

Where Is the Roar of the Real Men of God?

God is looking for spiritual lions who will exhibit boldness, compassion and true holiness.

While millions of men were watching last weekend's NCAA basketball contest (congratulations to Virginia Commonwealth), I was in a three-day conference in Concord, N.C., with 180 men from eight nations. We called it Bold Venture, and it was an opportunity for American guys to be exposed to the courageous faith of men from the developing world.

We ate together (North Carolina barbeque!), worshiped God passionately (thanks to three worship teams, including a group of guys from a Christian college in Georgia) and had our rear ends kicked by some humble, battle-scarred ministers from Uganda, Nigeria, Ethiopia and India.

"There is a new move of God stirring among men in this country—but it is not about 'taking charge' or throwing their testosterone around. It is about reflecting the full nature of Christ—humility, compassion, integrity, gentleness and strength."

Our goal during Bold Venture was to model New Testament humility. At least a third of the participants were in their 20s, and they have a low tolerance for fake religion. There were no VIP

rooms,
limousines, suits, ties or entourages. Everyone was on the same level. Being real was our theme, and the men from Africa and Asia gave us a taste of the revival that is sweeping their countries. It made us hungry for true spiritual awakening in this country.

During the weekend we touched on five areas Christian men should pursue. I'm sharing this with you because I believe American guys need a healthy dose of the gut-level honesty and raw spiritual passion we experienced in Concord.

✘ **1. Real men are compassionate.** Biju Thampy shared how God called him to work with the 300,000 street children who live in the slums of Mumbai, India. His heart broke when he saw a photo of an Indian child sucking milk from a dog. From that moment he determined to be a channel of Christ's compassion—and today he and his team feed, clothe and educate more than 1,000 kids daily.

Men often think of compassion as a feminine virtue, but Biju reminded us that Jesus was motivated by compassion throughout His ministry—and it produced supernatural results. "If you want to see miracles in your life, ask God for compassion," Biju said.

✘ **2. Real men make disciples.** Barry St. Clair was a busy youth leader for his denomination when I met him in 1973. He traveled around the country speaking, yet he took the time to teach a group of

10th-grade kids

how to spend daily time with God. I'm a Christian leader today because of

Barry's commitment to the "2 Timothy 2:2 Principle" of personal discipleship.

Barry reminded us in Concord that God never intended for us to make crowds or

monolithic church structures. "Today we run the church as a business," Barry

said. "The business makes money, and the money builds buildings. We've created an audience, not an army."

So many American guys are

sitting in pews week after week, never realizing that God has called them to

pour spiritual encouragement into the people around them. I wonder what would

happen if we had a major shift in priorities and began to invest our lives in

each other. We might actually start resembling the New Testament church!

3. Real men share Jesus. Ethiopian evangelist Daniel

Haile has preached in 50 countries and has seen countless miracles on the front

lines. But he didn't expect front-row treatment at our conference, and he

stayed in the same Hampton Inn with the rest of us (some brothers even stayed

in homes). What drives this humble man is his passion for souls.

Daniel reminded us that of the 200,000 people who

die every day, about 180,000 of them are not Christians. And while folks in the

church today question the reality of hell, Daniel told us that hell quite

dramatically figures into John 3:16.

"Hell is in John 3:16 because it says, 'whoever believes in Him *shall not perish*.' In the best 'love' verse in the Bible, we see hell."

✘ **4. Real men live holy.** Some denominations today have completely lost their moral spine. Even in so-called "Spirit-filled" churches, we rarely address the sinful habits that cripple men. We don't confront the pornography epidemic, the secret pain of sexual abuse, the unmentionable sin of homosexuality, the crime of domestic violence or the rampant epidemic of adultery and fornication. Men hide in their "man caves" of shame and live in continual spiritual defeat.

At Bold Venture we gave four guys the chance to share their testimonies of freedom. Two brothers told how they have overcome additions to porn; one young man told how he fell into temptation and had sex with his fiancée before his marriage (and how guilt almost destroyed him); and another brave man admitted for the first time publicly that he had been sexually abused by a minister. Because these men were transparent, dozens of men came to the altar to find freedom from their secret sins.

✘ **5. Real men are bold.** A Ugandan pastor (whose name I won't mention because his life is on the line) told us that boldness is more than the courage to be a witness. We also need steel in

our backbones to
confront sin. This brother had to muster up that boldness last
year when he
learned that his pastor was sleeping with women and infecting
them with the
AIDS virus.

Speaking from Proverbs 28:1 ("The righteous are as
bold as a lion") this African brother gave us some insights
about lions and
challenged us to let our voices be heard. The lion is the
loudest animal in the
jungle. God is still waiting to hear the roar that will emerge
from men of God
who are filled with the Holy Spirit.

It's time for God's lions to come out of their cages
of shame, defeat, condemnation and addiction. There is a new
move of God
stirring among men in this country—but it is not about "taking
charge" or
throwing their testosterone around. It is about reflecting the
full nature of
Christ—humility, compassion, integrity, gentleness and
strength—and passing it
on, as fathers, to those we are called to mentor and disciple.

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