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## **HOW TO BECOME A “REAL MAN”**

I believe that every boy has the question, “What does it mean to be a man?” and “Do I have what it takes to become a man?” Every boy needs a father to model manhood and to encourage him to believe that with God’s help he can become a real man.

I used to believe that if one became a true Christian, then you surrendered your manhood or womanhood and became a kind of neutered “other.” How crazy is that? The Bible says, “*Male and female He created them. In the image of God He created them.*” God’s nature contains both male and female characteristics, and He created mankind to be either male or female. We are born incomplete, and only as we “*present our bodies to God as a living sacrifice*” (Romans 12) does God enable us to fulfill the purpose He had when He designed us.

But what does it mean to become a “real man?” Included in this question, which pertains to both males and females, are questions about our identity, purpose, ideas about fulfillment, success, etc. The answers the world gives come primarily through the culture of our family, tribe, and nation. Consider some of the answers the world gives:

**American Indians** ..... A real man was a “brave.” Obviously this meant that a boy was recognized as a man when he proved that he was courageous. This was accomplished by “counting coup” or some other test. His loyalty was only to his tribe.

**Japanese** ..... The ideal Japanese man was the Samurai whose code was courage, loyalty to the Shogun or Emperor, and death before dishonor. They believed in their inherent racial superiority.

**Babylonians** ..... The Bible says they were arrogant, cruel, merciless, and that “*Their god was their own strength.*” King Nebuchadnezzar built a gold statue of himself and demanded that it be worshipped. As their king and representative man, this reveals their thoughts concerning manhood and purpose.

**Romans** ..... Their ideal man was supposedly portrayed by Russell Crowe in Gladiator. He was courageous and self-sacrificing for Rome, which was both a nation and an ideal.

**Nazism** ..... Courageous, racially superior, cruel, merciless, ambitious.

**America – James Bond** ..... Smart, fearless, self-glorifying, self-gratifying, cool, sophisticated (his Martinis had to be “shaken, not stirred.”) A beautiful man and super virile. Women were attracted to him, shall we say. He was young, strong, healthy, wealthy. Because humans do not normally stay young, strong and healthy, you may have noticed that James has had many iterations: Sean Connery, David Niven, George Lazenby, Roger Moore, Timothy Dalton, Pierce Brosnan, Daniel Craig, and counting. Also, James Bond always wins in the end .

**America – Super heroes** ..... America has become fascinated and infantilized over heroes, sports heroes and comic-book heroes: Superman, Spider Man, Bat Man, Captain America. Ticket prices to this year’s Super Bowl start at \$3,295 each but can only be bought in pairs with a steep additional fee. What fuels this kind of nonsense?

**America – the 1%** ..... In the October Atlantic Magazine, George Packer tells about the struggle he and his wife have had in the city of New York to provide schooling for their two children. He describes the incredible sacrifices that parents make to get their children in the “right” public or private school so that they will be on track to be admitted to a top university that will guarantee their future financial and social success. This also explains the recent news about certain Hollywood celebrities attempting to bribe the way for their children to get into Ivy League universities. The competition has risen to the level of madness. (Parents standing in line all night in the snow to get their child into the right kindergarten.) The private school he found provided two teachers in each class of 15 children; parents who were concert pianists or playwrights or investment bankers; the prospect later on of classes in Latin, poetry, puppetry, math theory, taught by passionate scholars;

and close connections with the admissions offices of top universities. But the tuition cost was \$50,000 per year for each child and rising every year. He calculated that the pre-college educations of their two children would cost more than \$1.5 million.

## Reflection:

Some of the characteristics of manhood and of success in the above list are, I believe, given to us by the Creator: courage, self-sacrifice, a desire to achieve, and a desire for adventure. But God's list is in other ways very different from the world's list.

Jesus Christ was not an imaginary super hero. He was "God with us;" and He was the man that God gave us as our model, example and Savior. Some of Jesus' characteristics are: Loving, courageous, joyful, disciplined, self-sacrificing, surprising, compassionate, pure, respectful toward women, kind toward children, forgiving toward those who hated and cursed Him, fearless, gentle with the disabled, hopeful, God glorifying, self-denying, focused on loving and serving His Father and loving and serving others.

Note that the world's ideal of manhood always includes: youth, strength, health, wealth, success, being admired by others. There is no place for the feeble, the poor, the disabled, the broken, the helpless. Also, there is really no place for death and dying.

What is your idea of a real man and a real woman, and your idea of success?

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**I AM YOUR LIFE!** In his book, *Miracles*, Eric Metaxas tells the story of his friend, Frederica Mathewes-Green. Frederica was raised in a nominally Christian home but rejected her parents' faith in her early teens. Her "homemade belief system was 'the life force.'" She concluded that it was somehow the "raw energy of life itself that was the essence of God, and the various world religions were poetic attempts to express that belief." She decided to take from each tradition what she liked and ignore what she disliked. But while in college, "I realized that my selections were conditioned by my own tastes and blind spots. I was patching together a Frankenstein God in my own image, and it would never be taller than five foot one."

This is when she chose Hinduism to be her faith, "Because I thought it would look really cool on me." She said that Christianity didn't even make the lineup because she considered it infantile – probably because she associated it with her own naïve childhood.

After graduation, Frederica met and married her husband, Gary, in a charming "hippie" wedding, in the woods with her wearing flowers in her hair and sandals, the women in tie-dyed dresses, a black lab with a red bandanna around his neck, and a vegetarian reception under the trees.

Immediately afterward, she and Gary took off for Europe. They would live for three months and extend their money by hitchhiking and living on wine and cheese. On June 20, 1974, they made their way to Dublin, Ireland, found a cheap hotel and decided to see some sights. They stumbled upon a church in the business district and decided to take a look inside. She separated from Gary and, "I came upon a small side altar. Above it there was a white marble statue of Jesus with his arms held low and open, and his heart exposed on his chest, twined with thorns and springing with flames." The statue depicted a vision that a French nun had seen in 1675. The nun heard Jesus say, "Behold the heart which has so loved mankind."

Frederica will never be able to explain what happened next. But suddenly this young woman so hostile to Christianity found herself on her knees in front of the statue. "I could hear an interior voice speaking to me. The voice was both intimate and authoritative, and it filled me." It said, "I am your life. You think that your life is your name, your personality, your history. But that is not your life. I am your life." It went on, naming that "life-force" notion I admired: "Beyond that, you think that your life is the fact that you are alive, that your breath goes in and out, that energy courses in your veins. But even that is not your life. I am your life. I am the foundation of everything else in your life."

Frederica stood up feeling rather shaky. She says it was "like sitting quietly in your living room and having the roof blown off. I didn't have any doubt who the 'I' was that was speaking to me, and it wasn't someone I was eager to get to know. I hadn't been sure the fellow had ever lived. Yet here he was, and though I didn't know him it seemed he already knew me, from the inside out. She says that it wasn't a kind of "woo-woo spiritual experience where the next day you wonder if it really happened. "It was shockingly real, as if I'd encountered a dimension of reality I'd never known existed before. Jesus was realer than anything I'd ever encountered, the touchstone of reality. It left me with a great hunger for

more, so that my whole life is leaning toward him, questing for him, striving to break down the walls inside that shelter me from his gaze.”

Jesus said, *I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me.* God created the universe through him, through Christ. And God sustains the universe through him, through Christ. He is your life. If you choose him, you choose life. If you reject him, you choose death. You can't sit on the fence. There is no fence. You are at this moment either in him, in Christ, in life, or outside of him, in death. He loves you and is calling you even today. He is saying to you today, “I am your life!”

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## **WHAT HAS GONE WRONG WITH PUBLIC EDUCATION? \_**

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Imagine the following scenario:

You have always had a love of children and have just finished the grueling process of getting your university degree (four years or longer) and obtaining certification to be a teacher. You have accrued over \$28,000 in debt (the average indebtedness of college grads). You want to make a difference in the lives of disadvantaged children and are hired as a teacher in elementary/middle/or high school in a low income part of your city. You are given a class of 25 children. 20 of the kids are motivated and want to learn. Five of them do not want to learn. Their low IQ makes it impossible for some of them to learn. Some of them come from homes where there is drug addiction, violence, physical and/or sexual abuse. They are angry, withdrawn, and sometimes violent. They are so disruptive that they demand most of your attention to the detriment of the children who want to learn.

These five children deserve help in some sort of controlled environment, and they should not be in the general school population, but federal laws have forced this situation. When you as a teacher try to establish discipline so you can accomplish some teaching, you find that your hands are tied. When a child bites, hits, turns a chair over, and you send him to the office, he is soon returned to the class and later you are accused of incompetence or racism (if it is a minority child).

A story much like this one got worse and worse and ended in a terrible school shooting – a completely avoidable shooting if common sense rules were in place according to the following book.

**WHY MEADOW DIED** Why Meadow Died is a best-selling book authored by Andrew Pollack and Max Eden. Mr. Pollack was the father of Meadow, one of the students murdered in the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Broward County, Florida, on February 14, 2018. Fourteen students and three adults were murdered on that day.

Mr. Pollack wrote, “This book is about exposing what went wrong in the schools so that parents across the country can learn from this tragedy, find out what’s happening in their own kids’ schools, and keep their kids safe. School safety shouldn’t be political, but I will say this: If, after the most avoidable shooting in American history leaders aren’t held accountable and lessons aren’t learned; and if a school shooting is permitted to become a partisan issue so that it becomes politically incorrect to discuss these issues, then our society is basically over.”

Dennis Prager wrote: “This is one of the most important books on American life published in the last few years. Why Meadow Died is shocking, illuminating, and ultimately angering. If the media ignore this book, it will prove they put ideology above truth.”

Mr. Pollock is an extremely angry man, and rightly so, and in his book he vents his anger toward everybody: federal and state legislatures, the National Education Association, the ACLU, the school board, the superintendent and principal of the school, the school guards, the police department, the media, etc. While I realize that this is only one side of the story, it is a side that many of us have never heard, and I think that we citizens, Christians, parents and grand-parents, should be willing to hear what Mr. Pollock has to say. A school shooting could be coming to a school near you.

Following are some quotations from Why Meadow Died. Obviously, I am not sure about some of the assertions that are made. (While there are many honorable school administrators and principals across the nation who are resisting the tide of political correctness as best they can, Mr. Pollock tends to tar them all with the same brush.) If you are interested, I trust that you will search out the truth and make your own evaluation. You will certainly want to talk to your friends who are educators.

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“Nationwide, citizens have lost power over our schools. Instead, school superintendents follow orders and cues from federal bureaucrats and social justice activist groups. Pressure to reduce discipline is strong on behalf of minority students and students with disabilities. The problem comes through labeling students with ‘emotional and behavioral’ issues as being ‘disabled.’ Kids with severe behavior problems are forced into classrooms where they don’t belong, and principals have a strong reason to ignore their misbehavior. This is great for superintendents, who can advance their career on manipulated statistics. It is fine for principals, who get rewarded for not documenting problems so that their school’s data looks good. It is bad for teachers, who have little say. It is worse for regular students who have even less. It is worst for the troubled and disturbed students, who have the least say of all. This is what happened to Nikolas Cruz, and it is why the Parkland massacre happened.

His entire life, Nikolas Cruz was practically screaming, “If you ignore me, I could become a mass murderer.” But the adults in the school system did not listen to him. Broward launched The PROMISE program to decrease student arrests. (The PROMISE program was nationally expanded under President Obama’s secretary of education, Arne Duncan. It had a good purpose, to do away with harsh discipline policies that were seemingly slanted against minority students, but Mr. Pollack’s book says this program went terribly wrong.) Students told the media after the tragedy that Nikolas had committed all sorts of crimes in school without consequence. If he had been arrested, he could have been prohibited from buying a gun, or the FBI may have followed up on his threats to shoot up the school.

### **Kim – A Teacher Survivor**

Over a period of ten years, Kim had watched standards, both behavioral and academic, steadily decline. Every new federal law, state mandate, and district policy seemed to presume that teachers didn’t know what they were doing and needed to be micro-managed and second-guessed. The notion that not enforcing rules would keep students on the right path struck Kim as bonkers. Before PROMISE, the serious consequence for drug use helped get kids back on track. But now, many more students were sliding down the path towards addiction. Kim saw bullying rise because teachers no longer had the authority to police it. If teachers continued to send students to the office, they found that administrators were more likely to blame the teacher rather than support them.

On February 14<sup>th</sup>, Kim had been teaching on the third floor of Building 12, the site of the massacre. The shooter stopped to reload right outside her classroom door. Kim kept all of her students in her room, behind cover, quiet, and alive. Then she stepped over six dead bodies on the way out of the school. Later, she heard students telling the media frightening stories about the shooter. He threatened to kill them; he brought knives and bullets to school; he brought dead animals to school and bragged about mutilating them. No one was surprised he had done it. Then she heard Superintendent Runcie insist on CNN that the school district had no responsibility at all for the tragedy, that “We really had no signs, no warning, no tips.” She said that was blatantly false.

### **An Immigrant Father**

Royer Borges moved his family from Venezuela to America in 2014 to keep them safe. He watched with dismay as Venezuela’s totalitarian government dragged the country further and further into chaos. He hired contractors to build a new room onto his house. Shortly after construction began, a thug from a local *colectivo* knocked on his front door. Aside from the military, only members of *colectivos*, government-sponsored gangs that are granted the right to extort and murder in exchange for their political support of the socialist regime, are allowed to own guns in Venezuela. The thug told Royer that he had to pay the *colectivo* if he wanted to continue his construction project. Royer refused, and that evening someone shot at the walls of his house. The next day, Royer found the thug and punched him in the face. A few days later, two men on a motorcycle shot at Royer and narrowly missed. That’s when he knew that his family had to move to America.

On February 14, 2018, Royer’s son, Anthony, was shot five times while trying to barricade a door against the shooter. Anthony spent two months recovering in a hospital and has learned to walk again.

When Royer learned about the school’s lax discipline program, he was furious and saw a lawyer. He couldn’t believe that public officials had decided that the law shouldn’t apply in schools. It made no sense to him that instead of going after these local officials, everyone was marching on Washington, D.C. for gun control. Venezuela had total gun control. That’s how the government and the *colectivos* were able to terrorize the citizens.

On April 6, Royer called a press conference and read a statement from his son that reads, in part: *I want to ask you to please end your policy that you will not arrest people committing crimes in our schools....so that we will not allow people like Nikolas Cruz to fall through the cracks. I know I have been called Iron Man. I am not. I am a 15-year-old who was shot five times while Broward sheriff deputies waited outside and would not come into the building.....I am not Iron Man. I*

*am just a kid who wants to go back to school without worrying about getting shot.*

Ever since Anthony had been shot, the Borges family received hundreds of letters, calls, and emails from strangers offering love and support. After the press conference, a new wave of messages came from parents telling them that their children, too, had faced similar problems. One email came from Nicole Landers, a mother and nurse from Baltimore County, Maryland, who said that her daughter had been sexually harassed, but school administrators told her there was little they could do because the boy “had rights too.” When Nicole’s son told an assistant principal that another student brought a knife to school, that student threatened to kill him. She went to the school for help filing a police report, but they refused to help. When she went to the police, they told her that schools had become no-go zones for law enforcement. If her son had a problem, he should walk off campus and call the police. Then they would come.

### **An Exceptional Student**

There was something profoundly dark and disturbed at the core of Nikolas Cruz’s soul. Even his adopted mother, Lynda, described her son as “evil.” But there are hundred if not thousands of students like Nikolas Cruz across the country. He should have been helped. And other students should have been protected from him. That did not happen.

Nikolas Cruz’s birth mother, Brenda Woodard, was a drug addict and career criminal. She had been arrested 28 times for crimes ranging from drugs and car theft to weapons possession, burglary, domestic violence and using crack while pregnant with her children. At age three, Cruz was kicked out of a private pre-K program because he wouldn’t stop biting other kids. He was diagnosed at that time with a developmental delay; later, with a speech impairment, language-processing deficiency, and ADD. For his two years of pre-K, he had to be placed in a restrictive harness in order to ride the school bus.

In June 2004, his K-teachers met with Lynda to discuss his “aggression and animal fantasies.” His teachers recorded that he was “impulsive with no boundaries; acts out his fantasies often explosively.” By the end of first grade, he had to be physically removed from the classroom on an almost daily basis.

A middle-school teacher recalled that “Everyone knew who he was because he wreaked havoc.” When frustrated, he would curse and threaten anyone nearby. A student, Sarah, said that she feared him. She recalled seeing him sitting outside the classroom with his desk tied down so he could not throw it again. His torture and killing of animals became a source of pride for him. He brought videos to school showing him skinning animals and boasted about drowning his cat. Cruz told his school therapist about a dream he had of killing people and being covered in their blood. (These reports go on for many pages.)

On Valentine’s Day, 2018, Nikolas came to school with an AK-47, legally purchased because law enforcement had been deprived of the reports of his criminal actions, and slaughtered 14 students and three adults. This was, indeed, preventable.

### **From Broward to Your School**

In January of 2014, Mickey Pope boasted to the Broward school board, “...the Department of Education and the Department of Justice has issued guidelines to school districts across the nation to do exactly what we are doing here in Broward.” That was not exactly true, but there was a largely secret and coercive campaign of bad-faith investigations intended to compel school districts across the country to adopt Broward’s policies.

### **REFLECTION:**

This is a horrifying report. Is it really true that public schools throughout our land are headed down the same general path as the schools in Broward County, Florida? I have heard that some classes in schools in my city have students that are so disruptive that little teaching can be accomplished and that in many cases there are no consequences for bad behavior. This philosophy or ideology is not fair to teachers, to the students who want to learn, and to the students who can’t or won’t learn. Maybe we need to find out what is going on in our schools and prayerfully, without blame or accusation, seek to find solutions.

## **SUMMARY OF THE ISSUES RAISED**

**BY MR. POLLOCK:**

1. pressure to do away with discipline and consequences for bad behavior in all schools.
2. the red herring of labeling any attempt to discipline “racism” (This is not do deny that racism may be an issue in some schools)
3. the taking away from teachers any real authority over students
4. treating teachers as if their motives are bad when they endeavor to control and discipline misbehaving students
5. using the mis-direction of gun control as being the primary problem causing mass shootings, which immediately politicizes the issue (Personally, I believe our gun laws are not being enforced, and I think assault type weapons should be banned.)
6. the practice of not reporting to law enforcement criminal behavior that happens in schools
7. not keeping records of such infractions by the schools
8. the practice of main-lining disruptive and disturbed students and expecting teachers to deal with these kids while fulfilling their primary duty of teaching.

God Bless

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