

The Question that confronted me as a single guy at 33 was “What does it mean to be masculine”? You would think at my age I would know. My dad was a carpenter and I love football. I do male and masculine things. Yet, for some reason the masculine card kept being played in my life. When you lose your wife: your masculine side is questioned. Was I man enough for her? If not, what was wrong with me as a man? Do I know what a man is? Does it matter if I was masculine or not? Indeed I was confronted with so many questions in my heart.

I believe that every man thinks about his manhood. I equally believe that every woman thinks about their womanhood. She might ask is she a lawyer or a mother or both? Is he a father, sports star or both? For a man we associate our manhood with sex. Is our penis big or have we become of age with a woman. Are we concerned with becoming prince charming for the ladies? We may say it is not important, but if a woman questions anyone of those things about our manhood we are threatened.

I suppose the first answer comes in the form of a question: does it matter if I’m masculine? Did my divorce question my manhood? Don’t tell me my masculinity did not come into play. I was the provider and the man of the house. When we split up, that was questioned. Someone could say to me I have issues and masculinity does not matter. I completely disagree because it crossed my mind over and over again. My role became dust within an hour. The message from her was: I can survive without you. My role was either meaningless or I did a poor job.

I know someone will still insist it does not matter. It’s just a divorce just like millions of others. Here is where I will fight back on that one. I went to a divorce group for men and it was full of all types of men. I was in the company of drunks, lawyers, and construction workers. They were all men from different walks of life. That night I heard the vim and vigor against

women. These men hated what happened to them. There was so much anger that I never went back. I wasn't in that space. I did not hate women, I hated what happened. That day I knew that my manhood mattered in a relationship. The men in the group were confused and angry. Their meaning in life had taken a hit.

For weeks and weeks I went into the bathroom at work and at home trying to self-talk myself. I looked deeply into the mirror every time, searching my eyes, for an answer. I was looking for me, but all I saw was nothing. The man I was apparently did not do it for my family in my mind. I know it's neurotic but is it? How often do men these days question their manhood? Someone might say we don't need to, but the divorce rate and that men's group proved to me we do. In the mirror what was I looking for? Oh I knew what it was. It was Bob or Steve down the street. They had pretty wives, big houses, and big trucks. They were electricians, carpenters, sports stars, and doctors. They look great, lived big, and played at a high level. I thought my masculinity should look like them in a nut shell. I didn't see Bob or Steve in my mirror: I saw me.

That's the problem with the neurotic: we see a fantasy in the mirror. I could not see me but I could see every other man as more successful. Here's a story. I knew a guy that could do no wrong. He owned a business, he knew the Bible inside out, and was very handsome. I loathed him because he was everything I thought I was not. One day that began to change. He lost his wife to adultery. He tried and tried to gain her trust to take him back. Eventually they tried again, yet she left him again. Years later he re-married, yet again he is losing another new wife several months later. My mirror began to crack as I looked at other men's lives. Maybe many men have identity problems too.

In the bathroom, after a shower, we might wipe off the mirror to see ourselves better. Time after time I have found out that other men have the same variety of problems I do. It was like wiping the mirror: they became clear to me. The cool part is that I became clearer too. Maybe whatever I become is not so far from who I am. Maybe I am unique, different, special and a man in my own way. I never liked being a lemming anyways. Still, I didn't look like a man in my own mind. What I saw as masculine was distorted.

This is weird to be honest (I'm honest trust me). What I mean is that I'm going to tell you something I don't want to admit. In my first marriage I did aerobics because I wanted to stay in shape. I loved it. The problem is that I decided to wear spandex in my private workout (ok embarrassed now). I did the house work and cared for the kids all day. I cooked and cleaned like a wife might have years ago. My wife came home and I gave her a kiss and asked her how her day was. Wait a minute were the roles reversed? Can a man be a home maker? At the time society was flirting with the idea. I half accepted it.

I look at guys down the street and I see men. My dad is a man. In the mirror I sometimes see a man and sometimes I don't. Counselors say that many men have unrealistic views of men. Maybe it's the sports guys fault. We are men right from the start but in our minds it's a different story. Men affect how men turn out. Women can hurt our ego but a father can kill a child inside. Men sharpening men is a double edged sword. It can save us or kill us. What do you see in the mirror?

A funny thing happened that changed my mind. I was a man in a family. I worked hard and long hours just like my dad. I played football, lacrosse, and hockey. Then the house came crashing down when my wife told me she did not love me anymore. All I was and all I had done for them were seemingly unappreciated. She had an affair, and in the divorce papers stated I was

never there for her. The truth can sting. When the roles in a family change the more they stay the same.

I had become the traditional woman's role in our new society. Why then did she need another man? The reason is that she was not a lesbian. Our society begged me to be the modern man, but someone forgot to tell the women. They still like men to be men. I became disposable because I was not her man. I was molly maid with a Penis. It was like tits on a bull. Sorry to be frank but I have to be honest. My role as the man went out the door with the spandex. I can wear them but should I? Our society says yes but the actions of my wife say no. This new traditional role of the "man/wife" is a bad sell in a man-woman relationship. I truly believe that in the traditional family unit the man/wife fails most of the time.

In our modern era it is honorable and acceptable for men to be women. We can be gay, transsexual, or what I call the man/wife. Just because we can does not mean we should. Women can do many of the things a man can but should they? Men can change diapers and sew but should they? Is losing our masculinity to femininity ok? Are we men or are we just unisexual? Why is it acceptable for women to be girls, but men cannot be just men?

This became real to me in two instances. The first was at work. I was now a single man. I brought my wife role to work. I even wore my spandex one night because I was lost in this role. I fixed my own buttons; made my own meals; and I could bake cookies: I was trying to be one of the ladies. Then comes into the story my friend: Joanna. She was 55 and had just lost her husband to cancer. She looked at me in my role as the new modern "man/wife" and knew I was in a heap of trouble. One night she told me I was not being a man. I became confused. Why would she say that?

Johanna told me that just because I can be female does not mean I should be female. Quite frankly I did not believe her. “This is the man I have become in this modern era” I told her proudly. She was old and traditional so I thought. Inside though I knew she was right. My actions were not masculine. I cooked, I cleaned, and I baked. I was the parent that brought the clothes and food to a game for the kids. My ex never did that because our roles were reversed. Johanna insisted that no woman that is looking for a man will want the “man/wife” I had become. I thought I was screwed. Was she right?

This became perfectly clear to me in my second instance. At church, the leadership wanted me married after two years of being separated. They offered me some single women to date. I tried but I was completely lost in the dating scene. I began a singles group and tried to fit in with the woman. The problem is that I cooked, I loved chick flicks, and I didn’t really associate with men well. Men were men and talked about men things: I was the man/wife. I like woman things.

One day a prominent woman in the church asked me if I was gay. That turned my female role off in one shot. That night I was in a rage: all my masculine hormones burst. I do think gay men are men. That is a different debate and understanding. Heterosexual women usually want heterosexual men. I thought I was in that group of people. The woman at church said I was in a different group. To those in the church or heterosexual group a man/wife is gay. Rightly or wrongly that is how they viewed it and me.

I want to be a heterosexual man! I thought I was! I liked women and loved doing stuff with women: what was wrong with these women? A voice inside me began to question my manhood? In the next chapter I will go deeper on the being male and female. I believe some things or actions are uniquely male and female. That is certainly arguable. For those around me

my actions looked more female than male. My married home life did not translate into my new single life. People look at you and peg you in a role. Don't tell me they don't. Patrick it's just a church thing. Oh no they did it at work too and on dates as well. My actions looked more female. Women admired it and wanted it but they didn't desire it.

So I was back to my beginning again. What is a man? I thought I was. So let's look at one other instance just for fun. One single girl at church who also thought I was gay was interested in my manhood. She pressed me to prove I was a man. In church that did not mix. Men are supposed to court, woo, and give leadership in a relationship. It is by Gods design, yet what did I know about the man's role? I slept with her to get her off my back. To prove to her and any other woman: I am your man. Then she turned the tables and told the church what we did. My pastor pulled me in the office and told me something very important: "what a man allows happens." Oh boy was I more confused than ever before.

We tend to let people tell men what to think and be. Men are notorious for letting others have their way. We are chivalry to the core. We want to give others a good life by being reasonable, charitable, and noble. The problem is that we have defined those terms in the wrong way. When we allow society to change our masculinity it will change society too. Men will not be raised up to be strong and heroes. Think about it, we don't have heroes anymore. We look down on our military and police. Our leaders are seen as hypocrites. Men need to be men.

So women want us to cook and clean, work hard and play sports, lead in the family, make the decisions, and be sensitive. I was more lost as I ever was. What should I allow as a man? My ex-wife controlled my life in the man role. I did not know how to do that. I allowed that to happen and the masculine side of me was destroyed. Again we had switched roles. The women I began to meet wanted my masculine side. I was in trouble. I was now in a place where God

needed me to be. I was open to understanding that masculinity is needed in men. Women really want a man to be a man. The traditions of the past are DNA not a concept.

When I first went to counseling, Susanne told me that I am no good to the relationship until I was strong inside. At that time it was Chinese but today it has become English. The stories about the white knight rescuing the damsel make sense to me on a different level. I thought it was about the castle and the shining armor but I was wrong. It's about the masculine strength, and the chivalry of Character. He is strong, mysterious, and brave. The castle and the sword are cool but they don't make the man: his masculinity does.

Let's take a quick look at the Code of Chivalry:

1. To fear God and maintain His Church
2. To serve the liege lord in valor and faith
3. To protect the weak and defenseless,
4. To give succor to widows and orphans
5. To refrain from the wanton giving of offence,
6. To live by honor and for glory
7. To despise pecuniary reward,
8. To fight for the welfare of all
9. To obey those placed in authority
10. To guard the honor of fellow knights
11. To eschew unfairness, meanness and deceit,
12. To keep faith
13. At all times to speak the truth, T
14. o persevere to the end in any enterprise begun
15. To respect the honor of women
16. Never to refuse a challenge from an equal
17. Never to turn the back upon a foe

Women want men and men want woman. Chivalry still is alive and kicking today. This code above is masculinity in a nut shell. Men think of dragons, battles, and castles, and really big swords. The woman sees a man with her eyes. I never knew that. I have seen that over and over again in many relationships. If you're a man in a woman's eyes you have her. She knows what she is looking for in a man.

The opposite sexes affect the relationship. When a man allows a woman to crush him, he is crushed. Have you ever asked yourself why a Hollywood star leaves a beautiful rich successful person for another? I believe it's because they play out in public the search for the true man or woman. Hollywood is full of actors and actresses that play parts. At home is it hard to play the role of the real you. Hollywood people struggle with reality and the role. We, at home, do the same thing. What is reality and what is our role? If we obscure the role we obscure the relationship.

I see statistics at times that raise my eyebrows. People in a gay relationship have separation issues just like the rest of us. I always thought that they would be content expressing their sexual preference. They had found the secret to happy lives, yet statistically they are unhappy too. Yes there is the gay side in relationships. Women like women or at-least admire them. It is the same for men. Within relationships gay or not masculinity is what it is. Two in a relationship assume a role: masculine or feminine. That's DNA and that's humanity.

My son asked me to ignore the society term of male and female. He said it is something that we have made up. Sorry son you are wrong. If we take tradition out people still migrate towards masculine or feminine. A gay man might dress feminine or masculine. It's the same with the lesbian or transsexual. There is no middle ground. Boys when given dolls tear their heads off. That is who we were made to be and it cannot be changed.

To discover your male masculinity is to find a part of you. Dr. Laura wrote a book called "Ten stupid things men do to screw up their lives." They are a list of character traits she found necessary in a man's life. Like I said before we need stories from other people to grow us into a deeper understanding of others and ourselves. Look at this list.

1. Stupid Chivalry

By getting involved with the wrong woman (weak, flaky, damaged, needy, desperate, stupid, untrustworthy, immature, etc.) you think your love will save/transform her.

2. Stupid Independence

Unwilling to admit "need" for bonding and intimacy, you hide in excesses of work, play, drink, drugs, porn, and meaningless sex.

3. Stupid Ambition

Unable to comfortably and proudly accept your inherent importance to society and family as husband and father, you bow to the false idols of money, toys, power, and status.

4. Stupid Strength

Uncomfortable with feeling weak, vulnerable, useless, powerless, or rejected, you use intimidation, force, or passive-aggressiveness to regain control.

5. Stupid Sex

Taking an attraction, opportunity, or erection as a "sign," you measure your masculinity and power by sexual conquests, infidelities, and orgasms.

6. Stupid Matrimony

Lacking a mature sense of the purpose, meaning, or value of marriage, you realize too late you've gone down the aisle with the wrong woman for the wrong reasons and feel helpless to "fix it."

7. Stupid Husbanding

Thinking marriage is the honorable discharge from loving courtship, you continue to live as though you were single and your "mommy-wife" will take care of everything else.

8. Stupid Parenting

Believing only women/mothers nurture children, you withdraw from hands-on parenting to assert your masculine importance, missing out on the true "soul food" of a child's hug.

9. Stupid Boyishness

Having not yet worked out a comfortable emotional and social understanding with your mother, you form relationships with women who become geared to avenge, resolve, or protect you from your ties to Mommy.

10. Stupid Machismo

Understanding the true and meaningful difference between being male and a man, you can become a man.

The picture of a man can look terribly confusing. The books I suggested so far have changed my point of view. They are the experts. I am just telling you what happened to me through these books and experiences. As I read through Dr. Laura's list again it reminded me of how we look at the family, Dad, Mother, and male and female roles. People assume that life remains the same as things change. The stupid things are really a snapshot of that idealism. We become parents or get married but we still wish to be who we were. My thoughts are continuing the thought that the more things change the more they stay the same.

Didn't I say earlier that we are not defined by our job or sexual preference? Don't we have to grow, adapt and change in life? Yes we most certainly do, but the deep down core of who we are remains the same. A man acts a certain way as does a woman. There are certain traits we inherit from the generations before us. That's DNA and that's human. The reason men and women still do stupid things too screw up their lives is because of the Dog rule. They lick themselves because they can. We act the way we do because we can and will.

Forrest Gump, that wisdom sage of Hollywood, says "stupid is what Stupid does." Dr. Laura is repeating what I found in reading her advice. I am all those things she found to be stupid. It is stupid to deny your masculine side. It's like taking the logo of Ford off their cars. It looks like, runs like, and feels like a Ford. Without the logo is it a Ford? Just call it what it is. As men, we can't afford not too (pardon the pun). Lives can become less stupid if we learn from the stories and books of others.

I believe that masculinity and chivalry go hand in hand. If we explore our manhood and affirm our manhood we become the goodness in this world. The heroes of the past knew they were men. Today women want real men but we have stopped raising boys that way. It is dirty to be masculine anymore. Good men are few and far between. Honor, justice, and character do not

describe the leaders we have in men. Men cheat, do drugs, and kill. Men rape, watch porn, and sports. Men lie in public and fight against society. Where are the men of integrity these days? They are at home with the children hiding inside the role of the man/wife while the world is falling apart outside. Male heroes complete a community, not destroy feminism. We are going crazy as a society because men won't fight any more for what is right.

I could go on discussing what masculinity really is but it needs more than a few chapters. Let's put my journey on hold for a moment and explore the roles we assume: Masculine and feminine. Let's go deeper like Dr. Laura did by looking closer at male and female traits in the next chapter.