

December 18, 1998 is the day I became a man. That was not my birthday. It was not the day I got married. It was not the day I was circumcised or found my career. It was the day my first wife told me she did not love me anymore. How on earth could that day be the day I became a man? Well because on that day I had to face myself.

Losing your life as it was is very hard and traumatic. I lost my castle, my princess, and my dignity. I thought a man eventually leaves his parent's home and builds his own castle. He fights his own battles; builds his own life; and he conquers all problems. The man I knew (Patrick Green Jr) was not a man. Patrick fled his castle, returning to his parent's home. A man does not retreat back into his parents fold crying in an empty basement all alone. When a kingdom crumbles, I wonder if angels cry. Today I believe they rejoice, because in the mist of fire and destruction, becomes a man reborn.

From December 18th forward, I began a journey: a journey to discover my masculinity. Did I do it on purpose? No, I did not. I thought I was a man. The person I had built up at that point was good enough for me. Yet, a nagging thought stuck in my mind. Why did my princess not love the prince? What was it about me that she rejected? Sure someone could say she did not reject me. Sometimes people just fall out of love. Really? My journey has taught me that not knowing who you are is why people split apart.

Masculinity might be just another word. What defines you as a man? So many of us define ourselves by the life we lead. We tag ourselves by saying "I am gay, a father, or I am in a career." Maybe your life has been great and you are defined by the successes you've obtained. Some people have had experiences that have changed them forever. Either way, you have been on a journey from the moment you were born. The world around you has shaped, molded, and trained you into the person you are today. What if your Masculine side means something more to

who you are? Understanding that part of your self is the beginning of a journey into a bigger world.

To illustrate let me tell you my story. I was sitting on a cliff on the edge of Vancouver Island in late August 1998 with my former wife and kids. It was beautiful as the sun was setting and we could see a yacht passing on the ocean below us. This was the good life. I was working midnights as a postal worker for the last 7 years. It had been hard on us, but the fruit was beginning to show. We had plenty of money. The kids are in school. I had spent the last 7 years taking care of them in the daytime while the wife worked. It was noble of me to parent while sacrificing sleep. Our family was set. I worked all the overtime to save for this vacation. I was the care giver, provider, and protector of this family, yet I knew something was wrong.

Things are not always what they seemed. That night on the cliff my wife said “I can’t see me living my life with you in the future.” Sometimes things are better left unsaid, or should they? All my sacrifice, all my parenting, and all my hard work just went down the drain. As I sat there I did not say a thing. What do you say to that? Inside, I was beginning to process my future. I thought that forever was forever in a marriage. Sure life was tough, but what did she mean? Who I was and who we were just seemed normal at that time. Nothing is as it seems.

One thing I have learned about relationships is that once you meet that special someone a ball starts rolling along. Physical attraction between two people is forged like a large bolder. Once that happens it begins to head down a hill, and once it starts it’s hard to stop. The same can be said for the death of a marriage. Nothing can stop the bolder as it wreaks havoc down the hill. The kids can’t stop it; begging can’t stop it, and many times counseling can’t stop it. Everything in a divorce gets crushed: kids, family, friends, dreams, and egos as the bolder comes barreling down upon you.

After that night my life and marriage began to unravel rather quickly. My ex-wife pushed that bolder of divorce down my hill. I'll give her credit. She was able to do what I could not. I wasn't happy but was unable, inside my heart, to fix it. I did not know how. Basically I didn't have the stones but she had steel ovaries. One night in November, in a panic, I cried out to God. I did not believe in anything; however, in peril, you'll tend to try anything once. I asked God to save my marriage. I told him "if you exist, help me, I am done and don't know what to do." Word of warning: when you surrender your life to God, all hell will break loose so to speak. God always answers prayer, but God does not always give us what we want. On a warm night in August a storm was brewing. On a cold night in December it became a blizzard. It was certainly time to panic.

One month later on December 18th, she told me to leave. I went to my dad's with nothing. No family, no clothes, no money, and no life as I knew it. My parent's basement was hot, vacant, and completely unfinished. This basement was perfect at that time because it was bare, empty, and certainly unfinished just like me. That night I realized I had no tools inside to fight the good fight. In hindsight it was a dangerous time. I could have easily killed myself. I was worthless without the kingdom I had built (or so I thought).

Some people decide to get angry at those who hurt them, but that was not me. I still loved my princess. How could I return to the castle? I went on a desperate journey over the next few months to figure out what went wrong. I decided to give the Distress Centre a call. Advice: when you are in distress call the Distress Centre (makes sense). A very nice lady named Susanne (that ran this place) looked at my file and decided to take me on for 9 sessions. The thing was that she rarely did that. She had become the administrator and did not council people much anymore, yet I intrigued her.

In many ways she began my journey. Over and over in our sessions Susanne would repeat “if you are not strong inside, your marriage will fail.” I didn’t get it. I was in distress because I needed my castle back. The realization came when I convinced my ex to come for a session (now were getting somewhere with this Distress Centre expert). Well to make a long story longer the “ex” ripped me apart and left. Left in the chair was a bloody and beaten shell that someone might call a man. The Distress Centre expert (the real expert by the way) said “well how was that?” “Ok uncle” I said weakly, I was ready to listen.

I hope you don’t find yourself watching ships go by as your life silently passes you by as well. There is always a fork in your road somewhere in time. For many of us it happens several times. To look in the mirror and not know who you are is a scary thing. We all have stories about the things that have defined and shaped us. Who are you really? Is an identity crisis really a crisis or a fork in the road? Maybe it’s time to venture down another road. It’s time to listen and start a new journey on a different path.

At that moment sitting in the Distress Centre chair I knew that I needed to find “me” because without “me” I would perish. Then Susanne graciously gave me two extra sessions to get me started. She was willing to take the time to set my new course into uncharted territory. Susanne began with highlighting other people’s stories. That is why I’m writing to you. I am a story and another way of looking at life. With that said I was given two main books (there were others) on how to find myself. These were books that showed me that a strong “me” is a strong life. All of these books changed me big-time.

The first is **“Is it love or addiction” by Brenda Schaeffer**. I cannot stress strongly enough how much this book can open your eyes. I never knew that we try to mold a relationship to fit a picture we forge in our minds. My picture of a castle and princess were skewed and

distorted. I wanted her to fit what I wanted and I desired. The problem usually is that we take a square spouse and trying to jam them into a round relationship. The process creates frustration, resentment, anger, and usually divorce. My eyes began to open to the problem. I hate it when people say “it takes two.” This book proved to me that was more than true.

I have struggled with the thought of what to do with young marriages. Two kids do genuinely love each other. They chose to live their lives together. It’s not a bad thing, but is it? They rarely ask the right questions. It’s about hanging out together. Take life as it comes. What happens when life comes and we change? Are we still doing life together or has our view and desires shifted. Does that special person begin to look, think, and act different? Has the picture you had of them changed or has it remained the same? That’s the struggle with marrying young.

What is your definition of a strong relationship? There are hundreds of books out there asking you the same question. John Grey wrote a book in 1992 called “Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus.” Although it was not written that long ago it makes a good point: we are different: people from different places and backgrounds needing to understand each other. A strong you means you can explain to others exactly who you are. To be who you really are in a relationship will only strengthen that bond. Who are you really? A healthy relationship yearns to see the other become so much more than they began with. Are you prepared mentally to deal with that?

People with addictions are never ready to listen in the beginning. There is a picture inside your mind of who you look like and what others should look like. We tend to spend our time trying to make others look like that picture. Rarely do we take the time to make us look like who we really are. We compromise and neglect the person inside. At some point we need to be ready to listen to the voice inside about who we are. Are you ready to listen?

The second book comes from a strange place. I was 33, but this book was written by an 18 year old boy **“I kissed dating goodbye” by Joshua Harris**. If a young man was able to realize he needed to know himself better first before he married, so could I. This boy told me that he had a perfect picture of the perfect marriage (sounds like the first book I read). He saw the perfect girl for his perfect life. In a way he placed his picture on her wall. She knocked it off and he was left sitting in a closet crying while wondering what just happened. Joshua decided to investigate what went wrong in his pursuit of the perfect marriage.

This book walks you through the process of disappointment while dating. He realized along the way that trying every girl was not the answer. If we build the best husband: the best girls will notice. He also helped me begin a journey with his personal guide: God. Maybe the best “me” is the best answer to a great future. That can be hard to swallow. Am I really that important to a great life? Yes you are! Plainly without the best you we get the second best you. Do you really want a second rate life?

So Joshua did kiss dating goodbye, but only to gain a stronger dating weapon: himself. The best girl did notice and life took unexpected turns. The cool part is that life became an adventure for him. He let God guide and open up life rather than only doing what he felt and he saw. We spend a lot of time in a very small box. There is a Canadian saying that Eastern Canada only thinks the country exists from what you can see from the CN Tower. There is way more people, land, and culture in Canada beyond the view from the CN Tower. There is more beyond what we have seen and known in our own lives too.

There was also a third book that came to me through a friend. This third book is of course **“The Bible” written by God**. “Oh brother Patrick I knew that had to happen.” Weak spineless people read that crap. Why does every help book have to have some spiritual element to it? Why

must the Bible and God come into every tragedy? Please don't put this book down just yet.

Remember when I was in counseling I refused to listen until my "ex" threw me under the bus. I don't want that to happen to you. If you say you are open to answers? If you say you are open to change? Then please give me the chance to share what I found. What have you got to lose, you can always leave this book if you hate what I'm saying. For the next few minutes sit there and read further with an open mind. Remember it's time to listen.

The Bible changed me because it was different than I thought. I thought it was boring legalistic ramblings from really old people. Yes they are really old people and it was written long ago. What I found though was that this book is really a love story. God created us and went out of his way to love us unconditionally. The people in the Bible struggled with life, but God was there to guide them through the tough parts. Gee a God that wants to help and guide me through distress. The funny part is that the distress lady was a Christian too. A couple of people at work were Christians. A scout leader and roommate were Christians. God had surrounded me with many people to get me through this traumatic time in my life. The Bible was one of the tools God used to help me.

The thing about this book is that it gives examples of failure. Wouldn't you expect a book written by someone to reflect only their good side? Well the Bible gives the bad side and shows how God deals with the failure, hurt, and pain in people's lives. The really cool part is it's all about building a kingdom. I had lost mine. God wanted me to get it back better than ever. A lot of the Bible helps us discover ourselves as we discover God.

Can you see the connection? All three books pointed to the same thing Susanne the Distress lady was saying. I needed to look inside myself and discover the real me. Patrick I know the real me. To a degree you do, but maybe, just maybe, there is a little more about you than you

think. I have stated that I thought I knew what a man was: I am here to say I was wrong. A man is really the sum of all his parts. His whole being and whole life works together in harmony. This book about men is how my journey taught me the truth about life and myself. You can call it revelation or realization. No matter how you put it “I needed to find me.” Through a journey that continues today I think I have found out some interesting things about me and the world we live in.

Some people call it the fork in the road. It’s the place where two roads intersect. I saw a movie once called “Sliding doors.” The main character went to enter the subway car through the sliding doors when the story of her life split into two people. The story line became two paths for her character. At this moment in time you have a choice: which way do you want to go. My character was on one path in my first marriage. God answered my prayer (different than I thought) and offered me a second path (or chance) to travel.

It still comes back to a book like “Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus.” This book illustrates that men and women are different. For most of us that is not a shock (if you have spent any time with the opposite sex). Our culture is trying hard to disprove that theory. How often do we spend time analyzing who we really are? I am different and you are different. Being a man is part of who you are. We are more than the roles we assume. I am very lucky I decided to look inside myself. My life changed direction because I became curious about “me.”

I have often wondered about different paths. The Greek philosophers have wondered the same things for centuries. They asked questions like “is reality real”? Do things really exist outside of our conscious reality? When you decide to look inside of your life, nothing becomes real. What you thought was normal, weird, and non-existent begins to redefine it-self. If I had a dollar for every time I said “gee I didn’t know that” I’d be rich. It is easy to just ride along a life

path just daydreaming. I think that successful people are successful because they took some time to stop and appreciate themselves.

We are the sum of our experiences. The books you read, places you go, and people you meet all shape you. Sometimes we forget that each experience changes us. Once in a while we might even build up brick walls to guard ourselves. What happens when we can't see over the walls we've built? To some degree that is what happened to me. On this side things looked ok. On the other side my ex might have been tempted to push me off that cliff we sat near. How could you know?

This book is an exercise in listening to something. Hopefully you will hear God, hear yourself, and hear your masculinity as life passes by. Each of these things is trying to talk to you about who you are. It would be a crying shame if what you see is all there is. In the movie "Contact" Jodie Foster's father says about life in space "if were alone then it seems like a big waste of space." I can say that about your life and mine. Isn't there more to us? Isn't there more to life?

What are those special markers in your life that have shaped you? I have had events, books, and teachers that have been those forks in the road. I have read the Gospels many times. One day a preacher asked me to go deeper by reading each of them 4 times in one month (that was hard to do). The thing of it was that by the third Gospel I was beginning to see things differently. This process changed me forever. There are reoccurring themes in your life that are defining you. Maybe those things are pivotal markers or forks in your journey. Is it time to acknowledge those markers and go through your journey so far one more time.

I could go on forever about what has happen to me, and it is a long story. Instead I would like to take you on the journey of how I found out who I am. Inside that journey I found

something I wasn't expecting: what a man really is. Strange that I did not know who I was before

33. My picture of masculinity and what was real were two different things. One thing is for certain; I did not care or know what a man was. People just live and die, that's all I knew. What God showed me in the coming months and years is that me (the man Patrick Green) is so much more than I think. I thought I lost it all, but God showed me something I wasn't even looking for: my masculinity. In the ensuing chapters I would like to share my journey in the form of what I know now about men.