

Positive Male Spiritual Role Models by Timothy J. Gallagher NY MROP 2006

As a police detective for over seventeen years, I have had opportunities to deal with many people in many circumstances. An interview of a streetwise suspect confirmed what I believe the world needs from men – positive male spiritual role models.

My partner was interviewing a hard, calloused man regarding an armed robbery. Occasionally, I interjected an innocuous question just to develop a relationship and breakthrough his carapace exterior. Surprisingly, this tough knot of a man began to open up, but never looked at either of us. We created a conversation as men. Not detective and suspect. I learned of his checkered past, his father leaving, his learning to hustle on the streets and his criminal behavior. His story was sad and I secretly hoped there was some good in his life so I asked if he ever had any joy in his life. He told me he did - once - when as a boy he lived with his cousins and uncle. They enjoyed hiking, fishing, and talking. It struck me that I do that with my sons and other boys as a Cub Scout leader. For the first time he turned toward me. This hardened man then sat up, looked me straight in the eyes, and told me to never stop doing that with those boys.

This experience solidified my belief in the need for positive male spiritual role models. My experiences as a police detective verify what the academic studies have discovered regarding crime: a small number of people cause many of our problems. Those small numbers are primarily males in their late teens to early thirties. When I look at the particular cases of these men, I am assured of my belief, for they did not have a positive male spiritual role model. In fact, often, these men are supported in court by a plethora of females; a mother, an aunt, sisters, girlfriends but rarely a male and seldom a positive spiritual male. In some cases, they had a male role model albeit a negative male role model, if there was a man at all.

What is telling of this is the importance of positive spiritual men. I have instructed in graduate school and police academies for several years and make this point with men by asking one question. Ask most men the worst thing they can hear from their father, or male role model and they will agree: "I am disappointed with you." It cuts them to the quick. We, as men, need to hear we are appointed, that we have arrived, and that we are a man's man. That harkens to the importance of initiation. This, by the way, is played out daily from boys being hazed as new members of a sports team to admittance into a street gang. Men's behavior is often a journey of seeking male approval. In that journey males must learn wisdom and to learn that wisdom a positive male role model must be present. Males must learn to transform the pain of life. And know this; the pain of life is sublime. Pain comes in many forms and fashions and the acting out of that pain is the crime I deal with as a detective. If we, as a society, ever want to truly fight the "war on crime" we must deal with the real issue; the lack of positive male spiritual role models.

Males must learn to experience joy, for in true joy they discover their true selves. Males must learn not to corrupt their innate power as men, for there is a power greater than them – God. All men, from jail to Yale, need a positive male spiritual role model to guide them in their journey to discover this wisdom.

The world is redolent of the journey from boyhood to manhood. Unfortunately, the world witnesses men's negative behavior in their journey in myriad ways. As a detective I witness the criminal behavior of men in their journey. For some men the journey is "I kill; therefore I am." For all men the journey must be; "I love; therefore I am." But the news is not all bad. The positive male spiritual role models are present, yet we need more of them. They are not hard to find; often these role models are the average Joes; school teachers, coaches, an uncle and, hopefully, a father.

To transform this pattern a conversation needs to spread, as it did with that embattled man and me, with a call to action echoing how important these men are to our world.