

## Identity

*"So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." (Genesis 1:27, NKJV)<sup>1</sup>*

Notice that man and women are each created distinctly in God's image. Masculinity and femininity were both created by God to represent different aspects of Himself. There is no generic human, no person without a fundamental identity. Each human is created as a man or as a woman and each gender reflects part of God's nature. Our culture has wanted to make men more like women, less dangerous, more tender, less physical, more feeling. At the same time, our culture tells women to be more like men, more independent, less tender, stronger. The natures God created, masculinity and femininity, are under assault. We must understand who we are and what we should be before we can begin to consider developing a lifetime relationship in marriage.

Why are boys so loud, so active, and so independent? Why are little girls so social, so interested in playing house? Could it be that it has something to do with how we were designed? Let's turn to Genesis and see what we can learn from how we were made in the beginning.

*"This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground. And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed." (Genesis 2:4-8, NKJV)<sup>2</sup>*

*"Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it." (Genesis 2:15, NKJV)<sup>3</sup>*

Notice where Adam was created. He was made in the wilderness. Adam was made where there were no desks, no office chairs, no suits, no meetings, no deadlines. He was set in the wild untamed country. Then, God formed the garden and brought man into it. Does this begin to explain why a boy wants to explore, wants to be daring? I remember when I was finally given permission to ride my bike around a several block loop by our home. I could now go, ride, explore. It was freedom; it was adventure and oh, it was great!

What of Eve? Where was she made? What is her purpose?

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<sup>1</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996, c1982.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

*"And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. 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. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." (Genesis 2:18-25, NKJV) <sup>4</sup>*

We see that Eve was created inside the garden. And she was made so that man would not be alone. Perhaps this explains why women prefer the home to the wild, and why women are so social. This is what they were made for. My sister, when she was a girl, never cared to venture far away from what she knew and from someone she could be with.

*"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. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."'" (Genesis 1:26-28, NKJV) <sup>5</sup>*

There is a mission given to both men and women. Do you see it? "Fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion." God planted a garden in the midst of the wilderness. God intended that man and woman would make more men and women and expand the garden to fill the earth. Subdue, have dominion, these are both missions to explore, conquer and discover the world. Be fruitful and multiply are commands to love, to be social, to provide. These missions follow from our very nature.

Observe men and women, boys and girls and I am convinced you will find this to be the case. Men and women are different in their identity, in their inner core. What are the core issues of a masculine heart? Of a feminine heart? John Eldredge in *Wild at Heart* gives three core issues for men and three core issues for women. Borrowing from Eldredge<sup>6</sup> we find that each man needs a Battle to Fight, an Adventure to Live and a Beauty to Rescue. Likewise,

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<sup>4</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996, c1982.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>6</sup> Eldredge, John. *Wild At Heart*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001.

each woman longs to Be Fought For, wants an Adventure to Share and needs a Beauty to Unveil.

## **Masculinity**

### **A Battle to Fight**

I remember watching *Braveheart* for the first time. Wallace wants to avenge his father's death but his uncle comes to take care of him and educate him. Wallace returns as a grown man and wants to stay out of trouble but when his girlfriend is murdered he starts to take action. Wallace isn't a guy to back down. The rest of the Scottish nobles are cowards and at the Battle of Steirling they want to parley instead of fight. Wallace delivers a stirring speech to the men, he gives them courage and a reason to fight. Then he goes to break up this parley and start a battle. Which kind of man would you rather be? One of the nobles? Or Wallace? What kind of man do you think Jesus is more like: Mister Rogers or William Wallace? First, a little qualification. If you were a leper or a cripple, Jesus would reach out to you. He would show you the love that no one else did. To you, Jesus was the incarnation of love and compassion. However, if you were a Pharisee, one who imposed regulations beyond God's law on the people and did nothing to help them, then Jesus had it in for you. Lets examine a story from Luke 13.

*"Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up. But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity." And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, "There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day." The Lord then answered him and said, "Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?" And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him." (Luke 13:10-17, NKJV)*<sup>7</sup>

Back in Luke 6, Jesus healed a man whose right hand was withered. The Pharisees were enraged and discussed what they could do to Jesus. The Pharisees wanted Jesus' head for what he was doing. Does Jesus back down, decide not to rock the boat, in an attempt to maintain unity? No! Jesus sees another person in need on the Sabbath and takes action. He knows the Pharisees will hate him, but does that cause him to back down? He picks a fight, heals the woman and then calls the Pharisees as they are, Hypocrites, and shames them in front of the people. Is this the work of a nice guy? Do you think the Egyptians thought Jehovah was a nice guy when He destroyed the country and killed all the Egyptian

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<sup>7</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996, c1982.

firstborns? Do you think the Canaanites thought God was kind and gentle when He ordered the complete decimation of every man, woman and child? Do you think that even the Israelites thought God was so nice when He said “Shape up or I’ll bring in the Assyrians” or “Obey Me or I’ll bring in the Babylonians?” After all "*The Lord is a warrior; the Lord is his name.*" (Exodus 15:3, NRSV)<sup>8</sup>

Why is it that a stick becomes a sword or a spear or a rifle or a bazooka in the hands of a boy? Why is it that on vacation in the Smoky Mountains, whenever the signs said “Danger! Falling Deaths Have Occurred” that I just had to climb the rocks. Why is it that for a boy or a man the best recipe for fun involves mixing some danger with something physically active? Things like a gun or fireworks or chainsaws make men and boys light up. We need to understand that this is part of our very nature. Adam was made to come through, to survive the test, to do the job. Also realize that Adam was created to be a soldier in a war. Earth was and is no neutral ground. The enemy is performing a full-scale assault against God and against us. God made man a warrior to fight since he knew we would live our lives on a battlefield. A man needs to know he is dangerous, that he has what it takes. If he doesn’t know, he will live in fear and be incapacitated by it all his life.

## **An Adventure To Live**

Battles are important, but do the battles add up into something? Am I a player in a game larger than myself? In *The Hobbit* by J. R. R. Tolkien, hobbits are very laid back creatures who never want to have any adventures. They smoke pipes, drink ale, garden and never stray much more than a day’s walk from home. They never do anything remotely dangerous. Swords belong hung over mantles and battles are thing of legend. Gandalf, the good wizard, interrupts Bilbo one day and sets him off on an adventure, much to Bilbo’s dismay. The adventure consists of many things, including many battles. These battles are not all fighting or war, but often involve Bilbo overcoming his own fears. In the end Bilbo learns to take risks, be daring, make friends and think much larger than his little community. Close to the end of his days on earth, being 144 years old, Bilbo fondly reminisces back on his adventure and how important it was.

Does God have an adventure? Does He take risks? He knows all the history of the world and is all powerful you say. How can he take risks? I think that in understanding God’s sovereignty we often don’t realize that in spite of knowing the outcome, He did it anyway. Even though God knew man would reject Him and sin, He made man anyway. God could have made us obey Himself. He could have made us without a choice, but he gave us that choice anyway. God took a huge risk in our creation. Why? So He could show us that He can come through, that He has what it takes. Think of so many stories in scripture. Israel is backed up against the Red Sea shaking in fear as Pharaoh and his army come tearing up the road. The Egyptians are not happy. They have just had their country destroyed by God. Its revenge time and the Israelites are shaking in their sandals. Then God shows up. He stands between the Egyptians and the Israelites. He saves the day and finishes Pharaoh and the army off. How about when the Assyrian general shows up at Jerusalem to take things over?

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<sup>8</sup> *The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version.* Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996, c1989.

The people are afraid and Hezekiah cries out to God. Then God shows up and wipes out 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night. This seems to be the story of the Bible: people in desperate need, then God shows up. That's how it happened after the mob saw Christ crucified. All hope seemed to fail. The disciples were hiding in terrified fear that they would be the next target, then God shows up. If you are still not sure of the risk Gods takes, think of this last story. There is this message, a message of such great importance. Without this message, mankind is doomed. So God sends this message to mankind. He starts it off in the hands of a few fishermen, a tax collector and a revolutionary. And they hand the message down to us. Unbelievable!

A man needs to have a mission greater than himself, something to live for, something to move him to action. This is the mission given to us by God.

*"Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.""* (Genesis 1:28, NKJV)<sup>9</sup>

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen."* (Matthew 28:19-20, NKJV)<sup>10</sup>

These are our missions, the adventures to which every man has been called. Of course, there may be many other adventures which God has in store for your life. But these two passages are an invitation, or rather a command, to enter an adventure.

## **A Beauty To Rescue**

In the movie *The Pirates of the Caribbean*, Elizabeth is taken by the pirates because of a gold medallion she is wearing. Commodore Norrington has proposed to Elizabeth, but Elizabeth isn't quite sure what to do since she and Will have this attraction for each other. When Elizabeth is taken, Will is ready to do anything to get her back. Anything, including helping pirate Jack to help steal one of the ships from the English fleet to give chase to the ship Elizabeth is on. Will captures Elizabeth's heart because he is willing to battle on her behalf. Commodore Norrington is a respectable man, but he lacks adventure, excitement and daring. He must give chase to the pirates because they are pirates, not because he must fight for his beauty. In the end, Elizabeth chooses Will because he was willing to fight for her.

Think of so many of the old tales. What would Robin Hood be with out Maid Marian to fight for? The beast was finally woken to fight when Belle cried out. Would prince Philip have battled Maleficent but for Sleeping Beauty? There is nothing like a beautiful woman to motivate a man. Does God have a beauty to fight for? Is he romantic in His heart?

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<sup>9</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996, c1982.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

*"(for you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God)," (Exodus 34:14, NKJV) <sup>11</sup>*

*"They provoked Him to jealousy with foreign gods; With abominations they provoked Him to anger. " (Deuteronomy 32:16, NKJV) <sup>12</sup>*

*"And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So shall your God rejoice over you. " (Isaiah 62:5b, NKJV) <sup>13</sup>*

*"I have trodden the winepress alone, And from the peoples no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, And trampled them in My fury; Their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, And I have stained all My robes. For the day of vengeance is in My heart, And the year of My redeemed has come. " (Isaiah 63:3-4, NKJV) <sup>14</sup>*

The Lord views his chosen people as His bride. He is jealous over them. He doesn't want them to follow other lovers, other gods. He becomes angry when others try to damage His bride. He will do battle on their behalf. And He rejoices over us; He loves us. Who created music, poetry, sunsets, beaches and starry nights? Don't you think the God who created the places and settings which we consider romantic is Himself romantic? What kind of stoic god would have placed the Song of Solomon in the Holy Scripture? God has fully endorsed romance because He Himself is romantic. Look through scripture and see how many times people have turned away from God only for God to move heaven and earth to win their hearts back. This is the pattern set forth for man to follow: Find the beauty. Give her your strength. Fight for her, defend her. Love her.

Masculinity is under attack. The rambunctious aggressive behavior of men and boys is seen as evil by our culture. But in trying to tame us, to calm us, they have done away with the core of man. Tell him to fight no battles, to live no adventure, to seek out and defend no beauty and what is left for man? Left are the endless monotones of the office. Left are the boring duties of family and church. We need man to be what he was made to be: powerful, adventurous, romantic.

## ***Femininity***

### **To Be Fought For**

Why is it that every little girl knows the fairy tales without them being told? She ever dreams of being rescued by the valiant knight who will do battle for her and win her heart. As Eldridge says, *"From ancient fables to the latest blockbuster, the theme of a strong man coming to rescue a beautiful woman is universal to human nature. It is written in our hearts, one of the core desires of every man and every woman."*<sup>15</sup> One

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<sup>11</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996, c1982.

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

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

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Eldredge, John. *Wild At Heart*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001.

of the core desires of the feminine heart is the desire to be wanted, to be pursued, to be a priority. There is a wild part in each woman as there is in man, but it is manifest in a very different way. The man is fierce and dangerous, the woman is seductive.

How does this reflect God? Does God want to be wanted? Does He want to be a priority? "*And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.*" (Jeremiah 29:13, NKJV)<sup>16</sup> Can you see it in there? Seek Me. Find Me. Search for Me. God wants us to pursue Him. He wants to be wanted. "*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" (Matthew 11:28, NKJV)<sup>17</sup> Jesus wants our heart's, He wants us to choose Him. Do we need to fight? Is there strength that the man must provide? "*And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.*" (Luke 14:27, NKJV)<sup>18</sup> Following Jesus isn't a piece of cake. It is difficult; it cannot be done halfheartedly. It requires much of us, perhaps even our life. "*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,*" (Ephesians 5:25, NKJV)<sup>19</sup> Do you see this? Just as Christ gave Himself up for the church, the man must give himself up for the women. Just as Christ won the war against the Evil One on our behalf, man too must battle for the women. Do you love me? Am I important? Am I valuable? Do you want me? If a man can't answer these questions with a resounding yes to the woman, she will shrivel inside.

## **An Adventure to Share**

Relationships often die because the man thinks the woman is the adventure. When this happens, eventually both will get bored and the relationship is headed for disaster. Let us remember what woman was created for. "*And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."*" (Genesis 2:18, NKJV)<sup>20</sup> What is this helper? What is she to help him with? "*Helper here is ezer, and means "a support," "a helper," or "an assistant."*"<sup>21</sup> Woman was made to be by man's side and assist him with all he does. "*Suitable helper would be better translated 'helper matching him', i.e. supplying what he lacks. She is his missing rib. Matthew Henry commented on God's choice of a rib to create Eve, 'Not made out of his head to top him, not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.'*"<sup>22</sup> This adventure of life requires much and it is better not to go through it alone. The identities of man and women are intended to complement each other and hold each other up in the adventures of life.

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<sup>16</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996, c1982.

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

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

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

<sup>21</sup> Richards, Larry. *The Bible Reader's Companion*. Includes Index. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1991.

<sup>22</sup> Carson, D. A. *New Bible Commentary : 21st Century Edition*. Rev. Ed. of: *The New Bible Commentary*. 3rd Ed. / Edited by D. Guthrie, J.A. Motyer. 1970. 4th ed., Ge 2:18. Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994.

We know God wants an adventure, but does He also want to share it? God didn't have to create us. God choose to because He wanted to. Even though galaxies and planets and myriads of creatures exist, God wants to be part of our lives. Why is mankind commanded to pray? Surely not because God doesn't know what we want and what is happening to us! God wants us to pray so He can communicate with us. For those of us who don't pray much, God not answering our prayers is one of the ways He can keep us returning for conversation. God wants a relationship with each person; He desires an adventure to share.

## **A Beauty To Unveil**

Both my sisters often played dress up when they were young. They wanted to put on pretty dresses, make up, and jewelry. Why? Women often feel pressure from our culture to be physically beautiful, but that is not what I am talking about. Girls and women have a deep desire to be, at their core, beautiful. Along with dreaming of the knight in shining armor coming for them, girls dream of being the beauty. Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, Belle, these are the dream of a women. The heart of a women asks, Do you see me? Do I captivate you?

Eldridge says, "*There's a reason that a man is captivated by a woman. Eve is the crown of creation.*"<sup>23</sup> Let's follow the creation story. Everything starts out as formless and void and then light is created, then the heavens and earth are formed. This is followed by the dry land being separated from the sea, then grass and trees, then day and night, then the birds and fish. Do you see what is happening? All of creation is building. An eagle is a magnificent creature, but a lion blows it away. Next is Adam, the height of God's handiwork. It is not to a mere animal that God says "You are made in my image, my likeness." But there is still one more thing. Eve. She is the finishing touch to creation. As Eldridge says, "*Eve embodies the beauty and the mystery and the tender vulnerability of God.*"<sup>24</sup> God is also a captivating beauty. Listen to David's words. "*One thing I have desired of the Lord, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the Lord, And to inquire in His temple.*" (Psalm 27:4, NKJV)<sup>25</sup> God is beautiful and He wants to be worshiped.

## **Men and Women**

Men need to be men and women need to be women. The categories I have presented above are, I believe, core to men and women, but they are by no means hard and fast. There are times when a woman needs to be strong and fierce. There are times when a man needs to be tender and compassionate. But if women are only strong and men are only tender, then there is something wrong; they are not functioning as they were meant to be. The psalmist states it

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<sup>23</sup> Eldredge, John. *Wild At Heart*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996, c1982.

well: "God has said this, and I have heard it over and over: God is strong. The Lord is loving. You reward people for what they have done." (Psalm 62:11-12, NCV) <sup>26</sup>

## **Identity Distortions**

If we look around in life, we see men not living like men, women not living like women. What happened? When did man lose his strength? Where did woman lose her beauty? Why do we see people all over walking with such deep hurts in their hearts. Why do they cover it up, becoming something they are not? Why is man now weak and woman now ugly? What happened?

We examined Genesis chapter 2; now let's look at chapter 3. We remember that God has commanded, "'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.'" (Genesis 2:17, ESV) <sup>27</sup> This command is basic and generous. There is one restriction; only one. Notice also what God doesn't say. God doesn't tell Adam about the coming temptation. God doesn't give Adam an action plan. Why is this? It is because Adam is designed to be strong, to know right and to do it. Adam has what he needs; it was created in his heart. So Adam and Eve are living in the garden, carrying on life and here the story picks up.

*"Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'' And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' ' Then the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'" 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." (Genesis 3:1-6, NKJV) <sup>28</sup>*

This story doesn't go well, does it? Here is Adam at the side of Eve while the serpent is tempting her. What does he do? Nothing. He doesn't take a chance or battle the evil. He goes soft at the very moment he is needed most. Eldredge words it so well, I must quote him again: "Our first father – the first real man – gave in to paralysis. He denied his very nature and went passive. And every man after him, every son of Adam, carries in his heart now the same failure. Every man repeats the sin of Adam, every day. We won't risk, we won't fight, and we won't rescue Eve. We truly are a chip off the old block."<sup>29</sup> Of course, Eve doesn't live up to her design either. She is to be Adam's helper, his soul mate, and she sides with the

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<sup>26</sup> *The Holy Bible : New Century Version , Containing the Old and New Testaments.* Dallas, TX: Word Bibles, 1991.

<sup>27</sup> *The Holy Bible : English Standard Version.* Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001.

<sup>28</sup> *The New King James Version.* Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996, c1982.

<sup>29</sup> Eldredge, John. *Wild At Heart.* Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001.

enemy! If Adam's flaw is that he doesn't come through, doesn't stand and fight, what is Eve's flaw? It seems that Eve thought God wasn't being good to her, that He was withholding something. Everything she had been given wasn't enough to show her that God was good. When Eve was deceived something dreadful happened to her identity. She became grasping and lonely. She no longer wants to be a part of the adventure with Adam, she wants to control it. Eldridge says, "*And as for her beauty, she either hides it in fear and anger, or she uses it to secure her place in the world. . . . Fallen Eve either becomes rigid or clingy.*"<sup>30</sup> Man is not attracted to woman in the same way because now woman is in some combination hiding and demanding. But what of man? How does he fall? For a brief moment in time, Eve had sinned and yet Adam had not. What did Adam think? Why would he give in to sin? I think Adam stood there and something like this ran through his head. "My friend, my soul mate is leaving me. I cannot live without her. She is the closest friend I have ever had." Adam picks Eve over God.

So we have Adam, he has went soft, failed to come through and has chosen Eve above God. And we have Eve who has become grasping and lonely because she thought God was holding out on her. What does Adam do now? "*I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself.*" What do men do now that they realize their strength is gone? We hide. We pose. We pretend we are something we are not. We are faking our way through life. We only fight the battle we are sure we can win, the adventures that won't ask much of us and the beauties that don't need rescuing. And what of Eve? She has become independent, demanding, driving. Of course there are some on both sides who go passive. Some men don't fight at all, some women just want to cling. Each and every heart is wounded. Each person has an identity distortion. What are these distortions? Where did they come from? What can we do about them?

## Individualism

You might be thinking, "I thought individuality was a good thing?" Individuality is good. God treats each person as an individual. The gospel is usually considered an individual message. Being an individual who is different from others is not what I am addressing here. I am considering individualism here as idea that one does not need others and does not want anyone to need them. Think back to so many western movies. There you find the rugged cowboy who has no friends, no posse. He is able to do it alone. This idea is also summed up in Simon and Garfunkel's song *I am a Rock*. The song goes "*I am a rock, I am an island. I've built walls, A fortress deep and mighty, That none may penetrate. I have no need of friendship; friendship causes pain. It's laughter and it's loving I disdain. . . . I am shielded in my armor, Hiding in my room, safe within my womb. I touch no one and no one touches me. I am a rock, I am an island.*" This kind of belief is unbiblical and is caused by a distortion of our identity. I know a couple where the man has a bad case of individualism. Because of this, the wife is lonely. She said to me, "If he didn't need me, why did he marry me?"

We must realize that man was never created to be alone. Before there was woman, Adam was there with God. But even having God as a friend wasn't enough; Adam needed Eve. In

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

Genesis we find this: "*And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."*" (Genesis 2:18, NKJV)<sup>31</sup> Here in the garden, while all was still perfect and Adam had communion with God, Adam still needed to have a human companion. It is no different for us today. In a project management class I took, we covered this topic called systems thinking. It is the phenomenon in which business chains, projects, etc. can fall apart because no one else thinks of the dependencies that each entity has with another. The idea of systems thinking is that we need to look at the whole system, not just our own little part. We must consider the effects on other parts before we act. Many of us today are so caught up in ourselves that we are blind to the dependencies we have upon others. Solomon summed up the need we have for each other in this way.

*"Two are better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, For he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken."* (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, NKJV)<sup>32</sup>

We need family and friends around us. We are not alone and should not act like we can do it ourselves and don't need anyone. The distortion goes deep, however and can lead us to an even greater problem than social individualism. It can lead to spiritual individualism. The person who doesn't need other people doesn't need God either. This is a grave danger and a very strong reason that we should acknowledge our dependencies and toss aside the thought that we don't need others.

"Alright", you say, "but when I am married, we as one don't need others." Wrong again! The couple itself is not totally independent. There are a number of social requirements placed on the married couple. First, we must remember and honor those from whom we have come. "*Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.*" (Exodus 20:12, NKJV)<sup>33</sup> This is a social command. I am not to be so individual that I forget or leave behind the relationship with my parents. I was once dependent on them, I grow up to be their friend and as they age, they are to be dependent on me. Second, the couple is commanded to have children. Children are not someone you are dependent upon, but rather they are dependent on you. The individualist doesn't want this attachment. We must remember that "*Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a real blessing.*" (Psalm 127:3, GNT)<sup>34</sup> The command is universal, "*Be fruitful and multiply.*" Just as the relationship with our parents is commanded, a relationship with children is likewise required. Third, every Christian whether married or not, is required to assemble with other Christians. The writer of Hebrew tells us, "*You should not stay away*

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<sup>31</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996, c1982.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> American Bible Society. *The Holy Bible : The Good News Translation*. 2nd ed. New York: American Bible Society, 1992.

from the church meetings, as some are doing." (Hebrews 10:25a, NCV)<sup>35</sup> We have an obligation to the body of Christ, to meet with them. Rick Warren in *The Purpose Driven Life* says this, "Today's culture of independent individualism has created many spiritual orphans – "bunny believers" who hop around from one church to another without any identity, accountability, or commitment. Many believe one can be a "good Christian" without joining (or even attending) a local church, but God would strongly disagree. The Bible offers many compelling reasons for being committed and active in a local fellowship."<sup>36</sup> So we can see that even as a married couple, there is still no such thing as individualism.

Why does a person wish to cut the ties with others? Why do we shut our hearts up? Why do we strive so hard to do it on our own? It is because each one of us is wounded. Each of us has been hurt deep in our heart and the distortion is a way of masking it, of covering it up. What is this hurt? Where does it come from? The hurt can be a variety of things, but it usually focuses on our identity, one of the three categories for either masculinity or femininity. This hurt can come from various sources, but often the greatest amount comes from a person's father. Maybe you are saying, "but I never had a father" or "I had a good relationship with my dad." If your father was absent, that is as damaging as having a bad father. And if you had or have a good relationship with your father, it is still the case that some of your hurts came from him in the times when he wasn't perfect.

How did this happen? The actual situation can take almost any form, but there is something in common between them all. Remember that each boy is asking "Am I strong?" "Do I have what it takes?" "Am I important?" and each girl is asking "Am I worth being fought for?" "Am I beautiful?" The questions are usually not verbalized in this form, but the content is there. The little boy who looks at his dad after scoring a run in little league, or catching a fish at the pond, or earning a cub scout badge is asking "Daddy, am I strong, am I becoming a man?" If the father is altogether absent or doesn't have time to be there when this question is being posed by the son, then he is in essence saying "No, you don't have what it takes, you aren't important." The little girl, in a similar way, wants to have her questions answered when she dresses up when she helps mom cook, when some bully is picking on her. If the father doesn't answer her questions by telling her that she is beautiful, she is becoming a lady and by standing to defend her, or if he is not there to answer at all, then the answer she hears is "your ugly, your nothing, your worthless."

How the boy or girl grows up with this hurt and how it affects him or her depends on many things. The girl may become clingy and insecure or driving and demanding. The boy may become weak and passé or strong and overbearing. The wound can take many forms and can have various effects. Let's examine some of them.

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<sup>35</sup> *The Holy Bible : New Century Version , Containing the Old and New Testaments.* Dallas, TX: Word Bibles, 1991.

<sup>36</sup> Warren, Rick. *The Purpose Driven Life.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002

## The Macho Man

When thinking of a macho man, my mind turns to the image of a biker with a heavy leather jacket, a t-shirt with some offensive saying on it and a loud large motorcycle. One might think of a football star, lots of muscles and fancy car; one who plays hard, drinks hard, and has a pretty woman at his arm. But let's think of another man. This man is in a suit and he practically lives at the office. He does whatever it takes to get that next promotion. He doesn't share success; he doesn't care who he steps on or who is hurt by his words. Or how about the man who insists that everything be perfect? He has a standard and expects everyone to live up to it. If you don't, watch out for his strong words or his silent coldness. You might be wondering how these two very different images are related. What can the biker guy, office achiever and the perfectionist have in common?

Well, they have in common the same flaws, the hurts in the heart. The wound is the same and both their actions fall in the same category. In both cases the men have let their strength go bad. This isn't anything new. It started right out of the garden. Cain kills Abel. Lamech murders a man and threatens the world. The Lord brings the flood because "*the wickedness of man was great on the earth*" and so he wipes things clean. Many of us are not murders today, but we kill with our words. Sometimes this is hurtful words to our family members, to our friends, or to our parents. Sometimes this is silence. Either way it is cowardice. And what brings man to this violence? Why does he do this? He does it because he is afraid. Afraid of what? Men are afraid of being exposed, being seen for what they really are. Let me explain how this comes from the hurt of the father.

When the boy turned to his father to ask "Do I have what it takes?" and "Am I becoming a man?" his father didn't tell him "Yes, you have what it takes" and "Yes, you are a man." The father may have been totally absent, or the father may have been too busy in his own world to care about his son, or the father may have been abusive. Either way, the answer the son received is "No, you're not a man, you are weak." So the boy grows up and he has never had his question answered. He doesn't know if he is a man, he isn't sure if he has what it takes, so he fakes it. He becomes rough and tough or driven. He hides behind the swaggering and false confidence. He doesn't want anyone to see who he is, or rather isn't, on the inside. The achiever or perfectionist is just a socially acceptable form of violence, but its effects are often ruined marriages, families, friendships and health. The macho man can't have a close companion; he can't let someone see his heart. So he can't share the adventure and he can't rescue the beauty. He is too busy trying to prove to himself that he is a man.

## The Feminist Women

The image of feminist women that comes to my mind is a well dressed, single woman who is focused on her career. Perhaps she isn't single, she could be married and have kids but still the focus is on a career and on equality with men. We often think of feminists as man haters, and some are. They think that every bad thing comes from men and actively seek to make men something more like woman. I know a young lady who has an inability to commit. She is well educated, and a quite capable women. Her way of coping with her wound is by

making sure that she can take care of herself. She cannot depend on someone, cannot give up control.

Each of these images, all of these women are caused by the same wound. These women have become grasping. Remember how Eve thought God was holding out on her. She took matters into her own hands and did something about it. She grabbed control from Adam and these women are doing the same. The feminist fights for herself; she doesn't want a guy to battle for her because she thinks she doesn't need it. She doesn't want a man to provide for her, she must provide for herself. This woman no longer asks "Am I beautiful," she tries to be powerful. This woman cannot share an adventure with the man. She wants her own adventure. Or she wants to be equal with the man in the adventure, instead of being his helper. The feminist woman wants to be like a man, but that is not what women were designed to be!

The wound of the feminist also comes from her father. She looked to him to answer her questions of "Am I worth being fought for?" and "Am I beautiful?" The father failed to answer the questions by being absent or answered them by his actions. He told his girl that she is worthless and ugly. Some fathers even physically abuse their daughters. What is the answer such a girl hears? "You are dirty and dark and evil." As the girl grows other men may hurt her by either stalking her or ignoring her. So she hides her hurts by vowing to be independent. She will never depend on anyone; she will do it herself. She builds a wall around her soul and never lets a man close to her heart. This too will ruin relationships and families and prevents a woman from being a loving compassionate mother. The feminist woman must run the show, take care of herself, and have her own adventure.

## **The Metrosexual Man**

Perhaps you have heard of the metrosexual guy. He gets beauty treatments. He gets his nails groomed. He spends an hour every morning fixing his hair. He wears the latest styles and taste for clothes. He is an all around nice guy. He is tolerant and doesn't stand for much of anything. At first you might think he is a ladies man and sometimes the ladies think so too. But get to know him and you will be frustrated by him. He is so nice, but there is no adventure no excitement. He is so boring. This kind of man may appear in another situation. He may not care about the latest styles, but he is a coward. He may be in the halls of the church on Sunday morning. He looks normal, but he will never take a risk. He quietly defers because he doesn't know if he can succeed. He can't take the risk of letting his wife in his heart or the chance of being rejected for his Christian message. His fear paralyzes him. What produces guys like this?

This man's wound has made him go passive. He doesn't stand, he hides. Abraham is a good example of this. In Genesis 12 we find that when the going gets tough after he had moved to Egypt because of famine, he hides behind his wife's skirt to save his own neck. He tells Pharaoh that Sarah is his sister and Pharaoh is going to take her as another wife. God intervenes and takes care of the situation, and you think Abraham would have learned his lesson, but no. In Genesis 20 we have a repeat situation. And Isaac repeats this scenario in

Genesis 26. These men are cowards. They can't commit seriously. They can't take a stand. They can't take a risk.

This man has the same wound as the macho man, but it comes out in a different way. Instead of posing, or pretending, this man hides. His strength doesn't become violent in some form. He simply loses his strength altogether. This guy will do anything to avoid confronting a difficult situation. He hides behind a newspaper or in front of the TV so he can avoid being exposed as weak by his wife and children. This man can't fight for the beauty because he won't take a risk. He won't stand. This guy only picks battles he is sure he can win. This guy gives up on the question. He accepts the answer he has been given: "You're not a man, you are weak."

### **The Insecure Women**

There is a teenager down the street who dresses very suggestively. She can be seen with her boyfriend on weeknights. She hangs on his neck and doesn't want to leave him to go home. Such a woman as this will likely give up her sexual and emotional purity for someone to say they love her and that she is important.

This woman has been hurt like the feminist women. Her natural father walked out of her life and her stepfather doesn't care about her at all. Her father failed to answer her question so she begins to take it to other men. She seeks to find men or boys to affirm her beauty and her worth. When this woman is hurt over and over, she hears that she is not worth fighting for and she begins to believe it. She thinks that mistreatment is what she deserves. She feels that some attention, no matter how distorted, is better than none. Eventually, she too will try to hide. After hearing over and over that she is worthless and ugly, she will ask the question no more. This woman can't function alone, yet can't share her heart with her man for fear that he will only hurt her more. She prevents a man from fighting because she smothers him. She needs him with her always, yet cannot open herself fully to him for fear of further hurt.

### **The Real You**

These examples I have presented are mostly the extremes. Most people fall somewhere in between. The hurts of the heart can be mixed. I have focused on the hurts given by the father, but some of these hurts can come from the mother as well. Masculinity bestows masculinity and confirms femininity, but femininity has a role to play in forming both as well. We can remember all the stories with the wicked stepmother, but sometimes real mothers can be just as bad. If a mother clings to a boy when it is time for him to grow up into a man, she will hurt him. If a mother won't give her daughter some freedom and space, she will hurt her daughter. If your mother was absent from your life, she will have caused a wound.

Often the problems which manifest themselves from the hurt take many forms. One can be both the macho man and the metrosexual at the same time but in different areas of life. The combination of grasping or violence and weakness or insecurity can take many forms. Each of us must recognize the ways which the wound in our heart has affected us. No one is

without some hurt. No one had perfect parents. Before you can begin to heal the wound, you must acknowledge it exists and understand how it has affected you.

## ***Healing the Heart***

I remember seeing a boy at the playground who had fallen and scraped his leg. He had been running and fell on the gravel. He had ground the rocks into legs but good. He went to his day with tears running down his cheeks. What did his dad tell him? “Quit crying, it’s just a scraped up leg.” This message isn’t only given to boys, though it is more socially acceptable for a girl to cry over her hurt. We see this in the movies all the time. The hero takes a terrible hurt, but he shakes it off and continues to get the bad guy. We are bombarded by the idea that we aren’t really wounded; the hurt is just a scratch. You might hear someone say, “Everyone gets hurt when they are a kid, but it doesn’t matter. Everything’s ok.” That isn’t quite the response David took. In one Psalm David says, “*For I am poor and needy, And my heart is wounded within me.*” (Psalm 109:22, NKJV)<sup>37</sup> In another Psalm he says, “*My tears have been my food day and night, While they continually say to me, “Where is your God?” When I remember these things, I pour out my soul within me.*” (Psalm 42:3-4a, NKJV)<sup>38</sup> Here is a guy who is no wimp and yet he admits that he is needy and wounded. He even cries and pours his soul out to God. Oh, how we need to be more like David today. It’s not quite what our culture tells us to be, is it?

You may be wondering exactly how your parents caused this wound. We have seen how a boy and girl are each asking questions about their identity. It should also be clear that the father, by not answering the questions or by answering them wrongly damages the child and causes a wound. The mother also has the ability to cause hurts. There are two general categories from which the hurts of the heart come.

First, unappeasable parents devalue their children. When the child is told over and over that he or she will be loved if or when, the child realizes it can never be done and thus is never loved. Affirmation is conditional and encouragement is usually qualified with a “you could have done better” statement. Such parents cause unreachable goals and unattainable standards. Children who grow up under these conditions are not accepted for who they are and they learn that they can’t measure up to what is expected. Second, chaotic home situations produce unjust situations for children. When a parent cannot control his or her own emotions, a child never knows how the parent will react. The child doesn’t know if they are going to be hugged or slugged or the reason for either one. Such injustice is clearly visible to children and hurts them deeply. This child grows up in confusion. The child’s role models, the parents, cannot be understood, so how is the child to learn from them? The distortions of identity follow from the nature of the child and the hurts that child has been given.

There is no one right way to heal the hurts. God deals with each person differently for each person has different hurts and different problems. Just look at Jesus. He doesn’t heal the

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<sup>37</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996, c1982.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

same way twice. There is the time he spits on the guy and then he spits on the ground and makes mud to put on another guy. For another he speaks and another he touches and there is the one he kicks the demon out of. Jesus had no formula. That said, I think there are some general principles which it is well to follow.

1) Face your problem squarely. A wound that is unacknowledged is a wound that cannot be healed. Often it is useful to talk about this with a close friend. James wrote "*Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.*" (James 5:16, NKJV)<sup>39</sup> Having a brother or sister in Christ stand by you and help you sort out your faults can be very beneficial.

2) Accept responsibility for what you have done. You have responded to the wound. You may have wounded others in your life. Did you become violent, or hateful? Did you become weak or insecure? Do you resent others? Did you try to escape into an unreal world? Did you try to hide your real self? You need to face up to these things and take control for your own actions.

3) Accept that the wound was not your fault. You didn't do anything to deserve the treatment you received. The wound is not your fault. You didn't deserve the mistreatment you received. It was not just. If you blame yourself for the treatment you received, you will never be able to heal the wound.

4) Decide wholeheartedly that you want to be healed. You can never fix a hurt that you want to hold on to. If you want to stay hurt, you will. Jesus, when he comes to the paralyzed man by the pool of Bethesda, asks him "Do you want to be made well?" (John 5:6) Do you really want healing? Or do you just want to talk about it; to keep receiving sympathy from others? This means you must stop blaming and take responsibility. You must also open your heart and grieve over the wound. Until you can cry over the hurt, you aren't ready to be healed.

5) Forgive those who gave you the wound. Taking responsibility and forgiving are two sides of the same coin. Some people can't forgive because it would make them finally responsible for their actions. Jesus makes it clear that we must forgive for God to work. "*For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*" (Matthew 6:14-15, NKJV)<sup>40</sup>

6) Forgive yourself. Many people believe God has forgiven them, yet they cannot forgive themselves. This is a contradiction. How can you believe God has forgiven you if you have not let go yourself? Are you greater than God?

7) Ask God to destroy the false self and bring forth the real you. The hurt person creates a false front to hide himself behind. You build this imposter as a new self that will be accepted and admired. But he will keep it a mystery. The hurt person doesn't want anyone to see through, to understand what is behind the front. The front is the savior we create for our self. To be healed, the impostor must be destroyed and the real you must come out. God must rip all our self protection away. The hiding, posing, faking will in the end destroy us. "*There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.*" (Proverbs 16:25, NKJV)<sup>41</sup> The false self must come crashing down for us to fully turn to God.

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<sup>39</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996, c1982.

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

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

8) Look to God for your affirmation. God is there to tell us that we are important. He knows we can't do it on our own so He provides a way. Man could not live up to the law, so God provided Christ. God knows the words you need to hear. If you are a Christian, then God doesn't see your sin. He is not condemning you. He has put His Spirit in you! You are His child and He will affirm your worth, your beauty or strength. He will heal you.

The Lord has provided a way for healing our hearts. Christ's mission was this: " "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, Because the Lord has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; " (Isaiah 61:1, NKJV)<sup>42</sup> Jesus' mission was for breaking our bonds and setting us free. He came to heal our hearts. He preaches to the poor; not just the poor of money, but the poor of self esteem, the poor of confidence and the poor of strength. He came to heal the brokenhearted: the wounded, the lonely, the depressed and the anxious. He came to release us from the bondage of our wounds, to give us strength, beauty, purpose and importance. When we turn to Him, He will work His power through us and heal us. We do as did David did so we can also say, "*O Lord my God, I cried out to You, And You healed me.*" (Psalm 30:2, NKJV)<sup>43</sup>

### ***Fitting it Together***

You may wonder why this chapter is part of a book on marriage. I have found that knowing thyself is required before one can begin to seek a proper relationship with another. Who one is affects how one acts toward others. The identities of masculinity and femininity need to be understood before we can examine marriage. The roles of man and wife follow from the identities of man and woman. Many of the problems of marriage follow from the flaws of identity. Now that we have a picture of the ideal and have seen how we have become flawed, we can turn to God who understands the wounds we have received and wants to make us the men and women He created us to be.

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<sup>42</sup> *The New King James Version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996, c1982.

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