

# THE MEASURE OF A MAN

**PRISM asked a handful of Jesus disciples to share their thoughts on the unique challenges men face and the high calling on men's hearts.**





### Rebel with a Cause: Lamont Hiebert

Canadian Lamont Hiebert is the co-founder and strategic partnership director of Love146 (Love146.org), an international non-profit that combats child sex slavery and exploitation and works to re-

store survivors to wholeness. He is also a recording artist with his band, Ten Shekel Shirt, and uses every performance as an opportunity to educate people about the realities of trafficking and sexual exploitation.

#### In your interactions with men, what gives you the most hope?

Men's rebellion and desire for freedom give me hope. I talk with young men in high schools, colleges, and churches about commercial sexual exploitation—pornography, strip clubs, prostitution. But rather than pointing the proverbial finger at them and making them feel like dirty little perverts for wanting to view porn or have sex with beautiful women, I instead appeal to their rebellion. After explaining how women and children are lured into commercial sexual exploitation and entrapped through coercion and violence, I then explain to men that criminals in the sex industry are out to lure and entrap them also. "They want your money and your soul. They want to own you," I tell them. "You should be free to explore the great gift of sexuality without criminals exploiting your natural desire for pleasure and passion.

## MEN'S DESIRE FOR FREEDOM GIVES ME HOPE.

Don't align yourself with slave traders and the enemies of your own freedom. These criminals want to make you weak, and they want to exploit you. Don't let them get you."

Not only have I witnessed fans of the sex industry completely change their perspective, I have also seen many courageous men join the movement against sex trafficking. I end the discussion by talking about that great scene in *School of Rock* when Jack Black asks the students to define rock and roll. The answer of course is, "stickin' it to the man" or "the system." I explain that the sex industry is the worst form of the "man/system." As we leave the room we all feel as if we've been let in on a little masculine secret: Rebellion, justice, and love are interconnected. Rock on, brothers!

### Willing to Go into the Hard Places: Glenn Miles

Glenn Miles is director of Asia Prevention for Love146. He is a native of England but based in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, and has worked with Cambodians since 1987. He has more than two decades of experience working to help exploited children, including those who have been sexually exploited.

#### What is the biggest challenge men face today?

For the average middle-class, hard-working man, the greatest challenge is juggling his role as employee, husband, and father. The balance is so often messed up. Men work too hard, and when they are at home they are often too tired to play their God-given roles.

#### On what issues would you like to see men step up to the plate and make a difference?

We need men who are appalled by the increasing amount of injustice in the world—such as children being sold and violated—and are willing to go into the hard places to do something about it. Helping "widows and orphans" isn't just a mercy issue for women to get involved with. Men need to step up to the plate and take hold of it as a justice issue.

The sex industry is the epicenter of a world where money, sex, and power rule. There is a need for Christian men to be challenging the pimps, pornographers, and perpetrators with a message of real love, but that means men being willing to go and be there. Most men struggle with these issues themselves and so feel the need to run away from it rather than towards it, but God needs us to face our issues and stand shoulder to shoulder with our brothers, because we can't do it on our own. Accountability isn't only about personal confession

# WE NEED MEN WHO ARE APPALLED BY THE INCREASING AMOUNT OF INJUSTICE IN THE WORLD.



but about daring to share about our inner struggles so we are empowered to reach out to others. Then we can be involved with God in the transformation of messy lives—including our own—alongside other men who also admit to being messed up. Then God is able to do incredible things.

### Do you have any advice on how to balance spending more time with family and engaging in justice work?

I don't often get it right, but I think feeling the tension is important. When I stop feeling the tension then there is a problem. Every time I travel away from home I wonder whether it is worth it, or could I stay at home? I try to be home on weekends when at all possible. I schedule in time with my wife and daughters and try to keep these times unchangeable. I tell my wife and kids I love them and apologize when I screw up.

### Promoting Mutuality: Richard Howell

Rev. Dr. Richard Howell is the general secretary of the Evangelical Fellowship of India, a nonprofit that crosses cultural and geographical boundaries to link Indian Christians with the global Christian community. Passionate about justice in general, he has a particular interest in gender equality.



### What do you consider the most urgent mission for men today?

It is imperative that men speak against cultural and religious practices

that deceptively advocate rulership of male over female. This is an urgent need, since gender abuse is on the increase. For example, why does a woman have to go on her knees when talking in the company of men (as in African culture), or provide a dowry at marriage or eat only after men have had their food (as in India)? The majority of men perpetuate cultural and religious practices associated with the dominant male.

### Does God have a unique role for men to play in the world?

Gender roles are culturally defined,

so in that sense there is no unique role for men other than the biological one. But since we live in a man's world, as is often said, men must take the lead in promoting mutuality. They also need to use their masculine strength to serve the family rather than dominate. This will sometimes lead to their being considered "henpecked" by those men who regard their wife as their property rather than their equal partner.

The church can help by creating awareness of biblical teachings on mutuality, using simple language and case studies, both from the Bible and contemporary life, both from the East and the West. There is a growing awareness among male leadership that they need to teach and model mutuality, but we still have a very long way to go before cultural practices around the world begin to change and dignity is given to women.

### As you've studied biblical mutuality and sought to educate others, what have you learned personally?

The exercise of learning, practicing, and teaching on mutuality has been a fascinating journey. I praise God for the grace to think outside the box and for the privilege of seeing God use women to draw people to himself as they exercise their gifts. The Bible teaches that leadership and service are gifts of the Holy Spirit—not gender-based gifts—and it has been a liberating experience for me to learn that. I have realized that spiritual growth is an outcome of obedience to God. We must not resist the work of the Holy Spirit or be slaves to cultural practices that are contrary to God's written word.

### In Search of Sacrificial Love: Leroy Miles

Leroy Miles Jr. serves Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church in Philadelphia, Pa., as associate pastor of pastoral care and counseling. As such, he heads up My Brother's Keeper,

## QUITTING IS NOT AN OPTION.

a spiritual development ministry that seeks to reposition and restore men to what God's Word instructs them to be, tackling issues like domestic violence and pornography.



### In your work with men in the church, what is the biggest challenge they face?

The biggest challenge is economic in nature. Whether it's unemployment or underemployment, men do not have the

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resources to provide effectively for themselves and those under their care. I often have conversations with men who have blended families, and they are feeling the pinch of supporting their family, which is at times in multiple households.

This issue speaks to being a responsible person. Eddie Robinson, the retired football coach who had the most wins in college history and sent the most athletes to the NFL, credited his success in life to simplicity. He's often quoted as saying, "The real record I have set for over 50 years is the fact that I have had one job and one wife." That's simplicity!

## As a pastor, how do you counsel your men?

I encourage them to endure in the struggle—in Christ. I remind them that no matter what their past looks like, in Christ they are more than conquerors. I see men who are fighting to be better men, husbands, and fathers—in that order. It's tough to be a man who attempts to lead spiritually those God has entrusted to him. I'm talking about the kind of sacrificial love described in Ephesians 5 and divine headship in 1 Corinthians 11:3-8—not lording over but understanding, positioned to be a source of God's blessing, a covering for his family or those in his care.

I'm not perfect, but I fight for simplicity. I've been married 17 years and have two daughters, and we fight for our marriage. Quitting is not an option. Zechariah 13:7-10 encourages us to grow through the fire. God wants us to be refined and purified. My hope is that when all is said and done, God's image will be seen in our marriage.

## Dying to Be Free: Tim Timmerman

Tim Timmerman is a visual artist who seeks to help people reflect on how we grow emotionally and spiritually amidst life's pain and joy. He teaches art at George Fox University in Newberg, Ore., and is the author of *A Bigger World Yet: Faith, Brotherhood, and Same-Sex Needs* (Bird Dog Press, 2010). You can view Tim's artwork and writing at [ABiggerWorldYet.wordpress.com](http://ABiggerWorldYet.wordpress.com).

## What pitfalls are unique to contemporary Western man?

Many men today face a gnawing fear that they're superfluous. Historically men were more "embodied," not sitting at a desk staring at a screen or dealing with entities that they may never encounter face-to-face. Their bodies mattered and were connected to their calling as doctors, farmers, or shopkeepers.

Then there's the lie that men don't need one another. I can't tell you how many men's weekends I've been on where I've

listened to men in their 30s or 40s heave and sob because they didn't have any real friends. We've

taught them that "real men" don't need anyone except maybe a wife or a woman to have sex with. Many men are impoverished because they don't have brothers who know them from the inside out. Why are we shocked when a congressman has an affair or leads a double life? A further consequence of such disconnection is suspicion, distrust, and a sense that each must preserve his piece of territory while continuing to build more walls. It often isn't until after an affair, a night in jail, or the like that many men begin to wake up and realize they profoundly need one another for their very survival.

## What can men do to remedy this deficit?

The best thing is mentoring—older men teaching younger ones the lessons they've learned—and brothering—men walking alongside each other and modeling how to sail a boat, show kindness, or be a good father or friend.

Beyond that, men need to be willing to move outside their comfort zone to reach those on the margins. There are too many men that the average Joe Christian considers undesirable and even damned and does whatever he can to keep his distance from: men in prison, gay men, to name just two. But these are the men that Christ would be hanging out with. Perhaps it is men's fears and insecurities about their own masculine identity that keep them far from these "others"—they fear that being associated with those men would open them up to suspicion from other men. Men are extremely conscious of what other men in the community think of them. Pride is a difficult hurdle, especially when dealing with how a man is perceived sexually.

But these men on the outside are dying; many of them are even now in, or at one time came from, our very own churches. It is my hope that more men will step through their fear and reach out to the untouchable men in our culture to do what Christ would do: walk with them, listen to them, and hold them in the midst of their pain.

## What would you like to see the church do for men?

Provide a safe space for men to be honest and drop the masks, where men can be men together, can walk with each other in the goodness and pain that life brings, can dig deep and get to know each other's demons, have each other's backs,

and offer up their lives to one another. If churches could provide spaces where men could collectively connect at a heart and gut level, I know that much good would happen in the body of Christ.

I know, because I've seen miracles—men who choose to wake up and want to live, men who face past abusers and release themselves from the grasp of those ghosts, men who dance with joy after slaying demons that were handed to them 30 years earlier, men who speak against the lies they were told and name the truth instead. It's hard. In fact it's a journey to hell and back, but I have found that real men, when faced with the abyss, will jump—trusting that Christ will somehow meet them in the air—and they are changed.

**In your own journey, what have you learned about yourself as a man of God?**

I've learned to be honest and open with others to a degree I never thought possible before. About five years ago I was challenged by a colleague at work to speak in chapel at the Christian university where we work about my experience wrestling with my sexual identity. It was the last thing in the world I wanted to do—at my job, with the students I teach. But God challenged me, saying, "It's time to die, Tim. Die to what people may think about you or how you want to be perceived. Time for the seed to die and be buried so something new can grow."

And so, although no one heard me, when stepping up to the podium to speak to an auditorium brimming with students, I simply said, "Die, Tim, die." And you know what? I did. Out of that death God has opened up much to me about what it is to be a man living transparently and honestly; and there is a richness in living that wasn't there before, a clarity. It's been liberating, and in the process many people have trusted me with precious aspects of their stories. So I found I wasn't alone. I found a larger community. ★

a common thread moves through them all...

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- Lise Klassen, founding director of North Peace Pregnancy Care Centre in Canada

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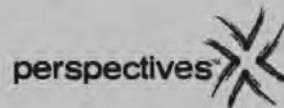
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them from re-offending, johns school can have a lasting positive effect. The Brooklyn DA's office reported a recidivism rate of .005 percent (12 out of 2,218 men) since the johns school was put in place. In Ohio, the recidivism rate in Cincinnati and Columbus has been reported as zero since the introduction of johns schools. In Marion County, Ind., only 2 percent (eight out of 400 men) of the graduates of the diversion program have been rearrested over a period of nine years. In Pittsburgh, Pa., a recidivism rate of .004 percent (two out of 500 men) has been reported since 2008. Breaking Free, in the Minneapolis, Minn., area, reports a recidivism rate of .004 percent (three out of 700 men) as of 2009. SAGE reports a recidivism rate of 1 percent (14 out of 1,512). Lacking a control group, most of these studies are not scientifically significant. Much more research is necessary to draw final conclusions about the johns schools.

Most significant are statements made by the men themselves. "I used to laugh at prostitutes," one young man said. "Now I see them as people with real feelings." Another emerged from johns school asking, "Why didn't I have this [training] when I was 17? My whole life would have been different if I had known then what I know now." Another participant, a 37-year-old unemployed mental-health counselor, said that when his wife left him, he vowed never to get emotionally involved with another woman. Seeking out women in prostitution was the perfect answer, he thought, since "no one would get hurt." Today he says, "Now I realize [people do get hurt, and] it isn't the solution. If they had put me in jail, I'd probably have gone back to it. It ... wouldn't have changed anything. But now I have been exposed to that information. I'm transformed."

Is there justice in johns schools? The full evidence isn't in yet, but it points in that direction. At the very least, johns schools can play an important role in reeducating men who have grown up in a culture that commodifies sex.

*Laura J. Lederer was Senior Advisor on Trafficking in Persons in the Office for Global Affairs for the US Department of State from 2001 to 2009. Today she is president of Global Centurion Foundation, an international organization that fights human trafficking by focusing on demand. Global Centurion assists communities, states, and governments in developing a comprehensive demand-reduction strategy. Visit [GlobalCenturion.org](http://GlobalCenturion.org) for more information and to see a global map of demand hubs for sex trafficking.*

(Editor's note: due to space limitations, the endnotes for this article have been posted at [EvangelicalsforSocialAction.org/PRISM-endnotes](http://EvangelicalsforSocialAction.org/PRISM-endnotes).)

God, one's spouse (or future spouse), one's children, women and girls in general, and the community as a whole.<sup>16</sup>

In his first epistle to the Thessalonian church, the apostle Paul informs us that God's will is our sanctification, that we pursue purity and abstain from sexual immorality (*porneia* in the Greek).<sup>17</sup> Through that pursuit we enter into God's heart for justice, rely on his grace for the practical application of justice, and proclaim to a dying world the One who has betrothed us to himself "in righteousness and in justice, in lovingkindness and in compassion."<sup>18</sup>

Coming to understand this aspect of justice has transformed my life and marriage. As a young law school graduate in 2005, I reveled in the calling to advocate for the rights of the oppressed, but I missed the mark when it came to doing justice in my marriage. I failed to view my vows to my wife as the primary set of rights and duties I needed to

### **Purity is not simply abstinence from immorality, but a process of being sanctified and transformed into the likeness of the Son.**

uphold and protect, and, as a result, my love for her suffered—and selfishness, lust, and impure thoughts found footing in my heart. It took a crisis in our marriage for me to begin to understand what the virtue of justice looks like, and that Jesus—the "faithful and true" bridegroom to a now and future bride—is the ultimate model of that virtue.

Today, God continues to reveal to me the importance of purity in thought, word, and deed as Christ-followers seek justice in this pornified age. Pursuing purity every day honors our spouses and guards our marriage covenants; it protects our children's innocence; it shields women from objectification; it prevents us from contributing to the exploitation of those caught in the flesh trade; and it produces the fruit of humility, transparency, and love in our lives. Personally, this pursuit is reshaping my marriage, my ministry, and my manhood. Will you join me on the journey?

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