer.

As you read, you'll probably see lots of things that not only apply to your husband but also to you. Several women who've reviewed this manuscript have said, "David, when you were describing my husband's (fill in the blank), you could have been describing me!" Men and women are wonderfully different, but we fall into the same traps. I hope these pages not only teach you much about your husband but also much about yourself.

And please don't misunderstand: When I describe the quirks of men I'm not saying they *should* be this way. I'm fully aware of how broken and dysfunctional guys can be. My goal is not to make excuses for men. I'm simply telling you what they are thinking but not saying.

I will spend a lot of time describing women behaving badly in this book. Does this make me a woman basher? Absolutely not. But sometimes a woman contributes to her husband's dysfunction without realizing it. As they say, it takes two to tango. You need to know what a man thinks when his wife provokes, disrespects, or mishandles him. I want you to profit from the mistakes other women have made. You may not be able to change your husband, but you can certainly change yourself.

Some books try to help too much. They offer too many specific suggestions. That's not what I'll be doing here. In fact, for the first 80 percent of the book I'll offer almost no advice at all. Don't be frustrated by this. I'm taking Jesus' approach—instead of spoon-feeding you the answers, my goal is to help you ask the right questions. As such, this book is more *descriptive* than *prescriptive*.

Once you gain insight into your husband's inner life, take your concerns to God in prayer. Seek him for the answers. And

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there is no shortage of very helpful marriage-building material from dozens of talented, experienced Christian authors. I've compiled a list of some of the best at my web address for women, www.speakingofmen.com.

Finally, I want to give you fair warning: This book is a bit like a tour of a sausage factory. I'm going to share some really messy stuff with you. Most of it is not politically correct. I guarantee you will read things that disturb you. If you do not handle this truth properly, it could sow a weed of distrust between you and your husband.

On the other hand, I'm a big believer in the power of the truth. Jesus said that knowing it would make us free. So if you really want to know what your husband isn't telling you, come with me to the headwaters of his soul.

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PART ONE

THE FOUNDATION OF MAN AND MANHOOD

Before I take you to the headwaters of your man's soul, we must go back to the very beginning—to the headwaters of mankind.

You're familiar with the story of Adam and Eve? A serpent tempts the woman to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. She plucks the fruit and hands it to her husband. The two eat, their eyes are opened, and sin enters the world. Paradise lost.

In his anger, God expels the rebellious couple from Eden. But the Creator quickly follows with his first two acts of mercy on behalf of the human race: He *provides* clothing for their bodies. And he *protects* them from further contamination by stationing an angel with a flaming sword at the entrance to the garden.

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God *provides*. God *protects*.

Adam was watching. And he, wanting to "be like God," took upon himself these two roles: provider and protector.

Men have been providing and protecting ever since.

Men derive great joy from providing food, clothing, and shelter to their loved ones. Every day, millions of men march off to jobs they'd rather not be doing in order to provide. Providing is more than something men do—it's central to who they are. Most guys would work even if they didn't need the money.

But even deeper is a man's need to protect. Men instinctively protect their families, their property, their honor, and themselves. If a man fails to protect these things, he feels a deep sense of failure.

Modern men have developed multibillion-dollar industries whose sole purpose is to protect people, property, and assets (security, banking, insurance, firearms, industrial safety, etc.). Men organize armies and police forces to protect the citizenry. Even men's favorite sports are built around the protection of a goal area (the end zone, home plate, the net) by trying to keep the other team out.

Some men are wonderfully healthy in these two roles. When your man is secure and balanced as a protector and provider, he's happy. So is everyone around him. Life is good.

But when he's out of balance in one or both, expect trouble. And that leads us to the great problem with men: most are either over- or underdeveloped as providers and protectors. Here's the result:

	Provider	**Protector**
Underdeveloped	Lazy, slacker	Cowardly, passive
Overdeveloped	Workaholic, greedy, stingy	Defensive, controlling, emotionally remote

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I'm convinced that every fear, dysfunction, and insecurity in a man's life flows from either an overdeveloped or underdeveloped need to provide or protect. It's Adam taking his roles too seriously, or not seriously enough.

And this is the gigantic secret your husband's not telling you—because he probably doesn't know it himself. Your husband's need to provide and protect will at times overwhelm his soul. It will be the source of every triumph and folly in his life. It's creating the hidden pressure that causes him to clam up—or to explode. It's keeping him from connecting on an emotional level with others. And it may actually be turning him into someone else.

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1

Understanding "Provider"

My name is Provider.

I am that voice in your husband's head that tells him to make sure you and the kids have food, clothing, and shelter. I'm that compulsion that tells him to get up and go to work when he'd rather sleep in. I told him to get an education, to improve his skills, to take the extra overtime, to save and invest—even when he didn't want to do any of those things.

As David told you earlier, I sprang into being at the fall of man. Prior to the fall, God was earth's sole Protector and Provider. But after the fall, as a part of the curse, God commanded Adam to provide and warned him it would be difficult (Genesis 3:17–19). Then God showed Adam how it's done: by providing clothing for his naked children. That's the moment I was born. I whispered into Adam's ear: *See that? It's your job now.*

I've been whispering to men ever since. Good men have always gone to great lengths to provide for their families. In ancient times men picked up spears to hunt dangerous beasts

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for food. As agriculture took hold, men threw their backs into clearing and cultivating fields. Today men around the world plunge into dark mines, steamy factories, and rat-infested cargo holds to earn enough money to provide for their loved ones.

While some men truly love their work, most would rather be doing something else. A study by the Conference Board research group found that just 45 percent of Americans are happy in their jobs, a record low.[1] A CBS News poll found that a third of U.S. men believe their generation has worse opportunities to succeed than their parents' generation (only a quarter of women felt this way).[2]

Our world is full of men who dislike their jobs—but they trudge to work each day because I tell them to. In David's home state of Alaska, there are thousands of men who toil in the desolate oil fields of the North Slope. They spend a minimum of two weeks on shift, pulling twelve-hour days, hundreds of miles from home. Most men hate spending half their lives away from their loved ones, but the pay is good. Slope work is not about personal pleasure—it's about providing.

Even men who like their jobs have to deal with workplace "stuff" they'd rather avoid. Every guy has at one point or another wished he didn't have to go to work. One of the most beloved country songs of all time goes like this: "Take this job and . . ." You know the rest. Men may fantasize about chucking it all and moving to a tropical island, but very few do. Why? I'm the powerful voice that convinces men to put duty ahead of desire.

Providing is so important that men rank themselves by their careers. Have you noticed what men talk about when they meet?

Levi: Hi, my name is Levi.

Josh: I'm Josh. Nice to meet you.

Levi: So Josh, what do you do?

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Levi doesn't even finish the sentence. Josh knows what he's asking: What do you do *for a living*? A man's very definition of himself comes from how he provides. That's me—Provider—doing my job.

In fact, men rank each other by their work. If a man has a prestigious career, other men esteem him higher. When a powerful man walks into the room, we rise to our feet to show respect and admiration. But men who do menial work (or who are unemployed) are often ashamed to tell others. In the film *The Company Men,* Bobby Walker (Ben Affleck) tries to keep his sudden job layoff a secret from everyone, including his wife. He lies to friends and relatives and refuses to cut back on luxuries, even as his financial situation becomes desperate. Bobby would rather lose everything than admit he's unable to provide.

So strong is my voice that men continue to work even when they don't have to. Why do moguls such as Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, and Mark Zuckerberg go in to the office every day, despite having billions in the bank? I give men meaning and purpose. Without me, men flail.

Money, food, clothing, and shelter are not the only things I tell men to provide. I also press them to leave a mark on the world—to provide a legacy to mankind. I tell wealthy men to endow universities and hospitals and to name buildings after themselves. I tell common men to leave an inheritance to their children. In fact, I'm the voice that tells men to bear children—and to stick around and raise them to adulthood. This may surprise you, but if I did not tell men to do this, most would not.

Look at child rearing from a man's perspective. Whereas the sexual act that produces children is pure pleasure for a man, raising them is not. Children compete for his woman's attention. They interrupt his sleep. They make messes. They're expensive. Worst of all, they become *teenagers*. Looking at

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child rearing through a completely selfish lens, it makes no sense for a man to raise his offspring.

Some men figure this out. Life's a lot more fun with fewer responsibilities and more freedom. So they avoid commitment. They father children out of wedlock. They become deadbeat dads. *Papa was a rolling stone.*

Yet the vast majority of men would never consider doing this, even though child rearing is a huge headache. Why? Because I tell them to stay put and provide.

Here's something your husband isn't telling you: He considers it an honor to provide. That $5K he sank into your daughter's braces? He'd rather have spent it on a boat, but he makes the sacrifice willingly. When a man puts aside his personal happiness in order to provide, I pat him on the back and whisper, "Well done." And a glorious feeling of satisfaction washes over his heart. When your husband provides unselfishly, you have me to thank.

I am Provider—and I'm a relentless taskmaster. My voice cannot be silenced. I keep whispering, even to men who lose their jobs, who become disabled, or who retire. Men who find themselves suddenly unable to provide often descend into despair, depression, or even madness.

Some men are healthy in their provider role. They work hard, but also leave adequate time for fun, family, and faith. They possess ambition, but are not consumed by it. They listen to my voice, but do not grant me total control over their time.

But many, many men are unhealthy providers. The dysfunction manifests itself two ways:

Underdeveloped need to provide: Some men have learned to tune out my whisperings. These are the classic "slacker" men

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who lack ambition and drive. Their numbers are growing. William Bennett writes:

> In 1970, men earned 60% of all college degrees. In 1980, the figure fell to 50%, and by 2006 it was 43%. . . . [T]oday, 18-to-34-year-old men spend more time playing video games a day than 12-to-17-year-old boys. While women are graduating college and finding good jobs, too many men are not going to work, not getting married, and not raising families.[3]

There's been a steady stream of Hollywood films lampooning slacker men who refuse to grow up. Such films did not exist until recently. Movies such as *Knocked Up* or *Failure to Launch* would not have made sense to the audiences of the 1950s—but today they ring true.

In Japan, a new generation of young men is rejecting their fathers' workaholic, macho ways. Dubbed "herbivore men," these sweet, floppy-haired boys are uninterested in having sexual relationships with women. They like baking and sewing, reading comic books, and spending time with family. They are exceptionally mild and show little interest in building a career. This is a concern in Japan, where both the birthrate and the economy are in the doldrums.[4]

Why are so many men today feeling little urgency to provide, even when given the opportunity to do so? I don't know. I am Provider, not Psychologist. But I can assure you that many men today (particularly younger ones) have learned to drown out my voice. Their lack of ambition is hurting these men and the women who want to love them.

Overdeveloped need to provide: Some men hear my voice too well. These men place outsize emphasis on career, goals, and ambition. This condition was common among men who came of age during the Great Depression. In the late 1960s,

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a term was coined to describe them: *workaholics*. Such men provide abundantly for their families' material needs, but neglect their relational and spiritual needs.

An overdeveloped need to provide can produce men who are greedy, materialistic, and avaricious. Greed results when a man hears my voice above all others. I can become so loud I drown out the voice of reason, the voice of wisdom, and the voice of God.

Foolish men sink their money into get-rich-quick schemes out of a distorted need to provide. Others pile on huge debt so they can provide their families with unneeded luxuries. They buy homes, cars, and toys they cannot afford in order to keep up with the Joneses, and then find themselves chained to debts they struggle to repay.

Sometimes a woman will amplify my voice, pushing her husband to provide designer clothing, posh home furnishings, and extravagant family vacations. "Honey, we need new granite countertops. They're more sanitary," she purrs. Crafty women know their husbands' need to provide is strong, and they use it to get what they want.

Strangely, some men try to provide by not providing. They become stingy. These men look to the future, gripped by fear that their money will run out and they'll lose their ability to earn more. So they hoard today in order to provide tomorrow. I'm not talking about men who are thrifty or those who prudently save a portion of their income; I'm speaking of men who deny their families the basic necessities of life in order to pile up treasure.

These men not only fail to provide adequately for their families, but they lack generosity with others as well. Americans are the wealthiest people on the planet, yet they give, on average, less than 2 percent of their annual income to charity. And the more a person earns the lower percentage he gives.[5] Many men do not believe the words of Jesus, who

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tells his children not to worry about tomorrow, that *he* will provide everything to those who seek his kingdom first (see Matthew 6:31–33).

Thank you, Provider. This is David writing again.

So this is what your husband isn't telling you: He feels a deep obligation to provide. The pressure is constant. His social standing and psychological well-being depend on it.

Your man *wants* to provide for you. But it takes a terrible toll on him. It's a constant struggle to know how much to work and how much to rest, what to spend and what to save, whether to quit his soul-killing job in order to follow his lifelong dream. Modern men live under a sword of fear that their jobs will be eliminated, their skills will atrophy, or their contributions will be unwanted.

Provider's voice is strong—but if you really want to understand what's driving your husband, you need to get to know Protector. He introduces himself in the next chapter.

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