

# **Modern Masculinity**

**Office Lighthouse Discussion Materials**

## **Modern Masculinity**

### **Chapter 1 - Defined**

We live in a modern society, and its cultural script attempts to define our roles. As males, we are pressured to fit in with the current cultural script for masculinity. The family is one place where the male role is being defined.

The cave man was the original masculinity model. The movies portray him as a hunter and provider. The cave woman stayed around the cave and cared for the children and the crops.

The later male models were also providers and dominated each phase of man's cultural evolution from the cave to the end of World War II. Then women went to work outside the home and the old cultural style of masculinity came under pressure to change. Thus, the last 50 years has seen the old masculine cultural script of leader, provider, and hunter, undergoing cultural change.

Comment on the above.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

- 1) The male hunter provider nature is appealing to some; how about you? Why or why not?
- 2) The female, as a homemaker, is generally not embraced in our culture. How do you feel about that? Why?
- 3) From your experience, is the masculine role changing in the family? If so, where do you feel that it's going?
- 4) Do you see the male's role changing outside the family in work, military, religion, leadership, etc.? How so?
- 5) The Bible says that God made man in His own image. If this is a basic truth, how might this affect who men need to be in the family and outside the home? Why?
- 6) How has your family experience modeled your idea of masculinity?

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### **Chapter 2 - The Old Father**

The current cultural script portrays The Old Father as a destructive, overbearing fellow whom we would never want our daughter to marry.

The Old Father “(He) worked 10, 12, 14 hours, came home, sat down, read the paper, ate dinner, took out the rubbish, shoveled snow in the winter, cut grass in the summer, and gave the final word in all important matters. But today: the monarchy is dead.” (The Boston Herald, Beverly Beckman)

The Old Father is bad. He is the way things used to be. His role is the “aloof breadwinner” and he is comfortable seeking success for himself in the job market. *Fatherless America* by David Blankenhorn. In “My Fair Lady” professor Higgins asks, “Why can’t a woman be more like a man?” Today the culture script argues why can’t a man be more like a woman?

Comment on the above.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

- 1) What was your experience with the Old Father model in your family of origin?
- 2) If we looked at your schedule and behavior would you look like the Old Father? How so?
- 3) How is the feminist’s movement affecting the Old Father model? How do you feel about that?
- 4) Jim Anderson in “Father Knows Best”, Archie Bunker and Ozzie Nelson (the father of David and Rickey) were the TV’s Old Father Models of the 50’s and 60’s. Who do you see as the media models of today’s father? How do you feel about these models?
- 5) “Happy is the man who has work all the days of his life.” (The Bible/ King Solomon) Is it best that men work outside the home and lead the family as the Old Fathers did?
- 6) What do you see our culture replacing the Old Father with? Are you tolerant or intolerant to the changes?

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### **Chapter 3 - The New Fathers**

“The New Father is fast becoming our best friend. He is our answer to our worries about what it means to be a man, the answer to our concerns about how to care for children, the answer to our dreams about social justice, personal happiness and equality between the sexes. He is a deeply involved parent. He is the favorite of the media.” (Fatherless America)

“He is not a workaholic, will not kill others in war, and has stopped worrying about being a “real man”. The American family is changing to a “less genderless society, with androgynous personalities”. (Janet and Larry Hunt)

Family therapist Augustine Napier urges us to find “a new kind of male hero” since our culture is awash in cynicism and disillusionment with men and for good reasons. We need a “new map for masculinity”.

“But the New Father idea is flawed. It belittles our own fathers. It opposes the needs of children, different gender parental roles. We are shifting our focus from the dependent child to the freedom-seeking adult. The New Father model is a mirage, there is no father there.” (Fatherless America)

Comment on the above.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

- 1) The New Father is about equality of the sexes. Is it possible for the sexes to be equal in your opinion? Why or why not?
- 2) What are you feeling about the New Father model in your own family experiences?
- 3) The New Father may require that his wife be an equal partner in bread - winning. A poll shows that 40% of the women who are unhappy with their jobs say it's because they don't get enough time with their children, as opposed to only 9% of the unhappy men using this reason. What would you attribute this to?
- 4) Men and women seem to be under a “role strain” to perform two roles with the New Father culture model. Are you and your friends experiencing such strain? How So?
- 5) “We now “worship equality” in this country. With this idolatry, God has taken a back seat to equality.” (Ken Boa) How do you feel about this statement? Can we have two masters?
- 6) What is your idea of masculinity with regard to a man's role with his wife and children? Where are you getting these ideas?

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### Chapter 4 - Father Types

Various types of men in the context of fatherhood in our culture are defining the good, bad and ugly masculine image.

The **Deadbeat Dad** is a bad guy. He is morally culpable. He is a criminal; he belongs in jail. His image, framed by a wanted poster, makes the cover of “*Newsweek*”. Wanted for failure to pay child support.

The **Visiting Father** is hard to see. He is a shadow dad, a displaced man, trying not to become an ex-father. No longer the man of the house, he has been largely “de-fathered”, but he is not viewed necessarily as a bad guy.

The **Sperm Donor Father** is a good guy. He completes his fatherhood prior to birth of the child. He spreads his seed, nothing more.

The **Stepfather** and the **Nearby Guy** are also good guys. They are substitute fathers. They are not fathers, but they serve as what are frequently called a “**Father figure**” – a non-father who raises other men’s children. (Fatherless America)

Comment on the above:

#### Discussions Questions:

- 1) Do you know examples of the above father types? What is your “take” on the masculinity of these role models?
- 2) A little girl writes this imaginary letter to her dad, “Dear Dad, I wish you the worst Fathers Day ever. And if you don’t pay, you don’t get love. Oh yeah, by the way, my mom makes less money than you do. I hate you.” How do you feel about her attitude? Would you want your son to marry her?
- 3) It appears that fatherhood is somehow related to money in our culture. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
- 4) In “*Parent Power*” John Rosamond says “Fatherlessness” may be a distorted myth. If you are a single parent, you are as capable as two parents of raising healthy happy children.” What is your experience with the concept?
- 5) “A cord of two strands is stronger than one. Three strands together are seldom broken.” (The Bible) If this is true, why aren’t men able to stick with their wives and raise their children?
- 6) On one hand, the culture seems to say men are unnecessary in the parenting process. Yet, we see substitute fathers in many homes. In your opinion, is a bad father better than a good substitute father ? Why?

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### **Chapter 5 - The Good Family Man**

David Blankenhorn in his book “Fatherless America” describes the Good Family Man, as a masculine role model. The following express his views:

“He is a necessary father, yet in the prevailing cultural script, he is a character without name, unheralded, often unrecognized.

The Good Family Man is not perfect, but good enough to be irreplaceable. He has not transcended his masculinity or moved beyond male roles. What he does is not mothering or parenting, but a gender specific noun, “Father” whose meaning is clear.

He puts his family first. He is a man who lives a certain kind of life. He finds himself with a primary imperative to launch his children as competent adults in an increasingly endangered society that is spinning out of control.”

Comment on the above.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Do you have any experience with this type of masculine role model? Explain.
- 2) The **Good Family Man** puts his family first as the provider and protector. What does this look like?
- 3) The **Good Family Man** shows love of spouse and children through action. What does this look like to you? Is saying no and discipline part of sharing love and if so how?
- 4) He is flexible; he shares the workload with his partner. How does this work in a two income family? How about with the stay-at-home mom?
- 5) He has Biblical and moral values. What would be an example of these values?
- 6) Sex, movies, music, alcohol, drugs, language and respect for older people are concerns of the **Good Family Man**, because they hinder his ability to protect and guide his children. Do you have any experience with these concerns as related to the family you want to share?

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### Chapter 6 - Maturity

In his book “*The Mature Man*” David Dewitt looks at the age-old masculinity process. The following quote expresses his opinion that does not line up with today’s cultural script of masculinity. “A man is an increasingly hard thing to find. We live in a society of boys; twenty-, thirty-, forty-, fifty-, and sixty-year-old boys. Many guys today seem to have the goal of maintaining a junior-high mentality all the way through life. The ultimate in life seems to be to retire, still a boy. I suggest there is virtually no difference between the shuffleboard courts of St. Petersburg, Florida, and the parties at Daytona Beach. The proof of my suggestion is that those playing shuffleboard would be at Daytona Beach if they were fifty years younger. They’ve not developed into men at all; they’ve just gotten older. Today many seem to agree with the ad: “I don’t want to grow up, because maybe if I did, I wouldn’t be a Toys-R-Us kid”.

Comment on the above:

#### Discussion questions:

- 1) “A **boy** is a male who is generally chaotic; not yet having personally established order in his life.” Would you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
- 2) “A **man** is a male who has taken on responsibility for establishing order for himself and the discipleship of his immediate family.” Would you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
- 3) “A **patriarch** is a man who has taken on the responsibility for establishing maturity for himself and the discipleship of his extended family.”
- 4) Using Dewitt’s definitions of **boy, man, and patriarch**, where do you see yourself defined? Why?
- 5) “A **patriarch** is not a retired grandfather who is set in his ways and basically out of it, following the lead of his grandchildren. A **patriarch** is a man who is working at something vital, plugged into his culture, leading his grandchildren, keenly aware of life’s changes, inventive, alert, and challenging the socks off his wife, children, grandchildren, and the extended family around him as he grows in the wisdom and knowledge of the Lord.” How do you react/respond to Dewitt’s statement about mature masculinity? Explain.
- 6) According to Dewitt, “There are two stages a **man** goes through on the road from being a **boy** to becoming a **patriarch**. A male, once he has decided to be a man, has two choices available to him as a man. He can choose to be a husband and he can choose to be a father. But a husband must first be a man [order his life], a father must first be a husband.”
- 7) Being a father requires succeeding as a husband. Can single parenting be done effectively, in your opinion? Where do you fit in this maturity process if you are single with no kids?