



Perspective

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By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

We Don't Cry

We men, we're pretty tough customers. We don't cry. We don't get scared. We have answers to every question our wives ask — and answers to some they don't ask. And we're very cautious about getting too emotional — especially when it comes to love. That kind of stuff is okay for women. In fact, we like 'em that way. But us guys are pretty tough.

At least, that's the way I was raised. As a boy I never kissed my brothers. We shook hands. If I whimpered at football practice, I was forced to run laps. My military instructors kicked the recruits who cried, and ridiculed the ones who showed mercy. My supervisor on my first full time job after college taught me to "stick it to 'em before they stick it to you."

I was all macho.

But several years ago my twisted thinking began to get straightened

out. I received a letter from a young attorney in North Carolina, scrawled in long hand on a yellow legal sheet. He was sharing the joys and challenges of his new walk with Jesus Christ, plus some deep, personal things. He closed the letter with "Love, Nard."

I was half-embarrassed and half-amused. "Why, that's the way a 10-year-old boy would sign a letter — 'love,'" I thought. Then it occurred to me that Jesus had remarked, a long time ago, that only 10-year-old boys — and folks like them — could enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Stuffed shirts and macho men would just not feel comfortable there in the midst of all that love.

I had forgotten. In my haste to become a man, I had left out some of the most important ingredients which make up true manhood — including love. Somehow I had picked up the false impression that

real men don't cry, don't embrace, don't say "I love you" to other men.

Hollywood script writers have cheapened love until many of us are too embarrassed to be identified with it. Legal religionists, on the other hand, have made us so fearful of the flesh that the sight of two men embracing threatens an entire church. J. B. Phillips, the conservative English scholar and translator, felt so strongly about this that he even re-wrote the Bible. When he translated I Peter 5:14 where Paul literally says, "Salute one another with a kiss of love," the Phillips translation reads, "Give one another a handshake."

I need to be loved. I need to be told I am loved. And I imagine that beneath their tough masks, all other men are the same.

A lot of things about me are changing. One of them is the way I sign my letters.