

## **“Warrior—The Warrior’s Cause”**

Today we start this series called “Warrior”, and this is really devoted to you men. Why? Because God has created you with the heart of a warrior and too many of us has lost that connection. Now, women don’t be afraid of this because this is not about getting men to be violent, or destructive. That’s not the heart of the warrior we’re talking about. What we’re going to be talking about is that if God created men with the heart of a warrior then he created them to fight for the right things, so what are the right things?

And women, don’t tune this out because this isn’t just for the men—I wouldn’t do that to you. It’s for you too and it’s not about you being submissive, or weak, or whatever, you are powerful too. It’s just that in today’s world, men need some encouragement to be who God created them to be. It’s like John Eldredge says, society at large today can’t make up its mind about men. We’ve spent the last 50 years redefining masculinity into something more sensitive, safe, manageable...feminine. And now society berates men for not being men. Society asks, “Where are all the real men?” The answer is, “You asked them to be women. You asked them to be metrosexuals.”

And it makes me sad to say that the church has a terrible track record in what it’s done to men. The church has somehow led men to believe that God’s greatest desire is for them to be good boys, and mind their manners, and be nice. That’s what we hold up as models of Christian maturity: Really nice guys, who don’t smoke, drink or swear. The result is that you walk into most churches today and have a look around and most men are just bored.

But listen, I am convinced that God created us to be warriors who are ready to fight for the right things. I am convinced that God created us men and women in his image, and part of that image for men is that we are somewhat wild at heart and always should be. I am convinced that God did not put us on this earth to merely be good boys, but to be men with a cause worth fighting for. I want to say it again, the fight is not necessarily a physical battle, some battles are, most are not, but, men, life and faith isn’t just about minding our manners. God created us with the heart of a warrior.

I look at my childhood and I can see it. I was a wild child. I was labeled a bad boy growing up. I was so energetic, so inquisitive, so adventuresome, so ready to explore and push the limits. I wanted to know how things worked, so I took them apart. I wanted to know where every door led, so I explored and learned to pick locks. I was into guns (bb guns), and swords, and bows and arrows. I made my own crossbow from scratch when I was 10. My parents took it from when they found my homemade arrows stuck in a wooden table leg so deep they couldn’t get them out. I made my own ninja sword from scratch when I was 12. I made my own nunchakus when I was 12. I wanted to be a warrior. I wanted to be an adventurer. I wanted to know how things worked. I wanted to explore everything. And for that, I was labeled a bad seed. A bad boy. And everybody in my world made sure to tell me how bad I was. It wasn’t long before I lived up to their expectations of me. But you know, the more I look back the more I realize that I wasn’t bad, I was just all boy. I had the young heart of a warrior in a society that just wanted me to sit down and shut up. And that’s the message I’ve gotten most of my life because society fears the strength of a man.

But I believe that God made the masculine heart, and God made the feminine heart. I believe that we are equal, but different and that’s a good thing. Men don’t need to become more feminine and women don’t need to become more masculine. We share many traits and abilities, but men and women also have very different traits, strengths, and abilities. And as we focus on the men, God’s invitation to them is, “Come and live out what I meant you to be.”

In this series I’m drawing from 4 sources, the Bible, the book *Wild at Heart*, some of the teaching from Craig Groeschel, and from my own life experiences and yours. And I pray that God would build you up and show you who he wants you to become.

I can almost hear what some of you thinking. How does all this warrior talk fit in with Jesus who was clearly, as the song says, “gentle Jesus, meek and mild”? Men, this is where it begins. Understanding Jesus. We picture him in a white bathrobe, with a blue Miss America sash, and a beatific expression on his face. Let there be no doubt that that was not Jesus. He was a carpenter who worked in wood and stone, he knew sweat, and dirt, and hard work and probably had some serious guns on him (that’s biceps).

In the book of Exodus in the Bible it says, **“The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name” (Exodus 15:3)**. We can't forget that part of Jesus. He wasn't afraid of a fight, he didn't back down in a confrontation. On a few occasions he picked a fight with the Pharisees. He wasn't afraid to rock the boat; he didn't tip toe around the issues. When Jesus saw someone hurting, he healed them, even on the Sabbath when it was breaking the law. He didn't have much tolerance for people who shied away from human need and hid behind legalism, and he called them on it.

Yes, Jesus had the deepest compassion possible and if you were among the wounded, the weary, the outcast, the ignored, the defeated, if you were one of them and around him you felt his compassion, his love, his care and concern. But if you were the enemy, he'd draw you out and he was not a gentleman about it. When the temple was being used to sell trinkets, and money-changers were taking advantage of poor religious pilgrims, Jesus was not a good boy. He didn't sit down and shut up. He turned over their tables, and John even says he made a whip out of some rope and drove them out.

And when thugs come to get Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane he doesn't shrink back or cower. Check this out. **“Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, ‘Who is it you want?’ ‘Jesus of Nazareth,’ they replied. ‘I am he,’ Jesus said...When Jesus said, ‘I am he,’ they drew back and fell to the ground. Again he asked them, ‘Who is it you want?’ And they said, ‘Jesus of Nazareth.’ ‘I told you that I am he,’ Jesus answered. ‘If you are looking for me, then let these men go.’” (John 18:4-8, NIV)**. He faces them head-on. He says, “Let the rest of these people go. I'll go with you.” And his presence is so powerful it knocks the whole posse over!

What I'm getting at is that, yes, there is a tender side of God, and we see that clearly in Jesus and his deep compassion for the least, the last, and the lost. But we can't forget that Jesus had a warrior side too and kept those two sides in balance. And God created us men so that we, too would have that same balance. The heart of gentleness AND the heart of a warrior. And men, it's OK for you to get back to your warrior. In fact, I think it's imperative for us to get back to the warrior God created us to be. It's imperative for us to realize that God made us in his image as warriors to fight for the right things, in the right way, at the right times. The world is waiting for men who stand up for something bigger than they are. God is waiting.

So, men, when was the last time you felt that inner warrior rise up? I think mine was on Christmas Eve when I had somebody heckle me as I preached. Something started to wake in me, to defend myself, to defend my God, to protect the people that were in the room that night. Those of you who were there may have actually heard me open up the can of whoop-ass. But it wasn't the time or place. But that inner warrior waking up, it really rattled me.

Something happens inside us, doesn't it men, when we see the challenge? I mean, look at the movies that start to wake our inner warrior. *Braveheart*, *Conan the Barbarian*, *The Matrix*, *Fight Club*, *The Last Samurai*, *Gladiator*, *Star Wars*, *Taken*. Honesty, I love a good chick-flick, and I love stories that stir the heart, but something supernatural happens when I see the story of warrior fighting for a cause. Something starts to wake within me. Watching *Braveheart* was a supernatural experience for me. The same with *The Last Samurai*. Both of those based on true stories of men who fought a righteous fight. **Every warrior has a cause to fight for.**

I talked about Nehemiah last week. He had a vision to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem, the capital city of his home country. It was a risky task and other nations were threatening them. He rallied the people in the face of these threats. Watch how he inspired them. He said in Nehemiah 4:14, **“Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes” (Nehemiah 4:14, NIV)**. And the men said, “Absolutely.”

There is something outside of us for which we desire to fight, and the men all rallied around, because there is something about a man that loves to fight for a cause outside of himself. “Oh, yeah, I'll fight for them. Oh, yeah, I'll fight for the broken. Oh, yeah, I'll fight for my families.”

Mel Gibson as William Wallace in *Braveheart*, he goes to pick a fight with the English who are oppressing the people. He says, *“Fight, and you may die. Run, and you'll live. At least a while. And dying in your beds, many years from now, would you be willing to trade ALL the days, from this day to that, for one*

*chance—just one chance—to come back here and tell our enemies that they may take our lives, [raising his sword over his head] but they’ll never take...OUR FREEDOM!”*

Guys, you look at that and you think to yourself, “If I was there, I’d fight!” I would fight because we were created with the heart of the warrior, and there is this desire to fight for a cause that’s bigger than ourselves. There’s something that takes place because, until you find the cause for which you are willing to die, you never truly live. Gentlemen, you know it. You get bored. Internally, you are craving for something more than just living for the things of this world. You are craving something more, because until you find that cause for which you are willing to die, you never truly feel alive. Every warrior has a cause to fight for. That’s the first foundational thought.

Second foundational thought is this. **A warrior without a cause to fight for will find the wrong thing to fight against.** This is where guys go stupid, and men, we are just too good at this. Without the right cause to fight for, we get bored and we fight against the wrong things. You will see guys all the time fighting against the authority above them, whether that’s at their jobs or against God, they become rebellious in a self-destructive way. You will find men who hurt the people that they have been called to love the most. A man without a cause becomes destructive. He self-destructs, and he takes those around him with him.

You will see guys who get bored and go do the most stupid things ever. You will see guys throw away their marriage in a moment of boredom. On one stupid lustful desire, they self-destruct. You will see guys who hurt the people who are trying to help them the most, because a warrior without the right cause becomes destructive.

Saul of Tarsus was this way in the New Testament. Later he would change his name to Paul. He didn’t understand the cause of Christ, so he hurt the most important cause, because he was a warrior without the right cause. Acts 8:3 says this, **“But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison” (Acts 8:3, NIV).** He killed innocent believers, because he was a warrior without the right cause.

Now, I know there are some ladies who are going, “Okay, Aaron, back off the warrior talk. Okay? Guys are already dangerous enough.” And if that’s you, I just want to say very lovingly, chances are very good that the reason you feel this hesitancy is because you’ve been hurt by a man’s strength gone bad, because that can happen. The strength that God gave a man can be used for great good. Sadly, though, it can be used for great evil, as well. *“Yes, a man is a dangerous thing. So is a scalpel. It can wound or it can save your life. You don’t make it safe by making it dull; you put it in the hands of someone who knows what he’s doing.” (Wild at Heart, p. 83).* This is series is about men becoming the warrior God intends which has little to do with physical violence. This is about becoming that focused, powerful, confident, spiritual, warrior. That warrior who still does the dishes and changes diapers.

A warrior. So, I would say to you, warriors, name your cause. What is it? Your cause may change over time. It certainly will. You eighteen-year-old warriors, you young men of God, right now, you have a different cause in this season of your life than when you are thirty-seven. The 37-year-old warrior has a different cause. The 54-year-old warrior, he’ll have a slightly different cause. The 82-year-old warrior, man of God, seasoned veteran will have a different cause. But what is, what is your divine cause right now, warrior?

I know a man whose cause is to fight against poverty and he is willing to do almost anything in that battle. I know a man whose cause is to fight against child abuse. I know a man whose cause is to fight injustice.

Some of you need to take a season of your life right now and your cause needs to be your marriage, or your children, or your financial freedom.

Name your cause. Maybe it’s something bigger than you. Maybe it’s something outside of you. You might say, “Aaron, what’s your cause?” I can tell you. What’s my cause? My cause is you. My cause is you. My cause is those of you who have chosen to follow Christ. My cause is you deepening what it means to follow Jesus. My cause is you going beyond church on Sunday and living like his follower on Monday with clear evidence of him in your life. My cause is you having the real power of God in your life. That’s my cause.

What's my cause? My cause is those outside, those who don't even see a need for God, people who don't know the life that really is life.

Ending homelessness is becoming a cause that I will fight for. I am a warrior with a cause. Name your cause, warriors, because without one, you will be fighting the wrong battle every single time, and you will destruct, self-destruct and hurt those around you. Gentlemen, it's time to fight. It's time to stop reducing Christianity to a call to sit down, shut up, mind your manners, and be a good boy. That wasn't Jesus, and that's not Christianity. It's time to fight; to find your cause.

Once upon a time a man was walking through a forest and, while walking, he found a young eagle. He picked up that young eagle, brought it home and put it in with the chickens in his barnyard. He gave it chicken food to eat, even though it was an eagle, the king of birds.

Five years later, a neighbor was visiting and glanced over in the chicken yard, saw the eagle with the chickens and said, "That bird is an eagle, not a chicken!" The owner said, "You're right, but I have trained it to be a chicken. It's not an eagle anymore, it is a chicken now. Even though it measures 10 feet from tip to tip of its wings, it's a chicken."

The neighbor disagreed and said, "No, still it's an eagle; it has the heart of an eagle, and it should be soaring in the sky."

"No," said the owner, "it is a chicken and it will never fly." They agreed to test it. The neighbor picked up the eagle, held it up above the ground and said, "You are an eagle, you belong to the sky and not to this earth; stretch out your wings and fly."

The eagle glanced at the sky, then looked down, saw the chickens eating their food, and down he jumped. The owner said: "I told you it's a chicken." "No," said the neighbor, "it is an eagle. Give it another chance tomorrow."

So the next day he took it to the top of the house and said: "You are an eagle, you belong to the sky and not to this earth; stretch out your wings and fly." But again the eagle, seeing the chickens feeding, jumped down and started to eat with them. Then the owner said: "I told you it was a chicken." "No," asserted the neighbor, "it is an eagle, and it has the heart of an eagle; just give it one more chance, and I know it will fly tomorrow."

The next morning the neighbor got up early and took the eagle away from the farm and away from the all the houses. He took the eagle to the top of a high mountain. The sun was just rising over the top of the mountain other eagles were riding the thermals. It was a beautiful sight to behold. He picked up the eagle and said to it: "You are an eagle, you belong to the sky and not to this earth; stretch out your wings and fly." The eagle looked around and trembled as if new life was coming to it. It heard the all of the other eagles, and suddenly it stretched out its wings and, with the screech of an eagle, and a broad sweep of its wings, it took to the air and flew higher and higher. It was a sight to behold. It was an eagle, even though it had been kept and tamed as a chicken.

Men, these next couple weeks is about reminding you of who you really are. And men, you are a warrior. You are created with something that God put within you, and you know it. It might be buried deep down after years, and years of being suppressed. Let's see if we can wake that inner warrior and become the men, the men, God created us to be. And for today, that's the Good News. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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