

THE COUNSELOR

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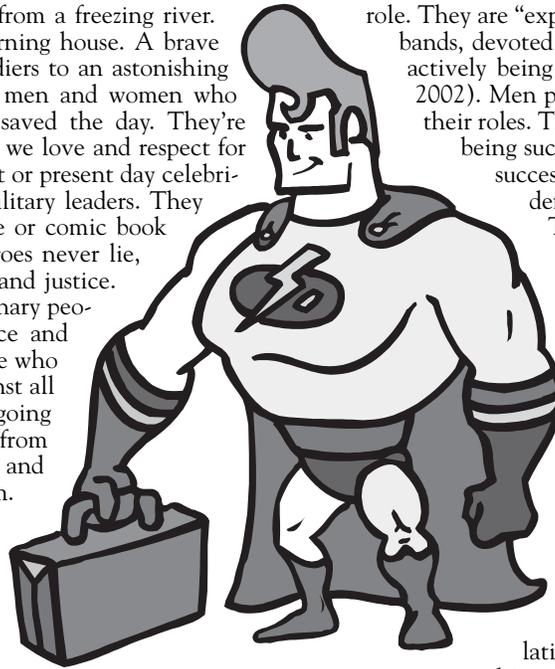
Volume 7, No. 1

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FEBRUARY 2004

WHEN HEROES FALL

One man saves a drowning woman from a freezing river. Another rescues a baby from a burning house. A brave captain leads his outnumbered soldiers to an astonishing victory. History records numerous men and women who overcame great adversities. They saved the day. They're heroes. We all have heroes, people we love and respect for their great achievements. They could be past or present day celebrities, sports figures, religious, political, or military leaders. They might even be fictitious superheroes, movie or comic book characters like Superman and Batman. Heroes never lie, always do what's moral, and fight for truth and justice. Our heroes could be family members or ordinary people whom we admire for their perseverance and accomplishments. We like courageous people who triumph over great difficulty. They win against all odds. Heroes inspire us to press on when the going gets tough. We draw strength and security from our heroes. We go to them when we're afraid and insecure. We depend on them. We love them. We all need heroes. Boys and girls often look to their fathers as heroes. They see them brave all kinds of adversity to provide for and lead their family. Boys and girls aspire to become heroes just like their fathers someday. Sometimes these hero fathers fail. They fall. They do things that break trust and relationships. They hurt the ones they love. Devastation and disappointment crush children's hearts when their hero fathers fall.



role. They are "expected to be successful breadwinners, loving husbands, devoted fathers, good sons to their aging parents, while actively being involved in church and community." (Means, 2002). Men push themselves toward perfectionism in each of their roles. They do this because of society's emphasis on men being successful. Society judges men on the basis of their success, measured by money, power, and prestige. Men define their self-worth by how successful they are. The greater the success, the more self-worth. Society likes strong hero types, not weaklings or "wimps." Hero types or white knights (Means, 2002), strive for grandiose achievements. Plagued by a constant sense of failure, they push forward. They plow ahead anyway, running on sheer willpower, sucking up the pain, and pulling themselves up by their bootstraps. They are loved and well respected by their family and friends. They maintain a high profile as they continue to work harder and harder to keep up their image. They are powerful figures at home and in the community. Many become "pillars" in their church. They become hero fathers. They work hard at everything for everyone, accumulating more power, praise, adoration, respect, and things.

THEY FALL

FATHER HEROES

Boys are groomed by our society to compete. They learn early that winning is the only thing. They learn it on the playground, soccer field, classroom, and street. They learn it in the home. They see their fathers stress and strain to make it. They grow up to be just like dad. Men are driven to success internally and externally. It feels good to excel, accomplishment brings rewards. Many men start out with good intentions, they fight for what's right, climb corporate ladders, establish themselves, and provide well for their families. Males are wired and groomed to be aggressive in pursuing successful careers. Men derive much of their self-esteem from their work. They feel they must press forward on life's battlefield and make big sacrifices for their families. They catapult themselves to the top of their careers. Patrick Means views our "hero subculture" as a major factor driving many men to exhaustion, stress related diseases, and suicide (Men's Secret Wars, 2002). Men are under incredible pressure today. They take on too much and try to play the hero



Men who live in this hero subculture are vulnerable. They get carried away. Pride sets in. They feel invincible, at the top of their game. They believe they really got there on their own. A false sense of security sets in. They rely on their own strength. They fall away from God. Father heroes engage in a whirlwind of activity, moving faster and faster. Internal struggles begin. The stress takes its toll. Deep down inside they begin feeling lonely, alienated from God and family. They go through the motions. Something is missing, something is wrong. They press on. Nobody notices anything yet, their discontentment grows and past emotional pain and hurt make their way to the surface. They may not know it, but pain from their own father wound plays a significant role in bringing about their decline. Many did not receive their father's blessing. They have been trying to please their fathers for years. These men desperately try to fix weak, troubled, or nonexistent relationships with their fathers. They carry their father's wound, the wounded father within. Hero fathers anxiously strive for praise, affirmation, and approval. It's never enough. They move further away from God, deeper into pain and closer to the fall. Things start falling apart. Pain, grief, and anger surface. Many of these fathers withdraw physically and emotionally from their wives and children. Outbursts of anger increase. They break their promises. Some become physically and verbally abusive. Some become involved in adulterous affairs. Others develop alcohol, drug, or sexual addictions. Many just withdraw. Their families suffer the most. They are no match for the pain and sin that lurks inside them and the world. They fall. Some men fall before they even get to the top, beaten down by frustrations, roadblocks, and intense pressure from themselves and the world to succeed. They fall away.

REPERCUSSIONS

A father's fall takes its toll on everyone. The impact is overwhelming. Some families never fully recover from the damage caused by fallen father heroes. Marriages and families are torn apart. Abusive, neglectful, deceitful behavior from fathers wound their wives and children deeply. Intimacy and communication between husband and wife shuts down, anger, resentment, and pain sets in. Hurts pile up until something gives or the relationship ends. Their wives are demolished. Trust is completely shattered. Children can be emotionally wiped out. Reactions vary according to their personalities

at some point, and let God help you let go of the anger and resentment you hold against your father. Don't let unforgiveness rule your life. Take one day at a time. Pray for God to change your heart toward your dad. Ask Him to open your eyes and heart to your dad's pain too. Pray for God to heal and completely restore your father. Pray for your relationship with him to be fully restored. Confront him in love, let him know how much he hurt you and how much you want things to be right between you and him. Take things slowly, allow yourself to go through all kinds of emotions. Some fathers readily confess, repent, and move toward those they hurt, they work for reconciliation. They ask for forgiveness. They turn around. Some

except God and your most intimate relationships have access to your deepest feelings and affections. Dwell on things that edify God. Watch out for false security. Beware of feeling strong in your own strength. Apart from God you can do nothing. Don't get too self-confident. Don't ever say, "I've got it covered, trust me." God warns against this type of self-confidence. The Bible says, "Only a fool trusts in himself." (Prov. 28:26) and "The heart is deceitfully wicked, who can know it." (Jer. 17:26) We are no match for the sin lurking inside us. There is a whole army of evil desires within us (James 4:1).



and developmental levels. The consequences are devastating no matter how old a child is at the time. The effects are always negative. Children become confused, angry, and depressed. They may act out their feelings by underachieving in school, poor conduct, fighting, argumentativeness, and other bad behaviors. Some become so depressed that they shut down or attempt suicide. Others withdraw into sex, substance abuse, and reckless behaviors. Fallen fathers' friendships suffer too. They lose face and struggle with shame. Fallen men lose respect with their community. Work relationships become strained and declining performance affects their company's bottom line. They may lose their jobs. Many are forced to step down from their positions at church. Many fallen fathers pull away from their church. Hero fathers fall out of fellowship with God. These men are at risk for plunging lower and piercing themselves and others with greater grief. Some lose it all, marriage, family and friends! They enter the darkest times of their lives.

YOUR HEALING

Wounds inflicted from fallen hero fathers can cut to the bone. It isn't easy running to God, when your earthly father betrays you. God is perfect. His love never ceases. Allow Him to slowly bring you through the healing process. He is not like your earthly father. Pour out your sadness, grief, hurt, rage, and anger to Him. He will listen and respond to your pain and petitions. Let Him help you heal. Express your pain to other Believers you trust. Decide to forgive

fathers never look back, they leave you with your pain. Don't give up. Let God love you into healing from your father wounds. Healing can happen whether your dad cooperates or not. God can restore you. He is faithful. Trust Him.

THEIR HEALING

Fathers must want to change. They don't have to fall before addressing their problems with anger, addiction, depression, lust, power, loneliness, grief, emotional pain, and father wounds. They don't have to be superheroes! Fathers, talk to someone you trust. Confide in them about your troubles. Drop your pride. Open yourself to the healing power of Christ. Get with other men who understand what you are going through. Pick one Godly man you trust and go to him. Let him come along side you and help you go forward in your journey. You may need professional Christian counseling to help you unravel your problems and make changes. You must renew your mind too. We need to conform our minds to Christ. Marital and family therapy may also be necessary to heal the brokenness. Many men cope, cover, or escape their emotional pain by engaging in some addiction. Challenge the myths of manhood. Healing from sexual addiction requires dealing with pain. Men must take active steps to eliminate the behaviors. This involves reducing the stress in their lives, joining a support group, and seeking professional help. They must take steps to restore their relationships, beginning with God. Seek Christ daily. Go to those you have hurt and ask for forgiveness. Guard your heart, don't let anyone

HOPE FOR US ALL

Men, we don't have to cling to masculine hero myths anymore. We can abide in Christ, love our families, develop solid intimate relationships with them, work hard, and do right. God equips us to be more than heroes. He molds us into Godly men! Don't conform to this world. God wants us to live in the world but not be of the world. We need to accept the fact that our earthly fathers will never be perfect. We must let go. Give up control. It's good to have goals but unrealistic to expect perfection. The Bible says, "Many are the plans in a man's heart but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails." (Prov. 19:21). "The measure of a man is not how tall, wealthy, or intelligent, you are." (4 Him, 1996). Let God order your steps. Live a Godly life. Pursue Christ. Men get love, humility, forgiveness, right relationship, direction, and salvation from Christ. Abide in Christ. Become a doer of the His Word. Get your self-worth from Christ. Our culture wants heroes who save the day. God wants men He can use. Christ already saved the day. He saved us. We need Him. He is much more than a hero. He is the Christ, God and Eternal Savior, Hope for us all!

F.Y.I.

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