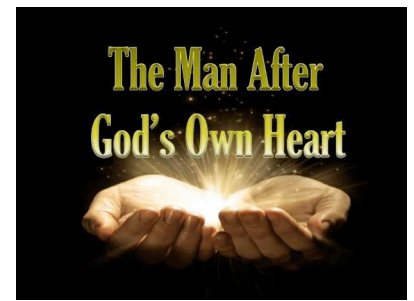


EMAW Testimonials

Collection for Inspiration

Trent Heaton – Grand Rapids, MI



April 9, 2015

"I was dying a slow and apathetic death"

In 2013, my life was by all accounts - ok. I had a steady income; I was married to my wife for 6 years and had a 3-year old son. My wife and I had gone through some rough seas over the 2 years prior with the loss experienced with miscarriage of a daughter part way into the second trimester and a still-birth of another daughter mid-third trimester. My wife was emotionally unstable and I was doing what I could to hold things together. I was in prayer and reading the bible "regularly" (once or twice a week outside of church). I had started a number of men's bible studies on my own and we met at my house. But nothing was really sticking. More often than not, we'd find ourselves adrift in conversation over fun stuff and day-to-day struggles - nothing really delving into the Word or into deep life stuff.

In the inside, I was dying a slow and apathetic death. My wife was emotionally all over the place and I felt like a shell of a man. I was allowing myself to be beat down by life in the way I operated with my father and my wife and I allowed this to consume me. I became a "yes man" and just went along to get along. I knew enough was enough that I needed to step up and be the man God had called me to be, but I didn't really know the path. My wife and I prayed that I would find a group of men to push me, challenge me, sharpen me; and I them.

In the Fall of 2013, Tony spoke briefly about a men's group he was starting at ABC called "EMAW" and I was intrigued. Honestly, I thought it sounded good and all, but as he was describing it, it seemed kind of hokey to me. I had been raised in the church my whole life and thought I knew all about scripture memorization and doing quiet times. I blew it off not thinking anything of it. I continued on looking for a solid men's group I could connect with on a deep level and really explode into some amazing growth - my heart yearned for that kind of community.

I approached the Small Groups Pastor at ABC the next Sunday about a group that would fit in my schedule. As it turns out, God had a plan and EMAW was going to be it. The only group that met at the time that I could, was EMAW. So I semi-reluctantly joined, though I went with an open mind.

And I praise God daily that I did. After just the first meeting with the group of "5 guys", I knew that it was going to be a big deal. The curriculum was challenging; it didn't let me slide by or coast. The accountability was tremendous; they didn't let me give up on myself as I had once been known to do. The encouragement was astounding; Christ used their words to heal my heart like I really needed it to be. I wasn't afraid to speak honestly, to reveal my hurts, and to ask hard questions. These guys stood by me and we grew immensely together, as well as individually. I could not have prayed for our hoped for a better group of men.

As is the case with EMAW's focus, we parted ways to start our own groups. This time it's different, because I'm learning what it looks like to lead this group and challenge the men around me to stick to their mission. I'm finding a different kind of growth that I hadn't experienced the first time around in EMAW. It's refreshing, yet challenging.

EMAW and Lonnie have provided me tools to be able to know what the Bible says about dealing with the tough stuff in life. God has blessed me by allowing me the privilege to have met Tony and be led by him and in turn, lead other men to a more full understanding of what it means to be a "man after God's heart".