

Men, if you consider yourself a follower of Christ, a Christian by belief and faith, then it is to you that I share these words, my feelings and thoughts.

Three topics have consistently been discussed, deliberated and explored during most of my adult life. Three topics that at first glance appear to be unrelated and yet are entwined. Three topics that, while each have their own unique set of problems and solutions, are related at their source.

The myth of the maverick, the lone ranger, the independent male has repeatedly been debunked over the last three decades. Manhood is a team sport and always has been. While men may feel the need to spend time alone for reflection, reenergizing or simply to enjoy solitude, a successful journey through life requires partnerships, friendships and collaboration with others.

Hunting, farming, building are best accomplished shoulder to shoulder. A community of men who keep one another walking a path that does not require excuses, regrets or remorse, because we allow the other men in our lives to give us a nudge, a slap upside the head and a kick in the butt, with our best interests in mind.

Left alone and to themselves, a man will eventually get into trouble, do something stupid and create a secret he can share with no one.

On an almost daily basis we are witness to acts of violence, brought to us in news feeds, with the underlying, unspoken shrug that boys will be boys. The world seems lost on ways to confront such behaviors before they surface, leaving it in the hands of police and therapists.

In scripture we are told that the man is the head of the household. That is a major responsibility not to be taken lightly. A solid marriage and family is the outcome of a man taking this role seriously. Caring for his wife and marriage such that it is holy and without blemish. (Ephesians 5:25-28) Yet, how many of us have left scars and blemishes on our marriage and on our wives? (My hand is raised).

It might be said that as the family and homes go, so does the neighborhood and the community, the city and the country. As we look around we are confronted with the reality that something is broken in our country and the world.

Women and the abuse they have suffered in traditional cultures and the ubiquitous criminal activities of the sex trade are no longer backpage news. Women continue to be objectified in the exploding world of pornography and sexually exploited from refugee camps to the boardroom. There are endless programs and agencies struggling to offer support and assistance to abused women and children from broken families. Trying to pick up the pieces, unable or unwilling to address the cause.

While efforts are made to heal the physical and psychological wounds of abuse and neglect, the impact of such mistreatment is life changing and life long. How can we ignore the fact that the perpetrators of these acts are overwhelmingly men, our gender.

We live in a world of many colors. The richness of the human race is wrapped up in its vast array of cultures, traditions, music, cuisines, clothing and languages. If we trust God in our actions, and not just in our words, we would be working to embrace and immerse ourselves in

this sea of humanity. Instead we congregate with those like ourselves and consider everyone else as 'others'. Others to be suspicious of, to be watched, to be questioned and looked down upon.

I fear we are headed to a future where time and money will be spent to police our communities rather than enhance our lives with progress and advancements.

As a man, a father and husband, a person who holds Christ as my standard bearer, I am ashamed of my gender. I must accept the truth that the lion's share of the problems that plague the world are generated by men. Men, who, for hundreds of reasons, use their position and strength to bring harm to others.

While men are the source of much of the pain, they are also the solution. Maybe the only real and lasting solution. The willingness to step aside and let women lead. The bravery to call another man's actions and thoughts into question. The ability to say 'I'm sorry' and work to make things right. The courage to point out what is wrong and the fortitude to make necessary changes. The humility to admit not knowing, and being coachable to learn and change.

Are we as men of faith, followers of a teacher who instructs us to love others as ourselves, to instruct our children and cherish our wives, shying away from sharpening iron. Are we dividing the world into the secular and the sacred, claiming to be a part of the latter and allowing the former to fester? Is it festering in us as well as we carefully hide it from our brothers and fail to point it out when we see it in the lives of others? Is there a mask we wear to our bible studies and men's groups that numbs our ability to see the harm we are allowing to happen around us?

I am not a legalis, quite the opposite. Christ came to free us from the law, to help us rise above the law. That as curators of the Holy Spirit living within each of us, we would act as He did and stand up for righteousness and justice for those around us. That we would practice true religion and feed the hungry, care for the sick, the widow, the orphans and the aliens.

When men are willing to drop their facade and leave their masks behind, their power and ability to create positive change increases ten-fold. When good men come together great things can happen. When men embrace one another, across racial and socioeconomic divides, our world can start to heal. What hope have we, if we choose to do less?