

# Understanding Masculinity

## Building a Marriage--part 7

Nov. 29, 2015

### **DAY 1: What is Masculinity?**

*1 Kings 2:2 ... "Be strong and show yourself a man."*

1. These were King David's deathbed words to his son Solomon who was about to become king. David equates manhood with a particular kind of strength.

*Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." <sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male (zakar) and female he created them.*

2. We are made in the image of God, and gendered. Our gender isn't just about body parts. We have gendered hearts. This is true of us, whether or not we feel that way.

3. The Hebrew word for "male" is "zakar," which means to leave a mark or make an impact.

The word was used of an assistant whose job was to remind the king of what was important. The word came to mean, someone who remembers what's important and then moves to do something important.

4. The Greek word used for "man" in the Greek translation of Genesis 1:27 is "arsen," which means to lift or carry. It came to mean someone who moves strongly to make a difference.

5. Putting our verses together melds into something like this:

A man remembers he bears God's image, and is called to move with strength toward people and responsibilities to make an impact.

6. What stands out to you from today's devotional?

## DAY 2: Reflecting how God relates to people

1. Last week we saw that one of the great pictures of feminine relating is reflecting the *invitational* love of Jesus (Matt. 11:28)
2. Masculinity is also a reflection of how God relates to us. In other words, we have the opportunity to give people an "audio-visual" of how God thinks about them, cares about them, and is moving toward them. Masculinity reflects God's *incarnational* and *sacrificial* love.

*Exodus 2:23 During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. <sup>24</sup> God **heard** their groaning and he **remembered** his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. <sup>25</sup> So God **looked on** the Israelites and was concerned about them. (knew it was **time to act**).*

3. For each of the **bolded** words, fill in what God did:

- a. He heard: \_\_\_\_\_
- b. He remembered: \_\_\_\_\_
- c. He looked: \_\_\_\_\_
- d. He acted: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Take personal inventory. Underneath each of these characteristics, jot down how you see yourself doing, both your strengths and weaknesses...

A masculine man:

- a. *Hears* the cry of others:
- b. *Remembers* the God he is called to reveal.
- c. *Looks* into another's distress and is moved, either emotionally or volitionally to care.
- d. *Moves* into another's need in order to reveal God's holy heart of love.

5. What strikes you about the character of God, or more specifically, what God's love looks like?

### DAY 3: What derails our masculinity? Fear.

1. After Adam and Eve's sin, the world changes dramatically. Theologians call this, "the Fall." These verses from Genesis depict the new world every man must face.

*Genesis 3:17 To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.*

<sup>18</sup> *It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.*

<sup>19</sup> *By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."*

2. Have you ever weeded a garden or a lawn? If so, how long did it take for the weeds to "grow back?" What did you have to do *again?* And again? And again? And again? You get the idea...

3. Genesis 3 is not just bad news for farmers. Every man is going to experience frustration, and a sense of both failure and futility.

4. The internal question running through the masculine heart will become: "Do I have what it takes to move toward my relationships and responsibilities with love and courage?" Over time, that question enlarges to, "Does my life really matter to anyone?"

5. After experiencing frustration, failure, and futility a man is tempted in several directions:

a. "Does my life make any difference? What's the use?"

b. "I'm tired of feeling like a failure. I'll do something that will make me feel better, even if it's wrong."

6. When I search through my doubt and face the fear that my failure to move like a man, something unexpected happens. I discover my center as a Christian man. I discover my desire (hidden in the heart) to move toward others the way God moved toward me!

7. The opportunity to know God, whether when things are going well or not, enables me to move into other people's lives the way God has moved into mine. Jesus calls that *life*.

8. What strikes you from today's devotional?

## DAY 4: The weightless man

1. Charles Spurgeon was one of the greatest Christians and preachers from the nineteenth century. Listen to how he described his own spiritual life...

"I know nothing about the wonderful experience of freedom from conflict and complete deliverance from every evil tendency. I have never won an inch of the way to heaven without fighting for it. I have never lived a day but I have had sorrow over my imperfection. I sometimes get near to God but at that time I weep most for my faults and failings." - Charles Spurgeon

2. It's easy to idealize the Christian life into something easier than it really is, and set ourselves up for more guilt and failure than there already is! What strikes you from Spurgeon's statement about his own spiritual journey? What effect does that have on you?

3. Paul's testimony is similar.

*Romans 7:21-24* "...I've tried everything and nothing helps. I'm at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn't that the real question?"

4. A man's greatest fear is that his life will have little to no impact on anyone or anything of lasting value. Instead of impact think "weightlessness." He fears his life carries no "weight" with anyone.

5. When life becomes daunting, men are tempted toward three counterfeits of manhood:

a. "Shallow Man" - he "does the right things" but isn't connecting deeply with anyone.

b. "Secular Man" - he focuses on what he does well, where he succeeds and spends most of his time doing those things. His relationships get short shrift. He assumes that if anyone has a problem with him, it must be their fault.

c. "Selfish Man" - is tired of feeling like a failure and will do whatever it takes to feel better.

5. To which of these counterfeits of manhood are you most tempted by?

6. Finish today's with prayer for yourself. Fight the fight against temptation to move toward counterfeit manhood by living primarily for your own well-being.

## **DAY 5: The sincerely struggling man**

*Romans 7:21-24 "...I've tried everything and nothing helps. I'm at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn't that the real question?"*

*2 Corinthians 1:8 We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life.*

*Ephesians 6:13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.*

1. Walking with God does mean that we "feel" victorious or move "from victory to victory."
  
2. When the problems of life and relationships become overwhelming we are faced with the choice of which road to pursue.
  - a. Pretend that life is not as bad as it seems, perhaps blame his troubles on others, but underneath become resolved to provide for his own well-being, his own pleasures, and live as if those are the most important things. Provide for your comfort; provide for your convenience. Or,
  - b. Acknowledge that life is hard, that you sometimes feel like a failure and sometimes feel empty. Gratefully surrender yourself to God as a graciously forgiven sinner and a devoted follower of Christ. Commit yourself to become whoever God wants you to become, and to move toward people in the same way God moves toward you. You have the opportunity to be an "audio-visual" representation of the glory of God's love of people.
  
3. What strikes you from these two choices? Which parts of the second choice give you hope?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. With these things as your "center," it allows you to deal with the issues of your life from a different frame of reference:
  - a. Brokenness over sin is not a sign of "failure" but of God's work in your life!
  
  - b. You will be less surprised by temptation, and will find an increasing, though sometimes fluctuating resistance to temptation.
  
  - c. Your brokenness will provide a humility which will give you more opportunities to build a growing care about others, and help them build hope for their own lives as they see you "centered" as a struggling, but spiritual man.
  
5. What strikes you most from today's devotional?