

Real Men

Are

Godly Men

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Looking for Men of Spirituality

Did God just make men to be less interested in spiritual things than women? Did Jehovah just expect men to be sort of ho-hum about worship, prayer, Bible study, and ministry? Well, that hardly seems consistent with the command of God for a husband to lead and love his wife as Christ leads and loves His church, or to rear their children in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord. It surely doesn't jive with the example of Joshua, who stood before the Hebrew children and demanded, "Choose you this day whom you will serve, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." No, God wants men to be deeply spiritual. He wants them to be spiritual leaders.

Why then do so many men seem to shun spirituality? I want to debunk a couple of myths.

Myths about Spirituality

1. Spiritual is not the same as being religious. A lot of times we use external, superficial standards to determine spirituality.
 - a. Absence of bad activity. I don't smoke, I don't chew, and I don't run with those who do." A spiritual burden. No, a lot of non-spiritual people don't do a number of bad things.
 - b. Presence of good activities. They're involved in things and they're virtuous. Well, that may or may not indicate spirituality.
 - c. Bible knowledge. Bible knowledge is great, but I've known some men who could quote whole books of the Bible and didn't believe a word of what they were quoting. Even Satan quoted scripture to Jesus.
 - d. Giftedness.
 - e. Praise of others.

Always be careful when spirituality turns into a popularity contest.

Now don't misunderstand, those are not bad things that I just named. In fact, they're very good things. They are things that are the fruit of spirituality, associated with but not synonymous with spirituality. A man can have any or all of those things and not be spiritual. If you don't believe that, consider the rich young ruler in Matthew 19:16. He knew the commandments, he obeyed the commandments, he had a good reputation, he had been blessed with success, and there is not a father who wouldn't want their daughter to find the rich young ruler. But, Jesus said that man couldn't enter the kingdom of God because there was something he had a passion for that was greater than his passion for Christ. He was a religious man, but he was not a spiritual man.

Spirituality is on the inside and it comes out. A spiritual man is the man who right from the start humbles himself before Jesus Christ. A spiritual man is on a journey that little by little empties himself of everything that would keep him from passionately following Jesus. As those obstacles are released, the power of the Holy Spirit goes to work on the inside and it begins to recreate that man or that woman in the image of Jesus Christ. That is what being a spiritual man is all about. It's an inner transformation.

There was a church that was going to invite a well-known, well-respected, and very spiritually-minded preacher to come and hold a gospel meeting for them. As they talked about him, some of the elders who knew him just raved about him. One fellow who didn't know him was just a little bit suspicious and said, "Well, the way you talk about old brother so and so, you'd think he had a monopoly on the Holy Spirit." One of the elders paused and after a short silence said, "No, he doesn't have a monopoly on the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit has a monopoly on him." That is what being spiritual is about. There's a great difference between spirituality and religiosity. Now that leads to the second myth that needs to be debunked.

2. Spirituality demeans masculinity. We don't talk about that much, but I think there's an underlying thing there that gets at men. Years ago, an article called the Feminization of Christianity discussed how organized religion, particularly Christianity, had begun to be feminized in the way we do everything, even the way we dress; how in a lot of churches men wear long robes like a dress and how some even demand celibacy. It's not uncommon among many religious leaders nationwide to be a little bit more on the effeminate side. I've known a lot of men who never really felt comfortable attending a "church service." It's almost like there was an unspoken thing that you had to leave your masculinity at the door. I think a lot of men don't think that church really relates to the world.

You don't have to give up your masculinity to be spiritual. Most men won't act out their faith the same way that women do. Remember God made men and women different. Men are generally less emotional - not the touchy, huggy-feely, emotional kind of person. Men are as a general rule, not always, are less relational. Now that doesn't mean men don't need to improve in those areas, but what I'm saying is, that God didn't design men to be better at nurturing than women.

3. Men are going to be less verbal. The average woman speaks 25,000 words a day, and the average man 12,000. So, when men go home from work and their wives ask "What happened today?" They probably say "Nothing."

A lot of you men would recognize the name Dan Deerdorf. He was for 10 years an all-pro tackle, and twice a year during that 10-year career, he lined up against Too Tall Jones of the Dallas Cowboys, an all-pro defensive end. So for 20 games, they played each other and somebody asked Deerdorf, "What kind of relationship did you have with Too Tall Jones?" Deerdorf just said, "Well, we didn't talk, but we had great respect for each other." It is said that in the last game, in the last quarter, Deerdorf got up from a block as did Too Tall Jones, Deerdorf looked at Too Tall and said, "I'm quitting." Too Tall said, "I know." Deerdorf said, "I'm glad." Jones said, "Me too." Now women wouldn't consider that the least bit of a relationship, but men you can kind of relate to that, can't you? There's some great respect there.

4. Men don't read as much as women. Goals are the common external standards that we often use to measure spirituality like reading, talking, emotions, and relations. Now don't misunderstand, I'm not excusing men from those expressions of faith. I'm not suggesting that men don't need to grow in all of those areas. I am saying is, that if you passionately follow Jesus Christ, there are a myriad of ways to express it, not just the way that we've grown to expect it to be expressed.

How then are men spiritual men? What does Jesus expect of us?

I believe the Lord can take men that everybody else would have thrown away and do incredible things with them. Consider the following from Luke.

"One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, he saw at the water's edge two boats left there by the fishermen who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.' Simon answered, 'Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.' When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So, they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!' For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men.' So, they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him." (Luke 5:1-11)

The men that we just read about in that passage already knew some things about Jesus. They were not indifferent toward spiritual things, but Jesus wanted more. He said, "I want your obedience." He said, "Peter, I want your boat." Then after using that, he said, "Peter, I want you to go out and cast again in deep waters." That didn't make any sense to Peter because Peter was a fisherman, he had fished all night during the best time to fish, and nothing was there. But whether it made sense or not, when Jesus commanded it, Peter did it. Religion goes through the motions whereas spirituality demands genuine obedience. So that when God says something like, "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her..." You obey.

Folks, when a Christian man comes home, snaps at his wife, wastes time on mindless pursuits and expects a wife to wait on him hand and foot while he pays little or no attention to the family needs, his selfish life quickly becomes empty because that's not what God seeks. Not just with regard to that command, but Jesus' number one criterion for spirituality is: Will you do what I say? "If you love me, you will obey what I command." (John 14:15-16) If they love Him, they obey because they want to please Him. However, if they obey because He commanded it they may be just a ritual or an attempt to earn salvation.

It's a lifelong learning process. But as we become obedient Jesus calls us to significance. Every man wants to make his mark on the world. The real difference in men is how we go about filling that need to be significant. Some run after money, some after politics, some after fame, some after fitness, and some want power, but Jesus says, nobody lives a significant life apart from me.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me [does not leave or forsake me] and I in him, he will bear much fruit;" (but listen to the last thing he said) "apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:5) This can be paraphrased to assist you to understand, Jesus said, "If you're with me, guys, you're somebody. If you're apart from me you're nobody."

Do you believe that? Do you really believe that apart from Jesus there's no significance in life? Most of us say we do, and act like we don't. We're with a group of people and in comes somebody the world calls a star or a celebrity who might be the most heathenistic, paganistic, atheistic person, and we say, "Oh, look, look, look at who it is!!!" You fall over, or maybe even run up and get an autograph. Jesus says apart from me there's no significance in life.

If you don't believe that, play a little game called the game of "Tens." Have you ever played the game of "Tens?" It tells you how much the significance the world gives. Let me play it with you right quick. Name the ten wealthiest men in the world; the last ten Nobel Prize winners in any category; ten of the NFL all-pro players ten years ago; ten Oscar winners for best actors/actress over the last ten years or ten members of the President's cabinet? Most of us can't even name the last ten presidents.

The world does not offer any lasting significance, but see men are made for purposeful living. I've never known a man who woke up and said, "I hope I have an average day." Or, "My goal in life is to be mediocre." Men thirst for significance. Men, your job won't give it to you. I don't care if you own your own company, or are the CEO your job won't give it to you. Even your family will not supply your thirst for significance. The only thing that lets your life be genuinely significant is the adventure of following Jesus Christ. I don't know of anything that takes more courage, I don't know of anything that's more challenging than authentic discipleship. I'm not talking about being religious; I'm talking about being passionate for Jesus Christ. It's the only thing that's significant. He calls us to be transformed.

What does take to be transformed?

1. Let go of your boat. Your boat is your world apart from Jesus Christ. It's where you work, play, and pay your bills. See, Jesus is looking to minister to more and more people everyday. So everyday, he says through the word, a sermon, a friend, "Give me your boat. I want to use you. I want right here, right now wherever you are working to be my place to reach out to these people, and brothers, you've got to release your security." That's what the rich young ruler couldn't bring himself to do. You've got to release your security and turn it over to Jesus because Jesus can't live in your heart if he doesn't live your boat.

2. Let go of your fears. Men, I want to get to the bottom line. I believe and there are obviously thousands of exceptions to this, women on the whole are more spiritually inclined than men. They tend to come to church more, pray more, read more, and surrender more than men do because men are afraid. They are afraid to relinquish control and turn their boat over to Jesus. Letting go of control isn't easy, and it's scary. I know a Christian lady in talking about this very thing, brought out a brilliant observation. "You know releasing control is not an easy thing for a woman either, but we get a lot more practice." I think that's a very astute observation. That may explain in part why women on the whole tend to be more spiritually inclined.

When Jesus caused those nets to be full, Peter fell down before Jesus and said, "Go away from me Lord," Why, because Peter didn't love Jesus, or because he didn't believe in him? No. Peter said go away from me Lord because I am a sinful man. Do you catch what is being said there? Peter is saying to him, "Lord, as I look at those full nets, I see that you're suggesting possibilities in my life that I've never even dreamed of, and Lord you've just got the wrong guy. I don't know what all it is you want me to do, but I just can't do it." Men, that's what we tend to do when Jesus calls us, and we settle for safe lives, but when we do, we settle for petty lives. Jesus says to us just what he said to Peter, "Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid of what will happen if you really totally turn your life over to me. Because of what I'll do in you, others will want to know me, so trust me." Jesus doesn't call men to be wimps, Jesus calls men to be warriors.

The following poem called "The Fellowship of the Unashamed" sums up this lesson on spirituality.

"I'm a part of the 'Fellowship of the Unashamed.' I have Holy Spirit power, the die has been cast, and I've stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I am a disciple of Jesus Christ. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away or be still, my past is redeemed, my present makes sense, and my future is secure. I am finished and done with low-living, sight walking, smooth needs, small planning, colorless dreams, tame vision, mundane talking, chintzy giving, and dwarf goals. I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I don't have to be right, just, tops, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I now live by presence, lean by faith, love by patience, lift by power, and labor by prayer. My pace is set, my gait is fast, and my goal is heaven. My road is narrow, my way is rough, my companion skew, my guide reliable, and my mission clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, deterred, lured away, turned away, diluted or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the face of adversity, negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander at the gate of mediocrity. I won't give up, back up, let up, or shut up until I'm preached up, prayed up, stored up, and stayed up for the cause of Jesus Christ. I am a disciple of the Lord. I must go until he returns, give until I drop, preach until all I know, and work until he comes. And when he comes to get his own, he will have no problem recognizing me. My colors will be clear." #1211 - - Steve Flatt - June 4, 1995