



Wild at Heart Revised and Updated: Discovering the Secret of a Man's Soul

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John Eldredge revises and updates his best-selling, renowned Christian classic, *Wild at Heart*, and in it invites men to:

Recover their masculine heart.

See themselves in the image of a passionate god.

Delight in the strength and wildness men were created to offer.

In this provocative book, Eldredge provides a look inside the true heart of a man and gives men permission to be what God designed them to be—dangerous, passionate, alive, and free.

Wild at Heart Revised and Updated: Discovering the Secret of a Man's Soul Details

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From Reader Review Wild at Heart Revised and Updated: Discovering the Secret of a Man's Soul for online ebook

C. Hollis Crossman says

It's not surprising this book became as popular as it did; it's full of the kind of faux masculinity our culture loves. Being *Wild at Heart*, it turns out, simply means being rambunctious, working on cars, saving a damsel in distress, yada yada yada. It's the same old story, poorly written, and fortified with examples from movies like *Braveheart* and *Gladiator*.

Who comes up with this stuff? Is Eldredge so confused as to the true nature of Christian manhood that he really thinks the William Wallace portrayed in Gibson's film is a good example for us?

As for the subtitle: I know the secret of a man's soul, and it's not what Eldredge suggests. The secret of *every* soul is that it is wicked and unclean until Jesus Christ redeems it, and that "masculinity" is simply a fulfilling of the role God gives you first as His child and second as a man. And it isn't boisterous physical activity that makes you a man; it's humility, love of God and neighbor, tenderness toward one's wife and children, etc.

This is legitimately one of the worst books I've read. I can't recommend it less.

Natalie Vellacott says

Where in the Bible does it really suggest that men should be "Wild at Heart?" living constantly on the edge and taking all kinds of risks and engaging in dangerous activities. Of course this idea will appeal to younger men and new Christians but it is completely the opposite of the Biblical model of denying self and taking up the cross to follow Jesus. There's nothing weak or unmanly about that!

Gavin Breeden says

So I'm about eleven years late in getting to the party here. I remember "Wild at Heart" being really big among guys (and some gals) 16-22 when it came out and I can see why. I'm also really glad I didn't read this at such an impressionable age. There are a few good things here: Eldredge recognizes that there is something of a male identity crisis in many parts of the Church. In other words, there is confusion about what biblical manhood and womanhood look like. He also accurately pinpoints some of these problems as stemming from the absence of a father or having a poor father. Eldredge clearly has a heart to minister to men in the 21st century Church and for that he should be commended.

Unfortunately, there are some significant problems in his method and his message that make this an unhelpful and perhaps even a dangerous book. First, most of Eldredge's points come from films ("Braveheart" is a particular favorite of his it would seem), books, conversations with friends, Eldredge's own life experience, and moments of God speaking to him privately. Now, of course God can use movies and books and friends to communicate with us and that's fine. But God's primary way of speaking to his people is by His Spirit, through His Word. Unfortunately, most of the book's main points come from the former list of things and not the Bible. Eldredge then pulls Bible passages out of context, twisting and distorting them to fit his purposes.

One glaring example of this that is crucial to the book's central argument is that because Adam was created in the wilderness and *then* put into the Garden of Eden and Eve was created *in* Eden that this somehow accounts for why men crave adventure and the wilderness while women desire to be safe and sound in a domesticated place. This is an example of trying to pull WAY too much meaning out of an incidental detail. When taking the whole Bible into account, one quickly sees how misguided Eldredge's point here is. First of all, the wilderness is almost always seen as a bad place to be in the Bible (consider what happens immediately after the Fall: Adam and Eve are banished from the Garden and sent into the wilderness, in Moses' day the scapegoat is sent out into the wilderness according to OT sacrificial laws, in the New Testament Jesus' temptation takes place in the wilderness, and so on).

Furthermore, Eden is meant to point to the New Heavens and the New Earth. It's no mistake that John's description of Heaven at the end of Revelation bears more than a passing similarity with Eden. Another example of Eldredge reading his own ideas into the text comes with his treatment of the book of Ruth. According to Eldredge, Ruth teaches us that biblical womanhood involves a woman being a seductress and using her feminine charms to get what she wants (contrary to Proverbs 31 and every other biblical passage on womanhood. He goes on to say that this Ruth as seductress thing is a biblical example for "all women" to follow (191). These are just two examples of Eldredge's misuse and abuse of the biblical text.

Then there's the actual content of the book which is troubling on a number of levels. Eldredge's view of biblical manhood is that we should be wild and untamed. The problem with men, he argues, is that their mothers, wives, and the Church has tried to tame them and make them "nice boys," instead of the wild adventurers that their hearts crave to be. Again he tries to insert this idea into various places in the Bible. His primary argument for why men are this way is because men are made in God's image and He is wild, passionate, and untamed, too. Putting aside that this isn't how anyone in the history of the Church has ever interpreted what it means to be made in God's image, is Eldredge somehow implying that men are more in God's image than women? I'm sure he wouldn't state it in those terms but it sort of felt that way in this book and that's just one example of how the book often seemed kind of sexist to me. Eldredge continually emphasizes that men are supposed to be adventurers and women are supposed to be the beauties waiting to be rescued (or seductresses, according to his exegesis of Ruth). The problem is I know lots of godly men who aren't naturally adventurous and lots of godly women who are. Which leads to another big problem with Eldredge's argument.

Eldredge seems to have taken a particular type of man (outdoorsy adventurer who likes to take risks) and made that the definition of masculinity. That idea is not rooted in the Bible and it isn't true according to our experience either. Is the guy out hiking a mountain somehow more manly than the guy working 9-5 in the office to put food on the table for his family? What about the man who leads with quiet strength? There are different types of personalities and it seems very unhelpful to tell all men that they need to be like this one type of man and go take some risks in order to be a true man.

According to Eldredge's definition, manhood looks and sounds a lot like boyhood. Be wild, let your desires lead you, don't worry about making a mess or being a nice boy (at one point, Eldredge shares the story of his first grade son getting picked on at school and Eldredge then encourages his son to hit the bully as hard as he can the next time he is picked on, he then defends this advice by saying that his son's "soul was hanging in the balance" because he might have been emasculated by the bully and he goes on to say that Christians today have misinterpreted Jesus' instructions about turning the other cheek but he offers no counter-interpretation).

But manhood is not about letting your desires lead you into the wilderness or being a risk-taker. In fact, that's the exact opposite of biblical manhood, which has historically been viewed as having mastery over your desires and impulses. Little boys and young men are led to and fro by their desires and whims, men should have self-control and mastery over these things. (Maybe it shouldn't be surprising that Eldredge clarifies more than once that men shouldn't leave their wives perhaps realizing his advice might give some men

justification for doing so.)

I could go on noting other theological and exegetical problems but I've said more than enough about a ten+ year old book that has received tons of praise and criticism as it is. Ultimately, this book is contradictory, confusing, and only muddies the already murky waters of biblical manhood in the American church today.

It is also one of the most popular Christian books of the last decade.

Joseph Reitano says

This book really helped me to understand who I am as a man in terms of creation. Why do I like to drive motorcycles, why do I love to travel the world where the average person dare not tread. Why at the gym I have the need to lift more weight and drive my heart that much harder? It's because that is how God made me. God has a wild and dangerous aspect to His personality. We can see it in creation itself and it's reflected in every man.

from ChristianBook.com:

Helping men rediscover their masculine heart, Wild at Heart, a guide to understanding Christian manhood and Christian men, offers a refreshing break from the chorus of voices urging men to be more responsible, reliable, dutiful ... and dead. God designed men to be dangerous, says Eldredge. Simply look at the dreams and desires written in every boy's heart: to be a hero, to be a warrior, to live a life of adventure and risk. Sadly, most men abandon those dreams and desires---aided by a Christianity that feels like nothing more than pressure to be a "nice guy." It's no wonder that many men avoid church, and those who go are often passive and bored to death. In this provocative book, Eldredge gives women a look inside the true heart of a man and gives men permission to be what God designed them to be---dangerous, passionate, alive, and free.

Russell says

What I liked: 1. This book was an easy read. I like to alternate between something light and something challenging. 2. It is written from a Christian perspective. 3. If you are not completely a frozen popsicle inside, then the book tries to inspire you to be more fully alive - seeking out your dreams, the very nature of your existence - dare to explore, take risks, and find a true calling.

What I did not like: 1. The author repeatedly makes reference to fighting, like men are made to fight, physically, like David, Joshua, et. al. Just because a man can fight does not necessarily make that a central purpose for him. As a caveat, it is fair to say the author also delves into the idea of fighting for things that are right, which I fundamentally agree with. However, some of the scripture used to support said hypothesis somehow did not ring completely true.

Overall: I liked it because I can really relate to the need to go out and do manly things, like woodwork, paintball, and heavy lifting, and using heavy machinery. I think many men are wired for just such activities. Spoiler: I agree with Eldredge's final statements that we should seek out the things that make us feel alive. I also think the theme of giving up control to God is literally the only way that we can have a true relationship with Him. Therefore, as we cede control we gain everything vs. losing our soul by trying to control everything, which effectively leaves no room for God in our lives. The last part of this review represents certain fundamental themes to the Christian lifestyle and summarizes (in a way) why we (Christians) often describe our journey as a walk with God, because sometimes we are walking with God and other times we forget and stray and reject God.

Adam says

I can honestly say that I find this book trite, over-espoused, and drastically overadored by a great many men and women that I generally like and enjoy spending time with. This doesn't make them dumb, bad, or idiots. It just makes them different than me. This doesn't make me smarter, good, or a non-idiot. It just makes me not a person who fits comfortably into any of the suggested roles that John Eldridge tells us that men secretly long for.

I don't want and never wanted to be a knight, saving fair damsels from horseback and fighting off all the monsters and dragons the dark corners of the world could come up with. I always wanted to be more of a poet, a minstrel, or something equally as corny (in the eyes of Eldridge - from what I can gather according to this smarmy book, anyway). Loving what I do and wanting what I want doesn't make me feminized or effectively spiritually castrated, as John would have me think.

I'm actually really okay being who I am and longing for what I do. It's what our Abba has sewn into me, and I am thankful for it.

The dangers inherent in overgeneralizing the Christian walk and the inner life with Christ can be found in many forms within these pages. I know that it's served as deeply encouraging to many, and challenging to others. I'm not dissing those experiences, and I'm thankful that they've happened for other folks. They just didn't happen in any way at all for me while reading this.

Nada. Nothing.

Nothing except annoyance and frustration, that is, and I'm enough of a philosopher and self-questioner to do plenty of self-examining as to why that was: was I uncomfortable because he was pushing some buttons I'd denied existed? Was he right on about things I was unhappy to admit were real? Etcetera, etcetera?

Nope.

I just didn't like this at all.

The end.

Becca says

I hate this book so much.

Gordon Francisco says

To live for an adventure, to rescue a beauty and to fight a battle. Sounds like a story...like a tale of dragons, ladies in distress and war for the homeland against the dreaded enemy...like all movies...great books...great tales...stories tell of woes, foes and overcoming great obstacles. These are all great truths, but are they any truer than your own life? But, does your life seem like you are just sliding through, getting by one-day-at-a-time? That's how most of us live, to survive for the next weekend, to get that job done...all struggle, little reward, and we get to get up the next morning and do it all again. But, there is more to our lives than duty, obligation and being the nice guy. But are we as men equipped to go on adventures, strong enough to rescue the lady in distress and brave enough to fight the foes for those we love? Most are not.

If you think, want and hope and desire for more to life...**READ THIS BOOK**. There is more, plenty more, and, you have everything needed to live life with freedom, excitement and purpose. What keeps us from the real life we would like to have? A lot, this book is a key to help unlock men from their hearts of quiet

desperation and how to be a vibrant, valiant man. There is a cost (personal efforting) but what of true value doesn't require commitment and dedication.

For yourself, your significant other, for your children and all of those in your sphere of influence...READ THIS BOOK...there are people just waiting for you to come alive...and so are you.

Trevor says

I have a handful of friends who are strong believers in the message delivered in this book by John Eldredge. Its ideas are, in a sense, very appealing to (Christian, American) male sensibilities. Eldredge makes the case that much of the reason why men are discontent, bored, uninspired, un-alive, and lukewarm (particularly as Christians) is because they are out of touch with the wild, adventurous, and manly instincts instilled in them by the creator. Modern society and the expectations of work and family have domesticated the Man and made him a weak, docile, bored shell of what God intends him to be. In order to be fully alive and to renew his passion for God, he must transform his attitude about life and seek, in Eldredge's memorable phrase, "adventure, battle, and a beauty" in accordance with God's plan for his leading creation.

The message is particularly appealing to certain types of men. It appeals to younger high-school and college aged guys who are in the process of discovering themselves, forging their own faiths, and establishing their own identities. It appeals to middle-aged men who are either bored of domestic routines or approaching their midlife crises. Perhaps a few feel after reading this book that their faith harmonizes for the first time with their instincts and natural passions instead of existing as an abstract thing done out of guilt or obligation on Sunday mornings. In all cases, it is probably fair to say that *Wild at Heart* appeals because here, in a simple prescriptive book aimed at advancing the Kingdom of God, is a new way to worship the Creator. No longer does "passion" for Christ have to mean singing dry hymns or waving your hands in the air during church. Eldredge seems to offer a way -- and a justification -- for worshipping God in the Cathedral of Nature, unhindered by "religion" and rather animated by Saint Irenaeus's famous dictum: "The glory of God is man fully alive."

I have so far made the message sound fairly good in a summary that I hope is representative of the book. The problem is that Eldredge's few good insights are twisted into a simplistic, blinkered prescription that carries with it a lot of intellectual baggage and theological misapprehensions of which Eldredge seems to be unaware.

His chief error is to conflate the act of being "fully alive" with a narrow, misguided, and unbiblical view of what it means to be a man. For Eldredge and his narrow interpretation of masculinity, a man can only be fully alive if he is "wild at heart," living in the way he was created. This is both unbiblical and illogical, as I explain in more detail later on. But there is an additional unbiblical twist that derives clearly from a middle-class 21st century life: Eldredge thinks that being "wild" means, in effect, going out into the wilds and doing outdoorsy things. The few concessionary statements he makes to gloss over the idea that a passionate faith and a passionate life can derive from other pursuits are buried under a morass of William Wallace metaphors, stories about camping, and tales of adventurous hardihood that would please the most vocal proponent of the Boy Scouts. Indeed, the take-aways people have gleaned from his book and the many camps it has spawned have almost made the Wild-At-Heart enthusiast into a parody -- beard-growing, flannel shirts, rock climbing, backpacking, backwoods exploration, camping, hunting, mountaineering, working with one's hands (eminently more "manly" than office work as a professional), and any other "dangerous" or "wild" pursuit by which men can show themselves -- and above all their approving comrades -- just how "wild" and "alive" they have become.

I'm not trying to insult any of these things. They're all good for their own sake, and most participants of adventure sports aren't trying to be inauthentic when they hike a fourteener, or go careening down a trail at Mach-5-with-their-hair-on-fire on their brand new Trek bike. I do most of these things myself and I enjoy them very much. Rather, what I question is the idea, put forward in Wild At Heart, that doing such manly, wild, adventurous things are necessary in order to imitate the character of God -- a proposition that runs like a golden thread through the entirety of Eldredge's book.

Eldredge arrives at this perspective by a peculiar twist of logic. In order to be spiritually alive, a man must be emotionally alive. In order to be emotionally alive, a man must do wild and adventurous things -- the kind of things that appeal to machismo outdoorsy types -- in order to fire his primitive instincts and fulfill his true created purpose as a "warrior" made in the image of God. Never mind, of course, that not all men are made "alive" by doing masculine things, much less outdoorsy things, which the Coloradoan Eldredge sees as a litmus test for all things masculine.

Eldredge's message, in short, has been taken way too far. Somewhere on the internet I read an interview with Eldredge in which he responded, when questioned, that promoting such ideas is valid and worthwhile if it is bringing more young men to Christ. On the contrary, it is highly questionable that this book is bringing many to Christ; and for those who already believe (indeed everybody who subscribes to the book's message), it is promoting a set of debilitating and almost dangerous ideas about how a Christian man ought to act and live. That is to say, Eldredge's message is giving Christian men a false idea of what it means to be passionate and "on fire" for God. It is misleading men by encouraging them to model themselves after a "warrior God" whose "wild" character is unsupported, even contradicted, by scripture. By criticizing the modern, domesticated, settled life, Eldredge is helping to create more unsettled, maladjusted, restless men who see it as their manly right to seek an adrenaline rush when they get bored by work or family life. The book legitimizes old-fashioned, un-Christian, and oppressive ways of viewing a man's role and purpose in life. And it is doing it all of these things in the name of a "god" whose alleged character as a "warrior" is completely unsupported by the canon of Christian scripture. If Eldredge thinks the Old Testament accounts of God leading the Israelites to victory over their enemies is evidence of a "warrior" God, then he clearly never paid attention when learning the theology of the New Covenant and its departure from the Old Covenant, a pillar upon which the Christian faith is based.

Even worse, in his attempt to persuade men that their chief calling is to be "wild at heart," he depicts women, not as created believers in their own right, but as passive companions in a journey that is really all about the man. Tales are told and examples are given of women who stymie their man's "wild" nature, to the detriment of both, with the message clearly being that women ought to be passive supporters of whatever makes their men feel happy and alive. In Eldredge's interpretation, gender is defined in simple, discrete, definable categories. Men are **this** way, Eldredge suggests (invariably masculine in the William Wallace way). Women are **that** way (invariably passive and subservient, like a mythological princess). On the basis of his simple-minded and reductionist understanding of gender characteristics, he then proceeds to prescribe how exactly men and women can become fully alive as Christians, which obviously only works for people who already fit his mold for how men and women ought to be. His insistence that being "wild at heart" entails pursuing a beauty makes no concession to men who feel called to become a priest or otherwise to lead a life of singleness. By suggesting linking the two and by insisting that they are essential to man's created nature and therefore his spiritual vitality, he is essentially delegitimizing or at least denigrating the faith journeys of anyone who remains single, whether by choice or not. These are issues that must enter the mind of every insecure teenage guy who reads Eldredge's book, and yet Eldredge writes as if **everyone** should look and act like a William Wallace in their conquest of some unsuspecting beauty. His wife's book, Captivated, is little more than supporting documentation of the idea that women will get everything they need, all their deepest yearnings, if only they are "captivated" by their warrior man and give his "wild" yearnings free reign. This may work for their marriage and some others, but it is a despicably small-minded view that perverts the scriptures and simplifies the complexity of gender relations.

Moreover, what does this say about the Beauty herself? Does she have no purpose in life but to sit around waiting for her Prince Charming? What if she happens to have aspirations of her own and she doesn't want to be *just* her husband's plaything for those times between his many adventures? Is God's creation of Woman really supposed to be submissive and elusive, passively awaiting her suitor to rescue her from singleness? Is her role in life merely to be an outlet for, and object of, her husband's masculine exploits? This sounds like a script for a Disney fairytale, but not for a serious Christian treatise.

When Eldredge combines his outdated ideas of gender with his overemphasis on "manly" outdoor adventurism, he ends up promoting ideas that carry a lot of moral and intellectual baggage. Most readers of Wild At Heart might be a little surprised to discover that the broad outlines of Eldredge's ideas were stated long ago. Eldredge's view that men should be "warriors" in the image of God draws heavily upon the doctrine of "muscular Christianity," the idea that proper manhood involved physical as well as moral vitality. The idea has a few innocuous expressions in the YMCA and other sports-related pursuits, but it appealed primarily because it granted a moral and theological license to the use of violence to spread Christianity to the "savage" peoples of the world. One writer praised the Englishman in 1901, at the height of the British Empire, for "going through the world with rifle in one hand and Bible in the other," adding that "if asked what our muscular Christianity has done, we point to the British Empire." Muscular Christianity, and the masculine ideals it promoted, were upheld as the surest means of conquering and evangelizing the world (which were often seen as one and the same thing!). Only in hindsight can we see clearly that Empire was a source, not of Christianization and civilization, but of brutality and exploitation that violated the scriptures and tarnished the gospel message everywhere. Muscular Christianity actually finds its most enduring legacy in the Boy Scout Movement, which was the brainchild of Robert Baden-Powell, a committed imperialist and arch racist who wanted to make British boys more adapted to the conditions they might encounter while conquering new African colonies. The United States showed equivalent moral platitudes about "muscular Christianity" when it sought to raise up soldiers and settlers who could first conquer and subdue the "savage" Native American tribes in the West, and then settle the land and make it a fount of American civilization.

The theology of "muscular Christianity" was itself highly dubious from a scriptural point of view, but it fit the prejudices of the age, when people (including Christians) sincerely thought that Europeans were racially superior, and that masculine toughness was a reflection of superiority and the source of future national (or imperial) greatness. These social and political ideas of the imperial age were combined with theology by those who believed that Christianity is best spread and defended by masculine "warriors" equipped to prevail in a Darwinian struggle against competitors on the world stage, particularly in a military struggle, which has always been regarded as the ultimate expression of masculine virility. (It is no coincidence that Eldredge's chosen heroes, repeatedly analogized through Wild At Heart, are violent Hollywood warriors like Braveheart and Gladiator.) A set of beliefs and theological principles created to legitimize and rationalize empire-building (and all the cruelties that attended to it) is not exactly a good foundation for a book aimed at hapless readers in the 21st century.

These ideas might be dismissed or overlooked easily enough as the product of a bygone age were it not for Eldredge's insistence that they represent the very character of God himself. Eldredge has apparently cherry-picked the Old Testament for passages that support his view of a Warrior God, who since he created man in his image must have wanted a bunch of Warrior Followers as well. But didn't Christ admonish Christians to turn the other cheek? That love, hope, and peace are the greatest commandments? That only he with no sin can throw the first stone? That the laws of the Old Testament were fulfilled and made new? And that henceforth the Kingdom of God does not have to *physically* fight battles against Egyptians and Hittites and enemy tribes because it is, on account of Christ, open to anyone who believes in Him? Ironically Eldredge's best example of a "violent" and "wild" Christ is when He overturned the Pharisees' tables for defiling the temple. Judged by that standard, Christ might be inclined to torch the pages of Wild at Heart.

Another prominent theme in the book is the notion that the conditions of the modern world have sapped the life from people and cut them off from the invigorating beauty and pleasures of God's natural creation. In

Eldredge's story, such ideas are used in his criticism of the tedious, mundane, unexciting lives that the majority of men on the planet must endure, the unfortunate routines that cause men to lose their spark of life. By being "wild" and "fully alive," he suggests, we can overcome these impediments to our spiritual and emotional vitality. The idea is good so far as it goes. But it is important to remember that Eldredge's notion of how to overcome the pitfalls of modern life derive from modern ideas and modern solutions, particularly from the Romantic Movement of the 18th and 19th centuries, which emerged as a reaction against the ideas of the Enlightenment and the scientific rationalization of nature that occurred during the Industrial Revolution.

Why does this criticism matter? What does it really mean? It means that Eldredge's objections to the mundane, domestic, un-alive realities of modern life -- such a big part of why his story appeals -- have nothing to do with the character of God or the message of Christ. The boring and uninspiring life that most men lead are the result of modern problems and modern socio-economic conditions. Their solutions, discussed since the Romantic Movement, are likewise the product of a particular time and place, and have nothing to do with scriptural admonitions of how Christians ought to live. In other words, it is shaky logic indeed to use 19th-century ideas as an answer to 21st century problems and then to ascribe them to a body of scripture that was written 1,900 years beforehand in a completely different historical context. The point is not that Christian scripture is irrelevant in the 21st century, but rather that Eldredge is *suggesting* that scripture is irrelevant by seeking answers from an intellectual source *outside* the scripture -- and then describing these modern-day answers as fundamental to the "character of God."

A similar objection can be made to the kinds of activities he prescribes for "wild" living. Why all the talk of outdoorsy, Colorado-esque, machismo, lumberjack type stuff? If the whole point is to make men fully alive in order to renew their passion for Christ, then why not cast the net wider to embrace the millions of Christian men who come "alive" in different ways? Eldredge's myopic view of masculinity gives him a narrow view of what makes men come alive. And because of his narrow view of what makes men come alive, his book is extremely disingenuous to any young man whose personality and disposition lead him to prefer, say, books over campfires, piano keys over pocket knives, and painting over hiking. Eldredge is basically suggesting that such "soft" young men can never be fully alive, can never even imitate the character of God, unless they act like a Maximus or Braveheart, or cut a figure like Paul Bunyan. That is absurd and un-Christian.

To sum up my objections with Wild at Heart, Eldredge puts entirely too much stock in an out-dated, theologically naive, almost dangerous idea of a Warrior God, who is supposed to be the model to which all men aspire. So why is this book so popular? Why are people so attracted to the image of the Wild Man? While do people feel compelled to defend Eldredge's message as somehow more "Christian" than the reservations I have registered here? It is probably not very much of a stretch to say that this book is "successful" because it is telling Christians what they want to hear. It appeals, in the first place, to individuals who happen to fit the rather narrow gender or personality roles that Eldredge's prescribes for all Christians. The message gives license to fathers who tired of their work, bored with their home life, and regretful about the opportunities they missed as young men -- to men, in short, who are approaching their mid-life crisis. It gives license to sons to bend (or break) the rules, or to do the dangerous things their parents forbid, all in the name of a "spiritual" treatise that claims such behavior is necessary to be "wild at heart" and to live in the image of God. The book provides (however dubiously) a theological rationale for reasserting the manly prerogative. It reasserts the old ideals of what it means to be male or female. It depicts women as a submissive and passive creature whose greatest purpose in life is to fulfill Eldredge's 19th-century conception of how gender roles should work. Above all, it glorifies the image of Man as a dominant, aggressive, wild, untamed hero-like figure -- a William Wallace or a Gladiator, but nothing like our Christ.

"Wild man." "Warrior." These are terms that now, because of this book, make me cringe.

Letitia says

I know that this book is surrounded by vehement controversy. After my husband read it, it was as though he came alive for the first time. Curious, I picked up the book myself. Though there are sections that I would drastically edit (and so would my husband), I found the heart of Eldredge's message incredibly moving, necessary, and paradigm-altering. I was truly astonished that this "man's man" would have such a perfect grasp of women and their needs and desires. I have consulted with other women who have read this book cover to cover, and they, too, feel that Eldredge truly understands a woman's heart. I do not suggest that we take all his advice literally, nor do I think he meant it that way, but this idea of setting men free to be men is something I can definitely get behind. One note: only read this book if you are starting with the assumption that men and women are fundamentally different. He does not address the philosophy that men and women are the same except for nurturing practices.

Debbie Mcleman says

A familiar title to many, wild at Heart is a popular book amongst male Christians. After hearing mixed views, I set myself the task of reading the book myself. This book explores the make up of the masculine heart, which appeals to me and I'm sure, to many other female readers out there.

One thing that is clearly highlighted throughout this book is this: you can take the guy out of the country, but you can't take the country out of the guy. Let me explain.

The writer suggests that boys, sorry men, have this need and desire to be in the wilderness, where he can create his own "dangerous" adventures. He states that, men don't have to be raised in the country to possess this overwhelming desire, but implies that this desire is all part of God's creation. Something in that Y chromosome then eh??

With this said, he does what a lot of American writers do (in my personal experience) and relates this desire back to Disney. Disney is popular nowadays for creating fairytale romances, where the young man fights for his true love. Although not the first to create such a tale, Disney brought these to the younger generation. The brave young man finds himself in his comfort zone, that is the wilderness, where he challenges his attackers. Obviously his attackers are greater than he, but somehow, this young man fights against all odds, to win the heart of his true beauty.

The writer suggests that men crave this desire to fight for someone, the woman he has been looking for. But do they fight for the women, or do they fight for the adventure of fighting??

One thing the writer emphasises is this. Men, being married does not make you any more of a man, than killing a lion does. Women do not make men, "men?". He says:
"A man does not go to a woman to get his strength, he goes to her to offer it."

The writer highlights that often men feel, when they have a wife or girlfriend, they become a man. He emphasises the need for God in this equation. A man needs to seek God and get his strength for Him.

Becoming a man, is a journey that a man takes with God. Here he will discover what kind of man God has called him to be and God will guide and mentor him. That is the most important thing I can take from this book. A man will become a man, is God's perfect timing, and women, you are the same. You will become that woman of God, when you seek Him, to guide you in that.

Although the media creates the common misconception, that men can grin and bare all, they can't. Their heart is more than a muscle too, and they need God to be their comfort, just like we do. Girls, this is important to know. I look at the males who surround me in my family and I consider what I've just said. How many times have I seen them cry? Not many at all, but it has happened, and that's good thing. It lets us girls know that they do have a heart?trust me guys, its ok to cry.

To quote a great song 'My troubled soul, why so weighed down? You were not made to bare this heavy load. So cast your burdens upon the Lord, Jesus cares He cares for you.' He cares for you men out there too.

God creating man in his own image, so of course He will be the only one who can define the masculine heart. He knows your heart, and knows what you can handle. Take everything to Him in prayer, and He will mould your masculine heart. The book itself, does raise issues that I do not agree with, but that's for another time. On the whole I found this book enjoyable which I was surprised about. For all your 'Wild at Heart' readers out there, you should read 'Captivating.'

And for all you William Wallace's out there, the battle belongs to the Lord

peace

Mark says

This is such an incredible book. It gives you insight from when you were little up to where you are now. It made me think of a lot of things I hadn't really thought about before.

Tatuu says

Which girl wouldn't grab a book with the title 'Discovering the Secret of a Man's Soul'? Men say they don't understand women,well, we don't understand you too! So, out of curiosity, I grabbed this book when I was a young twenty something year old. I don't know what prompted me to read it, or may I do and I just don't want to tell you.

I read it alongside 'Bringing up boys' and as an aunt to several boys, these two books taught me to just let boys be boys. When they decide to fight, I just watch them and I will only intervene when there is need. It taught me to reduce the number of 'NOs' I use on boys because as John Eldredge says, 'God designed men to be dangerous.' they are just wild and as a woman, you need to relax and let them be.

John Says, "Adventure, with all its requisite danger and wildness, is a deeply spiritual longing written into the soul of man. The masculine heart needs a place where nothing is prefabricated, modular, nonfat, zip lock, franchised, on-line, microwavable. Where there are no deadlines, cell phones, or committee meetings. Where there is room for the soul."

Here are some few points I noted while reading this book that try to explain how man is created in Gods image. Of course you have to read it to understand where all this is coming from.

1. There is something fierce in the heart of every man.
2. There is something wild in the heart of every man.

3. There is something passionate in the heart of every man.

Okay, I will have to read it again now that I am grown to come up with more points.

Have you ever seen a boy try to climb a wall and wondered what's wrong with him? Well, there is nothing.
:D

Jason says

Eldredge took Robert Bly's splendid, groundbreaking, ennobling book Iron John: A Book About Men as his inspired point of departure & produced, in Wild at Heart, a Christian treatise on masculinity that is, ultimately, as dangerous & misguided a book as I've ever read. Where Bly understands the need to prevent the masculine longing for wildness (a longing that is vital, life-giving, necessary) from proliferating as aggression, Eldredge subscribes to the view that wildness & aggression are (& must be) inextricably bound together, that the Bible sanctions the latter as the ultimate manifestation of the former. For every sensitive, perceptive observation about manhood & faith Eldredge makes (and there are a few, I grant him that), there seem to be three (one of which would be Eldredge's pointed, dismissive attitude re: Christ's imploring us to turn the other cheek, instead encouraging his son to exchange blows with the bully giving him grief at school) that reveal Eldredge's frightening inclination to twist & snarl Biblical narratives into endorsements of violence. I'd bought the book & had been looking forward to finding it an inspiring fusion of Bly's masculine sensibilities with Christian wisdom, but found, instead, a book that was chilling where I'd expected it to be enlightened; I returned it for a refund after mulling over whether or not to burn it.

Justin says

What a sad excuse for a book's premise. I paged through this, after reading some of the ridiculous reviews, and came away as disgusted as I thought I would be. As soon as men stop attempting to ascribe to outdated theistic (and frankly trite) models of masculinity, the world will be a much safer, better place. I pity women who read this and think they may have come away with a greater understanding of men, as it's a false understanding of throwback, primitive males who have no place in a world culture that can no longer support the aggression and chromosomal ennui predicated upon concepts that fall somewhere between moronic piety and some suppressed lizard brain urge that results in antisocial behavior. Evolve, for "god's" sake.
