

TRUE STRENGTH

True Strength - Session 1: Heart of a Man part 1

Activity: please answer the following “Would you rather” & “tell me” questions in your journal

Would you rather...

- » Live in a world where there are no problems, or live in a world that you rule?
- » Have a Zombie Apocalypse, or have World War III?
- » Receive free Starbucks coffee for a year, or free iTunes music forever?
- » Talk like Yoda, or breathe like Darth Vader?
- » Be a big deal, or be a great man?

PRAY: Heavenly Father, please grant us the understanding of our masculinity. Take away the obstacles that prevent us from becoming men of God and help us to understand what it means to be a man of God. We ask this through the intercession of St. Joseph. Amen.

Tell me....

- » If you have a sister, what are some of the things that she does that you would never think of doing?
- » What are some of the defining characteristics that make men and women different?

Just like women and men are different, so are all men different from one another. While there are certainly some things that we may think of when we think of masculinity—football, heroism, fighting—it would be a mistake to classify masculinity as specifically these things. For example, a man could enjoy a romantic comedy and he wouldn’t be any less of a man because of it. A man may not enjoy football, but he isn’t any less of a man because of it.

So what makes you a man?

What does every man have in common?

If you could sum up the heart of every man in one word, what would it be?

Video 1: Watch then answer the following questions

- 1) Can you think of an example or a story of a man you know who has made a positive impression on you?
- 2) What is the distinction between someone who is a big deal and someone who is a great man?
- 3) What are some qualities of people who are great?

Video 2:

Fr. Maximilian Kolbe was a Franciscan friar who was taken to Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland in 1941. Father Kolbe was imprisoned by the German Gestapo for hiding Jews and issuing a number of anti-Nazi publications.

In your journal: List 3 facts about Fr. Kolbe from his well-known time of ministry then list 5 things about him from before his time in the concentration camp.

Canonized by Pope John Paul II in 1982, St. Maximilian Kolbe was able to do the great work of giving his life for another because he was a great man. He lived as a saint before he stepped into Auschwitz, and his sainthood became recognized because of his sacrifice.

- 1) What's one thing that inspires you from St. Maximilian Kolbe's example?
- 2) What is the distinction between being a man of greatness and doing great things?
- 3) Eighty-five percent of youths sitting in prisons come from fatherless homes. Why do you think fathers have such a powerful influence, either positively or negatively, on their children's behavior?
- 4) What can you do right now in your life to prepare you to be a strong father?
- 5) What 4 marks or characteristics do you think make a man truly great?

Read: Greatness requires that we work at growing closer to God so that He can make us into the people that He has created us to be. Greatness is built on humility. We grow in humility by admitting our weaknesses and asking for help. I want you to take a few minutes and think about how you spent this past week. Identify time or activities that you did that prevented you from fulfilling your full potential. It could be a particular sin, or it could be laziness, playing too many video games, eating junk food, etc. Identify something that prevents you from greatness.

Challenge: Are you willing to give that thing up this week and replace it with something that will make you a man of greatness. You could pick up more prayer time, a devotional, or a corporal work. You could replace complaining with cheerfulness. Whatever it is, jot down your plan and the intention of growing as a person this week. Track how you do.

Pray: Take a moment to say a prayer, praying for the strength to be a great man and for Christ to lead you to the amazing adventure that He has for you. There is no right or wrong way to do this, simply talk to God, then ask for the gift of faith to believe He will indeed answer.

*Thank you for completing the make up work for True Strength: Heart of A Man.
Please show your journal with the completed answers to your group leader for credit for this session.*

True Strength - Session 2: Heart of a Man part 2

Please answer this question in your journal as you begin this session:

» Who is a man (one that is not a family member) that has influenced your life?

In this session we talked about what real manhood is all about. We gave some examples of how to be a man of greatness and discover the four marks of a man of greatness. We will explore the lives of saints who were soldiers, the virtues of knighthood, and how to gain real spiritual freedom. Please begin your make up work in prayer:

Read: Philippians 4:8

Pray: Heavenly Father, You entered the world as a man. We pray that You would enlighten our minds and hearts so that we may understand what it means to be a man. Provide us grace to grow into men of God, and open our hearts and minds to understand the meaning of our masculinity. We ask this through the intercession of St. Joseph. Amen.

In the last session we discussed the marks or characteristics of a truly great man.

» Can you remember the 4 marks that we came up with at the last session?

Please take a moment to jot them down in your journal now

VIDEO: Watch Scene 3. This segment will last approximately five minutes.

At the end of the scene, open your Bible and read Philippians 2:5-11. Then answer the following question.

» What strengths of character do you see in this description of Jesus?

VIDEO: Watch Scene 4. This segment will last approximately five minutes.

A great man loves Jesus and a great man lives for others. When we are children, we focus entirely on ourselves, but as we grow into men, we learn to love others and to live selflessly at all times. We learn by the example of Jesus and His grace. It can be easy to become trapped in ourselves, our own problems and concerns. It takes a great man to learn to live for others.

» There is a saying that “boys become men in the company of men.” What are some things that you would like to learn from older men?

Father Capodanno put the needs of wounded men before his own need of safety. While they might not be as obvious as wounded men on a battlefield, there are many people around us who are hurting.

» Without giving names, what are some examples of “hurting people” and some ways you can be a hero like Father Capodanno?

VIDEO: Watch Scene 5. This segment will last seven minutes.

» Can you describe a time when you or a guy you know stood up to defend a girl’s dignity?

» Think of a scenario that will likely happen in the future where you will have the opportunity to defend the dignity of women. What is that scenario and what will you do?

There is a reason that God made men strong: he intended on having men defend and protect women. The defense of something noble and beautiful is built into the heart of every man. But how do we get there?

During the Middle Ages, a squire on the night before his knighting ceremony was expected to take a cleansing bath, fast, make confession, and then hold an all-night vigil of prayer in the chapel, preparing himself in this manner for life as a knight. For the knighting ceremony, he dressed in white as a symbol of purity; over the white he wore a red robe to show his readiness to be wounded.

Knights were expected to be prayerful. They did not rely on their strength alone; they relied on a strength that was bigger than themselves. As a man, it can be difficult to fight lust in your heart, and it can be difficult to stand up and defend the dignity of women. When we rely on the strength of God, we learn to put ourselves at the service of women.

As men, we are at our best when we have something to do. We like practical steps. So far, we have covered three of the marks of real men.

» What do you think is the fourth mark?

VIDEO: Watch Scene 6. This segment is about eight minutes, to see what the fourth mark is.

Real men are men of virtue. The way that we learn to become men is to create habits in ourselves that cause us to grow. I want you to practice the steps that Chris gave us this week. Examine one bad habit that you have, and fast from it. Replace it with something good, like prayer or a good deed. I want you to pick one guy in the group to hold you accountable to that commitment this week, and I also want to challenge you to go to Confession this week.

Pray: “Our Father”

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True Strength – Session 3: Band of Brothers part 1

Just curious:

- » If you could only eat one food for an entire year, what would it be?
- » If you could pick one place in the world to visit, where would you go?
- » What is the most miserable experience you can think of?

The topic that we are getting into is about brotherhood and what it means to be a band of brothers. Please consider and reflect on this quote:

“Men—this has always happened in history—bind their lives together to accomplish a collective mission and destiny. Is the unique destiny of eternal happiness worth less to the men and women of today?” —St. Josemaría Escrivá, Furrow #729, Founder of Opus Dei

PRAY: Heavenly Father, thank You for creating us as young men who have a heart for true brotherhood. Teach us how to grow into good, loyal, and honorable men. Open our hearts to the truth of authentic friendship with our brothers in Christ. Light a fire in our hearts for something more than what the world has to offer us. Help us to see that You have surrounded us with a band of brothers and give us the courage to live a life worthy of the call You have given us—to live as Your sons. Amen.

VIDEO: Watch Scene 1. This segment will last approximately two minutes.

Scott uses the term “band of brothers.” Band of Brothers was an eleven-hour mini-series produced by Steven Spielberg in 2001. Extremely popular, especially among male demographics, this was a military mini-series following the Easy Company of the U.S. Army 101st Airborne division from their training and through their activity in World War II. Scott talks about our need for a band of brothers. In the military, soldiers are trained and built up to be more than simply co-workers or even friends. In the creeds of various military branches, they all speak of never leaving a soldier behind. This reflects something deeper than friendship. The military trains their soldiers to be a band of brothers.

Please answer a few questions.

- »Have you ever known anyone in the military? What was their training like? How do they speak of their relationships with the other members of their unit?
- »Why do you think it is so important that a soldier be trained to never leave another behind?
- »How is brotherhood different from friendship?

VIDEO: Watch Scene 2. This segment is about three minutes long.

- »Let’s say you are rock climbing or whitewater rafting. What happens if your teammates are not dependable?

When Jesus sent the Apostles out in their public ministry, he sent them out two by two. There is a reason for this: the Christian life is not intended to be lived alone. Jesus knows that we need support and He knows that we cannot live out our faith alone. The goal is heaven and we cannot get there on our own. Jesus reconciled the world to Himself through His death and resurrection. The Church exists so that we can live and worship in community with one another.

»What happens if we try to go whitewater rafting or mountain climbing on our own?

» Scott mentions friendship, loyalty, sacrifice, and purpose. Is there a person in your life who embodies all of those qualities?

»In the same way, what happens if we try to live the Christian life without brotherhood?

Examples with questions:

»A guy in our group is depressed and may be suicidal. How would you respond?

»Someone in the group makes fun of someone else in the group. What would you do?

»You know that someone in the group regularly cheats in school. What would you do?

You have been meeting for several weeks, and each week you are given a challenge at the end of your session. These challenges are disciplines that we are supposed to be working on in our daily lives.

» Which discipline or challenge have you struggled with the most?
(Examples: going to Confession, replacing a bad habit with a good habit)

Brotherhood doesn't happen overnight, but it won't ever happen if we don't have the intention to grow as a band of brothers. This week, everyone was to partner up with a person in the group. Talk to your Mentor about who is going to be your accountability partner. Share with that person the one daily discipline that you struggled with the most.

CHALLENGE: This week, your challenge is to try to do the discipline you struggled with again. But it is now the responsibility of your partner to make sure that you do it. It is up to you how you want to encourage one another—you can text reminders, talk to each other daily, or meet up and practice your disciplines together.

PRAY: Lord, as I learned about what true brotherhood is, I ask that You help me to be open to growing in discipline and service to my brothers.

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True Strength – Session 4: Band of Brothers part 2

READ: Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

PRAY: Heavenly Father, thank You for creating us as young men who have a heart for true brotherhood. Teach us how to grow into good, loyal, and honorable men. Open our hearts to the truth of authentic friendship with our brothers in Christ. Light a fire in our hearts for something more than what the world has to offer us. Help us to see that You have surrounded us with a band of brothers and give us the courage to live a life worthy of the call You have given us to live as Your sons. Amen.

VIDEO: Watch Scene 3. This segment will last approximately four minutes. Then answer the questions.

Scott shares the story of David and Goliath—which we all might be pretty familiar with. We have talked about the concept of a “band of brothers” as a kind of military expression. »What do you think is the purpose or mission of a military officer?

The daily activity of a soldier is defined according to his mission. Remember the O in the GOSPEL acronym: Our sins have separated us from God, and we find ourselves in a great spiritual battle.

»If your mission is to defeat the dominion of the devil, what are some daily activities to fulfill this mission?

In order to share a purpose with another person, we have to have purpose. If we do not know our purpose, we cannot share our mission with one another. David and Jonathan were able to have a brotherhood because they shared in the same mission with one another.

VIDEO: Watch Scene 4. The segment will last approximately six minutes. At the end of the scene, answer the following questions

Passivity is a failure to act when we should. As the king, David should have been leading his men in battle. Instead, he was passively back in his palace. This is similar to when Adam was passive in the garden while Eve was being tempted by Satan. Adam was there and did not fulfill his mission to protect and defend Eve. Passivity makes us weak in the face of temptation. We need to keep our mission always in the front of our minds, so we don't fall into passivity.

»Why did David fall into sin?

»What caused David to repent of his sin and be reconciled with God?

REFLECT/APPLICATION: When we forget or lose sight of our mission, our brotherhood has a way of calling us out and bringing us back to our mission. This is why soldiers have each other's backs. This is the kind of relationship that we need to have with one another—otherwise, when we fall down, we will stay down, and we will never accomplish our mission.

Take a moment to answer these questions in your journal:

- » How can you help a brother who is struggling to resist looking at pornography on the Internet?
- » How can you help a brother who is struggling to resist drinking alcohol or taking drugs?
- » How can you help a brother who is in an impure relationship with a girl?
- » How can you help a brother who is not putting in the necessary effort to get good grades in school?
- » How can you help a brother who does not have a strong, faith-filled father in his life?

VIDEO: Watch Scene 5. The scene is six minutes long.

Reflect and answer: What are some areas where you fall short—where you are spiritually vulnerable.

COMMIT: Your challenge this week is to reflect on the story of David, especially in 1 Samuel 17, the story of David and Goliath, and 2 Samuel 11-12, the story of David, Bathsheba, and Nathan. As you read, imagine yourself in the stories and reflect on these questions

- » 1 Samuel 17—How does Jonathan help David assume his role as king? What qualities does Jonathan have that make him a good friend? What characteristics of brotherhood do David and Jonathan share? How is God calling you to help your friends in the circumstances and challenges of their lives?
- » 2 Samuel 11-12—How does Nathan help David repent of his sin and turn back to God? Have you ever been in a situation where you had to call someone out, or where someone was calling you out and you had to be accountable? What ways does God use your friend to call you to be a better man?

PRAY: Say one “Our Father” and then try to simply pray out loud to God about the areas where you struggle with this whole topic of study. Thank Him for the ways you have grown. Pray for the others in the group as well as your own intentions.

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