

Lonnie Berger

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

Are you a warrior? I don't mean a soldier fighting battles overseas, I mean a man who fights for his family and home in the everyday struggles of life. Today we'll meet a man from rural Kansas who has long had a heart for men who wrestle with the challenges of today. He has developed a curriculum with tools which can help men in the battles of everyday life. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Lonnie Berger is a long-time staff member with The Navigators, an international Christian organization working in discipleship and leadership development. He is also the author of this new curriculum for men called Every Man A Warrior.

Lonnie grew up in rural Kansas. His family farmed near Waterville, a rural community of 664 people. Now, that's rural. He went to K-State and joined the staff of The Navigators. His first overseas assignment was as an undercover missionary in Romania, which was under communist rule at the time.

"Our dormitory caught fire and I found myself jumping out of a burning building," Lonnie said. "That's the most James Bond thing I've ever done." While in Romania, Lonnie also met another missionary named June. The two fell in love and were married in 1984. At that point they moved to Omaha.

Lonnie served in various roles with The Navigators, such as trainer, administrator, counselor and consultant. Through the years he saw that men had a real need for assistance, not only with theological issues, but with the practical side of life.

"Men spend ninety percent of their time and energy dealing with issues of money, marriage, raising children, sex, moral purity, work, going through hard times and making their life count," Lonnie said. "We need a Bible study to help men succeed in their daily lives."

For years he prayed for the development of such materials, and in May 2009, he felt God's call to write them himself. He called the curriculum Every Man A Warrior, Helping Men Succeed in Life. It is a story-based Bible-study curriculum. Each section begins with a true story of a real man dealing with real issues.

"I think a man wants to fight for something worthwhile," Lonnie said. "We want to fight for truth and righteousness and protection of the vulnerable. We don't want to just waste our lives or to let life pass us by, we need to fight for our families and marriages," he said.

Lonnie decided to field-test his first draft. "I thought we'd have twenty guys who would be interested, but we had 63 that first year," he said. It went so well that they went out for a larger field test in the second year. That test attracted more than 500 guys in twenty states.

For printing the books, Lonnie approached NavPress. "This won't sell," he was told. "Eighty-five percent of all Bible studies are bought by women. But if you want to raise the money and take the risk, we'll help you." Lonnie set out to do so. He was told to print 2,000 copies but he opted for more.

In year one, more than 7,000 copies were sold. In year two, some 17,500 copies were sold. "Men have a real hunger for help in the practical areas of life," Lonnie said.

More than 400 churches are now using Every Man A Warrior in some way. Many use it as a cornerstone of their men's studies programs.

Trans World Radio, which does international broadcasting, is now translating 22 of the lessons for broadcast overseas. They will be translated into 72 languages. Wow.

Lonnie continues to travel full-time for The Navigators, working with men's discipleship programs.

"God wants men to know answers to the problems we face," Lonnie said. For more information or to purchase books, go to www.everymanawarrior.com.

Are you a warrior? No, not in Iraq or Afghanistan. I mean, are you a warrior for families and marriages and children right here in this country? We commend Lonnie Berger for making a difference by developing this curriculum which can help men succeed in their everyday battles of life. This curriculum can help make every man a warrior.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.