



What Men Need

Are You Ready to Rethink “Manhood”?

After Mary Jo and I had been married ten years and were childless, the people of our church at the close of a worship service surrounded us, laying hands on both Mary Jo and I and prayed for us to conceive. A month and a half later, Mary Jo discovered she was pregnant. Little did I know just how life-changing that news would be. A few years before we had two foster children and the youngest cut his forehead. He was bleeding and I called our upstairs neighbor if she could come down and give us advice. She had gone on several medical missionary trips, and we wondered if we should bring DJ to the hospital. Theresa came down looked at the wound and said he needed a butterfly bandage. The blood and DJ's pain made me sick to my stomach and I quickly volunteered to go to the pharmacy to get the Band-Aids. Both Mary Jo and Theresa glanced at me and saw I was pale and clearly not responding well to the injury. In fact I nearly passed out. Theresa told me to go and Mary Jo kind of laughed at my lack of ability to cope. I left, a bit humiliated, my man card left behind in the apartment.

One of the great men of all time who probably did not get queasy at the sight of blood was Joshua, the long time assistant to Moses and eventually, the leader of the Israelites. Joshua was a legendary general who directed the Israelite conquest of Palestine. After Moses died, Joshua took over command of the Hebrew forces and he along with all Israel were given their orders by God. **After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them — to the Israelites. I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates — all the Hittite country — to the Great Sea on the west. No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.** (Joshua 1: 1-5 NIV)

This was the biggest challenge any of them, including Joshua had ever faced. Keep in mind that Joshua was somewhere between seventy and eighty years old. The Lord reassured Joshua that the resources of Heaven were available to him and with God on his side, he would triumph. **Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.**" (Joshua 1: 9 NIV) I wonder what you would do with your life if you knew the power of God would be with you and you would be successful. Fear has kept countless numbers of men from reaching their potential, from fulfilling the dreams they have had. Fear has wrecked me many times and perhaps it has kept you from pursuing the dreams God has given you. Several times before the Israelites let fear stop them. Notice, that Joshua connects courage and the Lord God being with us. There are many terrifying and dreadful things in this world, and you may face them but the rational acceptance of what is really before you is not what God is rejecting. In the midst of all the dangers and troubles you face, take courage because the Lord your God is with you.

I believe there are four unique needs of nearly all, if not all men. First, men need adventure. They need something that thrills them, that generates adrenaline. Men are not made for wasting their lives away watching

others do great things. We are made to be involved in bold, risky undertakings. Men become bored without something big to do, something that is bigger than them. They get grumpy and irritable when all they have before them is humdrum tasks that don't matter. Second, men need a mission, a purpose. Men need a reason for living that matters, that lasts. Rick Warren wrote two best selling books on purpose. He insists that both churches and individuals are healthier and more complete when they discover purpose, when they find out what matters most. Warren says that the five purposes of life come straight out of the Bible, from the Great commandments and the Great Commission. The Great Commandments are spelled out by Jesus. **Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'** (Matthew 22: 37-39 NIV) The Great Commission was established by Jesus just before He returned to Heaven. **Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."** (Matthew 28: 19-20 NIV) Summarized, here are the five purposes for all of us, but especially for men. 1. Love God. Focus on Him and make Him the center of your life. 2. Help Others. Give your best to make the lives of those around you better. 3. Dig Deeper. Make it a top priority to know everything you can about God, Christian faith and what the Bible actually says. 4. Connect with Other Christians. Spend time getting to know, encouraging, and being encouraged by the faith and commitment of fellow believers in Christ. 5 Talk Jesus. Make sure He is glorified and honored by what you say and bring Him up in your normal conversations.

All men need community. We need to build our lives with others. Men tend to isolate themselves because often men aren't as socially adept as women. We are at our best when we are active within the church, building friendships and hanging out together. When men isolate themselves, they lose a critical part of life. We men need to get together, work on projects together, go after big challenges. When Joshua gathered his troops together to go conquer the land God promised them, it was a perfect example of men at their best. Men need community, need to be a part of projects that are compelling, that join them with others who are going after the same goals, the same dreams.

Men need hope. When they don't have hope, when men feel like nothing they do matters, it wrecks them. Nine percent of men are daily feeling depressed. One third of all men take medication due to depression and thirty percent of all men will go through a serious period of depression. Twenty percent of all men have abused alcohol or suffer from alcohol related complications. What is more, suicide is a terrible outcome of men losing hope. Just recently a friend from Liberia shared a photo of her brother who had eight children, lying dead on the ground after shooting himself in the head. Men die by suicide almost four times as often as women and one male dies by suicide every fourteen minutes in the US. Without hope men destroy themselves, either slowly or quickly and what a terrible crisis that is. Men need hope. They need a reason to believe that the troubles and hardships they face won't defeat them. One of my favorite movies is the Trilogy Lord of the Rings set. In the second one, "The Two Towers", the men, women, and children of the nation of Rohan are gathered behind the great walls of the cliffside fortress of Helm's Deep. The horrifying Orcs and Uruk-hai have come up against them, numbering more than the sands of the sea. A terrifying, brutal and barbaric army, the enemy horde has begun to break down the defenses of Helm's Deep. It seems impossible to King Théoden that he and his people can survive. The bleakness of the night is crashing down upon Rohan. King Théoden laments that destruction is inevitable. "How shall any tower withstand such numbers and such reckless hate?" Aragorn, known as Strider and the heir to the throne of Gondor responds to Théoden's despair. "Yet dawn is ever the hope of men...day will bring hope to me." He then urges Théoden to fight for his people and the fortress where they are. "Then let us defend it, and hope". All men face doubt and at times fall into great despair. Those who have faith in Christ, those who know they shall in the end be victorious and reign forever with Christ in Glory, maintain hope and help others have hope too. Let this be your word for today, the motto by which you live and urge others to live. Repeat it time and again until it breathes within you. **I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope.** (Psalm 130:5 NIV)