

THE  
BRAVEHEARTED  
G O S P E L

ERIC LUDY



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## **THE BRAVEHEARTED GOSPEL**

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**Part One**

# THE MANLY STUFF

*The bane of a metrosexual society*

## THE RATHER AWKWARD WORD

One of my least favorite words in the English language is *castrate*. It is a rather awkward word denoting a rather awkward thing. And for better or worse, it's a word not typically allowed into a Christian book. And I, for one, am the happier for it. In fact, I can think of no worse way to spend my leisure reading time than to be laboring through a book that repeatedly used such a distasteful word. I'm sure we can all agree that such an unpleasant word belongs in historical reference books on ancient Siam and not in essays on the grand and holy adventure of Christianity.

That said, I wish to make us all a little uncomfortable. I plan to do in the third paragraph of this book what could spell this book's doom. I am going to not just use this unseemly word but I am going to define it. I realize the cost of such a maneuver. But when you understand how significant this unpleasant word is in light of the topic of this book, I think you will realize why I have no option but to push forward.

*Castrate*: to surgically remove a man's input, potency; his force; his influence; and his strength. (Note: you can thank me later for not giving you the scientific definition.)

I realize that you are probably standing in a bookstore at this moment, previewing this book and wondering if you should buy it. Your friend probably said something like, "You really need to read this book." But you are thinking to yourself right now, "My friend didn't mention anything about *this!*" But please know that this supremely uncomfortable word, now that it has been defined, has almost officially served its purpose in this book and will be seen only twice more.

As far as words go, I will readily agree that the word *castrate* is both

ugly and unpoetic. Not many songwriters are going to stick it into their lyrics, and not many poets are pining to find the perfect rhyme for it in order to jam it onto the end of their prose. So I'm not going to try and pitch it to you as a word to implement into your vocabulary turnstile. Simply put, there are just no more refined and flowery words that can substitute for it. *Emasculate* is by far the closest word to fit the bill, and therefore, I will resort to plugging it in as a more noble substitute throughout the pages of this book. However, *emasculate* has a softer, more disarming feel and therefore can't possibly fully replace the much-needed shock and alarm that oozes out of the word chosen to begin this book.

And as hard as I've tried to think of a better way to lay the groundwork for what this book is all about, I keep coming back to this crazy, ugly word. It says it clearly and concisely, though it may say it with a little too much flamboyance. You see, I believe that the "manly stuff" has been unconsciously removed from the body of Christ today. We are missing the manly input, potency, force, influence, and strength in Christ's body. Some may feel uncomfortable that Jesus was a man, but there is no way around the fact that He was. And yet His body, the church, is strangely lacking the evidence of this fact in our modern Christian world. Jesus has suddenly gone metrosexual in America. He's male, but He's a male that seems ashamed of His masculinity.

Everyone seems to have an opinion about how this book should be written.

"Eric, I like you, so I'm going to give it to you straight. You have to be careful not to come across like one of those Fundamentalist types!"

"You can't sound too preachy; otherwise, people will just slam the book shut!"

"You better not say it the way you just said it to me, or else people will be doing book burnings with this thing!"

"Oh, and Eric, just have fun when you write this!"

The goal of every book is to not just be written, but read. There are many ways in which this book could have been written, but few that would lend it that much-needed magnetic charm inherent in every truly engaging read. You see, this book is about uncomfortable things. And, I must admit, uncomfortable things are much more difficult to write about than ideas that scratch the back and massage the ego.

Whereas this book has loads of magnetic charm *to me*, I honestly don't

know if others will feel the same charm as they venture through its rough terrain. You, dear reader, must decide if I handled this topic well. For I'm certain you will have an opinion in the matter. There will be those who will criticize me for being too soft as well as those who will consider pressing criminal charges against me for being too hard. Frankly, my goal is to handle this topic with the loving dexterity of Jesus Christ.

I wrote this book because I had to. I just couldn't hold it in any longer.

I sat down in front of my laptop on June 4, 2007, with the intent of writing a completely different book. I stared at my computer screen for two straight days and agonized over the reality that God was pointing at something different. I'll never forget the conversation I had with Leslie, my wife, as I shared with her the burning compulsion to write a book about the Bravehearted Gospel.

"You have to write this!" she said pointedly in response. "And when you do, you need to write it like a man!"

So please know it was none other than a sweet, ultrafeminine girly girl, named Leslie, who infused the necessary steel into my spine to actually do this. Whereas the irony of that might not be fully appreciated at this moment, it is certainly still worthy of being mentioned here.

You see, this book has *boy* scribbled all over it. To paraphrase Alan Marshall Beck, this book is "Truth with dirt on its face, Beauty with a cut on its finger, Wisdom with bubble gum in its hair, and the Hope of the future with a frog in its pocket." But don't be fooled into thinking that this is a book about manhood. This is a truth book, and I would like to think that truth books can cross the gender barrier, even though they may speak in a man's tone, with a man's zeal, and a man's grit.

The manly voice has been separated from truth for far too long and so, even at risk of speaking too loudly and too brashly inside the hushed church sanctuary, this book is going to inject a serious amount of muscle back into the gospel life.

Girls, I'm going to say this up front because I wish to be perfectly clear on this point: This book may very well sound like the tribal war cries of a bunch of painted men, but it is not a man book. The truth of the Bravehearted Gospel is without equivocation a truth that *must* be adopted into the feminine heart. As much as a great man must learn to listen, cry, be sympathetic, and allow compassion to ebb in his being,



so a great woman must have a brave heart. She must have the grit, the growl, and the gusto of God drilled into the bedrock of her soul.

This message is literally burning a hole in my soul. It is everything the modern church is needing and not realizing it needs. It is historic Christianity brought back to life, an invigoration of that ancient power and potency that once steered the early church.

Like many of you, I've grown up amidst a sterile, weak, North American church. We talk a good talk, but when it comes down to living it out in the real world, we're nearly impotent. We talk about love, joy, peace, victory, and blessed happiness, but few in our ranks actually exhibit these basic evidences of the Christian faith. And what is disconcerting, is the fact that even fewer within the church show concern over this gross hypocrisy in our global presentation of Jesus Christ. As a group, we Christians are soft, mushy, and lax. There seems to be a serious shortage of the majestic, intrepid, daring, just, and durable qualities the church once possessed. The steel of a man is strangely lacking.

For instance: Whatever happened to the idea of sacred honor, unvarnished nobility, and unwavering allegiance to the King? What happened to the quake-in-my-boots fear of God, the lay-it-all-on-the-line commitment to the cause of Christ, and the die-if-I-must attitude toward defending truth and Scripture? Where did the radical abandon to seek and save the lost disappear to, or the once glorious idea of martyrdom? Or how about the burning need to stand against evil, to break the jaws of the wicked in order to ransom the oppressed, the orphaned, the widowed, and the enslaved? Where is the holy boldness, the courage, and the daring needed to birth the truth of Christ into this God-forsaking culture? What happened to the once noble idea of preaching with both authority and conviction? Where has the vanguard, the mighty men, the fiercely loyal regiment of King Jesus vanished to? Because we need them, and we need them now!

You see, the Bravehearted Gospel is not merely a title, it is an attitude and a lifestyle. It isn't something I invented. Rather, it comes straight out of the soldier's handbook from Heaven, covered in blood, sweat, tears, and glory. And if I may be so bold, the Bravehearted Gospel is the manly stuff that the modern church is missing, and if it were to be found again, this world might be turned upside down within a single year.

The Bravehearted Gospel is gritty living, the stuff of martyrs and

saints. Its bravado meets brains; its hamlike fist meets poetlike heart; its forehead of flint meets tender, love-inspired soul. The Bravehearted Gospel is muscular zeal meets helpless orphan, sacrificing life and limb to rescue her. It is spine of steel bending to embrace the urine-stained outcast, giving up everything in order to see him brought through Heaven's gates. The Bravehearted Gospel is not mushy logic, it is concrete truth. It's not postmodern or modernistic thinking, and it's not dry-as-dust tradition for tradition's sake. Rather, it is historical living ripped straight from the pages of Scripture and made incarnate in the lives of the disciples of Jesus in this twenty-first century. The Bravehearted Gospel isn't soft with sin and it's not hard on sinners, but rather it is the giving up of everything to see sin trumped and the sinner rescued. The Bravehearted Gospel is pure adventure, a life of nuclear joy and hallowed ecstasy. It's the hard way to live, and yet the most satisfying. And, God patiently waits to once again infuse the potency of His Bravehearted Gospel back into the bloodstream of the body of Christ. Ironically, it is you and me, and a million other Christians who are often standing in the way.

Now, I want to let you in on a few things.

First, one of the themes you'll stumble across throughout this book is the concept of nobility. In light of this, I am going to use the old King James translation and its majestic, poetic, and high tone whenever I quote Scripture throughout the upcoming pages. For those of you, like me, who have grown up on the newer translations of the Bible, I think you will find it to be an enchanting, graceful, and refreshing take on ideas that otherwise may have grown a bit stale. Yes, it's a more difficult translation, but when you get past its strong cologne, I think you will find, as I have, that it speaks with a lionlike voice.

Second, in all my previous ten books, I have made the disclaimer that names have been changed to protect individuals' identities. However, in this book, whereas that is true for almost every name used, there are a few names that I will say plainly without veil. I have contemplated this move for quite some time. But I feel that, in this case, it is necessary to help you, as the reader, better understand the specifics of what the modern church is facing. When everyone speaks in generalities often everyone agrees, but true change and true illumination often demands specifics. I pray to God that whenever I do choose to be specific in

naming an individual in this book that my thoughts will be offered with the utmost respect and presented with humility and grace.

Also, at the conclusion of each of the seven sections of this book you will find a special chapter entitled “The Bravehearted Path.” It is here that the manly stuff becomes practical and real. And it is here that I will give you peeks into what this extraordinary idea of the Bravehearted Gospel is all about. To understand the Bravehearted Gospel, you have to understand the mind, the heart, and the attitude behind it. And because we, as the modern church, have strayed quite far from our historic moorings, we consequently have a long way to go in order to get back to the grand and stately bearing of bravehearted christianity. I hope and pray that this humble literary offering will play a role, by God’s grace, to help lead us home.

I’m a man in the defining season of my life. There are males, and there are men. I beg God daily to be counted among the men. But, even as one of the men, there are multiple grades of honor a man can achieve throughout his life. And I must admit that I am still at the lowest rungs. I have merely begun this journey and in no way do I yet deserve to be associated with the noble idea of the Bravehearted Gospel, let alone have my name on the cover of a book associated with such a regal idea.

But there is one thing I possess that allows me to enter these sacred halls and speak about these lofty and princely ideas—*hunger*. I hunger for these truths more than I yearn for anything else. I esteem them; I passionately desire them; and I want them planted into the bedrock of my soul and integrated into the fabric of my being, no matter the pain and no matter the cost.

If I were to write this book ten years from now, I’m sure I would write it differently, and I’m sure there would be things I would add and things I would remove. For all those things that I should have added, forgive me. And for all those things I should have removed, please kindly try and overlook them.

I pray this book will serve to acquaint you, in a more intimate way than you ever thought possible, with the great power and great love of our King Jesus. This book isn’t about me, so I pray you look away if ever it seems like Eric Ludy is poking his head up too high within the text. This book is about Jesus, for Jesus, and to Jesus. And as Luke wrote unto Theophilus, so now I write unto my precious King.