

# Profiling Christian Masculinity<sup>1</sup>

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A biblical worldview must definitely encompass one's view of men and women. Basic beliefs about who each sex is and what each should be like greatly impacts one's own gender evaluations as well as the shaping of boys and girls, the education of young men and women, the success of marriages, the effectiveness of the church in the world, and even the stability of society. One's view of a man or a woman affects attitudes, character, and interaction with one another.

In some very key ways, men and women *are* the same but they were not created to be exactly the same: "male and female he created them" (Gen 1:27). There are not only opposing opinions over whether or not there is any significant difference between the sexes, but also over what those differences really are. Surely, Christians need a clear understanding of what distinguishes a man from a woman *according to their Creator*. The focus of this article will be devoted to understanding what *true masculinity* is and is not. The question of how a man knows whether he is a *real man* or not will be discovered from Scripture.

Imagine this topic being discussed on one of America's most prestigious college campuses. The ideas expressed would be as varied as the many strong opinions found there. One might hear, "A man should be macho and self-reliant," while another may say, "A man should be interdependent and sensitive." Others might insist, "A real man must be romantic," while still others would offer, "All boys should be raised to be good at sports in order to express their masculinity and relate to other men." Perhaps another would say, "A man's man is successful and a leader," while someone else may inter-

ject, "A respected man sees himself as an equal—a non-leader, a fifty-fifty partner." Another student could possibly declare, "A man is not a man unless he can rule his family without any questioning from them." How can there be so many opinions among supposedly learned individuals? There are at least two key reasons: the sinfulness of man and the loss of absolutes.

## Sinfulness Affects One's Concept of Masculinity

The history of the world's concept of masculinity is a sad commentary of how far man had strayed from God's original intent. It is a confusing and disappointing history. In the beginning, of course, God created the man at his best—Adam. He, being created by the perfect Creator, was the epitome of true masculinity. However, shortly after Adam's creation, his soul and body were gravely affected by his choice to sin (the Fall; Gen 3:1-8). From that point on, left to himself, man's depravity (inherent sinfulness) pushes him to stray in every aspect of life (Jer 17:9). Masculinity is just one of the areas that has been corrupted. One does not have to look far beyond the Fall to see the effects of depravity on the concept of masculinity.

Depraved ideas about what is *manly* have affected men and women negatively through the ages. In the ancient world, there was everything from the mild mistreatment of women to full-scale barbarism. In the early Greek culture, "real men" looked down on their wives as mere child bearers and housekeepers. They also did not allow them at the dinner table or in any assembly.<sup>2</sup> In the Roman culture, women were no more

than a means to bear children legally as well as a temporary fancy that could be discarded on a whim.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, men living in a matriarchal society were absorbed into their wife's family, followed the mother-in-law's or the grandmother's lead, and faded into the background.

Throughout history, some cultures have devised rather extreme ways for young men to prove their masculinity or manhood. While it is not necessarily wrong to have a visible rite of passage ceremony for young men, it has historically been a *very* bad idea for a man to have something to prove. In America, the feminist movement came on the scene at least partially in reaction to actual injustices by men against women. With the passing of time, that movement has grown into a far-reaching, immoral catalyst that has further confused and even redefined the lines of gender.

## A Loss of Absolutes Affects One's Concept of Masculinity

In more recent western history, the increasing relativism (the belief that there is no ultimate standard) and the resulting individualism ("only I know what is right for me") have had a great impact on gender concepts. This "no absolutes" mentality means that each man is left to his own "wisdom" on the subject of masculinity. That wisdom, of course, is totally subjective and may be based on one's own desires, culture, and/or educational training in the academic fields of psychology, sociology, or anthropology. There are a number of reasons why this kind of wisdom will get a person nowhere close to God's standard. First of all, man's own ideas and desires are very often selfish and self-serving. Second, culture has historically followed man's depravity. Third, American role models today basically consist of pathetic, immoral sports figures, movie stars, and rock musicians. Finally, the higher educational systems of the day are for the most part based on the study of unsaved people by unsaved people. As a result, there is a great reluctance on the part of typical Americans to make any statement about what is *truly masculine*. In fact, the earlier hypothetical college discussion might well be cut short with the postmodern declaration that each man must determine for himself what masculinity is and live within that without imposing his belief on another. This statement could very well be followed by the idea that one really should *not* be thinking in terms of masculinity but rather of genderless individualism.

It is clear from both Scripture and history that the unashamed and unchecked expression of depravity is continually on the increase, and the recognition of God's truth is on the decline (2 Tim 3:1-5). J. I. Packer sees society's decline in this way: "The truth is that because we have lost touch with God and his word we have lost the secret both of community (because sin kills neighbor-love) and of our own identity (because at the deepest level we do not know who or what we are, or

what we exist for)."<sup>4</sup>

The first step to regaining a true understanding of masculinity is to acknowledge that man's wisdom is misleading. Here is what the Bible says about personal opinion: "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death." (Prov 14:12, ESV).

Men must not follow the way that seems right to them or to society. In reality, following what seems right about masculinity is doing great damage to men's lives. Young men are floundering and grasping at wrong ways to express their manhood. Marriages are also paying the price. Even many Christian women are regularly lamenting that their husbands are either timid or violent. More men seem to be experiencing depression and abandoning their societal responsibilities during their supposed midlife crises. In the church, there seems to be a growing dearth of exemplary male leadership. Further complicating the problem for God's people is the rise of "Christian" feminism, which clearly departs from Scripture and the will of God. On a larger scale, society as a whole has experienced a great and unfortunate loss of the significance of gender. So much so that it is very acceptable in today's culture even to *deny* one's gender and try to switch to the other.

## God's Truth Will Lead the Way

Without an absolute standard, the confusion about masculinity can only worsen. There is no hope of improving people's depraved inclinations or making sense of the confusion. The *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* definition of *masculine* is certainly an accurate picture of the ambiguity that surrounds this subject in our culture:

**Masculine:** 1 a: male b: having qualities appropriate to or usually associated with a man.<sup>5</sup>

There is no clear understanding of masculinity in society because it has generally forsaken the only dependable absolute there is—i.e., God's Word. Humans need to know what God has to say about man and his masculinity. God's truth is timeless and transcultural. Furthermore, it is a completely sufficient guide for becoming the kind of men God intended (Ps 119:105; John 17:17; 2 Pet 1:3). One must, in submission and obedience, align his thinking and actions with Scripture in order to understand and live out masculinity for the right reason (God's glory).

## Basic Characteristics of Masculinity

Understanding masculinity must begin with acknowledging some very basic truths about humans that are found in

the Bible. These are characteristics that are true of both men and women. A man cannot begin to be the man God intended him to be unless he fully acknowledges who *mankind* is. God had a design in mind when he created human beings, and he created just what he intended. Those who are unwilling to acknowledge God as Creator do not have a stable and definitive beginning on which to look back. As a result, they will never be fully able to understand who they are or what they should be like. But those who believe in a perfect, good, and personal God, and who have been given a new heart by the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ can learn greatly from some basic things God has to say about people. There are at least six basic characteristics of humans, as God describes them, that have specific implications as they relate to the subject of masculinity.

1. *Man was created in God's image* (Gen 1:27). This means that he finds his identity in the person of God rather than the animals. He is rational, creative, and relational. Unlike the animals, he has an eternal soul that needs to find its meaning and rest in God alone. Being creative and relational are part of being made in the image of God. Unfortunately, many men try to escape these aspects of their manhood, claiming that they are feminine qualities. Furthermore, if a man sees himself as a mere animal, he can excuse all sorts of behavior and uncontrolled passions.

2. *Man was created a worshiper* (John 4:23; Rom 1:21-25). Because man has been given a soul, he is by nature a *religious* being. He *will* worship something. Though he was given a soul for the purpose of worshiping God alone, the depravity that was discussed earlier pulls him in other directions. Until he bows the knee to Jesus Christ, he might worship himself, another person, money, success and its accompaniments, false gods, or a myriad of other things. Worshiping something or someone other than God is not what man was created to do. This kind of worship is neither manly nor true. Conversely, it is manly to seek and passionately love the God of the Bible.

3. *Since the Fall, man has been a sinner by nature* (Rom 3:12). Man was not initially created this way, but he *was* created with the ability to choose rationally. Soon, he embraced this basic characteristic with his choice to sin against the one and only prohibition that God gave him. Therefore, a man must be aware, contrary to what his pride or his society may tell him, that he can be very wrong. At the core of his very being there is an innate sinfulness and imperfection that will be with him throughout his life. This being true, it is certainly *manly* to admit when he is wrong in his thinking or actions, rather than try to hide it or deny it. It should also be mentioned at this point that, as a result of the Fall, a struggle has continued through the ages concerning the God-given roles of men and women. Scripture implies that the woman would “desire” to rule over the man. Put this together with man’s sinful inclinations to dominate or shirk responsibility and the outcome is great dif-

ficulty, conflict, and a distortion of God’s wonderful plan (Gen 3:16). It is only through redemption and an appropriation of God’s daily grace that one can overcome these effects of sin.

4. *Man is in need of God's saving grace* (John 3:16; Titus 3:4-7). It stands to reason that when God gave Eve to Adam, making it clear that he was to love and lead her, he would also give him a protective or salvific inclination. Through the ages men have protected and come to the rescue of women, children, societies, and even ideologies. However, man must realize that he also needs a savior and protector. Admitting his utter helplessness and need of salvation is a doubly humbling experience for a courageous man. And yet, any man who hopes ever to be a real man must acknowledge his need to be saved by God. He must be rescued from himself, the evil one (Satan), and the ensuing judgment for his sin by bowing the knee to Jesus Christ as the only Lord and Savior of his life.

5. *Man was not created self-sufficient but needing God and others* (John 15:5; Gal 5:14; Heb 4:16). By virtue of being a created being and a fallen individual, it is obvious that man needs God for even more than salvation. He needs God’s enduring strength, guidance, and wisdom. It is also obvious that God made him to need others by statements like, “It is not good for man to be alone” and “I will make him a helper fit for him” (Gen 2:18). John MacArthur writes, “In marriage men cannot be faithful to the Lord unless they are willingly and lovingly dependent on the wife He has given them.”<sup>6</sup> The over thirty commands in the Bible pertaining to “one another” reinforce this truism.

6. *Man was created to be different from woman* (Gen 1:27). The fact that God created man unlike woman in appearance is a clear indication that they are different in other ways as well. In his wisdom, God has fashioned them uniquely inside and out, perfectly corresponding to how they are to *be* different and *function* differently. There was no mistaking God’s desire for an outward difference. Adam and Eve’s pre-covering existence in the garden reveals that God obviously intended for men and women to look different to themselves and others. There is subsequent Scripture clearly supporting this fact (Deut 22:5; 1 Cor 11:14-15). A timeless principle that can be observed from all of this is that God wants individuals clearly to express their own given gender. Today, there is less difference in how men and women look, and even act, than ever before in America’s history. Though culture is pushing for unisex everything, men and women need be careful that they are distinguishably different from the opposite sex in appearance, mannerisms, and cultural concepts of appropriate gender behavior. Some men might need help to recognize and change effeminate habits, which they have inadvertently developed.

The fact that men and women were created with differences does not mean that they are different in every way. Both genders are equal personally and spiritually. No one should

argue that women should not be treated with equal appreciation and dignity. Nor should their input or opinions be discounted on either societal or familial levels. Furthermore, the sexes are alike in that they are both able to communicate and even able to cling together as one in marriage. But, many want to overlook the existence of the comprehensive difference between a man's and woman's being. By the 1960s and 1970s, the feminist movement took a decidedly new path that has led to a current, full-blown assault on any traditional concept of what constitutes a man or woman.<sup>7</sup> Many proponents go as far as Shulamith Firestone, who pushes for the total obliteration of gender differences.<sup>8</sup> Also, she is not alone in her preference of artificial procreation and the full dismantling of the family, substituting a group setting for the upbringing of children.<sup>9</sup> Werner Neuer accurately writes in his book, *Man and Woman*, "The feminist movement tends to confuse a real equality of men and women with their being identical."<sup>10</sup>

Many are not aware (or perhaps want to overlook) that the differences in God's design for the sexes reaches far beyond outward appearance. These dissimilarities are amazingly and beautifully consistent with the roles he has set forth in Scripture. Neuer skillfully joins both of these ideas by compiling scientific evidence and research that reveal the extensive physiological and personal differences between men and women. Such differences include: bone structure and constitution, muscles, skin, sexual organs and function, blood constitution, bodily liquids, hormones, chromosomal cell structure, cognitive function, abilities, outlooks, and relations. Men and women are distinctly different beings.<sup>11</sup> With this great plan of God in mind John Benton writes, "In particular, gender difference is not fortuitous. It is not a product of chance. It is not something unreasonable and unintelligible. It is not something to be regretted, or to fight against. It is to be gratefully accepted as the good gift of a loving God."<sup>12</sup>

A man cannot ever be a man in the truest sense unless he, in his mind, attests to these basic realities and gives his very life over to them and the One who created him. Masculinity then is a matter of the mind. A man can go to the gym to work out and even gain the physique of Charles Atlas or Arnold Schwarznegger but this will not make him any more masculine. It is important to keep in mind A. B. Bruce's statement, "What tells ultimately is, not what is without a man, but what is within."<sup>13</sup>

was unmanly. The following is a chart of Christ-like character qualities (attitudes and actions) that will help explain authentic manhood more specifically.

## Characteristics of the Perfect Man—Jesus

Jesus, the God-Man, is portrayed in the Scriptures as the only perfect man (1 Pet 2:21-22). This being so, he is the perfect picture of what one should strive to be as a man. Christ is the pristine example of masculinity in every way (1 John 2:6). Surely, no one would say that any quality he possessed

## Qualities of the Perfect Man as Seen in Christ

ATTITUDES	ACTIONS	REFERENCES
<b>Eternal Mindset</b>	Did the will and work of the Father Not working towards his own success/desires	John 4:34; 5:30; 8:28-29
	Was filled with the Spirit (Word) Not the world's wisdom/ways	Luke 4:1, 14
	Gave the gospel to others Not temporary pleasures or relief	Mark 1:14-15; John 3-4
	Lived a holy, obedient life Not sinful	1 Pet 2:22; Phil 2:8
<b>Love/ Understanding</b>	Sought to meet needs of others Not uncaring/self-focused	Matt 4:23; Luke 4:18-21
	Sacrificed self and own desires Not self-preserving/selfish	Luke 22:42; Phil 2:6-8
	Was gentle whenever possible Not harsh/demanding	Matt 11:29; John 21:15-19
<b>Zeal/Courage/ Confidence</b> (because of God and His promises)	Led the disciples and others Not a follower when he shouldn't be	John 6:2
	Showed initiative when He should have Not waiting for someone else	Mark 6:34-44; Luke 6:12-16
	Confronted when necessary Not a compromiser/man-pleaser	Matt 23:1-36; Mark 11:15-18
	Was decisive according to God's revealed will Not wishy-washy or afraid	Matt 4:1-11; Mark 8:31-38
<b>Conscientiousness</b>	Fulfilled responsibilities Not irresponsible	John 17:4; 19:30
	Was diligent Not lazy or a quitter	John 5:17; Heb 12:2-3
<b>Humility</b>	Served and listened to others in His leadership Not proudly lording it over others	John 13:12-17; 6:5-10
	Glorified another (the Father) Not greedy for attention or recognition	John 8:50, 54; 17:1,4

God's will for men is to put on Christlikeness (Rom 13:14). One cannot be a *real man* unless he is increasing in Christ's qualities. Men should pray about them regularly and seek to emulate them in daily living (2 Pet 3:18).

### Characteristics Drawn from the Qualifications of Male Leadership in the Church

More insight can be gained into God's expectations about masculinity by examining what God has said concerning male leadership in the church. In the Scriptures, we find two very precise lists of positive and negative qualities by

which leaders are to be measured: 1 Tim 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9. Although Paul, in these passages, correlates this set of characteristics with church leadership, these qualities (except for “able to teach” and “not . . . a recent convert”) are addressed elsewhere in God’s Word for the non-elder Christian as well. The instructions were given to ensure that male leaders were habitually the kind of men that God wants *every* man to be. Because a leader is always some sort of example (good or bad), it is very important to God that every male leader reflect Christ (1 Cor 11:1). Therefore, since these two passages were specifically given by God to men, the basic instructions found in them are profitable for understanding what is truly masculine and what is not. It could even be said, from God’s perspective, that these commands and prohibitions are prerequisites to genuine *manliness*. A godly man must be:

- **Above reproach:** blameless, not able to be accused, having a good reputation.
- **The husband of one wife:** a pattern of singular affection for one’s wife.
- **Sober-minded:** temperate, alert, clear-headed, watchful.
- **Self-controlled:** in control of thinking, emotions and passions; prudent, thoughtful, decent.
- **Respectable:** orderly in time, responsibilities, and behavior; not chaotic.
- **Hospitable:** welcoming to others, loves strangers, serves others.
- **Gentle:** considerate, gracious, patient, kind in dealing with others.
- **He must manage his own household well:** governs, presides over, has authority over; is faithful to lead spiritually, cares for, protects; has children who are not riotous or insubordinate; oversees and/or fulfills affairs of the home.
- **A lover of good:** loves virtue and good men.
- **Upright:** just; upholds righteousness.
- **Holy:** pure, devout.
- **Disciplined:** persevering, steadfast, restrained.
- **Holding firm to the Word:** learns and upholds sound doctrine; holds to it tightly; able to exhort and convict

In contrast, a godly man must not be:

- **A drunkard:** not addicted to strong drink.
- **Violent:** violent, quickly angered, explosively angry.
- **Quarrelsome:** contentious, argumentative.
- **A lover of money:** covetous, greedy for money, materialistic.
- **Arrogant (self-willed) rather than a steward:** pushing his own ideas, desires, goals or gain.
- **Quick tempered:** inclined to anger habitually; quickly angry.

Examining the qualities for godly spiritual leaders helps us further refine what it means to be a man. When defining masculinity, it is futile to concern oneself with qualities that should be distinctly different from feminine counterparts, unless one has first thought about the more foundational traits of manhood. Hopefully, it has been made clear that one cannot be truly masculine by centering on only a few distinctive characteristics. Up to this point, the basic characteristics of man, the fundamental character of the perfect man (Christ), and some primary qualities that are specifically directed toward men have been discussed. That being accomplished, attention is now directed to those qualities directly related to man’s unique, God-given role.

## Role Characteristics in Which a Man Must Excel

By exploring God’s intention concerning gender roles it becomes clear how a man should differ from a woman. Herein lies the key to distinctive masculine qualities. After understanding from Scripture what God intended for a man to *do*, then it is much easier to determine what characteristics must be emphasized. In this process, it will become obvious that women may also be expected to possess these qualities to some extent or in certain situations. But, a man must excel in them in order to fulfill his major roles. This concept is very similar to spiritual gifts. For example, all Christians are commanded to evangelize and to be hospitable. However, some have been given the gift of evangelism or hospitality, and therefore will *excel* in that ability so that they might fulfill their role in the body of Christ. A strong and godly man will be characterized by the qualities that are necessary to fulfill the roles that God has given to him.

### Leader

When God placed man in the garden, he gave him specific instructions. Adam was to care for the garden—i.e., to oversee it (Gen 2:15). He was given charge of it even though God could have done a much better job himself. Adam also had dominion over and named the animals (Gen 1:28-30; 2:20). He was given these tasks before Eve came on the scene. When God placed Eve in the garden, he made it clear that she was to assist Adam in the work he had been given to do. She was to be his helper (Gen 2:18). God didn’t say, “Here Eve, you take this half and Adam, you take the other.” Adam was to lead; Eve was to help and follow.

Later in Scripture, husbands are clearly instructed to be the head in the marriage relationship, and women are commanded to submit to the husband’s leadership and respect his God-given position (Eph 5:22-33). It was to men that God

gave leadership positions in the nation of Israel.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, it is to men that God gave the position of leadership in the church (1 Tim 2:11-12). It is obvious that God has given man the role of ultimate leadership.

This says absolutely nothing (positive or negative) about a woman's capabilities or personal equality. God simply chose to give this role to the man. In any endeavor, there must be an ultimate leader. God chose and equipped Adam for this role. If leadership is a God-given role for men, then each man needs to find the way to lead. For some men, who did not develop leadership skills while growing up or who have habitually shied away from leadership, it will be necessary to develop leadership skills over time rather than incompetently try to lead in a full or total capacity. Granted, some men are gifted by God with exceptional leadership abilities to be leaders of leaders. If all Christian men were taught that it is *manly* to initiate and lead, there would not be such a lack of male leadership in the home and the church. In regard to teaching young boys leadership, Douglas Wilson writes,

Our boys need to learn humility, and they also need to learn boldness and courage. The only way to accomplish this balance is through a grasp of who God is. Because we have ceased teaching that God is our Father, with the attributes of divine Father, we have lost an understanding of imitative masculinity. Because of this, our boys veer into one of two ditches. Either they embrace humility without boldness which in boys is effeminate, or they embrace boldness without humility which is destructive.<sup>15</sup>

The qualities that one must strongly possess in order to carry out a leadership role are wisdom (by a full knowledge of the Word of God, facts, and persons, and then thoughtful application of biblical principles), initiative, decisiveness, humility, courage, and personal involvement.<sup>16</sup>

### Lover (the 1 Corinthians 13 Type)

At creation, Adam and Eve were given to each other as marital companions. This intention for marriage is further made clear later in Scripture (Mal 2:14). Certainly, love is involved in this kind of companionship. In the New Testament, husbands are singled out as needing to exemplify the kind of sacrificial love that Christ has for the Church (Eph 5:25). They are also specifically commanded to live with their wives "in an understanding way" (1 Pet 3:7). Clearly, husbands are to excel in this love. Also, Christ commanded the men he left behind to love and serve one another (John 13:15). John Benton writes:

There is need for repentance. Perhaps single men have used the strength they have to serve them-

selves rather than other people. Perhaps husbands have used their strength to dominate their wives and children. We need to learn to come back to God, back to his Word of Scripture, and learn again to walk with him. To be a loving sacrificial servant of others, as Jesus Christ was, is not to be namby-pamby. It is to be a true man.<sup>17</sup>

A true man, then, will excel in qualities that show love, such as giving, gentleness, consideration, kindness, servanthood, and self-sacrifice.

### Protector

A natural outworking of the roles of leader and lover produces the role of protector. After the Fall, it certainly became part of Adam's job description to protect his wife. As the supreme leader and lover, God has made a commitment to protect believers (2 Thess 3:3). A man must make the same commitment to protect his wife, his children, and his church. Though God in his love does not always protect people from the consequences of their sin or every evil in the world, his protection definitely involves both *physical* and *spiritual* aspects, just like a husband's love. However, it must be remembered that only the all-knowing and all-wise God has the right and the wisdom to allow evil purposefully to befall another.

In the Old Testament, men made up the army to protect cities, women, and children (Num 1:2-3). In 1 Corinthians 16:13, God commanded the brethren of the Corinthian church to protect the faith (the Word of God) with the words "act like men"—i.e., be courageous! Christ certainly protected the disciples he loved and led (John 17:12). He also expected all the church leaders to protect the body of Christ (Acts 20:28). Being manly involves protecting. The qualities a man must clearly possess before he will be a good protector are *courage*, *boldness*, *strength* (both physical and spiritual) and *watchfulness*.

### Provider

The roles of leader and lover automatically encompass the idea of *provision*. God, as the one who leads and loves, also provides for every true need (Ps 34:10). Husbands and fathers are specifically given the role of provider in the New Testament (Eph 5:29; 1 Tim 5:8). Leaders of God's people are given this role as well (Ezek 34:1-4; John 21:15-17). Men should seek to meet the true needs of those whom God has placed in their care, whether physical or spiritual. In order to fulfill this role, a truly masculine man will abound in the characteristics of *diligence* (hard work), *personal involvement*,

and *servanthood*. He will also do all that he can to acquire a *good job* that allows him to care well for those he must love and lead.

A man will be better able to fulfill God's intention as he puts off sin and grows in Christlikeness. There are many sins that will keep a man from possessing these qualities and fulfilling his God-given roles. These sins include fear of man, self-pity, love of pleasure, pride, laziness, selfishness, idolatry (e.g., work, money, possessions, success, one's wife), and a lack of trust in God and his truth. A real man will, by God's grace, strive to put off these and any other sin that stands in the way of his masculinity. He will seek God's help to implement all of these godly (Christlike) qualities into his daily affairs. John Piper writes, "At the heart of mature masculinity is a sense of benevolent responsibility to lead, provide for and protect women in ways appropriate to a man's differing relationships."<sup>18</sup>

The extent to which these role qualities are present in a man's life determines how well he displays these distinguishing aspects of his masculinity. He should surpass his counterpart in them. Furthermore, he has the freedom to exercise them with both of the genders. Women, on the other hand, may *at times* need to assume these roles with children, other women and men outside the realm of the church; but she will find true identity and satisfaction if she is *more* characterized by the role of assistant or helper, so far as marriage and spiritual instruction are concerned (Gen 2:18; 1 Tim 2:12).

Furthermore, a woman in the work place must be able to deal with a male employee under her in a way that preserves his masculinity and her femininity. Though many women have found a certain prideful satisfaction in leading, they are surely missing a far more pure and holy satisfaction that is found only in fulfilling the roles that God has given her.

Similarly, if men were to be more consistent in living out these role qualities they would not be inclined to strive toward counterfeit expressions of masculinity such as machismo or authoritarianism. Men of this persuasion have fallen into one kind of unbiblical extreme. The other extreme, of course, is that of passive or effeminate men. If a man overly focuses on any one of the characteristics described in this chapter, he will cause him to err toward one extreme or the other—to be unmanly and sin in his duties and relationships. Instead, a man must fully embrace God's superior design for the sexes. About this, John MacArthur observes, "They are perfect complements – one the head, leader, and provider; the other the helper, supporter, and companion."<sup>19</sup>

## The Bottom Line

So what does it mean to be a *real man*? It means not to trust in one's own judgment about masculinity but, instead

to cling to the fact there *are* absolutes outlined in the Word of God. It means to understand the basic characteristics of mankind and recognize that there should be a difference between the genders. It means possessing saving faith in and a likeness to the person of Christ. It means striving to emulate the qualities that God outlines for godly men in the church. Finally, it means to capitalize on the specific qualities that are needed to fulfill our God-given roles. In short, it means to live out a biblical worldview of masculinity.

Boys need to be taught the characteristics of biblical manhood by parents and other spiritual teachers. Furthermore, these are qualities that should be presented to the male population in all Bible-believing churches and institutions. Christian men need to take personal responsibility to study Scriptural teaching in this area, communicating with other godly men about it, and depending on God's grace to change.

Though many of the masculine qualities discussed in this article were related to the husband, Scripture also presents them as pertaining to those single men who are God's servants. Therefore, these truths are for each and every man, single or married, young or old. All men should fervently seek to pursue a true and life-changing understanding of the basic characteristics of man and Christ, take to heart specific biblical charges to men, and look for opportunities to lead, love, protect, and provide. Then, he will be a *real man*.

**Masculinity:** The possession and pursuit of redeemed perspective and character, enhanced by qualities consistent with the distinguishing male roles of leading, loving, protecting, and providing—all for the glory of God. ■

<sup>1</sup>This article was originally published as, and has been slightly adapted from, chapter eight ("Profiling Christian Masculinity") in *Think Biblically! Recovering A Christian Worldview*, ed. John MacArthur (Wheaton: Crossway, 2003) 155-168. Used by permission of Crossway Books, a division of Good News Publishers, Wheaton, IL 60187, [www.crosswaybooks.org](http://www.crosswaybooks.org).

<sup>2</sup>Demosthenes, "Speeches 51-61" <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus:text:1000.01.0080&query=section53>.

<sup>3</sup>Jo-Ann Shelton, *As The Romans Did* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) 37-55.

<sup>4</sup>J. I. Packer, *Knowing Man* (Westchester, IL: Cornerstone, 1978) 43.

<sup>5</sup>*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (1980), s.v. "masculine."

<sup>6</sup>John MacArthur, Jr., *Different By Design* (Wheaton: Victor, 1994) 44.

<sup>7</sup>Werner Neuer, *Man & Woman* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991)

15-16.

<sup>8</sup>Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (New York: Bantam, 1971) 1-13.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid. 223, 261-62.

<sup>10</sup>Neuer, *Man & Woman* 25, referencing Werner P. Lersch, *Vom Wesen der Geschlechter* (München-Basel: n.p., 1968) 126.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid. 26-51.

<sup>12</sup>John Benton, *Gender Questions* (London: Evangelical Press, 2000) 18.

<sup>13</sup>A.B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1971) 38.

<sup>14</sup>John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2002) 384-85.

<sup>15</sup>Douglas Wilson, *Future Men* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2001) 49.

<sup>16</sup>Stuart W. Scott, *The Exemplary Husband* (Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 2000) 117-42.

<sup>17</sup>Benton, *Gender Questions* 43.

<sup>18</sup>John Piper, *What's the Difference?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1990) 22.

<sup>19</sup>MacArthur, *Different by Design* 44.