

You Throw Like A Girl -Sermon

John T. Crestwell, Jr. -March 8, 2020

READING: The reading is an excerpt from the author Don McPherson's book: You Throw Like a Girl: The Blindspot of Masculinity. McPherson is a retired professional athlete that now works on issues related to toxic masculinity. I'm reading from **pages 47-48**.

**USE BOOK TO READ**

INTERLUDE - CHOIR

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SERMON:

Being a man is a privilege in our culture and almost all cultures on the planet. Recognizing this privilege for some is just as hard as understanding racial privilege. It takes a willingness to let down our defenses. First, I want to say that being a man is good. Being male; having masculine energy is a good thing. But as in all things, there are not-so-good qualities that emerge in masculinity; and that's the part I'm naming this morning. I'm naming the part of manhood/the part of humanity that is off-balanced and has been for a very long time.

As I see it, many of the problems in the world today are the result of out-of-control YANG (hard) (masculine) energy that is mostly perpetuated by boys and men and those who mimic their toxic behaviors.

I know about toxic male behavior because I got a large dose. I've said many things I wished I hadn't. I've used my manliness to suppress and control; to dominate. AND, I know that if I can evolve anyone can. But being a black man brings with it even more complexity.

You see, I grew up in a hyper-masculine time. And showing that you were tough, was one of the ways I survived. I was a black boy with separated parents, in a world where I was told not to be vulnerable. In my Black community, where just a decade ago Black men were holding up signs declaring "I am a Man!" Boys who became men but were brain-washed from the brutality of chattel slavery—many of us learned all the wrong ways to be a man—where I grew up if you did not learn the real rules of male superiority you were weak. My teachers were broken men in the neighborhood trying to give us their best advice; (some were father's in their home). They told us and their sons to "be tough" and "man up" and "don't throw like a girl." They taught us to "keep her in her place"; "man is the king of the castle." Those mis-guided men told us this toxic stuff because that's what they knew. That's what they

thought we needed to hear to survive. They were trying to help us with really bad advice. Advice is over-rated. I don't blame them really. Black and Brown men in America are a reflection of the virtues and vices within dominant culture (and vica versa). That stereotypical indictment that POC communities don't take care of their families is an accusation on our entire system that created the epidemic of fathers not being in homes with their sons and daughters. "It's the pot calling the kettle black." Admitting that masculinity is a first world male problem that trickles down and is acted out in more susceptible communities—admitting this--- is a first step toward reconciliation and right relationship building. Therefore, our central task as human beings today is learning to be in right-relationship with others. We must learn how to create and maintain healthy relationships that are based in mutuality and reciprocity and respect regardless of gender or non-gender.

As I alluded to earlier, Black and Brown men face an even more difficult obstacle in balancing their masculine energy because of the way the family was destroyed in slavery or through colonization. White

men/white people have to own up to the god-like power they've inherited, which has led to the idea that "goodness" and "righteousness" seem to be linked with winning and who has the most prizes at the end of the day. The "victor claims the spoils", takes the leftovers of the loser. Women were spoils back in the old days. That continues to play out today. It's ruining our relationship with the divine feminine energy. Men must realize that this imbalance of power is the cause of much of the disharmony on the planet. We must own it AND talk about it.

Right relationship is about "Complementarity". (SLIDE UP)

Complementarity means you are a part of a corresponding or harmonious relationship or situation; or it can be "a culture based on mutuality in men and woman." In science complementarity deals with particles and wave patterns of light that have complementary properties. Complementarity is about yin and yang balance to create harmony and flow. That's the goal in our relationships---coexistence.

But I did not understand any of this when I was a kid. I was doing what the adults showed me to do. So there is no one to blame and everyone to

blame. Translation: Start with YOU. Dissect your story and name where you were inculcated with beliefs that said you were superior or better or manlier, etc. If I start with me, I go back to David Reynolds...

I remember David, the neighborhood bully, who would yell up to my apartment (“John John, you coming outside?”) That was his clarion call for some attention. When I refused, he yelled up that he was going to beat my BLEEP BLEEP the next time I came outside. He tested my supposed manhood daily. I would have many tussles with David over the years. I tried to avoid him as much as I could, but he found his way into my life again and again; showing me how to smoke cigarettes, or take a girl around the corner or into the woods to do stuff that was way too grown-up to be doing at my age. He was constantly making me prove to him that I was “cool” or “tough” or “manly”.

David and I played football and basketball together—what tough boys and men do, of course. He was a better athlete, a year older; and this added to his strange desire to dominate me. Did he think he was helping

me? I don't know. But no matter how many times I stood up to him, he would outlast me and "win" the tough boy contests.

David was killed at 16 years of age while selling drugs back when drugs were ravaging the District of Columbia. It's a cliché story...I don't think he knew his father. His mother yelled at him constantly. He was always in trouble. He did not know how to use his masculine energy for good—never taught. It was clear that his mom was a broken woman.

David wasn't mad at me because I didn't come outside to play; he was mad at his life. David was abused and traumatized. He wanted someone to love him and tell him he was a good boy. I represented something good to him; he would confide that at times; and on those days, I did truly like him. But they were few and far between. David loved how 'cool' my mother was and how our house was full of love and laughs.

When I'd occasionally tell him "NO, I'm not coming outside to play with him" he heard, "No, I don't like you, nor do I want to be around you. You are alone in the world and no one cares about you." He was broken. Every day he sought to prove otherwise through his athletic

prowess or boxing skills or selling drugs on the corner. This is the real story behind many black men who have been corrupted by a system that teaches that manhood is brutality and taking and dog-eat-dog. It does not create a whole and complete human being.

Today, I am still saddened when I think of the millions of David's out there. Boys who never learn how to be real men. Boys taught this "old-school" form of masculinity through aggression. What is a real man then? I'll get to that...

I took the manhood lessons from the street, my mom, the coaches, and father-figures as the law, just like the author, Don McPherson did in his youth. "You throw like a girl" was a common colloquialism where I grew up too. And there was no misinterpretation. If you can't throw a ball and catch it, you are weak. If you did not have intercourse by the time you were 14 you were gay. If you did not treat girls like objects you were gay. If you did not objectify women as product to be controlled, you were weak or gay. If you only had one girlfriend, you were a "church-boy"—hence weak. If your girlfriend was known to

have been with more than one boy, she was considered a freak—someone else's left-overs, or even worse. All this trickles down from dominant culture and infects marginalized communities. The top must reflect the bottom and the bottom must reflect the top. That's the star of David—as above so below. As below so above.

To rebalance and decenter yang (aggressive) energy, we must look at and dissect what creates toxic masculinity. So, let's name it. It manifests due to our need for control of people, places and things. The solution to toxic male-ness is NOT JUST changing what children play with and how they interact; or giving boys more options for toys and games. It's more so about how we interact and how we manage and discipline control of boys and men and people. We all have control issues that need to be managed. And men have had too much social and political control which is creating the social imbalances we see. Do you disagree? Well, my friend and author, Professor Robin DiAngelo, who wrote the book *White Fragility*, uses a good analogy to explain the issue. She asks, "Can MEN take away women's reproductive rights?" (YES).



She also asks people to pay attention to the pictures of the US Congress and Senate and all the top positions in the government. Can one group take away the rights of women and POC? YES. If you look at the top corporations in this country---male energy dominates (YES). So as POC and women, there is a real fear that the Handmaid's Tale could happen—that corrupted men can take our agency away.

That makes being male or a man or a white man a little more uncomfortable now. Some are fragile and afraid; they should be. People are crying for relief from being dominated—all across the world. But what is frightening, for me, is that we do really dumb and insensitive things when they we're afraid. I pray the higher angles will prevail.

This moment in time is asking men to be more than just the guy who brings home the bacon (or turkey bacon or tofurkey). This great time of transformation is asking you (men) to share our space and learn how to really love the divine feminine energy that we all have inside us.

Ultimately men/all of us are learning not to be a male or female. My daughter Kenn, says Trans means to transcend gender. (transgender---

transcend gender. That's the goal. Sure, we identify as gendered or non-gendered. But really, we're learning to be a human being; learning to be a HUMANE BEING (that's a t-shirt "humane-being"). At UUCA we are learning how to build high-quality interpersonal relationship skills. (SLIDE UP)

What is a real man? What is a real woman? They are humane beings seeking fulfillment, joy and love without infringing on anyone's free-will. And when two humane beings come together, something even more beautiful emerges. Harmony. When the masculine and feminine energies are working in concert, it's like an effortless song. You give up on being the winner in the relationship. You let go of trying to control things. You realize that aggression creates more aggression; and if you have a partner who can flow with you, then your life flows on in endless song; above earth's lamentation. You'll catch the sweet, though far off hymn, that hails a new creation." That's what you'll be a new creation... I think I have good relationships in my life. Keeping and making good relationships is important to me.

My closest relationship is with Joni; I'm her husband, and she keeps me grounded. There is complementarity in our relationship. I don't see her as "my better half". She's Joni. I call her Joan her birthname. We are two whole people who combined to make something even more HOLY! BTW, John means Joan, if you look up the meaning; so we have the same name. She's white, I'm black. I like to say to her we are a physical embodiment of yin and yang energy. Sometimes she's yang and I'm yin. Sometimes the inverse is true. Most of the time we are both yin and yang. I like to say to her: "Let's balance the world together baby!"

I measure my life by my relationships with others. I measure my humane being-ness by considering my impact on others. That's what real men/real people do.

The author, Don McPherson, had a transformation. He was born middleclass, but his trappings were the same. Athletics and alpha-male dominance. He followed his path and all the caricatures and archetypes. He was in that matrix and it worked for him, so he kept doing it, UNTIL

IT DIDN'T WORK FOR HIM ANY LONGER. By 29, with diminishing skills and an injury, he was forced out of professional football. He wished to do/be more than a caricature and had several awakening experiences that led him to work with young male athletes, helping them to understand the ramifications of their sometimes-violent behavior, misogyny, and misplaced aggression. Don McPherson wants to use the rest of his life to balance the imbalanced equation—masculine energy's dominance. The task is daunting.

What we are talking about is more than equal pay and equal rights.

We're talking about power—a shift in power—re-thinking the very archetypes that we've been defined by. Getting pass them—is a mighty work! But like me, Don takes a one person/group at a time approach.

He said this in his book: (SLIDE UP) **“Therein lies the insidious hypocrisy of old-school masculinity—we cannot have it both ways; we cannot continue to ask young men to “suck it up”, “take it like a man” or solve problems by going to “fist city”, but remain oblivious to the carnage that this perspective leaves in its wake. And we can**

**no longer allow revered entities like sports to be free from our scrutiny as they advance violent, narrow definitions of masculinity... We must seek a pure and authentic understanding of masculinity...engage in honest discourse about what it truly means to be a whole and healthy man.”**

What does it mean to be a healthy man? Doing less harm. As parents, how can we do less harm in our interactions? As men, how can we do less harm? As women, as humans, how can we be more humane beings? By going outside the box of stereotypes and archetypes...

We solve toxic masculinity by going outside the box. (SLIDE UP).

Inside the box there is this façade of control; ego illusions.

Outside the box there is faith, hope and love. For men, outside the box are tears, fears expressed. Outside the box we ask for what we need; we say I'm sorry. We decorate, cook, and clean. We go deeper with our lives by getting help to see the blind spots. We feel more and listen more and lead with our hearts. We project less of our pain; and we seek wholeness, not externally but internally because we know we are 'beings

having a human experience.’ We seek nonjudgment and understanding into the multiple, quantum complexities of life—all those clashing and colliding realities. We give up those silly man-hood tests, projections of our inner pain. We give up the toxic language that subjugates and dominates. Outside the traditional box, we forgive our bad parenting and the things we probably did wrong. If you’re a parent, you screwed up. Forgive yourself. Now you know better and so you will do better. Keep adding tools to your tool box. Outside the box, we just stop playing the role of alpha AND try our best to BE LOVE in all of its expressions and manifestations. That’s what a real man is to me. That is a humane-being!

In our home, Joni and I know when humane-being-ness is off balance. And when one of us is off, the other is off. Being in a relationship with another person, and even an animal, is where much of your internal balancing work happens. Also, people in your workplace and family members, are all there as teachers—equations to balance. As you balance the polarities in your sphere of influence, you help fix the

discord in the world. Imagine tuning an instrument until it sounds right. That's you. Therefore, our/your work IS every day—every interaction, every time we think, mediate, or pray we are working to fix ourselves and our world—in every moment. Anytime the divine masculine and feminine energies find their balance, we experience a foretaste of glory divine. A little slice of heaven. You cannot find heaven or wholeness by holding on to old modalities that are violent or dominant. As you get out of the box of socialization and conformity; as you go deeper questioning the very nature of your existence, you come to see the illusion of titles and status and gender. All is one. Then you realize the only war going on IS INSIDE OF YOU. And as you speak peace you begin to live peace; you begin embracing a new reality that makes you happier, healthier and holier. You are being the change...you are being the peace....Then the hymn we sang earlier will ring even more true to you. I read those words as I close: **If ev'ry man in the world had his mind set on freedom, if ev'ry man in the world dreamed a sweet dream of peace, if ev'ry man of ev'ry nation, young and old, each**

**generation, held his hands out in the name of love, there would be no**

**more war.** If ev'ry nation in the world set a true course for freedom, if ev'ry

nation raised its children in a culture of peace, if all our sons and all our

daughters reached in friendship across the waters, refusing to be enemies,

there would be no more war. May it be so. Amen.