

**MACHO, MOUSE OR MAN?
Biblical Masculinity
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The "TIME" magazine article of a couple of years ago asked, "Why are men and women different? It isn't just upbringing. New studies show they are born that way." (Jan 20, 1992)
As the kids would say today - "No duh!"

Gil Schwartz wrote in a Family Circle article a while back,
"After years of believing that my wife and I were... free individuals ..., I now learn that we're not.

Instead, it turns out that just about everything we can and can't do - from washing the dishes to taking out the garbage to having a conversation about my cousin Ed without fighting - is programmed into the wiring of our brains.

It seems I have a man's brain and my wife has woman's brain...
(This is) the startling new information from the behavioral science industry." (Family Circle 4/21/92)

Again with sarcasm I ask, "Aren't you glad we live in the age of such amazing discoveries?"

The Time magazine author went on to write,
"During the feminist revolution of the 1970s, talk of inborn differences in the behavior of men and women was distinctly unfashionable, even taboo." (p42)

"Once sexism was abolished, so the argument ran, the world would become a perfectly equitable, androgynous place, aside from a few anatomical details. But biology has a funny way of confounding expectations."

Differences between men and women? Of course!

What does God say in Genesis 1?

"So God created man (human beings)...,
in the image of God he created them,
male and female he created them."

I am, sociologically speaking, two years too old to be called a "Baby Boomer". I'm a war baby. Therefore I grew up and even took much of my schooling before the feminist movement swept (pun intended) into our streets, schools, and homes.

My father was a man and my mother was a woman and there was absolutely no confusion in their minds or in the minds of us kids as to who was who.

There were two times in my childhood when my father was unavailable in the way he normally was.

Once when he had to take a job in Alaska to earn some cash to keep from losing the farm. And the other time when he broke his hip working on a rock crusher in a gravel pit.

While my father was away or incapacitated, my mother took over and believe me, we boys knew she was in charge. She was strong, she was wise, and I never for a minute thought we were less safe or in trouble because my father was away for a while.

But though she didn't show it while he was away, I can well remember her tears and words of relief when my father returned.

How glad she was to relinquish the leadership when he came back.

Though my mother could do it, my father was the one who led in family devotions, assigned who would pray at the meals, took the lead in getting us to church, and obviously bore the heaviest weight of the decisions that faced his young family.

My father loved my mother and we knew it. My mother was respected by my father and we knew it. My mother was very involved in all the decisions that were made in our home and we knew it. But my father was the leader and we knew it.

My father was, as is, a man - a man as defined by the Bible.

I grew up with that model. My parents' friends were of the same kind. I was largely unaware of any other.

**But it didn't take long after leaving home to become aware of two very different kinds of males:
The macho and the mouse.**

Male chauvinism had existed for centuries but it wasn't until the late 50's that its ugliest forms took to the streets in the Playboy magazine and mindset.

That chauvinism was depicted not only in magazines but in television with Ralph Cramden (of the Honeymooners), The Fonz, and later with Archie Bunker.

While those series were, I think, ridiculing such chauvinism, they nonetheless let us see ourselves for what we had been and were - a culture that devalued women and praised male dominance.

Many men didn't think they were truly MEN unless they conquered and controlled women.

By the 1970s, however, many women and some men were rising up to tell us how despicable our attitudes and actions toward women had been.

Thus was born the modern feminist movement.

Unfortunately the feminist movement didn't bring only a corrective, it brought a new imbalance.

While it should have taught men and women full respect for the differences and the value of men and women complementing each other, it instead largely tried to turn women into the very kind of men they abhorred and at the same time left men unsure of who they were.

That happened among Christians almost as fully as it did among others. To speak of differences between men and women became so politically incorrect that our boys and young men didn't know what their role was and didn't know what a man was supposed to be.

It seemed there were only two alternatives:

Either become an aggressive macho male who disregards the feminist movement and who conquers everything in sight, including women or

become an acquiescent mousey male with an uncertain vague image of a man completely indistinguishable from an uncertain, vague image of a woman.

Are those the only two alternatives? - Macho or mouse?

NO! There is a true manhood - biblical masculinity - a **MAN!**

Please be careful that you do not hear what I am not saying.

Today I am not speaking to what women are not.

I am speaking to what I believe the Bible says men are.

I want you to look with me at Genesis 12 and some biographical material about a man named Abraham.

It is unfortunate that the name Abraham has taken on such mythical force that many of us put him in the realm not of a god but not truly a man either.

Somehow we think of Abraham as one of those unreal characters in the Bible - certainly no one with whom we can identify.

But that is not the case. Here is a flesh and blood human being:

This man grew up in Iraq, was the equivalent of a rancher,
 married a woman who later it was discovered couldn't have
 children,

later moved with his wife, father, and nephew and all of their
 cattle over 500 miles.

Like moving from Denver to Kansas City or Salt Lake City.
 He fell on hard times when there was a drought and not enough
 water for his cattle or family and had to move again.

He managed scores of men in his business,
 loved his children,
 had royal disagreements with his wife,
 made some foolish decisions,
 but knew, respected and loved his God.

Abraham, a real human being - Abraham - a real man.

I wish there was time to have you read all of this short biography of
 this man - it's included in just 12 chapters.

But we can't, so I want you to see just vignettes of his story.

I ask you to look at Abraham today because I believe we see in this
 man an example of biblical manhood - Masculinity as God designed it
 to be lived out in a real world.

There are four characteristics that I want you to see in this man
 and they are four characteristics that the world, the church, and
 the home need in real men today:

Wisdom, Toughness, Goodness, and Courage.

I. First of all Abraham was WISE.

READ: 12:1,4-5,7-8

Proverbs 1:7 says the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord.

To put the opposite in the vernacular: Stupid is the man who says

there is no God and/or who lives like there is no God.

Abraham's wisdom began with his active acknowledgement of God.

A while ago on public radio someone was interviewing Studs Terkel the now famous blue collar author.

Studs was an old man and the interviewer asked if he was an atheist.

Studs laughed and said, "no", he thought he was "now an agnostic". "An agnostic you know", he said, "is nothing but a cowardly atheist". He and the interviewer laughed together and then Studs said, "no I suppose actually I'm still an atheist."

Even today people can be very intelligent and yet very foolish.

A. I want you to see that Abraham, was not an atheist but a man who knew His God.

Foundational to his life was a belief that God truly is and that he, Abraham had the responsibility and privilege of knowing, obeying and meeting with his God.

If I had time to take you through the 12 chapters, you would see this weather-beaten, hard-bitten rancher was a man who time and time again met with God.

One author interviewed over a thousand men across the country.

Men who are the leaders in the evangelical churches of our land.

What he found was that over 45% of them reported that they meet with the Lord through the Scriptures less than once a week.

He asked, "Is it possible that nearly fifty percent of the Christian men who are called to lead their families are spiritually anorexic?" (Point Man, p.115)

Oh, how we need time in the Bible. Through it we are reminded again and again there is a God who is there.

We are reminded of what is important in life.

We are reminded of the commitments we have made.

We are reminded of the God who will help us.

Abraham was WISE - a man who met with his God

B. Not only did Abraham meet with God but I notice with significance that he led others to meet with God.

Several times it says "he built an altar to the Lord".

**Can you imagine his kids questions when he finally had children?
 What are you doing, dad? Building an altar.
 What's an altar, dad? A place to meet with God.
 Who's God, dad? And so the questions go and so does the teaching.**

Today we have the impression given so often that a man doesn't talk about religion - that's women's talk.

NONSENSE - A real man is a leader in bringing people, especially his own family, to meet with God.

Now I'm not saying you aren't a real man until you can get the whole family in a circle and have them all be quiet while you wax ineloquent on some religious theme.

No, it doesn't have to be formal, men, but it has to be real - Because real men meet with their God and lead others to meet with their God - that's WISDOM - that's a MAN.

C. A WISE man not only meets with his God and leads others to meet God but a WISE man also ACCEPTS HIS CALLING.

**You didn't choose to be born nor to be a man.
 God made that choice.**

A man trusts his God and gladly accepts God's choice.

**I'm glad I'm a man. I'm not saying thank God I'm not a woman!
 I'm saying I'm glad I'm a man.
 I consider it a high calling.**

What a privilege to be a son,

to be a brother,
to be a father,
to be a husband,
to be a leader.

Abraham was granted leadership responsibility in his home and when God gave it, Abraham took it.

The text does not say, "Sarah, take your husband, leave your country, your people, and your father's household and go to the land I will show you."

It gives that leadership responsibility to Abraham and every time such leadership responsibility is given in the Bible it is given to the man.

I know there are people who today won't like that being said, but it's true.

Let me give you another example: In Ephesians 6:4 God says, "Fathers bring your children up in the training and instruction of the Lord."

Surely this doesn't mean that mothers bear no responsibility. BUT to whom is the primary responsibility given? Who is to be the leader in that home? FATHERS

A MAN accepts his calling to be a man and all the responsibilities that go with it.

A wise man meets with God, leads others to meet with God and accepts his calling as a man.

II. Not only was Abraham WISE but I want you to see that he was also TOUGH!

By "Tough" I don't mean rude or crude.

By "tough" I don't mean able to beat everybody up.

By Tough I mean a strength of body and mind that can stand up to the rigors of life.

It takes a mental toughness to pick up and move a whole business operation 300 miles like Abraham did when he left his father in Haran and moved to Canaan.

In Genesis 14 we see the account of Abraham's nephew Lot

being taken prisoner by four groups of invaders.

When Abraham heard about it he took 318 of his own men and pursued the armies over 120 miles and then at night attacked and defeated them and recovered all the stolen goods from the cities and also rescued Lot and his family and the others.

It takes a mental and physical toughness to do that.

As unpopular as this may be, I believe the Bible gives the primary responsibility for providing for a family to the man.

When I look at Genesis 3 I see that when God placed a curse on the man and the woman for their sin - the curse corresponded to one of their primary roles:

Women as the bearers of children and
men as the providers of food.

Yes, there are women who are incapable of bearing children and yes, there are men who are incapable of providing for their families but that doesn't negate the God-intended gender difference in primary roles.

While I'm at it let me speak of another primary role of men -

In their toughness they not only provide, they also protect.

There is in a man an instinctive sense of protecting a woman or children.

When the Apostle Paul described marriage in terms of Christ's love for the church he said that Christ was so concerned about providing for his church that he gave himself up - he was willing to die - for it.

So it is with a man for his family and even for others.

There is an old rhyme that I would suppose is anathema to the feminist movement:

What are little boys made of?
Frogs and snails and puppy dogs' tails,
That's what little boys are made of.

**What are little girls made of?
Sugar and spice and all that nice,
That's what little girls are made of.**

Our most sophisticated studies today are showing us that there is truth to the old rhyme.

Boys, and thus the men they become, are different than girls.

While I don't think that boys should be able to abuse each other or others - neither do I think that we should so domesticate them that we don't let the toughness develop.

Disciplined but not domesticated.

Real men are tough - able to stand up to the rigors of life and able to provide and protect.

III. Abraham was not only WISE and TOUGH but he was GOOD.

To be good means to put the needs and interests of others ahead of oneself.

In Genesis 13 and 14 Abraham demonstrates his goodness.

On the one occasion he graciously grants to his nephew Lot the choicest land when they must separate.

On the other occasion already referred to he risks his life for Lot when he rescues him from captivity.

How many men have a toughness but they are not good?

How many men have the position and the power in their homes or in their businesses but they are not good - they don't watch out for the interests of others but rather they are taking care of themselves.

A man, a real man, lives to serve others.

Masculinity is not the right to be served.

Masculinity is a call to serve and sacrifice for the good of others.

How many men sit around in their homes or elsewhere like Archie Bunkers treating women like minimum-wage waitresses.

How many men think that if they have provided food and shelter for

their families, they can assume the rest of the time and money is theirs to do with as they please.

In March of 1990 Dr. Robertson McQuilkin, president of Columbia Bible College resigned from his position. In a letter, I have quoted before, announcing his resignation he wrote:

"My dear wife, Muriel, has been in failing mental health for about eight years.

So far I have been able to carry both her ever-growing needs and my leadership responsibilities at Columbia.

But recently it has become apparent that Muriel is contented most of the time I am with her and almost none of the time I am away from her.

It is not just "discontent". She is filled with fear - even terror - Afraid that she has lost me she always goes in search of me when I leave home...

It is clear... that she needs me full-time.

The decision (to resign) was made, in a way, 42 years ago when I promised to care for Muriel "in sickness and in health...till death do us part."

So, as I told the students and faculty, as a man of my word, integrity has something to do with it.

But so does fairness. She has cared for me fully and sacrificially all these years;

if I cared for her for the next 40 years I would not be out of debt (to her). Duty, however, can be grim and stoic. But there is more: I love Muriel. She is a delight to me...I do not have to care for her, I get to. It is a high honor to care for so wonderful a person." (from Disciplines of a Godly Man p. 35)

A real man is not just WISE and TOUGH he is also GOOD.

IV. One last thing I want you to see in Abraham: He was COURAGEOUS.

Whether it was leaving the security of his father's country, or giving what appeared to be the best land to his nephew or risking his life and everything to rescue Lot - Abraham was a man who was courageous.

Courage is not fool-heartiness! There are people who take senseless risks - I am not speaking of that.

Selling all you have to purchase lottery tickets when the jackpot gets to \$13 million is foolhardy.

Real courage however is risk-taking anchored in faith.

Abraham was a man who took the risks only when so doing would yield the kind of gain that would honor his God.

If God told him to do something - he had the courage to do it even if he couldn't see the outcome.

If doing something was obviously the right thing even if God had not specifically told him to do it - he had the courage to step out believing that his God would aid him.

Another way of speaking of courage is with the word INITIATIVE.

Godly masculinity bears responsibility to generally take the initiative.

I don't mean that a woman never takes initiative or that a man always takes the initiative in life.

But I do mean that God has called men to set a pattern of taking the initiative.

It is not coincidence that God created man first and gave him certain responsibilities even before woman was created.

It is not coincidence that after woman and man sinned, it was to the man that God came first.

This pattern of the man bearing first responsibility is I think

demonstrated throughout the bible.

Over 25 years of counseling with men and women, single and married - one thing I have heard over and over again -

Where are the men who will take initiative?

There are so many wives who long for their husbands to take charge - no, not in some prehistoric dictatorial style but to be men who are wise, tough, and good and who will take the lead with courage.

Biblical masculinity takes initiative - it is courageous.

A man as God designed him is WISE, TOUGH, GOOD and COURAGEOUS.

Today's message is not a condemnation of men but to the contrary is a call to men to dare to be men.