

A Biblically Authentic Man

Intro

Why do we do this?

It's all about the glory of God.

“See, a king will reign in righteousness and rulers will rule with justice. Each man will be like a shelter from the wind and a refuge from the storm, like streams of water in the desert and the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land.” Isaiah 32:1-2

“A king will reign in righteousness”

Strength and Compassion

“One thing God has spoken, two things I have heard, that you, O God, are strong, and that you, O Lord, are loving.” Ps 62:11

It requires dependence on God to live in balance of strength and love.

Strong-----Perfect Balance-----Loving

“rulers will rule with justice”

We were made to rule. Genesis 1:27-28 (Part of being in the image of God)

Everything rises and falls on leadership (Adam)

We all have spheres of leadership/influence- home, children, co-workers, neighbors, and friends

The call for justice is one of the great themes throughout the Old Testament.

Hebrew word for justice is *mishpat*. It means much more than strict legal justice. The word was constantly used in conjunction with the Hebrew word for righteousness: “Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever flowing stream.” Amos 5:24

“God executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing.” Deut 10:18

We can trust God because he always uses his strength for the good of others. Good men, who follow the king of righteousness, are like him.

The call for compassion

Along with the call for justice is a call for compassion. This theme of compassion weaves its way through the Old Testament in the rich Hebrew word *Hesed*. *Hesed* is so laden with meaning that it's difficult to translate into English: “Loving kindness” or “mercy.” It also carries the idea of endurance or faithfulness, and unwavering compassion. His wonderful *hesed* is from everlasting to everlasting (Ps 103:7). It endures forever (Ps 106:1).

“The Lord passed before him [Moses], and proclaimed, ‘The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love [hesed] for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.’ Ex 34:6-7

Most amazing is the way in which the biblical writers bring together the justice of misphat and the compassion of hesed. To give people what is due them is one thing; the quality of spirit through which we relate to them is quite another.

“Thus says the Lord of hosts, render true judgments [misphat], show kindness and mercy [hesed] each to his brother, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor and let none of you devise evil against his brother in your heart.” Zech 7:9-10

“He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice [misphat], and to love kindness [hesed], and to walk humbly with your God? Mic 6:8

“The vision for wholeness and peace, which shines like a beacon of light through the Old Covenant, gives us important insights into Christian leadership. This theme is wonderfully gathered up in the Hebrew word shalom, a full-bodied concept that resonates with wholeness, unity, balance. Gathering in (but much broader than peace), it means a harmonious, caring community with God at its center as the prime sustainer and most glorious inhabitant. This great vision of shalom begins and ends our Bible. In the creation narrative, God brought order and harmony out of chaos. In the Apocalypse of John, we have the glorious wholeness of a new heaven and a new earth.” Richard Foster

Being the storm vs. the shelter

To at least some degree, every man knows that he is not fully happy. And when his unfulfilled desires surface, he is confronted with a crucial choice: to trust God or not to trust him, to rely on himself or to rely on the name of the Lord. If he trusts God, the unhappiness (which must continue till death) is surrounded by hope, by acceptance, by meaning in spite of imperfection. And he is empowered to move well, with a tender strength on behalf of others. That brings joy.

If he refuses to trust, the unhappiness within him becomes his most compelling problem. He must find some way to deal with it. Two ways: Needy or Tough.

Ruled by neediness-----Ruled by toughness

Needy men: insist others come through for them. Easily hurt and offended when people don't. Their background usually includes someone who brought them intense pleasure (perhaps a doting mother, a too-generous father, an overly solicitous, maybe inappropriately involved, youth pastor, or an admired athlete gave his autograph. As boys, these men learned a simple lesson: internal pain is most reliably relieved when someone does something for them...He is willing to be responsible up to a point, and he is often willing to be kind and thoughtful, sometimes even sacrificially helpful, but always with the demand that someone notice—and that someone give him what makes him feel good.

One woman said, “When I hear my husband’s car pull in the driveway after work, my heart just sinks. I immediately feel even more tired than I felt before. I’m a housewife with three children to take care of all day and now here comes the fourth. Its always about him, about something that’s wrong, like I’m supposed to do something. Even when he asks about me, I feel set up to ask about him. If he helps with dinner, I get that look that tells me I’m supposed to tell him how wonderful he is...everything he does makes me feel that I’m supposed to come through for him.”

The person who takes on the job of meeting a needy man's needs has no hope of success. No effort is enough. No kindness is sufficient. People in relationship with this man typically feel the pressure to come through and a chronic sense of failure that what they do is never enough.

Tough men: push people far enough away from them to avoid any significant sense of connection. Men ruled by the passion of toughness typically have a history more characterized by neglect or anger than by pleasurable involvement. Rigid discipline, preoccupied fathers, non-nurturing mothers, meaningless churches, legalistic theology: relational connection never existed for long in these men's experience. These men were starving for relationship but lost hope. It was easier to kill their yearnings for intimacy and get on with life than to embrace their longings and hurt.

Often abilities surfaced that permitted them to find the pleasures of "relationship from a distance." Athletic talent or academic gift or social smoothness or a mechanical knack gave them a chance to feel powerful and to achieve goals worthy of commendation. Over time, the tough man comes to depend on his abilities so fully that his human longing for connection is smothered. And that's how he wants it. Distance maintains safety. No need to feel the soul-crushing terror of needing that which may not come your way.

Tough men deny any deep longing for relationship, and chase after goals that do not require meaningful intimacy with people. Men more aware of their capacity to get things done seem to put greater energy into tasks than people. They become hard, distant, and emotionally blunted, protected by a veneer of convincing friendliness. A tough man's relationships are more often shallow but stable. But the stability is fragile. A tough man's relationships depends on a conspiracy of pretending that superficiality is satisfying, and that the pleasures of comfort and excitement are acceptable substitutes for the lost joys of communion. When a spouse or friend breaks through the conspiracy and asks the "tough man" for more, the relationship erupts like a long-dormant volcano.

Tough men damage people by requiring them to perform without providing any real tenderness or nourishment for their souls. People in relationship with a tough man often feel undesired and desperate. Those victimized by the tough man often struggle with depression, anxiety, and addictions.

Both styles (needy or tough) demand that others come through. But men in touch with their neediness require up close affirmation and support from a few intimates. Tough men want respect from a larger audience that keeps its distance. The styles may be different, but both are selfish. And both cause great harm.

One of the great tragedies of life is that no man fully sees the damage that his unmasculine style of relating does to others. Those that get a glimpse descend to the depths of brokenness and contrition. And it is from those depths that genuine repentance and godly masculinity arises...The hope of actually blessing others—nourishing his wife, positively influencing his children, encouraging his friends—grows stronger than the terror of failure. And good movement begins. He starts to become the shelter instead of the storm.

Being the shelter in the storm

Men are created and called to remember.

Genesis 1:27. God created us male and female. Male is translated from the Hebrew word *Zakar* which means "remembering one."

When a man realizes how much his wife longs for a shelter in the storm, for an advocate who truly loves and enjoys her with both strength and sensitivity to her hurts, fears and longings, he may feel anger and

fear. He gets angry that she is needy when he feels needy himself and threatened because he is not sure he has what it takes to touch his wife's deepest longings and fears. He fears failure and rejection if he tries.

For a man to overcome his doubts, he must center on two things.

First: He must remember and focus on God and all that it means to be forgiven (daily), accepted, and called until he is persuaded that there is real strength in his redeemed heart that can and needs to be released for the good of his wife and others. That will require serious attention to the Word of God and to remembering who he is in Christ.

Second: He must focus on his wife, her fears, wounds, longings, etc. He must allow his redeemed heart to deeply care about how much his wife longs to be cherished and protected by his tender strength and love.

A biblically authentic man has become so humbled and grateful for the grace of God that he gladly (though often it is a choice) embraces his calling to love and be loved by God so that he is able and willing to reveal the strength and tenderness of God to others no matter the situation. He is a man who rejects passivity, accepts responsibility, moves courageously, with his eyes on the greater reward.

Questions for Discussion

1. Read Isaiah 32:1-2. Does this passage stir anything in you as a man? Please explain. What might it mean for you to be the shelter from the wind for your wife (or friend)? Are you aware of the winds and storms of her life? How aware are you of what she longs for from you?
2. Would you say you tend more toward being tough or needy? What do you think it's like for your spouse or loved ones when you relate to them that way? What would it take for you to live more in balance with strength and love?
3. Do you tend to remember God in the face of pain and disappointment or do you tend to forget him and go south when you experience failure or rejection? Why do you think you do that? What would it take to remember God and move with tender strength on behalf of others in those difficult situations?
4. Give one clear example of how you could "remember God" and be the shelter from the wind and a refuge from the storm this week toward your loved ones.