

## **INSPIRING RESPONSIBLE, MASCULINE LEADERSHIP IN FATHERS AND SONS**

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### **A SPECIAL REPORT**

#### **THE ROOT CAUSE OF IRRESPONSIBILITY**

Paul Stanley, a wise and gifted leadership trainer and co-author of my favorite book on mentoring ("Connecting") once said, "When men do not take responsibility, and women are not pure, society falls."

Mr. Stanley was not implying that men do not struggle with impurity or that women do not struggle with irresponsibility, of course, but that these particular results of the fall were most damaging to society.

In my years of working with young leaders, I have observed a phenomenon which is so often true that it could almost be called a moral law of leadership: a young man's responsibility is in direct proportion to the able mentoring he has received from older men.

The converse of this law is also true: a young man's IRRESPONSIBILITY is in direct proportion to the LACK of mentoring he has received from older men.

It may be possible for young women to grow to maturity without the strong guiding influence of an older woman. But it is NOT possible for a young man to grow to maturity without the strong guiding influence of an older man.

This bodes ill for a culture obsessed with youth. Older people are told, "It is a different world. You leave the kids alone. You don't know what is best for them."

I am stunned at how many times I have talked to wealthy, successful corporate executives who refuse to mentor young people because--get this--they are INTIMIDATED! "They won't listen to me." or "I don't have anything to teach them."

In Bible times the domination of culture by young people was viewed as a sign of judgment. Consider Isaiah 3:4-7:

"I will make boys their leaders. Children will govern them. People will oppress each other, and everyone will oppress his neighbor. The young will make fun of the old, and common people will make fun of their superiors. A person will grab one of his relatives from his father's family and say, 'You have a coat. You'll be our leader. This pile of ruins will be under your control.' When that day comes the relative will cry out, 'I'm not a doctor! I don't have any food or a coat in my home. Don't make me a leader of our family.'"

Notice what is happening: the people have rejected authority and have capitulated to the demands of their children. And when the children have made a mess of everything (because they don't have the sense to lead), the people turn to just about anyone to lead them.

Imagine the horror: simply having a coat would make one qualified to lead--and still those with coats refuse the responsibility. What a wretched state of things!

### **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GODLY COUNSEL**

The book of Proverbs was written as a remedy to this: a book written by a father to a son, with specific instruction for how to live wisely. Against the noise of the culture, the father calls his son to attention:

1:8--"My son, hear the instruction of your father..."

2:1--"My son, if thou wilt receive my words..."

3:1--"My son, do not forget my law..."

and so on.

Our counsel is not perfect, and young men will need to be discerning. But the lack of godly influence is destroying young men. George Gilder in his book "Men and Marriage" quoted study after study which proved that young men who do not have a strong father (or father-like) influence essentially become barbarians.

### **WHAT HAPPENS IN THE ABSENCE OF WISE COUNSEL**

Here are some specific ways the lack of godly wisdom is destroying the ability of young men to lead:

Young men try to compensate for the "father wound" through extreme acts of the flesh. A young man who does not feel the acceptance of an older man will try to "prove" his masculinity through sexual conquest, risk-taking behavior, or aggressive acts of competition (for example, competing in business without any sense of proportion or balance in the rest of life). Young men take on fools as companions. If young men do not have wise counsel, they will automatically seek to do "what is right in their own eyes." They will seek the counsel of peers who have no more experience or knowledge than they themselves possess. Unable to channel their gifts, young men either abandon or abuse them. For instance, God designed men to be warriors who would stand for truth and fight against evil. Without a guiding influence, however, a young man will tend to swing wildly between thoughtless acts of verbal or physical aggression and complete passivity.

Ultimately, through these careless actions, young men wound others and perpetuate a generational crisis. They pass the sins of their fathers to their children. They seek to divest themselves of responsibility rather than embrace it. They live for themselves rather than expand their vision for God's Kingdom-building purposes.

### **GOD'S DESIGN FOR MEN**

To make sense of what Scripture says about men, we must understand God's purpose in the way he designed us. There's a lot out there on the subject, but nothing that roots the aspects of man's design in biblical principles quite like William Mouser's "Five Aspects of Man." For more info, go to <http://www.fiveaspects.org>

What follows is my "spin" on the five aspects--I hope it is faithful to what Pastor Mouser intended in his study.

### **ASPECT #1: LORD OF THE EARTH**

God told Adam in Genesis ch. 1 to "fill the earth and subdue it." The word "subdue" has the connotation of taking responsibility for. It is part of a man's design to take initiative and be productive. God designed men to take ground, make progress, and enlarge their realm of responsibility.

In our fallen nature, however, we tend to either abuse or abandon each of the aspects of our design. Many men abuse the "Lord of the earth" aspect by trying to take possession of that which is not in their realm of responsibility (recall that a substantial number of the 10 commandments are prohibitions against claiming stewardship over that which is not yours (thou shalt not steal, covet, commit adultery).

Other men abandon this aspect all together by trying to shed themselves of responsibility rather than embracing it. I have been surprised at the number of business books I've read recently in which the authors crow about how they have gotten rid of all of their responsibilities--employees and the like--and are getting rich without a care in the world.

Selfishly, I too would like to be prosper without taking responsibility. But the taking of responsibility is part of what God does to build ME into a leader.

### **ASPECT #2: HUSBANDMAN**

In Genesis ch. 2 God put Adam in the garden of Eden to "tend it." Not only was Adam to take responsibility by taming more of the earth, he was also to exercise watch care over that which was his responsibility. God designed men to nurture the things in their realm and bring them to productivity.

In our fallen natures, however, we men tend to abuse the husbandman aspect by ravaging our realm of productivity, stripping it of value in a greedy attempt to maximize short-term gain. Men tend to do this with things they own, and also with relationships--using and discarding people rather than equipping them to be what God wants them to be. We can also abandon our husbandman aspect by refusing to nurture anyone or anything at all--by living a completely self-centered life.

### **ASPECT #3: SAVIOR**

In Genesis ch. 3 God pronounced a curse, that the "seed of the woman" would crush the head of the serpent. The word for "seed" is "zera," which, according to Hebrew scholar Walter Kaiser, is deliberately flexible enough to refer to the one who represents the group (Christ the Messiah) as well as to all of the male offspring AS a group.

Let me be clear: men do not save themselves from their sins. But men HAVE been created by God with a desire to fight for truth and stand against evil and injustice. We see this in little boys who like play guns, as well as in the longing for significant purpose that a man experiences when watching a movie like "Braveheart." To the degree that act as warriors,

defenders and protectors, our actions have a destructive effect on Satan's schemes (see Romans 16:20).

Unfortunately, fallen man abuses the savior aspect by fighting for the wrong things, fighting in an ungodly way, or by attracting a woman by their ability to protect and then using that same power to dominate her. We can also abandon this aspect by refusing to take a stand for anything at all.

#### **ASPECT #4: SAGE**

The book of Proverbs was written by a father admonishing his son to be wise. A sage applies God's wisdom in everyday circumstances. The sage is no guru hiding out on a mountaintop: in Old Testament times, a leader was seen to be wise "in the city gates," which meant that he was making judgments publicly, where the wisdom or foolishness of his decisions would be obvious to all.

Fallen man abuses the sage aspect by pretending to employ God's wisdom while actually manipulating others for personal benefit. Jesus said of such men that it would be better for them that a millstone were tied around their necks and they were drowned--the coming judgment will be swift and harsh for such evil people. We can also abandon our sage aspect by acting foolishly--that is, contrary to God's wisdom.

#### **ASPECT #5: GLORY OF GOD**

First Corinthians ch. 11 says that man is the "glory of God." This could mean lots of things, but one thing seems certain: when men live out their design in a God honoring way, society develops a great respect and reverence for God.

I'm no historian, but it seems to me that when men are weak and /or irresponsible, society has a low view of God. When men abuse the glory of God aspect, people see God as abusive and cruel. When men abandon this aspect, people see God as impotent and distant.

Please understand: I'm not suggesting that we as men are in charge of "protecting God's reputation." We would be fools to give ourselves that much credit. But the fact remains that our action, or lack thereof, has REAL consequences.

#### **LIVING OUT BIBLICAL MASCULINITY--PRACTICAL IDEAS**

A godly man is one who, through the power of God's grace, becomes redeemed to these aspects of his design. This man becomes aware of and repents of the things he does to abuse or abandon his design. Furthermore, I would assume, he lives out this design in a balanced way--some men may have more of the warrior aspect, but that does not justify their neglect of other aspects.

How can a man live out his masculinity, each day, according to his God-given design? Here are the ideas given by subscribers to "Live Your Gift", my e-mail newsletter (to subscribe go to <http://www.inspiredleadership.com>)

**ASPECT #1: LORD OF THE EARTH**

(take initiative, be productive, enlarge his realm of responsibility).

\*Remember that God has created us for His glory, and this pertains to all the roles of our lives (husband, motorist, employee). I am Lord of the Earth in all of these roles.

\*Recognize that as redeemed image bearers, we have the backing of Almighty God as we rule over the earth as His delegate authority. We should not be intimidated by Satan's claims.

\*Be "Lord of the lawn." Work hard to keep things nice around the house. My house is my example to the world of how I treat the responsibilities given to me by God.

\*Seize the initiative. Give my FULL EFFORT to whatever I do--no half-hearted measures on behalf of what is important.

\*Spend time with my creator in His creation. Hunting, fishing, hiking. Take the family. Revere the creator. Explore! Be adventurous!

\*Establish a well-thought-out and pro-active financial plan to reach God-inspired goals. Seek wise counsel on how to best reach those goals and pursue the plan with courage.

**ASPECT #2: HUSBANDMAN**

(nurture the things in his realm and bring them to productivity).

\*Care for people and spend time with them. My wife and children, my employees, my friends--in many ways my interaction with them defines their potential. It either helps release their potential or it bottles it up.

\*Financial stewardship. Take responsibility for setting a budget, managing finances, encouraging wise spending in others, teaching children about money, teaching entrepreneurial skills to children. Instead of saying, "We can't afford that," use it as an opportunity to show children the value of money and how to work.

\*Become a servant leader. As a husband, bathe my wife in Scripture (not as rebuke but as exhortation). Enable my wife to be the helper-completer God intended her to be.

\*Listen carefully to spouse, children, and others. Nurture personal relationships not just so that people like me, but so that they GROW as a result of knowing me.

\*Take the initiative to bring out the full potential of both people and things. Relieve pressure on others by serving them (bathe the kids, clean floors, etc.).

**ASPECT #3: SAVIOR**

(fight for truth and stand against evil and injustice).

\*PRAY (I Timothy 2:8)--men's leadership in prayer is essential in protecting families from spiritual attack.

\*Aggressively run away from sinful situations: speeding, television, un-audited Internet, time at the beach--whatever fogs the lens through which I view God.

\*Witness your faith to people and build them up. There is nothing like getting an affirming slap on the back from a strong warrior.

\*Fiercely protect others, physically and spiritually. Use the warrior spirit to protect others rather than to take advantage of them.

\*Sanctify the family (I Cor. 7:14)--the whole family should be under the holy influence of the believing man.

#### **ASPECT #4: SAGE**

(apply God's wisdom in everyday circumstances).

\*Benefit from the experiences of other men who have gone before me by injecting their wisdom into my decisions.

\*Make words count for something. Speak that which God would have you say. Spend time in God's Word so that you know that His counsel is coming through you.

\*Seek to identify the flaws in the world's ideas about men's design, and strive to transcend that foolishness through wise living and accountability.

#### **ASPECT #5: GLORY OF GOD**

(live out design in such a way that society grows in its reverence for God).

\*Treat women with deference and respect, so that in being like Christ we bring glory to the Father and stand in contrast to fallen, selfish, abusive man.

\*Give glory to God for all things both in public and in private, and thank Him for trials--praising Him for the good that comes about.

\*Public prayer. Overcome embarrassment and not being articulate, and just pray. When men seek the Father, it shows both boldness and humility, and bolsters community.

\*Model for others the way Christ would do things, demonstrating God's attributes through work ethic, strength and courage.

#### **MASCULINITY REVISITED**

Our culture has had enough of both macho, male dominance and wimpy male passivity. What we need is GODLY masculinity, focused on building God's kingdom--the kind that has been on our heavenly Father's heart from Adam, through Christ, until now. And it is our legacy to carry, from father to son, until Christ returns.