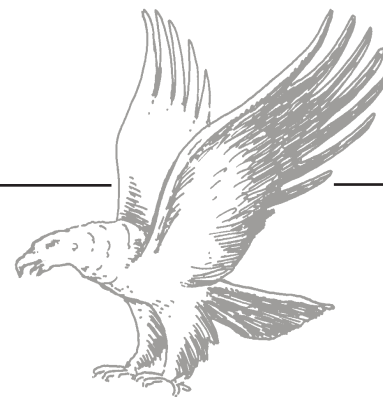


Wings

*"Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles."
Isaiah 40:31*



April 1, 2018

Toxic Humanity

Much is being said these days about toxic masculinity. But men are not the only ones in need of a wake-up call. All of us are contributing to the disintegration of society.

"There is none righteous, no not one. . . . [Their] mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known" (Rom. 3:10,14-17).



As third-wave feminism expands its influence in our culture, "toxic masculinity" has become a favorite target. Amanda Marcotte in *Salon* defines toxic masculinity as "a specific model of manhood, geared toward dominance and control. It's a manhood that . . . sees sex as an act, not of affection but domination, and which valorizes violence as the way to prove one's self to the world. Toxic masculinity aspires to toughness but is, in fact, an ideology of living in fear: The fear of ever seeming soft, tender, weak, or somehow less than manly." This is not a blanket condemnation of all men or of all expressions of manliness. Rather, it is a criticism of a distorted version of masculinity.

Speaking as a man, I have to admit that there is some truth to this charge. Some men truly are toxic. The fact that

our prisons are populated overwhelmingly by men, or that virtually all mass shooters are men, or that family courts are overloaded with cases involving deadbeat dads, argues that men in our society are major contributors to the breakdown in social order.

But branding men as the cause of all of society's problems is myopic and counterproductive. The manner in which they display it is different, but women can be just as broken and dangerous as men. For every Harvey Weinstein out there who betrays the masculine ideal, there is at least one Jezebel who can match him in pure evil and self-indulgence. The Jezebels in our midst are contributing just as much to our social meltdown as the crippled men. The problem here is not gender-specific. Men need to face up to whatever elements of toxic masculinity they project, and women need to recognize the toxic femininity that warps their lives, too.

Misguided gender roles are merely one symptom of a broader disease that affects our society. What is toxic is *humanity*—all of us are afflicted with

passions and appetites that scream to be unleashed. We live in a world that encourages us to "follow our hearts," creating a surge of selfishness that elevates our own interests above others. Every biological or cultural distinction has become a justification to blame and attack others, pitting one group against another. Whites struggle with their white privilege; blacks are besieged by a sense of entitlement; it's too easy for the rich to exploit the poor, and for the poor to make excuses for their lack of responsibility. All of us are contributing our part to this chaotic mess.

We could go on and on, but you get the picture. As Paul argues in Romans, the gospel of Christ begins with the realization that "there is none righteous, no not one." Whatever our gender, race, socio-economic status, or education, *all of us* struggle with impulses that poison the common well. The sooner we can admit our own failings, the sooner we can discover the value of a life of self-sacrifice and service—and the sooner society will begin the process of healing and recovery.

– David King



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