

## Men with Chests, Part 2

'We remove the organ and deny the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise.' C.S. Lewis

'And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children.' LK 1:17

John took a deep breath when he read Tim's (his teen son) virtual correspondence with a 'boyfriend' on the west coast. Any concern about his son's sexuality was starkly realized in that moment. Rather than shrink back, John knew he had to act. But how? Never close with his dad, Tim at 15 seemed further away than ever.

Yet the two shared more common ground than was apparent. Father and son loved Jesus, father and son shared some relational brokenness: John from sexual abuse, Tim from a neglectful father. In truth, both wanted more from each other and did not know how to bridge the gap.

As father, John knew he had to act first. Provoked by Tim's 'gay' explorations, John knew that he had to draw near to his son while he still had a window of opportunity. He began by expressing loving concern for his son. Tim at 15 was not a 'gay man'; he was a boy experiencing same-sex desire and acting upon it in a popular, destructive way. Unless he confirmed Tim as a man, John knew that his son could be lost to the confirmation of the 'gay self' and 'culture.'

And the Holy Spirit was at work in Tim. When he looked over all the pictures he had taken of himself and his new 'gay' comrades in California, Tim observed that he was becoming a different person. His 'look' was imbued with an alien attitude. He did not like it; somehow he knew that the 'gay' sensibility was at odds with his faith and who he in truth wanted to become.

John began to envision his son with new options he might explore to become that man. In the same breath that John asked Tim to break off relationship with his new 'friend,' the father invited his son discover these options. Together. That included getting help for their wounded relationship, church activities, even a mission trip in which they faced beauty and hardship as father and son.

A boy becoming a man also needs space and grace to work out his decisions apart from his parents. Tim drew strength and confidence from some good pastoral help designed for him and his needs.

I had the privilege of seeing Tim and John the other day; I witnessed a strong alliance between father and son. John is actively raising the boy he sired, and Tim is exhibiting a new solidity as the young man he is becoming.

God is turning fathers toward their sons, and sons back to their fathers. He is giving men back their 'chests': dignity and confidence in the strength the Father entrusts to His sons.