

Male Friendships Nullify Rejection

In Gordon MacDonald's book, "When Men Think Private Thoughts," he eloquently describes and explains this principle of friendship further from a ski-trip adventure he experienced.¹⁶ He likens male friendships to being AMBASSADORS. The ambassador is there to support you, help you climb the hills of life, and join with you in discovering life. "He doesn't compete with you and he doesn't take more from the relationship than he gives." An ambassador helps you feel comfortable.

In addition, MacDonald likens male friendships to being a SKI LIFT ATTENDANT. The lift attendant is there to serve the skiers and their needs. Our friends must see the needs in our lives, whether it's prayer, encouragement, a helping hand, or a shoulder to cry on. He must inquire about how our life is going mentally, physically, emotionally, spiritually and sexually. He is a friend who knows us beneath the surface level and knows that we are to serve each other.

MacDonald also likens male friendship to being a SKI INSTRUCTOR. Ski instructors teach other skiers to ski better and improve performance. Male friendships require taking instruction from other men who can teach us about life because they're more experienced than we are. A male friend can teach us something valuable, like how to enjoy true manhood, and that's worth more than a pot of gold.

MacDonald again likens male friendships to being SKI PATROL MEMBERS. They warn skiers of multiple dangers on the slopes and rescue injured skiers. Male friendships require that we look out for each other's best interests. A male friend will come when we're down and out, broken by rejection and life's circumstances. They won't leave us on the slopes to die; they will just take us on as their responsibility. Such men are not just friends who talk compassion, but they walk compassion.

I believe Hicks' description of wholesome friendships, with true male bonding through Jesus, will stamp out the spirit of homosexuality. The macho-man image in which a man wraps his identity up in a woman through sex will also end when men discover their true image of manhood. In other words, a man on a journey looking for a father's confirming love by seeking, "manhood from a woman's arms or from her voice will be profoundly disappointed. [Sadly,] his search will go on until he is burned out. While there may be a moment of pleasure and solace, that inner sense of confident manhood will remain elusive."¹⁷

The obligation to perform in the image of a macho-man has left many men drowning in a sea of lost identity. It is not important what barricades you hide behind, or how you got there. What is important is that your search for an identity and destiny ends with Jesus.

Just as women bind together with one another in conversation to teach, share and express the essence of womanhood without shame, men need the same nurturing without feeling pressured to live up to some lofty standards of learned ignorance that fits neither their character nor their personality. A lack of bonding friendships between men causes dysfunction inside the heart of men.

Robert Hicks points out that recent studies suggest that male friendlessness exacts a heavy toll in both physical and psychological health, especially in old age. Men who live without male friendships throughout life are more likely to suffer regret, feel lonely and die prematurely before their wives.

THE VALUE OF BUILDING AND MAINTAINING FRIENDSHIPS

Gordon MacDonald earlier reminisced about his ties to past male friends he thought were supportive. However, the depth of those friendships ended when he entered marriage. From then on, he built a marriage, a family, and work relationships without any regrets. He states that this direction cost him the loss of good male friendships. He just drifted apart from many of his friends. Later in life, he realized he had made a serious error in judgment about male friendships. He could have been a better husband, a better father and a better man, if he had kept old friendships alive or built new ones.

MacDonald states, "What I never understood is something that could be called the doctrine of friendship: friendships do not just happen, they are sought, developed and maintained. Friendships are not accidental, and they are not self-perpetuating. They must be cultivated much like a plant is carefully developed from seed to blossom."¹⁸

In this lies our dysfunction, without male friendships, we cannot become better men in the roles we fill. By making our wives our best friends, we assume they can fully understand the way we think. On the other hand, we men do not fully understand how a woman feels about certain issues, so why should we think they fully understand us? Because men and women think differently does not diminish the male-female relationship, it simply points out that our needs are different. Therefore, failing to recognize male and female differences can plant and birth seeds of rejection. Relying exclusively on our wives to cultivate, validate, affirm, and salvage our manhood is preposterous, because our wives cannot offer us everything in a relationship. It would be safer to define our wives as our most intimate friends, but to say, "my wife is my best friend" may be a cop-out."¹⁹

The lives of hurting men need an infusion of nurturing, godly compassion and masculine love that permeates the heart, pouring in oil and wine for renewed life about manhood. The task before men is a tall order and women should not feel obligated to repair a broken man's heart. Women are not equipped for that task, nor should they be. Men must tackle men!

Years ago, I attended a class at work. In the class, we discussed many issues, and before long, I started talking about the subject of my book. One older female in the class, looking frustrated, pulled me aside during a break. She told me about her husband's behavior and his recent decision to end their twenty-year marriage because he had grown weary of their marital relationship. She did everything for this man. Yet, she did not understand him or why he suddenly wanted a divorce. Her desperate conversation implied that she was at her wits-end and needed help. They were still living together but no longer communicating in the emotional realm. We talked a few minutes about a man's emotions and she asked me, with tear-filled eyes, "if men have emotions." I responded, "yes, men do have emotions."

Crying women repeatedly and secretly wonder about their men. Many women frantically try to fix the emotionally bankrupt men they love, but don't realize the lack of meaningful friendships and years of tradition passed down from man-to-man, handicap men's emotions and eventually cut off emotional maturity. Women cannot take the place of male friendships because women do not have the same physical, mental and emotional needs as a man. Therefore, in order for a man to feel content, he needs other men in his life. A man's general outlook on life, and his marriage, will most likely improve if the basic need of male companionship is met.

HINDRANCES TO BONDING

To break the cycle of learned ignorance, we must expel the fears we have about male bonding. At the same time, we must overcome the difficulties that prevent men from relating and bonding as friends. Robert Hicks describes five of the reasons male friendships are difficult in his book, "Uneasy Manhood." He discusses the basic ideas of why men who embark upon the male-friendship arena find it "uneasy."

The first reason is men dislike showing emotion for fear of being misunderstood by other men. For example, men tend not to hug each other for any length of time to avoid being considered having homosexual tendencies. Or, if a man breaks down in tears, other men are perplexed about what to do. Even though a brokenhearted man needs a hug of strength and security, he can rarely get one from another man for fear of what others will think.

Second, men have an inability to value real friendship without an alternative motive. An example of this is evident in a story told by Dr. Richard Halverson. Halverson said he looked across his church congregation searching for a man whom God would place on his heart. After the service, he asked one

particular man if they could spend some time together.

The following week, they had lunch and discussed family and important things in life. Pastor Halverson reports: At twenty minutes to two, the man looked at his watch and said, "I've got a two o'clock appointment and I have only ten more minutes. What do you want?"

Pastor Halverson said to him, "I don't want anything, I just wanted to be with you."

He said, "Come on, Halverson, I know preachers. You must want something. You want me to do something for the church? You want some money?"

"Honestly," Pastor Halverson said, "I just wanted to be with you."

He was silent for a long time, and then he said, "This is the first time a preacher's been with me when he didn't want something from me."²⁰

This story shows us that we must learn to be friends without an agenda, and that our real goal is for men just to be together. At the end of the interview, Halverson described manhood the way we live it and the way to live it out. He says, "People are like billiard balls on a table. We bump into each other and ricochet around, when we ought to be like grapes crushed together, out of which come wine."²¹ What a true statement! Men just haphazardly bump into one another on life's roads, never becoming friends, and often lose out on what could be a life-changing blessing.

The third reason men have trouble bonding, according to Robert Hicks, is that they have no role models of close male friendships. For example, a friend I see once a month, on men's day out for fellowship and dinner, went to the mall one afternoon just looking around. He saw a pair of sunglasses he admired but didn't have the money to purchase them at the time. Later, I went back to the mall and bought them to surprise him at our next men's day out.

As we sat in the car before entering the restaurant, I told him I had a surprise for him. I gave him the glasses as a gift, and he broke down in tears. I was stunned and shed a few tears myself and we hugged each other. Afterwards, I asked him why he was crying. He told me that no man had ever treated him that way. I asked him if his father ever did anything for him like this and he said no. In fact, he said he was taught not to entertain the idea of close male friendships and not to trust or get to close to any man.

Fourth, men feel they must compete with each other and evaluate themselves by the standards of other men. For example, most conversations men have are about what type of job or career they have and how much more money they make than the next person. We are always seeking to outdo someone else, rather than be true to ourselves. Nothing is ever said about what happens on the emotional level.

Fifth, and finally, men hide their weaknesses behind masks of

normalcy. The tendency is for two men to play a game about their status in life and how well they're doing, when in reality, they're dying. For example, let's take a look at Marvin and Timothy. Marvin lost his job at Goodlow Tire Company during the last downsizing. He receives a mortgage foreclosure notice in the mail. He spends the day looking at his financial situation wondering what to do. He's in trouble and he doesn't see a way out. Frustrated, he decides to stop at the local bar for a beer. Meanwhile, Timothy receives a divorce notice. He knows the fights have been worse lately, but he didn't think his wife meant it when she said she wanted out. He thought they could still work things out. He doesn't know what to do and he doesn't have anyone to talk to about it. He goes for a walk and ends up at the same bar as his good friend, Marvin.

"Hey, Timothy," Marvin calls. "Come on, I'll buy you a beer."

Timothy grins and slaps Marvin on the back. "Hey, long time, no see. What's up?"

"Kids off to college, wife has a new job, things are great. You?"

"Couldn't be better. Just got promoted to Sales Manager."

And on and on they go. Neither mentions his problem. Their superficial talk seems to bolster their spirits at the time, but later, as they leave the bar and return to their homes, the feelings of emptiness and aloneness overwhelms them. They cry agonizing tears of sorrow and think of suicide, but God speaks to them of a better way.

Consider, instead, if they had trusted each other enough to tell the truth:

"Hey, Timothy," Marvin calls. "Come on, I'll buy you a beer."

"I need more than a beer," Timothy says and slides into the chair next to Marvin.

"Yeah, what's up?"

"Barb."

Marvin nods. "She seemed a little uptight at the picnic."

"She wants a divorce." There, he said it, the "D" word. His stomach jolts.

"Oh, man. I'm sorry."

"I don't know what to do."

"Have you tried counseling or going back to church?"

"Marriage counseling, church?"

"Yeah. Me and Pat had a bad argument awhile back. Just seemed like we didn't speak the same language any more."

“Did it work?”

“Well, it got us talking. I found out that she really wants me to seek her out when I get home. You know, the ‘Honey, I’m home’ routine. It took awhile, but I don’t think we’ve ever been closer than we are now.”

Timothy nods, thinking about it. “I think I’ll give the Lord a try again.” He forces a smile and looks at Marvin. “Anything good happening in your life?”

And now Marvin can confide in him about his unemployment. Perhaps Timothy knows of a job opening or a financial counselor. At the least, he can offer support to his friend and assure him he will be there for him and let him know God has not forgotten him, despite his past hurt in the church. Because it’s not about Church, it’s about God’s healing for our lives.

Men who pursue bonding and invade the lives of other men will learn that their experiences aren’t extremely different. As we learn, share and become part of each other’s lives, it produces healing even when we think we don’t need it. By not invading the lives of broken men, we leave them exposed to the same traditions and difficulties that sabotaged our lives. Our offenses must be dealt with because brokenhearted men are on the increase. They are standing on the edge of their manhood, crying out for other men to invade their lives before they commit suicide to their masculinity. In contrast, men who accept their call to bonding as indispensable to masculinity and healing will discover that establishing male friendships is necessary and rewarding.

All Is Not Well With My Heart

*Reproach has broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness,
I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none;
And for comforters, but I found none. (Psalm 69:20)*

David describes in this Psalm the emotions we all feel at times. Rejection and insults can fill our hearts with a heaviness that threatens our innermost being. Why do we carry a heart full of painful incidents? How long will we remain broken and permit our lives to be scattered by drugs, sex, divorce, abuse, failure, emotional sickness and hopelessness, like pieces of a puzzle strewn across a table? Why can’t we find someone to talk to or comfort us? In our greatest struggles, we often feel, “I’m alone, weary and rejected! I can’t let anyone see that I’m full of pain, full of emotional and physical wounds and full of sadness. My life is overcrowded with agony and I choose to walk alone to avoid hurt. My heart contains ordeals that would stagger the minds of those who dare to enter the doors of my brokenness to see the heart of horrors I cloak.”

These are concerns men carry around for years. We carry so much pain but don’t realize there are men who will bear the pain and push through

the process with us. We are not alone in our struggle. Stu Weber describes the struggle in this way:

“Just imagine a large car stuck in the sand. When one man puts his back and leg strength against the rear end of the car, nothing happens. Two men might rock it forward a little, but three men get the car out of the ditch and back on the road. Some of us have been straining against immovable problems and dug-in frustrations for a long time. Every day we push and shove, grit our teeth and dig in our heels, but the mass doesn’t budge. Nothing appears to change. Could it be that our God might be allowing these very kinds of situations in our lives to help us learn an elemental truth? Some loads need more than a lone man’s strength. Some problems won’t budge until two or three friends put their shoulders into it.”²²

Men must stand shoulder-to-shoulder and surefooted to meet the challenges ahead, no matter how rejected they feel. Even when there’s no one to pity or comfort us as we face our self-inflicted reproach, remember the Spirit of the Lord has anointed Psalms 69:20 to show us the condition of our heart so we can take action. God will help us bind up all reproach in our lives.

Male bonding may be tough right now, and if we let go of the macho-man image and its empty wisdom, the doors of our heart opens to the undiscovered potential in Christ’s manhood. Male bonding among Christians has become a lost art because many men succumbed and followed examples of worldly wisdom and wounded themselves in their effort to become men. They have failed to discern that when they came to Christ, they bonded to the man Jesus. Just as eleven men bonded with Him, how much more should we bond with one another!

I think we men sometimes forget that Jesus, while on earth, was a real man who had feelings, passions, desires, dreams and hopes. We forget that he fellowshiped with twelve men for three and one-half years. Three of these men, Peter, James and John, became his close friends. To some extent, the church has stripped Jesus of every ounce of His humanity and spiritualized Him so much that rejected men are no longer able to connect with the Son of Man. Sometimes rejected men feel Jesus is unreachable. Jesus said that He is our friend. We need to follow His lead and become men of God, not men of rejection. Jesus gave His life for the rejected, now it’s time for them to surrender rejection to Him. Like a friend, Jesus loves us always.

Men, we are painfully aware that all is not well with our own hearts, but we have hope that our brokenness is not permanent. We know the Healer of broken hearts puts the broken pieces back together again like a skilled surgeon, and because we are still living means that, along the road of life, there is a turn and an exit ramp to our destiny. Along the way, a friend awaits us with a message; John 15:13-15:

Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are my friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing, but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father, I have made known to you.

We know that Jesus and the Father are in unity, and they have made known to us, all issues concerning our manhood. If the Father God bonded with the Son Jesus, shouldn't we follow their example by loving and bonding with one another as He does with each of us individually? To illustrate, let us look at the Apostle John. He bonded with Jesus. The closeness portrayed by John resting his head on the bosom of Jesus is unfathomable in male friendships today (John 13:23, 25 and 21:20). We men must capture the essence of that moment and learn to love and bond with the same purity of heart. John and Jesus' love relationship is a testimony to our manhood and to the necessity of male bonding. However, Proverbs 18:19 elaborates why bonding with hurt men is difficult.

*A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city,
And contentions are like the bars of a castle.*

Are we offended? Has a breach of trust taken place in our lives? Are we protecting our castles of hurt? Has the reality of rejection, aloneness or feeling unloved, made us fierce defenders of our hurting heart? To an offended man, the answer is yes, and no intruders can enter his castle. This implies that men use unpleasant life experiences as a shield against experiencing more hurt. In other words, we use pain to hide pain. We hurt others to hide our own gut-wrenching silent pain. But, we must place our pain in the bosom of someone greater than ourselves.

The Apostle John's response to Jesus shows us his character and openness when he laid his head down on the bosom of Jesus. We must realize that learned ignorance from the past should not define us. In fact, the wholeness of male bonding as John displays in 1 John 3:14, is the example of love that binds us as men.

*We know that we have passed from death to life,
because we love the brethren.
He who does not love his brother abides in death.*

Love will bind up the brokenhearted and enable them to break free from the grip of rejection. We can pulverize the death grip of hurt by loving our way to freedom. Built within every man, woman and child, is the need for

acceptance, and for many people, fitting in is important. Everyone wants love and acceptance. Unfortunately, that does not happen. Therefore, at some stage in life, we must learn how to deal with rejection, even our father's rejection or the love they refused to release to us. Wherever the rejection originated, and no matter how rejected we feel, a time comes when we must say, "I will not accept evil words spoken over my life." In the book, "Vision, Passion and the Pursuit of God," author, Mike Francen, deals a deathblow to rejection by saying, "Rejection is not fatal, it is merely someone else's opinion."²³

Rejection only leads to anger, and anger is a deadly tradition among men whose fathers left them without instruction. We shouldn't let our father's failure or rejection be a blemish on our lives. Neither should we think of our lives as insignificant. Instead, we need to stand up and repudiate the beliefs the T.R.A.D.I.T.I.O.N.s of Men have brought to our lives.

As we discussed in Chapter 1, David and Jonathan established trust after many encounters with each other. David demonstrated affection in his friendship with Jonathan because he keenly understood the value of their relationship. Despite David's struggle with Saul, Jonathan's relationship with David remained primary, and everything else that threatened to end their friendship was secondary. David and Jonathan never allowed the prevailing secular wisdom to hinder or define the limits of their relationship. David and Jonathan had a male bonding, spirit-to-spirit covenant friendship that Jonathan's powerful father, Saul, could not sever.

When men bond like this, they can be nothing but better husbands, better fathers, better lovers, better friends and better leaders!

False Roads To Manhood is Available at:

http://www.fcpublishing.com/about_kleptomaniac

Amazon: [https://www.amazon.com/Kleptomaniac-Whos-Really-Robbing-Anyway/dp/0975521772/ref=sr_1_1_twi_pap_2?](https://www.amazon.com/Kleptomaniac-Whos-Really-Robbing-Anyway/dp/0975521772/ref=sr_1_1_twi_pap_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1487626971&sr=8-1&keywords=kleptomaniac)

[ie=UTF8&qid=1487626971&sr=8-1&keywords=kleptomaniac](https://www.amazon.com/Kleptomaniac-Whos-Really-Robbing-Anyway/dp/0975521772/ref=sr_1_1_twi_pap_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1487626971&sr=8-1&keywords=kleptomaniac)

itunes: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/false-roads-to-manhood/id389571646?mt=11>

Book Daily: <http://www.bookdaily.com/book/387454/false-roads-to-manhood-what-women-need-to-know-what-men-need-to-understand>