

June 2017

Dear Sustaining Partner,

“The sign of a great man is the closer you get, the greater he becomes.” ~Anonymous~

There is continuous discussion about the importance and value of women. I do appreciate those who defend and honor women. Clearly I am personally aware of the significant role women play in our culture. Recently I'm wearied of the endless commentary blaming most all societal problems on the inequality of women. While there is always prejudice, it is my opinion as a woman in the work place and else where, I have primarily experienced opportunity, inclusion and respect. The few times I've had problems with “knuckle draggers” have been resolved with some honest discussion witnessed by a company executive. I understand it isn't always this simple, but that full discussion can wait for another day.

While the screaming and shouting of feminist rhetoric annoys and sometimes angers me, the lack of positive commentary as well as praise and respect for men disturbs me. Media, filmmakers, song writers, authors---and women frequently portray men in general as weak, ineffective idiots who stumble through life with their feet in their mouths. To be fair I've seen my share of failure...my own and others---both men and women. While it is true there are deadbeat dads, what's a man to do when it's as if they have failed before their first shave? I wonder if the lack of dad involvement we see through this ministry is young men have picked up on the prevailing negative attitude and are afraid to fail. Social media is full of “Dad fail,” and “man fail.” While some are funny, the fact this is not just poking fun at a common circumstance. Men are very often mocked and ridiculed for any failure. It's as if to not achieve great results with the first attempt is unpardonable. How we train our young men to fail is critical for his future. If he perceives himself to be a failure, he'll never know success as a man, husband or dad. His community will never reap the benefit of what only he can offer. To leave a godly, healthy, loving legacy men must learn how to fail well.

I like John Maxwell's term “fail forward.” Steve Jobs, who failed miserably many times said, “Learn what went wrong and learn as you continue.” The list of men who have “failed forward” is long. For instance, Walt Disney chose not to listen to those who told him to “get a real job.” The young men we see have not been taught everyone will experience multiple failures in a lifetime. They don't know “Major fails” are not important, because what makes all the difference is when a man gets up, moves forward and tries again because he knows eventually something good will come of his effort. For one to believe all failure is an opportunity will require another man risk to open up and say, “I'm still getting up and moving forward.”

In the month of June we talk more about men...about husbands...about dads. I have noted most often remarks in church and elsewhere (and on greeting cards) appear to be more critical and funny than complimentary. There is often more focus on what's lacking rather than encouragement to keep on moving forward. My dad, the most significant man in all my life failed many times. Because he kept "failing forward" he had great positive influence on me, my sibling and his community. In the midst of "major fails" he had courage to acknowledge mistakes, but not allow them to hold him back. As it is said, "No guts; no glory." I believe all credit should go to men who get up every day and do something. I am very well aware I would not have achieved much of anything if not for a dad who taught me how to fail forward while telling me I could do and be anything. Because of my experience, I believe dads are the most significant person in a child's life. We don't hear or think about that enough.

We work daily with young men who are mystified by expectations others have for him. Regardless of their deepest desire to be a hero, they've bought in to the myth which communicates assumed failure to him, his kids and family. Everyone agrees as good as he's gong to get is a good natured, yet stereotypical bumbling male. The prevailing attitude is it's safer to not take a risk and allow women run the show. And, so it goes; on and on replicating the belief it's natural for women to take over while young men continue to ask:

What is a man?

Is he someone who is strong and tall,
Or is taut and talented as he plays ball?
Is he someone who is hardened and rough,
Who smokes and drinks and swears enough?
Is he someone who chases women hard,
With a quest to conquer, but never dropping his guard?
Is he someone with a good business mind,
Who gets ahead of the others with his nose to the grind?
Or is he someone who tries his best,
Not really caring about any of the rest?
What is a man? Does anyone know?

TELL ME!

Who is the prototype? To whom shall I go?

Good question. We are looking for men who would choose to serve as a role model for those young men who are brave enough to say, "Help me!" Interested? Talk to us. We don't expect perfect, only men who know how to "fail forward."

For Life!

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