

## **Straight Talk For Tough Times: Lies Men Believe**

### **Introduction:**

Play “Braveheart” Clip.

This morning I’m continuing with a series that I started this summer, called “Straight Talk For Tough Times.” Two weeks ago I spoke to the ladies in attendance, and this week it’s the men’s turn.

Men and women have similarities, and very real differences. One thing that I hear over and over again from women is that they don’t understand the way that men think. Actually, I hear the same thing from men about women. I’m going to try to speak to what I see is the main issues that men have to deal with today.

I spoke about the confusing messages that women receive from our culture. Perhaps more confusing are the messages that our culture has for men. I grew up in a time when feminism was beginning to have a major impact on the cultural climate. It was tough to know how to behave. If you held the door open for a woman, some of them would thank you and consider you a gentleman, and some would stare daggers at you and say, “*what, you don’t think I can open a door by myself?*” There should be a sign plainly visible.

The pendulum seems to have swung back lately and what I now hear from women is “where have all the real men gone?” Even “Old Spice” has gotten in on the act. (Show [“Old Spice”](#) commercial.) The answer to that question, “where have all the real men gone?” is that we’ve tried to make them into women, and a lot of men are hopelessly confused as to what’s expected of them. The church (generally) has had a lot to do with that.

John Eldredge deals with this in his book “Wild At Heart.” He says: “*When all is said and done, I think most men in the church believe that God put them on earth to be a good boy. The problem with men, we are told, is that they don’t know how to keep their promises, be spiritual leaders, talk to their wives, or raise their children. But, if they will try real hard they can reach the lofty summit of becoming... a nice guy. That’s what we hold up as models of Christian maturity. Really Nice Guys. We don’t smoke, drink, or swear; that’s what makes us men. Now let me ask my male readers: in all*

*your boyhood dreams growing up, did you ever dream of becoming a Nice Guy? (Ladies, was the Prince of your dreams dashing... or merely nice?)*

I think to find a clue to what it means to be a man we need to go back to our childhood dreams. Every guy that I know dreamt of becoming a part of something bigger than himself, of taking on great enemies and defeating them; of being the hero in the story. William Wallace stepping out onto the field of battle to free Scotland from tyranny. John Wayne taking on a gang of outlaws in the Wild West. Jeremiah Johnson surviving against all odds up in the mountains by himself.

I remember dreams, when I was just a young child, of leading an army to defend this area from the communists. In my dreams I recruited all of my buddies from school and we set up barricades on all of the roads into town and heroically beat back the invaders. Any of you ladies have dreams like that?

Our games were like that. We'd collect acorns and have pitched battles with them. We'd challenge each other to feats of skill or endurance. My little brother and I would take turns climbing the big pine tree outside of our house and see who could leave a notch with a knife the highest up. Until one day one of us cut the top off the tree. You don't have to do a lot to entertain little boys, give them a couple of sticks and they'll make weapons out of them and have sword fights. There's something hard-wired into men that is looking for a challenge.

This is a major clue to what we're talking about today. Again, John Eldredge writes, *"It's not a question – it's the question, the one every boy and man is longing to ask. Do I have what it takes? Am I powerful? Until a man knows he's a man he will forever be trying to prove he is one, while at the same time shrink from anything that might reveal he is not. Most men live their lives haunted by the question, or crippled by the answer they've been given."*

So you have punk hip-hop artists surrounding themselves with half-naked girls fawning all over them in music videos, thinking that bling and a gun make them a man. Or you have jocks who believe that because they can throw a ball further than anyone else, or through a hoop more often than anyone else, that makes them a man. Or you find guys in t-shirts treating

women like dirt, drinking beer and acting tough thinking that makes them a man.

They've believed the lies that have been passed down to them. What are some of the lies that men believe? *"You will never be good enough."* *"You will never amount to anything."* *"You don't have what it takes."* *"Don't try, you might fail."* *"You're weak; no woman will ever want you."* *"You are not a man."* *"Money = love."* *"Work = love."* *"You're a lousy father."* *"You're a lousy husband."* *"You're a coward."*

What we need to understand is that we live in a world at war. Most people don't get that; they're surprised when things don't go smoothly. They think that the world is fair. But Jesus had it right when He told us, in John 10:10 that *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."*

There's a battle going on all around us, and if you listen you can hear the cries of the wounded. There are so many men who have simply lost heart. They're trying to crawl forward, but they're not getting anywhere. Many are already captives, submitting themselves to the chains of addiction, despair, passivity or boredom.

Hear what the Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 12:2. *"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will."*

There are a lot of men who are like rebels without a cause. Their whole life they've been trying to find the answer to the questions they've been asking, but without success. The answer is to go back to the manual. Look at what the Maker has to say about us. When we look at the very beginning we find what God put in the heart of man. In Genesis 1:28 God commanded man to *"...fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."*

From the very beginning God created man and put a challenge in front of him. Go forth and conquer; be productive; make a difference. Then in Genesis 3 we see Adam standing back passively and observing as the serpent tempts his wife and leads her into rebellion against God, while he stands back and does nothing. And everything changes.

In the Biblical story we see aspects of those childhood dreams of every man here. There's a cause – the restoration of creation to its rightful place. There's an enemy – he's called Satan, the devil, the deceiver. There's a hero – Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

That is the story that has been played out over centuries of time on planet earth. We read about different scenes as they've been recorded for us. David answers the challenge and stands before Goliath, because he believes that God will stand with him. Moses boldly comes before Pharaoh and demands that he let God's people go, then leads them through the wilderness to the Promised Land. In the New Testament we read of Jesus' coming. At His birth, King Herod murdered every baby he could find in Bethlehem to try to wipe out the threat to his throne. In His life, Jesus took every attack the enemy could throw at Him, even to the point of laying His life down for us. Then He rose again, to give us the power to be overcomers ourselves.

Now it's our turn. God is calling men (and women) to join Him in this battle of the ages. He calls us up into His story. And he calls us to rethink what we know about ourselves. The message in my head, that little recording that I couldn't stop, said, "You will never amount to anything" and "You don't have what it takes." But God's Word tells me that "*I can do everything through him who gives me strength.*" (Philippians 4:13) When I face a challenge and that little voice says, "You're a coward." I hear what the angel of the Lord said to Gideon, who felt the same way, "*The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!*" (Judges 6:12)

So guys, let's talk about what really drives us. I was in my thirties before I realized that I was a workaholic trying to please my father. I had learned from him that the way to show your family you love them was by working hard. I was working a 60 hour a week job while I was also pastoring a church, not realizing that I was neglecting my family. I had to finally realize that my validation comes from my heavenly Father, and all I want is to hear from Him one day, "*Well done, good and faithful servant.*" I also had to learn that God's love is unconditional.

I've had to learn to deal with the wounds that I've experienced in my life. I know now that God has a plan for my life and that, as Romans 8:28 says, "*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*" God wants to use me

– and you – in His great plan of redemption. But to use me, He’s got to do some work on me. So, I’ve had to change the questions that I ask. I used to ask “God, why did you let this happen to me?” Or, “God, why don’t you just... fix whatever problem I was facing...” I’ve learned to ask a new set of questions instead: “What are you trying to teach me here?” “What issues in my heart are you trying to raise through this?” “What is it you want me to see?” “What are you asking me to let go of?”

Guys, we don’t need accountability groups so much as we need fellow warriors. We need someone to fight alongside of and to watch our backs. I agree with John Eldredge that all men need three things: a battle to fight, an adventure to live and a beauty to rescue.

The problem is that even though the desires are there for those things, even though that’s what we’ve dreamed of since we were boys, we still don’t think we’re up to it. Why don’t men act like men? Why don’t men offer their strength to a world that is desperately in need of it? Two reasons: We seriously doubt we have very much to offer and we’re pretty sure that whatever we have to offer won’t be enough. Something has gone wrong and we know it.

If guys don’t figure this out and learn how to reconnect with God’s purpose they respond to their wounds one of two ways: they either overcompensate for their wound and become driven (violent men), or they shrink back and go passive (retreating men). Sometimes they respond with an odd mixture of both.

The challenge, then, is for men to press into a relationship with a Father God who can help them find that place in our heart that’s been lost. My next message in this series will be on marriage and how men and women can help each other become all they were meant to be. But for today, men, look around you, the world needs you. The world is crying out for men of integrity, men who know that they have been wounded, and who can admit it, but who also know who the healer is; men who are able to help this next generation; men who are willing to pay a price for the right cause.

**Conclusion:**

In closing, let me speak quickly to you parents out there. First of all, Moms, for all of your good intentions, it is not possible for a woman to initiate a

man into manhood. You're not a man. And if you try real hard, you'll just make him into a woman. Stop babying your boys.

Dads, your boys need you. They need your time; your attention; and your approval. You will blow it; you will mess up, but keep trying.