

Prove Yourself A Man!

Manhood in the Church

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Why does Christianity does not attract more men? Especially apparent is the absence of men in their twenties and thirties who focus so much on their careers and entertainment that they neglect proper reverence of the great and eternal Creator God.

We know that it is God who calls people into His church, but why is He not calling more men? And if He is calling men, why are they not more interested? Why do so many Christian men seem so emasculated and why are so many bold, worldly men not interested in what Christianity has to offer? Is it because it seems effeminate or merely just another woman's social club?

To begin to find the answer to these questions, let us take a look at what is happening in society in mainstream Christianity, and see what parallels we might find to the scarcity of men in the mainstream churches that may shed some light on the world's influence on God's true church.

I would like to quote from an article that appeared in the Washington Post's Religion News Service in 2006, written by Kristen Campbell and Adelle Banks. The article is entitled, "The Empty Pews: Where Did All the Men Go?" Remember this was written by two women who have observed the condition and problems of mainstream Christianity in America and their research led them to David Murrow's revealing book on the subject: *Why Men Hate Going to Church*.

Now I do not agree with everything they say, however they paint a clear picture of the male reaction to feminized mainstream Christianity. It gives us some food for thought and their final conclusion actually nails the problem right on the head.

Let me read from the article here: "Men do not need to be pirates in the pews. Then again, the presence of such swashbucklers might not be the worst thing to happen to a Sunday morning. So goes the thinking of David Murrow."

"We do not have to have hand-to-hand combat during the worship service to get men there," Murrow said. "We just have to start speaking their language, use the metaphors they understand, and create an environment that feels masculine to them."

Today's churches, Murrow argued, just are not cutting it, he says. "My background is in

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marketing and advertising. One day I was sitting in church and all of a sudden it dawned on me that the target audience of almost everything about church culture was a 50 to 55 year-old woman," said Murrow, a Presbyterian elder who is now a member of a nondenominational congregation in Anchorage.

The gender gap is not a distinctly American one but it is a Christian one, according to Murrow. The theology and practices of Judaism, Buddhism, and Islam offer "uniquely masculine" experiences for men, he said. "Every Muslim man knows that he is locked in a great battle between good and evil, and although that was a prevalent teaching in Christianity until about 100 years ago, today it is primarily about having a relationship with a man who loves you unconditionally," Murrow said.

"And if that is the punch line of the Gospel, then you are going to have a lot more women than men taking you up on your offer because women are interested in a personal relationship with a man who loves you unconditionally. Men, generally, are not."

Now keep in mind that this is taking about mainstream Christian churches. Continuing on with the quote here: "Concern about the perceived feminization of Christianity and the subsequent backlash is nothing new. In the middle of the 19th century, two-thirds of church members in New England were women," said Bret E. Carroll, professor of history at California State University.

Portrayals of Jesus around that time depicted a doe-eyed savior with long, flowing hair and white robes. Then, around the 1870s and 1880s, came a growing emphasis on making religion attractive to men. The movement known as "muscular Christianity," extolled manliness and had its heyday from 1880 to 1920, according to Clifford Putney, author of the book, *Muscular Christianity*.

Around the same time, fraternal orders (such things as the Lions Club, Shriners, Knights of Columbus, etc.) grew exponentially among the urban middle classes, according to an online article by Mark C. Carnes, author of *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America*. "Not only did the groups provide men with opportunities to cultivate business connections," Carnes writes, "but they appealed to some who found satisfaction in the exotic rituals, which provided a religious experience antithetical to liberal Protestantism and a masculine 'family' vastly different from the one in which most members had been raised."

Now fast forward to the late 20th century, when Promise Keepers experienced enormous, if somewhat fleeting, popularity. Determining the lasting influence of this or

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any other movement in men's spiritual lives proves difficult. But the Rev. Chip Hale, pastor of Spanish Fort United Methodist Church in Spanish Fort, Alabama, said he believes real strides have been made with Promise Keepers and other men's movements. Mission trips and hurricane relief work have also helped to make faith become real for some.

"These guys have really come out because it is something they can do," Hale said. "They feel like they have made a contribution. I think men like to do things that they feel comfortable doing. Yet come Sunday morning, we are going to sing love songs to Jesus and there is going to be fresh flowers on the altar and quilted banners on the walls," Murrow said.

"Men aren't the only ones alienated by such an environment." According to Murrow, "young people aren't that keen on it either. Both groups are challenge-oriented and appreciate risk, adventure, variety, pleasure and reward, values that some churches ignore or vilify."

Here is the very insightful conclusion that I want you to take notice of, both the article and the book.

"Churches have to help men and women use their gifts, not just fit them into old religious molds," Murrow said. "Churches ripping women off by making the church so much about nurturing and caring and relationships, and they are missing that component that they need to understand how to do this, which means making sure church doctrine is based on truth, not on traditions."

Now of course the church is about nurturing, caring, and relationships. However men and women can not understand how to properly apply these essential gifts if that is all that is taught and emphasized because without true doctrine we are like a ship without a rudder.

Members of God's church must understand that Sabbath services are not a time for entertainment. If you are coming to church to be amused, you are here for the wrong reason. Members who comprehend this truth are less likely to complain about the preaching techniques and skills of the speaker and are more inclined to learn what they can from the hard work put into the preparation by the speaker about how to live God's way of life more completely and perfectly. This comes by the hearing of the true Word of God, not by learning false traditions of men.

Now Jesus Christ warned of such errors when the Pharisees and teachers of religious

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law asked Him, “why don’t Your disciples follow old age tradition?”

Mark 7:6-9 (NLT) Jesus replied, “You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you, for he wrote, ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship is a farce, for they teach man-made ideas as commands from God.’ For you ignore God’s law and substitute your own tradition.” Then he said, “You skillfully sidestep God’s law in order to hold on to your own tradition.

This tradition refers to the humanly-reasoned teachings which have been handed down without inspiration by God, by professing Christianity theologians, and which rest solely on human authority.

Part of the reason the seats in mainstream churches are substantially empty of men is that they tend to emasculate men with their traditional teachings. Anyone who has read the Bible knows that God did not send lace-hankie men to preach the gospel, build the church, and witness to the world back in the days of the early church, and we can be absolutely sure that He is not doing that today either.

The greater churches of God must stop emasculating maleness in men by pressuring them to be tolerant and silent about sin in the world, the nation, and the community, and especially in the church. In fact, it must encourage men in the church to be men, not women or “girly boys.”

In his book, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, part of David Murrow's premise is that men do not feel welcome in churches anymore because mainstream Christianity has been feminized. Remember we are comparing the world (mainstream Christianity churches) and we are seeing how they have affected God's true churches.

Murrow relates several important statics in his book. The typical U. S. congregation draws an adult crowd that is 61% female and 39% male. This gender gap shows up in all age categories. On any given Sunday there are 13 million more adult women than men in America's churches. Almost 25% of married churchgoing women worship without their husbands. Midweek activities often draw 70% to 80% female participants.

Of the boys who are raised going to church, as many as 90% of them will abandon it by their twentieth birthday and many will never return. More than 90% of American men believe in God and 5 out of 6 call themselves Christians, but only 2 out of 6 actually attend church on any given Sunday. The average man accepts the reality of Jesus

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Christ, but fails to see any value in going to church.

Although these alarming statistics concern Sunday-keeping churches, they still paint a picture of the general attitude of American men toward professing Christianity. Sadly we find a similar condition in the greater churches of God which infers that the reasons are similar.

This prevalent negative attitude toward Christianity has adverse effects on families, or at least what is left of them, and it has been promoted in public schools, politics, entertainment (including sports), and disgustingly, with the death of genuine masculinity, an increasing number of boys and men are seeking to escape manhood in the sin of homosexuality.

One of the greatest manifestations of manhood is seen in the context of the family and it is one of the main testing areas of the true worth of a man. An important role for men in the Bible is that of a husband. Paul charges a two-fold obligation to husbands: they must be head of their wife, and they must love their wife. We will read here in Ephesians 5.

Ephesians 5:23-30 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.

Sometimes even godly men do not perform their role as husband adequately. If marriage is allowed to decline as it is doing in our day, then all other institutions in society will inevitably decline with it. Furthermore, whoever contributes to the decline of marriage, as many today are, sin against God. We know that Malachi says:

Malachi 2:16 “For the Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one’s garment with violence,” says the Lord of hosts. “Therefore take

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heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously." [Treacherously means: deceitfully, unfaithfully, disloyally, unfairly.]

One of the greatest examples of a bad husband and his failure is of the Israelite king Ahab. He married Jezebel, a Canaanite, and allowed her to bring Baal worship into Israel. Ahab came to the throne and under his leadership, the tribes declined further into idolatry and sin.

It was when the nation was moving into idolatry that God called His prophet to preach to the people. When God's people sinned, the Word of God, proclaimed by the servants of God, can call them back and save them from further spiritual and moral decline, if they have an ear to hear.

Ahab was such a bad husband and leader that, "Ahab did evil in the sight of the Lord, more than all who were before him. Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him."

He also allowed his wife to destroy the prophets of God, and while he sat pouting because he could not have Naboth's vineyard, Jezebel his wife, set about to kill the innocent Naboth to obtain it for him. It appears that the worst years of Ahab's reign sprang less from his own free will and natural disposition than from the evil counsels, or maybe the domineering requirements of his wife.

No godly men in Scripture have ever approached Ahab's weak and essential abdication to his wife, and no one had quite such an evil wife either. Men often have difficulty being godly husbands, especially when they have households with more than one wife, as we see in Scripture.

When godly kings were ruling, God blessed His people, and when ungodly men reigned, God sent judgment and defeat. Today we see the great nations of the descendants of the ancient Israelites abundantly blessed by God and now declining from sinful lifestyles and total rejection of the truth.

The lack of masculine, godly men to lead the nation and its families is a major contributing factor, as it was in ancient Israel. Yes, Israel often had material prosperity, but this was not a sign that God was pleased with her actions. In fact, the lust for material things often led the people farther from God. The best way to build a godly nation is to have godly citizens, godly families and godly churches.

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The story of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar was fraught with domestic tension and the story casts Abraham in a bad light as one who abdicated his responsibility and failed to deal with the dispute with his wife and his maidservant.

The story of Jacob, Rachel, and Leah portrays the patriarch as a less than effective husband, showing favoritism for the one wife over the other and producing a great deal more tension in the family that was already emotionally charged due to the fact that the two wives were sisters. Thankfully, in contrast to these failures, we have the stories of Boaz, the husband of Ruth, and of Joseph, the husband of Mary.

Marriage is the institution from which all other institutions come. The earliest education was done in the home as mothers and fathers instructed their children to eat, walk, speak, work, and so forth. Even the church is betrothed in marriage to be the bride of Christ.

Now from this basic and natural responsibility have come all formal centers of learning: schools, academies, universities, and other educational institutions. The earliest health care was developed in the home. What happens when these responsibilities are ignored? Sadly we find that there are some examples of disgraceful manhood in the Bible.

Of course no father is perfect, so even the patriarchs had their flaws and proved themselves, at times, to be bad fathers. David, although a godly man and loving father, did not discipline his sons enough and reaped the consequences when one son raped his half sister and another led a rebellion against him. Thankfully David realized his error and repented to teach Solomon to live God's way of life.

Eli behaved similarly, overindulging his sons and placing them before God, so that eventually they became so dissipated that God took their lives and Elias on the same day. Jacob, likewise, had his faults in fatherhood, unwisely and unfairly playing favorites with his sons and suffering the consequences in the form of great family discord.

The New Testament tell us that how fathers treat their children is a sign of their ability to lead. Although fathers are not to provoke their children to anger, they are also to keep their children under control with all dignity, because if they are unable to handle their own household, they cannot take on leadership roles in the household of the church. The apostle Paul emphasizes this paternal responsibility in Ephesians 6, where Paul writes:

Ephesians 6:4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but

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bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

The word admonition here comes from the Greek word *nouthesia* which means literally "a putting in mind; as a warning, admonition or instruction." Fathers are to put their children in mind of the Lord of His existence, perfections, laws, and claims on their hearts and lives.

Now this command is positive and is in accordance of all the requirements of the Bible on parental responsibility. The Bible charges parents with the duty to strive to train up a child in the way they should go, making it one of their highest priorities to prepare them for God's Kingdom.

Often in this society parents are brainwashed to believe that children should be left alone about religious beliefs and subjects to form their own opinions that they may judge for themselves. That has to be one of the dumbest things anyone can come up with.

Atheists and religious hobbyists always oppose or neglect the duty that God inspired Paul to command fathers. The argument commonly is that to teach religion to children is to make them prejudiced, to destroy their independence of mind, and to prevent them from judging impartially in favor of the Christian teachings. So how do we reply to this in the defense of the requirements of the Bible regarding parenting?

Let me give you six ideas regarding this. First, to suffer a child to grow up without any instruction in God's way of life is far worse than to suffer a garden to lay without any proper nutrients. Such a garden would be overrun with weeds and thorns, and how much more may a child's mind be overrun by negative influences without careful cultivation?

Secondly, people do instruct their children in a great many things. Why should they not in religion? They teach them how to behave in public, they teach them proper etiquette, how to work and serve others, how to eat and be healthy, and so on.

Does all this teaching destroy their independence? Does it make them prejudice? Some still argue: why not leave their minds open and free, and why not let them form their own judgments about common courtesies and civility? Why not let them develop their own lazy work ethic? Take one look at society today and your question is answered. Look at what a lack of training has produced in this nation alone.

The third thing is that people do promote their own beliefs and religion. An atheist for

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example is not usually anxious to conceal his views from his children. People teach by example, by incidental remarks, by attitude, by the neglect of that which they regard as of no value.

A man who does not pray is teaching his children not to pray. He who neglects the formal worship of God on the Sabbath is teaching his children to neglect it. He who does not read and study the Bible is teaching his children to not read and study it. It is impossible for a parent to not inculcate his own religious views on his children. Since this is so the Bible requires that his instruction be right and based on God's truth, not tradition.

The fourth is, to inculcate the pure religion of God is not to make the mind narrow, prejudiced, and indisposed to precipice the truth. It makes the mind sincere, conscientious, open to conviction, ready to follow the truth. Superstition, bigotry, infidelity, and all error of falsehood make the mind narrow and prejudiced, just the very opposite of their argument.

The fifth, if a man does not teach his children truth, others will teach them error. A vacuum cannot stay a vacuum for long. The young skeptic that the child meets in the street, the artful atheist, that hater of God, the unprincipled stranger, will teach the child at every opportunity. Therefore is it not much better for a parent to teach his child the truth than for a stranger to teach him error that will lead to tragedy and death? So, do our children get more instruction from public schools or more instruction from us, their parents? You can see the battle that we are all in.

The sixth point is, religion is the most important of all subjects and is therefore of the greatest importance that children are taught truth. Who is more qualified and available to teach their children than their own parents? Who loves them more and who wants them to be more successful in life? God, in His great wisdom, has put the responsibility of teaching on the parents under the leadership of the father. The father is ultimately responsible for his child.

If the father is a good overseer at home he will strive to meet the qualifications of a bishop, because a father is the bishop of his own home. The meaning behind the word bishop is: a person who looks upon, beholds, looks after, inspects, sees to, and takes care of those under his benevolent authority. We will read here, in I Timothy 3 the list of the qualifications of the minister, bishop, or "overseers," and this applies to fathers as well.

I Timothy 3:1-5 This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a

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bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); [we can add to that, how will he rule in God's Kingdom?]

These are very serious things here that we are faced with. Human fatherhood is thus a role that shows the man's leadership and godliness. Husbands and fathers are in training and being evaluated for a much greater responsibility in God's Kingdom.

From a worldly perspective the idea of a real man has mostly been beaten out of the western world's thoughts. Men are targets of ridicule and denigration, just watch any TV commercial or sitcom and you will see a barrage of attacks all designed to assault the dignity of real masculinity. The historic male role model as provider and protector is attacked.

Sadly the mainstream churches have aided and abetted promoting this feminization of manhood and exiling masculinity. These mainstream churches are even accepting homosexuality in their ministry as well as in their membership. They carry a great deal of guilt in this area.

It is not just the liberal mainstream churches that are guilty of this attack on God's creation of masculinity. In the western world, Christian pastors are either quaint, odd, harmless pushovers or they are slick, metro-sexual types who can manipulate the heartstrings of women but have no courage to stand up against real evil or teach the unequivocal truth with authority.

They suppress godly male assertiveness opting instead to be nice, and they have abdicated their call to speak the truth in the interest of political correctness and personal gain. They have decided that manipulating people with emotional self-help books and anecdotal sermonizing is better for the bottom line than training and teaching men in their congregations to be leaders and soldiers for Christ. As a result the church is suffering from a famine of real men, godly men who stand for God's truth no mater what. This shows up first in the family.

Although feminism is a force of evil, it is not the only problem in mainstream Christianity. What feminism has succeeded in doing is to convince both sexes that the only

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masculine identity that is valuable enough is an effeminate one, and the only way for equality to exist is for men to be like women or to simply not exist.

That is what we are facing in this nation politically, educationally, even in sports and in mainstream Christianity and it has effected the churches of God. Nevertheless, in the end men must face their own guilt in their emasculation because men have embraced their own feminization.

They have ignored and rejected honoring their Creator, and out of enmity for Him, embrace sinful lifestyles and the result is that they have done this to themselves by becoming indifferent, soft, and lazy, or they become Laodicean in their spiritual lives. You are very familiar with the prophecy in Isaiah 3 that says:

Isaiah 3:12 As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O My people! Those who lead you cause you to err, and destroy the way of your paths."

Men would rather give in to wrong demands of women and children than assert their masculinity by upholding God's standards within their home, community, and nation. Whether it is because they want to be popular with the girls, being too insecure and unsure about leading, or if it comes out of sheer exasperation, men seem to have the attitude of, "you want to take over the leadership, go ahead, because I just don't want argue to anymore," which is a defeatist attitude and a real man is not a defeatist.

Men have conceded the role in family, the church, and the nation, and we have no right to abdicate that God-given responsibility. Men need to be real men again, as God designed us to be. We need to take up our responsibility the way God intended us to act.

Men, why are you here at Sabbath services today? Are you here because your wife wants you to be here or are you here merely to keep peace in your family? Or are you here because you are deeply committed to worship and obeying God and you want to lead your family into God's Kingdom personally, helping them along the way to be steadfast in God's truth, teaching them to be faithful by your example?

Now we get to the real essence of this sermon. In I Kings 2, we have David's final words to his son Solomon.

I Kings 2:1-4 Now the days of David drew near that he should die, and he

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charged Solomon his son, saying: “I go the way of all the earth; be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man. And keep the charge of the Lord your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn; that the Lord may fulfill His word which He spoke concerning me, saying, ‘If your sons take heed to their way, to walk before Me in truth [not in traditions] with all their heart and with all their soul,’ He said, ‘you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’”

The first part of David's charge to his son, in his own words, concerning what was of primary importance was that he was to go the way of all the earth. That is a scenic description of death. David was a realist. He knew he would soon die so he made plans, which included counseling his successor and son, Solomon. His charge is reminiscent of Moses' charge to Joshua.

First Moses admonishes Joshua to be a man and to face his responsibilities with courage and faith. We will read this the story here in Deuteronomy 31.

Deuteronomy 31:7-8 Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, “Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it. And the Lord, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed.”

Deuteronomy 31:23 Then He inaugurated Joshua the son of Nun, and said, “Be strong and of good courage; for you shall bring the children of Israel into the land of which I swore to them, and I will be with you.”

Then Moses gave the law to the priests and admonished the people, including Joshua, to know it and obey it. The king was expected to be familiar with the law and the covenant, because in obeying God's Word he would find his wisdom, strength, and blessing and the same goes for husbands, fathers, and even single men.

I Kings 2:2 “I go the way of all the earth; be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man.

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If we want to know what true masculinity is about, this passage provides us with a great foundation and abundant insight. David commands Solomon to prove himself a man. To “prove yourself” could also be translated as: show, to look like, come to pass, be established, continue.

Solomon is to demonstrate characteristics foundational to God's design for masculinity as he takes the throne and succeeds David as king of Israel. It is not that he was not a man before coming before the throne, rather David's exhortation to his son is to show himself to be what he really is on the inside already. He is to live out manhood and godly masculinity as he takes on the role of king.

He could have shown himself to be a man before he had ascended to the throne and it is David's charge to him that he acts as a man of God while on the throne. Being in power does not make a person a man, but it, like many roles in life, requires that men live as righteous men if they are going to be real men.

David, the realist, served his own generation by the will of God. That is how we have to serve our families and the church. He was also concerned about Solomon and the next generation. David had his enemies, some of whom were in his own household and inner circle, and he wanted to be certain that the new king did not inherit those old problems.

During his long reign of forty years, David had unified the nation, defeated their enemies, and successfully organized kingdom affairs and made more than adequate preparation for the building of the Temple. He sang his last song and then gave his last charge to Solomon. Now what is of essential importance in this passage is how David defines a man.

“Solomon will show himself a man if he is first strong.” Now what does that mean? Does he have to lift weights all of his life? Of course not. This does not mean predominately physically strong, but rather it is referring to an internal strength, determination, and courage. In other words fortitude, grit, and endurance.

Solomon must be resolute in his beliefs, character, and integrity. He is to be firm in what he stands for and in carrying out justice, he is to do his part to see that God's will prevails, in his family and in his kingdom. He is to courageously stand tall in the various kinds of battles that life brings and he is to be courageous when it comes to standing for the truth and the laws of God.

A godly man must be strong in Christ recognizing, as it says in Philippians 4:13, that “We can do all things in Christ who strengthens us.” That is where a real man gets his

strength.

David who conquered Goliath was not a man of fear, but of great strength mentally and he was probably physically fit as well. He was not the biggest of men physically, but he had great faith and it was his faith and trust in God that anything was possible which made him strong.

His great physical feats were produced by internal fortitude based on strength which only God can provide. So David had to be physically fit to withstand his vigorous life as king, but his emphasis to Solomon was to be a real man by relying on God for strength. As in Paul's words to the Ephesians: "be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might."

Sadly it was Solomon's moral decline that made him a weak leader, man, and king. Strength is always found in trusting Christ and in obeying God's commands. In I Kings 2:1-4, David emphasizes that Solomon must put the Lord first, that he must stand up for the right and be against the wrong, and observe what the Lord requires in the sense of obeying the will of God.

Solomon was a young man who needed experience and courage so he needed this admonition from his father. In fact from the very onset of his reign he would have to make some tough and difficult decisions and orders.

David had already commissioned Solomon regarding building the Temple, a task that would take seven years. It is very likely that David had God's prophesy about Solomon in his mind when he gave Solomon the fatherly advice and reinforcement. Before Solomon's birth, God told David, in I Chronicles 22,

I Chronicles 22:9 Behold, a son shall be born to you, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies all around. His name shall be Solomon, for I will give peace and quietness to Israel in his days.

David knew that Solomon was going to have a peaceful rule for the nation, but he still told him to be strong, to have strength, because Solomon needed that mentally and spiritually in order to guide the nation in the right direction.

It is interesting that David told Solomon to prove himself a man knowing that God had predestined that he would be a man of rest and peace for Israel. This shows that God does not have the same qualities in mind of what a man is as the world does.

The human worldview of history admires the more arrogant and violent men. Alexander the Great, Ptolemy, Julius Caesar, William the Conqueror, and so on. God's judgment is quite different. Blessed is the person whose heart is right with God, whose conscience is clear, and who can look back with the Master and say:

John 17:4 I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.

Solomon's youth clearly constituted one of the main difficulties of his position. If he was about nineteen or twenty years old and known to be of peaceful temperament, then to have to rule over the war-like and turbulent children of Israel with a strong rival opposed to him, brothers of full age ready to step in, was evidently a very difficult undertaking.

So he is exhorted, though a boy, to show himself, in spirit, as a man. This counsel is similar to Paul's direction in I Corinthians 16:13-14, which says:

I Corinthians 16:13-14 Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love.

It refers to the fortitude or strength of mind that was required to discharge the demanding functions of the king.

This brings us to the next mark of a man, which, according to David, is obedience to the revealed Word of God. This is foundational to biblical manhood and it truly is the essence of it. If a man obeys God's Word in terms of how he lives and treats others, he has shown himself to be a man indeed. David continues with his admonishment to Solomon,

I Kings 2:3-4 "And keep the charge of the Lord your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn; that the Lord may fulfill His word which He spoke concerning me, saying, 'If your sons take heed to their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul,' He said, 'you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.'

There are five things listed here by David which God has given us to keep and to live

by. The first one is that we are to *walk in all of His ways*, not in our own ways or in the ways of a wicked perishing world.

The second one is that we are to *keep His statutes*. Consider all of His ordinances to be holy, just, and good, to receive them as such, and conscientiously observe them. They are the positive ordinance of the law. The third is to *keep His commandments*. Whatever He has commanded you to do, perform them and omit what He has forbidden you to do.

The forth is to *keep His judgments*. What He has determined to be right is essentially and inherently right. What He has determined to be wrong is essentially so. A thing is not good only because God has commanded it, a thing is not only evil because He has forbidden it. He has commanded the good because it is in its own nature good and useful and He has forbidden the evil because it is, in its own nature, bad and hurtful.

The fifth thing is to *keep His testimonies*, bear witness to all to which he has borne witness. His testimonies are all true, there is no deceit or falseness in them at all. They refer to future good things and good times. They are the decrees directing the commemoration of spiritually significant events.

Now David described the effectual nature of the law of God just as the Son is the dominant feature of God's natural revelation, so the law was the dominant element in God's specific revelation. The perfect law of God can change people, it revives the soul and the law and statutes can be trusted to make one wise.

Psalm 19:7-11 The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward.

This is what every man and woman should live by. But you are not a real man, according to God, unless you are abiding by these things and making a great effort to perform the will of God in your life. What God requires is to walk in His ways. These four words: statutes, commands, judgments, and testimonies refer to the different kinds of precepts in God's law of love.

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Obedience to the will of God would guarantee success. God's blessing depends on His people's obedience to His law of love. Solomon's personal obedience would result in God's fulfilling His promise that David's descendants would forever occupy the throne of Israel. Now notice the original promise given to David through Nathan here in II Samuel 7.

II Samuel 7:11-17 "Since the time that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel, and have caused you [David] to rest from all your enemies. Also the Lord tells you that He will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He [Solomon] shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever." According to all these words and according to all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.

David reminded Solomon of God's conditional promises that God revealed to David through Nathan, in order to impress upon him a powerful motive to continue faithfully and obediently. David also reminded his son of the special covenant the Lord had made concerning the Davidic dynasty.

He warned Solomon that if he disobeyed God's law he would bring chastening and sorrow upon him and the land, but if you obeyed His commands God would bless him and the people. More importantly God would see to it that there was always a descendant of David sitting on the throne. David knew that Israel had a ministry to perform in providing a vehicle for the promised Redeemer to come to earth and that the future of God's redemptive plan rested with Israel.

How tragic that Solomon did not follow God's law. It was the means of providing idolatry in the land and then causing the kingdom to be divided. All Solomon had to do was have faith enough, strong enough, and obedient enough, then it would mean that he was man enough.

There is no right of initiation or strange set of circumstances that a boy must pass through before he becomes a man. There are young boys and teens who are far

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manlier than grown adults in submission to God and living his way of life. This is because they stand for righteousness, they act in strength, and obey God's Word. This is manhood to the max. They treat women with honor and respect their parents and they are willing to share the gospel, which requires faith and strength.

David was young when he conquered Goliath and the message is that the transition from boyhood to manhood has little to do with age as compared to commitment to the Word of God. Granted there are physical, mental, and emotional changes that take place as a boy transitions through adolescence and into adulthood, but the main criteria for true manhood is who a person is on the inside with respect to fearing the Lord and trembling at His Word.

There are men who live as boys and boys who live as men. The issue is not so much age as it is a pure heart. There is also a physical manhood effect that comes from living God's way of life. It promotes physical good health, longevity, and resilience. Proverbs 3 says:

Proverbs 3:7-8 Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh, and strength to your bones.

Marriage does not make a man. Getting a job does not make man. Having children does not make a man, although each of these opportunities gives a man a chance to prove himself a man. A man is a "man" because God has made him male as opposed to female. A man is all that he should be if he fears God, and the same goes for women.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all.

This is both man and woman's purpose. God created life and He alone knows how it should be managed. He wrote the instruction manual of life and it is a wise person who reads and obeys it.

The fear of the Lord must result in obedient living otherwise the fear is fake. The dedicated believer will want to spend time daily in Scripture, wanting to know the Father and the Son better and discovering God's will. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge and it is the real beginning of manhood.

The last phrase in Ecclesiastes 12:13 can be translated: "This is man's purpose in life,"

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or “this is for all men,” or “this is the whole man” Man, in his entirety, must begin with God, with the reverence and awe of Him.

When Solomon looked at life under the sun, everything was fragmented and he could not see a consistent pattern, nothing was reliable. But when he looked at life from God's point of view (above the sun), everything came together into a whole. If man wants to have wholeness, he must begin with God.

A moral single man is no less a man than a moral married man, and certainly he is no less a man than an immoral married man. But a single man is often in danger of more pitfalls because he only has himself to please and to serve at home. Thus his tendency and often his desire is to hang out with his guy friends in a kind of ‘bromance’ because it is easier to have fun with guys who think the same, because there are no changes in habits necessary. They remain man-boys well into their thirties and forties.

How tragic and pathetic a man-boy is who prefers the constant and continuing companion of another man-boy over a sweet and caring, lonely woman.

A man who loves his wife as God loves the church, who trains his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, who does all that he can to provide for his family, and is himself a man of godliness and character, may not always be considered a man's man but he is God's man, like David, a man after God's own heart.

Acts 13:16 Then Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, “Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen:

Acts 13:22-23 And when He had removed him, He raised up for them [the children of Israel] David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, ‘I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.’ From this man's seed, according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior Jesus.

Now it does not matter whether our parents, friends, or anyone else considers us a man, because ultimately manhood is defined by God. God creates men to be men and His men fear Him and honor His Word. If you single ladies look for a man who fears God and honors and lives God's way of life, then you are seeking a real man, not some man-boy who cannot give God the time of day.

If a man doubts his manliness, he needs to believe what is already true. God created

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him to be a man and to live as a man by being strong spiritually, and to a lesser degree, physically. Keeping His Word, even a man that the world would consider weak and feeble and the least manly, can be stronger than all in the world if he believes and keeps God's commandments.

He does not need to take a trip to the wilderness and wait for a voice from heaven to declare that he is a man. He does not have to wait for his father or father figure to somehow bestow manliness upon him. He does not have to prove to himself or to others that he has what it takes to do what the world deems is manly.

Masculinity is given by God to men and men must live it out biblically rather than perverting and redefining it in the worldly and selfish terms.

When those under his care are in danger, a real man moves to protect them, even being willing to give his own life in service or in death. Jesus Christ, the epitome of a godly "man's" man, said this in John 15.

John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

The life of the man who has God's Spirit dwelling in him is not measured merely by his private morality or by his private faithfulness, but rather by how he conducts himself with others.

When a man is dating a woman or in a marriage relationship, he honors that woman and treats her in an understanding way, being kind, gentle, respectful, and protective of her. He lovingly leads his wife, taking the initiative and responsibility for the course and direction of the home, yet all the while listening to her and always seeking to do what is in her best interest. He does his best to understand her, he tries to do what she needs and he does not treat her as some one lesser, but as an equal and fellow heir of eternal life in Jesus Christ.

When he is raising children he trains them in God's truth and does not provoke them in anger. When he is in the workplace, he does his best and works with all of his heart and might.

Ecclesiastes 9:9-10 Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for that is your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform under the

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sun. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.

That is what a man does. The real man does his best to provide for the home and he takes measures to make sure his family will be provided for in the event of his death.

I Timothy 5:8 But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

When he is in the church he is willing to use his gifts to serve others and when he is in a position of leadership he is confident in Christ, to stand for truth and make the right decisions, having learned them from God's written Word. When he is in a position of temptation, he resists the Devil and stands firm against the flesh.

When someone is in need, he is merciful and generous to them and when others fail him, he is willing to forgive and does not take revenge because he is gentle and tenderhearted in dealing with others. He studies God's Word and teaches it when he has an opportunity. And he is a man devoted to prayer and loves God with all of his heart and soul and strength.

The world needs men to be men by showing themselves to be men, not by the world's standards, but rather by God's standards. Righteous manhood is a matter of the heart and it is manifested and matured by commitment and obedience to the Word of God.

Righteous men are men of integrity, internal strength, and Christ-encouraged, willing to do what is right and to stand for truth at all times and in all circumstances.

Men are going to be tried probably more than they ever have in the history of men over the next few years and it is going to take God's backing to help a real man in what is coming. May God help us all to prove ourselves godly men and to be men after God's own heart.