

Why Do We Sexualize Friendships?

In this series about man's battle to maintain sexual purity, I indicated that men and women can, in fact, have legitimate friendships but we must proceed with caution and keep proper boundaries.

My previous posts gave some practical tips about how we can change the behaviors that reinforce lustful desires. I also suggested that we really needed a "heart transformation" though, in order to overcome any unhealthy sexual desires.

So despite God's original design for sex within the pleasures of marriage, today's hypersexualized world makes developing friendships with the opposite sex, and at times even with the same sex, extra difficult. Anyone who is drawn to somebody in an emotionally-connected way or when we show any kind of physical intention, it is often viewed as having sexual intent.

This is especially true for male friendships, where physical intimacy such as "bro-hugging" or conveying affectionate words, is often misunderstood.

So how did we get to this point?

Let's start by exploring the history of male relationships.

The Affection of Male Friendships

Brett & Kate McKay, creators of the Art of Manliness website provided an interesting history of intimacy in male friendships in their post titled, *Bosom Buddies: A Photo History of Male Affection*. Their post gives an in-depth look into the decline of male intimacy over the last century.



Art of Manliness *Bosom Buddies: A Photo History of Male Affection*

Many of the historical photos in the AoM post may leave you with a sense of surprise. The article states the term “homosexuality” was not even coined until 1869 at which time the dichotomy between “gay” and “straight” did not even exist.

The poses, facial expressions, and body language of the men

may make some guys uncomfortable, even with the current acceptance of homosexuality.

The McKay's write, *"Attraction to, and sexual activity with other men was thought of as something you did, not something you were. It was a behavior – accepted by some cultures and considered sinful by others."*

Notice the difference? Something *you did* not something *you were*.

"But at the turn of the 20th century," they continue, *"the idea of homosexuality shifted from a practice to a lifestyle and an identity. You did not have temptations towards a certain sin, you were a homosexual person. Thinking of men as either 'homosexual' or 'heterosexual' became common."*

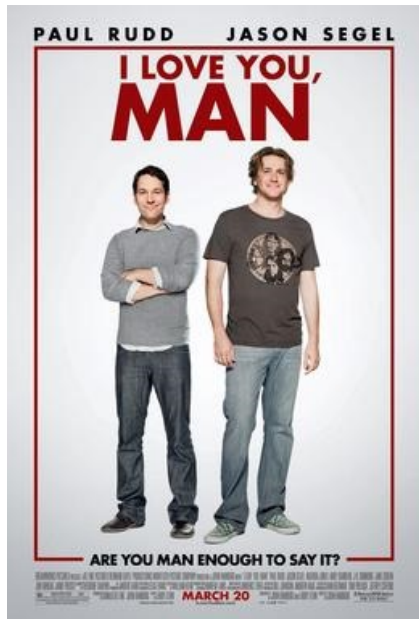
This modern conception of homosexuality took root in American culture and men began to be much more careful not to send messages to other men, nor to women, that they were gay.

As such, it was theorized that American men were becoming less comfortable showing affection towards each other over the last century.

I Love You Man!

In my opinion, men must learn to overcome our cultural aversion to expressing affection and sexualizing our relationships to go deep in their friendships – to God Buddy-

level of depth and connection.



DreamWorks Pictures

For example, I have a male friend who frequently says, “*I love you, brother*”.

In my younger days, I had difficulty expressing my love for other guys in the same manner due to this cultural conception.

But I am more comfortable with it now.

The apostle Paul’s letter to the Romans tells us to “***Love one another with brotherly affection***” (Romans 12:10).

We usually don’t put those last two words together or after one another, do we?

Brotherly feels masculine, whereas affection feels feminine. Together, those words invite us to a genuine, affectionate brotherhood.

We also see this intimacy with Paul and the elders: ***“And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him”*** (Acts 20:37).

The Intimate Friendship of Jonathan and David



Jonathan and David

We see this same type of affectionate bond between Jonathan, son of King Saul, and David, the future king of Israel.

Early on, Jonathan becomes endeared to David after the king-to-be slays Goliath. After the slaying, David rises up above all the men older than him and demonstrates faith that the Israelites didn't.

“After David had finished talking with Saul, he met Jonathan,

the king's son. There was an immediate bond between them, for Jonathan loved David. From that day on Saul kept David with him and wouldn't let him return home. And Jonathan made a solemn pact with David because he loved him as he loved himself."

-1 Samuel 18:1-3 – NLT

The other factor in their friendship is that David is a threat to Jonathan's place to the throne once Saul would die. But Jonathan made a covenant to David, uniting himself with the Kingdom of God at the expense of his own ruling kingdom. Their covenant had little to do with David's personal desires but the depth of their friendship for the sake of the Kingdom.

"I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women."

- 2 Samuel 1:26

There have been numerous attempts to use the friendship between David and Jonathan for the sake of normalizing homosexual relationships. These are often based on the Bible's description of David and Jonathan being characterized by "love", the knitting of their souls, and their making of the covenant with each other.

Jonathan's love for David is just one of the better examples of biblical truth colliding with modern cultural views of male commitment to friendships.

The Beautiful Friendship of Frodo and Sam

In an article titled, *Stop Sexualizing the Beautiful Friendship of Frodo and Sam*, author Jack Lee suggests that the internet is flooded with progressive theories, memes, articles, and videos questioning the relationship of Frodo Baggins and Samwise Gamgee in J.R.R. Tolkien's fantasy epic, *The Lord of the Rings*.



Frodo Baggins and
Samwise Gamgee
Lord of The Rings

Lee says our culture has become so delusional that an entire generation is missing the beauty in Frodo and Sam's emotive, platonic bond. He even thinks the average modern American male could benefit from an examination of their sexuality and masculinity traits.

In Lee's opinion, masculinity is becoming ill-defined and lost

in our gender-confused culture. Sam and Frodo's affection for one another isn't rooted in homosexuality or even effeminacy but in a servant-hearted love.

Jesus: The Model for Intimacy

Those who desire emotionally deep and intimate masculine relationships should look to Jesus. He was a wonderful leader, a kind-hearted servant, the advocate, and protector of all people. He is the perfect embodiment of strength, wisdom, and integrity. He was slow to anger, full of love, honesty, patience, and mission-mindedness. He is infinitely strong, and yet, gentle and controlled.

Not only did God create masculinity but He became it in the flesh Who teaches us about being a man even to this day. Jesus is a model that men should strive to emulate as He demonstrates the traits that we also see in Jonathan & David and Frodo & Sam.

Jesus had friends whom He loved, but he also felt the deep despair of loneliness. In The Garden of Gethsemane, He longed for His friends to simply stay awake and comfort Him but they could do nothing but fall asleep.

Also, consider the scene of the Last Supper. John 13:23 reads, "now there leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved" (KJV).



The Last Supper with Jesus

Men Need Intimate, Friendships

It's a shame that our society's homophobia prevents men from connecting on the deeper, more emotional level needed to overcome the rampant isolation and loneliness and sexual abuses by some guys.

Our families and churches are starving for men who are emotionally-connected, morally-sound, and unconditionally-loyal to each other.

When men have the common bond of Jesus Christ, they can feel comfortable expressing a genuine love for each other without any fear of appearing less than manly. They will also enjoy proper relations with women without any sexual intent. This comes from a transformed heart and knowing God's purpose for all of our relationships.

I conclude this series in my next post with the guidelines for our male-female relationships.