

Scripture: Philippians 2:1—11

Big Idea: The scriptural characteristics of a *real* man!

Introduction

It is clear that we live in a sinful, fallen world. Depravity, wickedness are not only on the increase, but in some cases celebrated, and at all times widely reported-on. Conversely, that which is Godly is reviled, repressed and ridiculed. J.I. Packer sees society's decline 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).”¹

In this warped world, we do well to ask “What does it mean to be a *real* man?” Were you to ask various people, you would undoubtedly get a variety of results:

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, ... “A man’s man is successful and a leader,” ...”²

Why so many points of view? There are two answers. One, sinfulness has affected our perception of reality, and so what makes a truly godly man has been lost. In the beginning, God created man at his best: Adam. Because Adam was created by the perfect Creator, he was the epitome of masculinity. However, after the Fall, his body, mind and spirit were corrupted by sin. Since that day, our inherent sinfulness and depravity has meant that all our attempts to be “manly” have been at best, a caricature and pale shadow of authentic manhood.

Secondly, we have abandoned God’s Word in our attempts to define what makes a man *masculine*, or a woman *feminine*. We have adopted relativism, the wisdom that says “Only I know what is right for me!” There are many problems with this subjective approach:

First of all, man’s own ideas and desires are ... 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.³

Trying to define what is a godly man by examining ungodly men makes about as much sense as trying to build an airplane from using the blueprint from a house! We need to accept that our own efforts to define true masculinity are futile: “*There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.*” (Prov 14:12, ESV).

Where to start?

So, if where do we turn to find out how to be true men, masculine according to the original design? We need to turn to the objective, eternal source: God’s Word. We need to know and recover what God has to say about man and masculinity, and we will find that in His word. His word is timeless and trans-cultural; as Paul writes:

1 J. I. Packer, *Knowing Man* (Westchester, IL: Cornerstone, 1978) p. 43. Quoted in: *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (2004), Vol. 9(2), p. 11.

2 Scott, Stuart W., “*Profiling Christian Masculinity.*” *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, Volume 9:2 (2004), p. 9.

3 Scott, Stuart W., *Ibid*, p. 11.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2Ti 3:16–17).

Peter agrees:

His divine power has given us **everything we need** for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us **his very great and precious promises**, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. (2Pe 1:3–4)

Some biblical basics

Understanding masculinity begins when we accept some basic *biblical* truths. Our world doesn't want to face the facts, but God's Word alone gives us the objective truth about humanity.

1. Man was created in God's image (Gen 1:27).

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27 NIV84)

This means that we find our identity in the person of God rather than the animals. We are not the accident of millions of years of evolution! We rather bear the image of God:

Being in God's image means that humans share, though imperfectly and finitely, in God's nature, that is, in His communicable attributes (life, personality, truth, wisdom, love, holiness, justice), and so have the capacity for spiritual fellowship with Him.⁴

Being creative and relational are part of being made in the image of God. Unfortunately, many men despise 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 to worship (John 4:23; Rom 1:21–25).

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. (John 4:23 NIV84)

By nature, man is *religious*; he *will* worship something. Though originally we were created to worship God alone, sin has warped our desire. Paul talks about how far we have fallen:

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. (Romans 1:21–23 NIV84)

But until we bow our knee to Jesus Christ, we will worship any number of things. A *real* man seeks and passionately loves the God of the Bible.

3. Since the Fall, man has been a sinner by nature (Psa 14:2–3).

The LORD looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one. (Psalm 14:2–3 NIV84)

Man was created with the ability to choose, but sadly we soon chose to do things our way. We are told "never admit that you are wrong", but a *real* man knows, contrary to what his

⁴ Ross, A. P. (1985). *Genesis*. (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Eds.) *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 29). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

pride or society may say, that we can be very wrong. At the core of our being there is an innate sinfulness which Paul calls our “flesh” or our “sin-nature” that constantly entices us to sin:

Those who live according to the **sinful nature** have their minds set on what that **nature** desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of **sinful man** is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the **sinful mind** is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the **sinful nature** cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the **sinful nature** but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. (Romans 8:5–9 NIV84)

A real man acknowledges his sinful nature, and relies not on his own strength or ingenuity to be delivered from his passions and inclinations, but to Christ! Paul writes:

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in the **sinful nature** a slave to the law of sin. (Romans 7:24–25 NIV84)

A real man is not a slave to his sin and passion, but a slave to Christ.

4. Man is in need of God’s saving grace (John 3:16; Titus 3:4–6).

... when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior... (Titus 3:4–6 NIV84)

Every man must realize that he needs a savior. Admitting our utter helplessness and need of salvation is a doubly humbling experience for any man. And yet, a *real* man acknowledges his need to be saved through Christ alone. As Peter declares:

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12 NIV84)

5. Man was created to be in relationship to God and others (John 15:5; Gal 5:14).

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.(John 15:5 NIV84)

As God’s fallen creatures, we need God for more than salvation; we need him for *life*! As this verse from John affirms, we need to be as vitally connected to God (through Jesus) as a branch is to a tree. If you cut off the branch, it dies, and it also loses its identity and its purpose! When we are cut-off from God, we are not who we were meant or designed to be.

It is also obvious that God made man 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). Paul writes:

After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— for we are members of his body. (Ephesians 5:29–30 NIV84)

The church is likened to a body, also to a family; it is meant to be a community, a place of *relationship*. Did you know that there are over thirty commands in the Bible pertaining to “one another?” Think also of marriage, that picture of Christ’s love for his church, which demands commitment and interdependence. 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.” A real man is in vital relationship to Jesus, but also his church, and his wife (if married).

6. Man was created to be different from woman (Gen 1:27).

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.(Genesis 1:27 NIV84)

In God’s eyes, men and women are equal personally and spiritually; but that doesn’t mean that we are the same! The fact that God created man *unlike* woman in appearance is a clear indication that we are different in other ways as well. In his wisdom, God has fashioned us uniquely *inside and out*, and we should rejoice in the gender god gave us! 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.”⁵

God clearly wants men and women to express their own given gender. Our culture is pushing for the elimination of gender, but men *and* women of God need to be careful that they are distinguishably different from the opposite sex in every way. ⁶

Characteristics of the Perfect Man – Jesus Christ

It is God’s will is for men to put on *Christlikeness*:

... clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature. (Romans 13:14 NIV84)

A *real man* is increasing in the same qualities that we see in Christ. The Apostle Peter says that we should “*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (2Pe 3:18). The good news is, we do not do this on our own! When we turn our lives over to Christ and acknowledge Him as Lord and Saviour, he sends his Spirit to dwell within us, so that the Spirit can, with our cooperation, fulfill God’s desire for each one of us:

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (Romans 8:29 NIV84)

You have in your bulletins a handout that I hope you will read and use, listing some of the manly traits of the perfect man, Jesus Christ. He is our model and example, the template upon which to build our lives, and become the men God wants us to be. Let’s note:

1. Jesus’ had a servant’s attitude (John 4:34; 5:30)

“My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.” (John 4:34)

“... I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.” (John 5:30)

The reason Christ was born as a human baby was to fulfil God’s plan and purpose to save us; Jesus attitude was one of submission to the father. He didn’t spend his life accumulating wealth or toys or wasting time; He had a servant’s heart, and as Philipians says:

5 John Benton, *Gender Questions* (London: Evangelical Press, 2000) p. 18 quoted in *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, Volume 9:2 (2004), p. 13.

6 Points 1 through 6 found in: Scott, Stuart W., “*Profiling Christian Masculinity*.” *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, Volume 9:2 (2004), p. 12.

[He] made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. (Philippians 2:7)

2. Jesus' was humble (Php 2:8)

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross! (Philippians 2:8)

Jesus emptied himself of all his godly prerogatives and went through the humiliation of becoming human, all for our sake. He wasn't concerned about his reputation because he knew who he was, and why he was on earth. As if becoming human wasn't humbling enough, Jesus also was willing to go to the cross, where he received our punishment.

Jesus is the ultimate example of a real man who was not too proud to serve others and serve God, content to leave his reputation in God's hands.

3. Jesus was a lover (John 15:13)

Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:13)

Jesus took after his Father, who "so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son" (John 3:16). He preached and taught about the Kingdom, living a life that revealed the heart of God; in short, Jesus showed love. He touched the unclean, hung-out with the marginalized, and he died on the cross for us. Jesus showed love; it wasn't about what he *felt*, but about his actions. A *real* man loves through *agape* love not through *romantic* love.

4. Jesus was courageous (John 15:13)

As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. (Luke 9:51)

Jesus knew His Father's will and did it even though he knew the cost; that takes a courage that few men have today. Courage is not mountain climbing or skydiving or thrill seeking, but a long steady obedience. He confronted when and where he needed to without being offensive, and he was confident without being overbearing or self-absorbed. In a society where men are praised for ruthlessness, machismo and attention seeking, we need the example of Jesus' steadfast courage and selfless service to others.

Conclusion

We haven't the time to elaborate on the many ways in which Jesus is and should be the prime role model for true masculinity, but suffice to say that He call us to emulate him:

Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. (John 13:14–15 NIV84)

Jesus is the perfect man, and the perfect example for modern men, who badly need a role model in order to achieve authentic masculinity. It is never a bad idea to follow the example of godly men (we all need mentors, as Paul offered himself to Timothy), but ultimately the attitude and approach to life of Jesus Christ must serve as the ultimate example. If it has been awhile since you read the Gospels to see how Jesus lived, I urge you to begin today! Can there be a better day to rediscover the kind of men God wants us to be?

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