

FOURTH QUARTER STRATEGIES - Saturday, January 16, 2016

REAL MEN DON'T EAT QUICHE was a bestselling tongue-in-cheek book satirizing masculinity back in 1982. Personally, it caused me try my first "egg and bacon pie" and I quickly realized that Quiche was quite tasty. I've enjoyed it ever since and I still consider myself to be a real man! Lately I've been listening to a new song pop up on the Country Western charts. It's entitled REAL MEN LOVE JESUS. It's a catchy title and I decided do a little research into the American Country artist to find out the rest of the story behind the song. In an interview, Michael Ray who performs the song in his new album says, "I wanted to put a song out there for the guy that gets overlooked - the guy that's working all week and has a few beers on the weekend but just trying to do right, keep his head down and raise a family." He continues, "Those are the guys who raised me. That's my dad, that's me, that's my grandpa - the men who were in my life."

Certainly all of us are somewhat influenced by those who raise us in our formidable years. But not all of us have grown up with positive role models and certainly many did not receive the positive Christian influence that Michael Ray mentions. The greatest influence in my early years happened to be my Grandpa. He was a German farmer who tilled the soil on his 87 acre Texas farm for nearly 70 years. Opa was a good man who loved to work the land and he and my Grandma helped my Mom raise me while my Dad was overseas during the Korean War.

Rather than focus on what it takes to be a real man, I'd like to take this in a totally different direction. Let's talk about "loving Jesus" and just what that looks like. I was forty when I first came to love Jesus and that love has continually grown as I've come to know Him more intimately. We're not talking about just expressing our love through words. In any relationship words are certainly important, but our actions are what matters most. My desire is to "love God with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my mind and with all my strength." And I know He wants me to also express my love for Him by "loving others as I love myself." Notice that I must love myself before I can genuinely love others. You see, I understand that we've all been wonderfully made - created especially for God's pleasure and purpose. And He truly loves us with all our blemishes and shortcomings.

Can you relate to loving Jesus? It's easy for all kinds of things to get in the way of that most important relationship. Religion can certainly get in the way. As a child we can be emotionally traumatized by a parent and that hurt can linger for years and possibly a lifetime. Grieving the loss of a loved one can cause us to blame God for our personal tragedy. Being treated unfairly can make it difficult to love others let alone Jesus. In Galatians 5:22-23 we're reminded that, "The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. Against such things there is no law." You see, it's not about the law or commandments. It's simply about Jesus and what He accomplished for all mankind on the cross. It starts with His love for us and real men and real women need to reciprocate that love. He deserves our love and devotion. He has mine and I hope you'll give Him yours as well.

Here to serve,

Jim Langley, CLU

Passages to Ponder: Jeremiah 31:3; Mark 12:29-31; Ephesians 5:1-2; Galatians 2:20; 2 Thessalonians 1:3

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Jeremiah 31:3 New King James Version (NKJV)

³The LORD has appeared of old to me, *saying*:

“Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love;
Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.

Mark 12:29-31 New King James Version (NKJV)

²⁹Jesus answered him, “The first of all the commandments *is*:

‘Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. ³⁰And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This *is* the first commandment. ³¹And the second, like *it*, *is* this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

Ephesians 5:1-2 New King James Version (NKJV)

5 Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. ²And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

Galatians 2:20 New King James Version (NKJV)

²⁰I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

2 Thessalonians 1:3 New King James Version (NKJV)

³We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other,