

# Authentic manhood

## Calling all men to get off the sidelines

One of the things I do at my home church is get together with a group of guys at 6 a.m. on Wednesdays for what we call Men's Fraternity. We are working our way through a *Authentic Manhood*, a study guide developed by Robert Lewis about what it means to be a biblical man.

A lot of guys are wondering about this and some are enormously frustrated by the question. The pressure in our world towards absolute egalitarianism has left a bunch of guys trying to figure out whether or not they have a unique and significant role to aspire to in their marriage, in their relationships with their children, on the job or in society in general. Robert Lewis says that he thinks men do have an important role, and his view is that the role grows directly out of creation and is clarified in the Scriptures.

A couple of months ago I read *Season of Life*, a book by Pulitzer Prize winner Jeffrey Marx. In this story within a story Marx tells how he researched the life of Joe Ehrmann, who found fame and fortune during his football career with the Baltimore Colts and then laid it down to become an ordained minister and high school football coach. Marx, by the way, was a ball boy for the Colts during Ehrmann's tenure.

The core mes-

sage in Marx's book is a dead ringer match for what Lewis teaches. Ehrmann builds into his players an understanding of both football and life. He prioritizes relationships and preaches that men need to have a cause bigger than themselves. He drills his guys to accept responsibility and to risk leading with courage. "More important than points on a scoreboard" is empathy, integrity and service. And then what you wouldn't expect: The baseline relational battle cry

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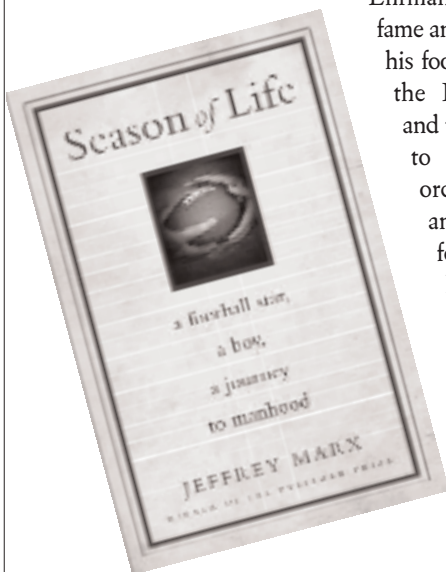
for Coach Ehrmann is telling the players that he loves them. "My job is to love you guys, and your job is to love each other," is how he says it to them. That is man talk?

The message of the *Authentic Manhood* material is that it can be defined—that there is a definition for men to know, understand and aspire to reach. Here it is: Real men reject passivity, accept responsibility, lead courageously and expect God's greater reward. As we have studied, thought, discussed and prayed our way through these four ideas, good things have happened in all of us.

One of the maladies of the modern male, without a doubt, is to sit out. To be dispassionate, or at least disinterested, is often viewed as a normal manly trait. Squirming out of responsibility and accountability has frequently been adopted as another inalienable right.

Closely linked to the above is the increasingly popular stand-on-the-sidelines approach to life. This is especially noticeable where family and household responsibilities are concerned. Most of us like rewards immediately, even if they are not of high quality or any duration. Self-denial for the sake of godliness and/or future better rewards is not in season.

Maybe a review of what it means for us as the male of the species to take seriously basic high quality and godly mandates can restore clarity for us. And then we will know of what we speak, how to live and where we are going.



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