

The Noble Man: Finding a Vision for Manhood

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They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

Matthew 24:32

12: The Power of Vision

You may have heard the story about the young Easterner who went West to find his fortune in the California gold fields of 1849. He outfitted himself with everything he could think of and more, and then anxiously began throwing it all onto the back of a mule. When he thought the gear was secure, he grabbed the halter rope to lead the over-loaded animal out of town, thinking only of the gold that was just lying on the ground, ready for the picking.

If you know about mules, then you will understand what happened next. The mule wouldn't move. The harder the young man pulled, the more the mule resisted. He stomped around, kicked dirt, cursed, and swatted the rear end of the stubborn animal, only to have it sit down on its haunches in the middle of the street.

Standing to one side, slapping his knee in laughter, a grizzled old prospector is taking it all in. Hearing the loud guffaws, the young man, red in the face with sweat streaming off his chin, turns to the older man and says, "I 'spose you could do this better?"

"Yup," says the old sourdough.

"Here, then. Give it a try," the young man says, holding out the rope.

Taking a spare hickory axe handle out of his pack, the old guy comes over and walks straight up to the mule's face and stares at him. Then, reaching back over his head with the axe handle, he smacks the mule with it, directly between the eyes.

The mule's front feet come off the ground and, without a whimper, the belligerent animal falls flat out on his side – the young man's equipment flying every-which-way.

"You've kilt my mule!" shouts the young man.

"Nope." says the old man, who then takes a hold on the halter rope and tugs it lightly. The mule lifts his head, then his neck, and finally gets his feet underneath and stands, looking at the prospector, who proceeds to lead him around the young man. Handing the rope over he says, "Son, 'fer y' kin git thet mule t' move, y' got t' git his attention."

You see, sometimes, God has to get our attention, and many of we men seem to need an axe handle between the eyes. That is my personal experience. Perhaps it is yours,

too. We go through life thinking that we are doing it all right, going many places, doing many things, focused in many directions, all of them good, and looking for success formulas and pat-answers. And then, something happens. Ventures fail, vision becomes blurred, and we wonder what God is up to.

When God moves in to get your attention, you will grapple with some version of these mysteries: Who am I? Where am I going? How will I get there? These are visionary questions that cannot be fully answered here, or anywhere else outside of your own heart. It was A. W. Tozer who said, "To have found God and still to pursue Him is the soul's paradox of love, scorned indeed by the too-easily-satisfied religionist, but justified in happy experience by the children of the burning heart."¹

The missing piece in many lives is the burning heart for God. This is where vision comes from, and vision is found in the man, Jesus. The almighty, holy, unapproachable, unknowable, majestic, God of the universe chose to become a man. He chose to walk among other men – chose to bridge the gap between Himself and humankind. It is not just about you walking with Him. No. You see, He longs to walk with you on your own personal road. Will you let Him? There is power for the noble life in the grand quest, the vision that He alone brings.

Therein lies real manhood for you, and for your sons – in the burning *heart of a warrior*.

¹ A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, Inc.), 15.