

In the light of our “Proven” men’s event coming up soon in our calendar (24-27 November 2016) I thought I might write some reflections on how God develops a man into maturity.

Ladies, I would ask that you please excuse the fact I am directly targeting men as I write this article... our evidence at Ellel Ministries strongly suggests that if a man can be transformed by his Heavenly Father... then every woman will indirectly benefit. However, I would suggest you still read on... simply because Holy Spirit may find a way to impact your heart too by what is written. At the very least it may help you understand us men a little more.

So where does a man go as an adult to learn his true worth... to know that he has what it takes? Where does a man go to learn his true nature and character... one that can never be stripped from him? And how do we find that kind of identity?

How do we get that deep heart knowledge that helps us understand who we truly are and believe in ourselves? Who can give a man that kind of identity and help him discover his real identity?

Why, God alone can!

In the last book of the Bible we read of The White Stone of Revelation (Rev 2:17) which is given only to those who ‘overcome’.

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.”

Revelation 2:17 NASB



That passage seems to speak of a new name which is given only after we have learned to overcome obvious adversity (that is, must come through tests, trials and ‘initiations’ that will have to be faced).

It stresses that name is given only “to him who overcomes”. That is to those who have what it takes! And with that comes a new identity which is forged within us in the process of ‘overcoming’.

In the end, what is given is our true identity, which can only come from God.

The only way I have witnessed a man receive this new name and new identity involves several key steps:-

- Understanding first where you have come from and what has shaped you
- Facing a series of trials that life will serve up to seriously test you
- There is often an arduous journey that has to be undertaken
- And you will have to face down your enemy ... and if you will face this enemy (usually within) and trust your Father God to help you ‘overcome’ him... then a new name and identity is given.

It might seem innocuous when just simply written down like that... but let me assure you from personal experience... this is no easy journey.

You see, to find our true identity – our real name - can only come through a series of initiations, tests and trials over time. Father God wants to travel with us on that journey. To succeed it will require something of us as men. (Many men never complete this journey. Some never undertake it!). But for those who allow Father God to strip away our masks and develop us, once we have ‘overcome’ – we are indeed given a new name – in fact, our real name. We’d much prefer to take an easier road. But there is no other way. Not if we truly want to become ‘sons of God’, true Kingdom warriors... proven men. If this is your desire... then this is the only way!



Every man must fight to find this new name and identity that awaits him... it is certainly not the name that came with our wound delivered by the Father of Lies.

So many men are taken out by the enemy’s lies like “You’re a loser” or “You’ll never amount to anything!” or “You’re a Failure”. Whatever the lie our wound has caused us to buy into, it is not our true identity. But it certainly feels true!

Stuart McAlpine rightly states:

“When Satan is allowed to ‘father’ ... the name he gives is always a lie.”

But this new name God wants to bestow upon you is not actually a new name...when you understand it’s really your true name.

Psalm 139 makes it clear, we were uniquely planned and created, knit together in our mother’s womb by God Himself. Father God clearly had someone in mind when he made us. Who is that ‘someone’ exactly... do you know? Really?

That ‘someone’ - YOU - has undergone assault after assault which has robbed you of your true identity.

Yet God remains committed to helping us realise and discover *whose* we truly are!

Gordon Dalbey states that -

“Despite a man’s past and the failures of his own father to initiate him, God can take him on a journey and provide what was missing.”

The history of a man’s relationship with God is the story of how God calls him out, takes him on a journey (not always one we’re happy to be involved in!)... then out of the difficulties we face, it surfaces our wounding and character flaws. Provided we trust Father God to heal and shape us, we then qualify to be given that new name and destiny.

Father God is seriously committed to reshaping us... and we are not the first ones He has taken on this foreboding journey!

Do you remember when God called Abram out from Ur of the Chaldeans to travel to a land he has never seen... and along the way the tests and trials he faced and overcame brought Abram to Genesis Chapter 15 where he gets a new name given to him by Yahweh! There he becomes Abraham!... and the father of our faith!

Do you recall God's intervention in Jacob's life?

Interestingly, Jacob means 'supplanter' or 'deceiver' (just ask his brother!). Firstly Jacob is taken away from his mother! (Every 'Mumma's Boy' needs his Father to eventually intervene). Jacob is taken away into Mesopotamia, a place he's never been before, to learn new things... things he could not get at his mother's side... nor his father's side! Jacob has to actually wrestle with God and something in him is dislodged! When he rides back into town Jacob has a new name, Israel (No longer a 'deceiver', but now destined to become the father of the 12 tribes of Israel). And he also returns with a limp that he did not have before (... because he has wrestled God face to face and lived to tell!)

And what of a zealous Pharisee called Saul, who breathed murderous threats against Christians, persecuting them – believing he was actually doing God's work!?!)

Wasn't he blinded by God temporarily and knocked of his colt? (Some of us need to be knocked of our 'high horse'!)... Saul is then led into the Arabian desert for three years to be apprenticed by Father God away from the public eye... when he returns the man has been given a new name, Paul (meaning 'small' or 'humble') and also given a new assignment as an Apostle, who happens to go on and write one third of the New Testament!

(Note that God needed to take each of these men to unfamiliar places and situations to test them, strip them, and transform them!... He may need to do the same for us.)

Even if your earthly father did his job really well as a dad... no dad can take you all the way. There comes a time when you have to leave all that is familiar and go into the unknown with God.



Remember, true masculine initiation (that leads to the discovery of our true name)... requires a journey; a series of tests; risks; trials; dramas which surface the unhealed places in us. We then must be willing to humble ourselves before anything can change. Those trials become the way through which we learn much about ourselves, and what needs to be 'overcome' in us... A man cannot just discover his real name and kingdom purpose without travelling this road. God has designed it as such. There are no short cuts.

Through each test comes a revelation. Each trial offers the opportunity to learn more about yourself and what needs to change within... particularly when every test carries the real risk of failure... (then our fears begin to surface!). Whenever we are fearful... that is an area we are not trusting Father God.

For most of us, we have been misinterpreting these tests and trials when they arise. We have failed to see what God has been trying to do for a long time now... intervene in your life to transform you. We just think

that all these ‘initiations’, trials, tests are just unfair and make life harder than it should be!

One guy said it this way:- “I just want God to make my life work out easier.” That man could have been speaking for most of us. But if we just want God to make our lives easier, we may get a rude shock to find out we have been asking God the wrong questions.

Most of us have been asking -

*“God, why did you let this happen to me?” or
“God, why won’t you fix my problem?” or
“God, why won’t you take this person out of my life?” or
“God, why won’t you fix my wife/marriage/kids/job/_____?” (you fill in the blank)*

But John Eldredge suggests that to enter into a life-changing journey of masculine initiation requires a whole new set of questions we need to start asking God -

*“What are you trying to teach me in this situation Father God?”
“What issues in my heart are you trying to surface through this trial I’m facing?”
“What is it you want me to see about myself, that I’ve never had eyes to see before?”
“What are you asking me to let go of Father God, which I have been resisting?”
“What is it that you want me to do Lord, that I have been too fearful to face previously?”
“Is there something unholy within me, Father God, that you want to dismantle?”*

I do not hold much hope for change in those men who are still stuck on the first set of questions.

However, I hold great hope for those who have been humbled enough and courageous enough to begin asking God the second set of questions.

In fact, to enter into the kind of masculine initiation that Father God requires of his sons, it is essential we start exchanging the first set of questions for the second set of questions!

In truth, Father God has been trying to initiate us and mature us for some time now... but we have just not been able to recognise it... rarely can we see what needs to change in us if left to our own devices.

Initiation requires us to take a whole new stance. We have to re-position ourselves. There needs to be a complete re-orientation of how we view life’s dramas and begin to consider that Father God just may be able to use these difficult situations to train us.

John F Kennedy once said:

***“Don’t pray for easier lives men.
Pray for greater courage to face and overcome the challenges that lay ahead!”***

So, what is the biggest obstacle standing in the way of us doing that? – It is our wounding!

Whether you want to admit it or not men... we have all been wounded.

But it's not just the wound that stops us from moving forward... it's the way we have mishandled our wound, and the life we have constructed to avoid facing up to that wound.

In summary - Boy gets wounded – emotional pain is attached to that wound – we push that pain away – we deny it even exists – we cover it over - we construct a False-Self – a mask, a pretence to protect ourselves... the False-Self we construct is one we believe the world will like better than the real us!

And all that has to be de-constructed!

And that does not happen easily or quickly.

Those trials, tests, and initiations that life has thrown at you... Father God has been trying to use those situations to get your attention. He wants to journey alongside you re-visiting all of the your past entanglements. Because God wants his sons healed so they can 'overcome' the enemy, and in doing that you re-discover your real identity, your White Stone Revelation identity.

But before our Father God can begin this initiation process with us... we have to recognise two very important things:-

1. We have a Father God who will never let us down and will always walk with us...
Abba can be trusted. 2 Cor 6:18 "I will be a Father to you and you will be my sons..."
We must learn to trust Him. (Not so easy for a man who carries a father-wound).
2. We must recognise that we have been wounded!

If we are unwilling to accept these above two vital truths... then our journey ends here. At least for a while.

Most men struggle to trust Father God, simply because the man they called 'father' was an imperfect man. And we then project our poor view of our earthly dad, onto our Heavenly Dad. Understandable... but hardly fair on God!

Then as men, we have nothing but contempt for our wound... if we will recognise we are wounded at all.

Robert Bly who wrote 'Iron John' states -

"Men are taught over and over again when they are boys that a wound that hurts is shameful."

The message is clear. A wound that stops you from continuing to play makes you a sissy! We have been bombarded with movies all our lives of soldiers who get shot, but they keep charging forward, dragging their intestines behind them! If we break our jaw in a footy game – we're supposed to keep playing! If a man sprains an ankle in a race... he is still supposed to finish.

Bombarded by that kind of imagery over the years leaves us to believe as men we not supposed to get hurt... (or at least admit that we have been hurt). If he takes an arrow to the shoulder, he's supposed to just break it



off and keep on fighting!

So, most men minimise their wound.

“It’s no big deal... lots of people get hurt by their parents when they’re young. “It hasn’t affected me. I’m doing okay.” ... But are you? Really?

King David wasn’t permitted by God to build His Temple because of blood stained hands from battle... (so not exactly a ‘softie’). Yet even King David, the battle hero, doesn’t ever pretend he was never wounded. Listen to David’s words from Ps 109 ... “My heart is wounded within me.”

*A wound that goes unacknowledged is a wound that cannot heal.
A wound that is never faced and grieved, is a wound that cannot heal.
A wound that we believe is deserved, is a wound that cannot heal.
A wound you have embraced, and believe it’s part of you... cannot heal.*

That is why Brennan Manning says:-

“The spiritual life begins with the acceptance of our wounded self.”

(In other words... the true spiritual life cannot begin until a man first realises he is has been hurt and needs his Heavenly Father to rescue and restore him!)

We deny that we ever got wounded... deny that it hurts... deny that it still shapes the way we live today. We deny our wounding is behind how we respond to our wife, to our children and to those under us in the work place or at church.

Manning goes on to say:-

“Whatever is denied cannot be healed.”

A man who cannot recognise there is a problem... can never change!

God can only begin the healing of a wound once we are prepared to first **accept it actually exists** and that it has shaped most of our life to date. Then we must learn to **trust Father God** enough to invite Him into that wound.

But because we are a little slow at getting with the program... God’s initiation of a man has to take a cunning course of action.

Father God will sit back and wait patiently for life’s pressures to surface the wound, usually through conflict in our closest relationships. Why? Because Father God must expose and thwart the False-Self we have created. God needs to reveal the mask that we have constructed.

You see when we become wounded we move into a form of self-rejection.



‘Don’t ever be your real self again’ the enemy whispers... ‘Invent a new self that everybody will like... and no one will reject!’

This is what leads us to put faith in a useless mask, an elaborate defence against the pain of the past. What we construct is the ‘False-Self’ and this defence becomes our preferred way of saving ourselves. The impostor we create with the False-Self and the masks we wear, effectively becomes our very own plan to save ourselves ! (We unconsciously try to create our own plan for salvation!!)

So God must, in His mercy and grace, find a way to undermine all that... and take it all away.

He is a jealous God... and He will not just stand idly by watching us, His sons, do this to ourselves and hurt those we love.

At the turning point of every man’s journey, God thwarts our plan for ‘salvation’ by attacking and undermining the False Self we’ve created. But our ‘plan for redemption’ is hard to let go of... it clings like the idol it is, to our hearts with the tenacity of an octopus!

Sadly, we do not let go of this Mask easily!

So God has to strip us of all the things we would use to earn people’s attention and admiration. Every way in which we have tried to defend or protect ourselves in the past via ungodly behaviours... these the Lord must expose.

God is counting on our deepest wounds surfacing, then we discover that the sinful behaviours we have constructed to cope with the pain, will no longer work for us.

And what surfaces in our heart when that happens – is incredible fear!

Jesus warned that whoever wants to save his life will lose it – Luke 9:24

There is a way that seems right to a man but in the end it leads to death - Prov 16:25

We have so denied our wounds and the pain they carry... we end up believing the False-Self we have created is actually us! We have worn these masks for so long now, we believe these masks are the real us! How sad.

The False-Self, our ‘plan for salvation and redemption’... it seems so right to us. We thought it was the real us!

But it is not the real you. In fact, far from ‘saving’ you... it is killing you!

The False-Self may shield us from the pain we refuse to face (for a while)... but the False-Self is a lie. Our whole strategy is built on pretence; a deception... and God loves us too much to leave us in that unholy place.

So, the Heavenly Father is banking on a man eventually arriving at place where we can begin to ask that second set of questions:-

“What is it you want me to see about myself, that I’ve never had eyes to see before?”
“What are you asking me to let go of Father God, which I have been resisting?”
“What is it that you want me to do Lord, that I have been too fearful to face previously?”
“Is there something unholy within me, Father God, that you want to dismantle?”

God needs to take a man back to the roots of his wounding so that He can heal it and begin the release of the true self... but first, God must thwart and expose the False-Self!

Once this process begins, over many months, we will scramble to put the False-Self back on at every opportunity, even after it has been exposed... such is our lack of trust in Father God... and our misplaced faith in this Mask. But Abba will relentlessly stick with us. Remember, we have a Father who will never abandon us or forsake us.

The true test of a man’s resolve to change comes when he finally realises that he can no longer rely on what he has used previously to prop-up his old life.

But this is a pivotal time... a very dangerous time... many men have arrived here and only been led by the Enemy to think that God has unfairly set them up! Remember, Satan will not lie down in this fight... He will do what he does best as the father of lies:- “God is angry with you, He’s disappointed in you, He will be just like your own father and abandon you, If God really loved you He would make this so much easier. He is not out for your best interests, and why isn’t God asking your wife to change? It’s not like she’s perfect!”... you get the picture!

Satan will use lies like that all day long to get you to turn back towards controlling your own life again. Satan always uses fear to tempt us back toward control. For Satan to win he must convince us to take back control of our own lives again, to re-establish the False-Self and put all of our masks back in place.

We must remember that it is out of His deep love for us that God thwarts the impostor! He is disciplining us as sons that he loves (Heb 12).

God thwarts us – to save us!

We think this process will destroy us (and it feels like it will some days!) But quite the opposite is true.

We must be saved from what will really destroy us – and those closest to us.

To move toward true masculine initiation and intimacy with Father - is to walk away from the False Self.

It’s only when we are most vulnerable can we be operated-on and healed by God.

Men, it’s time to drop the fig leaf and come out of hiding...

Losing the False Self is painful – I won’t hide that fact.

It’s only when
we are most
vulnerable can
we be operated
on and healed by
God.

But the devastation we cause ourselves and others we love by not laying it down is far more painful in the long run. Underneath our mask are the wounds we've denied and the fear we have been running from... there is a 'shaking' (Heb 12) that must take place.

May I strongly suggest we get with Father's program and allow that 'shaking' to begin.

Once the False-Self fails, we realise it can no longer be relied upon. Once the shift away from the False-Self has taken place, the real journey of Masculine Initiation can commence.

It is at that point we begin to rely on Father God to rescue and restore us...

Now, finally, the true plan of rescue and redemption can begin to unfold!

It is just the beginning of a remarkable journey with our Abba Father. A journey I have been experiencing for many years now and continue to do so as His refining of me continues.

Romans 8:19 - *"All creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed"* (ie unmasked)... the whole world is waiting for us, even depending on us to drop the mask. Father God has promised He will be with us... What are you waiting for?... Jump!

Jump into His everlasting arms! I promise the landing is better than you could ever imagine or dream.

Prayer:

"Father God, you know I'm a little anxious about dealing with the unknown and possible pain of facing issues I have pushed away for years, but I now choose to acknowledge my wounds and that I need your help to overcome them. I choose to trust You with the wounds I carry.

*There are several people who are responsible for wounding me. Please bring them to mind now*Namely:.....)

I now choose to forgive all these people and release them into the fullness of my forgiveness.

*Lord, I have spent years developing masks and coping behaviours that are really sinful ways of dealing with my wounded-ness. Please forgive me for all of these ungodly behaviours.
(These sinful behaviours include:*)

I now willingly choose to lay down this idolatrous 'False Self' that I created to survive in this world. Jesus, forgive my sin of creating the 'False Self' rather than trust in your completed work at Calvary to save me. I choose to make myself vulnerable to your tender mercy Lord and I ask that you gently open my eyes to see all the ungodly ways I have been operating in.

Please heal me and restore me so I can walk into my White Stone Revelation identity and destiny that you have promised me. Father, please come and show me how to fight the enemy so I can eventually overcome him in this battle and every future battle. I desire to receive my true inheritance as a precious son of God.

I am asking to You to help me begin this journey with You at my side Abba Father. Amen."

Now jump!