

Thoughts

[A Single View of Marriage](#) | [Biblical Sexuality](#) | ['Christian' Books](#) | [Missionary Kids](#) | [Pet Peeves](#)
[Pornography: Confession, Healing, and Contention](#) | [Respecting Women](#) | [Single Notes](#)
[Snippets](#) | [Spiritual Forces](#) | [Tension Points](#) | **'Wild at Heart'?**

'Wild at Heart'? ([View in PDF](#))

"Eldredge is obsessed with placing focus and importance on personality and stereotypes while simultaneously neglecting Godly character and fruits of the Spirit. Which one is biblical? Masculinity is defined by the attributes God looks for; not man."

Introduction

Let me start by saying that I do agree with Mr. Eldredge in what I believe is the basic point he tries to make in his book: that men need to be responsible, accountable people—not cowards—who need to stand up for what they believe. However, the approach and methods that Eldredge uses are neither balanced nor scripturally sound, resulting in a book both inaccurate and disturbing in its content.

Talks down to his readers

It's in poor taste that Eldredge talks down to his readers instead of alongside them—that's the impression he seems to give throughout his book. He makes little attempt to identify with them, and from his language (especially as his own masculinity is never called into question), it's very easy to get the impression of finger-pointing. Compare that to Max Lucado's non-insultive, scripturally sound, and intellectually stimulating style of writing, or Shaunti Feldhahn's thoughtful, standing alongside-you style.

Masculinity is not a biblical issue

Eldredge advocates his definition of masculinity using select biblical characters and Scripture out of context. The problem is, where does Scripture, in context, ever address masculinity? It doesn't—and if it doesn't—why doesn't it? As God intended, it teaches biblical principles; namely, (first and foremost) obedience to God. Christ never spoke to or against issues; only sin, because repentance and obedience to God naturally produces the men and women God wants. If masculinity is such a great concern according to Eldredge, why isn't it dealt with in Scripture? I have a big problem with Eldredge's attempt to use anyone, let alone King David, as an example of masculinity. Did God value David so highly because of his masculinity, or because of his heart? After all:

[1 Samuel 16:7](#) (NASB) *"But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.""*

Godly character + God-given personality + male = true masculinity
 Godly character + God-given personality + female = true femininity

The Kings of Israel that God honored were honored because they were obedient to Him; not because they were masculine. Without a doubt, there were some very conventionally 'masculine' men and Kings in whom God was very displeased, and who were struck dead as a result. I wonder if it had anything to do with what *God is looking for*, rather than what *John Eldredge is promoting*?

Throughout Scripture, it's clear that God looks at the heart, not the exterior, and yet Eldredge does nothing to emphasize or agree with this very central element of God's Word and desire for man. Christ's ministry stemmed

from his obedience to the Father, not his masculinity. Have you wondered why Eldredge leaves out the examples of Jesus weeping? Why Christ told Peter to put away his sword when he sliced off the high priest servant's ear, or why he never fought back when he was being beaten, insulted, and brutalized by the Roman soldiers before giving His life on the cross? The truth is, there are plenty of 'masculine' men who know of or care nothing for God. After all, they have the elements Eldredge so staunchly touts; wild, reckless, relentless risk-takers who are not concerned with the consequences of their actions, and driven by the "wildness of their heart" they were supposedly born with. Is this what we are to strive to be?

Humanism and false teaching

Using only Scripture (as he should), Pastor Daryl Wingerd does an excellent job of objectively scrutinizing and exposing Eldredge's own words: www.ccwonline.org/wild.html. What you will find are some frighteningly non-biblical views and beliefs held by Eldredge, including [Humanism](#). To date, Eldredge has never attempted to properly address or explain his views from Scripture. In his reply to a critique made by Rut Etheridge www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/008/15.34.html, he claims only that:

"I don't read any press on me, good or bad...I suppose my reaction is simply '*You shall know them by their fruits*' (Matt. 7:20)...but that is not the actual effect that my works have had on those who read them. Far from it. Virtually every response we see is that people are drawn to a deeper worship of God and a deeper level of repentance. The actual fruit of my ministry—holier lives of men and women—is quite the opposite of what Etheridge describes. That's not a bad test, as Jesus said."

A convenient answer (and difficult to prove without actual testimonies) that sounds good on the surface, but it still doesn't address the blatant scriptural error and Humanism in his book. And who *are* these people whose lives have been changed, where are their testimonies, and in what specific ways have they become more Christlike? In addition, if Eldredge never reads press—whether good or bad—how did he even know what Etheridge's critique was about? You can't defend yourself with vague answers anymore than you can change lives for Christ with Humanism and other false teaching. The standard is God's Word, and Eldredge knows he cannot substantiate his book using Scripture. Were there no errors in his book, he would be **more than happy** to explain his text from God's Word and answer his critics...but when alleged students of God's Word who should know the Scripture inside and out (such as Charles Swindoll) approve of his book, why try? If Charles Swindoll *really* read this book, then Satan has an ominous foothold in the Christian community.

Masculinity is subjective

Eldredge tells us that all men are born to be 'wild at heart', and that there's something wrong if they're not this way. Where is the evidence for this? What scriptural passage or even scientific evidence backs this up? God made every man unique with different personalities, tastes, views, cultures, and approaches to doing things. Men are different from each other, as are women. In fact, some women are more "wild at heart" than men are—does this make them abnormal, and shame the men that aren't living up to Eldredge's masculinity standards? Of course not. I dare say the opposite is true—that many men are not as thoughtful, courteous, considerate, and sensitive as they should be—and not just towards women, but people in general. Should we change our God-given characters and personalities so we conform to one man's concept of masculinity? Hardly. Eldredge tries to define and cram men into his conceptualized box of masculinity. The problem is, in reality—and not Eldredge's book—this will always break the box. I find it difficult to imagine God saying to a believer at the judgment seat of Christ, "You weren't manly enough." Christ neither wanted nor expected his disciples to be like Peter. The apostle John, one of the most quiet and reserved disciples (and I dare say *completely uncharacteristic* of Eldredge's "Wild at Heart" concept) was also the closest to Christ.

Throughout his book, it's difficult to deny that Eldredge focuses on one type of man in painting his picture of the 'wild at heart' persona: something along the lines of "Conan the Barbarian." If you think about it, you won't be able to come up with a better stereotype of men. Not only is this an insult to God in His design of character, personality, and creativity, but it's strangely convenient that this ideal man seems to match Eldredge's profile.

Frankly, I would like to describe Eldredge's "wild at heart one-size-for-all-or-else" fist-slammng as pure, unadulterated drivel. Mr. Eldredge, only God is the one who is worthy (and capable!) of judging people, and He doesn't use your criteria.

Takes Scripture out of context

Eldredge uses the scene of Christ holding back the Roman soldiers in the Garden of Gethsemane as an example of masculinity. Therefore, as men, we need to have that same boldness, that same bravery and risk-taking as Christ. Come again? What does this have to do with masculinity? This Scripture illustrates Christ's power and authority as God in the flesh, and that neither Satan nor man could thwart His plan of salvation or His authority. God allowed Himself to die on the cross for our sin. This has nothing to do with masculinity...but I guess that wasn't what Eldredge wanted to twist out of this passage.

No balance

Nowhere in his book will you find the element of balance: you don't find any rallying cry for the fruits of the Spirit in men, yet kindness, gentleness, humility, and patience are all things that God desires first and foremost in everyone, regardless of gender. Why was this left out? Instead of using a balanced approach, Eldredge paints pictures of men akin to drill sergeants or raging bulls in a china shop: wild, uncontrolled, brash, reckless. Is it possible to please God if you don't fit Eldredge's cookie-cutter concept of a man?

Instead of adhering to and advocating biblical principles such as repentance, obedience and accountability, he goes to the extreme and heralds a stereotypical "Chuck Norris" concept of what every man is supposed to inherently resemble; after all, women naturally desire this kind of man, so the man who doesn't live up to this description is effeminate. Right? Wrong. Both men and women are as unique and varied in their characters, temperaments, personalities, and tastes. You will find that the more women you ask, the more you'll discover that they value men who are humble, unselfish, sensitive, responsible, gentle, good listeners. Some women do like "wild," but most prefer "not too little, not too much." Ask them. It appears Eldredge didn't ask any women other than his wife for their opinions. In fact, I venture to say that most men very sadly lack love, sensitivity, and understanding toward their wives and women in general. There is a very real, underlying cynical attitude toward women that is still evident in the church. I have seen more than enough first-hand accounts of this. At the *very least* as believers, we should be treating others with the love and respect Christ has commanded us, knowing they were also made in the image of God and that Christ died for them every bit as much as He died for us:

[Genesis 1:27](#) (NASB) *"God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."*

[1 Timothy 5:1-2](#) (NASB) *"Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father, to the younger men as brothers, the older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters, in all purity."*

Bad advice

Eldredge advocates teaching your son to fight back in school. First of all, unless it's a life-or-death situation, it's against biblical principles, school rules, and it's a bad witness and testimony for Christians that are already under scrutiny by the unsaved. Secondly, depending on the situation, it may even be smarter to run than to try and fight back. They're called "masculine survival tactics."

Bad examples

Highlighting King David as he does, it's obvious Eldredge is trying to draw on the masculinity of David as an illustration. In essence, he questions the reader: "Why aren't you a man like King David? Where is your sword?"

Why don't you fight back?" Well, let me think...it's not the Old Testament times, I'm not a King ordained by God defending my nation from ruthless attackers, and last I checked, God still doesn't approve of murder.

In summary

Frankly, I detest this book because what John Eldredge teaches is unbiblical—extrapolating and twisting Scripture out of context—but also because there is a flagrant stereotyping of what masculinity is, as well as an attitude of pride and superiority in his book which I find disturbing.

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