

The Noble Man: Finding a Vision for Manhood

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You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.

Isaiah 55:12

10: The Quest 3

Tim Brannagan would be uncomfortable if I were to hold him up as a model of anything other than the mercy, grace, strength, and honor of God. But, courage in the face of danger comes to mind.

As he crossed the service road at Roberts Field on that evening in June, the thing on Tim's mind was finding a way to survive the night that was quickly descending. He found the hotel to be empty and, when he got to the room, he did exactly as the strangers had said to do. He locked himself in and barricaded the door with everything that would move. Then he rested, and waited, soon falling into a fitful sleep.

In the middle of the night, the hallways of the hotel filled with the noise of running footfalls and loud voices, as soldiers searched the premises. There was a hard pounding on his door but, remembering the admonition of his benefactors, and not knowing if the soldiers outside were government or rebel troopers, he did not respond. Whoever it was, they lost interest and moved on. The night passed without further incident.

At dawn, he arose to find that, even with the noises of armies that had been all around throughout the night, the airport had not yet been taken. So, he quickly retrieved his van and drove back to the Mission Station. It took 45 minutes; no checkpoints or barriers. Within a few hours of his leaving, everything at Roberts Field was bombed, rocketed, and destroyed. Two weeks later Tim was on his way to California.

Such a story causes me to wonder about courage. Clearly, it is one of those qualities that we recognize when we see it, but have a difficult time talking about. Adversity comes to us all and may require a courageous response – we face the battle because we have no other choice. But, that is a narrow view.

Greg Bourgond says that courage is about “leaning into your fears.”¹ I like that a lot, and would only add that it somehow also involves advancing against your fears, moving out, taking offensive action, being the warrior and claiming territory. Following the quest involves this kind of courage.

God told Joshua to be “strong and courageous” as he called him to move the children of Israel from 40 years of wandering, to claim their promised land.² While there probably

was fear in the Israelite camp, the warriors were willing and they, also, called upon Joshua to “be strong and courageous!” in his leadership.³

In the movie, *Gladiator*, the fictional Roman General Maximus said, “What we do in life echoes in eternity,” as he instructed his cavalry to follow him into battle in Germania.⁴ They did so courageously, some unto death, all unto victory and earthly reward. The cause of Christ is greater than this.

In the flush of deliverance by the hand of God at the Red Sea, Moses and Miriam sang, “The Lord is a Warrior,”⁵ to the assembled people. When this Warrior Lord sends out the call, a man of valor responds courageously because eternity is in the balance. Whether at rest or in action, I believe that this kind of courage is a permanent and valorous condition of the manly soul that has been captivated by Jesus Christ.⁶

One of the strongest voices speaking to men today is coming from Robert Lewis, of Little Rock, Arkansas. His book, *Raising a Modern Day Knight*, outlines a message to men that calls them to consider a model for manhood patterned after a knighthood metaphor.

The resonance of Lewis’ message has been so strong that literally thousands of men are being challenged to learn more about what it means to be a man, and how to lead their sons into manhood.⁷ According to Lewis, a vision for manhood involves four cornerstone principles. “A real man is one who: rejects passivity, accepts responsibility, leads courageously, and expects the greater reward – God’s reward.”⁸

The pathway to nobility is paved with the courage that takes a man into harm’s way, for no other reason than the joy of serving God. It is a grand quest that begins in the courageous *heart of a warrior*, and in his sons **and** his daughters, to whom he brings the blessings of his Sovereign Lord. The greater reward is nothing less than the eternal companionship of God, Himself.

¹ Gregory W. Bourgon (personal communication, 2005).

² Joshua 1:6-9.

³ Joshua 1:18.

⁴ *Gladiator*. Produced by David Franzoni, Branko Lustig and David Wick, and directed by Ridley Scott. 155 min. Dreamworks/Universal Studios. 2000. DVD

⁵ Exodus 15:3a.

⁶ Our focus here is on men, but it should be clarified that women of courage also rise to valor in this way.

⁷ Men’s Fraternity, <http://www.mensfraternity.com/mfhome.asp>

⁸ Robert Lewis, *Raising a Modern Day Knight* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers), 60.