

Men's Breakfast- Becoming Men of Steel

The shark

I once heard about a wealthy Texan who had an impressive ranch in Texas. On his ranch, he had a HUGE flood-lit swimming pool and in this swimming pool he kept a SHARK. The rich Texan loved to throw lavish dinner parties and would invite his guests up around the pool afterwards. Then he would say to them, "If any of you will swim a length of this pool then I will give you one of three things; 10 million, or half of my estate, or the hand of my daughter in marriage."

Well one evening as he was saying this ... and he always said before he finished," "but I must warn you before you do so, there is a shark in the pool."

One evening as he was saying this, there was a splash, and a man, very nicely dressed, swam the entire length of the pool chased by the shark. He got out of the pool just in time as the shark thudded into the wall.

The Texan said,

"Congratulations, you are the first person who has ever done that! Now what would you like? Would you like the 10 million?"

"No thanks."

"Half of my estate?"

"No thanks."

"So you would like the hand of my daughter in marriage?" asked the Texan.

"No, thank you!"

So the Texan said to him, "Well what do you want?"

And the young man replied, "I want the name of the man who pushed me."

Guys, I think being a bloke is a good thing. I believe God values men and he made us the way we are, to like a challenge, to like to hunt and fish and push mates into pools. He made us to enjoy fun. He made us fairly level emotionally and able to work long hours. God made us with that protective instinct to want to shelter and keep safe those in our care. They are all good things.

However I want to say to you men that you and I are living in a generation where men are no longer valued, and white middle class men are probably the least valued in society of all.

I don't know if you pay much attention to the messages behind TV ads. I remember, about the time the Simpsons started, how we saw Homer as the thickest, rudest, least skilled member of the family, how ads on TV started changing as well. The men in all the ads, whether they were husbands or just blokes, in every ad the women were brilliant and clever and the men were portrayed as having the skills of the maturity of a 6 year old. Over the last 15 years blokes in NZ have been sold a very negative message. Whether you are conscious of it or not, very likely it has begun to affect how you see yourself as a man, your worth and your value to society. I recall about the same time that the Simpsons came out and TV ads became subtly anti-male a book was written "Men are from Mars Women are from Venus" and the big push afterwards was to get men to learn to speak Venutian.

There is no doubt in my mind that up until 50 years ago women were not treated as equals and there were many injustices and prejudice actions against Maori. There needed to be a push back in society, a redressing of the imbalance, but I am very sure that the swing of the pendulum has swung back too far the other way now marginalizing men, especially white men.

My son was up last weekend and I asked about how the Ranui Youth Pastor was doing because Pastor Dwayne builds with my son two days a week.

Ben's feedback was strong and alarming.

You will all be aware how much work and fund raising and preparation goes into preparing a bus load of kids for Easter Camp.

This year, Ranui sent another large group of campers, but instead of the gospel and a call to a deeper relationship with Jesus, the theme was very politically correct; one of the key-note speakers even had a focus in his talk an apology for being white and for being male. Pastor Dwayne has since contacted all the parents of the campers and apologized for taking them to hear such rubbish and is going to challenge the camp organizers directly.

God loves men and women and European and Maori equally.

And you and I should never feel guilty about being men.

God made us men and the world needs men. Not men who are trying to become more like the world wants men. Not men who are trying to become more like women; but men who are willing to be real men, in a real world.

I have often struggled with artists' impressions of what they thought that Jesus looked like. Usually Jesus is a thin, undernourished pale looking bloke. The reality is though, that Jesus would think nothing of milling his own timber by hand and then fashioning huge yoke for oxen. That Jesus would think nothing of walking 50 kms in a day. That Jesus, when he was being falsely accused of crimes, when his back was being ripped open by the flagellum (a cruel whip with shards of glass and bone in its tips, for 39 lashes, when he is being mocked and spat on, when nails are being driven into his hands and his feet, he never backed down, he never complained, he remained silent.

When I look at Jesus I see a muscular man who was both physically and mentally very strong. He was what I would call a man of steel.

The prophet Isaiah says in Isaiah 50:7 that he set his face like flint to do the Lord's will. This is a real man, a man of steel.

I see in Jesus our Lord that strong determination to do what is right in the Father's eyes. He looks to the cross and He sets His face like flint.
There is a steel-like determination.

And I want to say, men, that you and I don't need to buy into the "thick as" image of men from TV. We don't need to feel guilty for being men and not speaking Venutian. We don't need to be ashamed of being white, if we are white.

I believe that we are living in a time when men are really confused about what it means to be a man, and are looked down on. This is an age when we need to look to Jesus, His steel like example and help each other be men of steel. That is blokes who will be real men of God no matter how hard the situation. A man of steel. A Jesus-like man is a person who always does the right thing no matter how tired you are, no matter how alone you might feel, or how misunderstood you might be.

I know I haven't made it yet but I want to and I want to encourage you brothers to do the same.

I know I haven't made it yet. About a month ago I preached on not taking the bait of Satan and never gossiping to anyone. Within two weeks of that sermon I had Hilary and Ken both challenge me where I was beginning to talk about other people not to them. In other words I have a long way to go but I think I am

getting there. Juliette and I had been married about 7 years... I recall a time about 4 years into ministry at Ranui... Ashling.... Three times in ministry I have had people turn Jezebellic against me... (*here Russell shared 3 illustrations*)

I shared at Easter Camp that most often now when people pray for me I don't shake or fall over or start laughing in the Lord's presence, I feel like God is instead putting titanium steel into my spine because he needs you and I to be strong, Christ like, men of steel, to impact and hold society together for the future. Listen brothers, this world needs men, and the church needs men to be real men of steel.

Women are wired to be more relational and pastoral than men and that is good. But the church also needs risk takers and pioneers and innovators, and men are much more naturally wired to provide those things.

I love the fact that woman often give more time to spiritual things especially when it comes to raising children with faith, and yet I recall the old Promise-Keepers statistic vividly where they found that if a woman came to Christ 17% of the family would follow her but if dad came to Christ 93% of the family would follow him.

I also think young Christian women are desperate to find and fall in love with real Christian men, men of steel. If you are a spiritual man, a man who can be relied on to do the right thing, the Godly thing, in all situations then you will have no problem finding a good wife.

Men, I believe this. There has never been a time in world history when men have been so looked down on and disrespected. But the world and the church needs men today who will be men of steel, who will set their faces like flint, with determination to do the right thing, the Godly thing no matter what they are facing.

I believe that men like that

- Will have great marriages,
- Will be great dads who raise secure and happy kids,
- Will be the anchors and the pioneers in the local church and

In this society where there are so many blended families, so many children growing up without their biological dad present, I believe men of steel can become such examples, such mentors, such an influence on the next generation that one man of steel can change the lives of so, so many.

I want to invite you to break up into groups of 3-4 and pray for each other to become that kind of man, a man of steel.