

What's the real big deal about being a man? Shania Twain says "Man I feel Like a Woman." Kidding aside, didn't I tell you enough about what is masculine and feminine? Yes I did in the last 7 chapters. but it's what you do with it that really matters. I could spout off about anything I want, but in all seriousness it is hollow unless I truly mean it. J Vernon McGee says this about faith "it's worthless unless you put it into shoe leather." What he means is, does your walk reflect your talk.

They say that a man's shoe size reflects his penis size. I don't know if that is true but there is a correlation between how big you are in life and the size of shoes you wear figuratively speaking. I'm not really talking about size in inches but size in impact. Look at it this way: a woman does not generally choose a man based on his shoe or penis size. They choose a man based on the size of his life. A woman looks at your life and decides if she wants in or not.

As I said in the first chapter: we need to make the best "us" first, or in any relationship we will suffer. The more (bigger) dynamic, interesting, and honest life we lead will attract some dynamic, interesting, and honest people into our lives. Why would bad people want to hang out with good people? Sure they can but do they really want to? Why should good people hang out with bad people? In reality they don't. I feel one of the main reasons we fail in life is because of the company we keep. Again in the first chapter I told you about good books that helped me. Each one of them tells stories about bad relationships that tried to fit the wrong people together.

The problem is that in many cases the wrong people for us are good people. They just don't fit who we truly are. The real problem isn't the people we know it's the person inside we don't know well enough. We don't take the time to know ourselves. We don't value what we truly are inside. People love to compromise for the sake of the relationship, yet they rarely compromise relationships for themselves. We consider that type of thinking self-centered and

arrogant. What do people in split-ups say most of the time? They say “I need to find myself because I lost who I was in the relationship.” That’s the life we lead in a nut shell. We are willing to reject ourselves before we reject others. The consequences of these flawed actions are devastating.

Isn’t it important to prepare for the things we do? When we go shopping we bring bags, money, and sometimes a list before we go. On a trip we pack, plan ahead, and pick the right place to go. We always plan our lives until it comes to ourselves. We tend to recklessly plow into our lives without a care of the damage we might cause. Think about it. A divorce will hurt us, money, family, friends, careers, and a future. For some of us we will never really fully recover from the lost we experience in a divorce. How much trouble might be avoided if we took just a little time to plan ahead?

Let me tell you another story. I had either a person or a book ask me to date myself (I can’t remember). I thought that was creepy and nuts. Only creepy people go out alone. What I noticed is that some single people do that all the time (makes sense). I also found out that many single people never went out at all (that will work). I am the goofy one. I had to find myself. Although it was really weird I had to try this dating myself thing. On some deep level it made sense to me. I never knew me. The mirror told me that the person in it was a stranger.

On a date we discover so much about ourselves. What we like, dis-like, and what we want to do again. The problem when we date another person is that we are trying to please them, discover them, and decide if we want to date them again. You see with our selves it works slightly different. We go out reluctantly at first; we discover things about ourselves we don’t like; yet in the end we cannot really choose to end the date. We have to take ourselves home at the end of the night. The trouble comes if we avoid ourselves like a bad date. It has to work out if

you are dating yourself. On this date you are bringing yourself home for a night cap and you will be going to bed together.

Maybe we need to look at dating ourselves like the cup half full scenario (oh God not that again). We can use ourselves as the perfect training ground for a date. When I go out I chose where to go based on what I want to try. Imagine going where I don't want to be. Yes I know a single life date is not ideal but it can be if you'll bear with me. Why do we go out with people where we don't want to go? Yes I know sometimes we have to but all the time? Choose to go where you want but with a twist. This is your life. You have permission to make a date what you want it to be. In my first marriage (life) I went where the marriage went. I most certainly never went where I wanted to go most of the time.

It feels dirty and liberating to go out and do what I want. In reality it's not stupid or arrogant to do what you like. It is foolish to do only what others like or want all the time. Yes it is foolish to only do what you want also but well get to that in a minute. People say they lose themselves in relationships. That's because they let themselves go in the relationship. One of the good parts of my new marriage is the experience. I have experienced my wife's life and she mine. It's not always a thrill to experience their lives but it is a thrill to them to share it.

A healthy "me" is made by sharing myself with myself and with others. It's when we deny ourselves of who we are the trouble begins. It's when we shrink back from being able to share ourselves with others that we get in trouble. If you are in a relationship that is not interested in you, it's time for a rethinking of that relationship. It does not necessarily mean breaking up but a re-jigging of the thought pattern. I have often wondered if my first marriage could have survived if we tried to make ourselves and each other more important than we did.

In a healthy relationship, knowing the other person deeply is very important. Encouraging them to excel at who they really are is important too. It's a relief and comfort to know that if they do things outside the relationship things will be fine. Each person needs to spend time in their own world. It's like three bubbles. One bubble is you and the other is them. It is their space and their world. Hopefully inside those bubbles is common ground. That is where the third bubble comes in. The third one overlaps each-others bubbles.

When I ran a singles group, the worst part was the bubbles. Each single person wanted to protect what is in theirs. Sadly, most of the time, I fought against their bubbles and lost. People have no problem popping another person's bubble. Basically 20 people liked 20 different things. To leave their bubble and enter another's were off limits. In the end 20 people never got together. I had three go here and five go there. This brings me to sharing yourself.

I believe we never grow if we don't share ourselves. Yes when we discover ourselves we grow. I believe that with all my heart, but there is a limit. Trust me, in the singles group there were limits. How do you know you're potential if you don't try something different and new? In my new marriage I do several things that are new. I can't even imagine not doing them now like coffee for instance. I had never been to a Starbucks before 38. That now seems nuts. She shared herself and I grew.

In school the teacher shares and we grow. In a book the author shares their mind and we grow. That is why our lives need to be valued. What we have to share is so important. If you have someone in your life that thinks your life is worthless, it may be time to go. The people around you need to be those that like to share. In my Distress Centre counselling that was it in a nut shell: sharing. She wanted me to value my sharing of myself. I had never experienced that

before. Also she wanted me to pick people in my life that valued me. That is tough when I grew up in a family atmosphere that certainly did not value me. I married one too (makes sense).

I called this chapter “The Date.” I chose that title because to make a man you have to be willing to value the man you are. We value a woman we want to date. Can’t you find value in being the best man to you? Yes we grow and change but right from birth you are a man. We need to value that first and foremost. Certainly I am a changed man and I appreciate the new man more than the old, but still I was always a man. Just because some people chose to devalue me as a man does not make me less of one. The first thing I learned is that I am a man. I needed to accept that. Heading out on a date with myself was extremely hard because all I ever knew was that I sucked as a man to all the people I cared about.

Imagine being called a wolf all your life. Imagine the utter denial that you would have if someone told you that you are really a human. That is exactly what happened to Mogli in the “Jungle Book.” He grew up with wolves. When the panther Bagheera tried to bring him to the man village: Mogli bolted back into the jungle: back to being a wolf. That first date with my self was just like that. It was an emotionally humiliating time spent with me. I knew I was more valuable than I thought I was. Anything I discovered about myself should have been worthless too, yet I liked what I like.

After my split-up it took three months for me to feel a weight lift off my shoulders. I don’t want to minimize my role in my divorce but being separated from her for three months was exactly what I needed. One morning I broke down because I had to admit that I felt better. That made me feel guilty and ashamed of myself, yet I liked it. The “me” in the mirror looked better than he did months earlier. It all began with a date.

So that is where we should begin. Yes I have talked for 7 chapters about what a man might look like but those are questions to ponder. You may be a woman, gay, transsexual, or heterosexual it does not matter what you think you are. You are who you are inside. A woman reading this book can learn a little into a man's world. It might or might not help her understand. Knowing your sexual preference or who you appear to be is between you and God. I wanted to build a case that thinking about the inner you is so important. What you do with that knowledge is your life. My job is to take you on a journey to know yourself better.

I can now say confidently that being a man is good for me. I am glad I am a man. I have taken a journey over the last number of years to discover that man inside. Some men are one way or another as I stated in earlier chapters, yet inside you are what you are. To begin to discover you begins with a date. Can you bring up enough courage to ask out the one person you should care about most? Across the path I saw my first wife. I was toast from that moment on. Still to this day she is that girl I met that night. I have been lucky enough to experience that feeling twice in my lifetime. My new wife met me and I just stood there afterwards wondering what just happened.

If you chose to date yourself I hope you discover a love for yourself. Maybe the fact you hate bowling or love painting is erotic to you. That word erotic might seem weird but is it? When you meet that special someone all you were just vanished as they sweep into your life. A fantasy about them is forged within your heart and soul. Why not experience that with yourself. Why not be raptured by "you."

My first date was the worst night of my life. I went to a movie. Where do you sit alone in a movie? It should seem easy but the front isn't one of them. How can the creepy single guy sit at the back in the darkest part of the theatre? Can you sit next to the cuddly couple? Can you sit

next to the opposite sex, next to kids, or even by yourself in a whole row? No going to a movie sucked. What did I see? I dunno, but I remember sitting near another single person because there is safety in numbers.

What movie to pick? A chick flick might suck on several levels. Why would I want to watch a relationship when I just lost one? Sitting with people in a relationship is uninspiring. Do they want the third wheel there? Watching chick flicks with another man's wife is a bad idea too. That ended quickly. In the end I spent Friday nights at home watching the chucky series while drinking wine. That is a man's chick flick thing.

Buying popcorn was the best part. I could get what I liked. (Disclaimer) it takes longer because choices are amazing. I think I bought too much because I couldn't choose. People seeing the poor man in the corner with 5 chocolate bars, bag of popcorn, twizzles, and pop felt sorry and compassionate for me. The date smiling at me in-front of her boyfriend didn't lend much compassion from him. Still I picked my food, my movie, and my seat. I hated and loved it all at the same time.

The dinner date was much the same. Where to eat? Gee it cost less. I didn't have to wait for the date to order, even though the server might think differently about waiting for me. I ordered too much again because I wanted to look like the poor single guy. Funny though, the waitress was less interested when I was single. I guess single at dinner is creepy. Yet again, I went home happy and sad.

I then began to venture out to concerts, events, and even life groups with married couples. I began to share the new person in my life: me. Dating your self can be bold and liberating. Once you like dating you all bets are off. What I liked mattered. I began creating events for others to attend. People became interesting because I was interesting. That saying "you can't love others

till you love yourself” is so true. I went to several churches to gain perspective. I grew like never before. Yes I love being married but my single days are precious memories. In a small way I miss my time alone with myself.

Ok let’s end by having some fun with you. Let’s go to the bathroom alone. (Warning this is by no means a sexually physical thing) I want you to woo yourself for the first time. Before we date someone we see them, approach them, and try to court them. In the end we want to become one with them if it works out. To get to the date part we have to leave a first impression. Over the years I have left a terrible first impression of myself. I was told and told myself that I was less than stellar. It took time to have fun with myself (in a good way).

Together let’s begin this journey by wooing ourselves right here in the bathroom. Keep your clothes on for now. This is about a conversation with you. Hopefully in the mirror is just you. If you see more than that there is trouble. If you don’t see yourself then there is also trouble. One of the hardest things I did was look at me in the mirror. If you hate who you are then this will defiantly be a tough experience (I know).

If you have a Bible, go to Song of Solomon in the Old Testament to chapter 4. If you don’t have a Bible (get one) go on the internet and print of Song of Solomon chapter 4. Ok, in the mirror repeat the whole thing while looking at you in the mirror. Yes it’s ok to laugh. As a matter of fact I encourage you to have fun with yourself. I hope you laugh, cry, and repeat it. Yes this chapter is said to a woman but you are dating yourself like a lover dates a lover. I want you to love yourself. We always think sexual but it begins with words that woo.

Finally I want you to ask yourself out on a date. I want you to pick the place that you want to go. No arguing just pick it yourself. Show up on time and go! I don’t want you to be a no show. Dress nice like you should and treat yourself to the best. In Hawaii I always go to Dukes



for dinner in Waikiki. It is expensive and frivolous. I have learned that sometimes it is important to laugh, smile, and have fun. When you are single it's always at your own expense too.

One of the hardest things I learned was to treat myself to a treat. I was asked one day to buy myself a chocolate bar. I don't think I had ever done that. I would have felt too guilty. I was told I never deserved anything. That day is still a milestone for me. I walked into a gas station and bought a snickers bar. It was the best chocolate bar I ever had. It wasn't the taste but the freedom that tasted so good. Yes there was shame but there was that other thing: I liked it.

As you head out on a date go where you would with another person. Go to dinner alone (very weird). Go to a movie (weirder still). Then go home and go for a walk (no sex on the first date please). On that walk, take the time to discuss your date. You would have if there was someone else there with you. What did you like? What did you hate? How would "you" rate the dinner and movie? Would you go on a second date? If not then try again. Remember you can never get rid of yourself so you might as well learn to love yourself. Try different things and challenge yourself.

Patrick I hate golfing and I have never tried seafood. Ok then don't golf but certainly try seafood. Maybe you never made an effort with golf or you really hate it. Maybe seafood will rock for you like coffee did for me. One last thing, in your past there were things we wish we did. For heaven's sakes do them. You might find out they are you. If you are in a relationship do this anyways because a stronger you is a stronger spouse. After this crazy date you are ready for the next chapter.

Falling in love comes through the date. In history it began with courtship. Someone escorted you as the relationship grew. We have experienced that through parents and friends. They all played a role in getting you to where you are today. I believe God was there as well. He

was guiding you through the good times and bad. He knew the end result before we do. We need to let God be the guide to a better self. A date is just the next step in the process. It's time alone without escorts and influences: just the three of us me, myself, and I. I am sharing myself with you because I learned to appreciate me and my life experiences. They are not all great experiences but they are building blocks to a better life. Have fun on your first date with you!