

MEN, WE HAVE A CRISIS!

I am a firm believer in the people. If given the truth, they can be depended upon to meet any national crisis. The great point is to bring them the real facts.

– **Abraham Lincoln**

THE ENEMY IS AT THE DOOR

Men, we have a crisis, whether you realize it or not. Some of the indicators that identify we are in crisis in the Unites States, are in part reflected in the points below:

- The lack of leadership and moral courage in every institution;
- The degradation of our society through the deterioration of traditional values, the guardians for our society;
- The destruction of the structure and order, and the ongoing attempt to redefine the traditional family;
- An economy that has hovered on collapse for years, and a country that appears so confused from the outside that we must look schizophrenic;

- Run away crime, behavior that borders on anarchy at times, and a depressing increase in every statistic that indicates a growing amoral population (having no moral standards, restraints, or principles; unaware of or indifferent to questions of right or wrong).

The result is the extraordinarily low state of our social, political, economic, cultural, familial, and spiritual condition in the United States today. I believe that these points of concern are rooted in a slowly developing phenomenon with disastrous consequences. It is the transformation and decline of the definition and role of men in our society.

The role of men used to be characterized as noble, character-driven, courageous, strong, and dependable. Where men were once relied upon to lead – beginning with leading ourselves, then our families and outward from there – they have become increasingly self-centered, immature and irresponsible. Rather than being the guardians for our society, men have increasingly become the problem in our society. Statistics can be boring, but they can also be very telling. I recommend Michael Gurian's book entitled *The Good Son*,¹ and I am going to cite some statistics from it to illustrate my point. The book was published a little over 10 years ago. Upon doing my own research in regard to these statistics for 2012, I found they have not changed much over time. Some have gone up a little, some have gone down a little, but generally the statistics have not moved favorably over the last decade:

- We have the most violent non-war population of children in the world. More people in the U.S. capita commit violent

crimes every day, than anywhere else, and 90 percent of them are male.

- More of our children per capita get arrested for crimes than in any other country. Ninety percent of arrestees are boys.
- After Russia, more of our citizens are in prison than in any other country in the world. Ninety percent of these incarcerated individuals are males.
- Our young males make up 80 percent of drug-addicted and alcoholic youth.
- Our boys constitute the majority of children who are homeless, murdered, in foster care, neglected and institutionalized.
- Our rate of mental disorders in the male population per capita is one of the highest in the world. For instance, 90 percent of the Ritalin used on children in the world is used on ours. Approximately 3,000,000 kids are on Ritalin in the U.S. – 90 percent of them are boys.
- The child suicide rate has gone up in recent decades with increasing acceleration, mainly among adolescent boys.
- Our teen pregnancy rates are among the highest in the industrialized world, and we provide the *least* extended family support for teens that have babies. Ninety percent of males who impregnate a teen girl abandon her and her family.
- Our schoolchildren are arguably the least disciplined in the world. Ninety percent of the children who require discipline in schools are boys. As one educator put it, “After teaching in Hong Kong, Japan and Australia, then returning to the United States, I felt something like despair when I saw what had happened the American middle school class room.”

- Our boys and young men also comprise the majority of child-abuse, and as victims are less likely to talk about and get help for their suffering. In a 1998 study of 7,000 children, 48 percent of boys, compared to 29 percent of girls, said they would never tell anyone about the abuse they had experienced. As psychologist Aaron Kipnis explains: "It's egodystonic – not in accord with their self-image and traditional gender identity – for boys to complain about pain." Thus our boys are becoming more and more at risk for abuse, neglect, violence, addiction, psychological illness, and all the pains of childhoods lived in broken homes and confusing worlds, pains that never appear in statistics.

CASES IN POINT

Story #1: A family has the 23-year-old son still living at home. He dropped out of High School in his junior year. He has not held any real job at all since that time. He is living and has lived this entire time in his parent's basement. With the exception of a six-month hiatus in which he found the real world a little too mean and challenging, when he returned home. He doesn't clean up after himself. The basement is a pigsty, with dirty dishes, garbage and clothes everywhere. He has a computer, watches TV, and plays video games all day long. He doesn't pay rent or any part of his living expenses. Finally, he doesn't even take the time to go upstairs to use the bathroom; he will simply step out the door of the basement and urinate in the drain. The stepfather is completely exasperated. The mother and stepfather are on the verge of divorce. The whole family is disintegrating, and they don't know what to do. The man-child's response, sitting and listening to all this, is a few

shrugs, minor acknowledgements, passive pathetic looks, and an occasional slightly embarrassed smile.

Story #2: A family has two college-aged boys living at home. One dropped out of college. The other was kicked out because of poor academic performance. Neither is working consistently. Neither is paying for rent or sharing with other expenses. One has been arrested six times for drug possession. With the help of his mother, he spends what money he makes on attorneys to stay out of jail, with the assistance of his mother. The other son spends what little money he has on cell phones, clothes, and social activities. Neither of them has saved anything, paid anything or has a plan to get out. The father says he doesn't know what to do because he never imagined his grown sons dropping out and living at home. The mother is fearful of what will happen to them if she doesn't allow them to stay. Both boys smirk, nod, laugh, and justify their activities, as their story is being shared with a national audience. The lack of remorse, shame or embarrassment is revealing as to the condition of these young men's attitudes and state of mind.

These two scenarios are not stories made up for the sake of my book; they are not exaggerated illustrations to make a point. These are two real-life current realities that my wife and I watched on a television show that aired recently. On one hand, I was dumbfounded as I watched these stories unfold before my eyes. However, on the other, I was not surprised when I saw the behavior of the parents, particularly of the father figures. The fathers had completely abdicated their leadership role and were failing both as fathers and husbands. Are these examples anomalies?

Unfortunately they are not. I see it every day professionally, and just simply living in America today, running into these caricatures of men is unavoidable. This destructive trend of boy-men not voluntarily leaving home, or not being made to leave home, not experiencing life's realities and struggles to learn and grow and mature, is not good, and it's rising at an alarming rate. The result: weak men.

These are just a couple of examples of what has gone wrong with our sons, really what has gone wrong with us as fathers. This has resulted in what we are seeing with our sons. I have sat with many parents who want help figuring out how to recover with their adult sons, or the runaway behavior of teens. I have sat with innumerable men, 20-somethings and up, single, married, divorced, some with children already. All have one thing in common: they know their life is broken, but they don't know how to get it right after years or decades of dysfunction. I have seen and heard it all. It ranges from horrific abuse to absolute neglect to crippling coddling, causing delayed emotional development and maturity.

Do these scenarios hit close to home for you? If so, you are not alone. There is hope for you, and by extension for the sons you are raising. Let this awareness be an awakening, a catalyst to inspire you to learn how to adjust and make course corrections. The purpose of this book is to raise awareness, provide you with hope, and then help you with a road map to a solution.

Returning to the illustrations of the eagle, the reality provided by nature give us some excellent examples and lessons to consider as we think about the scenarios. I personally believe there is an active agent behind nature; but for now nature gives us the eagle as a

teaching tool. The contrasts between the previous stories and the eagle are obvious, and don't need to be stated. What should be even more compelling to us is that both (the scenarios and nature examples) are real.

IGNORANCE IS NOT BLISS

Before we go any further we must first understand the urgency of our current situation. The illustrations above are all well and good, but why should it matter to you and to me? There is a reality for all of us fathers; we have a crisis on our hands, a storm is brewing. As people, we generally fall into one of three categories: 1) those fully aware, who know something must be done; 2) those somewhat aware, who simply hope the problem will go away; and 3) those completely unaware, who are blindsided. Whatever category you fit into, the reality of something coming isn't diminished simply because you don't see it, or hope it just goes away. History can be a great teacher, although all too often it repeats itself. There are some significant traumatic events in our history to learn from. Regardless of the level of awareness of men at the time, the following events still occurred resulting in significant negative consequences. In the late 1930s and early part of the 1940s prior to WWII there was a storm brewing in Europe, and it caught us. In the late 1960s and early 1970s there was a storm brewing in Southeast Asia, and it caught us. In the late 1990s and early 2000 there was an economic storm brewing on Wall Street that caught us. In 2000 and 2001, prior to September 11th, 2001 there was another storm brewing in the Middle East, and it caught us. You may personally not have been able to do anything about WWII, Vietnam, the stock market collapse, or September 11th, but there is another storm brewing you

can do something about. It's a crisis in manhood. This might sound alarmist, but it's with good cause.