Men Matter

A hundred years ago, an advertisement appeared in a London newspaper.

- It was brief and cryptic
  - and it promised only life threatening danger
  - to those who would respond to it.
- The ad said this:

**Men wanted:** For hazardous journey, small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful. Honor and recognition in case of success.

What an ad!

- Hazardous journey.
  - Small wages.
  - Bitter cold.
  - Complete darkness.
  - Constant danger.
- Who responds to that kind of an ad?
  - You have to be crazy to volunteer
    - for those kinds of circumstances.
  - But volunteer they did.
- As a matter of fact the response to the ad was overwhelming.
  - Men came from all over England to respond to that ad.
- Sir Earnest Shackleton only needed 27 men
  - for his arctic expedition
    - but there were thousands of men
  - who were willing to brave the terrible circumstances,
    - willing to endure the long dark arctic night
      - that lasts for months,
  - willing to literally put their lives in jeopardy
    - all for the prospect
    - of possible honor and recognition.
- Let’s be honest, gentlemen:
  - There is something about dangerous circumstances
    - and dire life threatening conditions
      - that appeals to the heart
      - of what it is to be a man.
- Mr. Shackleton knew exactly what he was doing
  - by filling his ad with the dangers
    - that were sure to plague his expedition.
- Those are the kinds of things that men relate to.
  - Those are the kind of circumstances that call out
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- to the warrior within each of us,
  - the kind of challenges that makes our heart leap
    - long after our body is unable
      - to endure such hardships.
- It appeals to the very heart of what it means to be a man!

- As men, we want to be a part of something important,
  - we want to do something with our lives that matters.
- All men, everywhere, share that inner drive,
  - that inner desire that compels them
    - to ignore danger and discomfort
    - in the pursuit of honor and recognition.
- It’s just the way we are wired.
  - Not all of us are going to get on a boat today
    - and sail to the South Pole
  - but there is a small part of each of us
    - that would love to have had the opportunity
      - to embark such and adventure,
  - to risk life and limb
    - in the pursuit of honor and recognition.
    - It’s the kind of thing that appeals to us as men.

The Church Needs Men
- This morning, I’ve come to share with you an invitation
  - to participate in an adventure of eternal consequences.
- At first glance, it is not as attractive
  - as the advertisement that Mr. Shackelton put together.
- We aren’t going to sail the arctic ocean
  - and transverse the South Pole,
- we will not risk life and limb
  - to endure the brutal cold
  - and long, unending, arctic night.
- And, if the truth is known,
  - there probably won’t be much honor and recognition
    - associated with success in this venture
  - but that doesn’t change the fact
    - that this job is monumentally more important
      - than anything that Earnest Shackleford
      - accomplished in his whole life.
- Gentlemen, the church needs men.
  - Real men.
    - Men who will put God first.
    - Men who will become leaders in the church.
Men who know how to pray,
men who are willing to teach,
men who are not afraid of hard work,
men who are loyal to their pastor
  • and are who are willing to make his vision their vision.

• The church desperately needs men
  o because men matter in the kingdom of God.
• Your contribution to this church matters.
  o As men you have the capacity
    • to impact this church like no other group can.

• A few days ago my wife discovered
  o that I was probably the only person on the planet
    • who had not seen the latest Disney production, Frozen, yet.
• So she set out to rectify that situation.
  o As I sat and watched a new presentation of the classic fairy tale,
    • I recognized all the standard roles.
• There was a heroin,
  o a classic princess,
    • who was thrown into a tragic,
    • life threatening circumstance.
• And there was hero,
  o a bumbling yet lovable male lead,
    • who loved the princess
    • but was blissfully unaware
      • of the important role that he needed to play in her life.
• And there was a villain
  o who sought to destroy the princess
    • and steal her kingdom for himself.

• If you haven’t seen the movie,
  o please forgive me for spoiling it,
• but in the end it comes down to a princess
  o who is being frozen from the inside out.
    • The only thing that can set her free
      • is an act true love.
• And with that realization the stage is set.
  o Up to that point the film has followed
    • the timeless traditional model perfectly.
• We are primed and ready
  o for the hero to step in and save the day,
    • for true love’s kiss to set the princess free.
      • Only that’s not what happens.
• Oh they set it up pretty well,
when you watch it you see the heroin
  • struggling to survive
  • and the hero,
    • racing to get to her side.
  • And we all know what is about to happen,
    • the prince is about to save the day...
      o Except, he doesn’t.

• For the first time ever, the heroin saves herself.
  o She commits an act of selfless love,
    • she sacrifices her own life for that of her sister
      • and it is her own act of love
      • that breaks the curse
      • and sets her free.

• Meanwhile the hero arrives a moment too late
  o and, while he finally does get the kiss
    • and pledges his undying love
    • and devotion to the princess,

• the message is firmly established
  o that the princess no longer needs the prince.

• It is not my goal this morning
  o to give a commentary on popular culture
    • or on the societal drift
      • that is constantly diminishing the role of a man

• but I do want to lift my voice for just a moment
  o and say, loud and clear,
    • “Men, you matter!”

• Your contributions matter,
  o what you bring to this church is vitally important.
    • Your hard work,
    • your unconquerable spirit,
    • your courage and your determination,
      • those things are unique to your role as a man
        o and this church needs men like you!

Consider this statistic:
  • When a child leads the way in commitment to a church, 3 1/2 % of families follow.
  • When a woman/mom leads the way in commitment to a church, 17% of families follow.
  • But, when a man/dad leads the way in commitment to a church, 93% of families follow!
• Men matter to their families and men matter to the church!
  o Your role as the priest of your home
    ▪ is vitally important to your family
    ▪ and you are vitally important
    ▪ to the success of this church.

• I’ve come to tell you this afternoon
  o that what the church needs
    ▪ is a strong male lead.
• We need men who are willing to stand in the gap,
  o men who will pray,
  o men who will intercede,
    ▪ men who will become examples,
    ▪ men who will demonstrate by their actions
      ▪ what integrity is,
      ▪ what godliness looks like,
      ▪ what righteousness is all about.
• We desperately need men
  o who are willing to step up
    ▪ and be men in the church!
• It is time to reestablish the role
  o of a strong male lead in the church today.
    ▪ It is time to run the add again:

**Men wanted:** Hazardous work, small wages, difficult circumstances, long nights and constant danger from an unseen enemy. The cost will be high and accolades will be few but we need men who will be heroes in the church.

**Shackleton the hero.**
• Earnest Shackleton was a real life hero.
  o The journey that he embarked on a hundred years ago
    ▪ would make him a legend of epic proportions.
• The exploration party departed England in late 1914 aboard a huge ice crushing ship called The Endurance.
  o But in January of 1915 the ship got stuck in pack ice
    ▪ deep in the arctic ocean.
• There was no way to set the ship free
  o and spring doesn’t come to Antarctica
    ▪ until September at the earliest
  o so they hunkered down and prepared to spend
    ▪ the long dark winter aboard a frozen ship
    ▪ in the midst of a sea of ice.

• Over the course of the next 8 months
the desperate crew hoped against hope
  that a spring thaw would set them free.
- However, when warmer weather finally came,
  instead of deliverance it brought disaster.
  Huge blocks of ice broke free
  from the glaciers around them
  and destroyed the ship.
- The crew abandoned ship
  and made camp on the ice
  as they watched their only hope
  of sailing back home
  slowly disappear
  beneath the frozen sea.
- They were a thousand miles from help,
  with dwindling provisions,
  in subzero weather.
- Nobody knew where they were
  and, worst of all, there was no way to send a distress call.
  Behind them was a frozen landscape
  and before them was an impassible sea.
  And it seemed as if all hope was lost.
- In that dark hour
  the indomitable willpower of Earnest Shackleton
  kept them all going.
- Shackleton would not be defeated,
  he would not give up hope
  and he vowed that he would get
  every man back home alive.
- Then he did just that.
  It was the stuff that legends are made of.
  An incredible story.
- The crew used lifeboats that they salvaged
  from the wreckage of The Endurance
  to embark on a treacherous
  5-day journey by sea
  to Elephant Island.
- From there they established a base camp
  then worked together to fashion a sail
  for the largest of the life boats.
- When that was done Shackleton and 5 of the crew
  set sail for a distant whaling station
  far across the murderous Arctic Ocean.
• to bring back a rescue mission for the others.

• It was a harrowing journey
  o with 20 foot seas
    ▪ that threatened to sink their small life boat.

• Some of the crewmen were reduced
  o to an absolute catatonic state
    ▪ where they curled up in the fetal position
    ▪ in the bottom of the boat
    • and waited for their inevitable death.

• For those that remained to man the boat,
  o they endured frostbite
  o and fingers that were, at times, frozen to the oars.

• They navigated by gut feeling and sheer luck,
  o it was a feat that historians have called
    ▪ the single greatest accomplishment
    • of open boat sailing in history.

• By sheer will and unwavering tenacity,
  o the little lifeboat finally caught sight
    ▪ of the rocky shores of the southern islands
    • that were the home of the whaling station
    • that was their only hope for rescue.

• Braving hurricane force winds
  o that threatened to destroy them,
    ▪ the exhausted, half dead, men
    • finally hauled their little boat from the water
    • onto the shores of a tiny rocky cove,
  o only to realize that they were
    ▪ on the opposite side of the island
    ▪ from the whaling station.

• Shackleford and two of the men
  o had to cross the width of the island’s
    ▪ forbidding, unmapped, mountainous interior
    • in a desperate,
    • last-ditch,
    • 36-hour,
    • all-or-nothing death march
    • to the whaling station.

• Finally the men stumbled out of the frozen mist,
  o ghostly shadows of the robust sailors
    ▪ that had started the journey,
and walked, by their own power
  into the whaling station
  • and requested a rescue mission
  • to relieve their beleaguered crew
    o on Elephant Island.
• From that moment forward, Shackleton’s name
  o would forever be a legend.

**Shackleton the failure.**

• When we think of heroes,
  o that’s what we think of.
• Men like Mr. Shackleton,
  o men who rise against impossible circumstances
    • and prevail against all odds.
• That’s the way we imagine our heroes.
  o A real man’s man,
    • larger than life.

• I mean listen to this:
  o It took the rescue mission four tries to reach Elephant Island
    • and rescue the men who were stranded there.
  o But, when they finally broke through
    • they found that the men were packed up and ready to go.
• When Mr. Shackleton asked them how they knew
  o that this would be the day,
    • their reply was simple.
    • We didn’t.
  o But we knew that if Mr. Shackleton
    • said he was coming back for us,
    • Mr. Shackleton would come back.
  o So every morning we packed our gear
    • and got ready to leave the island!

**Come on, guys.**

• That’s the kind of stuff that hero’s are made of.
  o That sheer will to live,
  o that unbreakable spirit,
  o that dominating drive
    • that refuses to yield
    • to the worst that life can throw at you
  o and that inspires others
    • to pack up camp every morning
    • while they are stranded in an arctic wasteland
      o because if Shackleton said it,
      o he’s going to do it!
• But, if you study the biography
  o of this giant among men,
    ▪ you will soon discover
  o that the final chapters of his life
    ▪ are quite disappointing
      • when compared to the fantastic
      • legendary feat that defined his life.
• Away from the heroic challenges of the Arctic Ocean,
  o Shackleton discovered that he was ill equipped
    ▪ for the normal life of a father
      • and a husband.
• He found himself unable to cope with day-to-day living.
  o The great hero,
    ▪ the beast of a man
      • who, essentially carried
      • his whole crew on his back
      • across the most treacherous territory in the world,
    ▪ found himself unable to cope
      • with the sheer frustrations
      • and continual nagging
        o of day-to-day living.
• He squandered his money
  o on ill-advised business ventures,
    ▪ and he let the tragic defeats
      • stifle his character
      • and drown out the heroic qualities
        o that had defined him.
• In a heart-wrenching final chapter of his life,
  o he descended into alcoholism
    ▪ as he sunk into over $1 million dollars of debt
      • before he finally died from a heart attack.

The Church Needs Real Heroes
• Men were made for moments
  o like Shackleton excelled in.
• Those are the moments where legends are made.
  o But the truth is that those moments
    ▪ are few and far between.
• The real test of a man
  o is how he lives
    ▪ in the midst of the mundane trials of life.
• And the real definition of a hero,
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• in the kingdom of God,
  ▪ is not defined by a single moment in life.
• Rather, it is defined by day-to-day living.
  • The church needs men,
    ▪ the church needs role models,
    • it needs a strong male lead,
  • but it needs men who are heroic
    ▪ in the everyday struggles of life!
• God uses men who learn to walk by faith and not by sight.
  • He uses men who learn to lean on him
    ▪ and to place their faith in him.
    • Men who, having done all to stand, stand.
• I’m not talking about men
  • of storybook faith today,
    ▪ I’m talking about men
    • of real, ordinary,
      ▪ day-to-day faith.
• Not men who subdued nations,
  • or men who overcame
    ▪ overwhelming odds,
  • but men who establish a legacy
    ▪ for their children to follow after.
    • Real life,
    • ordinary men
      ▪ who are used by God.
• So often, that indomitable strength of character
  • that never says die,
  • that refuses to quit,
  • that presses on in the face of all adversity
    ▪ is reserved for those definitive moments
      • like Earnest Shackleton faced in the arctic.
• But the absolute truth, this afternoon,
  • is that God uses men
    ▪ who will employ that same tenacity
      • in the everyday,
      • mundane battles that threaten your soul
        ▪ and seek to destroy your home.
  • God is calling on men
    ▪ who will purpose in their hearts
      • to stand for him
      • no matter what life brings against them.
• Men who will guard their families,
men who will protect their integrity,
  • men who will purpose to be a refuge
    • and shelter for their wife and children
      o in the midst of turbulent times
      o and terrible trials.

Men who will not fold
  o under the everyday pressures
    • but will approach the mundane,
    • the day-to-day,
      • with the same passion and zeal
      • that is often reserved
        o for the monumental tasks
        o that shape history.

Earnest Shackleton may be remembered as a hero,
  o but he died as a broken man
    • who was just a shattered remnant
      • of the hero he once was.

Let us purpose in our hearts, men,
  o not only to shine in those epic moments
    • when the whole world is watching
  o but to carry the torch
    • when no one but our kids and spouses
      • are watching us.
  o Let us purpose to live and to die
    • as heroes of the faith,
      • as unbending and unbroken men of the cross
        o who, having done all to stand,
          • stood to the very end of their watch.

That’s the kind of men that heaven celebrates!

Close
(Ask Pastor to come up)

When Shackleton began to publicize
  o his upcoming adventure
    • a friend stopped him one day and said,
      • I am surprised that you are so publicly promoting your
        new venture, that is quite unlike you.

Mr. Shackleton’s responded,
  o “I have a purpose in doing so.
    • I want my colleague, Mr. Wild, to hear about my plans.
    • He has buried himself in the heart of Africa,
      • and has left no address,
but I thought that if I would broadcast the news that I was going
  • it might filter though into the very center of Africa,
    o and if Wild knows I am going,
    o he will come.”
  o At that instant they both turned to discover
    • that Mr. Wild was standing in the doorway.

• It was a dramatic moment as Wild said,
  o “I heard you were going
    • and the moment I heard,
      • I dropped my gun,
      • picked up my baggage,
      • and made straight for home.
    • Here I am.
      • What are your orders?”

• Brother Larue didn’t ask me to do this,
  o but I felt compelled of the Holy Ghost
    • early this morning to tell you
      • that this man needs your help.
• He needs your support,
  o he needs your assistance,
    • he needs your prayers
      • and he needs you to stand with him,
        o shoulder-to-shoulder
      • as he leads this church in the direction
        o that God has given him.

• The church needs you.
  o Pastor needs you.

Bring Me Men!
On July 4 1894, American folk poet Sam Walter Foss published a poem called “The Coming American” that captivated me from the moment I first heard it:

Bring me men to match my mountains, Bring me men to match my plains;
Men with empires in their purpose, And new eras in their brains.
Bring me men to match my mountains, Bring me men to match my plains;
Men to chart a starry empire, Men to make celestial claims.
Bring me men to match my prairies, Men to match my inland seas;
Men to sail beyond my oceans, Reaching for the galaxies.
These are men to build a nation, Join the mountains to the sky;
Men of faith and inspiration, Bring me men, bring me men, bring me men!