



Tools For Families Building Godly Legacies

Manly Purity

A Father-Son Conversation

By Dr. John P. Splinter

As he sighted his rifle on the grizzly's chest he knew a heart-shot was his only chance. As he leveled the weapon he could smell his own body odor – he'd been in the wilderness now for three weeks without a bath ~ perhaps that's how the grizzly found him. The roar of the grizzly snapped his mind back to 750 pounds of 2" teeth and 4" claws. The bear was now on his hind legs ~ male grizzly ~ had to be eight feet tall ~ walking toward him ~ less than 18 feet away and closing. His bearded cheek pressed against the stock of his Winchester 30-30. The pre-war carbine had killed many a deer, but never a grizzly. "Don't fail me now," he whispered ~ squeezed the trigger....

Just thought it would be fun to start out with a manly mental picture. Can you picture this guy? Can you smell him ~ did you smell the gunpowder? In this article we're going to look at two words – "Manly," and "Purity." For some guys, when they read the word "purity," it lets all the air out of the word "manly." Pfffffffffffffffffffffffffffff.....

Those two words, "Manly Purity," can seem like an oxymoron ~ like jumbo shrimp or military intelligence. Many men often don't associate the two. The word "Manly" evokes mental pictures of physically powerful, athletic, rugged guys ~ rough-cut, hunter, Jeremiah Jones, sexually active, Semper Fi, mentally tough, Harley rider. By contrast, the word "Purity" evokes thoughts like innocent, slightly perfumed, skinny, sweet, naïve, gentle, virgin, tame..., boring. Joining "Manly" and "Purity" creates weird mental pictures ~ like combining Arnold Schwarzenegger and Mr. Rogers ~ a perfumed lumberjack ~ a feminine linebacker ~ a castrated Marine. Pfffffffffffffffffffff.....

Rather than defining manliness in terms of how much a guy can press, or how many women he's had, this article will focus on five components of manhood, and discuss how these interface with the subject of purity. The five components are: 1) Focus, 2) Connection, 3) Core Values, 4) Balance, and 5) Vulnerability. If you have sons 12 years of age or older, we strongly encourage you to take your son(s) through this study with you. Do it side-by-side, two men on the same bench. Talk about each of the five components.

Focus

You can tell a great deal about a man by observing the direction of his focus. Like a surveyor's transit, there are numerous directions to take into account. Here are four "focus directions" to consider.

In, or out: Is the guy primarily *focused inward*, upon himself, his needs, his self-advancement? Or is he primarily *focused outward*, toward others, their needs and their betterment? Nobody is ever completely internally or externally focused. We all focus both directions. However, there are tendencies we can observe in all men, and these tendencies say a lot about their character. Our highest and best example is Christ, who articulated his purpose statement as follows: ***The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mt. 20:28).*** Christ was externally focused.

Children tend to focus more upon themselves than adults do. So it is that the three-year-old screams because he can't have a cookie before supper ~ he is totally self-focused. So it is that weight-lifting rooms are frequently surrounded by mirrors, so men can watch their muscles. Self-focus can help a person achieve objectives, but maintaining a self-focus tends to get us lost. As we begin to believe that it's all about us, the value and meaning of others begins to fade. In the end, self-focus often ends up hurting those around us.

Oddly, people who have been emotionally wounded often become more self-focused, unless they leave their wounds at the foot of the cross. For example, people who grew up in alcoholic homes, in divorced families, or in other situations of deep and ongoing pain, often tend toward an internal focus. Part of the reason is that when they were children and had needs for being parented and affirmed, nobody took care of them. So they learned they were alone in this task of meeting their needs. This grew into a lifestyle of self-focus. In extreme cases, this dynamic is called "sociopathic." It's a belief that I can take whatever I need from you, and if that hurts you, too bad, so sad. It's a belief system that says, "I got screwed when I was young, so now I'm into taking what I want even if it screws other people ~ because it's all about me and what I need."

By contrast people who are *externally focused* place the higher value upon others ~ and are often highly praised for it. It's the mother who exhausts herself in caring for her infant. It's the soldier who throws himself upon the live grenade, saving the lives of other soldiers. It's Mother Theresa. It's Ghandi. It's Christ. St. Paul made the observation, ***Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die (Rom. 5:7).*** It happens ~ rarely, but it happens ~ and when it does, it blesses those around us.

There's a spiritual principle underlying this discussion ~ a principle that wise parents model and teach their children. This principle has much to do with the discussion of manliness and purity. Here's the principle: **Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.** This principle comes from the teaching of Christ ~ "***In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets***" (Mt. 7:12). He taught the same principle again, using other words: "***A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another***" (Jn. 13:34).

Let's apply this to the subject of manliness and purity. It takes a stronger, more mature man to truly focus upon the needs and betterment of others, than it does to focus upon his own desires.

Both self-absorption and impulsivity are immature traits that mature men work hard at weaning from their characters. The higher standard of loving others above ourselves is a trait of strong character. It is far more difficult than yielding to one's personal goals, impulses or passions.

Loving others more than ourselves has a lot to offer to the discussion of sexual purity, because it is **a)** based upon a "higher standard" than that of impulsivity and self-absorption, and **b)** it takes into consideration the value of the other person. Sex outside of marriage tends to be extremely self-focused (narcissistic), whether it's using a prostitute or merely looking at pornography and then masturbating. Here's a spiritual principle: Impurity is always a statement of compromised moral standards, plus self-focus. So where are you headed right now, in or out?

Up, or down. Another way of observing a man's focus is whether his primary attention is....