

STRAIGHT TALK FOR MEN

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STOP KILLING ME! By Melvin L. Latimer



In 2001 The FBI reported that there were 4,761 men killed by other men in the United States. Of those 4,761 men killed by other men, 2,567 were African American males killing other African American males.

Genesis Chapter 4, records the first murder in the Bible but more importantly a brother killing his brother.

When Cain killed Abel he did more than just murder someone, he killed a part of himself. The same blood that flowed through Abel's veins flowed through Cain's.

Cain killed more than his brother's natural body; he also killed his dreams, hopes, visions, memories and ultimately a part of his own future. Cain and Abel were connected in soul, body and mind. Cain's destiny was Abel's and Abel's destiny was Cain's.

When a man takes another man's life he in essence is killing a part of himself and his future. A death that prematurely takes a man from the earth before he fulfills his God given destiny, he never has a chance to produce sons and daughters.

SO, PLEASE STOP KILLING ME!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

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inherently different. While mothers are often seen as the nurturer, fathers often have an important role when it comes to playing with their children and teaching them how to do physical tasks. Fathers tend to be more focused on 'doing practical, educational things rather than talking about doing things.' As they are more physical with their children than moms, dads play an important role in developing their children's motor skills and ethical limits in regard to physical interaction. Children of these highly interactive fathers are also more curious about the world around them and develop greater problem solving skills.

The window of opportunity through which to provide that vital influence starts very young. In fact, it's safe to assume that dads have an effect on their children even before the little ones begin speaking. One study showed that at as early as five months babies had already been influenced by their interaction with their fathers. Those infants that had more contact with their fathers were more vocal and playful when placed with a friendly, but unfamiliar male. (Horn 39) This is in large part due to the fact that children begin at a very young age to establish patterns of trust and to form their social style. Developing so early, it is not safe to assume that a child is immune to negative influences before he can fully interact with his surroundings. When fathers acknowledge this, they can guide their children to receive the influences of their environment in a positive manner. A father's guidance will help children attain a higher level of social stability.

The well-liked are often those who conform to the trends of the crowd. Although this is one way to be popular,

there are other ways children gain acceptance of their peers. When parents use the home to teach their children how to interact with the world around them, their children develop better relationship skills which will aid them throughout their lives. As they grow, children will find that their ability to work together and communicate with their peers brings the same kind of approval as simply conforming but with a higher level of confidence. This social acceptance often leads to a greater sense of self worth which plays a crucial role in academic achievement. Excellence in both academic and social spheres is strongly linked to the child's relationship with its father. A study done by Kevin MacDonald found that when children spent more time playing with their fathers, their teachers consistently rated them as well-liked by their peers. Children glean much more from their interaction with their fathers than we realize.

When fathers take an active role in their children's lives, it not only helps them to develop healthy friendships and achieve good grades, but it will play a major role in their success as adults. Those adults who say their fathers were highly involved in their lives attend more schooling and have a higher average salary than those with lower father involvement. It is apparent that a father's interest in his child carries over to the child's own ambition to succeed. What then are we to do to assure that our children achieve the success noted in these studies?

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As a general finding, researchers note that although time with children is important, it isn't necessarily the amount, but the quality of time is limited, we need to make sure that the opportunities to be with our children count. One example can also give you a needed break from the hustle and bustle of work. Playing with your kids can be a positive experience for both you and your children, especially when they are young. This time needs to be free of distraction. Children tend to feel their surrounding more than analyze them, so they notice when they don't have the full attention of their parent.

Additionally, by playing with your children, you allow them to release energy built up from school or other activities, and this aids to develop a stronger personal bond. Simply through your eager interaction with them, they will trust you more, creating the foundation for healthy relationships throughout their lives.

Another opportunity for fathers, especially when their children are young, is bedtime. Hopefully, the night has calmed down and there is an opportunity to have quality time alone with the children. Simple things such as reading a book or recounting the day's events have the potential to make a child feel more secure while deepening the father-child relationship. When children learn to respect and love their parents, they are more willing to communicate and accept the guidance they will receive later in life. Parents, in turn, respect their children for their social maturity. Mutual respect promotes sensitivity and understanding toward others and plays a crucial role

in how well our children are able to work together with others in all aspects of their lives.

Some of the fondest memories I have from my childhood are those spent working with my father. It's true that I wasn't always excited to go work in the yard, but once into it, I enjoyed the time it afforded me to get to know my father on a more mature level. Working together gives you time to talk without having to 'have a talk.' It was through working side by side with my father that I really developed a respect for him and his experiences in life. Because of these times together, I am willing to turn to him for counsel. By nurturing our relationship, my father prepared me to deal with others generously on a personal level. His influence wasn't only effective because of the wisdom that he possessed, but more so because I knew that he really cared. His concern motivates me to extend that same level of caring to those around me.

The world is demanding. As fathers, we don't hold all of the answers to repairing society. Despite all your attempts as a father, your children may still have unresolved social issues; there is no cure-all in fatherhood. As a father, you hold some of the keys to unlocking the hopes and dreams within your children. When they are grown, you hope that they look back on you as their hero, someone who shaped their life for good. John Gottman, a family researcher, indicated why it is that fathers have such a deciding effect on their children's lives. He states, 'We believe the reason fathers have this extreme influence on their children is because the father-child relationship evokes such powerful emotions in kids. Spending quality time with your children

can unleash this huge potential to guide them to happy, healthy development.

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Can Men and Women Be Just Friends?

Grant Langston

For many people, the idea of a man and a woman being friends is charming but improbable. "It always leads to something else," they argue, meaning that the relationship eventually becomes romantic or soon frizzles out.

Perhaps they are right. After all, in contrast to the countless love stories we see in the movies, male-female friendships are rarely acclaimed or depicted as an ongoing, freestanding bond. How many stories can you think of that richly portray or endorse the lasting, devoted friendship of a man and a woman as an end in itself?

Even the acclaimed film "When Harry Met Sally," which got a lot of people talking about cross-gender friendships, ultimately proved to be another tale of romantic love. Billy Crystal and Meg Ryan's tumultuous and endearing friendship is only a stage in the development of the more celebrated attachment of falling in love.

On the other hand, there are those who are seemingly surprised by the question and argue that of course male-female friendships are possible; why wouldn't they be? These people's persuasiveness almost make the romantic pull of such relationships seem unusual. They ignore it altogether. "One of my best friends is a woman," the male proponent of this perspective insists. "And it's never

crossed my mind to consider her in a romantic way." Well, that takes care of that, I think. "My friendships with men are far less complex than my relationships with woman," a female with this position might say. "We can play sports and just have fun."

In our informal survey of people who are "just friends" with someone of the opposite sex, we heard a number of positive remarks. Over and over, men spoke about how a woman's friendship provided them with a kind of nurturance not generally available in their relationships with men. They said things like, "I don't have to play the macho game with women. I can show my weaknesses to a woman friend and she'll still accept me." When we asked women about their friendships with men, we heard comments like, "He is a good sounding board for getting the male perspective, the kind I can't get from my women friends."

Interestingly, women do not report the same level of intimacy as men do with their cross-gender friendships. Even women who count men among their close friends feel barriers between them. Women will say things like, "I have fun with men, and they can even be supportive and helpful about some things, but it's just not the same. If I try to talk to my male friends the same way I talk to my female friends, I'm always disappointed." At first glance the payoff for men seems to be bigger than the payoff for women in cross-gender friendships, but that's not necessarily true. Women report great enjoyment from the diversity their friendships with men bring to their lives.

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So, does all this mean the answer to the question about men and women being friends is yes? Few relationship issues are that plain and simple. The real answer is “it depends.” So, you say, let’s cut to the chase and get to the bottom line: What do these relationships depend upon? They depend upon how much each person in the relationship is willing to stretch and grow.

These friendships, you see, require both men and women to call upon parts of themselves that are usually less accessible when relating to their typical same-sex friends. For a man, a women friend allows him to express his more emotional side, to experience his vulnerability, to treat himself and his friend more tenderly than is permissible with male friends. What is typically missing for him in this cross-gender relationship, however, is the kind of rough camaraderie he can have with another man.

For a woman, friendship with a man helps her express her independent, more reasoned, and tougher side-the harder edge that’s kept under wraps in relationships with women. The downside for her is the relative absence of emotional reciprocity and intensity she normally shares with a female friend.

So, okay, twist our arms for a yes or no answer to this question and the answer will be yes. But we will quickly qualify it:

men and women can enjoy friendship together, but not at the same level they do with friends of the same sex.

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Men: Beware of Temptation

Men and women respond to temptation differently. Women tend to flee temptation, while men like to crawl away slowly and hope temptation will overtake them.

No man sets out to succumb to temptation on purpose. Yet every day we learn of men, Christian men, who fail. Unless a man remains perpetually vigilant, his own evil desires carry him into temptation and sin.

Six temptations men face:

- **Emotional neglect.** Men are most tempted not to give their wives the thing they desire the most: emotional connection and intimacy; the sharing of yourself at the deepest level, and wanting to know the same level in your spouse. God commanded, *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church* (Eph. 5:25). The Bible gives no similar instructions to wives because wives are naturally drawn to an intimate love relationship. For men it must be learned.
- **Lust.** Men become sexually stimulated visually. When a man looks and lusts, that does not mean he no longer loves his wife. He is engaged in temptation – physical

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and spiritual. We live in a sexually over-stimulated culture in which many men are drained of the spiritual energy needed to expose temptation and the moral energy to resist it. The best way to resist sexual temptation is to flee from it.

- **False gods.** You can have only one god. Most men try to worship an idol and God. That, too, is impossible. Idolatry is the error of giving worship or homage to any power or object other than God. It's either going to be Jesus Christ or something else. And whatever the something else is, it will never satisfy (e.g. accomplishments, money, pleasure, possessions, power, prestige, or position).
- **Money and debt.** Men find money intoxicating. Jesus named money as his chief competitor: *No one can serve two masters.... You cannot serve both God and money* (Matt. 6:24). Not only is man tempted to earn more money, but also to borrow more money than he can afford to repay. The temptation is to love them both. To live debt-free within your means, with Jesus as the god of your life, is the goal.
- **Whining.** The Bible tells of people who grumbled about the sufficiency of God's care. When men see others advancing more rapidly, frequently resentments, jealousies, envy, and bitterness build up. Sights, perceived and real, grind on his ego. The way to overcome the temptation to complain is to accept your lot in life and get on with a positive outlook. Paul said, *I have learned*

to be content whatever the circumstances (Phil 4:11).

- **Pride.** Stubborn pride often keeps a man from humbling himself and admitting he's wrong. Temptation to pride comes in many disguises. The most common form is for a man to look down with disdain on others. It is a sin of comparison in which a man compares his [perceived] strength with another's weaknesses. Equally insidious is the temptation for a man to look up in disgust to others who have it better or have accomplished more. Pride can even cause some men to feel they are above talking about "touchy feelings," and so emotionally neglect their wives.