

Day 1 - The Lies...

READ Romans 12:2. **CONSIDER** the Three Cultural Lies from this week's message about what it takes to be **a man**:

1. Ball Field - being a man is about athletic ability, size, strength, skill to compete and win.
 2. Bedroom - being a man is about sexual conquest.
 3. Billfold - manhood and self-worth are directly connected to net-worth.
- and **a woman**: 1. Prince Charming - "If I can find the right guy, he'll validate my identity as a woman." 2. Perfect Body - striving for an unrealistic version of young, thin, and beautiful. 3. Pretty, Polite & Smart - but be careful not to be a threat.

THINK about where you see evidence of these lies being impressed on us as a culture today. *Do you think these lies are perpetuated or challenged by the media? Magazines? Television? Sports? Movies? Music? Business world? Where have you felt pressure to conform to one or more of these lies of what it means to be a man or a woman? Have you been striving for manhood or womanhood in one or more of these ways? Whose voice are you listening to when you strive for these unrealistic and false achievements? Have part of these lies crept in to your own thinking and values? As you coach, lead, or parent, what do your words reveal about the expectations of being a man or a woman? What evidence of manhood/womanhood are you looking for in those you lead? What do your actions say?* This week, be aware of the messages you see and hear (overtly or subtly) about what it means to be a man or a woman.

Day 2 - The Truth...

The cultural lies and ideals not only take hold of our own gender identities, they can corrupt our view of the opposite sex. We can hold up this ideal of a "real man" or "real woman" and use it to condemn and judge those of the opposite sex with whom we work, date, or marry. **READ** 1 Corinthians 13:11 and 1 Corinthians 12:31b; 13:4-8a. The apostle Paul infers that he "became a man" when he learned how to love. To truly be a man or woman of maturity, we must embrace the way of love - to love and be loved; to give yourself to a cause bigger than yourself; to make a positive difference on those around you. This is part of the journey of becoming good people from whom good things naturally flow. *What do you think of this idea of learning to love in order to become a mature man or woman? Do you feel the need to defend or protect some other image?* **REFER** to the Three Cultural Lies (Day 1) and compare them to the description of maturity via love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a. You simply can't embrace both views. The cultural view and understanding of what it takes to be a man or woman are completely opposite of what we find in scripture. *Of what ideal or image do you need to let go? Is there someone whom you've been holding to these false ideals? How would it look to let go of the lies and embrace this person with love?*

Day 3

The YouTube clip at the beginning of the weekend service illustrated the "fight or flight" concept. If you have access to the internet, **WATCH** the 6 minute video.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MfEC4OkNui4>

(Bring it On by Dr. Jack Groppe) One group panics and abandons their mission completely, but another group responds differently. The second group's response to the threat of wild boar was described as leaning into the difficulty, addressing it and getting on with it. **THINK** about the two responses - flight or fight.

Which response are you most likely to gravitate toward when faced with uncertainty or trials?

To lead others to persevere, to be effective and productive, we must first do so ourselves. How we view difficulties is often how we'll lead others through difficulties. If we see hardship and trials as things to be avoided at all costs, we'll seldom lead others to persevere and to be prepared. **READ** Matthew 7:24-27. Notice what happens to both men. Storms come and beat against both houses! Nature demonstrates the importance of struggle as a baby bird struggles to free himself from the egg. The mother neither shelters him from the struggle by peeling away the shell nor throws him into the struggle by initiating the hatching process. When the struggle comes, the bird is ready. *As a coach, a boss, or parent, do you tend to rescue or shelter others from struggle? Do you parent with hopes of your child avoiding pain and struggle at all costs?* What we've built upon will give us what we need to get through struggles. But storms will come.

Day 4

READ Romans 5:3-5. Our working definition of perseverance is "enduring difficult situations to become stronger." What's the purpose of the baby bird struggling its way out of the shell? The purpose is for the baby bird to become stronger and be better equipped to face the next struggle. *What's your purpose as a parent? As you supervise and lead others at work?* Leading/coaching/parenting from love allows us to consider the well-being and best interests of others. **CONSIDER** these questions:

How am I doing when it comes to persevering in my own struggles?

Is there something I need to face and deal with? How am I doing with the struggles of those whom I parent/coach/lead? Am I rescuing or trying to control them in such a way so they don't have to face those struggles?

In our caring efforts to protect, we often cripple those whom we love and care for - the opposite of what we aim for.

Day 5

READ Ephesians 4:14-16. *Regarding perseverance, are you headed in the right direction?* One way leads to hope and the other leads to despair.

Whenever we persevere, we're made stronger, we develop character, we have purpose and hope. Whenever we shrink back, look to blame or attack others, we become victims. Hope is gone and we move toward despair. **ASK** yourself: *In which direction am I leading others? When a student/athlete/child comes up against a struggle, do I put in courage (encourage) or take out courage (discourage)? Do I speak truth with hope and love? Or do I speak with shame, blame, and despair?*

LOOK at "2 Strategies for the Coach" in the message outline.

What encourages you? Discourages you? Do you know what your child/student/employee would say encourages him/her? Discourages him/her?

CONSIDER taking time to get to know those you lead. As parents we may think we know what encourages/discourages our kids, but **ASK** them anyway!

TELL them what encourages/discourages you and possibly **SHARE** a time when you were encouraged/discouraged. It takes a great deal of courage to be a man or woman of love. As leaders/parents/coaches, we can build courage into those whom we lead.