

Raising Valiant Men (1)

Ryan Goodwin

"Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13). There is a need in our world for men who are willing to stand up for what is right and be leaders in the face of great obstacles. Unfortunately, our society no longer looks upon valiant and virtuous men the way it should, and we are in the process of raising one generation after another of weak men. In this article I want to explore some of the causes of a misguided understanding of manliness, and how we can solve this by raising our boys to admire the right kind of masculine qualities.

We Need Big Men

We need big men in our world, not based on physical size or strength. Our world suffers from a lack of men who are big in faith, big in principle, big in love, and big in compassion. What frightens me more than anything about this dilemma is not what we face today, but what our children will face tomorrow. One could say, in a certain way, that manliness is an inherited trait. We learn our masculinity from somebody, and too often that somebody is an inadequate model. It has been said that "boys will be boys." I beg to differ, and would counter with "boys will be men." What we teach the next generation of men about manliness could very well determine the direction of our society! *"If I may be permitted to offer what will sound like hyperbole, I believe the future of Western civilization depends on how we handle this present crisis. Why? Because we as parents are raising the next generation of men who will either lead with honor and integrity or abandon every good thing they have inherited. They are bridges to the future. Nations that are populated largely by immature, immoral, weak-willed, cowardly, and self-indulgent men cannot and will not long endure. These types of men include those who sire and abandon their children; who cheat on their wives; who lie, steal, and covet; who hate their countrymen; and who serve not God but money. That is the direction culture is taking today's boys"* (Bringing up Boys, Dr. James Dobson, p. 54).

Having Vision

The first thing we can do to save our boys is to extend our focus into the future. Strong men, after all, are visionaries. They look to the future, anticipate needs, plan for inevitable pitfalls, and chart a course that will lead the church, their families, and their souls to glory. Having vision means looking ahead instead of always looking back at the past. *"Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 3:13-14). We have to admit that problems in life will occur, however:

- A man with vision will see problems in his marriage early on before they eat away at him or his spouse. What will his marriage be like in ten years if things continue the way they are?
- A visionary plans ahead how he will deal with disciplinary problems before his children get into trouble. Knowing what you will do in each situation will help make your discipline more consistent and meaningful.

- The father of the son in Proverbs dealt with some tough subjects far in advance: Proverbs 1:10-19, 6:1-5, 6:24-7:27.
- Visionaries try to picture themselves as deacons or elders, even if they are not qualified at the time. What do you need to do as a man to make yourself more qualified?
- Men need to deal with conflicts before they are allowed to stew and fester. “*Do not let the sun go down on your anger*” (Ephesians 4:26).
- What kind of husband will I be when my wife gets discouraged? How can I prepare myself for that now, so that when it happens I will be remembered by her for my love, patience, and unwavering devotion?
- How can I manage my career goals so that I am available as a loving, sensitive father while my children struggle through their teenage years?
- A man with vision thinks about what the church will be like years down the road, and things he can do now to ensure a safe, sound, strong future for the local congregation.