

# **American Male**

**Office Lighthouse Discussion Materials**

## **American Male**

### **Chapter 1 - Friendless American Male**

“We take care of our health, we lay up money, we make our roof tight, and our clothing sufficient, but who provides wisely that he shall not be wanting in the best of all property-friends?” *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

“What is all the fuss about? I am doing just fine. I have all the friends I need.” This was one man’s response when I asked him about the subject of friendship among men. His wife confided with me later that while he had numerous drinking buddies, he didn’t really have even one true friend. (The Friendless American Male by David W. Smith)

Comment on the above.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Why do you think men have an aversion to sharing emotions? Contrast this aversion with women’s emotional behavior.
- 2) In general men find it hard to accept the need for fellowship with other men. Why is this, in your opinion?
- 3) How have role models like John Wayne or James Bond affected men’s image of toughness? How tough are you?
- 4) Discuss the positive and negative attributes of a life-type based on competition, with regard to friendship?
- 5) “A despairing man should have the devotion of his friends.” (The Bible) Who will be there with you when the difficult times come into you life?
- 6) How do you evaluate the quality of the relationships you have with other men?

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### **Chapter 2 - High Cost of Being Male**

“By the traditional retirement age of 65 there are only 75 men alive for every 100 women. It may be an exaggeration to conclude that men are slowly killing themselves, but the grim facts are nevertheless quite frightening. Women on the average live a full seven years longer than men. Life-span projections in the 1980’s for baby girls born in the early 1980’s reached 80 years. For baby boys the projection was about 73 years.” (Friendless American male, David D. Smith)

Comment on the above.

#### **Discussion questions:**

- 1) “With the decline in social stability of the extended kinship, family, and the nuclear family itself, friendships are becoming more important socially for mental and spiritual health.” (Friendless American male, David D. Smith) Are you concerned about the above in your life? Why or why not?
- 2) Stress is a normal part of a man’s social and work life. (Friendless American male, David D. Smith) How do you deal with stress?
- 3) If your work prevents you from leading a balanced life, do you need to make a change? What does this look like in your life?
- 4) How have we as men carried the value of self-reliance to a distorted extreme? How can we change this situation?
- 5) “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” (The Bible) How would this idea help you deal with the stress that might shorten your life?
- 6) If emotional support involves transparency; from whom do you receive emotional support and who do I give emotional support to?

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### **Chapter 3 - Male/Female**

“The two assumptions-(1) that the sexes differ, and (2) that women have more satisfying friendships than men – are truths that require little elaboration. But here the agreement ends. The difficult questions we need to face are (1) how do the sexes differ, and (2) does “maleness” or “femaleness” affect the making and nurturing of relationships with other humans?” (The Friendless American Male by David W. Smith)

Comment on the above.

#### **Discussion questions:**

- 1) Male superiority. A myth or fact? What is your opinion and why?
- 2) 130 to 150 males are conceived for every 100 females. It's down hill thereafter. 106 boys are born to every 100 girls. 25% more baby boys are born premature than girls. Women have a 7 year longer life span than men. How do you feel about male superiority in light of these statistics?
- 3) Girls score higher than boys on tests of verbal ability, such as comprehension and production of language, analogies and spelling. Have you observed this? What effect has this had on your relationships with women?
- 4) Boys tend to be more physically active than girls, doing more running and jumping. At play they range farther than girls do. Do you see this behavior in men and women as the mature? How so?
- 5) “Male and female He created them.” (the Bible) God says in the Bible he deliberately created both male and female. How does this statement affect your perspective of males and females ability to get along with each other as friends?
- 6) Females tend to be more anxious than males about risking failure. When they fail, they are more likely to blame themselves. When males fail, they tend to blame others. What is your experience with this kind of behavior in each sex?

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### **Chapter 4 - Faithfulness**

There are few things more irritating than someone who is unpredictable and cannot be counted on when you really need him. It has been said that wealth adds man friends. These fair weather friends are bad news. Those people are plentiful, but not worth much. The world's philosophy tends to be "laugh and the world laughs with you, cry and you cry alone". (The Friendless American Male by David W. Smith)

Comment on the above.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Have you experienced the cold shoulder from someone you thought was a friend? How did you respond or react to them?
- 2) Is trust a part of friendships? Why or why not.
- 3) Sixty percent of today's marriages end in divorce. Have you observed or experienced how divorce affects the spouse's mutual friendships?
- 4) A faithful friend keeps a confidence and a gossip separates close friends. Have you experienced this statement in your life? How so?
- 5) "Rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn. Do not be proud but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited." (The Bible) How might this statement be beneficial to establishing and maintaining healthy friendships?
- 6) Betrayal is so evil and faithfulness so victorious. Have you experienced betrayal? How have you handled it?

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### **Chapter 5 - Candor**

“Faithful are the wounds of a friend” “A rebuke impresses a man of discernment.” Give it to me straight. What do you really think? The friend who will level with you or even rebuke you is far better than one who is insincere, or speaks false words of affection. The biting words of a true friend may hurt your pride and feelings at the moment, but over the long haul you’ll be much better off for having heard them. By contrast the flattery or neglect of a false friend can bring you harm in the long run. Refusing to speak rebuke can also bring harm. (The Friendless American male by David W. Smith)

Comment on the above.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Do you have a true friend that will help you face the truth? Why or why not?
- 2) The majority of people feel that arguments are destructive to a relationship. Why is this true or not true in your opinion?
- 3) When you see a personality flaw in a friend when is it ok to address it? When is it not ok?
- 4) Willingness to express your own needs is another aspect of candor. How would this help or hinder a friendship?
- 5) Jesus cut to the heart of the matter with a man who came to him looking for candor when he said “unless one is born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God. (the Bible) How might Jesus’ example be helpful to you?
- 6) Candor is reciprocal, we must be willing to listen to advice as well as give it. Why is this so difficult for some of us?

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### Chapter 6 - Caring/Confronting

Today's culture has both a material and consumption orientation, the me first strategy is alive and well. Men possess a materialistic view of both men and women: women are viewed one-dimensionally as sex objects; men are viewed as objects to be manipulated toward one's own selfish end. (The Friendless American Male by David W. Smith)

Comment on the above.

#### **Discussion questions:**

The list below from "Caring Enough to Confront" by David Augshurger, contrasts how caring and confronting differ. Comment on the challenges these two perspectives present in developing true friendships.

<u>Caring</u>		<u>Confronting</u>
I care about our relationship.	vs.	I feel deeply about the issue at stake.
I want to hear your view.	vs.	I want to clearly express mine.
I want to respect your insights	vs.	I want respect for mine.
I trust you to be able to handle my honest feelings.	vs.	I want you to trust me with yours.
I promise to stay with the discussion until we've reached an understanding.	vs.	I want you to keep working with me until we've reached a new understanding.
I will not trick, pressure, manipulate, or distort the differences.	vs.	I want your unpressured, clear, honest view of our differences.
I give you my loving, honest respect.	vs.	I want your caring confronting response.