

October “Man to Man” Dept.

GET REAL

Bubba Ingram

If I remember correctly, my half of the apartment rent my junior year in college was \$110 per month. No, it wasn't a bargain. It was really that awful. However, some amazing changes took place in my life before I was married and still lived in that “cheap” apartment. For instance, I can remember watching a short bit of the ESPY Awards on ESPN one spring day and heard something that I knew would be meaningful to me the rest of my life. Jim Valvano was receiving the Arthur Ashe Courage Award that year. He was progressed pretty far along in cancer by that time but it had taken none of his motivational prowess. His presentation spoke to a part of me I had purposefully suppressed for years trying to be a “tough guy”. Here was a guy who was in constant pain. He knew he had this opportunity, if none other, to tell a national audience what he had learned about living life. I remember running to my bedroom to get a piece of scratch paper so I could write a list he began to give on 3 things to do each day in order to have a full life. They were; to laugh, to think and to have your emotions moved to tears. I still have that sheet of paper. Here was a “man's man”, very respected basketball coach, having the prime of his career diminished and taken by this disease. It wasn't just that it was an emotional list or a catchy list. I knew it was accurate before I had even put it into

practice fully. It was familiar to me. It was an echo of scripture (Ecclesiastes 11:9, Romans 12:15, Psalms 1:2). It was something that would help me to be a “real” man.

The pattern of being real had been with me for years in the person of my dad. He was never “affected” as mom put it. He was not arrogant or distant. He hurt and certainly was tired at times. He smiled at me and talked with me. Through watching his face I learned the many feelings a dad and husband may feel at times and how to express those to people around you.

I have mentioned before about how much the look of pride from my father has meant to me throughout my life. There is another look that has recently become a more discernable response. Several years ago, as my two boys were born and joined in our family gatherings, I noticed dad’s tone in prayer change to one of a very personal nature. Now, he always thanks God in a special way for each member of our family, by name, when he leads the prayers around the table. I notice his eyes sometimes, after a prayer, full of tears. His face, unashamed of his body’s response to the feelings in his heart, turns to take in the precious view of a family well lead. I see him several steps ahead of me cognitively as he leads the way to our next home. Feelings that I am just now understanding and embracing are in full blossom in his life. A man’s family ought not have to question the depth of his love and devotion to them. It should not have to be inferred from his actions or given only by compulsion because of someone else’s show of affection. The reinforcement given to our wives and children by this proof of priority in our lives is immeasurable. But can “real” men do that? Jesus did!

Why, as we find out in John 11:35, did Jesus weep as for Lazarus? Hebrews 4: 14-16 reminds us that Christ can sympathize with our weaknesses because he experienced the same struggles, without sin, during his time on earth. John 11:33 says that he groaned in the spirit. He felt emotions just as we do today. Our house was full of laughter growing up. I started to write half-dozen different examples here and realized I may be breaking an unwritten family code for releasing too much information. Suffice it to say that no one was seriously injured or demeaned in the making of the humor. To laugh and cry each day with your family and friends is an opportunity to express what is probably God's same reaction in heaven. People need to see a righteous man's reaction to the good and evil in this world. They need to see him willing to make himself vulnerable for the things he believes in. God can accomplish a lot through that kind of man, Philippians 4:13.