

SOLIDMAN

strong · present · confident

Solid Man Integrity Group Lesson One
Awakening the Internal
Part One – The Problem

PART ONE: THE PROBLEM - THE EXTERNALLY REFERENCED LIFE

**None are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe they are free.
- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe**

This first part is a gut check. It is going to require that you look deeply into how you've developed the way that you relate to your world. You will need to be honest and open about the state of your life right now. With courage, face the resistance you experience as you listen to these words and ask yourself the follow-up "reflection" questions.

The Solid Man Process is about mastering the art of fully and freely being good at being a man. Being a man is about living with freedom, strength, courage and love. Men want to live with significant personal power and self-control as we make a positive influence in our world. Let's have a look at why we don't always live like that.

THE PROBLEM DEFINED

Even though men are very hesitant to declare or even recognize it, we experience many difficulties in life. The problems we face on a daily basis manifest in various ways unique to each man.

Here is a list of some of what our troubles often look like. As you read this list consider what rings true for you. This is a long list, so take your time. Read each one out loud and circle the ones you have experienced.

- lacking confidence, personal power, purpose or meaning
- fear based living, worry or anxiety
- confusion about manhood or masculinity
- sexual issues like performance, porn or compulsivity
- emotional issues like anger, depression, or bottling stuff up
- being emotionally unavailable to self and others
- living in your head and relying only on logic

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- relational disruptions in your closest relationships
- having a posture of aggression, intimidation or abuse
- spiritual disconnections or loss of moral compass
- poor decision making, procrastination or being stuck
- escaping to compartmentalizing, disengagement or withdrawal
- various addictions, self-medicating or distractions
- inability to transition fully from boyhood to manhood
- lack of focus, presence and leadership
- being unreliable or not trustworthy
- passivity, frozenness and silence

From this list, which have been your primary consequences?

With every one of these problems there are consistent threads woven through the pain men experience. In this work, *Awakening the Internal*, we will consider the most profound thread, which is called an **“externally referenced life”**. Confronting your own externally referenced life will free you from many problems you face in your life.

An externally referenced life exists when a man’s identity and actions are determined by what others want, what would please others and what is expected of him to fit in or be acceptable. Since he is dependent on others for his identity and motivation he has lost his freedom and his vitality. This is where painful problems take root and grow like cancer.

☞ **The life you want is impossible if you are driven or defined by externals.**

The goal of the Solid Man Process is to become internally referenced so you can gain freedom and vitality in your life. You have been designed to live in freedom by relying on your strong internal resources. An internally referenced man is solid; moving with confidence and influencing his world with freedom, intention and purpose.

Our problem is that we have allowed our lives to have an external point of reference, living from the **outside-in**. Like sheep, we have just accepted this way of living without looking deeply at our life. You probably are experiencing life difficulties right now and this is why you are finally willing to take a strong look at the realities of your life.

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Awareness of the point of reference in your life will give you the ability to live your own life. You will begin to break free from habits and patterns that have held you back from being the man you want to be.

- ☞ **A man who lives an externally referenced life will NEVER be able to experience the fullness of masculinity and manhood.**

This experience is about fully and freely being alive. As you develop a strong internally referenced life and your internals are awakened to the profound realities within you, you will gain strength in life and the problems that have haunted you will release their grip on your soul.

- ☞ **The solution is to rebuild your life upon internal realities that drive us and define us; living from the inside-out.**

Since we have built the foundation of our lives upon what others think, need, or expect, we have allowed ourselves to be enslaved by what everybody else wants, essentially handing the reins of our life to others.

The consequences of an externally referenced life are sad since we lose connection with our True Self, who we really are at our core. Through our reliance on externals, we have developed a False Self, an imagined identity based upon what we think will be acceptable to others.

Rebuilding your solid core of integrity begins with the essential shift from externals to internals. This journey will take time, intention and patience. It will change the path of your life, forever.

What are Externals?

Most men, push-over nice guys to hyper-masculine jerks, are driven and defined by externals in their lives. “Externals” are those forces outside of yourself which you allow to define or drive your life.

Externals can either have enormous control over you or actually be a wonderful gift in your life that creates beauty, love and a deeper sense of well-being. Externals are not bad things in themselves. Problems arise when you need them to complete your identity or when externals drive your next move.

Here is a list of some examples of externals. As with the previous list, take your time, read them out loud and notice if any resonate with you. Highlight, underline or circle the ones that do.

- Our woman and those things she might give us; sex, validation, comfort, affection, more well-being, support, appreciation, etc.
- Our boss/employer and the approval and opportunities from work; promotions, titles, salary, benefits, purpose, status, etc.
- The culture at large and what is required to be a good productive citizen; keeping the infrastructure working like a man should.

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- Our confusing family of origin; systemic dynamics, fusion, rules, roles, expectations, identity, heritage, secrets, trauma, control, abuse.
- Our accomplishments, achievements or things we do to meet expectations, to get approval, to prove our value, to show our worth, doing what we “should” do be acceptable.
- What police, authorities and anyone who oversees our lives expects; keeping us in line and doing what is expected.
- What the academic system has taught us about reality, origins, knowledge, what’s acceptable, life, worldview, getting along, etc.
- Your device with all the apps, social media and diversions that come with the technology of our day coupled with the expectations to stay connected, respond immediately and keep up with the ‘next big thing’.
- The messages from religion that shape our identity, worldview and actions so we achieve the mission or vision of the church.
- Various sources of authority to which we might choose to submit like a church leader, boss, political party, a charismatic person, or someone who provides something you need.
- All our attachments to things that we think bring us life: addictions, self-medication, counterfeits, our favorite drug of choice.
- Peer pressure, keeping up with the Joneses, materialism with all the stuff we think we need, wearing masks, being a chameleon so we look acceptable.
- Consumerism and how marketing campaigns tell us what we think we need, convincing us to buy to feel good, complete or whole.
- Groups (political, religious, sports, academic, gangs, clubs, social, cliques, etc.) that require a certain way of being in order for you to fit in or belong.
- Totalitarian, oppressive governments or cults where you are not free to believe, to speak or to act freely and if you do, you face difficult consequences.

From this list, which externals seem to have been strongest in your life?

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These “externals” push into our lives expecting us to submit our soul in order to gain belonging or to remain acceptable.

In an online course for men on Dr. Glover’s website, Roger Nix lists the externals that he pursued before he was able to gain strength over them. His list includes: anxiety, alcohol, cocaine, work, success, sex, money, status, approval, being smart and entertaining, strippers, hookers, massage parlors, porn, marriage, fast cars, Harleys, a ponytail, travel, living first class, yachts, private jets, food, sugar, traditional religion, new thought religion, spirituality, cults, therapy, abstinence, celibacy, 12 steps, gadgets, pharmaceuticals, living abroad, risk and fantasy. We all have our own list like this.

Even Solomon from the Bible pursued externals to try to find meaning in life; he went after wine, women, song, money, education (philosophy), fame, power and possessions eventually describing all those pursuits as vanity.

Externals can determine what we wear, what we buy, what we collect, what we worry about, what we think about ourselves, what we are anxious about, what team we follow, what we are afraid of and what we pursue.

Externals are things where we think life comes from; “If I only had _____ (blank) _____ then I would feel whole and complete.”

When men are silent, passive, anxious, distant, defensive and living from a “damned if I do, damned if I don’t” posture, externals are ALWAYS in the mix. Externals are our attachments which control us throughout our lives.

☞ **When we’re controlled by an external, we will never be free.**

Consider what brings up the most fear, what brings you anxiety or anger in your life. Fear, anxiety and anger are always attached to the primary externals in your life and therefore are your greatest indicators to help you discover your own set of externals.

Reference Points

Hundreds of years ago there was the debate over which point the Solar System revolved. The Geocentrics believed everything revolved around the earth. The Heliocentrics had developed evidence that the true point of reference was actually the sun.

You heard about these guys in the fifth grade; Copernicus, Galileo, the Pope, the Church, etc. Finally, it was resolved, there was a shift in reference (from the Earth to the Sun) that changed the course of astronomy and science.

☞ **If your point of reference is off, everything else in your life will be off, you will never get life right.**

You must know that you’ve been following a false reference point, a lie. Men in our present culture have been taught, trained and even shamed into living with an external point of reference. We have a

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false reference point upon which our life is centered, therefore we actually are living a “false life”. The external referenced life is not real or authentic. Our true self is hidden and closed off.

It is time to reclaim the **true** reference point from which your life has been designed to live. That true reference point is your heart or your core. You have been designed to live from an inner authority, from your integrity not what everyone else thinks or expects.

This idea may be contrary to what you have believed, so listen if there are any personal reactions as you read this. This will give you clues about where your reference points have been. Think about how living by everyone’s expectations is like everything orbiting the Earth, it is just backwards.

If you are to truly live in freedom, then you must fully be free. If you are living under some sort of external authority, then you are not truly free. Your freedom only exists if you are truly free to guide and determine the direction of your own life.

☞ **Freedom can only happen with an internal point of reference.**

The Big Lie

The externally referenced life, where externals define you and drive your life, begins with the perception that you are flawed or something is wrong with you. This is the Big Lie.

There are many traditions that believe and communicate that something is broken or something is wrong with you, therefore your struggle in life is to “rein in the wild horses” or live on the higher plane.

To live an acceptable life we must build self-control, be disciplined, follow the rules and straighten up and fly right. We need to recognize our powerlessness, submit to a certain set of rules or surrender our lives to a power which can actually manage our mess. It seems that recovery or success in life always has to do with placing ourselves under some sort of external authority.

From the beginning of literacy there have been stories that communicate that something in manhood is broken, not acceptable for civilization or needs to be restrained. These stories about uncontrollable masculinity ranged from classics, like Enkidu from the Epic of Gilgamesh, Robert Bly’s Iron John or even Beauty and the Beast, to contemporary stories like Wolverine and Bruce Banner/The Hulk.

Even the story of the Frog Prince shows the encounter with the feminine as a doorway to life. He needs the kiss from a beautiful woman to become a real man.

Theological perspectives that believe something is wrong with the heart of a man have been determined pretty much by one passage in the Bible, Jeremiah 17:9; “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” People who use this verse as the primary descriptor of the hearts of people believe that if we live freely from their hearts we will fly headlong into a crazy life of sin; sexual sin, immorality, greed, sex, alcohol and even dancing!

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These stories and ideas say there must be an external authority that tames our broken wildness; something outside of us must control us so we can make life work, live righteously or gain acceptance. It is as though the way men are is not acceptable and something must change.

Evolutionary psychology communicates this with the endless discussion about what an “Evolved Man” looks like. This conversation assumes that the way men are needs to be fixed. We must identify and eliminate masculine deficiencies so humanity can continue to progress and evolve into the future.

You see this perspective in Science Fiction stories that have an ideal image of men in the distant future as asexual beings with huge telepathic brains and very small muscles. This looks like the ideal until a real man like Vin Diesel or James T. Kirk punch them in their gigantic heads.

Whether it is theology, literature, pop-culture or science, the message is very clear; something must be restrained or changed in every man.

Somewhere, you have been told that you’re born broken, not good enough or that you are not in good working order. Therefore, you cannot trust your own “Internal Resources” to guide your own life. You cannot live from your own inner authority.

☞ Who told you that you were broken?

Whether it is your masculinity, your heart or some other part of you, we’ve been told that something is broken. That message comes out in subtle and yet obvious ways. You will discover that the real problem is actually your frame of reference, not your core.

Since we can’t trust our own heart, we believe we must trust other’s perceptions and expectations in order to be acceptable. We end up with this false belief, “I can only trust externals if I am going to get this right.”

☞ The lie is this; you are broken and you must rely on externals in order to be acceptable.

To live from the inside-out you must break the stronghold that this lie has in your life. You must develop an internal point of reference and trust that you are in good working order.

The Dilemma: Orbit or Be Rejected

Who knows how all this happened, but in the past fifty years or so, men have been trained to orbit women and please them in order to get the scraps of external validation or sex.

Often meant in jest, messages like, “If Momma Ain’t Happy, Ain’t Nobody Happy” or “Happy Wife, Happy Life” reinforce what the primary job of a man is in this present culture; to please. Like a fish born into the water, we know nothing different. Many of us believe that this is what we have been born for; to please and make others happy.

☞ Like Sputnik, you’re a satellite with no gravity, beep, beep, beeping through life.

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With those external messages that tell us we are broken, we become our own worst critic. Our self-judgments and criticisms crumble our core and mess with our identity. These messages have gone deep into us. We are unaware how deep. Many externally referenced men despise their own masculinity and sexuality. In our own shame, we have created strong judgments against our own core.

☞ We can be our own worst enemy.

Taking care of ourselves, trusting ourselves, leading and even loving ourselves has become a lost art. We actually believe that caring for ourselves or saying what we want is “selfish”.

The false narrative that masculinity is inherently bad leaves us with no option but self-judgment and shame. In order to fit in and be acceptable we have chosen to defer to externals defining who we are and driving what we do. So we live to please others, to make sure we are not seen as selfish.

This is the dilemma; do I orbit around others trying to please them (which I hope results in getting the validation I need) or do I become a selfish A-hole who lives to please himself. These seem like our only options.

The external point of reference starts with the belief that you are broken, flawed, and unacceptable. So you compensate, trying to look good or to measure up. But the problem is that when comparing with others you never match up.

There always seems to be someone, something or someplace where you don't measure up. There is always someone smarter, better looking and funnier. We always question ourselves and lose confidence.

☞ Even when your behavior is right, you'll still believe your core is wrong.

If I believe I am broken, I will never be able to trust my core processes that give me all the information I need to make my next move in life.

There seems to be overwhelming evidence that something is wrong with me; I make bad decisions; I am stuck in poor behaviors; I keep coming back to those behaviors over and over; I can't get it right; I don't measure up. This is how evidence works when it is based on externals.

We read the writing on the wall; “Your Honor, the evidence is clear, this man has been weighed, measured, and found wanting!” We are unacceptable.

Our self-created externally referenced “identity hodge-podge” (parents, siblings, coaches, peers, bullies, teachers, co-workers, bosses, spouses, religion, culture, etc.) always fails us. We will never measure up. We will never be good enough. The evidence always says “failure”.

On the contrary, driving your own life requires a solid sense of being self-defined from internal sources and truth about who you really are. Freedom is having the power to act, speak, or think as you want without hindrance or restraint.

Where did you learn that you are broken or flawed?

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When we rely on externals for our identity and motivation, we have voluntarily placed ourselves into “slavery” or under some external authority. We believe we must gain some sense of value or worthiness through what we achieve or what others (especially women) think about us. We have become slaves to externals when we live with an external point of reference.

☞ **We have voluntarily placed ourselves under a yoke of slavery.**

We are attached to what we think will give us a sense of life. We have deep affection for the things that seem to make us feel better about ourselves. These attachments and affections are our externals.

To live the life you want to live, you must identify your externals. Until you eliminate the hold these have on you, you will be enslaved to them.

The world system wants men to be consumers, workers and orbiters to keep the machine rolling (without complaint). Men have been trained from the beginning of their lives that in order to get any of the scraps life has to offer they must put their heads down and accept an externally driven and defined life.

☞ **There is a different way to live.**

Reflection Questions

What do you think of first when you hear the idea of the externally referenced life?

How do you think these externals developed in your life?

In what ways has your life been lived out from an external authority?

Which parts of your life have been lived out from your own inner authority?

What do you recognize that you may be enslaved to?

HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?

We live in an externally referenced world and men in particular have been trained to be externally referenced. Let's look at what keeps us locked into the matrix of the externally referenced life.

We have been fed different messages or ideas about life from many different places. Here are some messages from our surroundings which have influenced our frame of reference. As you become more familiar with this concept of "reference" you will see many more places in life that has pushed you and other men into an external reference.

Systems

Whether you are aware of this or not, we are all part of various systems through which we live out our lives. These systems are significant contexts of our experience and gaining understanding will open your mind to clarity about how your life is externally referenced.

A system is a group of connected people that come together to make a complete whole for accomplishing some kind of purpose or even for survival. Families, a church, your culture or even your country are systems in which you live.

It is essential that you understand your role in any of these systems so that you can begin to make changes in your frame of reference. Usually we accept these roles without any consideration or intention. We blindly begin to follow some unspoken expectation in order to keep the system rolling along.

When we break free from our expected role, we will rock the boat and the system will do all it can to put you back into the Status Quo. It is like your body system that does all it can to keep things at 98.6 degrees. The internal homeostatic mechanisms like sweating or shivering keep it the same.

- ☞ **Expect every system you're part of to do everything it can to put you back into your externally referenced role.**

In any system, there are many different roles that you could have. You could be the one who keeps it all together as the glue or the provider. You could be a scapegoat or black sheep that takes the blame and shame. You could be the helpless one who needs rescue. You could just be the cog in the wheel that keeps the machine rolling or a pawn that is just part of a bigger game.

Neo from the movie *The Matrix*, found himself to be a part of a much bigger story than he was aware. He actually was an unconscious member of a large system that used the power from his body to fuel the machine. Once he became awake to this, he then took on a new role with a different system. His new role with Morpheus and Trinity was a kind of savior that began to break the hold of the greater system for everyone.

The Message from Systems = You must keep the system rolling, how dare you change your life at the expense of everyone else?

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What systems are you aware of that you are a part of? List at least 6.

School

Everyone who has gone to school has had their identity shaped by their academic experience. The fact is that the majority of us don't fit in the preferred learning style that is required to do exceptionally in school. Generally, about one quarter of us actually have the style of learning where school is just awesome! To varying degrees half of us end up doing alright, but it's still clumsy and takes work, but we get through it. Then the final one quarter of us are outright rejected and spit out into the cold world.

So for three quarter of students, school was probably not so positive. We were left with the belief that we are flawed and as kids, that hits us where it hurts – our worthiness. In addition to that, most of us were teased or bullied to some degree.

For most of us, we began to believe something was wrong with us. We had to figure out what we needed to do to fit in, to be acceptable and how we must be in order to keep the world rolling.

This is not the teachers fault – ok, maybe some teachers – but they are just part of a big system in which we all are expected to fit. But many of us don't fit and so we experience difficult things. Just ask people about their school experiences and you'll be shocked.

The Message from School = Something is wrong with you, you don't fit in. In order to fit in, you have to be a certain way.

What happened to you in your school experience that moved you to be more externally referenced?

Agriculture to Technology Shift

Over the last 150 years our world moved from a physically driven world of agriculture and industry to an information/tech-driven world. This has created significant changes and expectations for all men. We moved from work that required physical strength to work anyone can do. Consider what it took to drive a dump truck; years ago it took strong arms, a long reach and transmission mastery. Now even the most massive machines can be driven with ease, by just about anyone who wants to.

Since strength is a huge masculinity concept, men have lost a part of their core. Through technology, just about anyone can do just about anything, so many men question how we fit in the world. There are still trades and dangerous or dirty jobs reserved for men, but they are often seen as lower or less worthy.

The story of Mr. Incredible from the movie “The Incredibles” illustrates this well. Mr. Incredible had been a super hero who saved lives and protected the world from evil. But the government shut that down because of liability. The movie begins with this strong man in a tight cubicle with his vitality draining every minute. His strength is no longer valued or even necessary.

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This is the story of every man in this present culture. Our strength and presence is not as obviously valued as it was decades ago. Since strength is a significant part of the masculine core, and strength is not valued, we question our core.

The Message from Agriculture Shift = With technology, anyone can do anything, so your physical strength is not valuable.

In what ways has the agriculture to technology change shaped how you see your role with work and career?

Consumerism

Consumerism and marketing tells you that you're not complete without buying some thing. You will only be fulfilled if/when you get whatever it is that is being sold. You are told you need things outside of yourself in order to be whole. You need that new car or newest technology.

Look at how marketing has sucked you in. You need the newest gadget that you can't live without. You wish you had the nicest car to look cool. If you drink a certain beer women will flock all around you. All these things are presented to you as life-giving and essential to feeling good about yourself, to fit in or to compensate for all your inadequacies.

Consumerism came to the height of absurdity after 9-11. We heard that it was our role in this world to keep the economy rolling, either through buying or working. In the middle of a major disaster we were encouraged to keep spending, don't let the terrorists win, and keep the economy rolling. This is who you have become, a consumer.

The Message from Consumerism = You are incomplete, so you must buy stuff or keep the machine rolling to have some value.

To what degree have you been affected by consumerism?

Pop Culture

Men today understand the value of manhood and masculinity from external resources. We learn our masculine identity from TV, Pop-culture, movies, news, women, men, and commercials. Every avenue of information hits us with information about the value of masculinity.

The models for masculinity we see are hyper-masculine like James Bond, Action Movie heroes, Sports figures, the Dos Equis man, or MMA fighters. Or weak men like Homer Simpson, Ray Romano, TV show idiots who are absent, weak, deadbeats or SNAG's (Sensitive New-Age Guys).

It seems we are left with only two options – the hyper-masculine alpha male or the uber nice beta guy. Not much in between. Two significant parts of being a man - our masculine strength and our masculine heart are discredited.

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Since masculinity is not generally valued and since we are inherently masculine at our core, we get a feeling that we are not valuable. Just so you know, the Solid Man Process has a third really good option.

The Message from Pop Culture = Something is wrong with you, just for being male.

What Pop Culture images of masculinity have impacted you the most?

Religion

For an institution which would claim to set people free, religion has been a major player in actually creating externally referenced people. The church has a mission, so you must do what is expected in order to fit in so the church can meet its goals, even though those goals may be questionable.

It seems that morality and “right behavior” is maintained through guilt, shame and obedience. So individual freedom is lost. You must do what is expected and have the right lifestyle in order to fit in, to belong or to be acceptable. You must do certain things, adhere to certain beliefs and look a certain way in order to belong.

People are caught in the vise of “do versus be”. Your acceptance is based on what you do rather than who you are. This has been going on for millennia; it was so much of what Jesus confronted with the religious order that was in power during his time.

That religious order, the Pharisees, required everyone to adhere to a massive list of laws (do’s and don’ts) in order to be acceptable. If you did not follow the rules you were shamed and rejected. Jesus challenged this way of living and faced significant consequences for speaking against them.

This religious way of life is still at play today in many houses of worship. Consider the way you may have experienced pressure to do certain things or perform in a certain way.

The Message from Religion = You must be or behave a certain way in order to fit in or be acceptable.

How have religious expectations or control played out in your life?

Family of Origin (FOO)

The family you grew up in has influenced you more than you will ever know. There are certain rules by which every family operates; don’t tell the secrets, keep up the image, family first, Irish for life, don’t give in, we stay together, us against the world, you will be successful, we all finish college, we are blue-collar, union for life, vote Republican, vote Democrat, or follow along to get along. Rules like this stay with us like barnacles. We must identify them in order to move into a new way of living.

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There were also roles that you held to keep the family moving the way it was “supposed” to be. These roles look like the golden child, the good boy, scapegoat, bad ass, lost child, smart one, hero, athlete, quiet one, comic relief or baby. You were trained to do what was expected and you certainly weren’t supposed to go outside the lines! There are not many families who truly allow people to develop a truly autonomous self.

We all start out like the fish in water. A fish does not even know what water is. He was born into it and the water just always has been. This is like family. You may remember a time when you were over at a friend’s house and noticed that Jimmy’s family did things differently than yours.

That’s the start of discovering the “water” you were born into. Later, you may have rejected your FOO or just escaped. Or you may have been locked in for way too long. Often we then will replicate our family system in our relationships, playing the same role and living under the same rules even though you are a man.

In this journey to be internally referenced, it is essential to consider your FOO. Your “self” may still be absorbed into the FOO “blob”. Or you realize that you keep people at a distance just like your family. You must identify how your family of origin trained you and then begin to break free.

The Message from your Family of Origin = In order to be loved and accepted you must follow the rules and play the role you were given.

What were your FOO rules or your role in it? How are you still attached to those rules and roles?

Women and Relationships

While I believe that men and women are equal in the eyes of the universe, I believe there are significant differences. Our biology is quite different, our genetic imperatives are distinct, and the way we process life is unique. Respecting these differences is required as we process how we move in life. Most men have experienced some shame or even pain with how women understand men.

The issue here is not that women have an opinion about how men should behave, but that presently they have been able to determine what actually defines masculinity. So the message from the world of women is clear – “If you don’t live up to our expectations about what we think a man should be, you will be unacceptable and we won’t like you.”

It seems that women actually “hold” the definition and value of masculinity. The ability to define another person and to determine a man’s value, places women in an incredibly powerful position. If she is happy with you, then you are acceptable. If not, you are rejected. She has become your judge and holds your worth in her hands. Some call this woman who holds your value in her hands the “Golden-haired Woman” or the “Key-holding Goddess”. She owns your life.

☞ **Your measure is her pleasure.**

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In our culture today it seems that women actually own the narrative of masculinity. It is because most men are externally referenced and have given away their power. Reclaiming our own power starts with being internally referenced, knowing who you really are and what masculinity actually is.

It is true that there are some wretched men and many women have experienced the evil presence of those men. However, the vast majority of men are very good at their core. The very small minority of bad men has helped create a distorted view of all men.

These good men need to stand up for the reality that masculinity is good and also stand up against the evil some men are capable of. Since women have had the power to define men, it is as though men need to have their manhood conferred onto them as though a woman would “knight” them with it. In order to feel whole or acceptable, an externally referenced man will need a woman to validate him.

There are other messages we have heard that speak to this – “Man-up”, “You just don’t get it” or “If women ran the world...” All these common statements show the common belief that compared to femininity, something is deeply wrong with masculinity.

The Message from Women = You do not hold the definition of who you are. Therefore to be acceptable you must meet expectations of women.

How have messages from women impacted the way you live your life?

Designed for Connection

At first glance to some, the movement from externally referenced to internally referenced may seem increasingly selfish and create separation or distance in a person’s relationships. It may seem that this first pillar of the Solid Man Process is about creating selfish men who live in complete independence from others.

This process is counter-intuitive; it’s actually the externally referenced life that’s predominately selfish. It may seem to be other-centered and giving, but most of the actions of an externally referenced person ultimately are designed to bring something back to that person. In the externally referenced life, there are always strings attached to try to get someone to like them, to covertly get what they need or to be seen in a good light.

☞ **The externally referenced life is a life folded-in upon itself.**

The pleaser and orbiter may seem to be doing everything for others, even to the point of self-sacrifice, but their behavior always comes back to some if/then equation; “If she is happy then she will like me, give me sex, treat me right, or accept me.” The focus always comes back to you in a warped, back-handed way. The pleaser is somewhat of a “mini-narcissist” because there are always strings attached.

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The entire point of this first pillar is to help you become aware of your point of reference and shift it to a healthy pattern. The external reference is actually a very selfish posture.

Humans have been designed for relationship. There is no way to escape that truth. Our connections and attachments are one of the most significant and potentially fulfilling parts of life. It is that desire for close connections that makes the realm of relationship most frustrating as well. When your relationships are not going well they can be one of the most painful experiences in life.

The internally referenced life will prepare you for deeper connections, closer relationships and more fulfilling interactions. When you are externally referenced, the world of everyone else is in your focus; what everybody else wants and needs.

You, yourself are actually not in the game. You do not bring “you” to the relationship. Not until “you” are actually in it will you ever have a healthy relationship.

☞ **Healthy relationships require at least two individuals.**

If you have given up your wants, needs and desire in order to please others, you are not an individual in the relationship and a healthy relationship is impossible. You must reclaim yourself through developing an internally referenced life. Then you can actually begin to experience deeper, more intimate relationships.

From the pleaser perspective, having wants seems like selfishness, but the freedom developed from the Solid Man Process results in deeper connections with yourself and with others. So let's keep the process going.

Of the eight messages, which three meant the most to you?

What are some insights you have on this lesson?

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Group Presentation Questions (This is the set of questions to present to the group)

What you hope to accomplish with the Solid Man Process.

What were the events leading you to start this journey?

In what ways does it feel like your story has been hi-jacked by someone else, as if someone else is running things?

In what ways do see how you live from an external reference?

Which externals have been strongest in your life? And How do you think you became externally referenced?

Who told you that you are broken or flawed? Where did you learn this?

Of the Eight influences (Systems, School, Agricultural Shift, Consumerism, Pop Culture, Religion, Family of Origin and Women), which culture or system has had the most power on your life? And which of their messages has had the greatest influence on you?

Share some of the most significant stories of your life that have to do with the Eight cultural influences. Talk about any experiences you had that shaped you how you are today.

Share any more insights and observations you had with Part One: The Problem.