

He Has 3 Dads And Learned Something From Each One | Pop Wisdom | Dad Saves America

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SUMMARY

Mike Gibson, co-founder of the 1517 Fund and former VP at the Thiel Fellowship, discusses his views on higher education, masculinity, and personal experiences in a conversation with John. He emphasizes the importance of courage, the balance of masculine and feminine traits, and the value of diverse perspectives gained from having multiple father figures.

- Gibson critiques the traditional education system, advocating for creativity and entrepreneurship.*
- He expresses impatience with people who are inconsiderate in public spaces, contrasting it with his calmness in traffic.*
- He enjoys doing dishes while listening to music or podcasts, finding it a productive way to unwind.*
- Gibson defines masculinity through virtues like courage and mastery, while acknowledging the presence of both masculine and feminine traits in everyone.*
- He reflects on life lessons learned from his multiple father figures, highlighting the value of diverse life experiences.*
- Gibson shares a humorous yet dangerous childhood memory of jumping out of a moving car, showcasing his adventurous spirit.*
- He discusses his spiritual journey, expressing a belief in God while questioning the nature of divinity.*
- The conversation touches on nostalgic themes in children's literature and pop culture, noting the lessons of loss and authenticity in stories like "Teen Wolf."*

- He co-founded a venture capital firm called the 1517 Fund. He was previously a VP at the Thiel Fellowship, which pays kids to drop out of college and start businesses. His upcoming book, "Paper Belt on Fire" details how he took on higher ed and his strategy for renewing American creativity. - We decided the paper belt should define these industries from Washington DC to Boston. They print laws, money, regulations, and diplomas on paper. - [John] Mike Gibson, welcome to Pop Wisdom.

(upbeat music)

(text whooshing) What challenges your patience the most and how do you overcome it? - This is one of my biggest character flaws. I cannot stand if I'm in line at a small coffee stand and someone is ordering like,

the oatmeal mochaccino latte, half caf, half decaf. There's something where I think people should be aware of the line behind them and if it's rush hour or something, that people have to get on, I don't know what that is.

It drives me nuts. It's even worse if there's like, one barista who's working the register, as well. So I don't know why that makes me go crazy, but I feel like I should have greater patience. - It's an anxiety produced by a form of the golden rule. Like, why you gotta do this? - [Mike] Yeah. - I wouldn't wanna do this. What are you doing? - What's weird to me it's like, I don't get that impatient and traffic.

It's like, I can be in traffic and I'm upset. I mean, it's not great to be in traffic, but there's something about the focused intensity. The displeasure that this person is like, taking it upon themselves to make this line worse. - [John] What sound, noise, or smell do you love? - Oh man, the smell of a turkey being cooked on Thanksgiving morning in my parents' house. I love the smell of the eucalyptus trees on the coast of California.

It's very aromatic. It just smells fresh and bright. Sounds. - The ordering of a double latte- (laughs) - The steam of an espresso machine being turned on and the cup hitting the plate. - [John] What's your favorite chore and why? - I love doing the dishes, actually, because I put on music or a podcast. - You're set up for marital success. (both laughing) - I am an eligible bachelor who does dishes. That should be my dating profile.

Yeah, I love turning on music and then I can zone out. It becomes this thing where I can think of other things or if I'm listening to a podcast, that's a great time to do it. I can't just listen to a podcast and sit in chairs like this. That's impossible for me. I need to be doing something else. Walking or doing the dishes, so I'll go with that. - [John] If you cook, what's your favorite dish to cook?

- I'm a standard meat and potatoes guy, so I love grilling steak. I love grass-fed beef. Just seems to have a richer taste. I'm sort of perfecting my grill skills and I've got it perfectly timed. If you want to come over some time, I'll cook you the perfectly grilled medium rare steak. On the side, maybe some veggies. I could grill veggies, too. That's always nice. Men love to grill. - Okay. Coal, wood, or gas? - I just got a wood-powered oven and it's mainly for little pizzas, but you can also cook steaks

and other things in there.

It takes a lot of work to set up. but once it's going, it's pretty fun. - What's your favorite video or board game, if you play either of them? - Oh, man. It's been so long since I've gotten into a game. I grew up in the 80s, so I loved arcades and there was this one game called 1942. - Oh, yeah. - That it just happened to be in the arcade, so I had this urge to master it.

I would have like, \$20 worth of quarters I'd stack or \$10. It was a big line and then I'd just sit there forever playing that game. - What does masculinity mean to you? What is it? What is masculinity? - This is a tough topic. For me, I think it is tied to more the virtues than the essence of like, sexuality or something. I think those things are certainly related, but I think at the core of masculine virtue is something that has to do with courage, the ability to master your fears in the pursuit of a goal for the common good, I think, is masculine in a way that perhaps a feminine side might not be traditionally associated with.

I think there's an urge to mastery among men. I think just traditionally, it's been associated. You know, the warrior virtues of protecting the homeland and the home in a way, just the confrontation with violence is present in all men in a way I don't think women necessarily feel intuitively right away or by nature, on average. - I'm married to a woman who's actually got fairly masculine traits. You know, she's forceful in the best possible sense. I've actually learned a lot from my wife.

So what do you think about the sort of notion of masculinity as a set of traits, or femininity, for that matter, that we all kind of have? - Yeah, there's a polarity in all of us. It's like, we're all gonna be some balance of the feminine and the masculine, I think. And whether by culture or by nature, I think, on average, it's like, we'll see a little bit of separation where the pattern seems to match stronger among people who are traditionally characterized as male or female, right?

That doesn't mean I can't find a woman who exemplifies masculine virtue or vice versa. I think that's true. Maybe the key virtue in life is learning how to balance them each within us in some way. - [John] What is the number one lesson you learned

from your dad? - Wow. - And this can either
be your dad, Mr. Gibson, or your perhaps CIA operative dad. (Mike laughs) You can choose. - Wow, that's a
tough one. Never stop searching.
I'll start with that.

Trying to find out more
about who my dad was has led down just some
really interesting corridors and led to all sorts of mysteries and I still don't have an answer and maybe I will
never have one, but just the act of searching alone has led to some valuable self-knowledge that I might not have
otherwise had. As far as life lessons, I have three dads. I have two stepdads, a biological father. What my
stepdads have taught me are just the standard virtues
of hard work, dedication, mental toughness, and putting in the work.

- Do you feel like you have a
bounty in having three dads? How do you think about that? You know, I have one dad. I'm very happy for that,
but I'm sure there's some advantages
to having multiple dads. - That's very true. Yeah, it's like they each have
had different perspectives on life and I can ask
them different questions and get different answers
and that's been valuable. Also, they just have different life paths. I mean, one of my stepdads is a pilot and just
talking to him
about his life flying planes was fascinating and
that was very different from my other stepdad, who
worked in the paper industry.

So just learning about
their different life paths did a lot for me to just think about the different possibilities in life and different
approaches to things. - [John] What's the most dangerous
thing you did as a child? - Wow. On purpose or by accident? - Either. - When I was an infant. I mean, this was
Madman days,
I guess, in the late 70s. My mom didn't wear seat belts and I guess she just had me on her lap as she was driving
in New York City.

And when I was like, two
years old or something, she had the window down
and I jumped out the window and did a somersault onto the ground into the lane next to ours and apparently, a
cab
came screeching to a halt. - Oh, my God. You're describing, it's not
even my worst nightmare. It's a nightmare I didn't have until now. (John and Mike laughing) - So that's
probably one of the more dangerous things I've done. I've put other people in danger as a kid.

I was in my parents' car
and who was on a hill and I released the emergency brake and at that moment, my
brother chased a ball into the driveway and he caught the ball right as the car was coming towards him. And he
laid down flat, the
car went right over him, scraped his back. The car stopped and I
don't even remember this because it's so traumatic, I guess, because I like, ran and
hid in a garbage can for a few hours, thinking, I don't know what I was thinking.

I was so young. - So when did you get
your driver's license? (John and Mike laughing) - Well, I mentioned to you
that I was banned from MIT. I'm also banned from
driving in Switzerland for the next year or so because I was caught
speeding there multiple times and they sent me a letter
saying I was no longer allowed to drive in this specific
Canton for two years. (laughs) - If you could relive
one memory with your dad, which day would it be
or perhaps which event?

- Wow. That's a tough question. There are times where I've
wanted to feel the presence of my dad, even though he's
gone, that he was proud of me. We had a company go public for 1517. Just really culminated the
success of what we were doing. Yeah, I wish I could
celebrate that moment with him and know he was proud of me. Even though I never got
a chance to know him, just feel these things sometimes. - Yeah. That's really powerful.

Here's a big one. What did your dad teach
you about God, if anything? - So I was born Catholic. I went to Catholic school for kindergarten and then my
mom and stepdad
sort of just focused on other things, so I was
baptized but never confirmed and went to church on Christmas
and then stopped going. And then I just never lost
a spiritual sense of life. I know that's a bit of a cliché, but I was drawn to philosophy and some of these big
questions
about, is there a God?

What is the nature of God? And I've just always
been interested in that. I haven't returned fully
to the Catholic church, but I would say that I believe in God. I think it's fascinating. It's even hard to say those
words, "I believe in God," because what does that mean? - Yeah. - But I think working in Silicon Valley, it's
pretty rare to hear anyone say that. What's interesting to me
is I'm more interested in the debate about what

kind of God there is, rather than whether there is one because it just seems like there's this fundamental question, this mystery, of why is there anything at all rather than nothing and I don't think anyone has a good answer to that, atheist, agnostic, or believer.

That mystery's gonna be with us for a long time and for me, I'm just in awe of it, so that's where I come from where like, oh, maybe on a more intellectual side. It's like, there's this Pascal was a philosopher. He's famous for his wager. - Right. - About betting on whether God exists and what's funny is when he died, they found a note sewn into the lining of his coat that said, "Not the God of the philosophers.

The God of Abraham." And what he meant by that was like, the God of the philosophers is something we arrive at intellectually. Like, oh, we're gonna deduce the existence of God based on some set of properties, what have you. And what he was saying was no, Abraham is like the God of revelation. I guess he had had some mystical religious experience and that was just more powerful to him than any intellectual argument. And so for me, it's somewhat similar.

I don't have a religious practice, but it's more of a revelation and intuition and something I wanna live by and discuss and question and I don't know where that goes in the future, but right now, that's where I'm at. - Yeah. 100%. What do you want written on your gravestone? - Oh, man. - Lighthearted questions, right? (John and Mike laughing) - Another one bites the dust. No. I can't use it, but to go back to philosophy, apparently, Kierkegaard has on his gravestone, "Here lies an individual."

I would love something similar to convey the sense that- - Why can't you use it? What's he gonna do? - (laughing) That's true. Yeah, there's something to me where it was like, you want to know that someone lived the life that they wanted to live and I don't know. Maybe it's silly to try to impart message on a gravestone, but yeah, I don't know. I'd like to be known as, I think I'm a little bit clever and cunning.

I love mischief and I try to bring the spirit of that to a lot of what I do and I don't know. Maybe there's something I could say about that to convey that message. I don't know what it would be. Yeah. - My recommendation is only that you decide before it's too late, which hopefully is not

for

a long time. (laughing) What's your favorite children's book? - What's kind of funny is I love to read now, but I didn't read much as a kid.

I feel like there's

this whole era of like, young adult fiction children's books that I never had contact with that other people did and they'll always say to me like, "Oh, did you read "The Phantom Toll Booth" or something? I'm like, oh no, I never got to that one. So I feel like I should go back- - "The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe." - Yeah, that kind of stuff. So I feel like I missed out on that and then if I think about earlier, I always loved the Dr. Seuss stuff.

I don't know what it meant to me, but there were just things there, like star belly sneetches and another one was "The Giving Tree". That story always just like, broke my heart. - Lisa, my wife, she loves "The Giving Tree". It's so poignant and heart wrenching. (John and Mike laughing) And as an adult to read it. - My mom had this alternative snowman song she's sang. It's some oldie from like, the 30s and it's about how the guy melts away and dies and I was just, as a kid, I always thought it was like, the saddest thing.

I was like, Mom, why are you singing this? And I think she did it just because she thought it was funny, maybe. (laughs) The sad Christmas song about this snowman who melts. - I don't know that this is true, but it feels like it's true that when we were kids, a lot of the pop culture, a lot of the big movies, there would often be a kind of magical element or an alien. - Yeah. - And then something would inevitably have them leave, like ET goes away, ET goes home.

- [Mike] Yeah. Yeah. - And you end up with this sort of loss at the end and you'd be left with the lesson. - Yeah, all right, so I was recently watching "Teen Wolf", the original movie with Michael J. Fox. - [John] Oh, yeah. Classic, yes. - And it's this exact lesson that I find very puzzling now because he discovers his inner nature. - [John] Yeah. - He is a Wolf on the inside and he has these extraordinary powers and then he starts leading the basketball team to victory and then at the third act at the moment of crisis, it's the big game and so what does he do?

He has to learn to renounce his authenticity. He has to not be the wolf and still win the game with his friends. And I always thought,

I mean, why not like, embrace the inner wolf and just dominate? It's like, what kind of lesson are we teaching here? But I think you're right. It's like there was this lesson where you get the ring, you get the magic, and then somehow you have to prove that you can do it without it after having had it for the middle of the movie.

- All right, well, I think that's it, Mike. Thanks for the insights and- - Watch "Teen Wolf" again. - (laughs) Yes. - I think it holds up. - Definitely. Michael J. Fox, "Teen Wolf" before "Team Wolf Two". Jason Bateman, I'm sorry. - Not as good. Agreed. Thanks, John. - All right. If enjoyed this clip, we've got more where that came from and be sure to check out the full conversation with Mike Gibson. Don't forget to subscribe to the channel so you won't miss our interviews and short videos as they come out each week.

(upbeat funky music)
(logo whooshing)