



WHAT NO EYE HAS SEEN, WHAT NO EAR HAS HEARD, AND WHAT NO HUMAN MIND HAS CONCEIVED...

[READ 1 Cor. 2:9] We've been hearing this often this year, so it can become white noise, so let's pause and think about the implications. We often sell God short on His capability in our lives. There are things we haven't seen or heard and can't even comprehend that God wants to do. This doesn't mean you're going to get rich and famous, but God wants to do an incomprehensible transformative work in each of our lives.

1. What types of transformation have you seen in your life that was only possible through God?

THERE'S A STANDARD FOR WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE TO BE A MAN

There's a standard for what it looks like to be a man. It's a question of the influences we amalgamate to influence our conclusions. Pastor shared that many of his influences came from not just culture, but specifically movies. Sean Connery as James Bond is a cultural definition of a man even though he was a womanizer and objectified women. Matthew Broderick as Ferris Bueller is an example of the man who can talk himself out of anything and insists that everyone follow his agenda. Patrick Swayze as Bodie in "Point Break" is an example of a man who was fearless.

2. Men, what are some influences you've been exposed to about what it means to be a man and what did they portray?

THE BIBLE GIVES MEN A VISION FOR WHO WE'RE CREATED TO BE

The One who created us has the right to define us. The embodiment of the person and work of Jesus shows us some of the attributes we should pursue. These aren't just ways to behave but spiritual disciplines that in the core of us leads to sanctification, which is how God does a deep spiritual work that leads to God changing and molding us over time. Romans 5 and 1 Cor. 15 tell us something about Jesus, likening Him to the first Adam. The first Adam lived out of alignment with God's best, which is sin. The Second Adam is Jesus who lives the perfect life. He lived the perfect life and, within His humanity, showed us how to live according to God's design. There are three attributes in particular that will change men at their core that we're going to focus on today.

3. How can "being a real man" be linked to "spiritual disciplines"? What does that mean to you?

HUMILITY

[Philippians 2:3-7] What does humility really mean? Humility is considering others before ourselves. C.S. Lewis said that humility isn't thinking less of yourself but thinking less about yourself. God wants us to have a right view of ourselves—we're wonderfully made—but God wants us to think less about ourselves in our decision making. How did Jesus embody humility? Jesus willfully set aside some of the things He had a right to do as God and took on the likeness of humanity. Jesus shows us humility in that he willfully chose vulnerability in the form of the incarnation.

4. Have you considered humility in this way before? How do (or should) Christian men in our culture display humility?

VULNERABILITY

If we're going to pursue humility, we have to pursue it through vulnerability. Not many men are anxious to experience vulnerability because it means being exposed to the possibility of getting hurt, and men believe they're supposed to be tough. Men don't like to expose their emotions because they could be used against us. But, Brene Brown says that staying vulnerable is a risk we have to take if we want to experience connection. Many men don't experience connection with other people, let alone other men, because they don't want to be vulnerable, yet a majority of men say they feel isolated. Vulnerability may not feel natural but Jesus shows us the benefits of vulnerability in His relationships. He experienced the risks of relationship vulnerability as the disciples fell asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane and deserted him at his arrest at his greatest moment of need. You might get hurt, but Jesus also shows us that the gospel is predicated on redemption and reconciliation. Many guys feel like you're done if you burn me once. But, in the post-resurrected Jesus we see his approach toward other guys that otherwise hadn't been there for Him and the connection through vulnerability that develops relationship. Now, it's not that simple when it comes to emotional vulnerability. The quiet, cultural narrative most men have learned is to be guarded, but when we're never vulnerable, we never give opportunity for relationship. Men, because this doesn't come naturally for us, we have to adopt it. Adopting something is making or taking ownership of something that was not otherwise ours. To adopt this position of vulnerability requires a decision and yet Paul says this isn't just an option, but a command. It doesn't come easy, but it's a prerequisite to have love, give love, and have relationships.

5. Men, what spoke to you most about these comments about vulnerability?
6. What vulnerability walls do you need to let down to make room for relationship?

CHARACTER

[1 Peter 2:21-23] We talked about character last week, but this is a short add-on when Jesus chose not to respond verbally. What's so amazing in this passage is we see an onslaught against Jesus but his silence is not weakness, but integrity of character. He didn't need to defend what didn't need to be defended. When we live a life of integrity, there's no need to defend what doesn't have substance. What if we pursued the degree of integrity of character that we would be comfortable keeping our mouths shut if someone lobbed something at us that wasn't true?

7. How do character and defensiveness interrelate? Where have you been defensive and need to revert to silence?

CONVICTION

But it's not just the times Jesus remained quiet, but also the times that Jesus spoke up. Jesus' conviction reflects times when He would speak up about things that he would not remain quiet about. Jesus was willing to step into a space that others would not to speak up against the religious hypocrisy of the time. Our conviction leads us to articulate why something is good or bad or right or wrong. If we don't speak up, who will? But the thing we're missing in our cultural climate is civility. Without civility, we lose credibility to speak into something so people will hear what we're saying because of how we're saying it. Our discourse needs to come from a place of love, not the need to argue.

8. What convictions justify speaking up courageously? How do we do that civilly and from a place of love? (An example?)

FOR NEXT WEEK: START READING THE GOSPEL OF LUKE!