

WHAT DOES GOD EXPECT OF A MAN?

How would you describe the way a male of the human species ought to look, talk, and act? What makes a man different from a woman--and not only in biological terms? What is the biblical teaching on man's worth before God; his role in the family, church, workplace, and world at large; his friendships; his singleness? How is a man supposed to treat a woman? How has sin warped the male ideal? What should men be doing to be all that God wants them to be in a less-than-ideal world?

These types of issues will be addressed in this booklet written by Kurt De Haan. It is our hope that if you are a man, you will learn more of how you can be all that God designed you to be. If you are a woman, perhaps these pages will help you to better understand and encourage the men in your life.

Martin R. De Haan II, President of RBC Ministries

SUPERMAN?

Does God expect too much from men? Surely He doesn't expect flesh-and-blood beings to duplicate the incredible feats of Superman? The fictional survivor of the ill-fated planet Krypton arrived on earth looking like a human, but he was actually an alien form of life. His super strength, ability to fly, and X-ray vision clearly set him apart from normal men. Superman was too good to be true. No man, single or married, young or old, could ever be like him.

This booklet is not about becoming a superman. It would be of little value to any of us to present a picture of the ideal man that no one could live up to. Real men have limited strength. They stumble and fall. They fail. They can't see through walls. They can't leap over tall buildings with a single bound, or even short buildings with a running start. But that is not to say that men should be content to be less than what God knows they can be.

God has high ideals for men, but He also knows they need help to achieve those ideals. So He offers His resources and encourages them to learn from Him, draw on His strength, and seek His guidance.

To complicate matters, though, many different ideas of what a man should look and act like are being propagated in our world. God's pattern for men has gotten lost in the crowd.

Many questions are being asked. How does a man express his sexuality? How are men supposed to show their emotions? How are men supposed to treat women? Does God expect all fathers to change diapers? How much are men supposed to listen to, and learn from, women? Does God's kind of man appreciate beauty? Does God expect a man to stop enjoying sports, hunting, or fast cars? Does God expect a man to have a lot of friends when he would rather be alone?

The present-day crisis over the male role is evident in several areas of society. The confusion over proper male behavior has resulted in a variety of symptoms.

- Rampant sexual abuse.
- Marriage and family breakups.
- Male chauvinism and extreme feminism.
- Homosexuality, promiscuity, prostitution.
- AIDS and venereal diseases.
- Sex scandals in politics and religion.
- Pornography.
- Deviant, sex-oriented rock music.
- Media stereotypes and decadence.
- Debate over male/female roles in churches.
- Women in traditionally male roles.
- Violence in sports.
- Ethical dilemmas in the workplace.

With so much confusion about how a man should act in today's world, we need to find answers we can trust and build our lives on. The purpose of this booklet is to focus on what we can know about men as God wants them to be, and as God can help them to be.

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If you were to interview men and women--rich and poor, capitalists and communists, jungle inhabitants and sophisticated urban dwellers, old and young--you would hear so many different ideas on what a man should be that your head would spin. So many of those ideas are merely expressions of temporary cultural situations. What we need are timeless principles that come from the One who made man in the first place.

It is the Bible that helps us to know what God has said and how He intended men to act. So as you read through this booklet, keep your Bible open and study the issues carefully for yourself.

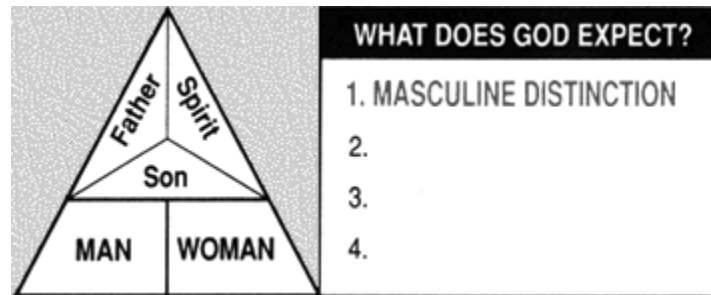
Even if you acknowledge the Bible as having come from God, you may wonder how much of what the Bible records was culture-bound and how much applies to today's society. The world has changed a great deal since biblical times. The basic issues, though, are the same. In His wisdom, God has given us guidelines to help us find answers for the confusing questions about man's purpose and place in today's world. The Bible contains principles that cross cultural boundaries.

In the following pages we will look at the plan of God for men as revealed in Scripture. God expects a man to demonstrate:

- [Masculine Distinction](#)
- [Servant Leadership](#)

- [Spiritual Equality](#)
- [Strength Of Character](#)

WHAT DOES GOD EXPECT OF A MAN? Masculine Distinction



Pee-Wee Herman, that strange and almost inhuman creature seen on Saturday morning TV, could hardly be called masculine. But what about Rambo--the popular, fictional, one-man war machine? Who would dare call him anything but masculine? His bulging biceps can take on an army and leave it in shambles. But is he masculine in the biblical sense?

What does it mean to be masculine? Which of the following are masculine qualities?

- The ability to benchpress your own weight.
- Auto grease under your fingernails.
- An appetite for meat and potatoes (not quiche).
- Scars from street fights.
- A deep voice that utters expletives.
- Treatment of women and children as slaves.
- Loud, opinionated, and bigoted ideas.
- Viewing women as sex objects.
- A fanatical following of sports.
- A refusal to cry.
- A rough and gruff demeanor.

You won't get much help from a dictionary if you want to define masculinity. It will only tell you that males have masculine traits, as opposed to feminine traits. To define masculinity, you must combine the genetic distinctions as well as the God-expected distinctions.

How are men different from women? Some physical traits may come to mind. But the God-designed differences go further than external features. Men and women are different down to each and every cell of their bodies--down to the 23rd chromosome to be exact. Males and females differ physically, emotionally, psychologically, mentally, and relationally.

The male hormone testosterone affects both the way a man's body develops and the way his brain thinks. Compared to a woman, a man generally has a smaller stomach; larger lungs; 20

percent more red blood cells; 50 percent greater brute strength; a shorter lifespan; less ability to stand high temperatures; a lower heart rate; he has greater sensitivity to light but less sensitivity to sound; greater likelihood of being left-handed, dyslexic, or nearsighted; greater tendency to have allergies; greater aggressiveness; stronger sex drive; he is more easily stimulated sexually by sight; less aware of how to develop an interpersonal relationship; more logical and less intuitive.

Men and women are different inside and outside. They look, act, and think differently. Current research is discovering anatomical differences in the brain that may underlie subtle differences in mental abilities that determine verbal skills and spatial perception. (The information above was compiled from several sources, including: *U.S. News & World Report*, August 8, 1988; *The New York Times*, April 11, 1989; *For Better or For Best* by Gary Smalley and Steve Scott [Zondervan, 1987]; *The Language of Love* by Gary Smalley and John Trent [Focus on the Family, 1988].)

Is masculinity important to God? Or are we making a bigger deal of masculinity and femininity than He cares about? Hardly. From the beginning of human existence, God has had very strong views about masculinity and femininity.

In Genesis 1:27 we are told, "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." Masculinity and femininity were part of God's plan. Men were designed for a specific purpose.

In Genesis 2:18, God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." Then after mentioning the animals God had created and that Adam had named, the narrative states, "But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him" (v.20). That comment is followed by an explanation that the man and woman were designed to marry, to cooperate, to "become one flesh" (v.24), to propagate the human race, and rule the natural world together (Gen. 1:27,28; 2:18,21-24). Adam's masculinity was somehow incomplete and undefined without a feminine human presence.

What does our present-day culture say about masculinity? Some people deny the biblical distinctions of purpose and God-designed functions and say that the only difference between masculinity and femininity is the reproductive role. Some males speak as if masculinity is a mark of superiority--while some women speak of males as the enemy.

Sex roles are being confused--and society is paying the price. Many music stars convey an androgynous image of sexuality, with men that look and act more like women. Homosexuals are fighting for acceptance, promoting their man-with-man and woman-with-woman brand of sex as an acceptable alternative lifestyle.

Another twisted concept of masculinity is expressed by those who are preoccupied with feeding their sexual urges. Pornography is spreading its poison, leaving victims addicted to fantasies, perversions, and violent sexuality. At its most basic level, masculinity has been reduced to

mean nothing more than possessing male sex organs with the accompanying sex drive. But that's not the way it's supposed to be.

The Bible contains numerous warnings against sexual perversions that violate both nature and God's laws for the proper expression of our male and female sexuality. What God expects or allows for men does not include promiscuity (Ex. 20:14; Lev. 20:10; Prov. 6:24-35; 1 Cor. 6:15-20), homosexuality (Lev. 18:22; Rom. 1:26,27), or pornographic lust (Matt. 5:27,28; Col. 3:5). These activities make a male less of a man in God's eyes.

Why has masculinity taken such a beating? Romans 1 details the reason for the problem. Because of sin and idolatry, humanity's relationship with God has been broken. Verse 21 states, "Although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened." Verse 24 describes the results of that rebellion: "Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves."

Sin has permeated society. The departure from God's revealed truth has resulted in all kinds of perversions in sexuality and relationships.

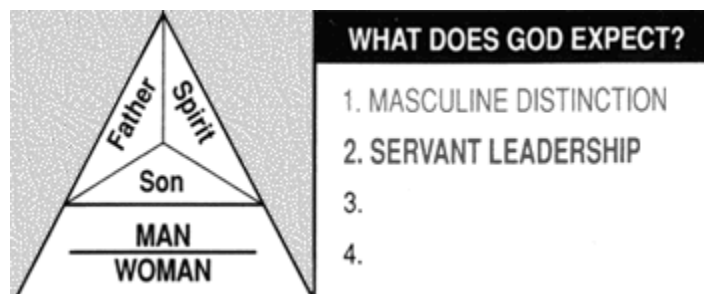
Does God's idea of masculinity require marriage? Not necessarily. The single life is an acceptable option (1 Cor. 7:1,8). The original ideal in Genesis was for one man to be married to one woman. Although the Bible speaks of married life as the norm, the single life is acceptable and even preferable for some people (Matt. 19:12; 1 Cor. 7:32-35). Jesus and the apostle Paul are two examples of single men who were in God's will.

What else makes a man a man? The remainder of this booklet will discuss *how* God has designed men to live out their masculine distinction--by acting with servant leadership, spiritual equality, and strength of character.

Thinking It Over. What kinds of models of masculinity are being presented in today's society for young boys to follow? How have religious groups caved in to the pressures of society and allowed masculine distinctives to be blurred? How do perversions of masculine distinctives affect a woman's view of her own femininity?

WHAT DOES GOD EXPECT OF A MAN?

Servant Leadership



The title of this section may sound like a contradiction of terms. Servant leadership seems to fit in with the absurd categories of frigid heat, smooth roughness, dry wetness, light darkness, friendly animosity, or ignorant intelligence. The words *servant leadership* could be contradictory, depending on how they are defined. But in the biblical use of the terms, leadership does not mean dictatorship, nor is a servant someone who is mindlessly subservient to every whim of a master.

What kind of leadership are we talking about? Biblical leadership is responsible, compassionate, understanding, accountable, competent, respectable, authoritative, pioneering, exemplary, and God-fearing. Being a leader does not mean making all the decisions. Nor does it refer to being the "boss" in marriage, the church, or society at large. Leadership implies taking initiative, accepting responsibility, and shouldering the weight of accountability before God.

What kind of servanthood are we talking about? Biblical servanthood is responsive, respectful, willing, loving, self-sacrificing, and submissive. Servanthood does not mean unthinking obedience. What it does mean is a willingness to lower oneself, to humbly serve another person, to put the best interests of someone else above your own enjoyment.

"Wait just a minute!" some men might cry out. "Doesn't the Bible say that wives are to be submissive to their husbands?" Yes, it does (Eph. 5:22). But in a broader sense, it states that men and women are to submit to one another (v.21), and husbands are to love their wives "just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it" (v.25).

How can servanthood and leadership be compatible? It may seem like trying to mix oil and water. In the verses that were mentioned above, Christ is the perfect example of how those two attributes can be combined. He had the power to force us to do what He wanted, but instead He put up with rejection, disobedience, and even crucifixion (Phil. 2:5-11). Jesus described the goal of His life this way: ". . . the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28).

If anyone had the right to dictate by virtue of His authority and power, it was Jesus Christ. But He came to earth and took on human flesh, patiently putting up with imperfect and stubborn people in order to provide exactly what we needed. He provided strong leadership, but His love for people permeated His leadership style. He never forced anyone to follow Him. Rather He earned the respect and obedience of men and women. They willingly followed Him. That's the kind of leadership men need to provide today.

How does servant leadership work out in different roles? The following brief listing offers some examples of how it works.

As a single man. The single male needs to show people of all ages and both sexes that he cares about others, not just himself. He must model a life that is worth following (1 Tim. 4:12-16). Single women should be attracted to him because of his character, stability, and desire to edify others.

As a husband. The husband is said to be the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church (1 Cor. 11:3), and he is to love his wife as Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:25). A husband must visibly and verbally put love into action if he expects his wife to be willing to follow his lead.

As a father. The father is responsible for the training of his children (Deut 6:6-9; Eph. 6:4), he is to provide for their needs (1 Tim. 5:8), and he is to treat them in a way that does not exasperate them (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21).

As a church leader. Men in leadership in the church must lead the people under their care, much as a shepherd leads, feeds, protects, and nurtures a flock of sheep (1 Pet. 5:1-4).

As a member of society. The Old Testament character Daniel demonstrated a willingness to take a stand for the Lord. He did what was right, no matter what the personal risk (Dan. 1,6). He made a difference because he courageously honored the Lord in a pagan world.

Why is leadership in marriage and in the church a male quality? It's not because males are superior beings (though many men would like to think so). Men and women are equals in Christ (Gal. 3:28). The issue is God-ordained function, not man-ordained bigotry. Somehow we need to get it out of our heads that leadership means superiority and supportive roles mean inferiority. After all, God the Father is the head of Christ, yet they are equal (1 Cor. 11:3).

The first indication of male leadership comes in the creation narrative of Genesis. Adam was created first and Eve was created to complement (complete) the man. God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a *helper* comparable to him" (Gen. 2:18). First Corinthians 11:7-11 and 1 Timothy 2:13 state that men should be leaders in the church because men were designed to lead, as evidenced by Adam being created first and Eve created to be his helping counterpart.

What does *headship* mean, and where does the term come from? When the topic of headship is introduced, many people suddenly get the mental picture of a Hitler-type dictator who gives orders (often unreasonable). First Corinthians 11:3 uses the word *head*, as does Ephesians 5:23. This term includes the meaning of "origin" or "source," so some have interpreted headship to mean that woman was created from man. They conclude that as Christ is the source of life for all believers, so man (Adam) was the source of woman's life.

However, it hardly makes sense that Paul intended to exclude the concept of leadership or authority from the concept of headship. He uses the term *headship* to denote God's relationship to Christ, and Christ's leadership over all believers, the church (Eph. 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Col. 1:18; 2:19).

This concept of leadership in the home is included in the list of qualifications for church leaders in 1 Timothy 3:4,5,12. In Titus 2:5, the apostle Paul told the older women to teach the younger women to be "obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed."

Is male headship a result of the fall? And if so, shouldn't we as redeemed people be working to reverse the effects of the fall? Some people have argued that position quite forcefully, but their arguments run against the biblical data. The apostle Paul made the point of headship based on the order of creation (1 Cor. 11:8,9; 1 Tim. 2:13,14). Headship is not a result of the fall; rather it has been perverted by the fall.

When God explained the punishment on men and women because of sin, He said to the woman:

I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you (Gen. 3:16).

This verse, particularly the phrase "your desire shall be for your husband," has been interpreted in many different ways. Some Bible teachers have taken this to mean that the woman, because of the fall, will be drawn to depend on man. These teachers also believe that the phrase "he shall rule over you" is a positive statement about the man bringing order and security into the woman's life. Others, however, see the man's rule described here as an unnatural domination over women.

There is another possible interpretation that seems to fit the context. Some Bible teachers are convinced that the Hebrew word for *desire* comes from an Arabic root that means "to urge," "to drive on," or "to seek control." They also point out that the same Hebrew words for *desire* and *rule* are used in the same grammatical structure in both Genesis 3:16 and 4:7. In chapter 4, it is sin that "desires" Cain and wants to force him to do what is wrong. But Cain could choose to stay in control and reject the temptation to sin. The word *desire* in both 3:16 and 4:7 could be understood as a strong desire to control. One result of the fall, therefore, is that women would have an unnatural desire to control men. And the man's proper role as leader would degenerate into a despotic rule.

While this last interpretation is disputed by some, it does accurately describe the battle of the sexes since the fall. Instead of peaceful harmony where man and woman complement each other, each has tried to dominate and manipulate the other for selfish goals. Instead of acting as complements, they have behaved more like contradictions.

Should men expect women to "heel, roll over, and play dead" when men are around?

Must men be the initiators of ideas and actions, and must women sit back or follow from a respectable distance? Should we think of women like some people think of children, that they should be seen and not heard? Archie Bunker thought so on the *All in the Family* television series. But that is not what God expects.

One look at the examples in both the Old and New Testaments shows that godly women were not passive slaves. They made a significant positive difference in their situations and made a valuable contribution to both social and spiritual life (Prov. 31:10-31; 1 Sam. 25:18-44; 2 Kin. 22:14-20; Judg. 4:1-24; Ruth; Esth.; Luke 2:36-38; 8:1-3; Rom. 16:1-15; Phil. 4:3; 2 Tim. 1:5).

Why is a servant attitude so important? Leadership without loving service produces an unbalanced, hideous creature. To be willing to take the role of a servant requires deliberate acts of love. The kind of man worth following expresses the love described for us in 1 Corinthians 13. This love:

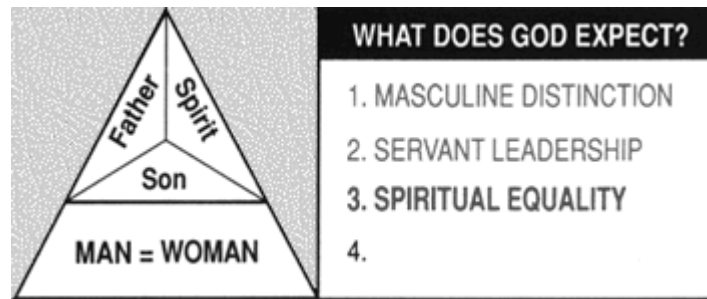
- is patient
- is kind
- is not envious
- is not boastful
- is not proud
- is not rude
- is not selfish
- is not easily angered
- is not a grudge-keeper
- is not an evil thinker
- is not a fan of evil
- rejoices in truth
- protects
- trusts
- hopes
- perseveres

A man who expresses that kind of love won't have trouble finding a wife, family, or a congregation who would be more than willing to submit to his leadership. Yet for many men, showing that kind of love may seem threatening. Such love requires that a man become vulnerable to being hurt and rejected, that he put aside his pride and humble himself for the good of others.

Men, are you willing to accept the challenge? You have a tremendous responsibility and great opportunities to set the pace, to be an example in your home, your church, your community, your world. No one said it would be easy, but if you are a child of God by faith, you have His Spirit within you (1 Cor. 12:13; Rom. 8:9). And with the Spirit within, you have all the resources you need to fulfill God's expectations for you. The kind of servant leadership God desires from you comes only as you submit to His leadership and serve Him. Serving and leading others will be an outgrowth of your relationship to the Lord Jesus.

Thinking It Over. How does the principle of servant leadership apply to a pre-marriage dating relationship? What kind of leader do you find easy to follow? How will a husband treat his wife if he wants to win her trust and devotion? (Be specific.) If you are a father, do your children see servant leadership in you? What is the relationship between leadership and accountability?

WHAT DOES GOD EXPECT OF A MAN? Spiritual Equality



"One must utter three doxologies every day: Praise God that He did not create me a heathen! Praise God that He did not create me a woman! Praise God that He did not create me an illiterate person!" (Rabbi Juda ben Elai, circa AD 150). Such has been the view of some men--religious men at that! Women have often been treated as second-class citizens of earthly kingdoms and the heavenly kingdom. Women, though, have not been the only targets of prejudice. Men and women alike have been the victims of discrimination by those who wanted to elevate their own self-interests.

Why has inequality existed? Why is this even an issue? Many people give lip service to the idea that all humans were created equal, but they think and act as if some people were created "more equal" than others. Others come right out and claim some sort of genetic superiority (as did Adolf Hitler). Human beings around the world have had the tendency to try to protect their own interests by denying the rights of others. Bigotry, racism, genocide, abortion, caste systems, financial snobbery, and other expressions of selfish self-interest have flourished at the expense of human dignity and life. But that's not the way God intended the world to be.

One of the expressions of selfish self-interest has been the age-old battle of the sexes. Confusion and debate over male-female equality exists because of prejudice and discrimination; misinterpretation of the Bible; male and female insecurities, failures, and overreactions; men failing to treat women as equals; women doing well in traditionally male roles; women desiring opportunities for service.

Were women created to be the equals of men? In the beginning, "God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:27). Notice that *both* man and woman were created in God's image. One sex does not have an inherent superiority over the other. And because both were created in God's image, both deserve the highest respect for the value of their personhood.

In the verse that follows, God gave man and woman several commands. "God said to *them*, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over . . . every living thing that moves on the earth.' " The mandate to populate the earth and to rule over it was given to *both* man and woman. Both men and women are in a position of dominion over the earth. Man is not

put on the earth to be ruled by woman, nor is woman put on the same level as the animals to be ruled by man.

Does equality mean sameness? No. When God created Eve, He said that she would be a "helper comparable to him" (Gen. 2:18). Eve was made of the same "stuff" as Adam. She was the necessary companion if Adam was going to reproduce and rule the earth. No sense of inferiority is implied by the word *helper*. Eve was different. And her abilities would complement Adam's.

Can men and women be considered equals if we make a distinction in their functions? At one time during the civil rights debate in the United States, some people proposed a "separate but equal" policy as a solution. The idea was to provide separate public services, job opportunities, and education to both minorities and the racial majority. It was interpreted by many to be a ploy to preserve segregation and perpetuate a skin-deep sense of racial supremacy. The "separate but equal" policy only served to propagate inequality.

Many women feel that they too have a separate and unequal position in life. No matter how much men talk about equality, some women feel they are treated like second-class citizens. Their feelings are often well-founded. Because of sin, men have tended to gravitate to one of two extremes: they either become passive and withdrawn or they become overly aggressive and domineering. In male-dominated societies, the general tendency has been to suppress women. Their intellectual abilities have been overlooked, their strengths ignored, and their worth unappreciated.

So how do we defend the biblical idea of different roles or functions for men and women? Aren't we perpetuating a self-serving separate-but-equal policy? No. There's a big difference between the racial issue and the sex factor when it comes to leadership in the home and in the church. For one thing, we are talking about a God-created difference rather than a man-imposed distinction. As we saw in the section on masculine distinction, God created male and female with complementary strengths. And as we saw in the section on servant leadership, God created a functional order. This in no way implies that women are viewed as less spiritual by God, nor do they get less attention from God, nor is their role any less important to Him, nor are they less accountable for their actions.

A woman is designed with the capability of bearing and nurturing children. Does that mean that the man is inferior? Of course not. Men are genetically designed to be physically stronger, to be able to do more strenuous work--and that does not make the female to be inferior. The list could go on and on. In each case it is not a matter of superiority but of complementary strengths that God has built into males and females.

What does the Bible say about the equality of male and female? The key verse in the Bible on this topic is Galatians 3:28. In order to get a sense of the context, here are verses 26 through 29.

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Is the apostle Paul saying that no longer should we make any distinction based on a person's gender? No. Paul is discussing the reality of the spiritual unity that believers have in Christ. Racial, social, and sexual distinctions do not make any difference when it comes to becoming a child of God through faith. In Christ, we all have access to God. In Christ, we all become equal recipients of God's grace. In Christ, we all become heirs of everything salvation holds in store for us.

In a highly prejudiced first-century society, the words of the apostle Paul were quite shocking. Many religious Jews had developed the arrogant attitude that they were spiritually superior to non-Jews. Masters often treated slaves like property rather than people created in God's image. Women too were often considered to be spiritually inferior to men. The words of the apostle Paul struck a nerve when he proclaimed that faith in Christ is the great equalizer. It was a radical, God-inspired thought for Paul's readers.

How should men treat women? Here are several biblical principles.

With purity. Paul told Timothy to treat younger women as if they were his sisters, "with all purity" (1 Tim. 5:2). Impure sexual joking (Eph. 5:3,4) or sexual activity outside of marriage is forbidden (Heb. 13:4).

With understanding. Husbands are to be understanding as they live with their wives (1 Pet. 3:7). Even though the command has primary significance for marriage, the principle would seem to be applicable for the way men, single or married, should treat all women. Men need to invest the time and energy it takes to try to understand how a woman thinks, feels, and acts. Men must not expect women to be like them.

With dignity and honor. The apostle Paul instructed Timothy to treat an older woman as if she were his mother (1 Tim. 5:2). Peter told husbands to honor their wives (1 Pet. 3:7). Though the primary application of this command is to a husband-wife relationship, the same truth should apply to any male-female relationship (Rom. 12:10).

Peter said the reason for giving such honor is that Christian women are co-heirs with Christian men of all the spiritual riches in Christ (1 Pet. 3:7; cp. Eph. 1:3,18). Husbands are to honor their wives so their "prayers may not be hindered."

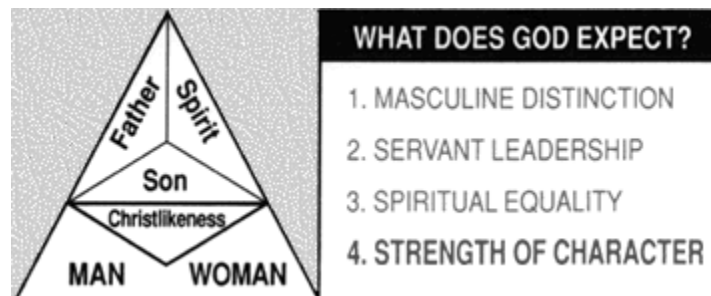
With love. No other command is so demanding or all-inclusive. Love encompasses all the other commands of how men are to act. Husbands are to love their wives with a love that imitates the kind of love Christ has for the church (Eph. 5:25-33). A man should treat a woman as he would want to be treated (Matt. 7:12; 22:39).

With an awareness of their giftedness. The apostle Paul stated that "there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all" (1 Cor. 12:4-7). Both men and women are gifted by the Holy Spirit. No one is excluded. And the New Testament gives us many examples of women who demonstrated a giftedness in the church. Romans 16 contains a list of the many women that Paul mentioned who had a notable impact on the spiritual life of the churches.

With submission. "Wait a minute," you might say. "Isn't the man supposed to be the leader?" Yes, but the Scripture also says, "submitting to one another in the fear of God" (Eph. 5:21). That doesn't contradict the headship of the husband, but it does mean that the man is to be self-sacrificing--loving as Christ loved us and gave His life for us. Christ's concept of leadership is not that of a dictator, but it is that of a servant-leader.

Thinking It Over. How do men treat women in your family, your church, your community? Do you agree that complementary functions should not be thought of as being unequal in value? How should a man (as a single, married, or church leader) encourage women to use their spiritual gifts?

WHAT DOES GOD EXPECT OF A MAN? Strength Of Character



What must a man do to develop bulging biceps and perfect pectorals? It takes a lot of exercise, to be sure, as well as the right kind of diet. As the saying goes, "No pain, no gain." Strength of character doesn't come automatically either. It is developed over time as a person exercises wisdom in following God's will. It comes as a man feeds on a steady diet of God's Word and follows His training program.

The apostle Paul used the analogy of athletics when he wrote to the believers in Corinth. He said, "And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. . . . Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (1 Cor. 9:25-27). And Paul told Timothy, "exercise yourself rather to godliness" (1 Tim. 4:7).

What is strength of character? We've already hinted that to some extent it can be equated with godliness or spiritual maturity. It is that--and much more. But first we need to define character. D. L. Moody said, "Character is what you are in the dark." That's true. Character is what you are really like, not the coverup that you allow others to see. Character is what guides your actions and produces the words you speak. Character is your unique identity, the sum total of your individual characteristics.

Character can be good or bad. Strength of character refers to strong, *good* character. A person strong in character is someone who stands for what is right, who has the "backbone" to express and live out his convictions. And those qualities are part of what God expects of a man.

So when we talk about "strength of character" as something that God expects of a man, we are talking about the qualities of godliness and spiritual maturity, a consistency of character that reflects a proper self-image, and a life that expresses the character qualities that God wants to develop in every man.

What produces strong character?

- Self-confidence--which comes from being at peace with God and knowing who we are in Christ (Rom. 5:1; Eph. 1,2).
- Consistency (Eph. 2:10; Phil. 3:16; Titus 2:12-14; James 2:14-26).
- Training (Phil. 2:12; 3:12-14; 1 Tim. 4:7).
- Right priorities (Mt. 6:33; 1 Sam. 13:13-14).
- Following the right example (1 Cor. 11:1; Heb. 12:1-3; 13:7; 1 Pet. 2:21).
- Obedience to God's commands (1 John 2:5).
- A steady diet of God's Word (1 Pet. 2:2).
- Relying on the strength of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-25; Eph. 5:18; Phil. 4:13).
- Right choices--living out the Christian faith, doing what is right no matter what (James 2:14-26).
- Trusting and depending on God (Prov. 3:5,6).
- Learning from others (Eph. 4:7-16).

What are some strong character qualities? A concise list of qualities that are desirable in a man is found in 1 Timothy 3. Although the apostle Paul outlined these character qualities for the purpose of selecting those who were qualified to be church leaders, the characteristics describe what God is looking for in all men. As you read through the list, you will see that they describe character traits and not intellectual ability, education, seminary training, or pulpit expertise. All men should be striving toward these qualities.

Let's look briefly at the characteristics given in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and apply them in a broader sense to all men.

1. Blameless. God expects men to be above reproach. This is an all-inclusive term that summarizes all the qualities described in 1 Timothy 3. It means that a man must have a pattern of life that is consistent with biblical standards.

2. *Husband of one wife.* A married man must be faithful to his wife. He keeps his marriage vows and does not toy with any type of sexual immorality. Literally "a one-woman man," this qualification has a broader possible meaning that a man is not to be a "womanizer" or a flirt. His heart is not to be afire with lust (Matt. 5:27,28).

3. *Temperate.* Gene Getz has stated that "a man who is temperate does not lose his physical, psychological, and spiritual orientation. He remains stable and steadfast, and his thinking is clear." Such a man is balanced in his living, not given to destructive extremes.

4. *Soberminded.* This term is closely related to the term *temperate*. It refers to the quality of being sensible in thinking and actions, exhibiting sound judgment.

5. *Of good behavior.* A man should be respectable and honorable in his actions.

6. *Hospitable.* The Greek term behind this word literally means "loving strangers." In a general sense, this term refers to friendliness and a willingness to help those in need.

7. *Able to teach.* This characteristic carries two possible meanings. It may mean that a man should have the ability to instruct others about the Christian faith. Or it could mean that a man is to be "teachable." If we combine these two elements, the term refers to an ability to teach others without arrogance.

8. *Not given to wine.* A man of God is not one who is controlled by alcohol (Eph. 5:18). In our day and age, this could be applied to illegal drugs as well. God does not want us to abuse our bodies or cloud our minds.

9. *Not violent.* The Greek word literally means "not a striker." Temper tantrums do not please God. This includes both violent actions and words.

10. *Gentle.* A God-honoring man, according to this term, would be gracious, kind, forbearing, and considerate of others.

11. *Not quarrelsome.* A man is not to be one who is always looking for an argument or stirring up trouble.

12. *Not greedy for money nor covetous.* Acquiring money and possessions should not be a priority. Jesus and Paul warned against a preoccupation with money (Matt. 6:19-21; 1 Tim. 6:10).

13. *Rules his own house well.* The man is the head of the home. He is responsible to see that his relationship with his wife and children is good. He is to be a good manager of home life.

14. *Having his children under submission.* A father is to be a respected leader at home, a man who does all that is in his power to train and discipline his children.

15. *Not a novice.* A new believer who becomes a leader before he is mature in his faith and practice runs a risk of falling into pride. This is a warning that a man is not to take on responsibilities that he is not mature enough to handle. Men must guard themselves against pride.

16. *Good testimony among those outside.* A man must develop a good reputation with non-Christians. He is to have a consistent faith that will be a strong witness to unbelievers.

How did Jesus show strength of character?

- He showed compassion (Mark 1:40-42).
- He dared to speak the truth about sin and hypocrisy (Matt. 23; John 8:31-59).
- He hated sin but showed love for hurting sinners (John 8:1-11).
- He took time to pray (Matt. 14:23; Mark 14:32-42; John 17).
- He refused to yield to temptation--drawing strength from the Word of God (Matt. 4).
- He spoke out for God's honor (Matt. 21:12,13).
- He followed through on His commitments (John 12:23-33).
- He humbly served others (Matt. 20:28; John 13:1-17; Phil. 2:1-11).
- He had His priorities straight (Matt. 5--7).
- He was forgiving (Matt. 18:21-35; Luke 23:34).

How did other men in the Bible display strength of character? Though no man can measure up to Christ's perfection, several men in Scripture do display the type of character traits that all men are to develop in their lives. Here are some examples.

Noah. He was like a beacon of light in the darkness. In a decadent culture, he stood out as a righteous man, willing to obey the Lord and build a ship for 120 years (Gen. 6; Heb. 11:7).

Abraham. Even though he had seniority, he kept the peace by graciously giving Lot first choice of grazing land (Gen. 13).

Joseph. He fled sexual temptation because of his reverence for God (Gen. 39). When he had opportunity for revenge against his brothers, he instead showed compassion, forgiveness, and love (Gen. 42--45).

Moses. He chose to obey the Lord rather than live a life focused on pleasure (Heb. 11:24,25).

David. Even though he was wrongfully accused and relentlessly pursued by Saul, David showed respect for King Saul (1 Sam. 24).

Daniel. As a young man in exile, he would not compromise his standards (Dan. 1:8) nor hide his faith (6:10-23).

Boaz. He protected Ruth's safety and honor, and he assumed responsibility for her (Ruth 2--4).

Stephen. Other believers recognized that he was a man "of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom" (Acts 6:3,5).

Paul. He showed spiritual sensitivity to believers with weak consciences (1 Cor. 9:19-23), and he vigorously guarded his integrity (vv.24-27).

Barnabas. This faithful worker encouraged others (Acts 4:36; 11:23,24), and he took a risk by giving Mark a second chance (Acts 15:36-41).

Thinking It Over. Men, what are you doing to develop strength of character in your life? How do you measure up to the qualities listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7? What can you do today and in the coming days to be more like Christ?

FROM ONE EXTREME TO ANOTHER

Which would you rather be suffering from: a high fever or hypothermia? Probably neither one, right? Both options are unhealthy extremes. Unhealthy extremes also exist among men. Too many of us men exhibit behavior that does not reflect what God expects of a man.

Listed below are several forms of extreme behavior that men fall into. What biblical principles does each violate? Use this section to review the main points of this booklet.

Playboy. This guy lacks sexual self-control. His sexual appetite controls his life.

Macho man. He seems to think masculine means muscles, meanness, and mastery of women.

Mama's boy. This adult male has never cut the apron strings. Mother still controls his life.

Tinkerer. This guy has a closer relationship with his hobby than he does with people.

Jellyfish. He allows his friends, wife, children, and co-workers to walk all over him.

General. As a boss, husband, church officer, or community leader, he barks orders.

Gym Rat. This man's thoughts and energies go toward watching or participating in sports.

Gay Guy. He may be male in body but his mind and actions contradict his sexual identity.

Workaholic. The job is number one, the source of his sense of satisfaction and security.

Zombie. He grew up thinking that a man should never show emotions, so he doesn't.

WILL THE REAL MAN PLEASE STAND UP!

God's expectations are attainable. He's not looking for perfection, but He does expect a willingness to allow Him to work in our lives, a readiness to admit wrong attitudes and actions, and an eagerness to aim for Christ likeness every day. Now is the time to stand up and be counted among the men who choose to follow His principles for masculine distinction, servant leadership, spiritual equality, and strength of character.

The responsibilities are beyond a man's natural abilities. Sin has badly warped God's plan for man. But the Perfect Man, Jesus Christ, can help. He not only came to earth to show us how to live, but He came to die so we would not have to be judged for our sinful failures.

If you have never done so, take a moment right now to talk to God. Use your own words, but admit to Him your sinful failures as a man. Tell Him you know that you do not measure up to His holy standards of right living. Then look to Jesus. Tell God that you believe that Christ died for you and took the punishment you deserved. Accept the new spiritual life He offers. Thank Him for forgiveness of sin and release from the penalty of death, and thank Him for the gift of new life.

If you've done that, then you have taken the first step to becoming a man of God. The rest depends on your willingness to obey the Lord as you read in His Word how to be the kind of man God expects you to be.