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# Support Groups for Men: Encouraging Healthy Relationships with God and Others

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

SUPPORT GROUPS FOR MEN:  
ENCOURAGING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS WITH GOD AND OTHERS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF GEORGE FOX EVANGELICAL SEMINARY  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

JOHN HENRY MCKINNEY II

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George Fox Evangelical Seminary  
George Fox University  
Portland, Oregon

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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DMin Dissertation

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This is to certify that the DMin Dissertation of

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has been approved by  
the Dissertation Committee on February 18, 2014  
for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in Leadership and Spiritual Formation.

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New King James Version of the Bible.

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“I will bring the blind by a way they did not know; I will lead them in paths they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight. These things I will do for them, and not forsake them” (Isaiah 42:16).

John H. McKinney II  
March 9, 2014

## ABSTRACT

Over several decades, societal shifts have dramatically impacted masculinity. One school of thought, hypomascularity, views men as dominant, controlling, and abusive. Their approach to reforming men is pedagogy. Hypermasculinity—another school of thought—considers culture as domesticating men. Often, they see reform occurring through men’s support groups.

There is an intentional design to domesticate men, making them softer and more manageable. Obviously, there is nothing immoral about desiring the transformation of man. The issue is not the desire but the methodology supporting it. So, how is change to be successfully implemented?

Some churches are offering men support groups. Such groups provide recovery from the common addictions for men: pornography, anger, and chemical dependency. Being relevant issues, these groups are scratching where men itch. Nevertheless, these problems constitute the fruit and not the root of the problem. Again, the approach is pedagogical.

So, how are men to achieve emotional and spiritual health? The assertion of this study is that the active participation of transparency by men, in support groups for men, encourages them to have healthy relationships with God and others. In chapter one, the challenge and scope of the male problem is considered. Chapter two reflects on mankind created in God’s image; the effects of sin on the image of God; and God’s image restored. Chapter Three is a historical review of the New Testament model of spiritual community; its disappearance; and, then, reemergence. Chapter Four examines the effects of domestication, the false self, the false identity, and the father wound on men. What are

the approaches that help and hinder them? Chapter Five proposes that support groups can lead men to finding the true self and discovering spiritual community. Chapter six offers suggestions to the Church for reaching men; and, then, developing the emotional and spiritual health of men.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

William Wallace was born during tumultuous times in 13<sup>th</sup> century Scotland. The King of Scotland had died and left no heir to the throne. Because there was no legitimate successor to the throne, King Edward (“Longshanks”) of England declared himself to be the King of Scotland. The Scottish nobles fought Longshanks as well as each other over the crown. Eventually, Longshanks duped his opposition into meeting to discuss a truce; and, then, he executed them. The most prominent Scottish nobles had a financial alliance with Longshanks and, therefore, posed no real threat to him. As a result, their willingness to participate in an organized and well-armed Scottish revolt was significantly compromised.

At a young age, William Wallace witnessed the results of one unorganized and poorly supported battle which took the lives of his father and brother. It was at the funeral of his father and brother that his future bride, Murron, would give him a thistle—an unforgettable token of love. After being raised by his Uncle Argyle, he returned to his father’s farm, with the intention of raising a family and living peaceably. Sometime after marrying his childhood sweetheart, Murron, an English soldier attempted to rape her. William intervened, fighting off the English soldiers and allowing her to briefly escape. Murron did not get far, though; the English re-captured and swiftly executed her in retaliation for William assaulting the soldiers.

Provoked by Murron’s death, William and many of his fellow Scots revolted; killing all of the local soldiers and commanding officer. Eventually, the English

responded to this rebellion by parading a large, organized, and well-equipped army on to the battlefield at Stirling. Because many of the Scottish Highlanders had rallied to the aid of Wallace, some of the nobles and their soldiers felt compelled to appear for battle. It was only too apparent to the Scottish army of misfit rebels that they were greatly outnumbered and outmatched. As William arrived, he observed some of the Scottish army deserting. Promptly, he asked them where they were going. One of the men replied to Wallace that the English were too many. William quickly intervened with a passionate plea:

WALLACE: Sons of Scotland! ... I am William Wallace! I see a whole army of my countrymen, here in defiance of tyranny. You have come to fight as free men. And free men you are! What will you do with freedom? Will you fight?

A SOLDIER REPLIES: Two thousand, against ten? We will run—and live!

WALLACE: Yes. Fight and you may die. Run and you will live, at least awhile. And dying in your bed many years from now, would you be willing to trade all the days from this day to that, for one chance to come back here as young men, and tell our enemies that they make take our lives, but they will never take our freedom?

Despite the call to arms by William, the nobles rode off to meet the English under a banner of truce to negotiate and, thus, prevent bloodshed. William wanted no part of a truce and schemed to thwart any possibility for negotiation. As William was about to leave for the parlay, one of his men asked, “Now, what do we do?” William replied, “Just be yourselves.” As he was about to ride off and join the negotiating, his best friend, Hamish asked William, “And where do you think you’re going? William answered, “To pick a fight.” When William arrived, Longshanks men were discussing terms to avoid a battle with the Scottish nobles. William interrupted and deeply offended the envoy; through his deliberate use of inflammatory language, a battle ensued. The nobles were compelled to fight.

Following the victory at Stirling, the nobles knighted him; and he became known as Sir William Wallace, “guardian and high protector of Scotland.” After this ceremony, the nobles could only argue over who had the legitimate claim to the throne. Disgusted, William decided to withdraw and leave them to their quarreling. One of the noblemen noticed William leaving and asked where he was going. He let them know he was taking the fight to English soil. One of the nobles, Robert the Bruce, asked William to discuss this matter privately. Robert explained to William that the nobles had too much to lose. Furthermore, the country was fragmented and had no sense of identity. Robert added, “Its nobles share allegiance with England. It’s clan’s war with each other. . . . If you make enemies on both sides of the border, you’ll end up dead.” William responded, “We all end up dead. It’s just a question of how and why.” Robert answered back, “I am not a coward. I want what you want, but we need the nobles.” “We need them?” William questioned. “Now, tell me, what does that mean, to be noble? Your title gives you claim to the throne of our country, but men don’t follow titles. They follow courage. Now our people know you. Noble and common, they respect you, and if you would just lead them to freedom they’d follow you. And so would I.”

With many clansmen supporting him, William took the fight to English soil. He besieged York, killing Longshank’s nephew. He realized, however, if he was to ultimately be successful in obtaining the freedom of Scotland, he needed the Scottish nobles support. He personally appealed to Robert the Bruce as the rightful leader of Scotland and asked him to unite the clans. William made a statement of empowerment to Robert the Bruce. “You’re the rightful leader. There is strength in you. I can see it. Unite us. . . . Unite the clans.”

Although Robert the Bruce promised to unite the clans through a handshake, he never followed through on it. Instead, some of the nobles eventually betrayed William to the English and he was executed. Following his execution, his body was cut into pieces and transported throughout Britain as an intimidation tactic; although, it backfired on them. Instead of squelching the Scottish rebellion, this brutal mockery inflamed it. “In the year of our Lord, 1314, patriots of Scotland, starving and outnumbered, charged the field of Bannockburn. They fought like warrior poets. They fought like Scotsmen and won their freedom.”<sup>1</sup>

### **UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT AND THE PROBLEM**

Even though this particular story is an example of historical embellishment, it has significance for males of the U.S. in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Men often pursue the ideal of raising a family and providing for it.<sup>2</sup> Although they encounter difficulties along the journey, it often necessitates a crisis to pursue their own cause for freedom.<sup>3</sup> The pursuit of freedom in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is from the domestication of men by society,<sup>4</sup> from living by the false self, and from the father wound that has never healed. The modern man, no longer understands what it means to be male; but they are in good company, since no one

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<sup>1</sup> Mel Gibson, Alan Ladd, Bruce Davey, Randall Wallace, Sophie Marceau, Patrick McGoohan, Catherine McCormack, and James Horner. *Braveheart*. DVD. Directed by Mel Gibson. Hollywood, CA: Paramount, 1995.

<sup>2</sup> Jim Conway, *Men in Mid Life Crisis* (Elgin, IL: David C. Cook, 1978), 21.

<sup>3</sup> David A. Stoop and Stephen Arterburn. *The Angry Man: Why Does He Act That Way?* (Dallas: Word, 1991), 172.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Bly, *Iron John: A Book About Men* (1st DaCapo Press ed. Cambridge, MA: DaCapo Press, 2004), 17; John Eldredge, *Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Man's Soul* (Nashville: Nelson, 2001), 82, 83.

else does either.<sup>5</sup> Most men are unaware they are living out of their false self. Societal role expectations are the cause for boys developing a false self at a very young age.<sup>6</sup> A male will make monumental efforts to conceal his true identity, for fear of his true self being known.<sup>7</sup>

Men need to be empowered to live from their strength. Every man needs to hear: “There is strength in you. I can see it.” For quite some time, society has not been empowering men. Instead, the goal has been to do the opposite. Social scientists attribute parents, society in general, and men as causing gender bias; and, in particular, influencing male and female stereotypes. Therefore, science claims that parents should be retrained on gender equality and, especially, to encourage boys to reject the male code of behavior. During the 1990s, “the Harvard Graduate School of Education, the Wellesley College Center for Research of Women, and the U.S. department of Education” decided on a scheme to feminize boys in grade school. As a result, teachers were asked to encourage their students to engage in cross-gender activities. If the students displayed an unwillingness to participate, then teachers were told to “force boy/girl mixed pairs.”<sup>8</sup>

Who decided men were the problem? A well-known feminist sociologist proudly acknowledges the women’s and gay liberation movements recognized masculinity as “problematic” to their causes; and “cultural turbulence around themes of masculinity has

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<sup>5</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 112.

<sup>6</sup> Sidney M. Jourard, *The Transparent Self*. (Rev. ed. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1971), 26, 30.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>8</sup> Christina Hoff Sommers, *The War against Boys: How Misguided Feminism Is Harming Our Young Men* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 74, 75.

grown.”<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the feminist and gay movements wish to dismantle male power as well as heterosexuality as the norm. As stated, “Gays cannot be free from oppression while heterosexual masculinity remains as it is.”<sup>10</sup> Clearly, society on many levels has an agenda to domesticate men.<sup>11</sup> The idea is to produce a softer, gentler, male;<sup>12</sup> and feminism “has labored to breed fierceness out of men.”<sup>13</sup> Tony Campolo states, “The feminist movement has missed it. There was a time when men were pushing women around; now, women are pushing men around. It all amounts to people playing games of control.”<sup>14</sup>

This study does not consider softness, being more emotional, or developing more sensitivity to be unmanly traits. It only becomes problematic when culture promotes that there are no gender specific behaviors. Feminists have believed that social conditioning has allowed the dominant male to mistreat women. Undeniably, gender equality has been, and still is, a problem. One of their primary solutions for this issue is gender sameness. “It has presumed a mandate to identify what is wrong with masculinity, ignoring the possibility that many boys are ‘okay.’” Imms accuses feminists of viewing all males as dominant and oppressive. He considers “contemporary ... masculinity [is] working

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<sup>9</sup> R.W. Connell, “The Big Picture: Masculinities in Recent World History,” *Theory & Society* (1993): 597, 598.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 613, 617.

<sup>11</sup> Bly, 6, 61; Eldredge, 83.

<sup>12</sup> Bly, 2.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>14</sup> Tony Campolo, class notes for DMin 544, February 24, 2010.

against oppression and domination.”<sup>15</sup> Feminists have also targeted redefining what it means to be feminine, in order to free them from the oppressors (men) and being lowly baby machines and housemaids. They reject the idea of being created with differences that complement one another. Thus, “feminism robbed women of one of their most blessed abilities in life: the ability to not only create life in their wombs, but to sustain that life force in the husbands.”<sup>16</sup>

Who decides the meaning of masculine? The social sciences are not helpful since God is not in the equation. Mansfield acknowledges that Darwinism set up society for nihilism—the rejection of all religious and moral beliefs—in order to formulate new beliefs and values.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, the social sciences would not be supportive of this current study, since it is a faith approach and not a humanistic one.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, what is the Church saying on the topic of masculinity? Sadly, the Church is not debating gender difference; instead, it is participating with society in confusing the issue. At least, Christianity remains consistent, with over 300 years of historical practice in the New World of favoring women over men.<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, the one institution that should be encouraging men to live from their strength is not. Sadly, the Church also believes men should be tamed.<sup>19</sup> To ask a man to live out of his strength

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<sup>15</sup> Wesley D. Imms, “Multiple Masculinities and the Schooling of Boys,” *Canadian Journal of Education* 25, no. 2 (2000): 152-65 (article not paginated.).

<sup>16</sup> Laura Schlessinger, *The Proper Care and Feeding of Marriage* (1st ed. New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 4, 18-19.

<sup>17</sup> Harvey Clafin Mansfield, *Manliness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 82.

<sup>18</sup> Mary Maples Dunn, “Saints and Sisters: Congregational and Quaker Women in the Early Colonial Period.” *American Quarterly* 30, no. 5 (1978): 592, 593, 594, 595.

<sup>19</sup> Bly, 6, 61; Eldredge, 83.

would, to some, encourage dominance and abuse.<sup>20</sup> Among other truths, this study will reveal when men live from their strength, they become a better man for it. It should be emphasized that men should live from their true identity and out of their strength; all, as the result of grace working in and through them.

### **IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM**

Men are suffering from an identity crisis, and our culture offers men little or no guidance to what it means to be masculine.<sup>21</sup> Especially in the last few decades, the agenda of society has been redefining the meaning of what it means to be male. This does not provide clarity but only confuses men more about their role. So, we better grasp what a man is not;<sup>22</sup> since, boys learn early in life that the definition of a man is to avoid crying and being a sissy.<sup>23</sup> In this regard, it is fathers and/or other males who shame boys towards despising any appearance of being feminine. Defining the male gender is becoming more complex rather than simple. Anymore, most adult men have no clue as to what constitutes a real man.<sup>24</sup> In other words, understanding what it means to be male is becoming less distinct; exactly the aim of modern culture.

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<sup>20</sup> Sally K. Gallagher, "The Marginalization of Evangelical Feminism" *Sociology of Religion*, (2004): 230.

<sup>21</sup> Mike Erre, *Why Guys Need God* (Harvest House, Eugene, OR, 2008), 25; James B. Nelson, *The Intimate Connection: Male Sexuality, Masculine Spirituality* (1st ed. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988), 49.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>23</sup> Nelson, 42.

<sup>24</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 112.

The identity crisis begins when boys transition into manhood; the son, realizing his similarity to dad and his dissimilarity to mom. Although individuation is meant to be a natural process of a boy growing up, mom often interferes with it. It only makes sense that mom does not want to lose that special relationship with her little boy.<sup>25</sup> As a result, the father wounds come early and from a number of sources; such as: the mother's words and actions cause the son to view his father negatively<sup>26</sup> (and, consequently, the son loses some of his childhood);<sup>27</sup> the son feels like a failure (due to his immaturity), since he cannot substitute for dad to meet mom's need for nurture; he lacks the emotional capacity to figure out how to connect with dad; he perceives dad as evil, because he is purposefully avoiding the husband/father role; and all of this causes the son to experience his "life with a double failure."<sup>28</sup> Frankly, most fathers were not taught to be fathers and feel totally incompetent to teach a boy how to be a man. Therefore, the typical absent father is generally off somewhere trying to figure out his own manhood.<sup>29</sup> The father wound is demanding, unforgiving, and a conditional love. The sons learns from his father that it is impossible to earn his father's love; and this is reinforced through the emotionally and/or physically absent father. From this, the son learns to survive through independence.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Bly, 12.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>29</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 25-28.

<sup>30</sup> Nelson, 51.

As a result, there is a “deep spiritual and psychological wound at the center of a man’s identity. ... [and it is] ... specifically the loss of his father.”<sup>31</sup> Unknowingly, he will repeat his father’s mistake of workaholism to prove his manhood. This drive to success damages and destroys relationships and, so, increases the wound.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, this is like pouring salt into the wound; and, leads to further seclusion.<sup>33</sup> Because of their pain men have “lost touch with a whole range of emotions ... don’t feel [their feelings] ... very well ... [are] alienated from their bodies ... lose concreteness of life ... [and are] ... seduced by abstractions ... [that are] ... confusing them about reality.”<sup>34</sup> Due to being isolated, men are “emotionally dead.”<sup>35</sup>

The injury to the son, early in life by the father wound, dominates his psyche. Subsequently, it will cause him to go underground from the lack of a father figure.<sup>36</sup> The stalemate effect of the father wound is often so significant that he will only return to address it much later in life.<sup>37</sup> In part, what precipitates the son’s crisis of failure is the position of his work goals ahead of his family; which often concludes “in a tragic

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<sup>31</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 155.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 158.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 155-156.

<sup>34</sup> Nelson, 30.

<sup>35</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 158.

<sup>36</sup> Erre, 141-142.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 25.

crash.”<sup>38</sup> If the son deals appropriately with the catastrophe, it will lead him to a discovery of his true identity.<sup>39</sup>

Men need to realize that many of their disasters in life are rooted in the father wound.<sup>40</sup> Men are not often aware that because of the father distancing himself and offering his son only conditional love, “the male is shaped for independence but not intimacy, self-protection but not vulnerability, competition but not mutuality.”<sup>41</sup> The lack of the father nurturing his son is carried into adulthood, and the wound he carries affects “the core of [his] . . . own sense of masculinity.”<sup>42</sup>

### PROPOSING A SOLUTION

Some of the son’s healing involves learning about his own father’s history and understanding that his father suffered a similar or, perhaps, worse fate. As the son feels his father’s pain, he empathizes with his father’s experiences; and, then, “healing comes from conscious acts of forgiveness and reconciliation.”<sup>43</sup> Bly points out that

A man’s effort to move to the father’s house takes a long time; it’s difficult, and each man has to do it for himself. [He adds that] . . . among a man’s jobs is to reclaim his own grief. When a man has reclaimed his grief and investigated his wound, he may find that they resemble the grief and the wound his father had, and the reclaiming puts him in touch with his father’s soul. Once his senses are sharpened, he will be able to smell the father’s wound.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 172.

<sup>39</sup> Bly, 209.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>41</sup> Nelson, 43.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

What is gained from such an understanding is that the son sees that he and his father exist together in a greater story. Thus, he realizes his suffering is not personal; removing him from the victim position.<sup>45</sup>

Men need healing from the perpetual image of their father as well as their own view of themselves as a man.<sup>46</sup> The consciousness that a father wound exists and a willingness to even investigate it is not usually something men can do alone. Therefore, connecting with other men is another part of the healing process. Recovering their male identity occurs through an intentional dependent and interdependent relationship with other men.<sup>47</sup> Amazingly, the male experiences both relief and strength through admitting that he needs help from other men.<sup>48</sup> In the right environment with other men, he will discover a breakthrough to his masculine identity.<sup>49</sup> This study supports the belief that the active participation of transparency by men, in support groups for men, encourages them to have healthy relationships with God and others.

God's intent is for men to live in community with each other.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, it is vital for a man to learn the truth about being male in the right context.<sup>51</sup> Participating in self-disclosure must be in a gender specific group, as it takes a man to support another

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>46</sup> Nelson, 44.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>49</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 41.

<sup>50</sup> Erre, 133.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 107.

man through his issues.<sup>52</sup> In other words, his wife or another woman will not be helpful in this endeavor.<sup>53</sup> Men need to be honest with other men and, in the process, “engage reality as it is, not as they want it to be.”<sup>54</sup> Otherwise, the false self remains active and dominate. This study recognizes that men will resist appearing feminine through being open and relational. Their fears of how others will perceive the dysfunctions of their lives will cause many men to avoid a close-knit group. Consequently, they will prefer remaining overly-dependent upon their wives.<sup>55</sup> It is important for the wife to understand being her husband’s confidant cannot and will not work.

A Christian support group is needed for men to discover their true worth in Christ (Ro. 5:8). Clearly, the typical male is not into contemplation and doing self-assessment. They need a community of men who will create a culture for fostering openness and self-disclosure. “Men have the need to know and be known by others; the need to be mutually interdependent; the need to love and be loved; and the need to find purpose and meaning in life.”<sup>56</sup> Men want to be loved and desire intimacy. The average male, however, just does not know how to seek the fulfillment of his need for love and intimacy.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> J.D. Castellini, W. M. Nelson III, J. J. Barrett, Mark S. Nagy, and G. L. Quatman. “Male Spirituality and the Men's Movement: A Factorial Examination of Motivations,” *Journal of Psychology & Theology* (2005): 52, 53.

<sup>53</sup> Gene A. Getz, *The Measure of a Man* (Glendale, CA: Regal Books, 1974), 42.

<sup>54</sup> Erre, 29.

<sup>55</sup> Nelson, 50.

<sup>56</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 37.

<sup>57</sup> Harry W. Schaumburg, *False Intimacy: Understanding the Struggle of Sexual Addiction* (Rev. and exp. ed. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1997), 70-71.

Because men have such a phobia about self-disclosure, as well as trusting and confiding in men,<sup>58</sup> it is imperative to provide a place where men can understand and relate to their losses.<sup>59</sup> The simple truth is that men need to know it will be safe to be vulnerable, and they will be supported through their weakest moments.<sup>60</sup> The most effective environment is where men will extend God's grace and promote transparency—barring their souls to one another.<sup>61</sup> Such an atmosphere fosters new understandings about their masculinity and develops community among one another;<sup>62</sup> and it is through this process of self-disclosure that men find self-identity.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, “There are types of validation and acceptance that we can only receive from friends of the same sex. . . . There are some stories we can tell only to those who have wrestled with the same demons.<sup>64</sup> Only men understand the secret fears that go with the territory of masculinity.”<sup>65</sup> Men can only discover their strength as they move from darkness and into

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<sup>58</sup> Nelson, 48.

<sup>59</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 166.

<sup>60</sup> Bill Perkins, *Six Battles Every Man Must Win: And the Ancient Secrets You'll Need to Succeed* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2004), 80, 104.

<sup>61</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 150.

<sup>62</sup> Erre, 142.

<sup>63</sup> Nelson, 50.

<sup>64</sup> The use of demons is considered a figurative connotation.

<sup>65</sup> Nelson, 51; as quoted from Sam Keen, 1984, 238.

the light.<sup>66</sup> When men are honest, they expose the masculine tendency of pretense<sup>67</sup> and pain control.<sup>68</sup>

The challenge for men, however, is the hurdle that has been created through stereotypical roles since the Industrial Revolution.<sup>69</sup> When men begin relating on an emotional level, it can feel wrong to them. The male generally confuses intimacy with sexuality. Thus, emotional relatedness may be perceived as a threat to their view of masculine stereotypes. Because men do not generally have a mature understanding of boundaries, emotional closeness can appear threatening;<sup>70</sup> and this is because men are more disconnected from their body and feelings, and their dualistic, black and white, thinking has little tolerance for ambiguity.<sup>71</sup>

The uncertainty of revisiting and grieving the father/son loss is a new and strange experience for men but one that is vitally needed.<sup>72</sup> In the U.S. culture, though, men do not typically give one another permission to grieve.<sup>73</sup> However, through intentionality—men openly discussing and receiving empathy for their losses<sup>74</sup>—such an experience can

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<sup>66</sup> Perkins, 80.

<sup>67</sup> Nelson, 25.

<sup>68</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 157.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>70</sup> Nelson, 42.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>72</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 33.

<sup>73</sup> Bly, 229.

<sup>74</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 166.

become “steppingstones to growth.”<sup>75</sup> By admitting his weakness, a man is no longer living as an imposter<sup>76</sup>—no longer numbing his pain—and through transparency he is discovering “the secret of masculine strength.”<sup>77</sup>

It is not just that men need to connect with other men to find their identity; but, in doing so, love what they discover about their identity. When a man’s identity is based upon his being and doing, he is better able to cope with failure along with success.<sup>78</sup> Grace allows a man to see his worth through the eyes of the Beloved. Such a revealing of God’s grace allows “authentic self-love” ... a deep self-acceptance” of every imperfection.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, the healing of woundedness is integral to discovering the true self; which, in turn, is essential to loving God and others.<sup>80</sup> It is as a man becomes aware of his reality that God becomes living;<sup>81</sup> and, yet, this exposes another part of the father wound that needs healing.

Often, a man’s relationship with his earthly father distorts his view of his heavenly Father as being “distant, cold, controlling, and unavailable.”<sup>82</sup> It is difficult for men to conceive that the Father desires to have an intimate relationship with them. Therefore, “a critically important part of [the male] ... process” is for men to learn God is

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 160-161.

<sup>76</sup> Erre, 33.

<sup>77</sup> Perkins, 34.

<sup>78</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 40.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>80</sup> Getz, 200.

<sup>81</sup> Nelson, 25.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 45.

present;<sup>83</sup> this is why men are in dire need of a better understanding of the incarnation, the purpose of a spiritual community, and the gift of grace.<sup>84</sup>

Although society has created masculine role confusion, ultimately, “God is the author of the masculine condition.”<sup>85</sup> God never intended for man to “make life work without Him. ... [Consequently], “our struggles expose our vulnerability and remind us that we are not in control.”<sup>86</sup> It is only by God’s grace that we can comprehend reality. Nelson suggests that part of being spiritual is “living in reality.”<sup>87</sup> Living in reality includes a greater self-awareness as well as our true identity, by faith, of being in Christ.<sup>88</sup> The truth is that “our identity is in Christ ... [and] our worth is not earned but is given to us by grace.”<sup>89</sup>

Christ demonstrated what the masculine identity is all about—it is rooted in service to others. It is the willingness of a man to lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13).<sup>90</sup> Men want to be involved “in service to a purpose greater than himself—a transcendent cause.”<sup>91</sup> Men were made for sacrifice (giving up one’s self for the good of

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 44-45.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>85</sup> Erre, 57.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 58-60.

<sup>87</sup> Nelson, 21.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>90</sup> Perkins, 122.

<sup>91</sup> Bly, 150.

another) and are at their best when used for the good of others.<sup>92</sup> God never intended for “fully masculine” to have any reference to male superiority; instead, He made men to be “stewards in order to direct creation for the benefit of others.”<sup>93</sup>

## DEFINITIONS

For this dissertation, it will be important to provide definitions of words and terms to be used. What does it mean to be made in *God’s image (imago Dei)*? There are multiple meanings for being in God’s image; such as: to reign,<sup>94</sup> to serve,<sup>95</sup> to love,<sup>96</sup> etc. The most embraced definition of *imago Dei*, historically, has been the ability of man to reason. Over time, reason came to be “understood broadly and includes such notions as self-consciousness, moral sense, freedom, self-transcendence, and spirituality.”<sup>97</sup> The theologian, Karl Barth, recognized that the popular definitions for *imago Dei* had been mutually influenced by philosophy and theology. Furthermore, he could never settle on any of these being an accurate portrayal of *imago Dei*.<sup>98</sup> Barth was the first major

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<sup>92</sup> Erre, 165.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>94</sup> Paul Francis Sands, “The Imago Dei as Vocation,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 82, no. 1 (2010): 37; David J.A. Clines, “The Image of God in Man,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968): 91, 93, and 101.

<sup>95</sup> Phyllis A. Bird, “Male and Female He Created Them: Gen 1:27b in the Context of the Priestly Account of Creation,” *Harvard Theological Review* 74, no. 2 (1981): 144.

<sup>96</sup> Yolanda Dreyer, “Karl Barth’s Male-Female Order: A Kingpin of Dogmatic Disparity,” *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 63, no. 4 (2007): 1543.

<sup>97</sup> Sands, 32.

<sup>98</sup> David J.A. Clines, “The Image of God in Man,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968): 54, 55.

theologian to explicitly state that the image of God resides in both genders.<sup>99</sup> He recognized that the Trinity made man and woman for the purpose of relating to one another as well as to the Divine.<sup>100</sup>

There are those who believe the image of God was fully retained and unaffected after the Fall; and such reasoning is based upon scripture (Gen. 9:6; Ja. 3:9).<sup>101</sup> It is true that certain aspects of the image of God are visible (e.g. reason, free will, servant, etc.); it is also apparent that sin greatly diminished the image of God in humans; and, subsequently, this is why God restored the image of God through Christ.<sup>102</sup> Furthermore, the image of God was weakened to such a state in mankind that human reasoning could not lead him or her to God unaided by God's grace.<sup>103</sup> As a result, the image of God is most fully reflected through Christ's obedience to the cross. For the image of God to be restored in us, then, is to be in Christ; and, additionally, is a process of being continually transformed into His image by the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18).<sup>104</sup> Therefore, the image of God is

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<sup>99</sup> Lisa P. Stephenson, "Directed, Ordered and Related: The Male and Female Interpersonal Relation in Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 61, no. 4 (2008): 438.

<sup>100</sup> Alexander Jefferey McKelway, "Perichoretic Possibilities in Barth's Doctrine of Male and Female," *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 7, no. 3 (1986): 233.

<sup>101</sup> Gerald L. Bray, "The Significance of God's Image in Man," *Tyndale Bulletin* 42, no. 2 (1991): 204, 210.

<sup>102</sup> Francis D. Nichol, *The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary: The Holy Bible with Exegetical and Expository Comment* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1953.), 7: 527 (Abbreviation to follow as: 7 BC, 527.).

<sup>103</sup> Zachary C. Xintaras, "Man, the Image of God: According to the Greek Fathers," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 1, no. 1 (1954): 53.

<sup>104</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, "Jesus as the Imago Dei: Image-of-God Christology and the Non-Linear Linearity of Theology," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47, no. 4 (2004): 618-24.

best reflected through relationships<sup>105</sup> and, particularly, through experiencing community through Christ and His body.<sup>106</sup>

It is only obvious that the distorted view of the *imago Dei* would also influence the definition of *spiritual*. If one believes humans have a propensity towards the Divine as well as innate goodness, this would also lead to the conclusion that we are all spiritual beings;<sup>107</sup> which completely contradicts Scripture (Ro. 3:10-12; Ps. 14:1-3; Ps. 53:1-3). To state, “The hidden or inner world of the human self is indeed spiritual,”<sup>108</sup> only confuses the topic. Furthermore, such a definition disagrees with the scriptural meaning of spiritual. The word for spiritual, *pneumatikos*, is “an after-Pentecost word.”<sup>109</sup> According to Vines, *pneumatikos* predominantly refers to “all that is produced and maintained among men by the operations of the Spirit of God.”<sup>110</sup> Similarly, Bonhoeffer defined spiritual as “that which is created only by the Holy Spirit, who puts Jesus into our hearts as Lord and Savior.”<sup>111</sup> MacIntosh does acknowledge *pneumatikos* was originally understood to refer to what the community received through the resurrection of Christ and maintained under the direction of the Holy Spirit. He adds it would not be until the

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<sup>105</sup> Cynthia M. Campbell, “Imago Dei Reconsidered : Male and Female Together,” *Journal for Preachers* 4, no. 2 (1981): 10.

<sup>106</sup> Bernard van den Toren, “God's Purpose for Creation as the Key to Understanding the Universality and Cultural Variety of Christian Ethics,” *Missiology* 30, no. 2 (2002): 219.

<sup>107</sup> Xintaras, 56.

<sup>108</sup> Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), 17.

<sup>109</sup> W.E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* ([computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System, Nashville: Nelson, 1997, c1996.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (1st ed. New York: HarperCollins, 1954), 31.

12<sup>th</sup> century (A.D.) that the definition of spirituality became privatized.<sup>112</sup> Therefore, it is easy to conclude that the Church eventually became wise enough to adopt its own definition for spiritual. Just as Barth saw the blending of philosophy and theology to define the *imago Dei*, Sweet understands that “spiritual has been stripped of its biblical and Trinitarian roots, corrupted by its association with psychology, consumerism, narcissism, and the paranormal.”<sup>113</sup> Although individual spirituality is nurtured through communing with God alone, it is always due to the salvation of Christ and guided by the Spirit. Christ gives us the spiritual position and His Spirit gives us the spiritual direction. Whatever we are spiritually is due to Christ and His Spirit within a community of believers.<sup>114</sup> Spirituality is not something we were born with or that is engineered through human effort. Being spiritual, therefore, is not a private affair. It is through relationships with God and in community with others—“that we can get the closest to experiencing God.”<sup>115</sup> Thus, being spiritual and developing spirituality is the result of Christ, His Spirit, and His Body.

There are multiple meanings for the word “*flesh*”<sup>116</sup> (*sarx*) in the NT, and these include: 1), soft tissue of all created beings (1 Cor. 15:39); 2), the human body (Gal. 2:20); the totality of humanity—body, soul, and spirit (Ro. 3:20); and 3), the carnal

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<sup>112</sup> Mark Allen McIntosh, *Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology, Challenges in Contemporary Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998), 6, 7.

<sup>113</sup> Leonard I. Sweet, *So Beautiful: Divine Design for Life and the Church* (1st ed. Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2009), 139.

<sup>114</sup> Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life* (Ft. Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1973), 219.

<sup>115</sup> Sweet, *So Beautiful*, 126.

<sup>116</sup> The definitions for *sarx* are not intended to be exhaustive.

nature, which is present in both unregenerate and regenerate man.<sup>117</sup> However, Paul also refers to the flesh as being human effort to attempt obedience (Gal. 2:16);<sup>118</sup> and, additionally, to presume spiritual advancement occurs through the strivings of the flesh (Gal. 3:1-4). It is very clear that the workings of the flesh—also known as “the works of the law”—only causes us to be under the curse of the law (Gal. 3:10-13). Therefore, the usage of flesh in this dissertation will either refer to the carnal nature and/or human effort to obey God’s commands.

The flesh is quite capable of negatively influencing Christian fellowship (1 Cor. 3:3). *Christian fellowship* and *spiritual community* will be considered as having the same meaning in this study. Clearly, through His sacrifice, Christ enabled the possibility for humanity to experience fellowship. Additionally, His Spirit is the One who applies the work of Christ to the believer and cultivates growing in fellowship with one another (Eph. 2:14-22). The Greek word for fellowship, *koinonia*, is rich in meaning. It “embodies the idea of community and communion, or having a common ground.”<sup>119</sup> Atkinson speaks of two features to *koinonia*: “what we share in together (our spiritual inheritance) and what we share with one another.”<sup>120</sup>

*Self-worth*, or *self-esteem*, “is the respect and value with which we view ourselves.”<sup>121</sup> Self-worth is determined through being as well as doing. It is the natural

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<sup>117</sup> Vine, Vine’s expository dictionary [computer file], electronic ed.

<sup>118</sup> Watchman Nee, *The Spiritual Man* (New York: Christian Fellowship Publishers, 1977), 73.

<sup>119</sup> Harley T. Atkinson, *The Power of Small Groups in Christian Education* (Nappanee, IN: Evangel Pub. House, 2002), 70, as quoted from John Paul Vandenakker, 1994, 5.

<sup>120</sup> Atkinson, 70.

<sup>121</sup> Gerald G. May, *Addiction and Grace* (1st ed. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 42.

value a person is born with as a human being. The recognition of being in God's image significantly contributes to self-worth; as well as seeing one's worth through Christ.

What a person does also influences the view of self; and our "doing worth can fluctuate and vary because life is always changing."<sup>122</sup>

*Gender* will be used frequently, and it refers to "the behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one sex."<sup>123</sup> Nelson points out that gender is closely associated with social and psychological concerns. As a result, it is a subjective feeling about gender as well as how one perceives their behavior should be around others.<sup>124</sup> "*Male*" is defined as a physically and sexually distinct being, having characteristics that are unique to his gender. The dictionary definition for male is, "A person bearing an X and Y chromosome pair in the cell nuclei and normally having a penis, scrotum, and testicles, and developing hair on the face at adolescence; a boy or man."<sup>125</sup> Another dictionary defines male as: "the sex that has organs to produce spermatozoa for fertilizing ova; of or characteristic of the male sex; masculine; manly."<sup>126</sup> Nelson recognizes the blending of a biological as well as social definition of male. He acknowledges the social definition involves the cultural perceptions of what a

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<sup>122</sup> Larry Gene Day, *Self-Esteem, by God's Design: A Journey to Worth and Identity* (Rev. ed. Portland, OR: Mt. Tabor Press, 2004), 37, 38.

<sup>123</sup> *Merriam-Webster*, s.v. "Gender," <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gender> (accessed October 29, 2013).

<sup>124</sup> Nelson, 20.

<sup>125</sup> *Dictionary.com*, s.v. "Male," <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/male?s=t> (accessed October 21, 2013).

<sup>126</sup> William Morris. *The American Heritage College Dictionary* (College Ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976), 790.

man is as well as “those qualities males ought to have.”<sup>127</sup> Consequently, ambiguity exists, since being or doing may describe what is male. *Masculine* is another definition for male but is more the perceived doing function of a man. Again, much of what defines masculinity is constructed by social and cultural influences.<sup>128</sup> The dictionary defines masculine as: “pertaining to or characteristic of a man or men; having qualities traditionally ascribed to men, as strength and boldness.”<sup>129</sup> There are clearly good traits as well as myths attributed to masculinity.<sup>130</sup> *Emasculate* can mean “to castrate; to deprive of strength or vigor; weaken ... debilitate, undermine, devitalize, soften.”<sup>131</sup> Emasculate or emasculation will only be used in a figurative sense to what society has been doing to men; and therefore, will not include the literal definition of castration.

Simply defined, *legalism* is the belief that “salvation is gained through good works.”<sup>132</sup> However, legalism is more complex, since it includes creating laws in order to observe the Decalogue.<sup>133</sup> Legalism includes the idea of self-effort, which this study believes has been, and still is, quite prominent in Christianity. With legalism, rules

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<sup>127</sup> Nelson, 27.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> *Dictionary.com*, s.v. “Masculine,” <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/masculine?s=t> (accessed October 22, 2013).

<sup>130</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 39.

<sup>131</sup> *Dictionary.com*, s.v. “Emasculate,” <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/emasculate?s=t> (accessed October 22, 2013).

<sup>132</sup> *Dictionary.com*, s.v. “Legalism,” <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/legalism?s=t&ld=1174> (accessed October 22, 2013).

<sup>133</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation*, vol. II (Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, 1996), 39.

replace relationship to govern obedience; subsequently, Christ and His Spirit are absent.<sup>134</sup>

## CONCLUSION

What can draw men out of hiding? What will motivate a man to bare the very depths of his soul to another? Chapter two will consider the biblical text for God making man in His image. Tragically, sin marred God's image in man and affected how he related to God and his fellow man. God's plan was to reveal the weakness of man through the law and self-effort; and, then, the need of a Savior. It is critical to this study to develop a theology for spiritual transformation; only through Jesus Christ are we reconciled to God and to each other. As a result of being in Christ, the Holy Spirit is the one creating community with God and with fellow believers. It is through grace that God's Spirit begins the recovery of God's image in man. Chapter Three is a historical review, beginning with the NT Church and the apostolic model—the House Church—as well as the tension of law and grace. Unfortunately, soon after the apostles were gone, the Church began making radical compromises. From the second century through the reign of Constantine, the progression and exploitation of Institutionalism completely changed the church culture. For over 1,000 years community and intimacy were lost as a result of the Institutional Church. Monasticism will not be considered helpful to spiritual renewal, since it was not based upon the works of Christ but that of man. Particularly through the contributions of Martin Luther and John Wesley the focus returned to faith in Christ and the priesthood of believers. Finally, certain events are examined on the development of

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<sup>134</sup> Sweet, *So Beautiful*, 118, 119, 133, 137, 140.

Christianity in the United States to the present day establishment of group meetings in the home.

Chapter Four looks at the unique differences with the male gender and what explains how men function. There are major influences for determining how a boy grows up to be a man. Societal expectations typically cause the male to live from his false self. As a result, boys grow up without a true identity, and this leads to acting out. Men need help, but they are not good at asking for it. Usually, a crisis initiates a man seeking after some form of support. Is society and the Church helping or hindering men in this quest?

Chapter Five demonstrates the need for men to be known by way of a support group; how men go through isolation to identification to male bonding; as well as creating a culture of safety through love. The end result is leading men to Christ and a life of service. As easy as it sounds, there are inherent challenges in helping men to discover self-identity and learning what it means to be male. Chapter six is the conclusion and offers the Church suggestions for attracting men to the kingdom of Christ.

## CHAPTER TWO

### GOD DESIGNED US FOR RELATIONSHIPS

During the reign of King Louis the XIV of France in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, several legends existed about an imprisoned masked man. One account portrays the father, Louis XIII, having Philippe taken away after his birth. Because he was the younger identical twin brother, he was raised by guardians in a country estate, with orders to keep his identity a secret. Near death, Louis XIII confessed to his wife and to his son, Louis, about Philippe. Due to his value of royal blood, Louis could not take the life of Philippe. So, Philippe was placed in an iron mask to hide his true identity. Later on, three musketeers rescued Philippe from prison, with the scheme of replacing the evil King Louis XIV with Philippe. What the movie depicted, whether intentional or not, is the consequence of wearing a mask. Philippe shared that he was imprisoned at age 12 and made to wear the iron mask. He rightly assumed the mask was meant to hide his true identity. However, Philippe did not realize he was nobility, the son of a king. One of the musketeers, Aramis, prefaced the explanation of his origin with these words: “The greatest secret of life is who we truly are.” Despite learning of his noble origin, Philippe remained attracted to wearing the iron mask. Another musketeer, Athos, found Philippe in a corner of the bedroom, slumped and ashamed in the darkness, holding the mask. Philippe explained: “I’ve worn this mask so long, I couldn’t sleep without it. I’ve been imprisoned for six years and you have freed me. But now you are asking me to enter another prison.” Later,

Aramis reminded Philippe: “We are offering you a chance to be king.” Philippe retorted: “No! You are offering me a chance to pretend to be king.”<sup>1</sup>

Most people wear masks to hide their true identity. Although both genders participate in the exhibition of the false self, the practice is more prevalent among males than females.<sup>2</sup> This may be due to the male being performance-driven, as God seems to suggest in Gen. 3:17-19.<sup>3</sup> The typical male is generally very opposed to anyone prying into his private life. They consider such inquisitiveness as an invasion of their privacy and will expend considerable energy to remain concealed.<sup>4</sup> This type of behavior should not be surprising, since mankind has had millenniums of practice in the art of hiding—mimicking the first couple in the Garden of Eden. It is apparent, however, that God never intended for mankind to relate so disingenuously to one another.

### **MADE LIKE THEM**

Although God created mankind in His own image, there is mystery. What does it exactly mean to be in God’s image? The creation narrative begins with a void—no life existing.<sup>5</sup> The Spirit is “hovering over the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:2); ready to participate in the creative acts of God.<sup>6</sup> The psalmist declared, “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. ...

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.imsdb.com/scripts/Man-in-the-Iron-Mask.html> (accessed March 2, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Jourard, 35.

<sup>3</sup> 1 BC, 235.

<sup>4</sup> Jourard, 35.

<sup>5</sup> 1 BC, 209; literally, “waste and void, *tohu wabohu*.”

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast” (33:6, 9). It is an act of faith to believe the creation story (Heb. 11:3); and there is considerable disagreement over the historical validity of Genesis 1-3.<sup>7</sup> To clarify, the creation account in Genesis is considered in this study to be an authentic book of the Bible. In addition, the apostle Paul stated that all scripture was inspired by God and should be valued (2 Tim. 3:16); which includes Genesis.

The first six days of God’s creative activity are described in Gen. 1; culminating in the creation of mankind.<sup>8</sup> On the sixth day of creation, there is an obvious grammatical shift as God pauses and enters into dialogue over the creation of humanity.<sup>9</sup>

Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them (Gen. 1:26, 27).

Debate exists over the exact meaning of “the plural [*Elohim*].”<sup>10</sup> It is highly unlikely that a monotheistic writer would be hinting towards a Trinitarian view.<sup>11</sup> However, because it is God’s Word, the possibility exists that God is expressing His nature in broader terms that could only be understood by the greater context of the Bible as a whole. As a result, the following New Testament passages substantiate the Trinitarian presence at creation:

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<sup>7</sup> 1 BC, 201.

<sup>8</sup> “Human beings considered collectively for the word “mankind;””  
[http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american\\_english/mankind](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/mankind) (accessed February 6, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> 1 BC, 215.

<sup>10</sup> W. T Purkiser, Richard Shelley Taylor, and Willard H. Taylor. *God, Man & Salvation: A Biblical Theology*. (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1977), 53.

<sup>11</sup> Phyllis A. Bird. “Male and Female He Created Them: Gen 1:27b in the Context of the Priestly Account of Creation.” *Harvard Theological Review* 74, no. 2 (1981): 130, 131.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made (John 1:1-3).

... the glory which I had with You before the world was; ... that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us. ... You loved Me before the foundation of the world (John 17:5, 21, 24).

... through whom also He made the worlds (Hebrews 1:1, 2).

For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him (Colossians 1:16).

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead (Romans 1:20).

### IN GOD'S IMAGE

What does it mean to be made in the image of God? The author of Genesis provides no answer to this question. The passage reads, "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:27). According to Vines, the Hebrew words *tselem* (image) and *demuth* (likeness) mean—a "resemblance" and not "an exact duplicate."<sup>12</sup> Clines states images of this period were not "representational portrayals," since "many images ... were unhewn lumps of rock."<sup>13</sup> Bird considers God's image as representational as well.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Vine, Vine's expository dictionary [computer file], electronic ed.

<sup>13</sup> Clines, 82.

<sup>14</sup> Bird, 138-139.

Throughout the Old Testament God is described as having body parts—eyes to see, ears to hear, the ability to have a whole range of feelings, etcetera. Such descriptions are not to be taken literally but are “merely metaphors” of God.<sup>15</sup> Others agree,

The entire Old Testament insists upon the central truth that God is spirit and that no physical image can capture His essence. . . . The Bible warns us against reducing the image of God to the level of physical matter; such an image too easily limits our concept of His real nature. . . . ‘To whom, then, will you compare God?’ asks Isaiah. ‘What image will you compare Him to?’<sup>16</sup>

Clearly, God’s intent in making us in His image was not about exact image or likeness. I believe being in His image has multiple meanings. Some understand it refers to the reign of mankind on earth;<sup>17</sup> reflects God’s lordship over creation;<sup>18</sup> and it connotes being a servant<sup>19</sup>—depicting God’s love to those being served.<sup>20</sup> Grenz says the following:

Gerhard von Rad considers, “the declaration about God's image is indeed highly exalted, but it also remains intentionally in a certain state of suspense.’ [Consequently] . . . by leaving the matter open-ended and suspenseful, Genesis 1:26-27 awaits a future fulfillment of the quest of the full meaning of the *imago Dei*.”<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, because the image of God involves a certain degree of mystery, it cannot be fully understood through fallen man alone. Obviously, this was God’s intent “that in Him all the fullness should dwell” (Col. 1:19).

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<sup>15</sup> Clines, 70.

<sup>16</sup> Paul W. Brand, and Philip Yancey. *In His Image* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 35.

<sup>17</sup> Sands, 37.

<sup>18</sup> Clines, 91, 93, 101.

<sup>19</sup> Bird, 144.

<sup>20</sup> Dreyer, 1543.

<sup>21</sup> Grenz, 618, 622; as quoted from Gerhard von Rad, 1973, 59.

## NEW TESTAMENT VIEW OF GOD'S IMAGE

For the New Testament writers, they understood Christ as being the image of God, and the following passages reflect this theme:

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:1-3).

But one testified in a certain place, saying: 'What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet.' For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone (Heb. 2:6-9).

But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. ... For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:3, 4, 6).

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence (Col. 1:15-18).

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren (Ro. 8:29).

Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor

uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all (Col. 3:9-11).

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor. 3:18).

And so it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. . . . And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man. (1 Cor. 15:45).

Bray is one who views the image of Christ in the NT and the image of God to be totally unrelated. He considers the image of God was fully retained and unaffected after the Fall;<sup>22</sup> yet, he acknowledges this view does not agree with the Early Church Fathers.<sup>23</sup> I agree with Grenz that these passages clearly point to Christ being the image (*eikon*) of God—the same word used in the Septuagint for image in Genesis one. What the last Adam fulfilled in the image of God, the first man, Adam, never achieved. Christ especially accomplished this primarily through the cross (Phil. 2:8b) and resurrection. Additionally, the image of God develops in His believers through the process of sanctification and in the future glorification (1 Cor. 15:51, 52; 1 Jn. 3:2).<sup>24</sup> What is clear from all of these NT texts is that the image of God is primarily linked to the characteristic of obedience. As a result, the image of God was not fully restored and manifested until Christ’s obedience on the cross (Heb. 5:7-9). So, it could be said that through Christ we bear His image, and through His Spirit we are continually transformed, to a greater degree, into God’s image (2 Cor. 3:18).

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<sup>22</sup> Bray, 204, 210.

<sup>23</sup> Bray, 202-205.

<sup>24</sup> Grenz, 618-24.

### HOW THE IMAGE WAS VIEWED AFTER THE APOSTLES

The first century philosopher, Philo, thought of the human intellect as the image of God. Christian writers from his day into the twentieth century adopted his view of reason best reflecting the image of God. The idea of reason came to be “understood broadly and includes such notions as self-consciousness, moral sense, freedom, self-transcendence, and spirituality.”<sup>25</sup> In his survey of *imago Dei*, Karl Barth recognized, throughout the eras of time, the meanings for being made in God’s image as mutually influenced by philosophy and theology. After pondering all of the various explanations, Barth could never settle on any of these being an accurate portrayal of *imago Dei*.<sup>26</sup> If *imago Dei* was simply reason, it seems ludicrous to believe Jesus only came to restore our reasoning abilities. It is here that I believe Irenaeus helps our understanding.

Irenaeus considered the *imago Dei* as mankind’s freedom to choose and reason; but these he considered to be tainted by the Fall. He understood Adam and Eve to be created in innocence and endowed with powers to grow to maturity but never achieving perfection. All that humanity lost in Adam is restored in Christ. Through His humanity—His birth, life, cross, resurrection, ascension, etc.—humanity is provided a deeper connection with God than was possible through Adam. Therefore, the image of man was only able to be fully developed in Christ.<sup>27</sup> This, of course, mirrors the Pauline concept of

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<sup>25</sup> Sands, 32.

<sup>26</sup> Clines, 54, 55.

<sup>27</sup> James G.M. Purves, 1954. “The Spirit and the Imago Dei: Reviewing the Anthropology of Irenaeus of Lyons.” *Evangelical Quarterly* 68, (1996): 105-107; Xintaras, 51, 52.

reconciliation, which is a relationship term. One theologian, Karl Barth, emphasized the *imago Dei* as being relational.

### THE IMAGE OF GOD AS RELATIONSHIPS

Barth was the first major theologian to explicitly state that the image of God resides in both genders.<sup>28</sup> Barth emphasized that it was through relationships that male and female reflected the “relationality” of the Trinity.<sup>29</sup> It is easily recognizable that God did not make just one but two distinct genders in His image; and, in doing so, for the express purpose of fellowship.<sup>30</sup> By design, being relational is to be human. It is not only our very nature but our calling to live in relationships. Consequently, for humans to live alone—isolated and alienated—is not normative.<sup>31</sup> I concur with Campbell that “the major contribution of Barth's proposal is that it shifts the location of the *imago* from the isolated or independent individual.”<sup>32</sup> That God created man for relationships is more fully understood following Genesis one:

... But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of Man.’ Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (Genesis 2:20-24).

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<sup>28</sup> Stephenson, 438.

<sup>29</sup> McKelway, 233.

<sup>30</sup> Campbell, 10-11.

<sup>31</sup> Anna Case-Winters . “Rethinking the Image of God.” *Zygon* 39, no. 4 (2004): 819.

<sup>32</sup> Campbell, 11.

## GOD DESIGNED MANKIND FOR COMMUNITY

It should be noted that chapter two is an expansion of God’s creative acts in chapter one.<sup>33</sup> “God blessed ‘them’ not ‘him,’ indicating that the creation of Eve occurred before the sixth day had passed by and that the blessings and responsibilities conferred on them were to be jointly shared by both in equal manner.”<sup>34</sup> As a result, “Adam needs someone comparable to him and [God] creates Eve for companionship. After waking up, Adam immediately realizes Eve as his partner.”<sup>35</sup> Prior to creating Eve, it is intentional for God to prompt Adam to name all of the animals and for Adam to understand that he was alone without a companion. Thus, God was placing emphasis upon the need of another for companionship, as the following states:

If the formation of woman was to meet fully the purpose of the Creator, Adam must come to sense his need of companionship—that ‘it was not good,’ in other words, that he should remain alone. . . . The words, ‘this is now,’ reflect his pleasant surprise as he saw in the woman the fulfillment of his heart’s desire. His thrice-repeated ‘this’ (as in the Hebrew) vividly points to her upon whom, in joyful astonishment, his eye now rested with the intense thrill of first love.<sup>36</sup>

Clearly, God’s image is also realized through meaningful relationships. “The rest of humanity shares the *imago* as we live in relationship with others.”<sup>37</sup> Humanity has the ability to relate rationally, emotionally, etcetera that is unique from all other created

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 226.

<sup>34</sup> 1 BC, 216-217.

<sup>35</sup> Adrien J. Bledstein. “Genesis of Humans: The Garden of Eden Revisited.” *Judaism* 26, no. 2 (1977): 191.

<sup>36</sup> 1BC, 226.

<sup>37</sup> Campbell, 10.

beings.<sup>38</sup> The portrayal of man and woman in the garden is about “living in harmony and mutual respect. . . . They nurture each other, and together they tend the garden they live in.”<sup>39</sup> It is clear that one of God's main objectives in “creation was for people to live in community with Him and with one another.”<sup>40</sup>

### **A CLEAR DISTINCTION BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE**

“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:27). God not only recognizes His image in relationship, but He also realizes a greater expression of His image through gender differentiation. His character is mirrored in both male and female. What is utterly astounding is that God places both genders, side by side, to contrast “absolute unity and equality while still allowing for difference and distinction. . . . For men and women to be equal does not imply that they must be identical.”<sup>41</sup> Humanity was “created [as] ‘male and female,’ suggesting that God's image could only be borne by creatures who embodied both similarity and difference.”<sup>42</sup> “God created us distinctly different and then called us to be one (Genesis 2:24, John 17:21). . . . Each person will reflect God's total image and have a combination of typically masculine and feminine characteristics:

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<sup>38</sup> Case-Winters, 818.

<sup>39</sup> Lawrence J. Crabb, Don Hudson, and Al Andrews, *God Calls Men to Move Beyond the Silence of Adam: Becoming Men of Courage in a World of Chaos* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 75.

<sup>40</sup> Toren, 219.

<sup>41</sup> Erre, 20, 23.

<sup>42</sup> Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Press, 2008), 103.

nurturing, assertion, leadership, gentleness, and receptivity.”<sup>43</sup> It is important to notice that God creates man and woman as distinct genders; and, yet, after the completion of creation week, God emphatically pronounced all He had made as “very good” (Genesis 1:31). Men especially need to understand that after Creation week God declares male and female as good—both genders designed are of godly origin.<sup>44</sup>

### **RELATIONSHIPS AFFECTED BY THE FALL**

God had given Adam latitude to eat of every tree in the garden with the exception of one. “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die’” (Gen. 2:16, 17). Adam, alone, was specifically given this warning by God. Following this admonition, Eve was created with the intent of being a complement to Adam. God recognized it would be detrimental for Adam to remain in solitude.<sup>45</sup> When Eve was created, it is apparent there is love at first sight (Gen. 2:23). Their perfect affection for one another, however, would not last.

The book of Genesis provides no time frame for the Creation of Eve and her encounter with the serpent (Gen. 3). The temptation is calculated and Eve is at the center of it. There is a question as to whether Eve was alone or if Adam was also present. It seems Adam was close by:

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<sup>43</sup> Douglas E. Rosenau and Michael R. Sytsma, “A Theology of Sexual Intimacy: Insights into the Creator.” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 23, no. 3 (2004): 263.

<sup>44</sup> Erre, 20.

<sup>45</sup> 1 BC 225, 226.

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden (Gen. 3:6-8).

After eating the fruit, “She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate” (v. 6). If Adam was there, he certainly raised no objection. I agree that Adam’s silence has been an enduring problem for men—they struggle with knowing just when to speak up—and his love for the woman was stronger than for God. The woman has often been blamed for the Fall, but it was the silence of Adam that caused chaos to return to this earth.<sup>46</sup>

The Devil claimed, “Your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God.” Of course, partaking of the fruit opened their eyes to a new reality. Rather than give them an inspirational experience, it immediately causes a descent on their perspective. The plunge is quite evident: sin, shame, secrecy, and separation.<sup>47</sup> No longer desiring after God, they go off and hide from Him.

The disobedience of Adam and Eve alienates them from God and closes down their communication with Him. “God never has to pursue someone if communication is open.”<sup>48</sup> The spirit to seek after their Creator was dramatically affected. “Death of the spirit is the cessation of its communication with God. . . . So when we say the spirit is dead it does not imply there is no more spirit; we simply mean the spirit has lost its

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<sup>46</sup> Crabb, Hudson, and Andrews, 90, 91.

<sup>47</sup> Personal notes from a Genesis Process addictions support group at Easthill Foursquare Church, May, 2004.

<sup>48</sup> Larry R. Shelton, *Cross and Covenant: Interpreting the Atonement for 21st Century Mission* (Tyrone, GA: Paternoster, 2006), 9.

sensitivity towards God and thus is dead to Him.” Nee elaborates further that being spiritually dead does not suggest a total loss of aspiration for God, but the spirit has been so infected so as to prevent a steadfast devotion of the spirit towards God. Consequently, he recognizes the absolute need of God intervening for man through Christ.<sup>49</sup>

The responses of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:7, 8, 10-13) are not examples of spiritual vitality. Rather than admit responsibility, they both attempt to incriminate the other as well as deny accountability for their own actions. Additionally, they accuse God for the insurrection. God, though, does not blame or shame them; instead, His grace intervenes through the promise of a Savior (Gen. 3:15). “The nature of God is not to exact punishment. The nature of God is to establish righteousness and renew his creation into his image. His concern is not to get even. His concern is to bring us back into proper relationship with him.”<sup>50</sup>

The Fall involves the breakdown of relationships—as humans relate to each other and God. Adam and Eve’s sin caused them to hide and disconnect from their Creator.<sup>51</sup> With the entrance of sin, man’s relationship with God was drastically altered, and this negatively impacted humanity’s knowledge of God, love for God, and faith in God.<sup>52</sup> “The devastating consequence of the Fall (Genesis 3) was the fourfold alienation from

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<sup>49</sup> Nee, *The Spiritual Man*, 50, 51.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>51</sup> Erre, 138.

<sup>52</sup> Andrew Murray. *Covenants and Blessings* (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1984), 9.

God, ourselves, others, and nature. ... God's redemptive plan is to restore relationships on every level.”<sup>53</sup> Atkinson makes a similar statement:

While humankind was created for community, it suffered serious interpersonal consequences because of the fall (Gen. 3). The onset of sin brought with it adverse effects in virtually all relationships; estrangement from God (Ro. 5:10) and alienation in our interpersonal connectedness with fellow human beings (Gal 5:20). Our failure takes from us the pleasures of community that God intended for us and leaves us alienated, isolated, lonely, and disconnected.<sup>54</sup>

### **REVITALIZING RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH DEATH**

Beginning with the promise in Gen. 3:15, God would continue to foretell the coming of a Savior through the OT prophets (Acts 10:43). The entire sacrificial system was pointing towards “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29).<sup>55</sup> In the ceremonial system, there were numerous rituals to be performed for personal atonement; and there was no such thing as a once and for all sacrifice. Consequently, the Old Covenant (OC) involved endless activities by mankind, through the mediation of a priest, to get right with God. The OC reveals that the efforts of man were never enough (Heb. 7:27) and something other than animal’s blood was required (Heb. 9:12).

Referring to the OC, Paul states, “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were

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<sup>53</sup> Kenneth Boa. *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 417.

<sup>54</sup> Atkinson, 14.

<sup>55</sup> 5 BC, 908.

under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons” (Gal. 4:4, 5).<sup>56</sup> Those who were under the law were under the curse of the law (Gal. 3:10). “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them” (v. 10). Therefore, since it is impossible to perfectly obey the law, every follower of God has lived under the curse of the law; and it is this curse from which Jesus redeemed us. Jesus did not merely redeem man from a ceremonial system; redemption included the OC—the Judaic laws—and the Decalogue.<sup>57</sup>

Paul seems to be the only NT writer that clearly understands the distinction between the OC and the New Covenant (NC), contrasting it through opposing terms (i.e. Gal. 4)—the efforts of the flesh and grace (v. 21-31). Additionally, Paul is the only NT writer who uniquely explains the gospel as being in Christ and separate from the law; whereas, the other apostles did not seem to fully grasp this distinction.<sup>58</sup> Murray cautions that many Christians still fail to understand the work of the law and live by the OC. His logic is as follows: 1) The law explains what is right and wrong; 2) What is written seems fair and reasonable to the mind; 3) The fairness of the law appeals to the natural sense of the will to obey it (although, the will is incapable of obeying); and 4) The law completes its mission by bringing man to the point of failure and despair—the need for what work’s—the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>59</sup> Obviously, these points by Murray could be

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<sup>56</sup> 6 BC, 965

<sup>57</sup> 6 BC, 933.

<sup>58</sup> Ray Sherman Anderson. *An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Press, 2006), 50.

<sup>59</sup> Murray, 54, 55.

considered a summary of Romans 7; as well, leading into the discussion of the law of the Spirit delivering us from the law of sin and death in Romans 8.

There are some exceptions (e.g. Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, etc.) in the Old Testament but, overall, the OC failed.<sup>60</sup> Clearly, the OC was not helpful for most, since they did not live by faith (Heb. 4:2). The reason for the failure of the OC was due to it being law and flesh driven.<sup>61</sup> Additionally, “there was always one problem: man’s heart was not right with God.”<sup>62</sup> Paul declares the problem with the OC: “the letter kills” (2 Cor. 3:6); the law condemns and functions as the ally of sin (Ro. 7:7); and it could never produce righteousness (Gal. 2:16). Simply put, the “law is not of faith” (Gal. 3:12). The OC was only intended to convict of sin (Ro. 3:20) and lead to Christ (Gal. 3:24). Therefore, the intent of being led to Christ is to meet Him at Calvary.

Jesus said, “Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (Jn. 3:3). Obviously, to be born again implies the necessity of dying. This was Jesus point to Nicodemus and is why Jesus said, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, “that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (v. 14, 15). Jesus revealed the death of humanity at Calvary, and is why Paul declared, “I am crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:20). The work of the cross, by faith, is to make the carnal nature inoperative (Ro. 6:6).<sup>63</sup> That is why Paul said, “If

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>63</sup> Vine, Vine’s expository dictionary [computer file], electronic ed.

anyone is *in Christ*,<sup>64</sup> he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). Similarly, “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Ro. 6:4).

The NC is about living a completely new life. The most significant difference between the NC and the OC is that God promises to do everything. “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them” (Ez. 36:26, 27). There is not a single suggestion in the NC of man helping God in this endeavor. In describing God’s responsibility, Murray says,

He wants to make us entirely dependent upon Him, to bring us into the right position and attitude so He can fill us with Himself and His love. ... In the New Covenant God proves what He can do with man, unfaithful and weak as he is, when He is allowed and trusted to do all the work. ... Liberty from sin and self ... [is the result of] ... God’s being and doing all within him.<sup>65</sup>

The NC does not function by human ingenuity or striving. The success of the NC is entirely based on trusting the Holy Spirit to do His work within the human heart.<sup>66</sup>

Stated differently,

It is only by a God-given faith that we can appropriate these God-given promises. It is only by God-given teaching and inward illumination that we can see their meaning and believe them. When God teaches us the meaning of His promises in

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<sup>64</sup> Italics supplied.

<sup>65</sup> Murray, 14, 16, 18.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

a heart yielded to His Holy Spirit, then we can believe and receive them in a power which makes them a reality in our life.<sup>67</sup>

Consequently, there is an absolute necessity of the Holy Spirit revealing humanity's position as being in Christ. The human mind, however, is incapable of grasping this spiritual truth by logic alone. When the Holy Spirit illuminates the truth of being in Christ, it becomes a power for godly living.<sup>68</sup>

Over centuries of time, God revealed, through the OC, that no amount of rules and regulations were capable of reforming and controlling the flesh.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, the only way to deal with the flesh was to put it to death through His Son. "The crucifixion put an end to the history of human actions as a criterion. ... Only a wrong interpretation of the Old Testament law could see the regulation of the 'flesh' as being the criterion for righteousness."<sup>70</sup> Jesus, Himself, actually condemned (*katakrino*—a strengthened form for rendering judgment against)<sup>71</sup> sin in the flesh through His righteous life and sacrificial death.<sup>72</sup> Our entering into Christ's death by faith eliminates the need of self-effort. Jesus said, "It is the Spirit who spiritually empowers life; the flesh is useless" (Jn. 6:63).<sup>73</sup> In the flesh, resides no power to contend with sinful urges.<sup>74</sup> Of course, this is why Paul

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>68</sup> Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, 136.

<sup>69</sup> The entire Old Testament testifies to this and is Paul's point in Romans 7.

<sup>70</sup> Ray Sherman Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Press, 2001), 80, 83.

<sup>71</sup> Vine, Vine's expository dictionary [computer file], electronic ed.

<sup>72</sup> 6BC, 562.

<sup>73</sup> Personal paraphrase.

<sup>74</sup> Crabb, 137.

said, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). “The energy of Christ is released most fully when we most completely come to an end of ourselves.”<sup>75</sup> This was Paul’s point, when he declared that God’s strength was made perfect in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). The believer’s responsibility is to remain in Christ and allow God to do His work within the human heart.<sup>76</sup> Paul declared, “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). Jesus made a similar point when He said, “The branch cannot bear fruit of itself ... I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (Jn. 15:4, 5).

Because of the redemption of Christ, a new law is in effect. The law of the Spirit sets man free from the law of sin and death (Ro. 8:2). No longer is it about striving to meet a standard, since it has been “fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (v.4). “All that is in Christ comes to us by free grace, without effort on our part but on the ground of simple faith.”<sup>77</sup> “Man’s way is to try to suppress sin by seeking to overcome it; God’s way is to remove the sinner.”<sup>78</sup> The Christian life is a walk, not a work;<sup>79</sup> which means the focus is remaining in Christ.<sup>80</sup> Paul said, “Fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12), “for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood”

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<sup>75</sup> Crabb, 179.

<sup>76</sup> Murray, 63.

<sup>77</sup> Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, 49.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

(Eph. 6:12). “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds” (2 Cor. 10:3, 4). Therefore, man is no longer bound to the Law but to a Living Person.<sup>81</sup>

Anderson writes, “Grace is not permission to live without any law but to live with Christ under the law of the Spirit.”<sup>82</sup> Therefore, obedience and righteousness is the result of being in Christ. Through the law of the Spirit, the flesh cannot operate (Gal. 5:16). Why is it important to live by the law of the Spirit? Because striving to be obedient means the flesh is active, and self is living under the law of sin and death.<sup>83</sup> This is exactly why Paul talks about both being dead to sin (Ro. 6) and to the law (Ro. 7). Any time the flesh becomes active, the end result is defeat and misery (Ro. 7:25). Another detrimental effect of living through the activity of the flesh—it results in self-righteousness and quenching the Spirit.<sup>84</sup>

### WHAT IMPACTS SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY

Pretentiousness is not only detrimental to an individual’s spiritual experience; it dramatically influences relationships with other believers. Paul discusses the importance of walking in the light, rather than in darkness (Eph. 5:8-13). Consequently, to not live in reality is to live from a dark, secret, place. To not live in reality is to not live in integrity;

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<sup>81</sup> Murray, 39.

<sup>82</sup> Anderson, *An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches*, 90.

<sup>83</sup> Nee, *The Spiritual Man*, 102.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

and this detrimentally affects horizontal and vertical relationships.<sup>85</sup> The intent of relationships is to foster trust through openness and vulnerability.<sup>86</sup>

Therefore, bondage to the flesh interferes with community with God and His body; this is because self-righteousness replaces the righteousness of Christ.<sup>87</sup> Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “you are still carnal ... behaving like mere men” (1 Cor. 3:3). Spiritual community is all about relating with Christ, His Spirit, and His believers. Bonhoeffer recognized that Christian community is the result of grace alone. It was because of an “alien righteousness” (a righteousness outside of ourselves) that unites us to Christ and that “grace ... alone is the basis for the longing of Christians for one another.”<sup>88</sup> Grace is what makes spiritual community and the ability to love one another possible.<sup>89</sup> What created spiritual community within the NT Church was the working of the Holy Spirit, due to the crucified and risen Lord.<sup>90</sup>

According to Bonhoeffer, what defines spiritual is “that which is created only by the Holy Spirit, who puts Jesus into our hearts as Lord and Saviour.”<sup>91</sup> Interestingly, the word for spiritual (*pneumatikos*) is “an after-Pentecost word.”<sup>92</sup> According to Vines, *pneumatikos* predominantly refers to “all that is produced and maintained among men by

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<sup>85</sup> Sweet, *So Beautiful*, 116.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>87</sup> Murray, 37, 38.

<sup>88</sup> Bonhoeffer, 20-23.

<sup>89</sup> Anderson, *An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches*, 150.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>91</sup> Bonhoeffer, 31.

<sup>92</sup> Vine, *Vine's expository dictionary* [computer file], electronic ed.

the operations of the Spirit of God.”<sup>93</sup> MacIntosh recognizes that *pneumatikos* was originally understood to refer to what the community received through the resurrection of Christ and maintained under the direction of the Holy Spirit. He adds that it would not be until the 12<sup>th</sup> century (A.D.) that the definition of spirituality became privatized.<sup>94</sup> Sweet asserts, “Spiritual has been stripped of its biblical and Trinitarian roots, corrupted by its association with psychology, consumerism, narcissism, and the paranormal.”<sup>95</sup> Although individual spiritual experience exists, it is through relationships—with God and in community with others—“that we can get the closest to experiencing God.”<sup>96</sup>

During the ministry of Christ, His disciples ambition was tainted by individual attainment (Mt. 20:20-28); as well, there is evidence of the Spirit’s influence upon them.<sup>97</sup> For example, Jesus commended Peter, “for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven” (Mt. 16:17); then, moments later, Jesus “said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.” It is apparent that the disciples needed more than Jesus could give them, and this is why He said,

I cannot state this truth more emphatically,<sup>98</sup> it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. ... I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> McIntosh, 6, 7.

<sup>95</sup> Sweet, *So Beautiful*, 139.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>97</sup> 5 BC, 465.

<sup>98</sup> Personal paraphrase.

hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you (Jn. 16:12-14).

The Greek word for “advantage,” *sumphero*, literally means “to bring together.”<sup>99</sup> Jesus knew His disciples had a far greater need of His indwelling presence than they did of His bodily presence. The only One who could bring them together—unite them—was the Holy Spirit.

Jesus commanded His disciples, just before ascending to heaven, to have one focus—the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4, 5). Their obedience to Jesus command resulted in being together with one passion (*homothumadon*)<sup>100</sup>—and receiving the Power He had promised. Jesus prophesied, “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (Jn. 7:38, 39). On the day of Pentecost, Peter explained the outpouring of God’s Spirit as evidence of the exaltation of Christ “to the right hand of God” (Acts 2:33). It is evident that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost is clearly the result of the glorification of Jesus in heaven; and not about the achievement of the flesh. Evidently, they prayed for ten days, and the Holy Spirit came upon all believers present.<sup>101</sup> The Scripture plainly reveals what the Holy Spirit can achieve through those who believe in Christ.

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<sup>99</sup> Vine, Vine’s expository dictionary [computer file], electronic ed.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> 6 BC, 137.

After Pentecost and early in the life of the NT Church, this description is given:

They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house ... (Acts 2:42-46).

Following the baptism of the new believers, three words stand out—"they continued steadfastly." The verb, *proskartereo*, literally means "to be strong towards ... to endure in, or persevere in"<sup>102</sup> ... to give constant attention to."<sup>103</sup> The Spirit prompted a tremendous dedication and aspiration for communing with God and one another (v.46). The apostles realized community was vital to the existence of the Church; so they met daily.<sup>104</sup>

### **IT TAKES THE HEAD AND THE BODY TO BE ALIVE**

Although, the NT Church manifests spiritual community in the book of Acts, the apostle Paul wrote the theological rationale for it.<sup>105</sup> He used a very powerful metaphor—two inseparable parts—Christ, as the Head and His Church as the body (Ro. 12; 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4). Mankind was reconciled "in one body through the cross (Eph. 2:16). That is why, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith ..." (Eph. 4:4, 5).

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<sup>102</sup> Vine, Vine's expository dictionary [computer file], electronic ed.

<sup>103</sup> 6 BC, 148.

<sup>104</sup> Atkinson, 86.

<sup>105</sup> Anderson, An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches, 69.

Paul “utilized the word body (*soma*) more than thirty times to illustrate how the Church should function.”<sup>106</sup> Not only were believers to understand their identity “in Christ,” they were also to realize their connection to each other as parts of the body (1 Cor. 12:14). Paul explains that although some parts of the body are more prominent in function, in no way was it to imply greater distinction. He reminds that “God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased” (v. 18). Paul describes how the gifts or parts work:

The manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all ... for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills (1 Cor. 12:7-11).

The emphasis is upon the gifts as a manifestation of the Spirit to benefit the entire Body. Paul also makes it clear that gifts are not bestowed, due to human choice, but by the will of the Spirit (v.11). Due to certain gifts, self-righteous pride was a significant problem for the Church at Corinth. Regardless of their function or giftedness, they were to remain humble (Ro. 12:3, 10, 16) and remember they were part of a greater whole (v. 12). Finally, Paul encourages them to be zealous for the greater (*meizon*)<sup>107</sup> gifts, “and yet I show you a more excellent way” (12:31).

The very best gifts are for loving (1 Cor. 13) and ministering (*katargazomai*)<sup>108</sup> to others; especially, “the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10). Jesus said, “Love one another, as

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<sup>106</sup> Atkinson, 32, 33.

<sup>107</sup> Vine, Vine’s expository dictionary [computer file], electronic ed.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

I have loved you” (Jn. 13: 34); and He explains this as, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (Jn. 15:13). The members at Philippi were told to consider others as superior (*huperecho*)<sup>109</sup> to themselves; and, then, explains humility is to have the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:3-8).

Paul discusses the body connection as being so close that “when one member hurts, all hurt; when one member rejoices, all rejoice” (1Cor. 12:26). He, also, acknowledged the possibility of a schism (v. 25). “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another” (Gal. 5:13-15). Paul’s analogy—the body may function like an auto-immune disorder—whereby, the body attacks and destroys healthy tissue.<sup>110</sup>

### **FELLOWSHIP IS REAL, NOT JUST AN IDEAL**

The NT Church possessed a unique community (Acts 2:42- 47). The Greek word for fellowship, *koinonia*, is rich in meaning. It “embodies the idea of community and communion, or having a common ground.”<sup>111</sup> Atkinson speaks of two features to *koinonia*: “what we share in together (our spiritual inheritance) and what we share with one another.”<sup>112</sup> Hospitality included food, and the sharing of a meal was considered “the

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000816.htm> (accessed September 28, 2013).

<sup>111</sup> Atkinson, 70, as quoted from John Paul Vandenakker, 1994, 5.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 70.

second most intimate relationship that you could have with someone.”<sup>113</sup> In the NT, fellowship was “a mutual sharing in some blessing or experience.”<sup>114</sup>

Swift views one of Paul’s major themes in the book of Philippians as “a partnership [*koinonia*] in the gospel” [Phil. 1:5].<sup>115</sup> “The confirmation of the gospel [is that] you all are partakers with me of grace (v. 7). Their work on behalf of the gospel is true *κοινωνία* with God only to the degree that it is motivated by *αγάπη* (‘self-sacrificing love’).”<sup>116</sup> Therefore, *koinonia* is a shared life that is the result of the gospel, experienced with God and fellow believers, and motivated by love. Paul said that love is what binds us together perfectly (Col. 3:14). Clearly, the Body, the Spirit, Jesus, faith, and love are complementary to fellowship or spiritual community.

### THE MODEL FOR SUPPORTING ONE ANOTHER

During His earthly ministry, Jesus provided a visible model “for human fellowship and encouragement ... [by choosing] twelve men who would serve as His support group.”<sup>117</sup> It is also interesting to note that Jesus devoted the majority of his time to associating with this group of twelve men. Because of this, Jesus gave His Church a strategy for functioning, since He emphasized “interpersonal relationships ... in small

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<sup>113</sup> Sweet, *So Beautiful*, 77.

<sup>114</sup> 8 BC, 347.

<sup>115</sup> Swift, Robert C. “The Theme and Structure of Philippians.” *Bibliotheca sacra* 141, no. 563 (1984): 237.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid*, p. 239; as cited from H.A.W. Meyer, 1889, 49.

<sup>117</sup> Atkinson, 80.

groups.”<sup>118</sup> It is apparent that the apostles incorporated this model, since the saints met together in the temple as well as in their homes. Atkinson specifically refers to these meetings in the homes as house groups.<sup>119</sup> It appears that these house groups met for the purposes of worship and nurture, with one of the major intentions being to encourage perseverance in the faith.<sup>120</sup> Meeting together had clear objectives, as can be ascertained from admonitions such as:

Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end (Heb. 3:12-14).

Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching (Heb. 10:24, 25).

We should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. Therefore, putting away lying, let each one *of you* speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. . . . Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. . . . And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you (Eph. 4:14-16, 25, 29, 32).

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light . . . finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. . . . But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light . . . See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand

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<sup>118</sup> Atkinson, 81, 82.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

what the will of the Lord *is*. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God (Eph. 5:8, 10, 11, 13, 15-21).

Confess *your* trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed (Ja. 5:16).

From these passages, believers met in homes to foster steadfast faithfulness to spiritual maturity. In addition, they were to meet more often, as they sensed the nearness of Christ's coming (Heb. 10:25).<sup>121</sup>

### **THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS**

In the NT Church, there was no earthly priest who mediated for the Church. Instead, Christ established a kingdom that made every member a priest (1 Pt. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6).<sup>122</sup> Through His sacrifice, Jesus provided access (Eph. 2:18) as well as confidence to approach God (Heb. 4:16), since Jesus was continually mediating for them (Heb. 7:25). Fittingly, believers were encouraged to make their requests known before God (Phil. 4:6); whether such petitions were for themselves or on behalf of others.<sup>123</sup> The idea of the priesthood of all believers involved more than just prayer. Members were encouraged to be truthful and confess their sins to one another and be healed (Ja. 5:16). Matthew Henry believes James is advocating for more than just asking forgiveness when one member wrongs another. He recognizes the power of confessing our sin to those we trust to

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<sup>121</sup> 7 BC, 464.

<sup>122</sup> 7 BC, 733.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

genuinely love us.<sup>124</sup> Apparently, confession included transparency to the Body and reclaiming ground from demonic forces (Eph. 4:27; 2 Cor. 4:2); whereas, the lack of confessing contributed to creating barriers, false pretence, and lack of transparency.<sup>125</sup>

Through confession vulnerability occurs; and openness exposes what is hidden; then, spiritual healing and growth can be experienced.<sup>126</sup> From personal experience, there is an enormous difference between blaming and shaming and the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation. I know how it feels to have brothers love and accept me despite my wrongdoing; form a circle around me and lift up my spirit through the laying on of hands and prayer. Forgiveness is all about grace; it is not about getting even.<sup>127</sup> “Confession is a bridge, something that strengthens a relationship and unlocks the chambers of shame that darken a person’s soul, so the individual can experience a greater measure of freedom in Christ.”<sup>128</sup> It is intriguing to note, the spiritually mature are open and vulnerable to others;<sup>129</sup> whereas, those who resist openness and vulnerability have a tendency to turn toward perfectionism.<sup>130</sup> The idea of confessing “our deepest concerns and our most

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<sup>124</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997).

<sup>125</sup> Boa, 433.

<sup>126</sup> Stephen Arterburn and Jack Felton. *More Jesus, Less Religion: Moving from Rules to Relationship* (1st ed. Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2000), 93.

<sup>127</sup> Sweet, *So Beautiful*, 238.

<sup>128</sup> Arterburn and Felton, 133.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

internal battles” was lost by the Church at some point; therefore, creating the need for wearing masks.<sup>131</sup>

### ACHIEVING ONENESS THROUGH CHRIST

Jesus prayed for His Church, “that they may be one just as We are one” (Jn. 17:22). The Trinity teaches the importance of connecting with one another is as vital as blood is to the body.<sup>132</sup> There is, however, another trinity that can interfere with unity—“the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 Jn. 2:16). It does not take any imagination to understand how the flesh commits sinful acts. A more subtle form of sin is attempting right doing through the flesh. It is often referred to as self-righteousness; although Christians do not generally view good deeds by the flesh as sinful.<sup>133</sup> “Wherever the power of natural man dominates, there you have an element in that system which is under the direct inspiration of Satan.”<sup>134</sup> An interesting definition of sin is anything done outside of God dependency;<sup>135</sup> or, “any effort to make life work without absolute dependence on God.”<sup>136</sup>

The apostle Paul wrote much about the flesh—it is the cause of carnal behavior and division (1 Cor. 3:3). The resurrected life is described as, “the love of Christ compels us ... [to] live no longer for [self] ... but for Him who died ... and rose again. Therefore,

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<sup>131</sup> Crabb, 98.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>133</sup> Watchman Nee. *Love Not the World* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1978), 38.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>135</sup> Sweet, *So Beautiful*, 137.

<sup>136</sup> Crabb, 92.

from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh” (2 Cor. 5:14-16). The word for compel (*sunecho*) means “to hold together.”<sup>137</sup> Clearly, Paul acknowledges that there are two laws operating in the heart of believers—the law of the spirit and the law of love:

“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit (Ro. 8:5); “because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us (Ro. 5:5), it is the love of Christ that holds us together” (Col. 3:14).

“It is not human love ... but God’s love that empowers [us] to fulfill the law of God ... and the Spirit of Christ within us that empowers our love for others. ... [It is] ... grace, not guilt, that motivates us to live by the law of love.”<sup>138</sup> Anderson recognizes that God’s love and His Spirit empowers and motivates us to love others; conversely, societal demands are a forced compliance and, therefore, represent a *pseudo-love*. It should be considered ludicrous to think that human love is capable of fulfilling God’s law of love. In fact, it is impossible to love as long as law or right doing is the focus; it merely represents self-effort. Love is not flesh achieved but Spirit-achieved.<sup>139</sup> As Anderson put it, “we cannot be a community of love without being a community filled with the Spirit.”<sup>140</sup>

What divided humanity —the flesh and the law—has been eliminated through the death of Christ. It revolutionizes relationships when the Spirit reveals that Jesus “is our peace.” Alienation no longer exists, because of oneness in Christ. Reconciliation of

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<sup>137</sup> Vine, Vine’s expository dictionary [computer file], electronic ed.

<sup>138</sup> Anderson, *An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches*, 141, 142, 150.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

relationships—earthly and heavenly—is the work of Jesus Christ. His death created peace and unity. As a result, the key to unity is a living faith in Christ (Eph. 2:14-18). In no way, however, does this imply that harmony is guaranteed to exist among the saints.

For the Church to represent His Body as a living organism, it was essential for the Church to maintain being in Christ and Christ dwelling in the believer. The intent of ministry is edification of the body and evangelism of “outsiders”; this occurs through having an upward and outward connection.<sup>141</sup> “Community is the bridge that connects solitude (intimacy with God) with ministry to believers and unbelievers.”<sup>142</sup> The expectation was that “conversion to Christ and to the cross should lead in turn to conversion to community.”<sup>143</sup> Community was considered as “the context for the individual's growth into full personhood and spiritual maturity.”<sup>144</sup> Therefore, what was happening in the NT Church was not an attempt at community; they were a living community of Christ!<sup>145</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Man and woman were made in God’s image. In their similarities and differences, both male and female reflect qualities of *imago Dei*. There are many attributes to being in God’s image; yet, all are for the sake of a relationship with God and one another. After the Fall, mankind relates differently to God and one other. Sin reintroduced chaos to

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<sup>141</sup> Boa, 420.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 418.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 424.

<sup>144</sup> Atkinson, 16.

<sup>145</sup> Leonard I. Sweet. *The Church of the Perfect Storm* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008), 63.

planet Earth. Clearly, sin infected humanity's devotion and aspiration for God. As a result, God revealed the need for divine intervention through a Redeemer (Gen. 3:15).

It is obvious Jesus death and resurrection changed how mankind relates to God and to each other (Eph. 2:11-22). The book of Acts is a testimony of how the Spirit appropriates the work of Christ (life, death, and resurrection) into the life of the NT Community. Obedience and community were the result of being in Christ; walking in the Spirit and not in the flesh. Consequently, obedience and community were totally a work of grace. Grace allowed for communing with God and loving one another to be a reality. To a great extent, community in the NT Church occurred in the homes of believers. Primarily, the "House Church" was for the sake of spiritual nurture and growth, in addition to winning new converts. The existence of community was dependent upon the application of grace toward one another through the priesthood of all believers. Therefore, connecting was the life blood that would preserve the Church as a living organism.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE CHANGING COMMUNITY

There are unprecedented events occurring in the book of Acts: Jesus ascends to heaven, the Spirit infuses believers, and extraordinary miracles abound. Following the spectacular day of Pentecost, an unseen power stirs the hearts of believers for one another; and spiritual community is born (2:42). Spiritual community was the result of being connected to God and to fellow believers.<sup>1</sup> Yet, “the intimate, close-knit life of the local groups was seen to be simultaneously part of a much larger, indeed ultimately worldwide, movement or entity.”<sup>2</sup>

Even though the Church in the book of Acts seems alive and well, there were challenges to address. The Church was rapidly growing numerically, and it was important to adapt and be relevant to the various needs of members. In Acts 6, the Church demonstrates such flexibility. As the Church evolved, the leadership improved their efficiency through the development of offices and particular governing rules.<sup>3</sup> The exponential growth was the result of the Spirit. At Pentecost, many Hellenistic Jews witnessed the miracle of hearing the gospel in their own language.<sup>4</sup> After Peter’s sermon (Acts 2), “about three thousand souls were added” (v. 41) to the Church. Later, “the number of the men came to be about 5,000” (Acts 4:4); “believers were increasingly

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<sup>1</sup> Boa, 420.

<sup>2</sup> Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 75.

<sup>3</sup> 6 BC, 188.

<sup>4</sup> Earle Edwin Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries: A History of the Christian Church* (Rev. and enl. ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 56.

added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women” (5:14); and, “the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith” (6:7).

The Church was suddenly viewed by Judaism as a threat to its own existence. Subsequently, the Jewish leaders made a decisive response (Acts 7, 8).<sup>5</sup> However, this “great persecution” did not squelch this new movement; it expanded it (Acts 8:1). This persecution and God’s ensuing intervention later led to the conversion of Saul (or Paul, Acts 9), who would devote his life of ministry to the Gentiles and become the major contributor to the writings of the NT.

Following his conversion, there are questions about Paul’s activity.<sup>6</sup> Apparently, he was in Arabia for three years (Gal. 1:17, 18); then, he went to Jerusalem for 15 days (v. 18). After a threat on his life, Paul was sent to his home province (Acts 9:30; Gal. 1:21), where he ministered for about five years.<sup>7</sup> Later, Barnabas knows Paul’s whereabouts, and recruits his services at Antioch (Acts 11:25).<sup>8</sup> Paul preached the gospel to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:2), and it was at Antioch where believers “were first called Christians” (Acts 11:26). The rumors spread about the Antioch experience, which attracted unauthorized visitors.<sup>9</sup> A great conflict ensued, which led to the Jerusalem counsel (Acts 15:6-29).

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<sup>5</sup> Cairns, 56.

<sup>6</sup> Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*. (3d ed. New York: Scribner, 1970), 25.

<sup>7</sup> 6 BC, 942.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 265.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 305.

## THE GREAT DIVIDE—LAW AND GRACE

There were several barriers for the Christian leadership at this time, and these are evident in the books of Acts and Galatians. To a large degree, Christian identity and theology were rooted in Judaism. Even though the veil had been removed by Christ, Jewish traditions and laws “continued as the theological litmus test of conformity and community.”<sup>10</sup> Consecutively, church structure and authority were intertwined with the Jerusalem Church; and a contrast between a theology of revelation (Antioch) and a theology of religion (Jerusalem) is distinguishable. “The theology of the Jerusalem church was committed to historical precedent, crippled by religious scruple and controlled by a fortress mentality.”<sup>11</sup> A line of demarcation existed between revelation as law-based and Paul’s theology as spirit-revealed; and Paul frequently encountered opposition.<sup>12</sup> Paul did not recognize apostolic succession; instead, he developed an “eschatological reality” through the acts of Christ as revealed by the Holy Spirit.<sup>13</sup>

This Spirit-revealed emphasis is made to the church at Ephesus: “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened” (Eph. 1:17, 18). To the church at Corinth, Paul stresses that his presentation of the gospel was not by human articulation or persuasiveness, so “that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God” (1 Cor. 2:4, 5). The wisdom of God, as revealed

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<sup>10</sup> Anderson, *An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches*, 23.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-28.

through Christ, can only be understood as the Holy Spirit reveals it (1 Cor. 2:12-14). Consequently, truth can only be believed and obeyed by faith as it is revealed through the Holy Spirit.<sup>14</sup> Anderson declares: “The revelation of God through Jesus Christ is so profound in its realism when grasped by faith and empowered by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>15</sup> Murray similarly states that “the letter kills” and “the flesh profits nothing;” only as truth from the Word of God is revealed to the heart of faith, through being revealed by the Holy Spirit, does it become living. He further emphasizes that it is only by grace and the indwelling spirit that a believer can then be obedient to God’s Word.<sup>16</sup>

The Jerusalem Counsel failed to resolve the division within the Church over law and grace. They merely “placed a plaster on a malignancy in Jewish Christianity.”<sup>17</sup> However, some good came out of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), since they would not make the Jewish laws binding on Gentiles; and Peter, James, and John affirmed Paul’s calling to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:9). The “right hand of fellowship” ... [affirmed] ... “that we should go to the Gentiles” (Gal. 1:9).

### **STRATEGY OF THE HOUSE CHURCH**

Acts largely describes Paul’s activities,<sup>18</sup> although it is difficult to detect his tactic for winning converts—the house church; although other apostles also used the home for

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<sup>14</sup> Murray, 95.

<sup>15</sup> Anderson, *An Emergent Theology For Emerging Churches*, 41.

<sup>16</sup> Murray, 94.

<sup>17</sup> Martin E. Marty, *A Short History of Christianity* (12<sup>th</sup> printing. New York: Collins World, 1975), 48.

<sup>18</sup> 6 BC, 113.

instructing believers (Acts 2:46; 5:42). “Paul’s deliberate missionary strategy was to convert entire households to Christianity and then use the homes as the bases for further missionary and church growth activity.”<sup>19</sup> It appears that most of the churches Paul references in his letters were home churches (1 Cor. 16:19; Philemon 2, and Romans 16:6, 23).<sup>20</sup> Considering the social structure of Roman society, Green considers Paul’s focal point of the home as the perfect strategy.<sup>21</sup> “At that time, “the Roman Empire witnessed a proliferation of clubs, guilds, and associations.”<sup>22</sup> As a result, many levels of society that were unwelcome into these groups found acceptance into house churches. One of the more appealing aspects of Christianity was the acceptance of people regardless of slave or free, ethnicity, etc.; thus, it was unique in “crossing social stratifications.”<sup>23</sup>

Considering that the finest of homes could contain no more than 45 people, presented obvious limitations for house churches.<sup>24</sup> The popularity of Christianity increased to such a degree during the second century that many homes could no longer accommodate the worshipers. As a result, some of the larger cities, like Rome and

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<sup>19</sup> Abraham Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity* (2nd ed. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 86.

<sup>20</sup> Meeks, 75.

<sup>21</sup> Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 208-9.

<sup>22</sup> Atkinson, 90.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 90-92.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

Alexandria, constructed church buildings. As early as 200 A.D., Clement of Rome mentions that some believers met in homes and others in buildings.<sup>25</sup>

### THE CHANGING OF THE GUARD

After the time of the apostles, the record “from 70 [A.D.] to 110” [A.D.] is inadequate for understanding what occurred during this span of time.<sup>26</sup> However, by the early part of the second century, it is clear that the Church was no longer being influenced by Pauline theology.<sup>27</sup> The focus was no longer on grace or dependence upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit.<sup>28</sup> Walker adds,

An inrush of ideas from other than Christian sources, brought undoubtedly by converts of heathen antecedents, modified Christian beliefs and practices, especially regarding the sacraments, fastings, and the rise of liturgical forms. ... Common Christianity ... was far from representing, or even understanding, the lofty theology of Paul or of the Johannine literature. It moved in a much simpler range of thought. Profoundly loyal to Christ, it conceived of Him primarily as the divine revealer of the knowledge of the true God, and the proclaimer of a ‘new law’ of simple, lofty, and strenuous morality. ... Christian life was ascetic and legalistic.<sup>29</sup> ... Simple repentance is not sufficient for forgiveness, there must be satisfaction. A Christian can even do more than God demands—works of supererogation—and will receive a corresponding reward.<sup>30</sup>

Hermas taught that it was possible to exceed the requirements of God and to be additionally rewarded by God. After Hermas, there was an increasing emphasis on human

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 94, 95.

<sup>26</sup> Mark A. Noll, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity* (7th ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 31; Walker, 31.

<sup>27</sup> Marty, 65, 66; Walker, 31

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 31, 37, 38.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 38; as cited from Hermas, Sim., 5:2, 3.

performance leading toward progressive holiness, which was laying the foundation for monasticism.<sup>31</sup>

Paul foretold of an apostasy, expressing imminent concern “that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock” (Acts 20: 29). Unmistakably, the threat was internal (v. 29); the intent—to distort the truth and lead others into error (v. 30). Appropriately, Paul sensed an immediate risk to the gospel of grace (v. 32). In his letters, Paul wrote of “the freedom of Christianity from all obligation to the Jewish law.”<sup>32</sup> Not long after Paul’s death, leaders were teaching believers about rules to live by.<sup>33</sup>

Despite Paul’s warning, it is amazing how quickly Christianity moved away from the divine blueprint. After most of the apostles had died, an enormous cultural shift occurred within Christianity, propelling the Church down a slippery slope. Noll describes the changes—with the absence of the apostles and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.—as the Church going through an identity crisis. Additionally, he commends Church leaders, because they sought stability through better organization.<sup>34</sup>

Therefore, Christian theologians led a movement to justify the correlation between Christian teaching and philosophy which influenced “the early development of Christian thought.”<sup>35</sup> Similarly, Anderson states, “Among the theologians of the early church, Christology became more of a formal, academic and even philosophical inquiry

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<sup>31</sup> Walker, 95.

<sup>32</sup> Walker, 27.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>34</sup> Noll, 28.

<sup>35</sup> Justo L. González, *A History of Christian Thought* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), 48.

into and defense of the person of Christ.”<sup>36</sup> The Church desperately needed to define itself and sought stability through organizing its worship, beliefs, and system of ecclesiastical authority. The move towards the Church as an institution was influenced both by cultural progression as well as by a greater intentionality toward apostolicity. Over three centuries, such methodology would slowly develop into a fully institutionalized Church. Eventually, Rome replaced Jerusalem as the headquarters of Christianity.<sup>37</sup>

The Eucharist came to be regarded as “an act of unity with Christ;”<sup>38</sup> and during the second century, the Eucharist became the center-piece of corporate worship.<sup>39</sup> The prominence of the Eucharist and the Bishop were contrived to “stabilize [the] ... existence ... [of Christianity] by invoking institutional structures.”<sup>40</sup> Although these post-apostolic leaders were under duress and attempting to make relevant responses to their times, these institutional structures were not by the prompting of the Spirit. “Self seeking and fraudulent claimants to divine guidance were soon preying on the churches.”<sup>41</sup> Niebuhr<sup>42</sup> and Conniry<sup>43</sup> recognize Christianity often encountered challenges of relating to various cultures; being in the world but not conforming to the world.

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<sup>36</sup> Anderson, *An Emergent Theology For Emerging Churches*, 44, 45.

<sup>37</sup> Noll, *Turning Points*, 27, 28, 41.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 58, 94.

<sup>39</sup> Boa, 435.

<sup>40</sup> Charles J. Conniry, *Soaring in the Spirit: Rediscovering Mystery in the Christian Life, Faith in an Emerging Culture* (Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2007), 146.

<sup>41</sup> Walker, 40; as cited from J.C Ayer, 1913, 40.

<sup>42</sup> Richard H. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (1st ed. New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 11.

During the infancy of Christianity, the Roman Empire fostered the expanse of civilization, and one of the most popular trends was “religious syncretism”<sup>44</sup>—possessing the best and broadest belief system. “Individualism” and “cosmopolitanism” created synergy for these “syncretistic tendencies” and “the reception of eclectic doctrines.”<sup>45</sup> Christianity was attracted to what was popular in the Roman empire—“an interest in the practical, the moral, and the human.”<sup>46</sup> Therefore, the Church could not resist the temptation to be culturally relevant.

Even though the first three centuries could be interpreted as operating with genuine motives, the prevailing problem is the ultimate destination. Boa acknowledges, “Church history shows a decline” by substituting ministry as a gift for an office.<sup>47</sup> He also diagnoses this decline as “the disease of institutionalism,” since the Church was no longer about people.<sup>48</sup> The Church continued regressing, since church office was superior to spiritual gifts; and the disease became fully visible when the identity of the Church changed from a body, a living organism; to a building, a dead and static system.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Conniry, 160.

<sup>44</sup> Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought*, 58.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>47</sup> Boa, 307.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 428.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

## TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES

Clement (ca. 30-100 A.D.) was the first to speak about apostolic succession and elevated the office of the bishop.<sup>50</sup> Ignatius (1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> A.D.) uses the term “catholic church”, defining and defending monarchical episcopacy (bishops hold the highest office). He declared all is done by permission of the bishop and to oppose him is to oppose God; and “the church is more than a human institution.”<sup>51</sup> Hippolytus (c. 170-230), concurs with Tertullian (c. 150 – 225) by attributing the bishop with the title of high priest; although Hippolytus describes the bishop “the sole ordainer.”<sup>52</sup> Mainly, Gnosticism prompted the Church to formulate truth as residing in those directly linked to apostolic succession. Toward the end of the second century, a far different concept of apostolic succession would be adopted in Rome.<sup>53</sup> Eventually, the appeal came for unity in the Church through the episcopate. A recognizable theme in the third century—unity and truth, as well as the Bishop and the Church, are one and the same.<sup>54</sup>

Gonzalez recognizes baptism changing to a rite of purification; thus, it no longer symbolizes Christ’s death and resurrection. Furthermore, he notes a distancing between the Fathers and the theology of the apostle Paul, with the emphasis on what we do for

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<sup>50</sup> Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought*, 64.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 76, 77.

<sup>52</sup> Eric George Jay, “From Presbyter-Bishops to Bishops and Presbyters: Christian Ministry in the Second Century; a Survey,” *Second Century: A Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1, no. 3 (1981), 156.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 161, 162.

<sup>54</sup> Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought*, 249.

rather than what we are in Christ.<sup>55</sup> The initial attraction of pagans for Christianity was due to it being relationship-based and not primarily about dogma.<sup>56</sup> The formation of dogma was occurring, and the trend would only continue to grow.

### **ORTHODOXY AT ALL COSTS**

The apologists (mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D.), Justin Martyr being the most notable, were compelled to portray Christianity as appealing to the Hellenic mind. Consequently, they relied more upon philosophical discourse than their predecessors to prove that Christianity was a philosophy based upon divine revelation. Because Christianity was highly suspect, they were quite rational in justifying the legitimacy of their faith.<sup>57</sup> It was only natural, however, for the apologists, mostly trained in Greek philosophy before their conversion, to view “Greek philosophy as a means to lead men to Christ.”<sup>58</sup> As a result, they wrote in defense of their faith to false accusations, persecution, and heresy. Orthodoxy was the result of their efforts to combat heresy, which led to a formal NT canon, creeds, and apostolic succession.<sup>59</sup> Brown considers the triumph of orthodoxy as a positive development.<sup>60</sup> Noll views orthodoxy as a stabilizer. Christianity was vulnerable to attacks within and without. Irenaeus acknowledges over 200 influences threatening to

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 112, 113.

<sup>57</sup> Marty, 84

<sup>58</sup> Cairns, 106.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>60</sup> Raymond Edward Brown, *The Churches the Apostles Left Behind* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 17.

splinter Christianity into oblivion. To distinguish truth from error, a link to the apostle's needed to be established. Thus, apostolicity became the identifying criteria for including books in the Canon and legitimizing the episcopate. The creeds were considered useful for preparing baptismal candidates as well as safeguarding even the more seasoned believers from heresy. The creeds were also incorporated into more firmly formalizing liturgies.<sup>61</sup>

Although these efforts to protect Christianity seem apropos for these tumultuous times, it contributed to solidifying the establishment of institutionalism. Therefore, "the church during the second century moved toward a fixed and more uniform organization."<sup>62</sup> The prescription for health, according to Tertullian, was that the Scriptures were written for the Church; and only the Church "has the right to use and interpret them." Consequently, "the heretics are excluded from every discussion, and only the orthodox and apostolic church has the right to determine that which is Christian doctrine and that which is not."<sup>63</sup>

### INSTITUTIONALIZED

During the third century, Clement of Alexandria (?-c. 215) described clergy as in control of salvation and distinguishes professional office from the laity.<sup>64</sup> Cyprian (c. 200-258) viewed clergy "as sacrificing priests in offering up Christ's body and blood in

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<sup>61</sup> Noll, *Turning Points*, 30, 31, 44.

<sup>62</sup> Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought*, 150.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>64</sup> Darrell L. Guder and Lois Barrett. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 190.

the Communion service.” Additionally, he described the priest as representing Christ in the Eucharist.<sup>65</sup> By the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, the clergy fully assumed the place of Christ as mediator and were consistently called “priest.”<sup>66</sup> Noticeably, the Church reverted to OC theology.

In the fourth century, the emperor, Constantine, accelerated, complicated, and embedded the Church as an organization.<sup>67</sup> Originally, John Wesley considered the corruption of the Church as beginning with Constantine; later, he identified the mystery of iniquity as functioning within the Church as early as the first century. For Wesley, he saw seeds of apostolic succession germinating from the first century and its further exploitation by the time of Constantine.<sup>68</sup> Guder and Barrett recognize by the second century, the bishop of Rome is becoming the most powerful church figure.<sup>69</sup> Constantine, though, gave distinction to clergy as “a privileged class”<sup>70</sup> and Christianity enjoyed a favored status. The Church was not only protected by the state, it was controlled by it. The entire identity of the Church changed through becoming a department of the state. Some use the term “Caesaropapism” to specifically label the “monarchical control over ecclesiastical affairs.”<sup>71</sup> Walker remembers the apostles created offices—under the

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<sup>65</sup> Cairns, 113, 160.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>67</sup> Guder and Barrett, 191.

<sup>68</sup> Howard A. Snyder, *The Radical Wesley & Patterns for Church Renewal* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Press, 1980), 80, 82.

<sup>69</sup> Guder and Barrett, 232.

<sup>70</sup> Walker, 151.

<sup>71</sup> Marty, 141, 142.

direction of the Holy Spirit—in order to better function. He views no correlation, though, between the work of the apostles and the Catholic hierarchy.<sup>72</sup>

Celibacy was highly regarded as contributing to holiness by the time of Constantine. Many, by this time, considered the marriage of celibacy to the cleric as fostering a steadfast example of holiness.<sup>73</sup> As a result, the state authorized the ordination of clergy; this and celibacy created another distinction between the priest and laity.<sup>74</sup> Although Jerome (c. 345-420) advocated the virtues of celibacy over marriage,<sup>75</sup> the practice of celibacy among bishops would not be more fully established until the rule of Justinian in the sixth century.<sup>76</sup>

Although liturgy had become quite formal, the episcopacy demonstrated flexibility to accommodate the massive influx of pagans. The pagans were accustomed to tangible evidences to their worship, and “many church leaders believed that it would be necessary to materialize the liturgy to make God seem more accessible to these worshipers. The veneration of angels, saints, relics, pictures, and statues was a logical outcome. ... [and] a more aristocratic, colorful form of liturgy ... [also created] a sharply drawn distinction between the clergy and the laity.”<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Walker, 79.

<sup>73</sup> Walker, 151.

<sup>74</sup> Guder and Barrett, 191.

<sup>75</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (1st American ed. New York: Viking, 2010), 314.

<sup>76</sup> Walker, 141, 151.

<sup>77</sup> Cairns, 159, 160.

If the death knell for Christianity was not already sounding, surely the erection of cathedrals became its mausoleum. The Church is no longer following Christ, since Constantine, as Emperor, was the official head.<sup>78</sup> Constantine built a number of churches, and one of his more symbolic contributions—a church to honor the apostle Peter. During this time, extensive construction of church buildings occurred, adopting the architecture of the basilica—a well-known “design for civic and entertainment venues.”<sup>79</sup>

There is evidence of dedicated church structures existing during the late 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries A.D., but it was the Emperor Constantine who sealed the identity of the church to a building rather than as the living Body of Christ; and most of the episcopate viewed this “as offering unexpected opportunities”<sup>80</sup>—“stability, access to power, and a reasonable opportunity for wealth.”<sup>81</sup> It is only too apparent, there were:

Compromises with other masters ... [for] the development of ecclesiastical hierarchies based on secular models of monarchy. ... Organization entails the administration of power, which constantly reveals itself to be a seductive force trying to distort the gospel. ... [Ultimately] the reign of Christ is jeopardized when any organizational structure becomes an end of itself.<sup>82</sup>

Niebuhr says, “Sinful pride and idolatrous pretension are ... inevitable ... of large political groups. ... [Thus], exaltation above ... measure ... defines the Anti-Christ”. He then acknowledges how a “collective egotism”—creating something much bigger than oneself—is the spirit of Anti-Christ and has been revealed in history and, particularly,

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>79</sup> Cairns, 161.

<sup>80</sup> Justo L. González. *The Story of Christianity* (1st ed. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 125.

<sup>81</sup> Noll, *Turning Points*, 88.

<sup>82</sup> Guder and Barrett, 228-231.

within Christianity.<sup>83</sup> “All idolatry has its source in the desire to make the way to God more certain and more manageable.”<sup>84</sup> Even though the Son of God had provided the way to God through the cross, the Church developed a more profitable way to worship.

### MONASTICISM

Prior to Constantine, spiritual community was replaced by religious dogma, formalism, and power-broking; and following his reign conditions deteriorated even more. The Church experienced a massive influx of converts, which Gonzalez attributes to the diminishing of spiritual convictions and morals. The fourth century saw martyrdom replaced by monasticism, as hundreds retreated to the desert. The exodus into the desert was a reaction against the deep compromises occurring through the infiltration of pagans into the Church.<sup>85</sup> It was this perception of worldliness permeating the Church that made monasticism so attractive. Another motivation for monasticism—it was a psychological form of martyrdom.<sup>86</sup>

Before this time, there were practicing ascetics. Origen is the most well known ascetic (c. 185-254);<sup>87</sup> although Anthony (c. 251-356) is considered the founder of monasticism.<sup>88</sup> Monasticism, however, was not a response for the sake of the gospel.

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<sup>83</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr. *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation*, vol. 1. (1<sup>st</sup> ed. Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, 1996), 210, 217.

<sup>84</sup> Anderson, 53.

<sup>85</sup> Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought*, 268, 269, 280.

<sup>86</sup> Noll, *Turning Points*, 88.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 36, 90.

<sup>88</sup> Cairns, 152.

Instead, like Galatia (Gal. 1:6, 7), it was a fleshly approach to spiritual formation. It was “a reaction against the secularizing of the Church”<sup>89</sup> and “an implied criticism of the Church’s decision to become a large-scale and inclusive organization.”<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, the origin of monasticism developed from dualism—the spirit was good and the flesh was evil. Therefore, it was an escape from the evolution of Church and society, and, in addition, it “offered a more individualistic approach to God.”<sup>91</sup> It is suggested that monasticism was a movement to preserve the intimacy and community being lost through the elimination of the House Church.<sup>92</sup> However, there is no correlation between monasticism and the House Church. The NT House Church was due to the fruitful efforts of the apostles, the gospel of Christ, and for preserving spiritual community. Spiritual community was lost long before the popularity of monasticism. The Church had already substituted self-righteousness for the righteousness of Christ, and spiritual community cannot be produced through human engineering.

Bonhoeffer explains,

Christian community is founded solely on Jesus Christ, it is a spiritual and not a psychic reality. In this it differs from all other communities. The Scriptures call ‘*pneumatic*,’ ‘spiritual,’ that which is created only by the Holy Spirit, who puts Jesus Christ into our hearts as Lord and Saviour. The Scriptures term ‘psychic,’ ‘human’ that which comes from the natural urges, powers, and capacities of the human spirit.”<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Marty, 68.

<sup>90</sup> MacCulloch, 201.

<sup>91</sup> Cairns, 151, 152.

<sup>92</sup> Morse, class notes, October 27, 2009.

<sup>93</sup> Bonhoeffer, 31.

Genuine relationships are not possible, as Jesus intended for the body to experience community, except through Him—by grace. As Bonhoeffer states:

It is grace, nothing but grace, that we are allowed to live in community. ... Community [occurs] ... through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ. ... A Christian comes to others only through Jesus Christ. ... Our righteousness is an ‘alien righteousness’ that comes from outside of us. ... Community ... springs solely ... from ... the justification of man through grace alone; this alone is the basis of the longing of Christians for one another. ... Without Christ there is discord between God and man and between man and man. ... Without Christ we ... would not know out brother, nor could we come to him. The way is blocked by our own ego.<sup>94</sup>

Monasticism was not the result of grace; nor was its existence due to an alien righteousness. Instead, monasticism attempted to construct a self-made righteousness. For centuries it was believed spiritual disciplines led to a higher spiritual state with God.<sup>95</sup> However, Pauline theology teaches the opposite, since “God ... made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:4-6).

For centuries, righteousness by works was the practice of the Church and monasticism. Although monasticism was prompted by sincere intentions, the same could be said of Pharisaism. Monasticism represented twisted thinking, and it sought to establish a spirituality separate from culture, rather than within culture.<sup>96</sup> Furthermore, asceticism<sup>97</sup> was a poor attempt to detach from sin and encouraged self-righteousness

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Nelson, 23.

<sup>96</sup> Niebuhr, Richard, 56.

<sup>97</sup> Asceticism and monasticism could be distinguished as separate terms, although they often were synonymous.

rather than holiness.<sup>98</sup> If the focus is on self, rather than Christ, the belief system becomes delusional and demonic.<sup>99</sup> Monasticism “was never a perfect answer to the question of how to live the Christian life.”<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, it “had the effect of making conscientious human effort quite important.”<sup>101</sup>

“Community is and must be inclusive. The great enemy of community is exclusivity.”<sup>102</sup> Monasticism was exclusive. “Most groups that refer to themselves as communities are, in fact, *pseudo-communities*.”<sup>103</sup> The focus of monasticism was the works of the flesh; and, over time, it only intensified as a legalistic system of rules for attaining perfection. When human effort is at the center of community, it leads to “a movement, an order ... sectarianism. ... The human element always insinuates itself and robs the fellowship of its spiritual power and effectiveness for the Church.”<sup>104</sup> As much as Dietrich Bonhoeffer valued certain aspects of monasticism, he stated that “the restoration of the church must surely depend on a new kind of monasticism, which has nothing in common with the old.”<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Neibuhr, Reinhold, vol. 1, 239.

<sup>99</sup> Anderson, *An Emergent Theology For Emergent Churches*, 48.

<sup>100</sup> Noll, *Turning Points*, 85.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>102</sup> Scott M. Peck, *The Different Drum: Community-Making and Peace* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 61.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 89, 90.

<sup>104</sup> Bonhoeffer, 37.

<sup>105</sup> Eric Metaxas. *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy: A Righteous Gentile Vs. The Third Reich*. (Nashville: Nelson, 2010), 260.

During the monastic reforms of the tenth and eleventh centuries, a return to the strict rule of celibacy was emphasized as an imperative for a monk.<sup>106</sup> Celibacy was one of the accepted practices of the monastic life, and it was the misapplication of 1 Cor. 7 that caused many to believe Paul condoned it as the normative to attaining a holier life.<sup>107</sup> Paul warned that in the future, “some will depart from the faith” (1 Tim 4:1). Two visible evidences of this departure—forbidding to marry and fasting.<sup>108</sup> There is nothing evil about being celibate or fasting. Even though Jesus spoke of some being “eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake” (Mt. 19:12), He was not sanctioning celibacy as the mode of achieving a higher spiritual state.<sup>109</sup> Clearly, God is identifying these specific activities as not leading towards faith but away from it. It is understandable why God denounces these two activities together, since it is living under false pretenses. The practice of forbidding to marry began with the Gnostics but was “perpetuated by the monastic system.”<sup>110</sup> As Walker points out, Gnosticism was a great concern but never attracted the majority of Christians.<sup>111</sup> Consequently, I see God especially denouncing monasticism in this prophecy, since it became a much bigger system within the Church.

Therefore, monasticism will not be considered here as contributing to an understanding of community and spiritual development. Spiritual growth and community are not constructs of human ingenuity and engineering. Spiritual attainment is not the

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<sup>106</sup> Cairns, 201.

<sup>107</sup> Marty, 66.

<sup>108</sup> 7 BC, 303.

<sup>109</sup> 5 BC, 455.

<sup>110</sup> 7BC, 303.

<sup>111</sup> Walker, 57.

result of exclusivity and self-righteousness. Monasticism sought to substitute Christ for sharing ideals in common; and replacing *pseudo-community* on par with community in Christ.

### CHRISTENDOM

With the passing of centuries, the union that Constantine orchestrated would come to be referred to as Christendom.<sup>112</sup> At times this relationship benefitted governments; at other times, it better served the interests of the Church. The Church made the mistake of becoming too influential, too powerful, and too controlling. History records the depth of corruption by the papacy to “barter or beg” for the sake of extending its authority; and, when possible, to enforce its claim to “the fullness of power.” I agree with Marty’s assessment that all of this weakened rather than increased the spiritual vitality of the Church; although I would differ that the Church was already spiritually bankrupt. Over time, the Church idolized its eminence and plunged into the abyss of organizational immorality. The Church developed more secularly than spiritually as the result of feudalism. Land, money, prestige, and control contributed toward the popes having greater and broader authority.<sup>113</sup>

A further decline of the Church occurred in 1215 when confession became mandatory and transubstantiation became a doctrine. Both the confession and Mass only gave the clerical office more control and not less. Consequently, “medieval men feared

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<sup>112</sup> MacCulloch, 188.

<sup>113</sup> Cairns, 193, 194.

the clergy, who had power to give or withhold the life-giving sacraments.”<sup>114</sup> The dominance of the Church hierarchy is especially attributable to “the number of sacraments” as well as making “them the main avenues of grace.”<sup>115</sup> It was inevitable that humanity would wake up and rebel over the hypocrisy of those who were supposed to be representing Christ.

Prior to Luther, there were many calls to reform that the Church hierarchy labeled as heretical and attempted to stamp out. A number of sects (e.g. Wycliffe and Huss) advocated for a personal faith, the authority of scripture, and a democratic rule of government.<sup>116</sup> Even though these calls to reform included inflammatory language, such provocations in no way justify burnings and inquisitions. Frankly, the response of the Church to its authority reflected a demonic rather than a Christ-like spirit. Since the Church had the power, there was no motivation to change. Therefore, the eventual view would be that reform within the Church was impossible.<sup>117</sup>

### **THE GREAT REFORMATION**

The timing of the Reformation could not have been better for someone like Martin Luther. Dissatisfaction with the Church had been growing, and public unrest was reaching a crescendo. Many of the common folk wondered if the Church even cared about the grassroots issues. What hurt the credibility of the Church was its inability to be

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<sup>114</sup> Cairns, 213, 217.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 259.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 228.

relevant and adapt to the changes of society.<sup>118</sup> Furthermore, the pompous attitude about papal infallibility was viewed as contradicting the immoral practices by the See.

Ultimately, the undoing of the Vatican was papal taxation. The inability to perceive how the Church was increasing and not lessening the financial burdens of the populace did irrevocable damage to the authority of the hierarchy.<sup>119</sup> One historian describes the condition of the Church, prior to the Reformation, as spiritually bland, formal, and lukewarm.<sup>120</sup> The Institutional machine continued out of control, as it invented new methodologies for organizational control, such as: transubstantiation, purgatory, and indulgences.<sup>121</sup> The expanding wealth of the Church at the expense of the people created widespread resentment.<sup>122</sup> Even a Roman Catholic theologian refers to the time before the Reformation as a dark time in Christendom; “a decline of true piety into religious materialism and morbid hysteria; amongst the clergy ... widespread worldliness and neglect of duty ... demonic ambition and sacrilegious perversion of holy things.”<sup>123</sup>

The stage was set. “The effects of a millennium’s emphasis on penance and the need for justification prompted the Reformer’s question, ‘How can I find a gracious God?’” What motivated Luther to seek the answer was his own dissolution with what the Church had to offer.<sup>124</sup> Through His study of the writings of Paul, Luther discovered that

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<sup>118</sup> MacCulloch, 396.

<sup>119</sup> Walker, 265, 266.

<sup>120</sup> Marty, 182; as cited from Henri Pirenne, 1956, 552-553.

<sup>121</sup> MacCulloch, 555-557.

<sup>122</sup> Walker, 266.

<sup>123</sup> Marty, 182; as quoted from Karl Adam, 1951, 23, 25.

<sup>124</sup> Marty, 205, 206.

Christ had provided the sinner righteousness as the result of grace. Eventually, Luther realized the sacramental system of the Catholic Church were ceremonies for producing self-righteousness, and monasticism focused on the efforts of man rather than what Christ has done. Luther came to understand that a theology of the cross replaced what he had believed and practiced—a theology of glory. Simply, a theology of glory meant it was possible to please God through trying hard enough. In contrast to the theology of glory,

The cross, for Luther, revealed the judgment of God that no amount of human work could make humanity successful; no amount of diligent study could make humanity truly wise; no amount of human exertion could provide enduring joy. The cross, in sum, was God’s everlasting ‘no’ to the most fundamental idolatry of regarding the self as a god. It was God’s final word of condemnation for all efforts to enshrine humanity at the center of existence.<sup>125</sup>

As a result, Luther attacked everything the Church cherished—indulgences, sacraments, the inerrancy of the Pope, the Mass, and Monasticism—“these were not paths to a better life but perversions of the free grace of God in Christ.”<sup>126</sup> Luther’s intentions were for a dialogue about grace, but the Church perceived it as a threat to ecclesiastical authority.<sup>127</sup> Fortunately, political and social conditions were in his favor, and it was Luther who opened the door for Protestants to make a full departure from Roman Catholicism.<sup>128</sup> Luther’s emphasis on justification by faith provided a way of independence from clerics and ceremonies, and offered individuals a cross-centered approach to God. As a result, since there was an advocate with the Father (1 Jn. 2:1), there was no need for going through an earthly mediator. Although Luther never intended

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<sup>125</sup> Noll, *Turning Points*, 160, 161, 168-170.

<sup>126</sup> Marty, 212.

<sup>127</sup> MacCulloch, 609.

<sup>128</sup> Cairns, 299.

to create another denomination, “scholastic Lutheranism” formed an institution that caused asphyxiation through its own dogma and traditions. The reaction to this “dead orthodoxy” was Pietism.<sup>129</sup>

### PIETISM

Pietism was a movement away from the controls of the Church and the secular influences of society.<sup>130</sup> Pietists also wished for worship to be more individualistic—less formal and ritualistic and “a more heartfelt expression of Christian faith.” Pietism, therefore, sought for worship to be informal and more emotional.<sup>131</sup> Consequently, Pietism was a lay movement and emphasized daily Bible study and dependence upon the Holy Spirit for understanding the Scriptures.<sup>132</sup> Philip Spener is recognized for starting study groups at his home, with an emphasis on Bible Study, prayer, and sharing. Spener was not enamored with the tendency towards exclusivity, and later abandoned these groups.<sup>133</sup> Spener, though, influenced August Francke to the group concept, and the University of Halle came to be known as the center for Pietism.<sup>134</sup> What also inspired the Pietists was their imminent belief in the end of the world and the need for the conversion of the Jews; and it was the latter that contributed to its eventual demise.<sup>135</sup> It was through

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<sup>129</sup> Walker, 444, 445.

<sup>130</sup> Marty, 275.

<sup>131</sup> MacCulloch, 738, 742.

<sup>132</sup> Cairns, 381.

<sup>133</sup> Atkinson, 102, 103.

<sup>134</sup> Cairns, 381.

<sup>135</sup> MacCulloch, 740-741.

Francke that Pietism became evangelistic-minded. As the result of Francke, Count Von Zinzendorf extended the pietist movement to the Moravians who would later make a life-changing impression upon John Wesley and the Methodists.<sup>136</sup>

### WESLEYANISM

Some attribute the effectiveness of John Wesley's preaching as likely preventing a revolution in England.<sup>137</sup> What this study considers to be more significant were the groups he formed to grow his converts in the faith. The fruit of Wesley's work is a testimony to his unique style of ministry—an openness to new ideas and his giftedness to assimilating and making them work. His theology and methodology were especially influenced by “Radical Protestantism”—a desire by some (e.g. Anabaptists, Moravians) to complete the Reformation through a restructuring of the Church to operate by the New Testament model. The Moravians influenced Wesley's view of “the *ecclesiolae* in *ecclesia* or ‘little churches within the church’ approach to church renewal.” Furthermore, his own heart conversion occurred within a Moravian small group; and through the Moravians he realized the benefits of group intimacy and nurture.<sup>138</sup> Martin Luther also contributed to his experience, since the reading of Luther's Commentary on Romans gave him a full assurance of his standing with Christ. George Whitfield's invitation to participate in field preaching, also gave direction to his methodology. Wesley realized

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<sup>136</sup> Cairns, 381, 382.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 382.

<sup>138</sup> Snyder, 8, 24, 26, 45.

through field preaching that he was reaching those unreachable by the Anglicans.<sup>139</sup>

Wesley had the capacity to be adaptable and viewed “salvation in stages, rather than as an all-or-nothing state. ... [Consequently, he developed] a series of groups reflecting various degrees of commitment.” He really demonstrated his ability as an innovator by designing groups that were segregated according to sex, age, and marital status.<sup>140</sup>

The various groups of the Methodists served both an evangelistic and discipling function. The great majority of conversions were attributable to groups; and, additionally, largely responsible for revivals and spiritual renewal. His success with groups was due to: effective discipline; transparency through confessing to one another; and the group leader’s intimacy with group members. The overall purpose of his groups was for encouraging holiness within the spiritual community. These groups offered an abundance of opportunities for lay people to become involved in leadership; and, Wesley also used women in leadership—the only available place for women to become involved in leadership at that time.<sup>141</sup> The testament to Wesley’s methodology: his groups endured for over a hundred years after his death and were essential to the spread of Methodism.<sup>142</sup>

He became convinced that many of the practices of the Church were based upon tradition and not the Bible. Increasingly, Wesley came to trust more in Scripture and less in tradition; and this was due to personal reading and his witness of the Spirit’s

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<sup>139</sup> David Lowes Watson, *Accountable Discipleship: Handbook for Covenant Discipleship Groups in the Congregation* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1991), 35.

<sup>140</sup> Robin Maas and Gabriel O'Donnell. *Spiritual Traditions for the Contemporary Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 313.

<sup>141</sup> Snyder, 24, 56, 57, 60, 61, 63.

<sup>142</sup> Watson, 29.

renewal.<sup>143</sup> He eventually concluded he could only trust the paradigm of the NT Church. As a result, he adapted his view of apostolic succession to be “the continuity of apostolic witness and spirit in the Christian community.” The methodology of Wesley was motivated by his desire to imitate the NT Church, and he felt this justified his innovations. “Wesley was convinced that ‘a man may be orthodox in every point’ and yet ‘have no religion at all.’” In his view, if believers were truly serious about their faith, they would band together for the sake of growing in grace. Wesley demonstrated that effectiveness is not about ecclesiastical practices and professional education “and everything to do with spiritual growth, maturity and structural flexibility.”<sup>144</sup>

#### AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY

Wesley was willing to be experimental; and he provided just enough structure to not squeeze the life out of it through governance.<sup>145</sup> Methodism became highly successful in America, as long as it functioned on the grass roots level. However, Methodism became stagnant—similar to other denominations—through organization.<sup>146</sup> Noll realizes that Christianity came to the New World with an agenda to make converts. As a result, organized religion often failed to be relevant to cultural needs and even quenched the faith of its own constituency.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Snyder, 69, 70, 72, 73, 76, 79, 82, 120.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 82, 84, 85, 121, 148, 149, 163.

<sup>145</sup> Snyder, 121.

<sup>146</sup> Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 174.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 11, 62.

During the colonization of America, women attended church in greater numbers than men; in many congregations, over 75% of new members were women.<sup>148</sup> Initially, it was too dangerous for women to be involved on a grand scale with the building of the Colonies. Despite the population being mostly male for the first few decades, more women attended church than men.<sup>149</sup> Dunn explains the gender disparity:

When it became clear that they would not be called home to England . . . men turned to building a permanent civil society. . . . [This caused a] declension . . . in male piety [and, in addition, more stringent church] policies . . . [had a greater] effect of discouraging male admissions. . . . [At the same time] ministers wanted control over the vote and voice of the congregations . . . and to create a ministerial elite. No doubt this was easier to achieve when the majority of the devout were women. By the turn of the century ministerial rhetoric had validated this symbolic reduction of a Christian congregation to a company of women.<sup>150</sup>

Immigrants continued to come to America and, especially, the Pietists were instrumental with outreach in appealing to individual spiritual renewal.<sup>151</sup> Eventually, these reform groups led to the Great Awakening; consequently, revivals became popular, and “the most important effect of the revivals was to create an alternative to the Church of England. The alternative involved the popularization of emotional personal faith as opposed to formal ceremonial worship. It included new models of intimate Christian fellowship as opposed to external religious observances.”<sup>152</sup> Therefore, “the revivals . . . [were] promoting a more active, more individualistic form of Protestantism. In communities visited by revival, it became customary for laypeople to take the initiative

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<sup>148</sup> Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, 181.

<sup>149</sup> Herbert Moller, “Sex Composition and Correlated Culture Patterns of Colonial America,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (1945): 114.

<sup>150</sup> Dunn, 592, 593.

<sup>151</sup> Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, 71.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

for gathering to pray, read the Scriptures together, and exhort one another to godliness.”<sup>153</sup>

Anne Hutchinson (1591-1643) is especially recognized for developing a trend of spiritual home fellowship meetings, which at first was for women only. Noll acknowledges that “women would not play a public, visible role in the churches for centuries to come,” but “women were the pioneers” of “organizing” and “building support fellowships.”<sup>154</sup> Women discovered their feminine identity to be valued through Christianity. “Only for women did religion and social goals maintain a close correlation . . . male needs [were] no longer validated by religion. . . . Put politically, gender differentiation could in this way be seen as a stage in the separation of church and state.”<sup>155</sup>

As a result of the Great Awakening and the War of Independence, a formal document was created ensuring separation of Church and state.<sup>156</sup> The effects of greater liberty influenced church attendance to reach “an all-time low” (5 to 10 percent of the entire population);<sup>157</sup> thus, “revivals did not halt the general trend of secularization in colonial society.”<sup>158</sup> As Shiels states,

Social as well as religious change marked the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Communalism gave way to individualism. . . . Migration touched many lives very deeply. Children reared to cherish family ties and communal

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>155</sup> Dunn, 594, 595.

<sup>156</sup> Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, 144.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 110.

responsibilities left for the frontier in early adulthood. Each generation migrated greater distances.<sup>159</sup>

All of these factors influenced what is known as the Second Great Awakening.<sup>160</sup>

Two of the more influential revival leaders of the Second Great Awakening were Francis Asbury (1745-1816) and Charles Finney (1792-1875). Both Asbury and Finney reported many male converts; however, local congregations could not retain them.

Although Americans initially equated Methodists with England, ultimately Methodism came to be known as “the religion of the people.”<sup>161</sup> There were no gender barriers with the Methodists; males and females were encouraged to participate. According to Noll, however, “the revivals of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century ... [brought] women to the visible forefront of the churches. ... It became increasingly common for women to take part in revivals and soon also in the social reform, especially the temperance and abolition movements, that grew out of the revivals.”<sup>162</sup> As a result, by 1835, women outnumbered men in church two to one; also, church was considered a feminine activity.<sup>163</sup> Christianity enabled women to discover their true value.<sup>164</sup> Whereas men often identified with non-religious organizations, women “found personal support in religious company.”<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Richard D. Shiels, “The Feminization of American Congregationalism, 1730-1835.” *American Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (1981), 57.

<sup>160</sup> Nolls, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, 166.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 170,171.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 180-182.

<sup>163</sup> Shiels, 52.

<sup>164</sup> Nina Baym. “Onward Christian Women: Sarah J. Hale's History of the World,” *The New England Quarterly* 63, no. 2 (1990): 253.

<sup>165</sup> Shiels, 60.

One of the predominant appeals of revivals emphasized holiness of living.<sup>166</sup> Phoebe Palmer's "Tuesday Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness" became "a model for home meetings throughout the United States." By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Palmer's home group is attributed to over 200 similar home groups being created globally. According to Atkinson, the majority of denominations that emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries originated out of home groups.<sup>167</sup> There was a tendency, however, for these people-centered movements to evolve into institutions, which neutralized their effectiveness by disappearing into the mainstream.<sup>168</sup>

Revivalists believed in the validity of their message and were greatly concerned about the morals of America. Capitalism, urbanization, and western expansion motivated revivals toward spiritual and social reforms, and women became strong advocates of these endeavors.<sup>169</sup> Men were attracted to more "rational pursuits," whereas "there were more opportunities for women to actively participate in Christian churches." Podles observes that throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century women continued to outnumber men nearly two to one in U.S. churches. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, there was a popular notion that church was for women and the clergy were considered effeminate. To counter such perceptions, the promotion of "Muscular Christianity" occurred from 1880-1920.

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<sup>166</sup> Nolls, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, 181.

<sup>167</sup> Atkinson, 107, 108.

<sup>168</sup> Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, 192.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 183, 189, 190.

Pictures of Theodore Roosevelt were commonly endorsing the involvement of faith and body in God's service.<sup>170</sup>

Near the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Nelson attributes the shaping of gender roles by the Industrial revolution, the end of the frontier, the women's suffrage movement and the increasing female dominance of home, school, and Sunday school. He also notes the common usage of the terms "heterosexual" and "homosexual". The YMCA and the Boy Scouts of America were established and their manuals warned "young men on the perils of femininity;" and he recognizes these societal concerns as revealing "anxieties about masculinity." In response to many of these issues, Theodore Roosevelt declared "that what America needed was a good war to make men men again." Later on, just prior to World War I, Roosevelt would accuse President Woodrow Wilson of doing "more to emasculate American manhood and weaken its fiber than anyone else I can think of." Upon entering into WW II, a member of the F.D. R. administration commented that "America has become magnificently male again." And, General George S. Patton said, "All real American men love to fight."<sup>171</sup> All of these statements reveal the notion of the male identity as being tough, dangerous, and violent. Thus, the role of being a man was to "be trained to struggle, suffer, and die so that the life of the community can go on."<sup>172</sup>

The Industrial Revolution altered the father's presence and role in the home; and, subsequently, added to the mother's role of decision-maker and provided her with a

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<sup>170</sup> Leon J. Podles, *The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity* (Dallas: Spence Pub., 1999), 5, 17.

<sup>171</sup> Nelson, 19, 69.

<sup>172</sup> Podles, 59.

greater sense of power. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Christianity had increasingly given women a voice and made them feel empowered. Some evangelicals totally supported the public involvement of women and others became concerned that society was abandoning the biblical subservient role of women.<sup>173</sup> The U.S. was changing rapidly and not all of Christianity was adapting; instead, it was fracturing into “liberal and fundamentalist factions.”<sup>174</sup> Gallagher states that “by the early twentieth century the vision of a ... ‘Christian America’ through social reform had faded.” She specifically attributes this to “war, immigration, economic collapse, and the growing popular acceptance of a secular, scientific worldview.” As a result, the religious social reforms for women broadened into individual human rights.<sup>175</sup>

### SMALL GROUPS

The concept of small groups primarily occurred in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century through the idea of the Sunday school; a primary method for teaching and indoctrinating than for nurturing. The field of Psychology first revealed the value of small groups from the 1940’s into the 60’s through training, encounter, and sensitivity groups. With the decline of Sunday school attendance and the success of psychologist’s with groups, the

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<sup>173</sup> John P. Bartkowski, “Changing of the Gods: The Gender and Family Discourse of American Evangelicalism in Historical.” *History of the Family* 3, no. 1 (1998): 97-117 (Article not paginated.).

<sup>174</sup> George M. Thomas, “Cultural Analysis of Religious Change and Movements.” *Sociological Inquiry*, (1996): 290.

<sup>175</sup> Gallagher, 221-222.

Church began promoting the use of small groups during the 1960's and 70's.<sup>176</sup>

According to Robert Wuthnow,

Approximately 40 out of every 100 adults in the United States belong to some kind of formal small group.<sup>177</sup> ... [He] suggests the small-group movement is so powerful it is beginning to alter American society. It is changing our understanding of community and redefining our spirituality. In other words, small groups are affecting the ways in which persons relate to each other and how they view God.<sup>178</sup>

### THE MEN'S MOVEMENT

Ironically, the feminine agenda of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries is recognized as especially contributing to an identity crisis among men.<sup>179</sup> As previously mentioned, the popular notion for regaining the masculine identity involved doing (e.g. war) rather than being. The men's movement—spurred by women's and gay rights—became significant in the 1980s through the efforts of Robert Bly. This is often labeled as “The Mythopoetic Men's Movement,” due to the use of mythology and tribal legends. Some of its major characteristics were: authenticity, accountability, community, and transformation, as the result of regularly participating in a support group. These groups operated more from a “Jungian influence” of self-individuation through life experiences.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Atkinson, 108, 109, 112, 113.

<sup>177</sup> Robert Wuthnow, *Sharing the Journey: Support Groups and America's New Quest for Community* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 3, 11-21.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Bartkowski, 97-117 (Article not paginated.).

<sup>180</sup> John S. Guarnaschelli, “Men's Support Groups and the Men's Movement: Their Role for Men and for Women,” *Group* 18, no. 4 (1994): 197-211.

After the 1970s, the gender norm of the male being the primary breadwinner of the household was “replaced by dual-earner households.” Gallagher recognizes, “Evangelical rhetoric on gender and family ... [took a] pragmatic [tone of] ... employ[ing] the language of partnership and complimentary.” She adds that these were different terms being used to express an old ideology— “‘equal but different’ roles.”<sup>181</sup> Consequently, the implication—Evangelicals advocate for the submission of women.

The Christian Men’s Movement, Promise Keepers, began in 1990 and was the evangelicals’ response to the feminine movement. The Promise Keepers initially stated mission was: “dedicated to uniting men through vital relationships to become godly influences in their world.” Even though their mission statement sounded generic enough, it was often perceived as an attempt to reassert patriarchalism. Such a perception seems validated through Promise Keeper materials encouraging the man to “not ask for your role back ... but take it back.”<sup>182</sup> Promise Keepers is recognized for promoting change; and support groups were considered “a key aspect” for supporting change. Reportedly, these support groups validated and transformed the desired behaviors. The same elements from the mythopoetic groups—authenticity, accountability, community, and transformation—were also found in the PK small groups.<sup>183</sup> Originally, under the leadership of former University of Colorado football coach, Bill McCarney, Promise

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<sup>181</sup> Gallagher, 227, 228, 230.

<sup>182</sup> Sara Elden, “Gender Politics in Conservative Men’s Movements: Beyond Complexity, Ambiguity and Pragmatism.” *Nordic Journal of Women’s Studies*, (2002): 38-48.

<sup>183</sup> Louise B. Silverstein and Carl F. Auerbach, “Do Promise Keepers Dream of Feminist Sheep?” *Sex Roles* 40, no. 9/10 (1999): 665-88.

Keepers understood where men love to congregate—sports facilities.<sup>184</sup> The strength of this movement was that Promise Keepers could attract men to stadiums but churches could not retain them; since they were leaving a “masculine environment” and returning to a “feminine church.”<sup>185</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Even though Promise Keepers is less relevant today, it is considered to be one of many factors for creating a greater cultural awareness for the needs of men as well as the importance of men supporting men.<sup>186</sup> A popular men’s group program in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is Celebrate Recovery which originates from Rick Warren’s Saddleback Church. Celebrate Recovery, as a faith-based approach, is considered comparable to the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) 12-step program. Unlike AA which uses generic deity language of “Higher Power,” Celebrate Recovery incorporates Scripture and terms that are familiar to many Christians.<sup>187</sup>

The Church Jesus established and the Institution of the fourth century are not comparable models. Jesus said that His Church would be known by their “love for one another” (Jn. 13:35). The institutional model was organized religion with fixed parameters; which included where, when, and how worship was to be done. Jesus was not the central figure of worship. Instead, He was included because He came with the original

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<sup>184</sup> Perkins, 26.

<sup>185</sup> David Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church* (Nashville: Nelson, 2005), 79.

<sup>186</sup> Castellini, et al., 42.

<sup>187</sup> Anthony E. Brown, Simon N. Whitney, Max A. Schneider, and Charles P. Vega, “Alcohol Recovery and Spirituality: Strangers, Friends, or Partners?” *Southern Medical Journal*, (2006): 656.

package. The Church became about a clergy-driven machine and was about authority, control, and power. The religious practices merely pointed to and reinforced who was really in charge.

It is regrettable to defend the intentional disregard of approximately 1500 years of history. However, in my experience, I have found sufficient inspiration in Christ and His Word. Conversely, I have found little to no worth from writings based upon a theology of works. The problem is not that my theological background somehow limits my approach; instead, Christian theology departed (apostatized), centuries ago, from saved by grace through faith in Christ. Therefore, as a Protestant, I rest in the good company of other Christians (e.g. Martin Luther, John Wesley).

In the writings of Paul, Christ is the Head and the Church is His body. Obviously, the Head and the body are both needed to be complete. The identity of the Church changed from the body to a building. This begs for the question, what happened to the Head? The human body can only survive with both head and body. By the fourth century A.D., both the body and the Head of the Church no longer resembled the NT Church. The best example in history of combining theology and methodology was John Wesley. He appears to have most closely emulated the model of the Church during the time of the apostles. Again, organization was the detriment of his groups.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE WORTH OF MEN

Private James Ryan was the only son, of four sons, still alive. During WW II, three of his brothers were killed in action. As a part of the 182<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, Private Ryan had parachuted 30 miles behind the German lines near Ramelle, France; and there was no way of knowing whether he was still alive. There was no logic to imperiling a company of men in a search and rescue mission—only a principle—he was worth it to the Army Chief of Staff, General George Marshall. Later, while in route to their destination, the small company of six men ironically took refuge for the night in a bombed-out church. Some of the men openly questioned the worth of their mission. The leader of this group, Captain Miller, stated it was not their responsibility to question their orders; only carry them out. Nonetheless, he revealed his own frustration with these words: “This Ryan better be worth it. He better go home and cure some disease or invent a longer lasting light bulb or something.”<sup>1</sup> Sadly, this statement reflects societal values of human life based upon achievement rather than about one’s being.

What is the worth of a human being? The psalmist asks this question (Ps. 8:4), and then declares God gave humanity the honor and distinction of being ranked just lower than God Himself (v.5).<sup>2</sup> Thus, God gave mankind the status of being ruler over “all things” (v. 6).<sup>3</sup> More than others, Christians should understand God’s value of human

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.kokos.cz/bradkoun/movies/savingprivateryan.txt> (accessed March 3, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Personal paraphrase.

<sup>3</sup> 3 BC, 649.

beings through Jesus Christ (Ro. 8:5). It would be a mistake, however, to think that all Believers automatically appreciate self worth through the sacrifice of Christ. In addition, being born again does not erase the human hard drive and eliminate the desire to sin; nor does anyone receive a physiological download of self-worth.<sup>4</sup> It is important to grasp God's value of humanity; and equally to realize all which has negatively impacted the self-worth of men and women. Men, especially, need to know God as well as themselves. The issues for men cannot be managed through knowledge alone. Although education is important, information alone is not the answer for men. It is also a mistake to think the solution is merely addressing their external struggles. Their problems are centered in the male identity. Most men have a wound that is not so evident; nor easily mended.<sup>5</sup>

#### **MAN: WHAT HE IS AND WHAT HE DOES**

What is a man? What does it mean to be masculine? Are there really gender differences; or are such differences merely cultural constructs? I believe the answer is both/and, not either/or. As stated in chapter one, there are many factors—biological, sociological, and psychological—that define men. Nelson points out that gender is closely associated with social and psychological concerns. As a result, it is a subjective feeling about gender as well as how one perceives their behavior should be around others.<sup>6</sup> It should be added, the social definition involves the cultural perceptions of what

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<sup>4</sup> Carol Agnes Cannon, *Never Good Enough: Growing up Imperfect in A "Perfect" Family: How to Break the Cycle of Codependence and Addiction for the Next Generation* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1993), 18.

<sup>5</sup> Eldredge, 72.

<sup>6</sup> Nelson, 20.

a man is as well as “those qualities males ought to have.”<sup>7</sup> Clearly, sinful humanity is to blame for the ambiguity regarding what it means to be male.

### IT IS OKAY TO BE DIFFERENT

The male was made for adventure and exploring; there is even a spiritual dimension to it.<sup>8</sup> For millennia men have found their identity as defenders and protectors, challenging and conquering the dangerous external elements. Early on, the female’s role was to birth and care for the children. The male demonstrated his prowess in hunting game and fighting their enemies. Conversely, women did not have the physical strength and endurance to participate in life-threatening activities.<sup>9</sup> With men, success in hunting and war made them feel powerful, dominant, and elite.<sup>10</sup> Manhood was proven through achieving and winning; especially, competing against other males. Male dominance became more about expendability than superiority. Thus, the male was looked upon as the one who could contend with any enemy that posed a threat.<sup>11</sup>

Consequently, the male revealed his identity “as adventurous, achievement-oriented, assertive, autonomous, dominant, confident, practical, unemotional, and strong.”<sup>12</sup> Social scientists, however, popularly teach there are no gender differences—male and female are alike. Therefore, they believe gender difference is entirely a social

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<sup>7</sup> Nelson, 27.

<sup>8</sup> Eldredge, 5.

<sup>9</sup> Lionel Tiger, *Men in Groups* (New York: Random House, 1969), 46, 47, 58, 59.

<sup>10</sup> In no way should this be perceived as suggesting men are superior.

<sup>11</sup> Nelson, 31, 32.

<sup>12</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 36.

construct. As a result, science teaches there are no male-only behaviors; subsequently, masculine traits are completely socially learned. Thus, gender “is something we do, not something we inherit.”<sup>13</sup> God, however, made a distinction between the genders—“male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:27)—with complementary roles. In Gen. 3, the Creator endows each gender unique responsibilities as providers to the family. In particular, after the Fall, the male is depicted as achievement-oriented—with the emphasis on doing (Gen. 3:16-19).<sup>14</sup>

### ELEMENTS OF MALE DIFFERENCE

Gender similarity is not only a popular belief within social science; it is also promoted through the educational system of the United States.<sup>15</sup> Because social science believes gender behavior is learned, the best method for change is by deprogramming the gender.<sup>16</sup> Thus, if genders are trained differently they will behave accordingly; as if there are no other factors for influencing behavior patterns. It should be noted that social science acknowledges masculine deviation from that of feminine but views these as correctable in young boys.<sup>17</sup>

“Differences between men and women have universally been found with respect to four behavioral/psychological traits: ... aggression ... cognitive skills ... sensory

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<sup>13</sup> Joan Z. Spade and Catherine G. Valentine. *The Kaleidoscope of Gender: Prisms, Patterns, and Possibilities* (3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage/Pine Forge Press, 2011), 5, 7.

<sup>14</sup> 1 BC, 235.

<sup>15</sup> Sommers, 74; Imms, 152-163.

<sup>16</sup> Sommers, 74.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

sensitivity ... and sexual and reproductive behavior.”<sup>18</sup> Although aggression is now defined differently; “boys hit and girls gossip.” As a result, both genders show aggression, they just display it diversely. Still, controversy persists over how much biology influences aggression.<sup>19</sup>

Science contradicts itself by admitting gender behavior differences are detectable “slightly after birth.”<sup>20</sup> Dissimilarity between male and female is detectable in the brain at six months of age. Females have more nerve fibers connecting the right side to the left side than males. This accounts for the simultaneous use of the left and right side of the brain by females; whereas, males are only able to use one side at a time. The left side of the brain contributes to language skills and develops faster in females; “the right hemisphere, which specializes in certain spatial tasks, such as imagining how objects look from different angles or finding your way around a city, starts running earlier in males.”<sup>21</sup>

Research also reveals that the male hormone, testosterone, is the chemical that provides the male drivenness; as well as those male behaviors which transcend cultural expectations. Boys demonstrate their gender difference through separation and individuation, whereas girls reveal theirs through making connections in relationships.<sup>22</sup> At a young age, boys are attracted to objects and girls to faces. Consequently, boys are

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<sup>18</sup> David Popenoe, “Parental Androgyny.” *Society* 30, no. 6, (1993): 8.

<sup>19</sup> Susan Gilbert, *A Field Guide to Boys and Girls: Differences, Similarities: Cutting Edge Information Every Parent Needs to Know* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: HarperCollins, 2000), 3.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 4, 8.

<sup>22</sup> Nelson, 39.

wired for doing things and girls for relating to people. There certainly is no debate that females grow up with an enormous social and interpersonal communication skills advantage over males.<sup>23</sup> This is not to suggest boys and girls must be excluded from certain activities or future vocations due to gender. It is recognizing, however, that, hormonally, males and females are not always attracted to the same things. The hypothalamus is an area of the brain, which produces certain hormones, providing each gender incentive for what and how they will participate. Not surprising, “most little boys like playing with toy guns and cars ... and, [in contrast] ... little girls like playing with dolls, dressing them up and nursing them.”<sup>24</sup>

Clearly, the male is drawn to interests involving their strength and capability. The muscular physique of boys reveals the masculine proclivity to rough and tumble activities.<sup>25</sup> Such a suggestion is not condoning the segregation of male and female activities; just, males should not be forced into molds, with the idea that society can construct a gentler and kinder male species. In a society where diversity is a value, there should be greater tolerance for recognizing gender differences without implying superiority over another. Each gender has its inherent strengths and weaknesses; and both can be regarded as complementing rather than competing. “Some people try to pretend that for all practical purposes their gender is irrelevant, as though they were in fact

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<sup>23</sup> Gary Smalley and John Trent, *The Hidden Value of a Man: The Incredible Impact of a Man on His Family* (Colorado Springs: Focus on the Family Pub.; Distributed by Word Books, Dallas: 1992), 90, 91.

<sup>24</sup> N. T. Wright, *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense* (1st ed. Harper, San Francisco: 2006), 34.

<sup>25</sup> Gwen J. Broude, “Boys Will Be Boys.” *Public Interest* no. 136, (1999): 13.

neuter. ... Imaging ourselves to be neuter involves denying something deeply important about who we are and how we are made. We simply are gendered beings.”<sup>26</sup>

### FATAL FLAW

The mortality rate of men to women is appreciably different. In the U.S., women lived 4.9 years longer in 2010; an improvement from 7.8 years in 1979.<sup>27</sup> There are variables to longevity, of course, which most experts of today reference as not being about gender difference at all. Such experts point to a greater interest in longevity, which prompts better lifestyle choices (e.g. diet, exercise, cessation of cigarette smoking).<sup>28</sup> The disparity of mortality rates among gender are often recognized, but gender is not acknowledged as being a variable.<sup>29</sup> The United States Department of Health and Human Services issued this initiative in 2000: “To eliminate health disparities, with a specific emphasis on sex differences in health.” Their claim appears justifiable, since data from 1920 to the present reveals longevity is predominantly about choices rather than gender. Consequently, many view the gender mortality disparity as skewed by younger males engaging in riskier behaviors; and acknowledge the subsequent attenuation of such activities with age and maturation. Nevertheless, Rogers et al. admit that evidence exists

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<sup>26</sup> Wright, 34, 35.

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/deaths.htm> (accessed March 3, 2012).

<sup>28</sup> Matilda White Riley, “Changing Lives and Changing Social Structures: Common Concerns of Social Science and Public Health.” *American Journal of Public Health*, (1994): 1215.

<sup>29</sup> B. Broome, “Women and Health Care,” *Urologic Nursing* 27, no. 1 (2007): 81.

for mortality rates being both social and biological.<sup>30</sup> In addition, as men age, they experience changes in their hormonal levels. Lower hormonal levels influence safer practices and contribute to less behavioral differences between genders.<sup>31</sup>

Even though gender mortality disparity remains controversial, there are researchers who continue to recognize differences in gender health and social connections.<sup>32</sup> In the 1970's, Sydney Jourard wrote about the male role having lethal characteristics. He did not recognize a biological difference in gender mortality; instead, he distinguished it as interpersonal. "Man seems obliged ... to hide much of his real self. ... Men typically reveal less personal information about themselves to others than women."<sup>33</sup> Jourard recognized transparency makes men feel too vulnerable. Consequently, for a man to do self-disclosure causes him to feel he is exposing his weaknesses merely for the sake of prying into his secrets. The tendency, therefore, is men avoid self-disclosure; they isolate; possess less competent interpersonal skills than women; and practice less self-awareness for caring for one's being. "All this implies that trying to seem manly is a kind of work, and work imposes stress and consumes energy. Manliness, then, possesses a chronic burden of stress and energy expenditure which is a factor for 'the shorter life-span' of men—the fatal flaw."<sup>34</sup> The male identity is so strongly connected to employment that men have a shorter life span after retirement.

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<sup>30</sup> Richard G. Rogers, Bethany G. Everett, Jarron M. Saint Onge, and Patrick M. Krueger, "Social, Behavioral, and Biological Factors, and Sex Differences in Mortality," *Demography*, (2010): 555-559.

<sup>31</sup> Popenoe, 8.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 558.

<sup>33</sup> Jourard, 35.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 35, 36.

Jourard states that a societal conditioning forces men into assuming unhealthy roles.

Thus, men are trained to be in their masculine role. However, no one should assume the male can simply be fixed through proper reprogramming.<sup>35</sup>

### MALE OPPRESSION OR SUPPRESSION?

Historically, men have enjoyed a preferential status—both at home and in the workplace—which included inequalities and abuses.<sup>36</sup> Men have committed, and still do commit, atrocities against women. As Clark states, though, “most men are not oppressive ... [and] a small percentage of the male population actually attacks women.”<sup>37</sup> However, over several decades, everything male has become viewed with disdain, while everything feminine is now adored.<sup>38</sup> The comic strip, “Blondie (which began in the 1920s),” contributed to portraying the male (Dagwood) as a foolish idiot. Hollywood has only persisted in characterizing a similar ideology;<sup>39</sup> and, culture wishes the male to be viewed as “a monster.”<sup>40</sup>

Feminists have used many negative adjectives for labeling men; and their accusations have had a significant influence upon the male psyche.<sup>41</sup> Because men are viewed in such ways, the feminist movement “has labored to breed fierceness out of

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<sup>35</sup> Jourard, 37-41.

<sup>36</sup> Bly, 175.

<sup>37</sup> Ron Clark, *Am I Sleeping with the Enemy?: Males and Females in the Image of God* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2010), 36, 37.

<sup>38</sup> Bly, 175.

<sup>39</sup> Archie Bunker, of “All In The Family,” is an example.

<sup>40</sup> Bly, 23, 119.

<sup>41</sup> Nelson, 14.

men.”<sup>42</sup> The fruit of their labors to change masculinity are particularly more evident over the last two decades. Consequently, there are terms for describing the “new man model” as “more sensitive, domesticated;”<sup>43</sup> “feminized;”<sup>44</sup> and “emasculated.”<sup>45</sup> Some authors believe the agenda of many institutions (corporate, educational, and even the Church) has been to domesticate the male.<sup>46</sup>

Is it fair to suggest that a major segment of society is reconstructing a softer male version? One writer in 1969 said, “Tenderness is in. The Marlboro man is out.”<sup>47</sup> One sociologist labeled the changes over three decades as, “the sensitivity of the seventies ... the macho eighties ... and ... soft men ... of the nineties.”<sup>48</sup> As noted in chapter one, not only has education been on a mission to reform boys; so has the film industry. “Disney cinema [is] ... one of the most effective teaching tools America offers its children.”<sup>49</sup> It is purported that Disney influences “200 million people a year” through its films,<sup>50</sup> and it is described as having “pedagogical aims.”<sup>51</sup> In particular, “Pixar consistently promotes a

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<sup>42</sup> Bly, 46.

<sup>43</sup> Donna Peberdy, “From Wimps to Wild Men: Bipolar Masculinity and the Paradoxical Performances of Tom Cruise,” *Men and Masculinities* 13, no. 2 (1991): 237.

<sup>44</sup> Elaine Swan, “You Make Me Feel Like a Woman: Therapeutic Cultures and the Contagion of Femininity,” *Gender, Work & Organization*, (2008): 99.

<sup>45</sup> Ken Gillam and Shannon R. Wooden, “Post-Princess Models of Gender: The New Man in Disney/Pixar,” *Journal of Popular Film & Television*, (2008): 8.

<sup>46</sup> Bly, 6, 61; Eldredge, 83, Perkins, 24.

<sup>47</sup> Sam Keen, “The Soft Revolution,” *Christian Century* 86, no. 53 (1969): 1668.

<sup>48</sup> Peberdy, 236; as quoted from Susan Jeffords, 1993, 198.

<sup>49</sup> Gillam and Wooden, 3.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 7; as quoted from Henry Giroux, 1999, 19.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

new model of masculinity. ... [and it is a] postfeminist model of gender.”<sup>52</sup> In describing the plot in each of the Pixar films, the authors’ state, “Emasculated is not too strong a term for what happens to these male protagonists.”<sup>53</sup>

The question could be legitimately asked, what is the harm in toning down masculinity? It seems that having boys and men connect with their softer side would be applauded. However, developing sensitivity and learning to incorporate softness is more than a mental exercise. Therefore, this study considers such virtues to be a spiritual achievement; specifically, it is Spirit-achieved and not flesh-achieved. Clearly, there are hard and soft aspects to masculinity;<sup>54</sup> although the topic often polarizes people to one side or the other.<sup>55</sup> As identified in this study, methodologies of manipulation are realizable through various institutions (e.g. education and the film industry). Pedagogy and human effort may alter behavior, but it cannot permanently modify it. Truth is imperative to change but the world does not offer the truth. It only offers theorems; and theories are not always representative of the truth. Christians should wholeheartedly believe, “We walk by faith not by sight.” The Church recognizes truth as embodied in Christ; and it is through grace and truth and the power of the Holy Spirit that transformation is achieved. Simply, change is the result of faith in Another Power.

Education is an important aspect of learning, but the educational system is a major part of the problem—not the solution. Education has taken on the agenda of the feminist

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>54</sup> Unfortunately, sin has accentuated the hard aspects and castigated the soft.

<sup>55</sup> Peberdy, 237.

movement and intends to force—if necessary—boys to be girlish. According to some, “we look forward to a time when boys will be able to safely stay in the ‘doll corner’ as long as they wish, without being taunted.”<sup>56</sup> There are those who think that merely teaching boys to be more feminine will fix everything. Like Broude, I fear the new man model that finite beings are attempting to construct.<sup>57</sup>

Bly predicted that male “passivity increases exponentially as the education system turns out ‘products.’”<sup>58</sup> The teacher attempts to keep the boys quiet and attentive all day; just like the girls. It is nearly an impossible task to achieve. Consequently, the only way to control some boys is through drugs.<sup>59</sup> Male discrimination is evident as, “Three times as many boys as girls are enrolled in special education classes ... and three quarters of the children taking Ritalin for ADD are boys.”<sup>60</sup> Another disturbing fact, “90% of the world’s Ritalin is consumed in the United States—mostly by suburban white boys.”<sup>61</sup> The ratio of boys to girls being diagnosed with some form of Attention Deficit Disorder, in some areas of the country, ranges as high as 10:1. Pollack believes the alarming difference is due to boys being separated from their mothers at a young age; this, combined with “the boy code”—a boy is not supposed to express his true feelings. Thus, he explains this is why boys are acting out in school, labeled as “hyperactive,” diagnosed

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<sup>56</sup> Sommers, 86; as quoted from William S. Pollack and Ronald F. Levant, 1995, 387.

<sup>57</sup> Broude, 16.

<sup>58</sup> Bly, 61.

<sup>59</sup> Lionel Tiger, *The Decline of Males* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2000), 79, 181-182.

<sup>60</sup> Sarah Glazer, “Boys’ Emotional Needs.” *Congressional Quarterly Researcher* 9, no. 23 (1999): 526.

<sup>61</sup> Kathy Koch, “Rethinking Ritalin,” *Congressional Quarterly Researcher* 9, no. 40 (1999): 907.

with ADD or ADHD, and prescribed drugs to curb their behavior.<sup>62</sup> Pollack's supposition is shared by many so-called experts in the field of education and the social sciences.<sup>63</sup>

So, what is currently wrong with boys? William Pollack states, "It's a national boy crisis, and the two boys in Littleton are the tip of the iceberg. ... and the iceberg is all boys."<sup>64</sup> As a result of the Littleton crisis, "some psychologists contend that societal pressures on boys force them to suppress their most vulnerable emotions in service to a rigid idea of manhood."<sup>65</sup> In 1999 Broude remarked, "We've had eight school shootings ... and there are about 35 million boys. ... That's not a very big percentage on which to base a theory. ... Only between one and four percent of boys are in trouble."<sup>66</sup> The idea, therefore, is for boys to learn to be more emotionally expressive like girls. Broude contends that making boys more like girls would be a catastrophic mistake. Feminine attributes have their own set of problems—low self-esteem, depression, etc.—boys have enough problems and do not need more. She even states that adolescents are not like sponges, soaking up everything that is thrown at them; because at the end of the day, gender differences remain. She adds, "The boy advocates, who are disturbed by the differences between males and females, want to persuade us that normal male traits are

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<sup>62</sup> William S. Pollack, *Real Boys: Rescuing Our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood* (1st Owl Books ed. New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1999), 21, 36, 37.

<sup>63</sup> Sommers, 128.

<sup>64</sup> Glazer, 521.

<sup>65</sup> Glazer, 523; a reference to Dan Kindlon and Michael Thompson, "Raising Cain".

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 524; as quoted from Broude, no page number attributed.

personality disorders. This is clearly wrong. We should acknowledge that the sexes are different and work with what nature has provided.”<sup>67</sup>

The problem is that many researchers have a “static view” toward male behavior as “incurably toxic”<sup>68</sup> or “pathological.”<sup>69</sup> Consequently, the problem of male behavior in the classroom is a combination of: gender bias, forcing gender-neutral ideology, and “the hyperactive male student in class no longer has any place for the rambunctious exploratory behavior of a younger hunter.”<sup>70</sup> Another contributing factor to boys aggressiveness is the absent father or “fatherlessness.”<sup>71</sup> According to one study, fatherless boys are 50% more likely to be incarcerated.<sup>72</sup> Broude states that boys are naturally aggressive—it is a masculine trait. She acknowledges what modifies aggression for males is structure and, in particular, fathers who are emotionally present for their sons.<sup>73</sup> Emotionally present fathers are an enormous need for sons growing up; but there are other factors that influence a male’s outlook on life.

### **THE FALSE SELF**

Jourard places the onus primarily on families and schools for encouraging role conformity and, therefore, alienating the true self. As a result, it is taboo to reveal the true

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<sup>67</sup> Broude, 15.

<sup>68</sup> Imms, 152-165 (article not paginated).

<sup>69</sup> Tiger, *The Decline of Males*, 180.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>71</sup> Sommers, 129, 130; as cited from, David Blankenhorn, 31.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 130; as cited from a presentation by Cynthia Harper and Sara McLanahan.

<sup>73</sup> Broude, 14.

self through self-disclosure.<sup>74</sup> “Self-disclosure is a symptom of personality health and a means of ultimately achieving healthy personality. . . . Alienation from one’s real self not only arrests personal growth; it tends to make a farce out of one’s relationships with people.”<sup>75</sup> Whitfield recognizes that all of us primarily function from the false self, and attributes this to growing up in a shame-based family. The false self is the by-product of a child realizing the true self is unacceptable. Consequently, the child conforms by repressing the true self and developing what others are requiring—an unrealistic self.<sup>76</sup> “In an austere, disapproving environment, a child doesn’t just develop low self-esteem. He develops no self. . . . The battle is not with self. It’s with a lack of self.”<sup>77</sup> Smedes acknowledges “three forces”—secular culture, graceless religion, and critical parents—each influences the development of the false self. He summarizes the construction of the false self as: it is all about appearance (secular culture); it is all about following the rules (graceless religion); and, it is all about earning approval (faultfinding parents). What complicates the parental influence is what he calls “unspecified” expectations. These expectations serve to remind children they are losers. Thus, children understand no matter what they do, they are never good enough. In order to be what they think others want them to be, children learn to develop a false self. As a result,

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<sup>74</sup> Jourard, 26.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>76</sup> Charles L. Whitfield, *Healing the Child Within: Discovery and Recovery for Adult Children of Dysfunctional Families* (Pompano Beach, FL: Health Communications, 1987), 43, 11.

<sup>77</sup> Cannon, 7.

“unhealthy shame ... is a false feeling inflicted by the false ideals implanted in us by ... these three forces.”<sup>78</sup>

### STUCK ON PRETENDING

In particular, boys grow up “receiving a baptism of shame.”<sup>79</sup> By age six, the son adopts his mother’s despicable view of his father; and by age 20, the son is convinced that he is also “defective male material.” Thus, boys enter a life of seclusion, and, subsequently, the son becomes a person who lives a dark life—the very perception he has had of his father. Some sons will numb themselves through addiction and others will try to transcend the dark father through achievement;<sup>80</sup> although, even attainment can be an addiction.<sup>81</sup> Bly recognizes striving for success has an addictive element to it; and adds, “Addiction amounts to an attempt to escape limitations.”<sup>82</sup> In other words, the son becomes addicted to or stuck on proving his worth through his accomplishments.

What does it mean to be an addict or have an addiction? Are definitions broader than just chemicals? According to May, “Addiction exists wherever persons are internally compelled to give energy to things that are not their true desires. To define it directly, addiction is a state of compulsion, obsession, or preoccupation that enslaves a person’s will and desire. ... Attachment, then, is the process that enslaves desire and creates the

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<sup>78</sup> Lewis B. Smedes, *Shame and Grace: Healing the Shame We Don't Deserve* (1st ed. Harper, San Francisco, 1993), 38-40.

<sup>79</sup> Bly, 32.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 99, 100.

<sup>81</sup> May, 11.

<sup>82</sup> Bly, 104.

state of addiction.”<sup>83</sup> May recognizes more apparent and harmful addictions exist, but also notes everyone is in need of deliverance from things.<sup>84</sup>

Several sources provide lenses for defining an addict and addiction as:

[Addict] To devote or give (oneself) habitually or compulsively. ... One who is addicted, especially to narcotics.<sup>85</sup> ... To devote or surrender (oneself) to something habitually or obsessively (addicted to gambling); to cause addiction to a substance in (a person or animal);<sup>86</sup> [Addiction] ... The quality or state of being addicted; compulsive need for and use of a habit-forming substance characterized by tolerance and by well-defined physiological symptoms upon withdrawal; broadly: persistent compulsive use of a substance known by the user to be harmful;<sup>87</sup> ... The fact or condition of being addicted to a particular substance, thing, or activity (denoting a person's inclination or proclivity).<sup>88</sup>

Broadly, the above definitions include harmful and non-harmful behaviors. It could be argued there is a vast difference between a heroin and pornography (porn) addiction.

Regardless of what controls an individual, however, addiction is an anesthetic which temporarily numbs our own sense of reality. For example, television is a popular form of escaping reality for a time. According to May,

All of us suffer from addiction. ... The psychological, neurological, and spiritual dynamics of full-fledged addiction are actively at work within every human being. The same processes that are responsible for addiction to alcohol and narcotics are also responsible for addiction to ideas, work, relationships, power, moods, and fantasies. ... We are all addicts in every sense of the word.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> May, 14.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>85</sup> Morris, 15.

<sup>86</sup> <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/addict> (accessed May 18, 2013).

<sup>87</sup> <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/addiction> (accessed May 18, 2013).

<sup>88</sup> [http://oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american\\_english/addiction](http://oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/addiction) (accessed May 18, 2013).

<sup>89</sup> Gerald May, *Addiction and Grace* (1st ed. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 3, 4.

Relating the broadening of his own view of addiction, May writes: “I myself was addicted to a variety of substances: nicotine, caffeine, sugar, and chocolate.” And then, he adds, “addictions are not limited to substances. I was also addicted to work, performance, responsibility, intimacy, being liked, helping others, and an almost endless list of other behaviors.”<sup>90</sup> He confesses being tempted to view his addictions as having less devastating results than chemical addiction; and, yet, concluded: “to be alive is to be addicted, and to be alive and addicted is to stand in need of grace.”<sup>91</sup> Addiction keeps us enslaved and prevents us from experiencing freedom.<sup>92</sup> All of us are in need of deliverance from something in his or her life, and God’s grace is the only answer.

If the majority of human issues are not as serious as heroin addiction, then perhaps people need less grace for deliverance. Although this represents flawed and preposterous thinking, it really explains how the need of a Savior can be minimized or dismissed. Mankind possesses a free will but how free is it? What affects our freedom “is the powerful force of addiction. ... Spiritually, addiction is a deep-seated form of idolatry. ... [and is] anything that becomes more important to us than God. ... [Perhaps] we have many addictions we don’t even know about.”<sup>93</sup> May acknowledges the prevailing ignorance about how everyone is controlled by certain desires. He adds that addiction impairs the will and controls our behavior.<sup>94</sup> “When one’s will is impaired or

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 10, 11.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 13, 28, 29.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 33, 41.

broken, he is robbed of his freedom of choice. ... Few of us realize ... sin is addictive in nature and we are all addicts.”<sup>95</sup>

As stated before, addiction is an anesthetic to the pain of our reality. Whatever the addiction, there is often a historical context to it. The addiction is not the problem; nor is the addict the sole problem. Addiction is often the response to the dynamics within a family system. Cannon states,

Addictive orders are caused. People don't just fall out of the tree full-blown addicts. The predisposition comes from somewhere. I believe that the seed of addiction falls from the family tree. It flourishes in the soil of a painful social environment. And it develops into codependence, which may then evolve into addictive diseases such as alcoholism, workaholism, sexaholism, compulsive eating, etc.<sup>96</sup>

The addict is often attempting to numb their history—the untold family story.<sup>97</sup> Friedman describes family members as having roles and someone ends up being the identifiable patient. As a result, the toxicity of the family is transferred to a member; thus, the spotlight is on one person and relieves all other members of bearing any responsibility.<sup>98</sup> In no way does this imply the addict lacks any responsibility; just, the problem is bigger than it seems, and often is a shared responsibility.

Many people not only possess narrow conceptions about addiction, they also consider addictive issues to be by-products of exceptionally troubled families. Undoubtedly, it is possible that not everyone understands that we all grew up in a

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<sup>95</sup> Cannon, 26, 27.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 25

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 25, 26, 43.

<sup>98</sup> Edwin H. Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York: Guilford Press, 1985), 19.

dysfunctional family.<sup>99</sup> Over time, my own realization of a dysfunctional family has transformed into a more inclusive definition. There is no such thing as a perfectly functional family. Therefore, layers and varying degrees of dysfunction exist within all families. To suggest some families are dysfunctional and others are not would constitute a form of denial; it would be more realistic to acknowledge dysfunction exists in all families, due to being members of a fallen world.

Some misbehaviors, whether perceived as an addiction or not, are considered by society as correctable with the appropriate training. This mentality, of course, has the option of choosing an alternative to dependence upon a Higher Power. If all misconduct can be managed through discovering the right methods, then the source of hope is in man and not God. An even more corrupt evil, because it is taught by many religions, is that “God needs our help.” There is an element of truth in this idea; God only functions in the heart which chooses Him. He does need human cooperation, since he will not impose His will on anyone. Most adults, however, believe the following statement is scriptural: “God helps those who help themselves.”<sup>100</sup> Instead, the Bible teaches God’s grace is sufficient; and His “strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9). So, God is able to help those who rely rather than try.

The problem with healing the false self through certain methods is that it leads to false solutions. “As long as the lying, false self is the one relating to God, others, and ourselves, then grace and truth cannot heal us. The false self tries to ‘heal’ us by its own methods; it always finds false solutions, and the real self that God created to grow into

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<sup>99</sup> Bly, 146.

<sup>100</sup> Randy Frazee, *The Connecting Church: Beyond Small Groups to Authentic Community* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 52.

his likeness stays hidden and unexposed to grace and truth.”<sup>101</sup> It takes grace and truth, over time, however, to experience healing. “It cannot be willed.”<sup>102</sup> Addiction is a separate and even more self-defeating force that abuses our freedom and makes us do things we really do not want to do.<sup>103</sup>

Obviously, some boys can be rascals and some men can be dangerous; and in surgery, a scalpel can bring either harm or great good, depending on how it is used.<sup>104</sup> Such a statement could be construed as suggesting that society should just accept men for the abusers they are; men cannot be changed. The point Eldredge is making: the scalpel becomes useful when the right Person is using it. The world offers men help, but where is the Church? The world does not have the answers for bettering men; the world only offers a counterfeit. Society is not interested in helping men find their strength; it just wants men controlled.<sup>105</sup> Men need to be transformed; only, the question is: Who decides the agenda for changing men? For the world, it is about imposing rules. For the Church, it is about following the standard—living morally. The strategy of the Church should be taking the grace approach; but it is not.

The masculine strength of pursuing and achieving can be a blessing or a curse. God described the striving of the male to excel as revealing both the elements of success and defeat (Gen. 3:17, 18). Unfortunately, man has never learned to gauge and accept his

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<sup>101</sup> Henry Cloud, *Changes That Heal: How to Understand Your Past to Ensure a Healthier Future* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 19.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 19, 23, 31.

<sup>103</sup> May, 3.

<sup>104</sup> Eldredge, 83.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

own limitations. His drive to perform created a masculine mentality of “failure at doing is failing to be a man.”<sup>106</sup> Yearning for victory is the very essence of what it means to be male.<sup>107</sup> Because men are so focused on their accomplishments, they become preoccupied with comparing themselves to others.<sup>108</sup> Sadly, the measure of a man’s worth is his possessions. There is always someone who has more.<sup>109</sup> To a degree, this explains why men are so addicted to work.<sup>110</sup> For this, the male psyche has the Industrial Revolution to thank for ushering in a new reality.<sup>111</sup>

### WHERE IT WENT WRONG

Prior to the Industrial Revolution, boys worked alongside the men in their family and benefitted from male bonding.<sup>112</sup> At the beginning of the 1900s, “90 percent of the people lived on farms while only 10 percent lived in cities. ... People expected to live all of their life in the same community.”<sup>113</sup> Industrialization, though, uprooted rural families for urban wealth and, as a result, affected cultural values.<sup>114</sup> Consequently, fathers often left home to work, allowing far less time for interaction between fathers and sons. In

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<sup>106</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 39.

<sup>107</sup> Perkins, 15.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 83,84.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>110</sup> Nelson, 13.

<sup>111</sup> Bly, 94, 95.

<sup>112</sup> Nelson, 45; Bly, 95.

<sup>113</sup> Conway, 45.

<sup>114</sup> Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, 304.

addition, taking a job in another location put distance between extended families and particularly affected the valuable input of grandfathers. Bly identifies the Industrial Revolution as doing immeasurable harm to the father/son relationship. By fathers working away from home, and maybe even out of town, the distancing fractured the father/son relationship. As a result, the responsibility for teaching them how to grow up predominantly resided with the mom at home and the teacher at school (who frequently was female as well).<sup>115</sup>

With the Industrial Revolution the male identity especially became connected to work, and men developed their sense of worth around their achievements. Nelson observes that our culture does not offer any clear guidance as to what it means to be masculine. Instead, American culture has an “erection mentality” that “values hard facts over soft data.” Our idea of masculine is that “the army will make a man out of you.” Fully masculine means “to have balls” and not “embrace qualities that are foreign to our body.”<sup>116</sup>

The American male has been in deep trouble for nearly 150 years. There are several key factors for masculine role confusion: because of working dads, boys have been impeded from observing a masculine role model; dads are not and cannot teach their sons about manhood; moms were/are incompetent teachers regarding cross-gender values; no identifiers exist for recognizing the transition from boyhood to manhood; and, “the feminist movement has redefined womanhood in our culture.” Consequently, “most

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<sup>115</sup> Bly, 19.

<sup>116</sup> Nelson, 37, 49, 72, 100, 110.

men ... don't know how to respond to today's woman."<sup>117</sup> Additionally, as stated earlier, the male gender and masculinity are being redefined.

The struggle for men of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not new; it has only intensified. Men do not understand what is wrong. If it is any comfort, few have the problem figured out and less understand the solution.<sup>118</sup> Men are suffering from an identity crisis and our culture offers no help for being a healthy male.<sup>119</sup> Christianity is not effectively treating this issue either.<sup>120</sup> "Religious institutions ... only provide men mandates, scaffolding, signposts, and appealing images."<sup>121</sup> Bly also suggests that the Church prefers that men remain repressed and not discover their strength.<sup>122</sup> It may be that we better understand what a man is not,<sup>123</sup> since boys learn early in life that the definition of a man is to avoid crying and being sissies.<sup>124</sup> The problem does not simply improve with time, as most adult men are "not quite sure what a real man is."<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 25-31.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>119</sup> Erre, 25; Nelson, 49.

<sup>120</sup> Nelson, 140.

<sup>121</sup> Richard Rohr, *Adam's Return: The Five Promises of Male Initiation* (New York: Crossroad Pub., 2004), x.

<sup>122</sup> Bly, 6, 8.

<sup>123</sup> Erre, 26.

<sup>124</sup> Nelson, 42.

<sup>125</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 112.

## THE FATHER WOUND

The identity crisis starts when boys are transitioning into manhood—realizing their dissimilarity to mom and their resemblance to dad. Although they enter into the process of separation and individuation, “separating from mother can be problematic; especially, when mothers’ realize they are losing their sons.”<sup>126</sup> The wounds for a boy are from many sources: the mother’s words and actions cause the son to view his father negatively<sup>127</sup> (and, consequently, the son loses some of his childhood);<sup>128</sup> the son feels like a failure (due to his immaturity), since he cannot substitute for dad to meet mom’s need for nurture; he lacks the emotional capacity to figure out how to connect with dad; he perceives dad as evil, because he is purposefully avoiding the husband/father role; and all of this causes the son to begin his “life with a double failure.”<sup>129</sup> It cannot be overemphasized that the mother is a significant creator of the father wound, as she greatly influences how the son perceives his father. Furthermore, she relishes the relationship she has with her son and has no intention of it diminishing.<sup>130</sup>

The mother is not entirely at fault for her son’s woundedness. Obviously, the situation would be much different if the son had an emotionally present dad. The problem includes an under-functioning dad and an over-functioning mother. So, the issue involves an emotionally distant father and a mother who overcompensates by assuming the

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<sup>126</sup> Bly, 12.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 24, 32, 183-187.

position of “quarterback.” Friedman recognizes the blame is a family systems failure, although he does state that “it is her position that tends to lay the failure at her feet.”<sup>131</sup> By no means does this exclude the father’s responsibility; he is also a major player in the son’s woundedness. At issue, most fathers were not taught to be fathers and feel totally incompetent to teach a boy how to be a man. As said earlier, the absence of the father is work-related; but, also, because he is generally trying to figure out his own manhood.<sup>132</sup> The father wound is demanding, unforgiving, and a conditional love. The sons learns from his father that it is impossible to earn his father’s love; and this is reinforced through the emotionally and/or physically absent father. From this, the son learns “independence: be your own man ... self-protection: keep your guard up.”<sup>133</sup> Obviously, for a son to enter adulthood with this attitude, sets him up for failure.

As a result, there is a “deep spiritual and psychological wound at the center of a man’s identity . . . specifically the loss of his father.”<sup>134</sup> Unknowingly, a boy will repeat his father’s mistake of proving his manhood—either through work or some other endeavor—often both. Through some means, a man is going to prove he is a man. His drive to succeed will damage, break up, or deaden relationships; regardless, it increases his wound.<sup>135</sup> Additionally, other losses in life only “salt the wound” and leads to

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<sup>131</sup> Friedman, 105, 106.

<sup>132</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 25-28.

<sup>133</sup> Nelson, 51.

<sup>134</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 155.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

seclusion.<sup>136</sup> Because of their pain men have “lost touch with a whole range of emotions ... don’t feel [their feelings] very well ... [are] alienated from their bodies ... lose concreteness of life ... [and] seduced by abstractions ... [that are] confusing them about reality.”<sup>137</sup> Men are “emotionally dead,” and this is because of being isolated and suffering in solitude.<sup>138</sup>

There is a scene from the 2001 movie, *Shrek*, that somewhat illustrates the current dilemma for men. Shrek is the green ogre who wants to live in his own domain of isolation. Because others have violated his space, he wants to erect a ten-foot wall around his swamp in order to keep everyone out. Shrek declares to the donkey, “Look, I’m not the one with the problem, okay? It’s the world that seems to have a problem with me. People take one look at me and go, ‘Aah! Help! Run! A big, stupid, ugly ogre!’ They judge me before they even know me. That’s why I’m better off alone.”<sup>139</sup>

“Due to the epidemic of fatherlessness,”<sup>140</sup> most males are unaware they are hiding—living in seclusion. Men need to realize much of their issues in life are rooted in the father wound.<sup>141</sup> Like in the movie, “*Good Will Hunting*,” men need to grasp that “it is not your fault.”<sup>142</sup> Men do not understand—boys and fathers—why the father remains distant. By the father offering his son conditional love indicates: “the male is shaped for

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 155-156.

<sup>137</sup> Nelson, 30.

<sup>138</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 158.

<sup>139</sup> <http://www.imsdb.com/scripts/Shrek.html> (accessed February 2, 2009).

<sup>140</sup> Erre, 141-142.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>142</sup> <http://www.imsdb.com/scripts/Good-Will-Hunting.html> (accessed January 10, 2011).

independence but not intimacy; self-protection but not vulnerability; competition but not mutuality.”<sup>143</sup> The lack of the father nurturing his son is carried into adulthood and the wound he carries has affected “the core of [his] own sense of masculinity.”<sup>144</sup>

Some of the son’s healing includes learning about his own father’s history and understanding that his father suffered a similar or, perhaps, worse fate. As the son feels his father’s pain, he empathizes with his father’s experiences; and, then, “healing comes from conscious acts of forgiveness and reconciliation.”<sup>145</sup> Bly points out that

A man’s effort to move to the father’s house takes a long time; it’s difficult, and each man has to do it for himself. Among a man’s jobs is to reclaim his own grief. When a man has reclaimed his grief and investigated his wound, he may find that they resemble the grief and the wound his father had, and the reclaiming puts him in touch with his father’s soul. Once his senses are sharpened, he will be able to smell the father’s wound.<sup>146</sup>

What is gained from such an understanding is that the son sees that he and his father exist together in a greater story, which causes him to view his suffering as not personal and eliminates him from being the victim.<sup>147</sup> Bly points out, it is “the early negative views of the father” that dominates the psyche; and it is not until “around forty or forty-five ... an unexplainable biological timetable ... [that] a movement toward the father takes place.”<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Nelson, 43.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>145</sup> Nelson, 44.

<sup>146</sup> Bly, 88.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 25.

## MID-LIFE CRISIS

Escaping from reality is easier than facing it. If untrue, no one would have any struggles. Men need to break free from role conformity and being people pleasers. Bly states “a child will not become an adult until it breaks the addiction to harmony.”<sup>149</sup> Therefore, something must eventually generate disharmony to create a need for change.

It is not unusual for men to ignore their pain until much later in life; hence the term: mid-life crisis. Why does it take until mid-life for men to come to their senses? Society has an established standard for early adulthood which is: acquiring an education, getting married, raising a family, pursuing a career, and climbing the ladder to success. In youth, the focus for a man is the future, carving his niche in history, and living out his dreams for accomplishing it. At midlife, the man arrives at the realization that he has failed to make his mark. Suddenly, life is all about now—the clash between his fantasies and what is realistic.<sup>150</sup>

Much like his father, the son plows through life trying to conquer it. Only, he does not know he is generally no more prepared to be a man or a father than was his own father. The son desperately craves the approval of his father as well as guidance about what it means to be masculine. The son receives inept mentoring through observing the father’s absence. The father’s activity at a distance models that manhood is proven

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>150</sup> Conway, 21, 31, 32, 33.

through conquering all of life's tasks. Since there is no marker for transitioning from boyhood to manhood, he gropes along attempting to prove his worth as a man.<sup>151</sup>

Although many factors influence the male identity, he predominantly finds identity through doing.<sup>152</sup> The male psyche is all about achieving, and if a man is not successful, he is a failure. As a result, the male does not find his identity through his being. This is why men often get buried in their work, hobbies, and games; isolated and cut-off from sources of nurture. "The epitome of the I-am-what-I-do syndrome among today's men is the workaholic. ... The real goal of the workaholic is to stay so busy that he doesn't have to deal with the inner pain of unmet basic needs."<sup>153</sup> According to Brunner,

Men are being disciplined into power and not into their weakness. Men are being trained to be successful and not about suffering. Men should be teaching young men not to abuse their power. There is no accountability in their lives for abusing their power. Workaholism is an acceptable way for fathers to abuse their sons. Midlife is about the breaking of dreams. At mid-life everything changes and ... what ... worked in the first part does not work in the second part. The heroic journey (ages 1-32) is for winning. Working hard is rewarding. Often the crisis involves loss of some sort. What worked in the first half of life stops working; and what seemed to work when we were young does not work at this point.<sup>154</sup>

Opinions differ as to the age when the crisis occurs. The prevailing belief is that it occurs as early as 30 and peaks around 45.<sup>155</sup> Brunner refers to this as a "crisis of limitation" (ages 35-50), a term borrowed from Richard Rohr. This is a time when men begin to acknowledge and make sense of their own expectations and limitations for

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<sup>151</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 28, 29.

<sup>152</sup> Nelson, 19.

<sup>153</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 25, 27-29, 33, 38-40.

<sup>154</sup> Brunner, class notes, February 18, 2010.

<sup>155</sup> Conway, 26, 27.

achieving life goals.<sup>156</sup> In mid-life, work begins to sour; the ego dips; the body deteriorates; and men have few or no friends. At this point, the male is extremely vulnerable. He is walking through a minefield and disaster is lurking. As a boy, he learned to go to his mother and not his father with his problems. The tendency is to seek out an empathetic female; and this is when affairs happen.<sup>157</sup> Not all men enter into an immoral relationship; many will instead turn to their wife for help. During this time, men will also seek gratification for the emptiness they are feeling in some way. They may appear to be checking out from the existence they have known. Subsequently, they may be described as going through a second childhood—buying toys, clothes, etc.—to satisfy their urge to be young again. They may feel depressed and lonely, and think alcohol is their best friend.<sup>158</sup> The dichotomy is that their lifestyle has created space between others, and they rarely have a confidant. Throughout their adult life, men have demonstrated their strength; “at mid-life they’re supposed to have it all together.”<sup>159</sup> It could be said that men in mid-life crisis are in a double-bind—they are supposed to have mastered life but, instead, they are disenchanting and bored with it. For the man in mid-life crisis, being bored is similar to reaching the bottom of the barrel. He has reached the end of his emptiness and something of significance must fill that void.<sup>160</sup> When a man is in his mid-forties he is often overextended and, yet, does not have the energy capacity to maintain

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<sup>156</sup> Brunner, class notes, February 18, 2010.

<sup>157</sup> Conway, 28, 29, 102, 120, 121.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 61, 72, 75, 85-92.

<sup>159</sup> Conway, 132-133.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

all he has achieved.<sup>161</sup> Life is no longer working well and he may or may not ever figure it out.

The mid-life crisis is a transition from doing to being. It involves navigating through loss, similar to death. “The crisis of limitation” involves the process of years of accepting the change from youth to growing older and unattained ambitions. Consequently, the midlife crisis is a journey through the stages of death.<sup>162</sup> These stages of death are cyclical, though, rather than linear. Men do not go through these stages to never encounter them again. Consequently, as in Alcoholics Anonymous, nothing is permanent and we are always in recovery.<sup>163</sup> The idea is of accepting one’s limitations; a resigning or surrendering to a new state of being rather than doing.

Not everyone, however, goes through this journey successfully. For some, this is a wisdom journey and, for others, it makes no sense at all. Instead of adapting with new insights, such men become embittered with age. Those who never engage with a crisis become “old fools.” They either ignore or power through their situation; subsequently, they become cynical about life. There is a reason for the term, ‘old fart.’ Their outlook about life becomes stinkier with age.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 144-154.

<sup>163</sup> May, 90.

<sup>164</sup> Brunner, class notes, February 18, 2010.

## CONCLUSION

The man in mid-life crisis is going through a critical juncture; much of what he experiments with will be “escape-oriented;” which only complicates matters. He will be sorely tempted to blame others as well as certain circumstances for his difficulties. What he desperately needs to understand is the struggle is predominantly internal rather than external. Ultimately, this is a spiritual struggle—an invitation from doing to being—and he needs God to guide his search.<sup>165</sup> Carl Yung once said,

People from all the civilized countries of the earth have consulted me. I have treated many hundreds of patients. Among all my patients in the second half of life—that is to say, over thirty-five—there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious [spiritual] outlook on life. ... None of them has been really healed who did not regain his religious [spiritual] outlook.<sup>166</sup>

Men crave freedom. Like William Wallace, they are willing to sacrifice their lives to have it. Unfortunately, men will die today unaware that Jesus has already paid the price. Men do not need more obligations. The Bible has more than enough rules. The rules are there to lead people to rely on Christ, not try harder to obey. Frequently, religion is binding, imposing practices that ensures failure. Therefore, what men need to know is the truth that will set them free.

What all people need—especially men—is grace and truth. Both are found in Christ. We are accepted in Christ and the truth is that His grace is our all sufficiency. “With grace alone, we are safe from condemnation, but we cannot experience true intimacy. [Jesus] offers grace ... [and] truth (truth about who we are ... who He is, and

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<sup>165</sup> Conway, 71-81.

<sup>166</sup> Brunner, class notes. February 18, 2010.

... the world around us), and we respond with our true self, then real intimacy is possible. Real intimacy always comes in the company of truth.”<sup>167</sup>

The sad reality—men are struggling alone—oblivious to their need for help. One of the myths about masculinity is that a real man asks no one for help. He is the lone ranger. He grins and bears his pain. Many men go to their graves never knowing the truth about masculinity—that all men need help from someone. Grace and truth cannot function in hibernation. Grace and truth operates in connection with a relationship with the Head (Jesus Christ) and His body. Many people come to Christ because they are sinners, and then proceed through life pretending they are not.<sup>168</sup> Church does not save men from hiding, it only provides another cover. Fig leaves have never been an acceptable substitute. God knew from the beginning that it was not good for man to live in isolation. I believe men crave deep connections with other men; they just don’t know how to establish such relationships.<sup>169</sup>

As said in the beginning, there is a spiritual dimension to being male.<sup>170</sup> Imposing constraints upon the male spirit can only be injurious; and this is supported by this chapter. Men need to know that male strength can be a good attribute; especially, when Spirit directed. Who has the answers for man except the One who created him? I fully agree that “God is the author of the masculine condition.” He never intended for life to

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<sup>167</sup> Cloud, 15.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>169</sup> Erre, 137.

<sup>170</sup> Eldredge, 5.

work without Him.<sup>171</sup> This is Christianity's greatest opportunity. I agree with Bly; men would benefit from learning how to direct their strengths to a "transcendent cause."<sup>172</sup> Many men can be encouraged to come out of hiding if the Church was willing to point them to the Way, Jesus Christ. The Church has a unique message. Now is the moment for the Church to tell men they have value, while the world is sending them a conflicting message. Men need to know their worth and that it is based primarily upon who they are, not about what they do. The Church has the opportunity to point men to the One who proved the worth of all on the cross.

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<sup>171</sup> Erre, 57, 58.

<sup>172</sup> Bly, 150.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ENCOURAGING MEN TO PURSUE HEALING

Boss and Charley represented some of the last of the cattlemen, during the range wars of the late 1800s. Known as “free-grazers,” their only desire was to graze their cattle on the open range and not be fenced within a ranch. In the fictional movie, “Open Range,” a particular land baron, Denton Baxter, despised free-grazers and had violent intentions for them. His devious design was simple: kill them and claim their cattle for his own. Boss and Charley knew they were in deep trouble. They were a small outfit and, with too many guns against them, the two were clearly outmatched. Boss recognized Charley was deeply disturbed; so, he asked Charley what was wrong. Charley’s answer: “I’m fine” ... “Just got some old feelings coming up.” In the moment, Charley struggled with opening up. The time was not quite right for being vulnerable about the content of his feelings. Several hours later, in the quietness of the night, Charley began to share the ghosts from his past with Boss:

When I was a kid, a bunch of us would go into the woods with our peashooters. Nothing fancy, just enough to kill a bird or a squirrel, maybe something larger if we was lucky. Killed my first man in them woods. Held the paper on our farm, and after my pa died, he'd come around to get payment from my mom in any way he could. Weren't much older than Button when I shot him in the throat. Knew there'd be more killing, so I run off and joined the Army. War was on. They was only too happy to have me.

My first skirmish was like hunting with my friends. We just sat up in some trees, and they came marching at us. Must have been a hundred of them dead after the smoke cleared. Went around and shot the rest who weren't. Those of us with the knack was made into a special squad so we could travel light and on our own into enemy territory. Orders were pretty simple. Make trouble wherever we could. With room like that, it wasn't long before we was killing men that weren't even in uniform. Seemed like that went on the rest of the war. After that, I come West. Lot of call for a man with them skills. And I put them to work for men just like

Baxter. Every once in a while, I almost get through a day without thinking about who I am, what I'd done.<sup>1</sup>

Despite being fictional, this story nevertheless reveals considerable truth about the male reality. Charley had an ugly past—skeletons in his closet—and he wished to forget it. With the passing of time, the memory of his past continued to haunt him and would not go away. For ten years Charley kept the gruesome horror of his deeds buried within himself. He worked hard but, despite his work ethic, he could never forget what he had done. Boss had worked with Charley for ten years, but he had no idea that Charley had previously been a gunslinger and a killer. Boss was certainly aware that Charley carried a lighter pistol, but Boss had no idea that Charley's pistol had a past—with the purpose of outdrawing and gunning down another man.

Charley was a killer, and it ate on him like a slow, incurable, disease. Even though he had abandoned his gun hand profession for more than ten years, he could not shake off his personal identity as a killer. He felt he had committed so many wrongs he could never be considered a good man—not by his or anyone else's standard. Who would knowingly keep company with a murderer? Who could possibly trust someone who had possessed such a low value upon human life? For ten years Charley had worked with Boss and carried an aching heart—the secret of dastardly deeds. He was lonely. He had a need for someone to listen, to care, and to accept him for who he was and not for what he had been and done. He understood reality, though. Most people could not be trusted to be so accommodating—so big-hearted. No one could possibly listen to the atrocities he had committed and stomach it all. Charley thought he could never find anyone to understand

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.script-o-rama.com/movie\\_scripts/o/open-range-script-transcript-costner.html](http://www.script-o-rama.com/movie_scripts/o/open-range-script-transcript-costner.html) (accessed February 2, 2009).

that what a person did in the past does not determine who they are in the present. Because of such allusions, Charley lived in the past; lived in fear; lived in pain; lived in another reality.

### **SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS DISCOURAGE OPENNESS**

If the fictional Charley feared exposure in the late 1800's, then the man of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has even more concern about his true self being known. Our society does not encourage openness and transparency; instead, it represses it. Role conformity is the biggest form of repression. Jourard particularly describes the intentionality of society to train people to accept appropriate roles in order to promote normalcy within the social order. He primarily recognizes the family and educational system as enforcing role conformity, and creating estrangement from the real self.<sup>2</sup> In chapter four, secular culture and graceless religion were also noted as greatly contributing to the development of the false self.<sup>3</sup>

Children learn to live a façade early in life, due to the high standard before them.<sup>4</sup> Obviously, self-alienation affects both genders. However, Jourard stresses the problem is much worse with males. Women actively engage in transparency and are also receptive to self-disclosure from others; men avoid such interaction altogether.<sup>5</sup> Jourard defines self-disclosure as “the act of making yourself manifest, showing yourself so others can

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<sup>2</sup> Jourard, 26, 30.

<sup>3</sup> Smedes, 38.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 38-40.

<sup>5</sup> Jourard, 35-37.

perceive you.”<sup>6</sup> He then proceeds to make the distinction between openness (self-disclosure) and being alienated:

Self disclosure is a *symptom* of personality health and a means of ultimately *achieving* healthy personality (italics supplied). ... One’s *self grows from the consequence of being*. People’s selves *stop growing* when they repress them. ... Alienation from one’s real self not only arrests personal growth; it tends to make a farce out of one’s relationships with people.<sup>7</sup>

### THE EFFECTS OF INDIVIDUALISM

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Americans are observing the fruition of Alex de Tocqueville’s 1835 prognostication of individualism causing isolation and the fragmentation of society.<sup>8</sup> During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries of U.S. history, individualism began replacing communalism, as families began leaving their extended families and migrating west.<sup>9</sup> However, individualism did not become apparent on a large scale until the explosion of the suburbs after WW II. “The suburbs effectively created a culture of isolation by providing people with private space.”<sup>10</sup>

Individualism can be defined as: “a social theory advocating the liberty, rights, or independent action of the individual; the principle or habit of or belief in independent thought or action; the pursuit of individual rather than common or collective interests;

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<sup>6</sup> Jourard, 12, 19, 30, 31.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 32-33.

<sup>8</sup> Peck, 25.

<sup>9</sup> Shiels, 57.

<sup>10</sup> Frazee, 111, 112.

egoism; individual character; individuality; an individual peculiarity.”<sup>11</sup> It is apparent that certain elements of this definition are applaudable. There is nothing wrong with being your own person; or, thinking or acting independently, as long as it is not harming anyone. However, there is more to the definition of individualism than just being your own person. With individualism, “me” is the focus. No one else matters. Self reigns supreme.<sup>12</sup> “Our devotion to self-protection and control might be very human and natural, but it is the essence of sin and will keep us from ever loving or being loved.”<sup>13</sup>

Humans were designed to be relational.<sup>14</sup> God made man and woman for the purpose of relating to Him and each other.<sup>15</sup> “Because God has created a relational world, people can know their true selves only in relationship.”<sup>16</sup> Wheatley states, “Everything in the universe exists because it is in relationship to everything else. Nothing exists in isolation ... we humans want to be together. We isolate ourselves when we’re hurt by others, but alone is not our natural state.”<sup>17</sup> Jourard agrees, “We camouflage our true being before others to protect ourselves against criticism or rejection. This protection comes at a steep price.”<sup>18</sup> Although this is correct, Science does not link God and the effects of sin with the dilemma. The fall in the Garden of Eden alienated humans from

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<sup>11</sup> <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/Individualism?s=t> (accessed November 1, 2013).

<sup>12</sup> Frazee, 42.

<sup>13</sup> Schaumburg, 82.

<sup>14</sup> Crouch, 105.

<sup>15</sup> Toren, 219.

<sup>16</sup> Cloud, 74.

<sup>17</sup> Margaret J. Wheatley, *Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future* (1st ed. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2002), 19.

<sup>18</sup> Jourard, vii.

God, each other, with self, and with nature. God's plan of redemption is the only way to change our relationships on every level.<sup>19</sup>

### COMMUNITY VERSUS INDIVIDUALISM

The impact of individualism: it isolates people and prevents the possibility of community.<sup>20</sup> Individualism is a predominant characteristic of modern culture, and this is an opportunity for the Church to provide the opposite—community. Because society is so fragmented and isolated, Frazee sees community building to be “the biggest challenge” the Church faces in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>21</sup> “Today’s church is not a community but a collection of individuals.”<sup>22</sup> He admits that Christianity is not currently offering community. Many churches are trying to offer community through small groups, but individualism is preventing it. Sadly, the Church has lost its focus, and no one even knows the meaning of community anymore.<sup>23</sup>

It seems Frazee does not understand the meaning of community either. He suggests that community will occur around a common belief system.<sup>24</sup> If that is the case, then religions should have a monopoly on community, since they have a common belief system. Later, Frazee quotes Schaller who asks the question, “So, how do you build community? ... The easiest way to consolidate a group is to give them a common enemy.

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<sup>19</sup> Boa, 417.

<sup>20</sup> Frazee, 30.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 44, 111; as quoted from John Locke, 1998, 122.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 46, 47.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

A more scripturally sound way is to develop shared experiences in support of a common cause.”<sup>25</sup> Christianity has a common enemy—Satan; and it has a common cause—follow Christ. It is certainly possible to have shared experiences and, yet, never encounter community. Frazee further proposes, “The church must ask itself the question, ‘What is our plan for teaching our people to obey everything Christ has commanded?’”<sup>26</sup> Not only is this the wrong question, it is legalistic to the core. Obedience is not flesh-achieved. Obedience only occurs through God’s Spirit having the reigns of the human heart.

Jesus emphasized the necessity of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Just prior to ascending to Heaven (Acts 1:5), He promised His disciples, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you” (v. 8). What created spiritual community within the NT Church was the working of the Holy Spirit, due to the crucified and risen Lord. What united believers to each other and to Christ was the baptism of the Holy Spirit.<sup>27</sup> Spiritual Community is all about our relationship with Christ, His Spirit, and His people. What creates spiritual community is not the result of human effort, but the Spirit functioning as the result of a grace community.<sup>28</sup> Grace is what makes spiritual community; and grace is what generates and sustains a loving community.<sup>29</sup>

Although spiritual community is the ideal, that is not usually where to start with most men. The typical male fears the perception of being unmanly; as a result, he will not betray his masculinity through appearing to be feminine. Sadly, men consider developing

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 69; as quoted from Dallas Willard, 1988, 16.

<sup>27</sup> Anderson, *An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches*, 168, 169.

<sup>28</sup> Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*, 219.

<sup>29</sup> Anderson, *An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches*, 150.

relationships through openness and transparency to be feminine behaviors.<sup>30</sup> For men to seek love, forgiveness, and acceptance from other men will feel outside the norm, since they are accustomed to relating to men on a competitive level.<sup>31</sup> Because many men are homophobic, they will also be resistant to having close male relationships with other men.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, men generally view intimacy and sex as what happens in the bedroom; thus, another barrier to developing close ties with other men.<sup>33</sup>

### MOVING MEN OUT OF THEIR COMFORT ZONE

Much of what men believe about relationships, intimacy, vulnerability, and love are myths. Another myth: a man is what a man does; his worth comes through doing. Because men are all about doing, it is almost impossible for them to enjoy being. In order for men to make the journey toward being, something needs to disturb and wake him up to the false self. As noted before, this destabilization of the false self occurs around midlife.<sup>34</sup> It is busywork and noise that disallows any personal reflection;<sup>35</sup> of the professions, clergy are some of the worst at avoiding self-knowledge.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, the

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<sup>30</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 37-48.

<sup>31</sup> Nelson, 62; Patrick Means, *Men's Secret Wars* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1999), 71.

<sup>32</sup> Nelson, 62.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>34</sup> Rohr, 44.

<sup>35</sup> Gordon MacDonald, *When Men Think Private Thoughts* (Nashville: Nelson, 1996), 153.

<sup>36</sup> Donald R. Hands and Wayne L. Fehr, *Spiritual Wholeness for Clergy: A New Psychology of Intimacy with God, Self, and Others* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1993), 62.

wounds have to be significant enough for the man to desire something better than his current situation. In time, he may learn that what he is seeking after is his true self.<sup>37</sup>

Everyone hungers for relationships—men included. “At our very core we are relational beings.”<sup>38</sup> Although the average male would not admit it, men have the need to be known as do women.<sup>39</sup> The question is not if men need to be more open about themselves but how to encourage men toward greater openness. Men greatly desire emotional affirmation and validation from other men, although many are unaware of such a need.<sup>40</sup> This study is proposing that the active participation of transparency by men, in support groups for men, encourages them to have healthy relationships with God and others. Healthy relationships would include living from the true self and experiencing spiritual community with God, spouse, and a group of believers. Even though the concept of support groups is not that complex, this will not be easy for the Church, as a whole, to incorporate. The Church is chiefly head and not heart-oriented.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, this study will appeal to relationally-based congregations in the U.S.; and it categorically will not work in rule-based ones. Rule-based churches emphasize adhering to beliefs out of obligation and avoiding criticism. They are not interested in openness unless it leads to

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<sup>37</sup> Rohr, 47.

<sup>38</sup> Cloud, 46.

<sup>39</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 37.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>41</sup> Sweet, *So Beautiful*, 115.

shame and repentance. Consequently, rule-based churches are all about pretentiousness; the non-compliers leave the all saints club.<sup>42</sup>

### FINDING COMMON GROUND

Chapter four considered how a son adopts his mother's negative view of his father by age six. It should be emphasized, due to the father's emotional and/or physical absence, that the father is either unavailable or unapproachable. Through his growing up years, the son learns he can trust his mother about personal matters.<sup>43</sup> It is only reasonable to expect, as an adult, he will still turn to women for the answers. The woman in a man's life typically knows he needs help. Overusing his partner as a sounding board for his frustrations is only too convenient.<sup>44</sup> Much of what disturbs him involves his masculinity and identity; only, he is unaware of what is troubling him. In addition, women cannot possibly relate to the male issues. It really is unfair to ask her to be an ear to what is troubling him. Where will he go for help?

Clearly, what provides common ground for all men is that they are stuck in their woundedness through numbing their pain. What does it mean to be stuck? It means we cannot move forward and we cannot move on.<sup>45</sup> The character, "Red," in the movie *Shawshank Redemption*, said it this way: "These walls are funny. First you hate 'em, then

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<sup>42</sup> Arterburn and Felton, 58, 123.

<sup>43</sup> Bly, 99.

<sup>44</sup> I overused my wife for a period of time.

<sup>45</sup> Personal notes from sermon remarks by Pastor Kurt Croon at New Hope Community Church, Portland, Oregon, November 10, 2013 (used by permission).

you get used to 'em. Enough time passes, you get so you depend on them.”<sup>46</sup> There are a number of things that keep men stuck or walled in, but the most popular anesthetic for men is porn.

A simple definition for porn is visual content (e.g. magazines, video, and internet) of nude bodies and/or sexual activities.<sup>47</sup> According to one survey, 90% of those responding admitted that pornography was one of their addictions.<sup>48</sup> Although the above study is dated, a recent article indicates the problem has steadily increased up to the present. Also, men continue to be the main consumers, and the availability of porn on the internet will only cause the trend to increase.<sup>49</sup> In the U.S. alone, the gross income estimate for the porn industry (2006) exceeded \$13 billion.<sup>50</sup>

There is an obvious need for helping men in the most vulnerable areas of their lives. Porn is an undeniable problem, existing within the Church as well as without.<sup>51</sup> For the Church to offer support groups for men who desire help with their addictions—especially porn—is greatly needed. It is vital for the Church to understand, though, that “sexual addiction isn’t just an issue of sex or even of external behavior: It’s a

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<sup>46</sup> <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0111161/quotes> (accessed November 11, 2013).

<sup>47</sup> Paul J. Wright, “U.S. Males and Pornography, 1973-2010: Consumption, Predictors, Correlates.” *Journal of Sex Research*, 60 (2013).

<sup>48</sup> Schaumberg, 41; as cited from Patrick Carnes, 1991, 42.

<sup>49</sup> Wright, U.S. Males and Pornography, 60, 61.

<sup>50</sup> Destin Stewart and Dawn Szymanski, “Young Adult Women’s Reports of Their Male Romantic Partner’s Pornography Use as a Correlate of Their Self-Esteem, Relationship Quality, and Sexual Satisfaction.” *Sex Roles* (2012): 257; as referenced from J. Ropelato. (2007). *Internet Pornography Statistics*. Retrieved from <http://internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com/internet-pornographystatistics.html>.

<sup>51</sup> Means, 132, 133.

byproduct of loneliness, pain, the self-centered demand to be loved and accepted regardless of the consequences, and a loss of vital relationship with God.”<sup>52</sup>

Men struggle with real intimacy, and it is much bigger than symptoms such as porn. The dictionary defines intimacy as being: “a close, familiar, and usually affectionate or loving personal relationship with another person or group.”<sup>53</sup> MacDonald defines intimacy as: “the experience of human connection far beneath and beyond the level of the sexual and the intellectual—the connection of hearts.”<sup>54</sup>

What interferes with real intimacy or making solid connections with other men is false intimacy. False intimacy is the result of isolating and living out of the false self. False intimacy is “a self-created illusion to help a person avoid the pain inherent in real intimacy.”<sup>55</sup> Therefore, false intimacy is acting out and embracing fantasy, whether that fantasy is imaginary or real (e.g., prostitute or affair).<sup>56</sup> Those who struggle with sexual addiction are strongly attracted to false intimacy and cannot cease participating in it. Although Schaumburg sees a correlation between false intimacy and sexual addiction, he considers sexual addicts are crossing a line to do extremely destructive and out of control behavior. Therefore, for him, sexual addiction is on the other end of the continuum of

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<sup>52</sup> Schaumburg, 25.

<sup>53</sup> <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/intimacy?s=t> (accessed November 11, 2013).

<sup>54</sup> MacDonald, 18.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 22, 30.

sexual behavior. In other words, looking at porn and masturbating is closely related to the behavior of a sexual addict—it is just not the extreme.<sup>57</sup>

The sexual addict is avoiding the pain associated with managing relationships. It becomes one method for creating a sense of control in interactions.<sup>58</sup> Subsequently, sexually acting out becomes an illusion of safety. With sexually fantasizing, there are no risks of rejection; as well, the guarantee of the participant—whether imaginary or real—being fully engaged. Clearly, this false intimacy becomes a sexual conquest for achieving unconditional acceptance.<sup>59</sup>

Men typically discover false intimacy early in life. Boys learn as children, due to a lack of nurture and non-acceptance, that the safest way to avoid the pain of relationships is through isolating. They also learn intimacy can be achieved alone through self-gratification.<sup>60</sup> Hands and Fehr attribute fear to what incapacitates men from experiencing intimacy. Thus, male's commonly fear: "enmeshment" ... (becoming entangled in another's situation) "loss of autonomy and even identity. Intimacy is impossible under these conditions."<sup>61</sup> Predominantly, Hands and Fehr consider intimacy as referring to interpersonal relationships, and the ability to be emotionally honest and vulnerable with another. Therefore, "Intimacy is primarily an attitude; sex is an act."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 20, 21.

<sup>58</sup> Schaumburg, 20, 22.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 70-71.

<sup>61</sup> Hands and Fehr, 21.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 37, 38.

Fear keeps men isolated, struggling and stranded on their own island. Most men do not have any male friends they consider trustworthy to be a confidant. Yes, they have their recreational buddies; but they will not discuss their deep, hidden, feelings with another guy.<sup>63</sup> There are a few theories as to why most men do not talk about their feelings: they perceive it is not manly;<sup>64</sup> they struggle to admit their mistakes and weaknesses;<sup>65</sup> they did not have a mentor to teach them about manhood;<sup>66</sup> and, they lack competence in the social skills.<sup>67</sup> Consequently, the false self greatly impairs a man's existence.

The reason men live from a false self is not entirely about growing up in a shame-based society. Men also hide due to the consequences of Adam and Eve's sin—ashamed of their own sexuality.<sup>68</sup> A definition for sexuality includes both gender and sexual intimacy. Therefore, sexuality has physical and emotional components.<sup>69</sup> Because men have separated sex from intimacy explains why sex does not have to be personal to them.<sup>70</sup> A man's sexuality is connected to his identity, and this is a bigger problem than most realize. Society has forced the male's sexuality underground; hence, isolation.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Nelson, 48.

<sup>64</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 37.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>69</sup> Nelson, 26.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 115, 116.

The deeper issue of shame, however, exists due to the condition of the human heart. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it” (Jer. 17:9)? God is asking humanity, “Who can know it?” The Hebrew word for “know” is *yada*. The verb, *Yada*, has a cognitive and experiential meaning; which implies a deep, intimate, knowing.<sup>72</sup> God is stating no one will ever understand human behavior, never be able to fix it, and never be able to control it through self-effort. In Jeremiah 17, God says, “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength (v. 5). . . . I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind” (v. 9, 10). The implication—He is the only One who is able to fix the heart problem. “If the heart isn’t cured, taking a series of steps toward behavioral change will ultimately accomplish little.”<sup>73</sup> Society thinks ideas, formulas, and steps can change people, when, instead, it is relationships. The Church, especially, needs to realize that information does not lead to transformation.<sup>74</sup> “God has given . . . three primary sources for help: the Word of God, the Spirit of God, and the people of God. These three interlocking elements are essential to . . . restoration.”<sup>75</sup> It is possible to reveal a part of the true self to others; but it is only in a relationship with God and His people that anyone can live from the true self.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Vine, Vine’s expository dictionary [computer file], electronic ed.

<sup>73</sup> Schaumburg, 98.

<sup>74</sup> Rohr, 52, 121.

<sup>75</sup> Schaumburg, 93.

<sup>76</sup> Cloud, 49.

### THE NEED TO BE KNOWN BY WAY OF A SUPPORT GROUP

Men do not have an inclination for baring all of the naked truth from their past. Jourard states that self-disclosure begets self-disclosure. There is a dynamic about self-disclosure that encourages reciprocation.<sup>77</sup> Jourard also recognizes that self-disclosure occurs as the result of someone believing “his audience is a man of goodwill.” He continues:

When a man discloses his experience to another, fully, spontaneously, and honestly, then the mystery that he was decreases enormously. . . . Self-disclosure follows an attitude of love and trust. If I love someone, not only do I strive to know him; I also display my love by letting him know me. At the same time, by so doing, I permit him to love me.<sup>78</sup>

Typically, extroverted personalities are more willing to be open.<sup>79</sup> As a result of being vulnerable, it fosters vulnerability. Truth-telling is one of the strengths of a support group; it creates space for others to be truthful. In this setting, many men, for the very first time, hear self-disclosure like they have never heard before. As stated above, men are often able to be transparent after observing it through others. I have frequently heard men state: “I thought I was the only one with this problem;” and, “I was afraid of being rejected as some sort of messed up pervert.”<sup>80</sup>

Another part of the healing process involves connecting with others. Men, however, possess a strong fear for being truthful about their inward self (true self); they especially fear rejection by their peers. But in order to discover who they are, they need

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<sup>77</sup> Jourard, 65.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>79</sup> Personal observation from four years in men’s support groups.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

to reveal themselves to others. The only way for men to experience a breakthrough to their masculine identity is through men relating to other men.<sup>81</sup> Subsequently, by living in reality, men discover their identity through sharing themselves to others.<sup>82</sup> In addition, men learn relying on one other to be a strength and not a weakness.<sup>83</sup> Consequently, in a support group of men, the masculine myths begin to unravel, and they begin to experience just how much they really need male friends in order to be complete.<sup>84</sup>

Men need a safe place where other men can understand and relate to their pain.<sup>85</sup> Men want men who will relate to their struggles, respect their vulnerability, and protect their confidentiality.<sup>86</sup> The heart cry of a man is to bare his soul and know another man will still fully accept him.<sup>87</sup> “There are types of validation and acceptance” ... [that only friends can give] ... Only men understand the secret fears that go with the territory of masculinity.”<sup>88</sup> When men are honest, they expose the masculine tendency of pretense<sup>89</sup> and pain control.<sup>90</sup>

It would be a mistake to assume that openness eliminates problems; it only creates the potential for it. Consequently, this study is not just advocating any type of support

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<sup>81</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 41.

<sup>82</sup> Jourard, 7.

<sup>83</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 80.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>86</sup> Perkins, 104.

<sup>87</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 150.

<sup>88</sup> Nelson, 51; as quoted from Sam Keen, 1984, 238.

<sup>89</sup> Nelson, 25.

<sup>90</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 157.

group for producing change. As Cloud says, the Body of Christ is the only place where real and lasting growth occurs.<sup>91</sup> There should be an intentionality to support groups that leads them to faith in Christ. Otherwise, churches become vendors of information only. Until churches deal with the heart, they are essentially saying, “Sin can be dealt with apart from what Christ did on the cross.”<sup>92</sup> Men need more than just groups that are addiction/recovery oriented. Any church that does not help a man to realize he is living from a false identity and carrying a father wound is setting men up for failure; also, the likelihood they will never seek out help again. False intimacy is only the tip of the iceberg for men. Consequently, their issues do not represent the full extent of what troubles men. The symptom(s) is/are the result of a damaged core. Friedman points out that it is futile to treat the symptom without addressing the emotional process supporting it. Therefore, in order for healing to be effective, he stresses the focus should be on “the emotional system,” and the symptoms will lose their power.<sup>93</sup> The quote by Friedman deserves emphasis; issues with an emotional base go unresolved if the approach to solving them is solely a cognitive one (i.e. pedagogy). Essentially, many churches are addressing the *symptoms* of the false self and the father wound, but not treating the roots of the symptoms. It is similar to applying a band aid to an infected sore. The band-aid does nothing for the infection; it just covers it up, even though the infection appears to be effectively treated.

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<sup>91</sup> Cloud, xi.

<sup>92</sup> Schaumburg, 67.

<sup>93</sup> Friedman, 71.

It is impossible to grow in a relationship with God, when we continue to live through our false self. In fact, our entire growth is stuck in the past. Cloud understands that “as long as the lying, false self is the one relating to God, others, and ourselves, then grace and truth cannot heal us.” Consequently, the result is “the real self that God created to grow into his likeness stays hidden and unexposed to grace and truth.”<sup>94</sup> If God’s love is to have any deep-seated meaning and power for change, then all that is true needs exposing. Truth alone is detrimental, however. The law only condemns and elicits worse behavior. Truth must be accompanied by grace if there is to be transformation.<sup>95</sup>

### **ISOLATION TO IDENTIFICATION TO MALE BONDING**

“The most common disability” men have, according to Rohr, is the father wound.<sup>96</sup> According to several studies less than one percent of males reported being close to their fathers; which explains why the majority of men are angry. It is also the reason most adult men do not have any men friends with whom they are willing to be transparent.<sup>97</sup> The most vulnerable part of a man is his hunger for the father.<sup>98</sup> Why is this not the major focus of the Church in ministering to men? Rohr accuses religion in

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<sup>94</sup> Cloud, 19.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Cloud, 88.

<sup>97</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 21, 25.

<sup>98</sup> Rohr, 87.

America as being mostly about civil order and not about “soul transformation.” Church, he says, became less about the Cross and more about accumulation and attainment.<sup>99</sup>

In 2004, I attended a 12-week course entitled, “Healing the Father Wound.” What every man in this group of ten had in common—emotional and/or physical abandonment from their father. Most described dad as coming home from work grumpy, speaking impatiently, and too tired to interact. A father’s remoteness, absence, and criticism represent an injury to the son. By the time a son is grown, he will have endured a “baptism of shame;” his mother will guarantee it happens.<sup>100</sup> A lack of nurture for a child constitutes a subtle form of abuse.<sup>101</sup> As well, workaholism is an acceptable way for fathers to abuse their sons.<sup>102</sup> It is said that if the son is not able to watch his father work, a hole develops in his psyche, convincing him that both his father and his father’s work are evil.<sup>103</sup> Bly acknowledges the father wound to be so influential that it affects a young adult male’s ability to trust older men.<sup>104</sup> The consequences of the father wound can be so pervasive that a son will think his father is irreconcilably evil; and causes him to avoid confiding to other men altogether.<sup>105</sup> The son may become so convinced of his father being a lost cause that he no longer considers his father a part of his story.<sup>106</sup> In my father

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 78, 38.

<sup>100</sup> Bly, 31, 32.

<sup>101</sup> Whitfield, 28, 22.

<sup>102</sup> Brunner, class notes, February 18, 2010.

<sup>103</sup> Bly, 21.

<sup>104</sup> Bly, 95.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 117.

wound group mentioned above, most participants were fifty or older. No one in the group had ever spoken to their father about their wound; and three never would, since their father's had previously died.

Some, if not many, will consider the father wound to be an exaggeration. My concern is that the issue is being overlooked through such reasoning as: "When we come to the Lord all things become new and the old passes away." Over the years, I have actually heard well-meaning Christians make such statements in the context of childhood abuse. There are sincere individuals who erroneously believe when people give their heart to the Lord that God simply erases the memory of one's past. In this study, the various forms of abuse will not be fully considered, although physical and sexual abuse is considered the most devastating; it is a violation of touch.<sup>107</sup> Another effect of abuse, in general, is that such mistreatment obstructs the ability of an abused child to love God or self.<sup>108</sup>

Does the Christian community realize the enormity of the problem for men? If a man speaks of an injury, it causes him to feel like he is a sissy—a weakling—less than a man. Is the Church even willing to acknowledge that the father wound is abuse and that it possesses men's psyches? The wound does not heal; instead, it creates a hole in the heart. Furthermore, the hole does not go away with time; the wound only expands and causes more problems.<sup>109</sup> "When parents are absent or abusive, we take that uncompleted aspect of our personality out of time. It goes underground and does not change until it is called

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<sup>107</sup> Rohr, 19.

<sup>108</sup> Cannon, 142-143.

<sup>109</sup> Bly, 21.

out into good time, into time affected by grace and truth.”<sup>110</sup> So, the adage, “time heals all wounds”<sup>111</sup> is incorrect. Such rationale agrees with comments like: “That was in the past! Leave it there! You are only stirring up trouble and trying to make people feel guilty. Why can’t you just get over it?” These statements may apply to those wishing to remain a victim; as well, reflecting denial and insensitivity by the accuser.<sup>112</sup>

If it seems the problem is being overstated, “Men are more likely than women to be arrested, die violently, commit and be victims of crimes, ... be addicted, ... die ... on the job, [and] have more heart attacks.”<sup>113</sup> “94 percent of all inmates are male. ... over 80% of all suicides are men.”<sup>114</sup> Men demonstrate they are troubled, since they are 300 times more successful than women at committing suicide.<sup>115</sup> Actually, the problem cannot be overstated, because society does not understand what is occurring with men at all. If our culture realized the enormity of the issue, information would not be the primary approach for helping people.

Again, in the above father wound group, everyone was surprised to hear others admit having a father wound too.<sup>116</sup> It was my first experience to hear men discuss their pain in front of other men. One of the liberating factors of a support group is moving out of isolation into identification with others. Hearing other men share their pain in our

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<sup>110</sup> Cloud, 34.

<sup>111</sup> Quote of unknown origin.

<sup>112</sup> Bly, 117.

<sup>113</sup> Murrow, 36.

<sup>114</sup> Rohr, 12.

<sup>115</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 86.

<sup>116</sup> Personal group experience, “Healing the Father Wound,” 2004.

group had a powerful affect. It was liberating to finally open up and be honest about our own pain. Possibly, what a boy fails to receive from his father—male bonding—may also occur in a support group. Cloud states, “Bonding is the ability to establish an emotional attachment to another person. It’s the ability to relate to another on the deepest level. When two people have a bond with each other, they share their deepest thoughts, dreams, and feelings with each other with no fear that they will be rejected by the other person.”<sup>117</sup>

Bonding is the result of a love and trust relationship; and it takes time. I have only known this experience with a select few in my life. Honestly, I have never experienced bonding in any support group. The reason: the group was following a manual of prescribed behavior. Crabb explains that Christian groups are often morally bound to doing what is right. As a result, groups exist for accountability rather than relating to one another. Imposing a moral standard does not produce lasting change; it is merely a moralistic approach to packaging all problems and solutions into a box.<sup>118</sup> When the Church attempts to facilitate change through behavior modification, it ensures failure.<sup>119</sup>

The Church should be promoting spiritual transformation as a result of Christ and His Spirit working on the hearts of His people in community. Growth only occurs in the Body of Christ.<sup>120</sup> People do not change merely through greater self-awareness or through a mandate to live according to a set of rules. Transformation occurs through

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<sup>117</sup> Cloud, 45.

<sup>118</sup> Crabb, xvi, xvii, 28.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>120</sup> Cloud, xi.

connecting with God and with His community. Connecting means: “to join, link, or fasten together; unite or bind; to establish communication between; to associate mentally or emotionally.”<sup>121</sup> Crabb believes that connecting is at the center of healing and, therefore, the core of what needs healing is disconnecting. He defines disconnecting as “a condition of existence where the deepest part of who we are is vibrantly attached to no one, where we are profoundly unknown and therefore experience neither the thrill of being believed in nor the joy of loving or being loved.”<sup>122</sup> Disconnected is merely a synonym for isolated.

Cloud understands isolation is the result of being controlled in past relationships. As a result, being alone—isolated—is the only way a person feels free and in control of their own life. Unfortunately, people isolate to hide their pain.<sup>123</sup> There are many components to isolation—depression, lack of purpose, anger, guilt, shame, distorted reality, addiction, fantasy, etc.—and all of these elements are cyclical. “Isolated people do not experience the real, so they escape into the ideal. . . . Idealism furthers isolation. Real connection cures it.”<sup>124</sup> It is through connecting on an emotional level and being vulnerable that we are able to bond with others.<sup>125</sup> The natural question: how does the Church encourage people to bond?

Crabb characterizes the problem with the Church is that it does not know how to be relational. There is no deep connecting, because the Church is agenda and program

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<sup>121</sup> <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/connecting?s=t> (accessed December 3, 2013).

<sup>122</sup> Crabb, 44.

<sup>123</sup> Cloud, 81.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>125</sup> Cloud, 77.

driven. In addition, the Church confuses conformity to a set of beliefs as an indication of unity. Christians also possess “the cult-like ideology,” thinking they have the truth and everyone else is wrong.<sup>126</sup> Yancey recognizes that many churches have steps to attain toward being spiritual. He says, “This ladder-like approach to spirituality is nearly universal.”<sup>127</sup> Peck points to the difficulty of community existing in congregations,<sup>128</sup> and it is because “excessive organization is antithetical to community.”<sup>129</sup> In the following statement, Peck describes how brokenness leads to community:

We are desperately in need of a new ethic of soft individualism, an understanding of individualism which teaches that we cannot be truly ourselves until we are able to share freely the things we most have in common: our weakness, our incompleteness, our imperfection, our inadequacy, our sins, our lack of wholeness and self-sufficiency. . . . I’m not OK and you’re not OK, but that’s OK. It is a kind of softness that allows those necessary barriers, or outlines, of our individual selves to be like permeable membranes, permitting ourselves to seep out and the selves of others to seep in. It is the kind of individualism that acknowledges our interdependence . . . [from] the very depths of our hearts. It is the kind of individualism that makes real community possible.<sup>130</sup>

### CREATING A CULTURE OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY

In Jesus’ prayer for the Church, He asked “that they may be one just as We are one” (Jn. 16:22). This section of Christ’s prayer was specifically for future believers.<sup>131</sup> His hope for the Church was experiencing the same union of relationship “He and His

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<sup>126</sup> Crabb, 114.

<sup>127</sup> Philip Yancey, *What's So Amazing About Grace?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 30.

<sup>128</sup> Peck, 25.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>131</sup> 5 BC, 1053.

Father enjoyed.”<sup>132</sup> The Trinity is a representation of how connecting is as vital as blood is to the human body.<sup>133</sup> The Church has not known this type of community in a very long time. Church has deteriorated into an idolatry of formalism. Christ and His cross are often not the focus. Rohr remarks that Christian culture has a far greater struggle with consumerism and addiction than the tribal pagan cultures. Therefore, he says, “religion is part of the problem and not a part of the solution.”<sup>134</sup> Sweet states, “Church has too often been selling a philosophy called Christianity, or marketing a product called Church rather, than lifting up Christ.”<sup>135</sup> Church has become less about relationships and more about rules; and, the colder the relationships, the thicker the rules.<sup>136</sup> Rules only indicate that we are under the dominion of sin (Ro. 6:14). When we are in bondage to the flesh, we cannot experience spiritual community; and this is because our focus is on our righteousness instead of Christ’s.<sup>137</sup>

How can we experience spiritual community? It is simply a community that is connecting with Jesus and each other.<sup>138</sup> “The first certain Christian community” included Jesus and two thieves who “were all bound together in a shared identity and

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<sup>132</sup> Crabb, 65.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>134</sup> Rohr, 104, 38, 44.

<sup>135</sup> Sweet, *So Beautiful*, 106.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>137</sup> Murray, *Covenants and Blessings*, 37, 38.

<sup>138</sup> Sweet, *So Beautiful*, 128.

destiny.”<sup>139</sup> Sadly, the Church has lost its point Man. “Jesus is our best chance to get ‘human’ right and be authentically human.”<sup>140</sup>

Jesus gave His Church only two simple commandments: to love God and each other as we love ourselves (Mt. 22:37, 39). Bonding occurs in an atmosphere of love. Experiencing love from God and others produces change. “Without relationship, without attachment to God and others, we can’t be our true selves.”<sup>141</sup> By experiencing God’s love—both in vertical and horizontal relationships—a new dynamic allows people to be open, alive, and growing.<sup>142</sup> As stated in chapter four, the combination of grace and truth produces spiritual growth. Grace facilitates the reception of truth and invites the true self into relationship. Truth is the basis for living in reality and, thus, experiencing true intimacy.<sup>143</sup>

Cloud defines grace as: “the unmerited favor of God toward people. Grace is something we have not earned and do not deserve ... grace is unconditional love and acceptance. Elements of a grace culture are: humility, love, forgiveness, and acceptance.”<sup>144</sup> A grace culture does not just happen. The Spirit empowers people to treat each other with grace. As Jesus said, the ability to love is the result of being forgiven much (Lk. 7:36-50). Through God’s forgiveness, men are capable of confessing their

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 218; as quoted from Karl Barth 1961, 77.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>141</sup> Cloud, 49.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 52, 56.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>144</sup> Cloud, 5, 20, 84.

own unworthiness, experiencing a contrite spirit, and a greater capacity for loving.<sup>145</sup> People hunger for love that is only experienced in spiritual community.<sup>146</sup> Treating others with grace is not the result of proper orchestration—it is the result of reconciliation with Christ (2 Cor. 5:14-21).

Again, a grace culture takes time, since trust has to develop. Society has a short attention span and desires a quick fix. Consequently, most people lack the patience to endure the process of time to experience change.<sup>147</sup> Cloud quotes an “old proverb that says, ‘the longest distance between any two points is the shortcut.’”<sup>148</sup> Time must accompany grace and truth for healing to occur.<sup>149</sup> Sweet agrees:

Relationships are hard, exhausting, unpredictable, and time-consuming. . . . Relationships don’t come to us like Christmas packages, all neatly wrapped with ribbons and bows. Relationships come more to us like an abused package from the post office: ripped, torn, its guts spilling out, the contents often broken. . . . The relational leaves us open and vulnerable and often hurting. . . . Like any bad marriage (relationship), which can be like an open wound—raw, ugly, constantly oozing pain and unpleasant odors—it is not easy when you participate with people in their pain and problems.<sup>150</sup>

### STAGES FOR CREATING SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY

Peck describes the stages a group goes through to discover community. The first stage is *pseudo-community*. In this stage, the group is nowhere close to community; yet,

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<sup>145</sup> 5 BC, 764.

<sup>146</sup> Crabb, xvi.

<sup>147</sup> Cloud, 27.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>150</sup> Sweet, *So Beautiful*, 138.

everyone pretends it is fully operating. Pretense is what the group has to move beyond; and conflict avoidance indicates the group remains pretentious.

In the second stage—*chaos*—the group begins to understand the result of being more open as well as attempting to fix one another. Additionally, part of the process through chaos is learning to listen to understand each other. This is problematic, too, since most are only interested in what interests them (individualism). Some of the chaos will include the feeling that the group is not making progress and lacks structure. Peck warns that structure reduces chaos but it also obstructs community. During chaos, the truth can be painful but necessary for moving into the third stage.

Peck refers to the third stage, *emptiness*, as the bridge between chaos and community. Emptiness is discovering barriers to communication: “feelings, assumptions, ideas, and motives.” Emptiness is not empty-mindedness but learning to be more open to others. It is learning to be empathetic—to feel what others are feeling—to grieve the loss being expressed. Peck refers to emptiness being a time of sacrifice towards rebirth. Progress in the emptiness stage occurs when members in the group begin to be transparent over real life struggles. Pretending ends and vulnerability begins. Eventually, some may complain about dwelling on the negatives too much, and Peck calls this an attempt to move from pain back to *pseudo-community* (comfort).

The fourth stage, *community*, is attained when the group is at peace with being truthful and vulnerable.<sup>151</sup> Peck does not feel there is a “one-sentence definition” for

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<sup>151</sup> Peck, 86-106.

community because it is “mysterious, miraculous, and unfathomable.”<sup>152</sup> The dictionary offers a vague definition of community:

a social group of any size whose members reside in a specific locality, share government, and often have a common cultural and historical heritage; a social, religious, occupational, or other group sharing common characteristics or interests and perceived or perceiving itself as distinct in some respect from the larger society within which it exists; a group of men or women leading a common life according to a rule.<sup>153</sup>

If this was an acceptable definition, then community would exist across the globe. Peck recognizes there are discernible elements to community such as: “communicate honestly; relationships [are] deeper than their masks of composure, and have developed some significant commitment to ... each other.”<sup>154</sup> Other qualities associated with community are: respecting individual freedom of expression; humility; inclusive rather than exclusive, with a concern for others outside of the group; it is a safe place for people to be vulnerable about their struggles and wounds; there is a confession of brokenness; it is healing and transforming; members disagree gracefully; everyone is a leader (no hierarchical system); and it is a sacred space, where people and their experiences are honored.

At this stage, feelings are being felt, by both the individual and the group. Trust has developed to such a degree that group members have the freedom to celebrate or grieve according to the moment. Peck cautions that there is no such thing as reaching utopia and remaining there. It is too natural, being human, to slide back toward chaos or

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>153</sup> <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/community?s=t> (accessed December 4, 2013).

<sup>154</sup> Peck, 59.

*pseudo-community*. When groups return to either of these stages, this indicates the need for returning to emptiness; although, he says most groups will strongly resist it.<sup>155</sup>

Peck acknowledges that some sort of crisis prompts people to form into a community. People often pull together for a common cause, such as the aftermath of a natural disaster. However, after the disaster is over, community usually ends as well.<sup>156</sup> He describes the importance of the group being committed to one another like a marriage. Also, the group must maintain an ongoing consciousness that each member remains in crisis and in recovery. Furthermore, he sees the group has not only a mission to remain for each other but for others who may want to join.<sup>157</sup>

I have experienced these stages of community with another individual. There was no consciousness of following any steps to experience community; it just happened; it also did not last. Peck describes community as an intangible—not easily attainable. The Church will need to guard against making these stages to community a four-step process. Otherwise, it becomes a human undertaking—another failed programmed event. Rohr is correct when he states that Americans are control freaks who want to micromanage everything, because we are a “high-maintenance” culture.<sup>158</sup> The Holy Spirit creates community; we are His participants. Rules, methodologies, and the flesh will only prevent community.

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<sup>155</sup> Peck, 86-106.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 59-85

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

## CONCLUSION

God's original intent was for men to be social and live in community.<sup>159</sup> The problem is that sin affected our relationships with God and man. Jesus changed that; He reconciled us to God and gave us a new identity. It is absolutely imperative that men discover their worth in Christ. Rules only cause us to see how flawed we are; grace allows us to see our worth through the eyes of the Beloved. Such a revealing of God's grace allows "authentic self-love" ... a deep self-acceptance" of every imperfection.<sup>160</sup>

God's grace teaches us that we are Spirit-dependent to live a godly life. Additionally, grace allows us the chance to live in God's reality (by faith) as well as accepting the limitations of our own reality. Living in reality embraces the weaknesses of our flesh and, simultaneously, recognizes that our spirituality resides only in Christ.<sup>161</sup> Many believers look to Christ to put them in right standing with God; then, they consider it the responsibility of man to stand on the shoulders of Christ to maintain their relationship with God.<sup>162</sup> In essence, some believe justification is the responsibility of Christ, whereas, sanctification (holy living) is man's responsibility. Believing God has His part and we have ours is what contributes to wearing masks and pretending to be what we are not.<sup>163</sup> Men need a theology that will help them to be successful followers of

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<sup>159</sup> Erre, 133.

<sup>160</sup> Nelson, 53.

<sup>161</sup> Nelson, 21, 23.

<sup>162</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7azfoonNqpc> (accessed November 16, 2011).

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

God. Men need to understand Christ made the Holy Spirit available to everyone and, through dependence on the Spirit, we may be obedient.

In a Christian context, the goal of a support group should be progression towards spiritual maturity (Heb. 6:1; 2 Pt. 1:5-7). A support group should not exist primarily for working on symptoms, but connecting with God and each other. Initially in a group, men will “need rules and regulations until ... [they] learn relationships.”<sup>164</sup> I agree with Eldredge, though; accountability is legalistic.<sup>165</sup> It is not the goal of the group to ensure that no one sins; the goal is for Jesus to be Lord of every man, and it is He “who is able to keep you from stumbling” (Jude 24). Therefore, to achieve spiritual maturity, it is important to keep a two-way focus: “in Christ” (Ro. 8:1) and “Christ in you” (Col. 1:27). The starting and ending point is the cross of Christ. Jesus said in Jn. 12:32, “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself.”

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<sup>164</sup> Sweet, *So Beautiful*, 133.

<sup>165</sup> Eldredge, 175.

## CHAPTER SIX

### MEN FINDING THE WAY

Near the conclusion of “Saving Private Ryan,” James Ryan is respectfully visiting the gravesite of his fallen Captain, John H. Miller. He crouches down at the grave marker and begins talking to his captain: “To be honest with you, I wasn’t sure how I would feel coming back here. Every day, I think about what you said to me that day on the bridge. I’ve tried to live my life the best that I could. I hope that it was enough. I hope that at least in your eyes, I have earned what all of you have done for me.” With his wife by his side, James turns and says, “Tell me I have lived a good life.” With eyes of disbelief, she questions him: “What?” He responds, “Tell me I have been a good man?” She answers, “You are.”<sup>1</sup>

Every boy grows up into manhood wondering if he is a man? This is understandable, since, in American culture, the view of the male gender has been diminishing for several decades. Yet, men still have value—they can fight our wars—and they do. Men still have worth—they can die to sustain our freedom—and they do. Men have the right to fight for us and die for us, but they have no rights for living. Essentially, our populace considers men to be expendable and, subsequently, there is a willingness to lay them on the altar of sacrifice.<sup>2</sup> Society believes men have the right to be a man on the battlefield, because that is when we really need them to be men. In other words, they can

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Hanks, Robert Rodat, Ian Bryce, Mark Gordon, Gary Levinsohn, Edward Burns, Tom Sizemore, Jeremy Davies, Vin Diesel, Adam Goldberg, Barry Pepper, Giovanni Ribisi, Matt Damon, Ted Danson, Harve Presnell, Paul Giamatti, John Williams, and Janusz Kamiński, *Saving Private Ryan*. Directed by Steven Spielberg. Universal City, CA: DreamWorks Home Entertainment, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Nelson, 31.

die as a man but they cannot live as a man. On civilized soil the American people want their men to be soft.<sup>3</sup> In this grand republic of the United States of America, society is raising an emasculated version of masculinity. Regrettably, this nation views it as acceptable for boys to grow up to be any type of man, as long as he has been altered and is not the true version of himself.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, men live from the false self and have no idea they dwell in isolation. Men need the freedom to discover and live from their true identity. Society does not want men to discover their freedom and be a man; it prefers men to abide by societal expectations.<sup>5</sup> The statement in *Braveheart* could not be more applicable for our time: “Every man dies, not every man really lives.”<sup>6</sup>

Popular culture does not recognize gender distinction. It only defines gender as “something we do, not something we inherit.”<sup>7</sup> To be more specific, the goal for both genders is androgyny. Consequently, both genders are melded into one and male and female genders no longer have any distinct characteristics.<sup>8</sup> The Bible teaches that God made man and woman in His image—equal, yet not identical—with differing characteristics. As a result, God reveals a greater expression of His image through gender differentiation.<sup>9</sup> So, why stress gender difference? Masculine myths have existed for well over a century, and confusion over the male role persists. Modern society is not offering

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<sup>3</sup> Bly, 3, 11, 19.

<sup>4</sup> Jourard, 26, 30.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> *Braveheart*, 1995.

<sup>7</sup> Spade and Valentine, 7, 37.

<sup>8</sup> Broude, 5; <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/androgyny> (accessed March 5, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> Rosenau, 263; Erre, 20, 23.

clarification; instead, it exacerbates the problem. U.S. culture is manipulating masculinity to be something that it is not. It is shame-based and will not work. These tactics will not transform anyone; they will only cause men to hide more.<sup>10</sup>

The Church exists to lead people toward freedom; not oppression. The Church needs to help men discover their true identity and to use their strength, constructively, for the good and not the harm of others. The intent of this study is not to encourage men to live from their strength to be dominant and abusive. Men are typically the physically stronger gender. Therefore, the goal for the Church should be for men to discover ways to use their strength and talents in benevolent ways. Christ demonstrated what the masculine identity is all about – it is rooted in service to others. It is the willingness of a man to lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13).<sup>11</sup> Men want to be involved “in service to a purpose greater than himself.”<sup>12</sup> Men were made for sacrifice (giving up one’s self for the good of another) and are at their best when used for the good of others.<sup>13</sup> God never intended for “fully masculine” to refer to being domineering. Instead, He made men to be “stewards in order to direct creation for the benefit of others.”<sup>14</sup> Men are not often deterred by a difficulty; they will rise to the occasion when the bar is raised higher. Consequently, men will find servant leadership to be challenging as well as liberating.

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<sup>10</sup> Rohr, 131.

<sup>11</sup> Perkins, 122.

<sup>12</sup> Bly, 150.

<sup>13</sup> Erre, 165.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 47.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCOVERING THE KINGDOM

In conclusion, this study will offer several suggestions for the Church to help men discover the kingdom of God. Men are often reachable on their own turf. Therefore, it is important to appeal to their values. Men do not typically consider church to be male domain. To them, church has a feminine ambiance, and this is one of the reasons women outnumber men in membership and attendance. Some men have the perception that church is more about losing than gaining—giving up their masculinity, being controlled by rules, and yielding to less sex. The masculine religion is sports; and men love competition.<sup>15</sup> Men identify with teams as well as being outdoors. For many men, following a team sport may be the only way of knowing the ultimate experience of winning it all. The Church will be more appealing to men when they offer a multiplicity of outdoor activities for men. Outside, the sky is the limit, because it is open space that is so appealing to men.<sup>16</sup>

Whatever produces adrenalin often appeals to the testosterone-driven male. Many men also enjoy watching action movies. There are some movies that have the potential for inspiring conversations in a spiritual direction afterwards. Movies such as: “Good Will Hunting,” “Saving Private Ryan,” “Braveheart,” “Dances With Wolves,” “Lonesome Dove,” “Gran Torino,” “The Adjustment Bureau,” and “Open Range” are excellent movies to initially start a support group; or, as another reason for the support group to meet. It should be noted that all of the above movies have a common theme—

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<sup>15</sup> Podles, 169.

<sup>16</sup> Murrow, 17, 25, 95.

the male identity. The Church should think creatively of what appeals to the non-Christian male.

It was mentioned in chapter four that boys grow up lacking good interpersonal communication skills; and this does not improve enormously with age. Men need to be taught how to listen. Boyd defines listening as attentiveness to the communication as well as to the experience of another. By experience, he means to listen to the emotional content of what is expressed. He further describes having a will for this form of listening—a way of being—with a respect and regard for the other. The intent of such listening is to remain curious. “No judgment. Only grace.” He adds that this type of “communication builds community.” Listening to the heart of another is empowering, and our culture is not accustomed to giving power away.<sup>17</sup> As Bonhoeffer says, “listening can be a greater service than speaking.”<sup>18</sup>

Listening to another’s experience includes a man’s grief. Men need to grieve their losses—feel their pain—and experience empathy. It is difficult for men to feel the feelings of others, because they have little or no experience with empathy. Besides, it is difficult to be empathic, when you have difficulty feeling your own feelings. When men learn how to acknowledge and validate each other’s feelings, they contribute to each other’s healing. “Grief is a form of validation; it says the wound mattered.”<sup>19</sup> Some will consider this a form of complaining; and may even feel it was attempted before and it did not work. Transformation is not the result of merely expressing experience cognitively;

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<sup>17</sup> Glenn E. Boyd, “Pastoral Conversation: Relational Listening and Open-Ended Questions,” *Pastoral Psychology* (2003): 347, 352, 353, 356.

<sup>18</sup> Bonhoeffer, 97.

<sup>19</sup> Eldredge, 130.

then, it is only a mental exercise. A person can only heal what they feel.<sup>20</sup> “A wound that goes unacknowledged and unwept is a wound that cannot heal. A wound you’ve embraced is a wound that cannot heal. A wound you think you deserved is a wound that cannot heal.”<sup>21</sup> Men are in desperate need of doing grief work, and they are totally unaware of this need. Grief is one of those vital components to moving into spiritual community. Little wonder that our society is ignorant about community; we do not give people permission to grieve, except under tragic circumstances. Predominantly, many are unaware of the heartbreaking stories men will share in the proper setting.

Men need sacred space—a place dedicated for the purpose of men supporting one another. This is where men can become vulnerable; their stories are considered important and honored; it is also where they learn to trust others. Through isolation and living from the false self, men are emotionally dead.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, they struggle to form attachments and bond with others. If a man cannot form a bond with a person, he will bond with whatever addiction fills the void for him.<sup>23</sup> Little wonder that women accuse men of being able to express love sexually but not knowing how to love emotionally. It is through emotional attachment that men form bonds. Bonding is the result of a love and trust relationship.<sup>24</sup>

If men are to be attracted to Christianity, women can play a key role. Women currently dominate leadership roles in the Church and need to intentionally involve

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<sup>20</sup> Eldredge, 127.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>22</sup> Stoop and Arterburn, 158.

<sup>23</sup> Cloud, 70, 71.

<sup>24</sup> Cloud, 45.

men.<sup>25</sup> Most men are not going to be attracted through the front door, due to the current feminine décor and worship service styles of many churches. The touchy, feely, atmosphere that is quite popular today is a turn off to the average guy; and the traditional churches with their ritualistic services are no better.<sup>26</sup> Churches should consider how to adapt their services to draw men back to church. Eliminate the friendliness ploy of meeting and greeting one another during the service. Men are uncomfortable with shaking hands with a stranger.<sup>27</sup>

Churches will see more men when the major point of entry to the church is through a men's support group. Men are not going to line up to join a support group. Isolation is too familiar, and the man cave is more comfortable as well as entertaining. To apply Murrow's point more broadly, if men are to participate in a support group, women will be instrumental in it happening.<sup>28</sup> Today's man is typically soft; consequently, his partner will have considerable influence upon him. Expectedly, such a proposal will be considered clever pressure tactics. Men are not typically self-motivated enough to attend a men's support group, but he will often do it for his wife. I have seen many men attend support groups because of a moral failure; consequently, it was go or else. Why would anyone wait for the motivation of a tragedy to attend a support group? Women need to know men are considerably vulnerable to a moral failure; and the porn epidemic demonstrates that fact. Jesus said, "Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already

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<sup>25</sup> Murrow, 11.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>27</sup> Richard Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 259.

<sup>28</sup> Murrow, 11.

committed adultery with her in his heart” (Mt. 5:28). In this situation, the inward lusting after a woman is the same as the physical act.<sup>29</sup>

Support groups should have a confessional element. Peck sees it as integral to reaching community. Confession was an encouraged practice among NT Christians (Ja. 5:17). The confession of sin was integral to Wesley’s groups, and this seems to have contributed to his groups enduring for over 100 years. Groups will be tempted to drift towards *pseudo-community*, which involves pretense. Confession keeps darkness in the light and the group in reality. Grace allows truth to penetrate the heart without shaming a man.

Support groups need an atmosphere of grace, the Holy Spirit, forgiveness, love, and acceptance. In “A Few Good Men,” Colonel Jessup was correct: “You can’t handle the truth!”<sup>30</sup> Grace is what enables us to be able to accept and embrace the truth. If all a person experiences in a group is the truth it will drive him away.<sup>31</sup> Once men have shared the truth about themselves, it is no longer a secret. They have taken their secret—what was in the dark recesses of their being—and exposed it in the light (Eph. 5:11, 13.). I have personally experienced the power of confessing my sins in a support group. It is liberating.

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<sup>29</sup> 5 BC, 336, 337.

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0104257/quotes> (accessed December 17, 2013).

<sup>31</sup> Cloud, 19.

Support groups need Christ to be the main focus. The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.<sup>32</sup> Jesus needs to be the main focus of the Church as well. The Church polity book is about conforming and controlling people, and this repels men.<sup>33</sup> Jesus said, “You will know the truth and the truth will set you free” (Jn. 8:32). “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn. 14:6). “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Cor. 3:17). The Church should have a theology that sets the captives free, not binds them. Men are predominantly missing from church. The majority of churches are comprised of women. Men feel they have to give up their manhood to attend church regularly. Although this is not true, a man’s perception represents his reality.

It is in a man’s DNA to want to win and to be successful. Obviously, such desires are wrong when greed and manipulation are the motivating force; conversely, winning and success can be virtuous ventures. Men crave being involved with what works. They despise phoniness. Support groups will only be as successful as the theology that supports it. Support groups should have the objective of men finding their identity in Christ, not in a set of tenets. The Church has forgotten that “the letter kills” (2 Cor. 3:6). I agree with Crabb that the NC changes how we look at one another and what we talk about. Our focus should become less about our failures and more about what God is doing in us.<sup>34</sup>

Finally, support groups should be leading men to discover their strength. Feminists will interpret such ideas as encouraging men to be lords of their women. Although such concerns have legitimacy, the Church will understand God has given men

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<sup>32</sup> Stephen R. Covey, Roger A. Merrill, and Rebecca R. Merrill, *First Things First: To Live, to Love, to Learn, to Leave a Legacy* (1st Fireside ed. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 75.

<sup>33</sup> Murrow, 31, 115.

<sup>34</sup> Crabb, 79.

a calling. The Bible declares “the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church” (Eph. 5:23). This is a spiritual calling to leadership, not supremacy.<sup>35</sup> “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her (v. 25). . . . So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself” (v. 28). There is no implication of dictatorship; rather, it is teaching partnership. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the Church. This is a description of servant leadership and not lordship. Furthermore, there is an emphasis placed on the quality of leadership—Jesus being the pattern.<sup>36</sup> A husband is also described as nurturing and tenderly caring for his wife as he would his own body.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, this teaches love and nurture; not mistreatment.

Men were born to reproduce.<sup>38</sup> If we want them in church, men should be trained to be leaders; it defines, in part, who they are. Growing churches are into discipleship and men will respond. Men seek greatness. Jesus never condemned aspiring to be great; He only said that the way up is down.<sup>39</sup>

Until a man discovers his strength—what makes him unique and why he is here—he will misuse his strength. The tiger needs to leave his cage; he also needs the guidance of grace to grow up and into His strength. Otherwise, a penned up animal tends to have a nasty disposition. The tiger needs to discover his true identity. When he does, the tiger will no longer feel he must prove he is a tiger. It is through finding himself that

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<sup>35</sup> 6 BC, 1036.

<sup>36</sup> 6 BC, 1036.

<sup>37</sup> Vine, Vine’s expository dictionary, [computer file] electronic ed.

<sup>38</sup> Murrow, 164.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 131.

he is transformed and manifests a more mature behavior. Society cannot transform men; it can only drive a man to hide. Yes, we need men to find their softer side; but they need, in a greater way, to learn to use the tough side in ways that are constructive and not destructive; helpful and not hurtful. Some men will express their strength violently (over react) and others will appear to be a wet noodle (under react); both, however, are a misuse of strength. Society admires overachievers, but this is a cultural dysfunction. The losses from such behaviors are their marriages, children, and health. How a man misuses his strength is often a combination of over and under reacting.<sup>40</sup>

The reason a man will misuse his strength, at times, is because he is living out of his false self. The false self is the male's own plan of salvation. He thinks, it shields him from his pain and ensures self-preservation.<sup>41</sup> The journey towards his strength begins when his false self fails.<sup>42</sup> "The spiritual life begins with the acceptance of our wounded self."<sup>43</sup> Undoubtedly, many will not even grasp the magnitude of that last statement. We are merely being religious until we understand that our false self has been relating to God. In chapter five, Cloud stated, "As long as the lying, false self is the one relating to God, others, and ourselves, then grace and truth cannot heal us."<sup>44</sup> Nelson recognizes that spirituality involves living in reality.<sup>45</sup> He acknowledges popular ideologies exist that encourage ignoring "our shadows and distortions" and focusing only the good; and this

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<sup>40</sup> Eldredge, 42, 56, 73.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 107, 108.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>44</sup> Cloud, 19.

<sup>45</sup> Nelson, 21.

form of human philosophy is self-deceiving and “self-defeating.” He argues that “when we embrace our own fleshly histories as our stories, warts and all, then our healing becomes possible.”<sup>46</sup>

Simply, support groups encourage men to come out of their shell and be real with each other. Men suddenly realize they are not alone—they have common ground. In time, they understand they have a common woundedness—a father wound. Through transparency, they start exposing the false self; and, thus, they begin the journey of initiation.<sup>47</sup> Too often, the false self is ignored and goes unexamined. Without the downfall of the false self, the ego will misapply truth. As long as a man lives out of the false self he is not living in reality; and he will wander aimlessly—without any direction for his life.<sup>48</sup> Truly, this new journey will tread the ground of sacred space. This will be a strange, frightful, and vulnerable initiation; and great will be the temptation to return to what feels familiar.<sup>49</sup> Eldredge adds that a man’s brokenness is a source of tremendous shame, and this is when a man needs the assurance that “it is not your fault.”<sup>50</sup> If a man will persevere, he will experience the power and the freedom that comes through being honest with a group of his friends.

The relationship of grace with truth cannot be overemphasized. If God’s love is to have any deep-seated meaning and be a power that changes us, then we need all that is true about us to be exposed. Truth alone is detrimental to us. The law only condemns and

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 24, 25.

<sup>47</sup> Eldredge, 107.

<sup>48</sup> Rohr, 23, 3.

<sup>49</sup> Eldredge, 113.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 126.

makes us feel worse about ourselves. Truth must be accompanied by grace if there is to be transformation.<sup>51</sup>

God demonstrated our worth through creating man in His image. Despite the marring of God's image through sin, Jesus recreated us in God's image through His gracious sacrifice. Not only did He reconcile us to God but He also reconciled us to each other in one Body. Jesus gave us the gift of His Spirit, and through Spirit dependence, we are able to love God with our whole heart and love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Jesus also gave us another commandment, "love one another, as I have loved you." The apostles had a strategy for believers loving in this way through House Churches. The NT Church did not attend church one day a week; they met daily (Acts 2:46).

The NT Church definitely experienced tension between law and grace. Not long after the departure of the apostles, the Church quickly moved away from righteousness by faith in Christ, and began incorporating a works-based approach to spiritual formation. In the centuries that followed, the status of clergy was elevated; orthodoxy and institutionalism sealed the tomb for any chance of spiritual community. Monasticism intended to make a difference but it failed. Nelson refers to the religious practices over the centuries—the rituals and disciplines—as not being about faith.<sup>52</sup> Luther also recognized these as faithless, works-oriented, attempts to achieve holiness and perversions of grace;<sup>53</sup> hence, the Great Reformation.<sup>54</sup> Luther's emphasis upon

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<sup>51</sup> Cloud, 19.

<sup>52</sup> Nelson, 23.

<sup>53</sup> Marty, 212.

<sup>54</sup> Noll, *Turning Points*, 168.

justification by faith ushered in the return of the priesthood of all believers.<sup>55</sup> The clearest evidence of spiritual community is realized through the groups formed by John Wesley; and the endurance of these groups for over 100 years.<sup>56</sup> Ultimately, Wesley desired to have his groups patterned after the NT Church. Consequently, he provided just enough structure but did not squeeze the life out of it through governance.<sup>57</sup> Since Wesley's time, the issues have changed dramatically for men. Even though small groups are fairly common throughout Christianity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, no large-scale movement is addressing the male identity or even recognizes the father wound exists.

The male is recognized in this study as a distinct gender. The Bible describes each—male and female—with unique differences. Such dissimilarities are biologically and physically observable from childhood. Difference in no way suggests superiority. It is vital for men to discover who they are; otherwise, they will continue to live from a false identity; and this only perpetuates men being bound by addictions.

The father wound and false identity causes isolation and a lack of transparency. Men need men who will relate to their struggles. That is why this study proposed that the active participation of transparency by men, in support groups for men, encourages them to have healthy relationships with God and others. Men need a grace community of men to help them learn the truth about themselves; and, more importantly, the truth of the gospel. Ultimately, a man's help must come from the Church and a community of men. Men need to connect with other men and, especially, the Man, Christ Jesus. Jesus said,

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<sup>55</sup> Walker, 444, 445.

<sup>56</sup> Lowes, 29.

<sup>57</sup> Snyder, 121; Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, 174.

“And I, if I am up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself” (Jn. 12:32). Because a man hungers for greatness and craves to belong to a transcendent cause, the kingdom of Christ is the only answer.

The main concern of the Church should be to become a spiritual community again. If the Church wishes to experience community it will need to abandon rules, regulations, and the hierarchal system that Peck says prevents it. Community is not about control; it occurs through release—emptiness—turning the reins over to Another. Community will occur when the Church focuses on Christ, depends on His Spirit, and lives by grace and love. The Church needs to know Christ and the power of His resurrection. Then, and only then, will it be a body that is connected to the life-giving Head.

### **LIMITATIONS**

This study has focused on the challenges facing men of today. Because of the parameters of this study, women’s issues were not considered. Obviously, women have their own struggles; and, as well, need the help of gender specific support groups. Clearly, this study was written from a white American, middle class, Christian perspective. Therefore, ethnicity and other world religions (e.g. Hindu, Islam) were also not considered in this discussion.

The parameters of this study prevented the consideration of current generational differences to the issues and values raised. Consequently, baby boomers will easily relate to this study, whereas other generations may perceive some points as non-applicable—disconnected to current realities. Each new generation experiences unique

events that are life-changing for them and influences their reality and worldview. Baby boomers grew up in a time of prosperity and jobs were plentiful. Later generations will not so easily view their identity through work, since a college education and employment after graduation has become more complex.

As a result, this study recognizes the worth of applying aspects related in this study with generations X, Y, and Z. Consequently, new research could explore how these other generations view their identity. What are their thoughts about the father wound? Does it even matter at this juncture in their life? If so, how do they feel it is impacting their life? What forms their self identity? Do they even feel they have an identity? What is their view of Christianity? Do they view the Church as relevant to their needs and a contributor towards their culture? Observably, these are a few areas to probe at another time in another study.

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