

WHAT DOES GOD EXPECT OF A MAN?

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How would you describe what God expects of a man? After all that has happened in our culture to bring equality to men and women, is there still a basis for masculine distinction that is more spiritual than biological? What does the Bible say about a man's role in the family, church, workplace, and world at large? How is a man supposed to treat a woman? How has time 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 are some of the issues addressed in this booklet by RBC writer Kurt De Haan and other staff members. 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, we hope these pages will help you to better understand and encourage the men in your life.

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SUPERMAN?

An urban legend says that the actor who played Clark Kent in the popular Superman TV series of the 1950s died thinking he had taken on the powers of his screen role. Different versions of the story have the man coming to his end after trying to prove that he could fly from a high window or resist a bullet fired at his chest. None of these rumors are true.

What is true, though, is that thousands of men have imagined themselves having the super strength, ability to fly, and x-ray vision that clearly set Clark Kent apart from normal men.

The following pages are not about becoming a superman. We all know that 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 they can be.

We all have a high stake in understanding what God expects of a man. The present-day confusion about what a man was meant to be can be seen in a variety of symptoms.

- *Sexual abuse of women and children.*
- *Confusion in roles of husband and wife.*
- *Contempt for women in the workplace.*
- *Same-sex marriages.*
- *Moral scandal in every profession.*
- *Pornography as a substitute for intimacy.*
- *Sexually violent and explicit music.*
- *Decadence in media.*
- *Angry debates over women's role in church.*
- *Deadbeat dads.*
- *Violence in sports.*
- *Epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases.*

With so much pain linked to the confusion of masculine identity, it's critical for a man to know what to expect of himself, as well as how to deal with the unrealistic and conflicting expectations of others.

***God has high
ideals for men,
but He also
knows that
men need help
to achieve
those ideals.***

It's evident that the answers to many questions that are being asked can have a bearing on all of our relationships. How does a man express his masculinity? Has the hunter, farmer, and fisherman of the past been replaced by a new breed that

talks about heartfelt issues, changes diapers, and helps with the housework? Are roles of the past lost in the fog of a world where men spend time getting in touch with their feminine side?

Where is our Creator in all of this? What does He expect of a man? Fortunately, the Bible has answers for those who have been confused by the question of whether or not "masculine distinction" is anything more than biological and cultural.

The Bible provides high standards but reasonable expectations. It also provides help and wisdom from the Creator, who offers His presence and encourages both men and women to learn from Him, draw on His strength, and seek His guidance.

WHAT DOES GOD EXPECT OF A MAN?

If you were to interview men and women—rich and poor, computer programmers and construction workers, jungle dwellers and residents of urban high-rises, old and young—you would hear different ideas of what it means to be a man. Some say the measure of a man is determined by the strength of his body. Others believe it's a matter of the mind. Still others would talk about the money he makes, the cost of his toys, or his ability to compete in the world of rugged sports.

What is often overlooked, however, is that the measure of a man is not determined by comparing any male with others of his gender. What matters is whether a man lives up to the expectations of his Creator.

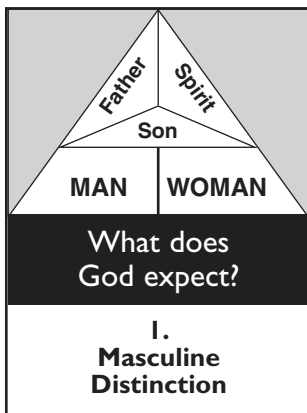
In many ways, men and women are more alike than different. Both are made in the likeness of God. Both are dependent on one another. Both are meant to serve one another. Both are held accountable to the same principles of honesty, love, and faithfulness. Yet both are also different enough to spark compelling attraction and ongoing conflict.

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According to the Bible, what counts is that God Himself expects a man to demonstrate:

- Masculine Distinction
- Servant Leadership
- Spiritual Equality
- Strength Of Character

MASCULINE DISTINCTION



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.*
- *Domination of women and children.*
- *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. Although it is often difficult to find a clear standard for what it means to be a man, even science recognizes that there are differences of gender that go deeper than external features.

How are men different from women? 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].)

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Is masculine distinction important to God? Or are we making more of an issue of masculinity and femininity than He does? The second

question may be more difficult to answer. But according to the Bible, God wants us to think of men and women as both alike and different.

In Genesis 1:27 we are told, “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 our Creator’s plan. A man was designed first and then shown that he didn’t have what it took to go it alone.

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 to rule the natural world together (Gen. 1:27-28; 2:18,21-24). Adam’s masculinity was somehow incomplete and undefined without a feminine counterpart.

*Adam’s masculinity
was incomplete
and undefined
without a feminine
human presence.*

What does our present-day culture say about masculinity?

Some deny the biblical distinction of roles and say that the only difference between masculinity and femininity is the reproductive role. Others quote the Bible in an effort to justify male dominance. In response, some women view all males as the enemy and blame the

Scriptures for making their lives more difficult.

We can't deny that the way we measure a man has become a confusing and often misunderstood issue—and society is paying the price. In increasing numbers, men struggle with whether or not they have what it takes to be a husband and father. Others believe it is their legacy to use their sexuality and strength to take advantage of women for their own self-centered pleasure. Many discover too late that they have traded long-term relationships for moments of sexual pleasure.

The Bible contains compassionate but firm reminders that undisciplined sexual indulgence is not the measure of a man. Our Creator has so much more for us than the pain and self-destruction that comes with promiscuity (Ex. 20:14; Lev. 20:10; Prov. 6:24-35; 1 Cor. 6:15-20), same-gender

sexual relationships (Lev. 18:22; Rom. 1:26-27), or even cultivated lust (Mt. 5:27-28; Col. 3:5). These activities cause a man to fall short of God's ideal.

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Why has masculinity taken such a beating? Romans 1 details the reason for the problem. Because of ungrateful thoughts 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: “God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves.” Then verses 26-27 explicitly describe the painful results of gender confusion:

God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

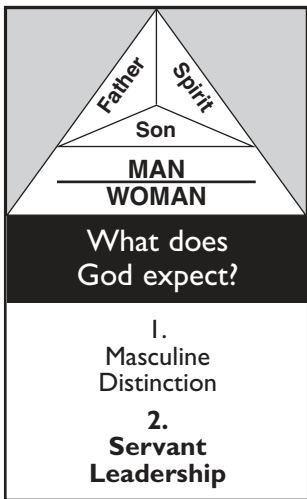
Does God’s idea of masculinity require marriage? Not necessarily. The single life is an acceptable option (1 Cor. 7:1,8). The original ideal in Genesis was for one man to be married to one woman.

Although the Bible speaks of married life as the norm, the single life is acceptable and even preferable for some people (Mt. 19:12; 1 Cor. 7:32-35). Jesus and the apostle Paul are two examples of single men who were models of masculinity.

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 distortions of masculine distinctives affect a woman’s view of her own femininity?

SERVANT LEADERSHIP



The title of this section may sound like a contradiction of terms. To some men, servant leadership sounds as absurd as 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 the ability to control. Neither does the Bible view a servant as someone who is mindlessly subservient.

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 her” (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” (Mt. 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, and he is to love his wife as Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:23-25). 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 (Dt. 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 responsibility? 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 male-based domination. 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).

Somehow we need to get it out of our heads that leadership means superiority, and supportive roles mean inferiority.

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 an authority 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, in other places, the Bible says that God's intent is not to exclude the

concept of leadership 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).

“The head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.”
I Corinthians 11:3

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 the woman.

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.

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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 combatants.

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

Must men always be the initiators of ideas and actions, and women just 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? Some men may think so, but that is certainly 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 (Jud. 4:1-24; Ruth; 1 Sam. 25:18-44; 2 Ki. 22:14-20; Est.; Prov. 31:10-31; Lk. 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 not a grudge-keeper
- is kind
- is not an evil thinker
- is not envious
- is not a fan of evil
- is not boastful
- rejoices in truth
- is not proud
- protects
- is not rude
- trusts
- is not selfish
- hopes
- is not easily angered
- 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.

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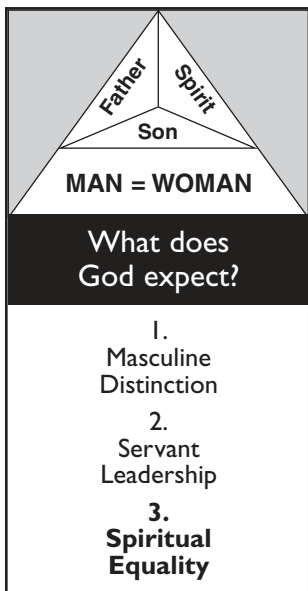
Men, are you willing to accept the challenge? You have a tremendous responsibility and great opportunities to set the pace, to be an example in your home, your church, your

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 (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 12:13). 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?

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 was not put on the earth to be ruled by woman, nor was 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 a distinction is made 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 the minorities and to 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 served only 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-

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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 men and women 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. Does that make the female inferior? No. 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.

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.

Does this say that we should no longer make any distinction based on a person's gender? No. Paul was 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 (Mt. 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.

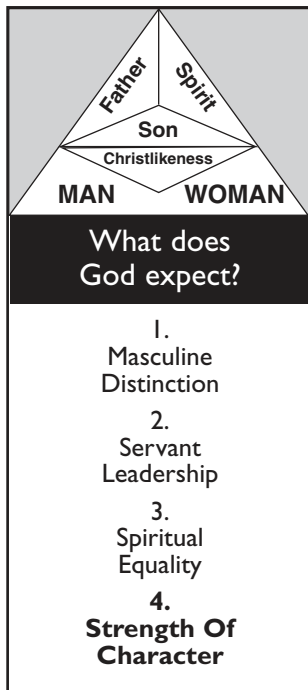
“Wait a minute,” you might say. “Isn’t the man supposed to be the leader?” Yes, but the Bible also says, “submitting to one another in the fear of God” (Eph. 5:21). That doesn’t contradict the headship of the husband, but it does mean that the man is to be self-sacrificing—loving as Christ loved us and 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?

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, “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 toward 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
in the dark.”*
D. L. Moody

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; Ti. 2:12-14; Jas. 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 Jn. 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 (Jas. 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 (Mt. 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. Sober-minded. 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 (Mt. 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 In 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 (Mk. 1:40-42).
- He spoke the truth about sin and hypocrisy (Mt. 23; Jn. 8:31-59).
- He hated sin but showed love for hurting sinners (Jn. 8:1-11).
- He took time to pray (Mt. 14:23; Mk. 14:32-42; Jn. 17).

- He refused to yield to temptation—drawing strength from the Word of God (Mt. 4).
- He spoke out for God's honor (Mt. 21:12-13).
- He followed through on His commitments (Jn. 12:23-33).
- He humbly served others (Mt. 20:28; Jn. 13:1-17; Phil. 2:1-11).
- He had His priorities straight (Mt. 5-7).
- He was forgiving (Mt. 18:21-35; Lk. 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.

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 into 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 Christlikeness 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 man's fulfillment of God's plan. 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.

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