

THE GODLY MAN

How to Become a Man of God



1 Corinthians 16:13–14 (NASB)

Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men,
be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK

The world needs Godly men. The church needs Godly men. The family needs Godly men. Men who are following God are the key to mature, healthy churches and families. God knows that, we know that and Satan knows that. Thus, he does all he can to keep men from being what God wants and needs us to be. Most men today do not grow up with examples of godly men in their lives. Thus, they struggle in their personal lives, their families and their church. Yet most Christian men want to be all God created them to be. They just don't know what that means. This book is written from my own study and growth as a man. I wrote these blogs to put into words what I had been learning and applying to my own life. I share it with you because most men go through similar struggles as they grow and mature. All that is in this book is based on God's Word. I pray these truths and principles from the Bible will help you as they have helped me.

Rev. Dr. Jerry Schmoyer

BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

Rev. Dr. Jerry Schmoyer is a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary where he received his ThM in 1975 and DMin in 2006. He served as a church pastor in the USA for 35 years until 2016. He is founder of Christian Training Organization where he leads marriage, family, and youth conferences, and is active in counseling and mentoring pastors. He has ministered to pastors in India since 2006.

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I. FOR MEN ONLY

RECLAIMING MANHOOD TODAY

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The Godly Man – I. FOR MEN ONLY

1. LIKE FATHER – LIKE SON!

Men are in trouble today! Despite there being roughly the same number of men as women in this country, the suicide rate for men is 10 times higher than women. Our life expectancy is 10% shorter. Ninety percent of all arrests for alcohol and drug abuse involve men, and 80% of the homeless are men. Six times as many men die of lung cancer as women, and twice as many die of heart disease. There is a reason for all of this.

Women recently have been going through a time of 'finding themselves.' There are books, seminars, and much information available defining, describing and explaining womanhood. Until recently, however, there has been almost nothing about men. Gordon Calbey in *Healing the Masculine Soul* says "Men don't know who they are as men. They tend to define themselves by what they do, who they know, or what they own."

The breakdown of our society today is rightly blamed on the breakdown of the family. The breakdown of the family today is mainly blamed on the breakdown of role of the man of the family. Many families are trying to reverse this trend and re-establish the family as the central unit in society with the man as the head of the family. However, men are having a very hard time, despite their good intentions, of knowing exactly what God expects of them and then being able to carry that out. Several years ago, I found myself in that very place. When I tried to answer the question, "What is a man?" I always came up short. God has been teaching me and leading me on a journey to reclaim manhood today. On the way I have discovered that most (not "some" or "many" but "most") men today are going through the same thing I am. That is comforting, but also scary. How can we be the Christian men, husbands and fathers God wants us to be when we aren't sure just what that is?

Unless you had a mature, secure father who was able to communicate what a man was and to affirm you in your growing manhood, you are probably like me: filling a role but not always sure of exactly what that role is. Mark Twain said, "A male is someone who starts pretending he is a man when he turns 12 and keeps doing it the rest of his life." Many of us keep pretending we are men, but down inside we aren't sure of it at all. We assume a "man" is whatever our father was, and that we aren't a man until we are just like him and he assures us we are a man. Unfortunately, too many of our fathers didn't exemplify Godly manhood and weren't able to make us feel accepted by them as men. Surveys show that less than 1% of males have or had at one time what they would call a 'close' relationship with their father.

Without a father to show us what a man is like or affirm the growing maleness in us when young, where do we turn? To mother -- with the result we turn further from finding ourselves as men and become dependent on women affirming us as men (thus our need to please women no matter what the cost and our deep fear of criticism or rejection)? To the world -- with the result we put on the veneer of some false image (super-jock, rebel, woman's man, computer whiz, macho tough-guy, etc.) and hide our real selves and emotions inside?

To our job -- to produce and impress ourselves and others with what we accomplish? None of those satisfy. They are all false substitutes. There is no substitute for a father in our masculine development, at least no substitute in this world. Fortunately, we have a Heavenly Father who is perfect and accepting and Whom we can turn to (if we don't read too much of our earthly father into

our Heavenly Father and feel distant from Him, too). It is only as a man turns to God that those little-boy needs can be met and filled in.

If you feel hurt or rejection from your earthly father, or an empty place where you would have liked to have unconditional acceptance and affirmation, you have to admit that to yourself and let the hurt, pain and anger from it come to the surface. You must turn all of that over to God your Heavenly Father and forgive your earthly father. After all, he is a product of his own father's failings as well. Let Jesus fill the empty places in your life. He suffered the ultimate Father-rejection just so He could heal you of those very things. He is the only solution. Pray about these things and allow God to do His perfect work in you.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

What is a man? How would YOU define a man? How does that compare to the world's definition of what a man is?

When did you feel like you became a man? What marked that passage?

How will you know when your son becomes a man? How can you help him now?

What hurts do you still carry from your father?

In what ways does your earthly father influence how you see your Heavenly Father?

BIBLE STUDY TO HELP WITH THIS

Read about Absalom, David's son (2 Samuel 3:3; 13:20 - 14:33). How did David fail as a father? How did this effect Absalom? What should he have done differently?

Why did David feel so guilty (2 Samuel 18:33)? Did he ever show this love to Absalom?

Read about Joseph, Jesus' father (Matthew 1:18-25). What kind of a man was Joseph?

What kind of a father do you think he made to Jesus? What did he do to help Jesus be secure to be His own person when He turned 12 (Luke 2:49)? How can you do that for your sons?

FOR WOMEN ONLY: What can you do to help your husband with these things? (I KNOW you read the article, in fact I'm sure many more women than men will read it!) Talk with him in a loving, accepting way about his manhood. Ask him if he sees himself as a man and how he would define a man (how will he know when your son becomes a man?) How has his father influenced him in this? Let him talk, patiently give him time to think and express himself. Reassure him that you see him as a man and give him specific reasons and examples of why. Talk about the good impact he is having on your sons as men. Be gentle in making suggestions, and do it in a context of love and acceptance. I can't begin to tell you how fragile a thing the male ego is (you probably already have discovered that!). Look at your husband as a little boy still needing his father to hold him on his lap and assure him of his love and acceptance -- but knowing that will never happen. Consistently pray for him, and check your expectations of him. Most women, without realizing it, have almost super human expectations of their husbands, and this just makes him feel like a failure. He cannot feel like a man if he feels he is a failure to his own family. Make him feel like a hero!

The Godly Man – I. FOR MEN ONLY

2. “O ABSALOM, MY SON!” (DAVID AS A FATHER)

There's no doubt that David was one of the finest, most Godly men who ever lived. He was truly "a man after God's own heart." There are many areas of his life where we would do good to learn from him and try to be just like him. However, there is one area where we can learn from him and try to not be like him. That is his role as father. David's relationship with his son Absalom gives a clear picture of the damage that can be done when a father-relationship is not strong and open. This can not only help us to be better fathers to our sons, but also can help us to better understand how our own fathers have affected our lives -- and what to do about it.

Absalom was one of many sons David had by his several wives (2 Samuel 3:3). It is humanly impossible for a man to meet his wife's needs when he has only wife, when that time is divided between many families and running a large kingdom on top, that is a sure formula for failure. David just never was close to his sons. He didn't have time, but the Bible is clear that God held him accountable for that lack. He COULD have taken time and had things different, as can any man today (or in past generations).

Our story starts with the repetition of a sad pattern which David brought into his family years earlier: forced sex that results in murder. Amnon, another son of David, fell in lust with his step-sister Tamar and through deceit raped her (2 Samuel 13:1-19). Actually, Amnon manipulated his father David into setting it up for him (2 Samuel 13:6-7). It seems David's children knew how to get what they wanted from their father, who perhaps gave them gifts instead of time and attention. David never suspected what was going on between his grown children. Amnon's reaction after the rape (2 Samuel 13:15-18) shows he was spoiled and indulged, with no godly manly traits to his name!

That could be the end of it, except David did nothing about it (2 Samuel 13:21-23). He was furious, but he took no steps to help either Tamar or Amnon. This really bothered Tamar's brother, Absalom. He was very close to his sister (proven by the fact he named his own daughter after her - 2 Samuel 14:27). When, after waiting 2 years, no justice came from his father, Absalom took matters into his own hands and killed Amnon (2 Samuel 13:23-33). David's message by not doing anything was that he didn't care. Actually, he did, but wasn't able to do what should have been done..

Absalom fled in guilt. David missed Absalom and wanted to be reconciled with him but for 3 years made no move to do anything about it (2 Sam. 13:34-39). He just put it off and time passed. Meanwhile Absalom wants to be reunited, and gets Joab to talk David into letting him come back (2 Samuel 14:1-23), but David refused to see Absalom (2 Sam. 14:24). That perceived rejection hurt Absalom. His need for his father was as strong as ever, but his respect for him was greatly diminishing.

After two years of waiting, Absalom again had Joab intervene. This time Joab didn't want to, knowing David needed to work this out on his own as a man and father. Absalom got his attention by burning his fields and persuaded him to intervene to bring justice (2 Samuel 14:28-32). Joab obviously sympathizes with Absalom in all this. However, when they were finally reunited again (2 Sam. 14:33), nothing happened to break down the walls that had been developing. Aside from a perfunctory kiss, the Bible account leaves a cold, empty, formal picture of two men going through the motions. Inside each loved and needed the other, but neither made the first move. Each

interpreted that as rejection from the other so neither wanted to expose themselves any more. A real marked change develops in Absalom from here on, though. He turns bitter against his father.

When a son doesn't feel his father's love and acceptance, he tries other things to prove he is a man. Absalom used his good looks (2 Samuel 14:25-26) and winning personality (2 Sam 15:1-6) to get attention and approval from others, trying to prove to himself he was a man and OK as a person. He turned to the world for power and prestige (2 Sam 15:10-11), even taking David's best counselor from him (v. 12). He tried to outdo his father to prove he was as good a man as his father (taking over his father's throne), even using sex to prove his maleness (2 Sam. 16:21-22) while trying to hurt his father at the same time. Absalom is totally obsessed by David's rejection, and it completely controls all his thoughts and actions.

You know how the story ends, Absalom is killed (despite all David can do to prevent that) and the kingdom is returned to David (2 Sam. 18:1-32). Instead of being glad, David is heartbroken over the loss of his son (2 Sam. 18:33-19:4). Perhaps guilt and failure contributed to David's remorse. In any effect, it is interesting that of all the good David must have accomplished in this decade of his life, the one thing that is recorded is his failure as a father to correctly influence or impact his sons. The heartbreak of this stayed with David his whole life.

Now while it is easy to see how David then, and our fathers today, can really make it harder for us in the present because of their perceived rejection of us, there is another side to the story. What about Absalom? He was a grown man with his own family (2 Sam. 14:27), but doesn't seem to turn to his wife for help. Nor does he turn to God. The only time he speaks of spiritual things is to use them to manipulate his father so David thinks Absalom is getting close to God and will give Absalom what he wants (2 Sam. 15:7-9). Sure, David didn't meet Absalom's needs as he should have, but then Absalom tried to force what wasn't there. He then tried to punish his father for not being the father Absalom needed.

What should Absalom have done instead? What should we do today about the hurts we have from our fathers? First we must honestly admit them, feel the pain of the, and acknowledge them. Then we must forgive our fathers for their part in them. To do this it is helpful to realize that they themselves are the products of poor male relationships as they grew up. If Absalom would have checked into David's background he would have found that David wasn't accepted by Jesse the same as his older brothers were (1 Sam. 16:8-11) and his brothers mocked and rejected him (1 Sam. 17:28-29). Obviously David didn't have any males in his life who accepted, affirmed him as a man, and taught him how a man is to show love and anger. This set the pattern for David with Absalom - he had never learned how to act to men in his family and treated his sons much the same as he was treated. Realizing this about your father will help you see he wasn't the perfect person who couldn't love you because you were so imperfect, but that he didn't show love because of how he was taught.

The only way to outgrow this is to forgive your father, stop trying to either earn his approval or hurt him back, and let Jesus heal you of it all. Spill it all out to God in prayer. Let your Heavenly Father remake you in His image. He knows. He's been through it all. Jesus suffered the ultimate Father-rejection -- on the cross! He knows what it is like, and because of what He went through He can heal you and reform you in the image of His own dear Son, Jesus. There is no other way to get free from the terrible chains from the past that bind and limit us. Jesus alone has the key to unlock you and set you free, and He is more than anxious to do it if you turn your past over to Him and let Him.

The Godly Man – I. FOR MEN ONLY

3. LIKE MOTHER – LIOKE SON!

There's no doubt about it -- Jacob was a mama's boy! Now it wasn't his fault, after all a boy must turn to someone for love and attention if he doesn't get it from his father. But I'm getting ahead of my story. First, let's gather some background information on this dysfunctional family.

Jacob was the son of Isaac and Rebekah. Although Isaac tended to be passive and Rebekah was a bit domineering, they seemed to have a strong love at the start. They were programmed for difficulties before they even met. Isaac grew up with a domineering mother (Sarah) and weak father (Abraham), something that is still common today. In his formative years Jacob didn't have the benefit of seeing his father fulfill the man's role in his family, and seems to have been especially close to and dependent on his mother. In fact, her death left such a hole in his life that the only way he could get over it was to fill it with his new bride, Rebekah (Genesis 24:67). However, it isn't a wife's duty to replace a mother in a man's life. That is a sure formula for trouble! Still, things may have worked out except....

One day Isaac faced a tough situation: stay where God wanted him and trust God for food in drought conditions, or take off and try and meet his own needs his own way. Now Isaac had seen his father Abraham take the latter option twice (Genesis 12:10-20; 20:1-18) in the same situation and "like father like son." Isaac, too, took off. One sin always leads to another and before long Isaac, like his father, had to make another choice: his neck or his wife's. Isaac, too, had Rebekah say she was his sister so, when she was taken to Abimelech's harem, Isaac would be paid instead of killed (Genesis 26:7-11). Can you imagine how this made her feel? A woman needs to feel protected and secure, that she is the most important thing in her man's life and he will do anything to take care of her. If not, she will take her protection into her own hands, like Sarah did. Sarah wasn't domineering until Abraham sold her out to protect himself, and I don't think Rebekah was, either. However, because of this she lost respect for Isaac and took meeting her needs into her own hands, manipulating her husband to make sure she was safe and cared for. This set the groundwork for the break between Isaac and Rebekah when Jacob was born.

Isaac was never able to restore his relationship with Rebekah and meet her needs as a husband must. He never saw his father handle this right and so was unable or unwilling to change the pattern. Thus, Rebekah turned to the next man in her life to meet her needs -- her son (Genesis 25:27-28). It seems Jacob ended up his mother's favorite by default. He wasn't as 'manly' as Esau (out-of-doors macho stuff, etc.) and therefore his father favored Esau and neglected Jacob, a very clear message that Jacob didn't measure up as a man! When his mother offered her acceptance naturally he jumped for it. What woman wouldn't try to make up for her husband's lack, and what boy wouldn't accept what love he could get? Still, that isn't the way God meant it to be. That wasn't the way for Jacob to turn into the man God wanted him to be. When a boy is closer to his mother than his father (and this is very common today), several things happen that aren't good for his manly maturity. For one thing, it develops a pattern that can be life-long -- needing a woman to affirm him as a man (and feeling incomplete without a woman in his life). Unknowingly he can expect his wife to 'mother' him and fill a similar role in his life to that of his mother. Also, growing up with his mother's view of men (not good at all) won't give him a right idea of what a man is, nor will he want to be a man if that means being like his father (whom he and his mother both reject for the same reason -- he doesn't meet their needs).

A man will never feel like a man simply because a woman tells him he is one. Only another man, either his earthly father or Heavenly Father, can do that work in him. If not, he will always stay dependent on women, while growing to resent their control, fear their rejection, and confusing the roles of wife and mother. As he grows this inner hurt turns to anger and comes out in occasional anger explosions which shock him and those around him. Some men continue to seek for male affirmation, turning to other men in homosexual relationships (I think this is why homosexuality is so prevalent today). Unless a mother is willing to release her son and the father willing and able to bond with him man-to-man by the time the boys start puberty, something will be missing that will emotionally hinder him the rest of his life, especially in his feelings of being a man.

That is what happened to Jacob. He grew up with no respect for men and probably no desire to be like the men he knew. He deceived and used his male images: his father Isaac and his brother Esau (Genesis 25:29-34; 27:1-37). He let his mother dominate and use him, hiding behind her skirts for protection and courage, using her manipulative methods instead of trusting God and standing for what was right like a man. As a result, he lost everything, including his mother. He fled for his life and never saw his mother again -- but he, too, following the pattern started generations earlier, married a strong woman like her.

Jacob needed Rachel's approval and support, her affirmation that he was a "good boy" and a man! Domineering women are afraid to submit to a man and need to keep control in their hands (if not total at least the right to final veto over anything they disagree with). Rachel lost respect for Jacob because he let her dominate him. Even though women try to dominate or control (at least to some extent), down inside they know it isn't God's way and need a strong man to lovingly not allow them to do so. If they can control their man, they will lose respect for him.

Never fear, though, our story turns out well. Jacob got out-manipulated by Laban and a series of events over about 20 years forced him to return home and work through things with Esau and Isaac. On the way he wrestled with God face-to-face. There is no woman to hide behind, no trick to use, nothing but standing and facing whatever comes. He took it like a man, one-on-one with the Creator of the Universe. As a result of being willing to die to himself and let God remake him in the image of his heavenly Father, Jacob's experience left him a changed man with a new name to show for it (Genesis 32:32). Facing his past hurts and present inability was difficult and painful, but he did it. You can, too, if you are willing to let God touch you and remake you into His image, however painful that may be. You must be willing to pay the price to become the man God wants you to be. Jacob couldn't change himself, no one can. But God is in the business of change. He alone can make you the man He created you to be. Your earthly father may not have, and your mother can't, but the Lord God Almighty can and will! He did with Jacob. Try Him and you'll be changed, too!

The Godly Man – I. FOR MEN ONLY

4. FATHER TO A PERFECT SON

"Father to a perfect son!" That may not sound like something you can identify with. What about this title instead: "How Can An Imperfect Father Raise A Son To Be Like Jesus"? Can you identify with that better? I sure can.

All right, so who is this perfect son with the imperfect father? You guessed it, the only One it could possibly be -- Jesus. When Jesus came to earth He voluntarily laid aside the use of His divine attributes in order to grow, learn and function just like any other human being (except He didn't have a sin nature). He did not coast through on His deity. The Bible says He experienced all we do, and learned obedience by the things He suffered in life. Thus, He needed an earthly father to teach Him to mature into a Godly man. Now none of us can choose our fathers, but in a way you can say Jesus chose His! That makes it all the more interesting to see what kind of a man Jesus would pick for His own earthly father, the one to whom He would entrust His growth and development. Joseph is the young man He chose.

Now the Bible is full of many poor examples of father-son relationships: David and Absalom, Isaac and Jacob, Jacob and his sons, etc., etc., etc. The best example of a good father-son relationship is that of Joseph and Jesus. You'll soon see why.

We don't know much about Joseph. He is never quoted in the Bible and very little is said about him. We see him mainly in our Christmas pageants when he follows Mary around like a shadow. He is more like one of the props than a person. The inn keeper has more of a part than Joseph, and there really wasn't an inn keeper in a small place like Bethlehem! Still, he is very special.

We first see Joseph when he is engaged to Mary, a legally binding contract. He finds out she is pregnant by the grape vine. She knows the baby is from God because 1) Gabriel appeared to her when she was fully awake, 2) she knows if she had sex with anyone or not, and 3) Elizabeth confirms it without any prompting by Mary. All Joseph gets to go on is a message in a dream. He had tremendous pressure on him to do what any 'right' Jew would do to show up sin and help put an end to immorality. He could accomplish that by having her stoned or publicly divorced, suing to get his dowry back. Marrying her was not an option for God's law forbid it and Joseph put God before Mary. In agony he had decided to privately divorce her, taking the financial, social and emotional loss himself so as to spare her from facing any of it. Now that's a real man! How many men today would take the loss themselves and do all they could to protect their wives if she turned up pregnant with someone else's child? How would YOU react? Despite his youth (most likely late teens) Joseph handled it like a real man.

We all know what a fine, Godly, committed woman Mary was. That goes without saying. Yet the fact that she responded so completely to Joseph's leadership shows something else about the kind of man he was. When Jesus was about 4 and they had settled into a home in Bethlehem (Nazareth was full of gossip about the early pregnancy so they stayed away from there until God sent them back). One night, after a house full of company all day (the magi), Joseph was told in a dream to grab what they could and head for Egypt immediately. What wife wants to move on 5 minutes notice, in the middle of the night, with a young child, and after a house full of company all day? Yet she believed and obeyed. God could trust Joseph to obey and so He directed His Son's

future through Joseph, and Mary trusted him, too. The return trip from Egypt and the place of their future home were all revealed to Joseph in dreams and Mary followed.

It was Joseph's responsibility to train his sons and teach them a trade. They all learned carpentry. By looking at Joseph's full sons you can see something of the man himself and what he built into them. James was the leader of the church in Jerusalem and wrote the book that bears his name. It focuses on the importance of godly living, treating others fairly, not being materialistic, enduring whatever happens by trusting God, and total commitment to live for him. All these things James got from his father. Another son, Jude, also wrote a book in our Bible. He had at least one or two more sons and several daughters.

Of all his sons, Jesus was the one Joseph was closest to. Not only was He his firstborn, but he was with him longer. The others married in their late teens, but Jesus stayed with Joseph another dozen years. Despite not being his physical father, the emotional ties must have been very strong. They were best of friends and talked about everything together. They spent 24 hours a day, 7 days a week together. Often they kneeled together in the carpentry shop to pray about the special future God had for Jesus. Together they sought God's will as to what that future was and when His ministry would start. Jesus was no mamma's baby, hanging around Mary all the time. He was known publicly as "the carpenter's son." They had everything in common. I bet you could even see some of Joseph in the way Jesus walked and talked! What better influence could a boy growing up have than to spend it with a father who loved and accepted him? What would you give to have had that? In order to go to the cross, it was essential to have such a start in life.

Still, Joseph knew his place. So did Jesus. When He was 12 He told Joseph, "Don't you know I must be about my Father's business?" That would have really hurt a lesser man. No father likes to see his son prefer another man to him, but Joseph was mature enough to handle it.

Picture the day Jesus hung up His apron, lay down His hammer, and left Joseph and the carpenter shop for good. Hugs and tears marked the end of their father-son relationship and the start of a Master-servant one. It was hard, but Joseph makes the adjustment. Joseph's main work in Jesus' life is now over, and Joseph seems to drop from the scene sometime about the middle of Jesus' ministry. God removed Joseph so Jesus would have to depend on His Heavenly Father 100%. He completely weaned Jesus off Joseph.

Why didn't God keep Joseph alive to see Jesus' whole ministry? It seems obvious. To have Joseph at the cross with Mary would have been too hard on Joseph and so God spared him that pain by taking him to heaven before it. I think, too, it would have been hard on Jesus to see his father there and watch him suffer. It may have tempted Jesus' resolve to go through with it all. I don't know all the reasons, but obviously God did for that's how He made it happen.

Joseph is a fine example of a Godly man and father. He put others first, was open and honest with his emotions, and spent the time to build himself into his sons. He left an enduring legacy in Jesus as well as the books of James and Jude. He wasn't perfect, but He could raise a perfect Son because He let God use him and work through him. That's the only way any man today can be the kind of father his sons need. Remember Joseph, think of him, make him your pattern and example. Ask God to build into you the masculine traits He built into Joseph. Don't look at the faulty father-son relationships around you, or even yours with your father. Pattern your relationship with your son after Joseph and Jesus. Real man can talk and laugh, hug and cry, kneel to pray and get up to pound nails together. Real men aren't real men unless they are real. Are you?

The Godly Man – I. FOR MEN ONLY

5. MEN AND FEAR

Jesus experienced fear. That's right, He was afraid! He was tempted in every area we are yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). Therefore, He must have faced fear. Why, days before the crucifixion, did He ask God to keep Him going to the cross if possible (John 12:20-28)? Why did He sweat drops of blood in Gethsemane the night before His crucifixion (Matthew 26:36-46)? Why did He cry, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" Yes, Jesus felt fear.

If Jesus, the ultimate Man, felt fear, why is it so hard for men today to admit to fear? Why do we cover it over with machoism, hide it behind a 'cool' exterior, drown it in alcohol, submerge it in overwork, express it as anger, or just totally deny it? When was the last time you said, "I'm afraid"? How do you think the people around you at work would respond if you said that? How would you feel about yourself? If Jesus faced fear, and reached out to those closest to Him for help (to pray with Him in Gethsemane), why don't men today admit to fear and reach out to other men for help?

Somewhere along the way we get taught that men can't show or admit to fear. We learn from our fathers that fear makes us inferior. In fact, in an unspoken way it is communicated to boys that any show of emotion is wrong. We are taught that to be a man is to be like a wooden Indian. We have no, or very few, role models of mature men handling fear. Others hide it, so we think they don't have it and if we do then something is wrong with us, so we hide it, too.

Before I get any further let me say that not all fear is sin. Like anger, fear can be sinful or good. Also, like anger, it is a motivator. Fear warns us to do something about danger, to protect ourselves and those we love. In that way it has a positive effect. However, when it causes us to doubt God and not put faith in Him as we should then it is sin. Call it worry, concern, or whatever, if it causes us to doubt that 1) God is in control of everything happening and 2) all that He does is guided by His love for us then it is sin. Just as with other mental attitude sins (like lust, greed, etc.), it isn't having the thought that is sin but what we do with it. The thought must immediately be turned over to Jesus so it doesn't become sin. Jesus didn't let the fears that attacked Him become sin.

Is it easier for women than men to turn their fears over to God? Let's take that a step back further: is it easier for women to admit their fears than men? To this I say yes. That is the first step in turning them over to God, but that doesn't mean it is easier for them to turn them to God. I do think men and women become fearful about different things. Men seem to fear rejection and criticism, what others think of them (or what they think of themselves). Many men fear losing people they love and being alone. Our male image and ego is very fragile. Women seem to fear that which threatens the security of themselves or their loved ones. Perhaps, too, it would be true to say that introverts are more open to fear. Those who are analytical, sensitive, or perfectionistic are more fertile ground for fear. Thus, it could be said that men who are introverts have the hardest time with fear (more predisposed to it as introverts) but less able to admit, face and work through their fears (as men).

Fears seem to be worse when they are built on a bad past experience. We men seem to do all we can to avoid situations that brought fear in the past. "Once burnt twice wary" certainly seems true. Other things we may face head on to conquer, but we seem to run from our fears. When we face two conflicting fears we really get into a bind. We can fear rejection by fellow workers by not

taking a stand with them while also fearing losing our job because we did take the stand. These fears really do a number on our health: stress, high blood pressure, heart problems, digestion ailments, back aches, etc., result.

There is no way to avoid things that bring fear. God just won't allow it. He will not allow man to remove everything that can bring fear. No amount of money, power, security or control takes away fear. God allows it to penetrate any defenses we put up because it is to motivate us to turn to Him. Instead of ignoring or trying to control our environment, God wants us to come to Him with our fears. That's what Jesus did in Gethsemane.

Fear becomes sin when it becomes stronger than our faith. The only cure is to put our trust back in God's promises that He will not give us more than we can handle (I Corinthians 10:13), He'll always be with us (Hebrews 13:5), His strength is sufficient for us (Philippians 4:13, 19), and all things work together for good for those who love Him (Romans 8:28). Remember, God has not given us a spirit of fear (2 Timothy 1:7) but His perfect love casts out all fear (1 John 4:18).

Learn to be sensitive to your fears. 1. **Admit** them, recognize fear is there. 2. **Realize** it is natural to feel fear. 3. **Discern** if it is to give you positive motivation to do something or temptation to cause you to lose faith in God (or both at once). 4. **Reaffirm** your faith in God no matter what happens. 5. **Depend** on Him to help you when the time comes. 6. **Keep** foremost in your mind positive, godly thoughts and not negative ones (Philippians 4:8). Fear is natural. We'll face it our whole lives. However, instead of it defeating us we need to learn to defeat it. Fear has been a good tool of Satan to defeat men, but it doesn't have to defeat you. Will you begin to admit and face your fears? Then "the truth will set you free" from them! That sure beats any substitute way of handling them!

MULL OVER THESE QUESTIONS:

What is the greatest thing you fear in life? Why do you fear it?
How were you taught to handle fear when you were young? Was that right or wrong?
What are some of the wrong ways you handle fear?
How can you teach your son to handle fear the right way?
Does your wife think less of you if you admit to a fear?
Do you think less of yourself if you admit to a fear?
What can you do this week to begin handling your fears better?
What is the best thing your wife can do to help you face & handle your fears?

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6. MALE ANGER

The quiet Saturday morning sounded like any other. The TV was on in the living room and a couple of lawnmowers could be heard in the neighbor's yards. All of a sudden several gunshots sounded in the back yard. Running to the back door, a wife saw her husband standing over his smoking lawnmower, rifle in hand, firing every bullet it had into their new, expensive lawnmower. What was wrong? What caused such an outburst from a seemingly quiet, steady, self-controlled man? What would happen next?

Has this ever happened to you? Oh, maybe it wasn't shooting a lawnmower. It could have been kicking a hole in a wall, putting a fist through a car windshield, a verbal attack on a loved one way out of proportion to what happened, or an uncharacteristically violent outburst out of the clear blue. Unfortunately, we can all identify with such an event. But what causes these things? What can we do to prevent them from happening again?

Male anger. What is it? What causes it? What controls it? Why is it more prevalent today? We see the outward obvious forms of it: wife-beating, child abuse, sexual violence, rape, beatings, gang violence, etc. We also see a rise in displaced anger in men in compulsive/addictive behavior: increasing use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco, gambling and sex. The most difficult to recognize and identify, though, is suppressed and internalized anger. Most men stuff their anger inside and it implodes, devastating the man and his family -- as well as his lawnmower! Until it explodes there is a slow but steady leak of the poison onto those around us: sarcasm, gossip, criticism, withdrawal, not reaching out in love, pointing out failures in another, keeping a mental record of other's failures, etc.

Very, very few men today grew up with a male image who knew how to handle anger correctly. Our male role models handled anger in a way that was destructive -- either to those around them or to themselves. Thus, we learn to either lash out violently or to stuff it and withdraw. As men we don't have example of how to handle anger, and we become afraid of it. As Christians we think we are never to feel anger so we stuff it down harder. We fear losing control of ourselves if we recognize it. We think we will be rejected for even honestly admitting it. We figure if somehow we were a better father or husband or Christian or employee others wouldn't do things to make us angry. All this nails the lid tighter and tighter on our anger until it all of a sudden explodes.

We learn the wrong ways to handle anger from other men, but other factors contribute to this. As men, we have often not learned to be in touch with our emotions and feelings. Thus, we can't label and handle them properly, nor can we communicate them to those around us. Too high expectations of ourselves (and others) combined with low self-worth and feelings of guilt, failure and incompetence magnify this. As time goes on it gets worse.

Moses is an example of this. In anger he killed an Egyptian, broke the 10 commandments tablets, and struck the rock twice instead of speaking to it. This kept him out of the Promised Land. He had a life-long battle with anger. He never defeated it but it defeated him. What could he have done about his anger?

The first step in correctly handling anger is to admit it, identify it. Ignoring it or stuffing it will never ever help. In the short run it will explode when unexpected, in the long run it will contribute to stress, high blood pressure, strokes, heart attacks, etc. This contributes to men having a suicide rate 3 times that of women. First, anger must be correctly labeled.

Then the root cause of the anger must be honestly sought. Anger is a secondary emotion which substitutes for a primary emotion that is harder to handle -- like pain, rejection, or not getting our own way. Notice closely and you'll see all sinful anger comes from some kind of hurt or rejection (which is pain, also). The sooner you can recognize the inner hurt and handle it the quicker you can diffuse the anger that masks the real problem. The only way to keep the hurt from turning into anger is to forgive the one who caused the pain. Without forgiveness the hurt will remain, and anger will come.

While doing this watch the big enemy of honestly confronting your anger -- fear. Fear of rejection, failure, losing control, having to face the hurt, not being a 'man,' etc., keep us from honestly facing our anger and hurt.

The key word to handling anger is HONESTY. Be honest with yourself and God about what is going on. Then you must be honest with the person causing the hurt/anger. This must be done in love, not to hurt back. It must be done with wisdom and patience. Usually, it is good to say something to the person causing the hurt - but not always so they hear it. Pretend they are there and tell them how they have hurt you, not in a way to hurt back but to get it out of yourself. Writing it down is also good. Again, it isn't necessary to give what you write to the person. Often getting it out of you honestly is more important than the other person hearing it, unless you think God really wants them to hear/read it. Pray first before speaking to the person.

So, if you see inside yourself the potential to shoot your lawnmower one day, follow these steps and gain victory over your anger. If not it'll shoot something more than the lawnmower, it'll shoot you!

HOW CAN A WIFE HELP HER ANGRY HUSBAND?

An angry man needs to know that his wife is on his side, loves and accepts him no matter what. She must:

- 1. Be his friend, not his mother.** He doesn't need a mother but a friend who will treat him and insist on being treated by him as an equal. You can't live for him. You can encourage him in his problem-solving but not try to solve his problems for him.
- 2. Appreciate him, don't nag him.** Especially don't nag about things that make him feel like a failure, like his ability to provide for his family. Tell him you appreciate what he does do. Be content.
- 3. Affirm him, don't criticize him.** Affirm him for what he is and what he does. Compliment him for his good points. Make sure he knows you love him for who and what he is, not just what he does.
- 4. Give him space, don't crowd.** No one likes to be pushed or controlled, especially men. Men are intimidated when their women can't accept them the way they are. Let him know you're satisfied and available to listen, then back off to pray and wait. Pushing him may cause him to make some exterior changes to get you off his back, or it may cause an explosion at you.
- 5. Give him time, don't rush him.** His anger built over years, even decades. It won't go away overnight.
- 6. Hold him responsible, don't be co-dependent.** Don't cover up for his anger or bail him out when it gets him into trouble. That doesn't stop the problem it just keeps him from facing and doing something about it. He must face the consequences of his own actions.
- 7. Give to him, don't withhold from him.** Don't leave him (except for your own or your child's safety). Love, forgive and support him. Don't put up walls. He needs your friendship, not your judgment.

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7. MALE SEXUALITY

This is a hard subject to write about, especially in an article like this. It's a subject much easier ignored and overlooked, but then that is the very attitude that has made male sexuality the problem it often is. No area so quickly and accurately cuts to the heart of who a man is as his sexuality. The deepest truths of our psychological makeup are revealed through our sexual response, what affects us and what doesn't, and how we relate sexually. Sex functions as a mirror. We meet ourselves in it, and often we don't like what we see. Men often feel they don't have their sex lives as together as they want others (or themselves) to think. We usually reveal only a small layer (the acceptable layer) of their actual sexual thoughts and lives. We feel that if others would know the truth, we would be thought of as either perverted or sexually dysfunctional.

Wrong sexual stereotypes start young and are reinforced as boys grow to men. What talking boys do about sex often does more harm than good. Sometimes Christianity contributes to this wrong stereotype by its silence on the whole matter, making talking about sex taboo. Thus, misinformation and ignorance about the role and function of sex grows. This sets fertile ground for pornography, lustful fantasies, and wrong sexual thought patterns. Parents teach children how to handle money, but not how to handle sex. As a result, men today often go around pretending they have it all together sexually, but in reality do not. There is much to be learned from our sexual choices and fantasies if we are honest and courageous enough to face them.

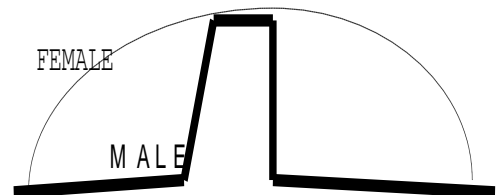
Although in our minds we know better, **we still seem to consider adequate sexual functioning as proof of our masculinity**. On top of that, we aren't really sure of what 'adequate' is. We know what we've been exposed to in the world isn't right, but what is? Any supposed sexual failures on our part inevitably damage our male identity. Much has been written and taught about a woman's sexuality and how it works, but almost nothing about men. Women assume one thing about their husband's sexuality, and the men assume something quite different. Usually neither is right. Sooner or later this causes problems!

Often men and women's view of sex has been influenced by exposure to **pornography** in some form. Actually, pornography is a fantasy, a substitute, an escape. Pornography for men is the same as soap operas and romance novels for women. Both are sexual, vicariously experiencing a forbidden fantasy. Both are self-centered and self-serving. In each, the underlying emotional needs and dynamics are much stronger than the physical reality of it all. Emotional needs more than physical needs make them appealing.

The same is true of **mental or physical unfaithfulness**. This usually has little to do with sex. The reasons go much deeper. They fulfill unmet emotional needs. These unmet needs must be honestly admitted, explored, and met in legitimate, Godly ways. Often the root causes go back to faulty childhood relationships with mother or father.

There is a common saying that pretty well summarizes the sexual differences between men and women. It is that **women give sex to get love, men give love to get sex**. Sex for a woman starts first thing in the morning as closeness is cultivated by small talk, touches, time and attention. Men turn on and turn off quickly, but for

a woman each is a slow, gradual process that men must be aware. Here's a place where you must certainly put her needs before his! Romance and attention are still very important, like when you



were dating her. That's why small talk is so important for her in the evening, it is her way of making emotional contact with you. If you don't take that first step anything past it will be much harder.

Pray together before sex. We pray before we eat, thanking God for his gift of this and asking Him to bless it to our benefit. Why not do the same for sex? After all, God created sex -- it was His idea! What's more, He gave it to mankind BEFORE there was sin or evil. Sex in marriage is a beautiful gift, symbolic of the oneness of Christ and His church.

I know I've been speaking in vague generalities here, and that can be frustrating. I feel it's the best I can do in an article like this. Please feel free to contact me for more personal advice or counsel if you'd like (Jerry Schmoyer, 348-8086).

WHAT CAN A WOMAN DO TO HELP?

Honestly admit to yourself any pull you feel to soap operas, romance novels, or any related type of sexual/romance fantasy. What emotional needs cause that to be appealing to you? Turn those needs to God for Him to meet in His time and way.

Do you have too high expectations of your husband physically, emotionally or spiritually? I think most women do. He will sense that and it puts extra pressure on him. It can make him feel less a success and this impacts all areas of his life. Reassure him often of your acceptance of him as a man in all areas.

Allow him to NOT want sex sometimes without your thinking something is wrong with you or him.

Make sure you do not fill the role of mother in his life. If you take on that role, or he puts you in that role, it will be more difficult to adjust to being sexual lovers at night. That's also true if you see him in a father-figure or father replacement role.

Remember how the sexual curve differs for men and women. Gently educate him to your needs. Don't assume he knows these things, men don't unless taught them.

Don't make his ultimate pleasure the only focus of sex. Pornography does that. Don't use that as your assurance of how successful the act was for you or him.

Remember, sex breaks down walls for women and they like this. But that can be threatening to men and they may withdraw emotionally during sex. Be patient and understanding. Gently talk to them about this later.

Pray for him and yourself in this area. Pray before sex, even if it is just to yourself.

If you have had sex with someone you aren't now married to that bond must be broken. If it was in a previous marriage, remember the government can only break what the government makes (the legality of a marriage). Only God can break the spiritual bond which is entered into by sex, with or without marriage (I Corinthians 6:16). Confess the sin (if it wasn't in marriage). Ask God to break the union physically and emotionally. Accept His forgiveness and carry no guilt. Don't ever let your thoughts dwell in it again.

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8. CALEB AND THE MALE MID-LIFE CRISIS

Caleb is one of the most overlooked men in the Bible. He was one of the spies who went in to check out the Promised Land (Numbers 13:30-33). Only he and Joshua had enough faith to trust God to defeat the giants for them, and as a result the people wanted to stone them (Numbers 14:10). Still, he held faithful to God. Caleb was a man of God. Six times we are told that he followed God completely (Numbers 14:24, etc.). Despite this, he had to suffer the negative consequences of the sins of others and also had to wander for 40 years with the rest. What was his attitude about having to give up the prime years of his life (early 40's to early 80's) because of other's sins? How did he handle not meeting his personal goals? What about how he felt seeing his family do with less than he wanted to provide for them? Caleb had some adjustments to make, but so did Joshua. However, Joshua was chosen to be Moses' replacement and spent these years in training and as second-in-command. Caleb was passed over by God for this promotion. How did he handle that in addition to everything else?

Evidently he handled it quite well for the Bible tells us about the excellent, godly children he raised. A bitter, self-pitying old man doesn't accomplish that! We know for sure that he made his adjustments well for when he finally did enter the land and was given first choice of which land he wanted, he chose the land where the giants lived (Joshua 14:6-15). He and his sons, by God's strength, drove out the giants that the whole nation was afraid of 40 years earlier.

Yes, Caleb was a fine man of God. I'd love to have a talk with him. I'd ask him, "How did you handle being held back because of the sins of others?" "What did you do to overcome thoughts of bitterness, self-pity or failure during all those wasted years?" "How did it affect you when Joshua was chosen over you?" "What was your attitude while the prime of your life was passing and your goals and plans weren't being met?" "Did it affect you as a man to see your family live on a lesser level than you wanted to provide for them?" Unfortunately, I'll have to wait a bit to ask those questions. Still, we can guess at what the answers must have been. Caleb saw God in control and was content being in His will instead of measuring himself by worldly standards for success. He adjusted his expectations and was content with what he had. All men need to do that as they grow older.

Several years ago, it really hit me that I was never going to pastor a super-church, be on TV or the speaking circuit, or write books for publication. Those were the goals we all had in seminary, for they mean success and God's blessing on a ministry. Many of my classmates have attained such things, and frankly I sometimes envy them if I'm not careful. But then I confess that sin of discontentment and remind myself that how God sees success and how the world sees success are two different things. As a man I want to rise to the top of my profession, provide the best for my family, make my loved ones proud of me, be important and productive. I've had to make adjustments as the years passed and those things didn't come. I'm in my 13th year of pastoring this church and love it. I know this is where God wants me. I've had to adjust my expectations or be frustrated, bitter, and feel like a failure. Most men must do the same. Seldom do we achieve more than we expected at the start, often it is less.

Not only must we adjust as to the quality we attain in life, we must adjust in the quantity we produce, too. As we age we just don't have the energy we once had. Our testosterone starts declining in our 20's and is down 50% by middle age. Eventually it drops to where we were at

puberty. We can't run as fast, compete at work with younger men, etc. When we try to keep up our bodies strive to produce more testosterone to meet our need but just can't. As a result, depression, nightmares, loss of memory, insomnia, boredom or loss of sex drive may occur.

Unfortunately, men are slowing down just when many women are starting to gear up. Men hit their physical and sexual prime in their late teens, but for a woman that doesn't come until their 30's (I've always wanted to ask God about His reasoning behind that!). Also, by the time a man is slowing down his wife is finally getting free from being tied down to house and children and looking for excitement, career, something to pour her energies into. By the time grandchildren come we find grandpa is the sweet, affable one who does the more "feminine" things like gardening while grandma has become more decisive, tough-minded and intrusive. Their roles almost reverse.

What does all this mean for men today? First, it means we must start off with the right expectations about what success really is, and we must make sure our children grow up with those same goals. We can't feel like a failure because we don't provide all we want to provide. That is God's choice to make. Also, we cannot get our identity as a man and human being tied up in our work or career. That's why men overwork and suffer the stress and heart attacks that come with it. (More about that in a future article.) As we age we must continually readjust so we are content in whatever state God has us (Philippians 4:11-13). If not we will blame God and get bitter, or blame ourselves and get depressed. If we push ourselves to do more than God has for us we will burn out. If we try to do what we did earlier in life we won't be able to do it. In this world where youth is everything it is a real skill to age gracefully, and that attitude starts in our 20's!

How about you? What is your definition of success? What are you doing now to help make those mid-life adjustments easier? In prayer ask God to show you where your expectations for yourself are above what He would have them be. Talk these things over with your wife. You may find the values of the world, and especially those of your own father, are influencing you in a negative way. God wants to provide peace and joy for His people, but if we don't make the necessary adjustments in our goals and values as life goes on we will lose them. You'll never find them in work or career or worldly 'success' anyway. You'll only find them in Jesus. He didn't rush and push. In fact, career-wise the world considered him a failure as a carpenter (he quit) and leader/teacher (his audience rejected him). We know He was a success because He did what God wanted, and that is the only way true success can be attained. Pattern your life after His to find true satisfaction and accomplishment in life!

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9. MALE FRIENDSHIPS

Jim Mosher and I were the best of friends in high school. We went everywhere and did everything together. He lived down the block. We were both on the wrestling team, football team and track team. On Saturday evenings we watched Red Skelton and did sit-ups in his basement. We walked to school together and both took the vocational-technical course. We were best of friends, inseparable. Then I was drafted into the army while a football injury kept him out. That was in 1965. I only ever saw him once since then. We live less than an hour apart, but we have absolutely no contact. What happened? We didn't argue, we just separated. Weren't we really friends before? Sure, we were -- the kind of friends men have: friends of convenience, location, and common achievement, friends one can walk away from and never see again.

That's not the only time that's happened in my life. In grade school it was my cousin John Guldin. In junior high my friend was Robert Raines. In the army it was Tom Palmer, and in college Fred Bluffington. In seminary it was Sammy Puckett. I could tell the same story about each friendship, for when that time of my life was over the relationship ended.

That's not how it was with my sister and her friends, though. She never lost contact with any of her friends. Our family still hears from Margie Patty, her elementary friend of 35 years ago. Although my sister died 9 years ago, I still know more about what her old friends are doing today than about mine! Why is that? Why were her friendships entirely different than mine?

To understand we must step back and have an overview of male relationships. The romanticized image of friendship between males has long been part of our country: men in their loyalty and resourcefulness, defeating the common enemy together (Indian fighting, foxhole mates, baseball team, fishing, same project at work, home-repair, etc.). Like the Lone Ranger and Tonto, male relationships are based on accidents of association, not special personality characteristics. Thus, they don't ripen into deep relationships. Also, when the association is broken so is the friendship.

For men, friendships do not come easily. They are complicated, rarely evaluated, and never talked about. After a man marries and has children, if friendships develop among men it is usually at work and stays within working hours. (That's what makes it hard for men to leave a job. The only male relationships they have are usually there.)

This is why the beer commercials are so successful. Men picture themselves having buddies like that: drinking together after the rugged soccer or softball game, reliving the key plays and enjoying one another's company, everyone accepted and fitting into this men's world. Does that ever happen? No! It never has been that way and never will be. Still, men think things were (or can be) that way and that's what sells the beer. Two men can sit in the same room 10 minutes without ever saying a word but in their minds they're buddies like in one of those commercials!

Men have a deep-seated need for friends, but there are many difficulties in men initiating and cultivating personal relationships. I must admit I don't have any close male friends. All my best friends (those I share personal and intimate things with) have been girls. I grew up in an all-woman world and so felt more comfortable and accepted by women. My sister Judy, my cousin Mary Jane, my friend from church Linda, and friends of recent years like Nancy Kremm and my wife Nancy, all are female friends.

I never learned how to make close friendships with men. We can work on a project together and enjoy each other's company. We can joke, play softball, discuss the Eagles, or many other things. But talk about my feelings and fears? Express my appreciation for and need of him as a friend? Share my failures and hurts and tears? Suppose I called one of the men in my church that I feel comfortable with and asked him to meet me for lunch one day because I miss his company and would like to spend more time with him than I have been doing? How would that go over? See what I mean. Now suppose I ask him to meet me for lunch so we can go over some long-range planning for church programs or some such thing and there would be no problem! This proves my point -- men's relationships are utilitarian, always serving some function or purpose. They aren't just for the joy of each other's company.

For men, friendships either just happen or they don't. If they don't fall in place men usually don't work at developing or pursuing them. Men just don't know how to do that without feeling (or thinking they are perceived as) gay, unmasculine, or just somehow different. Men work at hiding their real emotions, especially from other men. Men don't make commitments to each other. That's why relationships like David and Jonathan stand out so strongly. Gale Sayers and Brian Piccolo in "Brian's Song" is another exception that proves the rule. Apart from a few examples like there, men have no role models of how to develop male friendships. My son, Tim, from when he was young, always said he liked to have girlfriends because with boys he always felt like he had to compete with them in some way. I don't know where that comes from in men, or how to get rid of it, but it is a fact of life.

For another thing, men don't admit their problems to other men. I counsel many times more women than men. Men don't ask advice, even when lost while driving. It is "unmanly" to turn to others for help.

Is this lack of male friendship so bad, though? Why should a man bother having a male friend if he has a wife? Is anything lost by men not having a male friend? I think so. Even Jesus needed and cultivated male friendships. He had the 12 whom He invited to live and work with Him 24 hours a day. From them He had 3 specially close friends (Peter, James and John) to enjoy an even deeper level of intimacy (sharing the Transfiguration, etc.). Even closer to His heart yet was John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Jesus leaned on his chest during the Last Supper. (It is an unwritten rule today that men never touch other men outside of carefully understood gestures like handshakes, slap on the back, playful arm punch, etc.) Jesus needed them with Him, and wanted them praying with Him as He went to Gethsemane. It wasn't just because He wasn't married. A good male friend can be someone you can bounce things off of you can't bounce off your wife (sexual temptations, feelings of inadequacy, fear of failure, frustrations and hurts from your wife, stress of work, etc.). I think there is a place for close male friendships today. We all know that widows adjust to life much better than widowers, and I think this is one reason why.

Could this be why so many, many more men than women become workaholics, alcoholics, drug addicts, etc.? I'm sure it's one of the reasons women have a much easier time witnessing to other women than men have witnessing to men. If we don't develop relationships with other men how can we help reach them for Christ and help them grow spiritually? Is this why Christian manhood is often so much weaker than Christian womanhood today? I don't know the answers to all these things. I don't even know if there are answers. I do know, though, that this is an area worth considering. It's not easy being a man. It's harder being a man alone. Satan's strategy is divide and conquer, and I think he's done that pretty well with men. I'm not the only one he's done it with. It doesn't have to stay that way, though. Are you willing to pay the price to do this? I hope so.

The Godly Man – I. FOR MEN ONLY

10. DO WOMEN EXPECT TOO MUCH?

I'm a classic baby boomer. I was born in 1946, a not-so-subtle celebration of my father coming home from World War II. My era was populated with heroes who were larger than life: Generals Eisenhower, Patton and MacArthur. My generation was the first in history to be nurtured on Technicolor images. TV made its own set of colossal figures around which many of our expectations for manhood were built. I remember John Wayne, the Lone Ranger, Hopalong Cassidy, Randolph Scott, Sergeant Preston of the Yukon, Gene Autry and my favorite, Red Ryder. They became what true masculinity should look like to me. I acted out what I saw in TV. I was the good guy, dressing and acting like my heroes. I carried the same kind of gun. My backyard was the corral, my dining room the old home place, and the arm of the sofa was my faithful horse. Everything was simple and straight-forward. I wanted to be a cowboy when I grew and I knew just how a grown-up cowboy should act.

Then somebody threw me a curve ball! The rebellion of the 60's wiped out my old heroes. People changed. One of the changes is that women decided they wanted sensitive, feeling men. John Wayne was replaced by Alan Alda and Michael Landon. The trouble was, no one told men how to be like this. Divorce rates doubled. Roles blended and became obscure. People didn't know what to expect of others or themselves. Everyone was trying to 'find' themselves. This clash of images can still be heard today. The shock waves continue to rock marriages even now.

Think of your grandparents' marriages. What did your grandmother expect of your grandfather? It was clear to all the man was to be the provider and to be faithful to his wife. The woman took care of the inside of the home and the children. The man took care of the outside. The same was true of our parents' generation. Everyone knew what their roles were and what was expected of them. That just isn't true today. Wives are seldom satisfied with a man doing just what their father or grandfather did. What does your wife expect of you? What do you expect of yourself? I think one of the biggest problems marriages face today is the high expectations wives have of their husbands. Let me explain.

In the past marriage was one of several institutions where meaning was found and intimacy needs were met. Others included the church, neighborhood, extended family, fellow employees, etc. Today marriage is usually the only place where people can go for intimacy and companionship. That puts extra pressure on marriage to meet these needs.

In the 1950's and 1960's man was the physical provider and protector (John Wayne). In the 1970's and 1980's he was also to be the emotional provider (Alan Alda and Michael Landon). In the 1990's he is to have an equal share in child raising, too. This is a contributing fact to the great rise of the home-schooling movement today. The problem is that no one has trained men to be this new kind of open, feeling, emotional man. We still identify maleness with our fathers. Expectations for men have greatly increased: from their bosses, their wives, their children and themselves.

It isn't easy for most men to say, "You're expecting too much of me!" Usually we give the impression, especially in courtship, that we can and will handle anything that comes along. Our wives believe that, and expect us to always be on top of everything. God says men are to be the leaders of the family and this adds to the load. By keeping things hidden inside man gives the impression he is able to handle it all. Also, he believes it is his responsibility to handle everything,

like his father and John Wayne did. That just isn't true, though. No man ever handled it all, even though they gave that illusion. To admit and face one's inability to be able to be on top of everything is the first step out of this bondage. Even Jesus never made any claim to be able to handle everything that was expected of Him but constantly went to the Father for strength, wisdom and help. If He had to do that, certainly we must do that also.

It's been greatly freeing to me to realize I can't do all others expect of me, or that I expect of myself. I'm working on what expectations are right and which are too much. God will never let you be the perfect husband; you will never be able to meet all your wife's needs. He reserves that role for Himself to make sure she turns to Him instead of always to you. However, knowing that I can't and won't meet them all, nor do I need to, is greatly liberating. It frees me from always being a failure and allows me to be me. Check out expectations that are made of you. Does it seem your wife expects too much of you? What about your children? Mainly, what do you expect of yourself?

WOMEN: WATCH WHAT YOU EXPECT!

Women must constantly realize that most men are really little boys doing their best to act like men and fulfill a role they feel wholly unsuited for. The pressure of the responsibility of raising a family correctly, earning a living, and being what God wants them to be can be overwhelming. Men struggle inside as much as you and face the same fears and feelings. We just don't show them. Help us to express these. Ask "How did that make you feel" to get us to label and communicate our feelings. DON'T put more expectations on us, for we'll just try to meet them, fail, feel like a failure, and be more unable to do all we have to do. Remember, only God can meet your needs as a woman, mother and wife. If He chooses to meet those through your husband or in some other way (meet them inside you himself by His Spirit or put them on hold for a while) is His business. Don't expect your husband to meet them, only expect God to meet them. NEVER try to change your husband. Men had enough of that from their mothers and that isn't why they married you! Accept them as they are and pray for God to change them (or you -- or both!). It's not easy being a man today. Don't see them as someone who has arrived and is on top of things, see them as fellow strugglers, as brothers alongside you working together to grow to be all God wants you to be. Encourage them, support them, compliment them, love them, forgive them -- but never scold, nag, or make demands of them. Ask him sometime, "Do I ever expect too much of you?" Then LISTEN QUIETLY for however long it takes him to get it out. Don't defend yourself, just apologize and hug him!

MEN VRS WOMEN

When God created man something was missing, so He created woman to "fill up the empty spaces" (literal translation of Genesis 2:18). Man, being the more rational and objective, was given the role of leader and provider. Woman, being the more emotional and subjective, was given the role of caregiver. Each complements the other. Neither is superior to the other. They are equal but different. Listed below are some of the differences:

	MEN	WOMEN
MEETINGS DECISIONS	Preconceived idea when meeting starts, then argue their side until one wins. Structured debate...	Attempt to achieve consensus before voting, solve problems & develop opinions as open discussion proceeds. Free-flowing discussion...
CONVERSATION	Must interrupt, talk louder, force opinion. Assume if someone has something to say they will make it known. Quick to cut off, interrupt. To others: competitive Focus on content (report) Give local 'expert' higher status & more influence Quick to give solution to each problem. No patience for "whining"	Seek out other's opinions, invite others to talk, important for all to participate, all are drawn into the discussion. Hesitate to interrupt, esp. men To others: sensitive Focus on interaction (rapport) See all as equal, intimate Share troubles, not expect solution. If not able to say everything on their heart, they don't feel they have been 'heard.'
WORK, ORGANIZATION	STAIRCASE, clearly defined set of steps to be completed in order Plan all steps, complete step 1 before going on to step 2	JIGSAW PUZZLE, divide work as they go, deciding what needs to be done when get to that state of the process Start, develop as they go, then go back to change, add, correct, etc.
TOLERATE CONFLICT	Can put up with continuing personality conflicts and disagreements seemingly forever	Acutely uncomfortable when people clash, want to straighten it out without confronting anyone.
DISAGREEMENTS	A way of affirming independence Boys playing argue about rules, that's part of the fun	Threat to intimacy Girls playing quit when argument arises, relationships more important than rules
SUMMARY	Objective (do the job)	Subjective (close to the person)
	Competitive	Affirming
	Final Product most important	Process most important
	Goal: final product right	Goal: intimacy & relationship
	Product & Process over Person	Person over Product & Process

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11. WHY ARE WOMEN SO BIG ON ROMANCE?

Perhaps you've heard "The Seven Ages Of The Married Cold." It goes like this:

1st year of marriage: "Sugar dumpling, I'm worried about my baby girl. You've got a bad sniffle and there's no telling about these things. I'm putting you in the hospital for a general checkup and a good rest. I'll bring your meals in. I've already got it all arranged."

2nd year of marriage: "Listen, darling, I don't like the sound of that cough and I've called Doc Miller to rush over here. Now you go to bed like a good girl, please?"

3rd year of marriage: "Maybe you'd better lie down, honey. Nothing like a little rest when you feel punk. I'll bring you something to eat. Have we got any soup?"

4th year of marriage: "Look, dear, be sensible. After you feed the kids and get the dishes washed, you'd better hit the sack."

5th year of marriage: "Why don't you get yourself a couple aspirin?"

6th year of marriage: "If you'd just gargle or something instead of sitting around barking like a seal!"

7th year of marriage: "For Pete's sake, stop sneezing! Whatcha trying to do, give me pneumonia?" (source unknown)

Why does this make us smile? What is there in this that strikes a chord near home? Most married couples realize that things change as married life goes on. Women notice and regret that the 'romance' has gone out of marriage. Is this all right? Is it natural and inevitable? Is it avoidable? In this article we want to see just what this is all about from a woman's side and then we'll be able to understand what they need and how to provide it.

Ephesians 5:22-33 is the major passage on this subject. Please get a Bible and read it right now. Not the key words there. The woman is told to "submit" to

	MAN	WOMAN
NEED	PROVIDE, GUIDE	LOVE, SECURITY
DUTY	SACRIFICIAL LOVE	SUBMIT, RESPECT

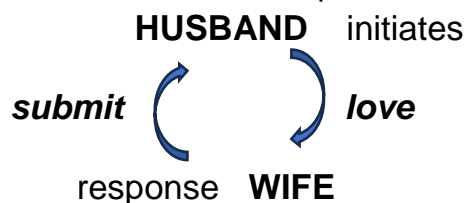
her husband. This word is a military word which means "respond". Woman is a responder (surely you've discovered that!). She responds to how she is treated. After all, she was created to "fill up the empty spaces" (Genesis 2:20) in Adam, so naturally God made her to respond to him. She was made strong in what Adam was weaker in (subjective emotionalism) while man was stronger in what she didn't need because he already had it (objective rationalism). Thus man is told to "love" his wife because that makes her feel secure so she can respond to him as she should. The Bible never tells a man to submit to his wife, nor does it tell a woman to love her husband! The chart above shows how these work.

The key element in making a marriage relationship work is the husband having his wife feel secure in his love. The Greek word for "love" is "*agape*" which refers to unconditional love, 'no matter what' love, 'love in spite of.' In contrast the other Greek word for love is "*phileo*" which is friendship, conditional love, love 'if' or 'because.' There is no security in that. I Corinthians 13 describes *agape* love. Read that chapter and put your own name in where the word 'love' is to see how you measure up! Paul says our pattern of love is Jesus. He says we are to love our wives "just as Christ also loved the church" (Eph. 5:25-33). That means our love is to be sacrificial, giving our very lives for our wives. He also says we are to love them "just as you love yourself" (Eph 5:33). We must

overlook their mistakes and errors as we do our own. We must show the same acceptance for them as we do for ourselves.

Joseph, Mary's husband, is a fine example of a man making a woman feel secure. He put her needs first (more about this in the next article). She responded with complete trust. Hosea, too, put Gomer before himself. He bought her back from slavery and prostitution and reinstated her as his wife. Boaz's unselfish treatment of Ruth won her heart, too.

Women are responders. How your wife treats you is in response to how loved and secure you make her feel. It is up to the husband to initiate this in love. Then the wife can respond with



submission. It isn't just outer submission that is referred to, but submission built on security and respect (Eph 5:33). Just as children are to respect and trust their parents, and based on that want to please them, so a wife is to want to please her husband because he meets her needs. Thus, it's up to the man to initiate the love and security in the relationship.

That's where romance comes in. It's a tangible way for a woman to see and know she is loved. Women give themselves to men in an entirely different way than men give themselves to woman. A man takes on a new addition to his world when he takes a wife. It is a new responsibility and commitment. For a woman, though, she completely gives of herself. She becomes open, dependent, vulnerable, totally affected by her man. That's why she needs extra security, extra reminders that she is loved and special and important. Romance does that. So does listening when she talks. Talking, to a woman, is key to intimacy. By sharing her thoughts in words, she is setting a secure foundation for what is to follow. Without that security a woman can't really give herself. So, men, listen to your wives. Romance your wives. Show them you love them in ways that mean a lot to them. Keep on doing the things you did before marriage when you wanted to convince her you loved her and she could depend on you. Unfortunately, that is hard for most men, for we draw back into our shells after marriage. Especially when harsh words have been said it is difficult to be the first to reach out. Apologizing isn't easy, nor is admitting our failures and sins. Our male ego gets in the way. But it's worth it. An investment in our wives is an investment in ourselves. We get so much more back from them than we put into them that it is really beneficial to us, as well as right and good, for us to make sure their needs for security and love are met. Peter says if things aren't right in our marriage even our spiritual life suffers (I Peter 3:7). Go tell her now how much you love her and how important she is to you. She'll be glad you did -- and so will you!

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12. ABRAHAM & SARAH; JOSEPH & MARY

ABRAHAM & SARAH: A LOVE AFFAIR GONE WRONG

I think Sarah has gotten a bum rap. She is usually used as the epitome of unsubmission and bossiness in a wife. Peter talks about her as if to say "if even Sarah can learn to submit, any woman can!" (I Peter 3:1-7). Now I'm not saying she wasn't that way, but when we imply she was always purposefully that way and go on to pity poor Abraham, we are missing an important lesson for husbands today. I contend that Sarah started off submissive and trusting, but Abraham 'burnt' her badly a couple of times and to protect herself she became domineering. Of course, that doesn't make her response right, but there is something we as men must learn from Abraham's sin. Follow along with me please:

When we first meet Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 11:27-30) they were called Abram and Sari then, but we'll use their common names throughout) nothing seems amiss in the relationship. In fact, she doesn't seem to have any problem leaving her home and family to go to an unknown land when Abraham says to pack up and leave (Genesis 12:1-5). It might be this that Peter refers to when he talks about Sarah being submissive to Abraham and obeying him completely (I Peter 3:1-6). But then there is trouble in paradise!

When they finally get to the promised land a famine comes. Instead of staying and trusting God Abraham takes matters into his own hands and comes up with an idea. They go to Egypt to take care of themselves, but because Sarah is still beautiful despite being in her late 60's Abraham is afraid pharaoh will kill him so he can take Sarah into his harem. Thus, he has her lie about their relationship to protect him by having her say she was just his sister (Genesis 12:10-20). How did this make Sarah feel? She was sacrificing to protect Abraham, when it should have been the other way around (see article 11 in this series about Ephesians 5:22-33). It became 'every man for himself.' A woman needs to be protected and feel secure in her man's love. Sarah did not have that. Thus, she built up walls between herself and Abraham. She still should have submitted and trusted in God, who really is in control. Wives today must realize that it is really God they are submitting to and trusting when they do so with their husbands. I am not excusing or justifying Sarah's sin, I do want to point out what happens when a man does not put his wife's needs first and have her feel secure and protected.

Could this have been a one-time slip with Abraham? I think not. Twenty years later he does the same thing when God gives him a retest. This time he fled to the Negev, but everything else was handled the same (Genesis 20:1-18). In fact, we see their son Isaac picked up this pattern and it continued in his relationship with Rebekah (Genesis 27:5-13) and even down to Jacob and Rachel (Genesis 30:1-3). I think it was a pattern in many ways. When a man puts his needs first and doesn't make his wife feel like a precious treasure who means more to him than he himself, it really makes it easy for a woman to take things into her own hands. That is just what Sarah did.

She took control of her own life for her protection (just as Abraham did when he led them into Egypt). She told Abraham to have an heir by Hagar (Genesis 16:1-3), then when she was jealous of and hurt by Hagar she had Abraham kick her out (Genesis 16:4-6). How hard and bitter she eventually became is seen in her laughing at God's prediction of a coming son (Genesis 18:9-15).

When Isaac was born it seems she used him to meet needs her husband wasn't meeting: feeling significant, needed and fulfilled (Genesis 21:1-7). This just taught Isaac to be submissive to a strong woman, a pattern he continued in and passed on down to Jacob.

Sarah even made Abraham send Ishmael away (Genesis 21:8-13). When God started working on Abraham about all this and told him to take Isaac and sacrifice him it seems certain he didn't tell Sarah (Genesis 22:1-3). Notice how this relationship had deteriorated, starting with Abraham's putting himself first. Men today can learn much from this. Would your wife say she can identify with Sarah? It's not too late to turn things around. Don't just expect your wife to submit and respect you, put her needs first so you deserve her trust and respect. God holds us men responsible for our marriages. Learn from Abraham.

JOSEPH & MARY: A LOVE AFFAIR GONE STRONG

Not all relationships are like Abraham and Sarah. One that was the exact opposite was Joseph and Mary. Joseph put Mary first. When he found out she was pregnant and they weren't married he could have sued for divorce and protected his reputation (some say he could have had her stoned). Then she would have taken the blame and disgrace for the rest of her life. A 'good' Jew would have done that. Joseph must have been terribly hurt to find out about her infidelity, still he didn't get bitter or try to take revenge. According to the law he could no longer marry her, but he intended to end it in the way that she suffered the least. He decided to protect her at the sacrifice of his own pride, reputation and finances (Matthew 1:18-25). For the rest of his life, he was mocked and laughed at for marrying someone carrying someone else's baby (John 8:41 implies they thought it was a Roman soldier who got Mary pregnant). Now how do you think Mary responded to this show of love and sacrificial protection? It's no wonder God chose someone like Joseph to raise His Son!

We always see Joseph putting Mary and her needs first (Luke 2:1-20). No wonder she wanted to go to Bethlehem with him, even though pregnant. No wonder she quickly obeyed when God, through Joseph (not through Mary), told them to leave for Egypt and then later to return to Nazareth where all the talk about them was ripe (Matthew 2:13-23).

I think Joseph is one of the finest men in the Bible, a great example for all husbands today. He stands in direct contrast to Abraham. That's why Mary stands in direct contrast to Sarah, too.

Who are you more like? Maybe I should ask first of all who your wife is more like? If she's more like Sarah what do YOU need to do to have her feel secure trusting you? If she's more like Mary -- great! But wait a minute before taking all the credit. Is she like Mary because of your sacrificial love and protection, or because she is trusting God despite how you are? These are heavy things to think about, things we'd rather avoid. However, if we are to be the husbands God wants us to be then these must be addressed and worked through. What can you do to make your wife feel more secure in your love? In what ways can you show your love for her more? What can you do to protect her better (from too hard work, from criticism she receives from out or inside the home, from disrespectful children, from too much responsibility, etc.). We'd all love to have wives like Mary. We can, too. The first step is for us to be more like Joseph!

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13. PASSIVE MEN – WILD WOMEN

Chuck Yeager in "The Right Stuff," when asked by his wife what was the only thing of which he was afraid, answered, "You!" Unfortunately, here is a lot of truth to this. There is often an awesome fear between men and women which undermines mutuality and togetherness. For the believer, Jesus removed all fear on the cross (2 Tim 1:7), but often there are fears we aren't aware of and thus don't turn over to Jesus. I think a man's fear of his wife is one of them. Please read on and hear me out before you make your decision about this.

WHY MEN ARE OFTEN PASSIVE: The pattern of strong women marrying passive men is nothing new. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are all examples. This is formed by parents in their children. When a woman dominates and a man takes a less active role the children see this as the way they should be and often grow up to repeat it. The man finds a strong woman like his mother who can and will take some (or all) of the decision-making burden and responsibilities off his shoulders. The woman, like her mother, looks for a man who 'needs' her, whom she can mother, and who will give her what she perceives as her freedom. People subconsciously look for these things in a mate.

Married life often magnifies this. The man comes home from a long, hard day of work and is emotionally and physically drained. All he wants is peace and quiet, to be left alone, and to not have any more demands made on him. The more demands his wife makes of him the more he withdraws. He feels criticized or unappreciated for what he does do and withdraws more. She wants to 'make contact' with him and talks about one little thing after another. He seems to ignore her and not hear what she says. She takes this as rejection. So, she becomes more pressuring and even abusive. He puts up solid walls (or stays out of the house, coming home late). Eventually she goes 'wild'!

The man then gets angry, too. However, he can only show his anger in passive ways: putting things off, putting up walls, ignoring her, being late, etc. He is like a child who can't win a war with parents can get stubborn and drag his feet. This affects their emotional as well as physical relationship. Men don't express their anger at their wives much because they were taught not to show anger at the other significant woman in their life, their mother. They never saw their father handle his anger correctly, either.

When this brings out direct anger from his wife, a man will often sit back and discount what she is saying because "that's just her anger speaking." Since she shows anger and he doesn't she must be sinful and he is righteous and justified in his actions. All communication ceases and more walls go up. Sometimes instead the man caves in out of fear of the wild woman (which is probably what he did with his mother).

WHY ARE WOMEN OFTEN ANGRY: So, why ARE so many women angry at their men? Part of it is training -- it's the only thing they've seen in their parent's marriage. There is more to it than that, though. Some of it comes from expectations not being met in marriage. They think from young on that if they marry the right man they'll be happy, satisfied, fulfilled. A man will solve their problems and meet their needs. The man promises this by word and action. He is attentive, romantic, and puts her first. Then gradually things change and she gets angry (frustrated).

It's not uncommon for a woman to battle a man tooth and nail for control, but when she 'wins' and gains control she then loses respect and becomes angry at him for letting her control him. He thinks he is giving in (being passive) to keep the peace, but really he is creating a never-ending war.

Secretly inside she wants him to be strong enough to control her when she can't control herself. She thinks, "If he really loved me he wouldn't let me get away with this!" When he doesn't control her she gets angry/wild. More women TODAY are chewing men up and spitting them out, all the while longing for a man to stand up to them and offer a credible counterpoint worthy of their respect.

When a man grows up being afraid of woman-anger (his mother, sister, etc.) he has a very, very difficult time handling that same woman-anger in his wife.

SO, WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

If you are a **woman** and you realize you have an anger problem realize you are not alone in it! Check out your expectations of him to make sure they are realistic (see Article 10 in this series). Give him some space when he needs it, especially when he comes home from work drained and empty. Put your needs on the back burner and minister to his, the return will be manifold! Go to God with your needs, He is the only one who can meet them anyway!

For **men**, admit that your passivity is just as wrong as her anger, and often a lot more dishonest. Understand her high expectations as a show of her need of you. Men must find a way to honestly convey their feelings -- not stuff them inside until they explode. Study yourself to become aware of the subtle ways you show anger and fight back: walls, procrastination, criticism, withholding love, etc. Be the man in your family, take control lovingly from your wife. Be more aware of what God thinks of you than what a person thinks of you.

Engaging an angry woman can be like boxing with someone who has long arms. If you "stay outside" trying to calm her down and backing off or giving in, she'll batter you. But if you're willing to take a few blows and move deliberately closer to her -- perhaps insisting that you sit down and work it out, and refusing to let her harsh words continue to hurt you -- both of you can win the match. A man must be emotionally healthy to "move inside" and take a few punches for the future good of all. Sadly, many men today bear deep wounds caused by demanding mothers or distant fathers. In confronting the woman he loves the man is ruled either by suppressed hostility toward his mother or the model of withdrawal from his father. Without an example of a father who handled his wife's anger correctly the boy grows up fearing woman-anger and will not express his true feelings so as to not make things worse.

'Wild' women long for a knight in shining armor who is both strong and bold enough to cut her free, so that she can be restored to what God wants her to be. A woman knows in her God-created spirit that she needs a man strong enough to help her face things about herself which she would otherwise avoid if left to herself. She needs a man capable and willing to wield the sword of truth with a manly sensitivity, that is, with the courage to cut where and when necessary, and with the love to do it with respect for her and submission to the God who has created them both.

When the man can't face the woman-anger he needs to recognize the spirit of fear and condemnation which is his enemy -- not his wife. He must battle his own insecurity and past hurts, not battle his wife. She just points them out by her anger and forces him to become aware of his failings. Remember, the woman is not your enemy but a victim of her own past hurts, just like you. She probably grew up afraid to trust a man with her needs.

A man must let Jesus control Him and depend on His strength in virtually every area of his life and marriage to have the strength to be the husband his wife really needs. Pray constantly for your wife, and yourself. Ask Jesus to show you how He's praying and interceding for your wife and pray for her the same way! Remember God will usually work through you to answer those prayers, so be ready to do what He wants when He wants it. It's not easy, but it's certainly worth it!

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14. DO YOU OVERWORK?

(Would Your Wife or Kids Say You Overwork?)

Overwork is common today! It is a killer stalking our society. It is really a problem, but it is a problem others applaud. Many today see overwork as what is expected to 'get ahead' and 'be a man.' Overwork is the fastest-growing killer of men today. It's getting worse all the time, not better. Men just seem to overwork. Before we can talk about what to do about it we must understand why it happens.

One reason we men overwork is the example and training we receive growing up. We see our fathers always being busy. We equate success and busyness in the workplace and even in the church. In school and college, we are rewarded for being productive perfectionists and devalued when we are not. The busiest people we know are looked up to as the most successful: the doctor and the pastor. Recently I've heard of an alcoholic doctor who is losing his 3rd wife, is an alcoholic, his kids are on drugs and his employees hate his guts, but his practice is making money and he's seen as a success in the eyes of his peers. Now if he were on his first marriage, had a good relationship with his family and employees, but was having to cut back office staff he'd be branded a failure. He throws himself into his work and that makes everything OK.

Another reason we overwork is that our male ego is closely involved with our work and activity. Men identify themselves by what we do. We are "Ken, the salesman," or "Bob the banker." The first thing men wonder about each other is what they do, for we evaluate each other (and ourselves) on this basis. A man without a job (unemployed, sick, retired) often doesn't feel like a full, functioning man. A man whose wife has to work (or earns more than him) often has a hard time accepting this. Thus, our identity is too closely tied up in what we do. If you don't think this applies to you, ask yourself how you would feel if you were paralyzed in bed and your wife had to take care of you for the rest of your life? How would that affect your ego and self-worth? (By the way, what kind of a patient does your wife say you are now when you get sick?)

Still another reason for our tendency to overwork is that we get our feelings of accomplishment from our work. We get a 'high' from a completed project. In fact, workaholism is like other addictions in that work is the drug of choice, and the adrenaline flow from pressure or accomplishment gives a high. The 'stash' is lists of work, projects started at home, things in mind that need doing, etc. Thus, in overwork a man feels successful and gets a high from his accomplishments.

His family feeds into his overwork for they appreciate and depend on the things he can provide. Also, his busyness is an escape from thinking about other things in life: personal relationships, fears, his mortality, etc.

Often we stereotype workaholics as yuppie types with their briefcase and car phone. That just isn't true. As with other dependencies, there are binge workaholics and closet workaholics (hide their addiction even from their families). Housewives and home school mothers can be workaholics as easily as a man. There are cleanaholics (always keeping the home perfect), careaholics (always doing for others), busyaholics (running around with a tight schedule), rushaholics (over committed), and others. This is done for the same reason: insecurity, guilt if not doing, earning other's approval, self-identity be what one does.

Signs to look for that show overwork include denial (rationalize it with various excuses), poor self-esteem (productivity becomes our identity), inability to relax (feel guilty when relaxing, need the adrenaline high from accomplishing something), perfectionism (expects too much of self), and isolation (works alone so not held accountable). Too much work brings physical symptoms, too. In Japan 10% of the deaths of working men are from "karoshi" (death from over work). In America this is called Epstein-Barr Disease, or Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. The immune system is suppressed and a man becomes open for infections, etc. His high adrenaline flow masks the problem for a while, but then depression, forgetfulness and mood swings enter. When hospitalized, the first thing a workaholic asks for is his brief case (his stash)!

What can we do to prevent this epidemic from claiming us? What should we do if we think we might have some of the symptoms? The cure is two-fold. First, ADMIT TO THE PROBLEM. The surface problem is overwork, but the root problem is what makes us turn to work: insecurity, fear of failure, unsure of ourself as a man/person, etc. Admit it as sin for it breaks God's principle to rest one day out of seven. It is idolatry, for we are to have no other gods before Him and work has become a god. The other part of the cure is to PLAN OPTIONS TO REPLACE OVERWORK. Find someone who can and will hold you accountable. Your wife probably won't do well at this. She isn't in the position to hold you accountable. Also, she helped allow it to get to this point. Each addict needs an "enabler" to keep his addiction going, and without knowing it many wives fill this role with their husband's work addiction by bailing him out, making excuses for him, accepting his excuses, and doing things he should be doing. Wives often are more part of the problem than of the solution. With a person who can hold you accountable, write down your goals and plan your hours to meet those goals. Often our goals are for family relationships but 95% of our time goes into work projects. Spend time praying and meditating, Seek to understand why you overwork -- what need does work meet in your life? Commit yourself to make some hard choices, to say "no" to things, to put your priorities into practice in your life.

Remember, Jesus himself only had seven 24-hour days in a week. He just had 3 years to complete His mission, and He was never rushed, never overworked, never too busy for God or people. God doesn't give you or me 25 hours of work to do in a 24-hour day, and He doesn't expect us to shortchange our family or our health to force more work out of ourselves. Enjoying and relaxing are legitimate and necessary. Let's do what we can to come in line with God's expectations for us!

WHAT CAN WIVES DO TO HELP THEIR HUSBANDS?

Pray for them, specifically and in detail. Pray that the need work is meeting in their life be met in other ways.

Pray for yourself, that God would show you how you enable your husband to continue in his addiction. Pray that God would use you instead to help meet his needs so he can be free from the compulsion to overwork.

Talk with him about this in a loving, accepting way. Keep in mind that his work is the rope he hangs onto to hold up his male ego. Don't go cutting that rope unless you first give him something better to replace it. Build him up as a person apart from his work. Taking away a cripple's crutch without teaching them to walk without it isn't helping them!

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15. HANDLING STRESS

Stress is a growing problem in American life today. *Time* magazine called it a national epidemic. Two-thirds of all office visits to family doctors are said to be prompted by stress-related symptoms. Stress is a byproduct of 20th century living. It is a sign of the times that the three best-selling drugs in this country are an ulcer medication (Tagamet), a hypertension drug (Inderal) and a tranquilizer (Valium).

Stress drains us. Think of a battery. When more is being drained out of it than is put back into it there is only one ultimate result: emptiness. Our batteries can be drained emotionally or physically. Often they overlap. Some short-term stress can be helpful for the extra adrenalin helps us focus our attention and motivate us to meet the situation. Long-term stress, though, results in burnout. Usually, one of the main causes of stress is overwork.

SYMPTOMS

How do you know if you are suffering from stress? Usually, you'll know. Sometimes we get so wrapped up in our own lives, though, we lose perspective. You are suffering from stress if you often or always: eat or talk too rapidly; rush people to hurry up and say what they are going to say; think of your problem, even when others are talking; take work home on weekends or vacation; feel guilty when you sit down to rest; pack more and more activities into less and less time; become easily irritated by little things; lash out at the people you love the most; sense a loss of self-esteem and intimacy with others; and feel a sense of loss of spiritual presence in relationship with God. Moses is an example of this. He did all the work himself (Exodus 18:13-26). As a result, He saw the Jews as a burden - His burden (Numbers 11:4-15; Deuteronomy 1:9-13). Then he lost it and struck the rock twice instead of speaking to it (Numbers 20:1-12). He was suffering from burnout.

Physical symptoms include cold hands (especially if one is colder than the other), indigestion, diarrhea, too-frequent urination, being susceptible to every cold or virus that goes around (weak immune system), shortness of breath, sore muscles in jaw, back or neck, headaches, tiredness, sleeping too much or too little, and becoming accident prone. Elijah, after the victory over Jezebel and the prophets of Baal, ran away in fear, wanted to quit and die, and collapsed in physical exhaustion (I Kings 19). God graciously sent an angel to feed him and have him sleep. When you notice a symptom, treat it like a red light going off on your dashboard. Don't ignore it!

CURE

Burnout from stress isn't a self-terminating illness like poison ivy. It will not change unless you change it. It cannot be cured by trying to take better control of circumstances around you. The more you try to control the circumstances the worse the stress will become. That's like using gasoline to put out a fire. The antidote for stress is four-fold:

ANTIDOTE 1: REPENTANCE. This is anti-denial, admitting there is a problem and it can't be changed from without. Admit you are draining more out of your emotional battery than you are putting back into it. Allowing stress to remain is a sin against the peace, freedom and joy God provides in Christ. It is NOT God's will for us. It will keep you from really doing the whole life work

God has for you (Acts 20:24). Life is like a marathon race, not a 100-yard dash. Many of our lives are like a series of dashes with collapses in-between. God wants consistency from us. Confess it if you haven't been consistent because of allowing too much stress to result in burnout.

ANTIDOTE 2: REST. When we carry burdens that God hasn't given us to carry, we cannot expect Him to help us carry them. When we do ask for His help He just tells us to drop them. He'll only help us carry things He wants us to carry. Make sure you are only carrying what God wants you to carry. That way you'll have rest. When we pursue our own aims thinking they are God's aims we lose our rest and peace (Hebrews 4:10; Isaiah 26:3; 30:15; Psalm 37:8; Romans 8:6). Paul said he had to stop trying to please men in order to be a true servant of God (Galatians 6:10) and often we carry extra burdens to please others, impress others, or earn their approval.

Think of it like this. God is like a warehouse and we are warehouse men. Each burden that comes along we unload on Him. When we become the warehouse ourselves, placing each burden on ourselves, it will weigh us down and crush us. Don't be the warehouse, that is God's job. Just transfer the burdens to Him!

The second most stressful day in Jesus' life was when John was killed. Jesus received the news, along with the report Herod was after Him. Jesus knew what happened to the forerunner would show what would happen to Him. Before He could work this through the disciples returned from their missionary journeys anxious to fill Jesus in on all the good things that happened, but crowds gathered so they couldn't talk or even eat. They sailed across Galilee to get away and handle all that had been happening, but the crowds followed and Jesus spent the rest of the day teaching, healing and feeding the people. The disciples became jealous so Jesus sent them home by boat. The people wanted to make Him king by force for more free food so Jesus hid from them. He spent the night in prayer and intimacy with God the Father. Many times, Jesus withdrew, hid, or slipped away to pray. Often He stayed up all night praying. That was His only way to keep the stress from getting to him.

Stress can ruin your health and peace. I read somewhere a list of things to do to be sure to have a heart attack (often the result of stress and burnout). This is what it said you must do: never say "no"; insist on being liked by and try to please everyone; never delegate responsibility; never have a day off; volunteer for all the extra work you can; and never leave enough time to do things or get places so you'll always be in a rush. It's our choice if we burnout or not. However, it's not God's will for us, nor is it necessary.

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16. FATHERHOOD

There are fine examples of fathers in the Bible (Joseph for example) and bad examples (Jacob, Eli, Samuel and David for example). What makes the difference? Sometimes there seems to be a very fine line between being a success or a failure as a father. Every man wants to be a good father, but not everyone knows how. Many don't even know just what it means to be a good father. We often become the kind of father we had. As we think about these things in this article I want to use a question-and-answer format. Read the question. Answer it to yourself, write down the answers, or go through it with someone else (your wife, your children, another friend, etc.). It is designed to help you think your way through this subject and come to your own conclusions. Enjoy!

- 1. Describe your father in one sentence.**
- 2. What is the BEST thing your father did for you as a child?**
- 3. What is the WORST thing your father did for you as a child?**
- 4. In what ways did your father treat his son(s) differently than his daughter(s)?**
- 5. How does it affect a man when a son is born?**
Is this any different than when he has a daughter?
- 6. What does it mean to you to be called the "head of the family"?**
- 7. Do you think too much responsibility is put on men for their families today?**
Does the father get too much of the blame for family problems?
Who should have the primary responsibility for raising the children: father? mother? both shared equally?
- 8. Is there more expected of you as a father than there was of your father?**
In what ways?
Is this right or wrong?
- 9. What do men feel most adequate about as a father?**
- 10. If children grow up and rebel, does that mean there must have been a problem in the parenting process (is it your fault or your child's fault)?**
How much is the free will choice of the child and how much the result of how he was raised?
- 11. What is the main role a father has in the development of a son?**
Why do many men feel more responsible for the raising of their sons than their daughters?
Is this right?
During which stages or areas of development is a father most important to a son?
What is the hardest part about raising a son?
What is the most important part about being a father to a son?
How much open affection should a man show to a son?
- 12. What is the main role a father has in the development of a daughter?**

Why is it easier for most men to show love to a daughter than a son?
During which stages or areas of development is a father most important to a girl?
In what ways can a father find needs met in a daughter that his wife should meet?
Is it possible to cause a daughter to be too dependent on her father?
Why is this wrong?
What are the warning signals?
What should be done about it?

13. If you are a stepfather, how does that compare to being a father?

What is the hardest part about being a stepfather?

14. Who should come first, a man's wife or his children (whose needs should he put first)?

15. Does the fact that are in the image of God in your children's eyes (as they see and relate to you they will probably see and relate to God) put extra pressure on you?

16. How do you handle your failures as a father?

Is it ever possible for anyone to ever become a perfect father?

Why doesn't God ever let any man become a perfect father?

17. What word of advice would you give to someone about to become a father for the first time?

18. What is the BEST part about being a father?

19. What is your LEAST ENJOYABLE part about being a father?

20. In what ways are you still like your father?

Which are good (and should be kept) and which are bad (and should be changed)?

21. In what areas have you grown beyond your own father?

22. In what area should you pray about improvement as a father and exactly what should you pray for?

22. On a scale of 1 to 10 where would you rate yourself as a father?

Where would your wife and children rate you?

I haven't given you a lot of input this time. Hopefully thinking through these questions and applying the answers to your own life will be revealing and helpful. Ask God to use these things to your maturity and His glory.

The Godly Man – I. FOR MEN ONLY

17. ARE WOMEN REALLY MORE SPIRITUAL THAN MEN?

I think if a vote were taken in many of our churches today the majority would say that women are more spiritual than men. Their higher numbers (quantity) and often more open expression of their faith (quality) cause it to seem they are more spiritual. I think it seems that way to men even more than women. But are they? Are women more spiritual than men, or do they just express their faith in a different way? Because men are in the more subdued minority, are they really less spiritual?

By comparing the spiritual practices of men and women we can see how some men can feel spiritually inferior to women. For one thing, men aren't able to attend as many Bible studies and meetings as their wives, and since men often equate spirituality with 'doing' they think they fall short. Also, men don't read like women do (women read 80% of the Christian books published). Then, too, men don't pray like women do. Women seem to feel more comfortable praying out loud. Men's prayers are direct memos to God, short and to-the-point. Women tend to show their emotions more in prayer, and go into greater detail. Unfortunately, we often consider that makes women spiritually superior. However, if you look at Jesus' and Paul's prayers in the New Testament you'll see they are also very utilitarian and nothing flowery, just like men pray today. By looking at these standards, it can seem men aren't as spiritual as women. In reality, however, just because their spiritual expression is different doesn't mean it is inferior.

Men often have unrealistic expectations of themselves as the spiritual head of the family, and failure to meet these will make them feel a failure. We picture the Norman Rockwell view of family devotions -- the perfect family seated at the dinner table with all eyes fixed on dad while he reads from the family Bible. From two-year-olds to teens, all are transfixed on father's masterful enunciation and enthusiasm for the biblical text. What usually happens when we try to do this, though, is that the two-year-old spills his milk all over the family Bible and the teenager sits with arms folded, smirking and finally responding by saying, "This is boring. Can we go yet?" The truth of the matter is that a father who does anything of a spiritual nature with his kids is light years ahead of the pack in today's world.

Also contributing to the myth that men aren't as spiritual is the fact that many church programs are more geared to meet women's needs than men's needs. Thus, men feel left out or that their failure to respond is their fault. The church as an organization is often overly female-dominated and female-influenced. Flowers, gowns, quiet music, poetry, dressing in nice clothes, and use of best manners are often taken as being feminine and many men feel uncomfortable in those surroundings. Compare them to the surroundings and activities beer commercials picture 'typical men' in and you'll see what I mean.

As a minister I am keenly aware of the image I portray to the men in the congregation. Often the image of a pastor is not something men can identify with. Pastors on TV are usually portrayed as effeminate old men totally out of touch with reality. Most men can't comprehend what a minister does with his time all week. When we were first married Nancy assumed we'd have Bible study all day every day, that was her perception of being in the ministry. When a woman looks up to her pastor as spiritually what she would like her husband to be she puts an unrealistic and unfair burden

on her husband. If he feels this it just makes him resent the minister and that makes him feel less spiritual. Many men have had poor experiences with pastors or churches in the past and that makes them extra sensitive to comparison. Godly male role models are very rare today.

Some men are uncomfortable with the Christian life because it is so different than the male world they function in. There is no clear game plan. Decisions are made as they come, depending on the leading of the Holy Spirit. Submission, love, servanthood, patience, and putting others first are the traits that are recognized. Men often like to have things planned, organized and well-structured so they know what they are to be doing when. Christianity just doesn't work this way at all. I read somewhere that churches that emphasize God's control, power, sovereignty and holiness are more attractive to men while those which emphasize God's love, grace, mercy and compassion appeal more to women. I don't know how true this is, but I do believe there is some basis in it.

So, are men less spiritual than women? NO! They are different, but not less spiritual. Realizing that has really freed me up and removed much guilt from me. I used to feel if I couldn't pray or worship, share or witness, cry or hug, or spontaneously gush like my wife or other women whose walk with Jesus I admire, that something was wrong with me. Knowing I can be ME and do these things the way that comes naturally to me is very liberating. Realizing God loves and accepts me in my less demonstrative, more down to business way has taken a heavy burden off of me. If you are falsely laboring under that load, drop it! God made us different, but not inferior. You can see this in Joseph and Mary (God revealed His will for the family to Joseph every time), Aquilla and Priscilla (she was very outgoing and he quiet, and God accepted each of them equally), and others. That false guilt can really defeat you and take away your joy. Don't let it. Don't try to be someone you aren't. God knows and accepts you just as you are (Psalm 103:14). Isn't that great?

QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU THINK THIS THROUGH:

1. Do you ever feel spiritually inferior to your wife? What do you base that on?
2. What are the main differences between your and your wife's prayer & devotional life?
3. What different spiritual needs do you and your wife have?
4. In what ways do you and your wife express your faith differently?
5. Who feels more comfortable in your church, you or your wife? Why?
6. What can you do to help other men feel more comfortable with their spiritual lives?

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18. ARROWS IN THE HAND OF A WARRIOR

*Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat-- for he grants sleep to those he loves. Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gate. **Psalms 127:1-5***

I've always been fascinated by arrows and how they were made. The analogy between children and arrows has always interested me, too. Children are compared to arrows in Psalm 127. This analogy applies to the forming of the child/arrow as well as the sending of out of it/them. I'd like to share a few thoughts about the later with you.

In archery the release is all important. You must relax, apply all your energy, focus and release. If not done perfectly correct the whole flight will be affected. The same is true with children. As home schoolers we spend much time raising/forming our children, molding them into the image we want. Arrows are made to be released to go to their destination, or they are useless. Releasing our children, too, is an all-important aspect of raising them. Without doing it right growth will be stifled and stunted. Studies of Christian youth show that one of their greatest problems in life is freedom from parental control. Ask yourself: did your parents release you smoothly or are you still struggling to be free?

Why is it so hard for us parents to let go? Probably because we are afraid we haven't done a good enough job and they may fail. Ask yourself another question: how mature and competent were you when you felt the need to be released by your parents? Releasing our children leads to their maturity, and it won't come as long as we hold on. We can't wait until they have it all together! Sometimes we 'use' children to meet needs in our lives which should be met in other ways: significance, meaningful relationships, vicarious accomplishments, etc.

Letting go is something we must do over and over, from the moment of birth on. It is an attitude we must form and apply daily, even hourly. We must constantly be weaning them from dependence on us to dependence on themselves and God. This is a moment-by-moment process which starts inside us but is shown in the role we play in their lives.

One more thing about the release: when an arrow is shot it leaves the string. There are no strings attached: no more demands, manipulation, control, guilt, or self-centered expectations.

So, the arrow is formed and then released. But what is the target? What are we aiming at? A well-formed arrow and good release fails if we aren't aimed at the right target. The target is Christ-likeness, not high-test scores, musical accomplishment, or athletic ability. Being the man or woman God wants them to be is our goal for our children.

Thousands of years ago the invention of the bow and arrow changed the face of warfare forever. For the first time a warrior could impact a battle scene from a great distance. Similarly, our children are the only messages we'll send to a world we'll never see. They are the only provision we have for impacting a world at a distance. May God grant us the strength to draw our bows to the full and the wisdom to release our arrows with practiced skill. I want my arrows to hit their mark for God. As time draws to a close on this darkened planet, surely every arrow must count!

The Godly Man

II. ROADBLOCKS TO CHRISTIAN MANHOOD

BEING MORE LIKE JESUS THE MAN

By **Rev. Dr. Jerry Schmoyer**

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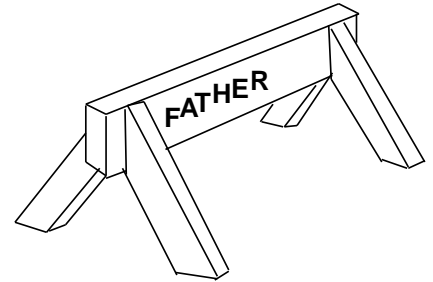
1. Father's Influence
2. Mother's Influence
3. Career influence
4. Unrealistic Expectations
5. Handling Emotions
6. Sexual Distractions
7. Expressing Spirituality

The Godly Man – II. ROADBLOCKS TO CHRISTIAN MANHOOD

1. FATHER'S INFLUENCE

TO THINK ABOUT: Describe your father in three words.

Men are in trouble today! Their suicide rate is four times as high as for women, life expectancy 10% shorter, comprise 80% of the homeless and 90% of all arrests for alcohol & drug abuse. By attacking men, Satan undermines the family and with it the church and our nation. This series of articles is to help Christian men to remove that which keeps them from being all God wants them to be.



To begin with, ask yourself: "What is a man?" How would you define a Christian man? Since that is our target, it is important we know what we are shooting at. If you don't really wrestle with that question you won't get very far. Personally, I like Mark Twain's definition: "A male is someone who starts pretending he is a man when he turns 12 and keeps doing it the rest of his life." That's how I usually feel, but recognizing that helps. Also knowing that I'm not alone in feeling that way helps, too. Often men feel like they are the only ones struggling, that everyone else has it all together and can somehow sense they struggle. Satan really uses things like these to isolate and defeat men today.

Back to our definition of a man. Gordon Dalbey in "Healing the Masculine Soul" says: "Men don't know who they are as men. They tend to define themselves by what they do, who they know, or what they own." When men meet, the first thing they want to know is what the other man does. That's our identity -- but it really isn't! We must do much better than that in defining Christian manhood. Actually, it will take this whole series to accurately answer this question. Still, it must be answered. How will you know when your son becomes a man? What will you tell him (by words or actions) about manhood? How can he know when he becomes a man? Other cultures have had a tradition that marks the change from boy to man: bar mitzvah by the Jews; Indian rites, African puberty rites, etc. What do we have in this country? first cigarette? first beer? first sexual encounter? All these are sins! There has to be something better? What I look for in my sons is their being able to function as mature Christian adults on their own in their God-given male role as father and husband (specifics in later articles).

There isn't much in our culture that nurtures or encourages boys to become men. The role models and influences are all against it! School is more for girls than boys. Ninety-five percent of those labeled 'learning disabled' are boys. In a typical classroom a female teacher expects neatness, quietness, manners and self-control: things that come more naturally to girls than boys. To make it harder on boys, girls mature faster than boys and therefore do better in school. At church it usually isn't much different. Women teach much the same as in school. Quietness, kindness, sacrifice, cooperation and love are the traits that are valued. At home a boy is usually in a woman's world, too. Mothers, baby-sitters, nursery school, etc. - it's all female. (We'll look at this roadblock next). No wonder many men (including me) feel more comfortable around women than men!

Even for those boys who do have fathers in their homes, there isn't always a good manly influence. Often the father is gone a lot working. That's another roadblock we'll look at. Keeping busy means men don't have to get involved and relate emotionally to their family, and they can even feel they are fulfilling their role as 'provider.' A recent survey showed that less than 1% of men today have or had what they call a close relationship with their fathers. Without that boys find a substitute

for maleness: Rambo macho tough guy, computer intellectual whiz, athlete, rebel (crazy hair & dress), etc.

Boys MUST have a mature Christian father to show them what a man is. They also need a man to affirm their manners. In fact, the way a boy (or girl) sees his father is the way he will see God. No wonder so many of us struggle with a picture of god who is either too busy, too distant, or too perfectionistic. A boy will assume his father is a prime example of mature manhood, no matter what he does or how he acts. Whatever the father is, the son will want to be. I guess that's why it's hard for me to see myself as a 'man.' So much of what I was taught (by example) a man should be when I was a boy I reject, and will never be that way. Therefore, I'll never be like my boyhood image of 'manhood.' My job now is to substitute it with a more sound, Biblical, Godly picture. That's what led to doing this series.

David is a prime example of how a father not affirming his son's maleness will cripple the son. To be fair to David we must point out that his home was lacking. His father forgot about him when Samuel came to crown a king. His older brothers cruelly mocked and rejected him when he brought them food in the army. As a father he wasn't close to his sons. He was a success in his work/career, but not his family. When his daughter Tamar was raped by her step-brother Ammon (2 Samuel 13) David didn't do anything, losing respect in Absalom's eyes. He took matters into his own hands and killed Ammon, then fled from his father. David wouldn't forgive or be restored. Joab gets Absalom back to Jerusalem but David still won't see him in person. Years later a forced and half-hearted reconciliation takes place. Absalom, in his pain and bitterness, dedicates his life to proving he is a man by getting back at his father and replacing him on the throne. He almost succeeds, but is killed. Then David mourns deeply for his son. If he'd have shown that love earlier Absalom's whole life would have been different!

A good example would be Joseph, Jesus' step-father. He gave Jesus up to God when he was 12, but they spent the next 20 years together at home and in the carpentry shop. Imagine the talks they must have had, the close camaraderie and friendship. That's what Jesus needed, and why God gave Him a father like Jesus. His other sons, James and Jude, were excellent men of God, too. Ask yourself: who are you more like: Joseph or David? Who are your sons more like, Jesus/James/Jude or Absalom?

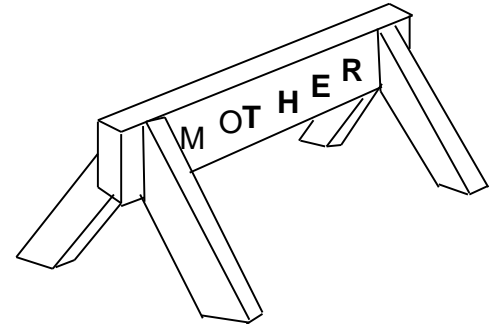
What's the solution? Be honest enough to ask yourself tough questions about these things. What is a man? Are you a man? Where do you need improvement? What influences have formed you into the man you are today? Realize you aren't the only guy with a past. Your father had a past, and so did his father. You must honestly (and without bitterness) come to grips with the impact and failure of your own father. Feel the pain and rejection, don't cover it up. Men are much better at avoiding emotions than facing them. Forgive your father, remembering he is a victim of his father and so on. Turn it all over to Jesus to heal you. Let Him fill the void. Commit yourself to pay the price so you don't pass these things to your son, though. Make sure you know what the price is, what steps you must do to be the Christian man God wants you to be. You must also know what substitutes and obstacles keep you from doing this (hiding emotions, fear of failure, hiding behind being busy, blaming others, giving \$ & things instead of self, etc.). Sit down with your wife and ask her if she sees you as a man and why. Ask her what she'll look for in her sons to know when they become men. Together pray and ask God to make you the man He wants you to be. He can and will do it. After all, His goal for all of us is to remake us in the image of Jesus, and He is the ultimate man's man!

The Godly Man – II. ROADBLOCKS TO CHRISTIAN MANHOOD

2. MOTHER'S INFLUENCE

TO THINK ABOUT: Describe your mother in three words.

The old saying is that boys grow up to marry women like their mother. There's a lot of truth to this, because boys are often dependent on their mother to meet their needs. When they are too old to let her 'mother' them they often look for a mate to fill the same role. Oh, at first they'll say their wife isn't anything like their mother. Just the opposite, they'll tell you. But as time goes on they find she is more and more like their mother. Why is this? What causes this? In just what ways can a mother put roadblocks in the path of her son's male maturity? To answer these let's look at the life of Jacob and his mother Rebekah.



ABRAHAM & SARAH Our story starts with Abraham, who set the pattern for his son who passed it on to his son. Perhaps it really starts with Abraham's father Terah -- then we could say it starts with Terah's father. Wherever it really started, we'll begin by looking at Abraham. Sarah trusted Abraham and followed him from Ur. However, to save his own skin in a famine he told her to lie about her relationship to him. She was taken into Pharaoh's harem, but Abraham was safe. When God gave him a retest on this he did it again, this time in Philistia. Thus, Sarah realized she'd have to look out for herself, that she couldn't trust Abraham to look out for her because he was only looking out for himself. She became a strong, domineering woman and Abraham a weak, passive man.

ISAAC AND REBEKAH Isaac married a strong woman like his mother (Genesis 24). She replaced Sarah in Isaac's life (Genesis 24:67). He followed his father's pattern and fled when a famine came, also saying his wife was just his sister to save his own skin (Genesis 26:7-11). Rebekah, too, lost respect and trust for her husband and ran her own life, looking out for herself.

JACOB When Jacob was born Rebekah continued this same pattern. He was her favorite and she dominated him (Genesis 25:27-28). Isaac, meanwhile, preferred the 'macho' outdoorsman Esau. Jacob was rejected by his father for not being 'man' enough. As Sarah had with Isaac, Rebekah used Jacob to meet legitimate needs of hers which her husband wasn't meeting: needs for meaning and acceptance, to feel important loved. This never works, though. It doesn't really meet the need for the mother, and is devastating to the son. In fact, it is emotional incest. Mothers today (especially home-schooling mothers) are often subtly lured into having their children meet needs their husbands aren't meeting. Women whose needs aren't being met by their husbands must take those needs to God and to Him alone.

Think of how this affected Jacob. He didn't want to be like his father (and who can blame him), but being like his mother wasn't right either! His view of maleness must have been very poor, for that was the source of his rejection and pain as well as his mother's. Thus, he became emotionally dependent on his mother to meet his need of approval and acceptance. A woman cannot meet a boy's need for male acceptance. It is better to have it unmet than for the woman to try and meet it. Still, a first a boy clings to what she offers for it is better than nothing. Later, though, he has a harder time breaking free to be the man God wants him to be.

Jacob therefore grew up in a woman's world and was more comfortable around women and woman-type activities and conversation. There was no Godly male to challenge him to become a

man, to affirm his growing maleness, to encourage him to become a man of God. Jacob's father didn't call, and his mother didn't release him. He became weak, dependent, manipulative. He copied his mother in deceiving and scheming to take care of himself. He stole Esau's birthright (Genesis 25:29-34) and later even the blessing (Genesis 27:1-38).

RACHEL When he had to flee because of his trickery, Jacob ended up with Rachel. She became his mother replacement and took over the same role in his life that his mother had filled. She was dominating (she stole the household idols and lied to her own father, deceiving him to get her own way; she traded sex with her husband with Leah to get some mandrake plants when she wanted them). Jacob went along with all this for he needed her approval and support. He had to be a 'good boy' so 'mommy' didn't get angry at him! How often that same pattern is repeated today!

The strange thing about it all, though, is that a woman loses respect for a man she can dominate! She will fight every attempt of his to be a man and do all she can to control him (at least in some areas where she is afraid to trust someone else) but when she does she loses respect for him. Secretly she needs him to be strong (yet gentle) enough to take control from her for she can't give it over. She needs someone to help her control herself for she is unable to do so on her own. Men don't understand this, and if they do they don't know how to get control back, for usually it's been going on for generations.

THE SOLUTION Is there no way out? There is! A male must come to the place where he is committed to become a man and act like a man. He can no longer be controlled by his mother/wife's approval or disapproval. He must do what is right, what God wants, and not just what she wants. He can no longer be dominated by fear of his mother/wife's rejection and anger. Satan uses this to mislead too many men, starting with Adam. Unless this happens there is no way he can have a mature, satisfying relationship with his wife. His spiritual, emotional and sexual relationship with her will be influenced by the mother-role he continues to allow her to have.

Usually, a male takes this step when challenged ("called out") by other men to fulfill his God-given role as a man. If no other male does this, God Himself will do it! Jacob was forced to return home, leaving Laban who out-tricked him. In Esau he meets a situation he can't manipulate (although he tries by giving him many presents) or sneak out of. Rachel can't get him out of it. He must face his fear of Esau, the guilt of his deceit, and the consequences of his sin against Esau all by himself. He is forced to become a man. He turns to God in prayer (Genesis 32:9-12), then wrestles with God (Genesis 32:22-32), not willing to let go until God remakes him. That is very manly act: a grown-up-man-but-still-boy wrestling with the God of the universe! There is no woman to hide behind, no tricks to pull. He goes one-on-one with God. As a result, a real change is made in Jacob. God even changes his name to Israel (Genesis. 32:32). He is willing to pay the price to be what God wants him to be. He desires to fulfill his God-given role as a man, whatever the price and cost may be. He wants to do what is right and best, not what is safest and easiest. He takes the first step to becoming a man. His life is never the same.

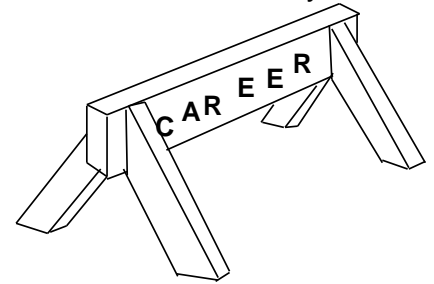
God can and will do this to any man who allows Him to do so. He won't force, though. Men, perhaps what you are going through is God's call to you to stretch yourself, to become a man, to grow to your God-given potential as a man of God. A strong mother's influence can be a real roadblock to Christian manhood. But it can be overcome with God's help. It's up to you!

The Godly Man – II. ROADBLOCKS TO CHRISTIAN MANHOOD

3. CAREER INFLUENCE

TO THINK ABOUT: Define 'success.'? What does it mean to you to be 'successful'? How will you know when you are successful?

Why are so many men so prone to overwork? Why is workaholism, overwork and the stress from it, and burnout such a major problem among men today? I think it's because men tend to define their worth by what they do instead of who they are. That's the usually the first thing they ask each other. That's why retirement is often so difficult an adjustment. That's why unemployment can be so devastating.



GOD ORDAINED WORK While it's true that God created work and designed man to work (Genesis 2:8-15; 3:17-19), He did not create man to overwork. Jethro's advice to Moses when he was working is still good for us today: set limits and share the load or you'll burn out (Exodus 18). We'd do well to heed those words of warning today!

WORKAHOLISM Alcoholism, drug abuse, gambling and workaholism all share common characteristics. There is a physical (in work it is the adrenaline high) and emotional (in work it is the avoidance of other activities including relationships and the sense of accomplishment) addiction. Addicts keep their stash handy (in their briefcase or at least in their mind), ready to haul out when needed. Remember, workaholics don't have to always be working. A workaholic is one who uses work to in some way escape other things in life or to give meaning/purpose that should come from other areas. If it is done regularly or occasionally it is still workaholism.

When are these needed? When it's hard to relate, cope, or just feel good about one's self the temptation to run to our stash and get a temporary high from work and accomplishment. We are trained to do this in school and college, where being a productive perfectionist is highly rewarded. We grow up with the Puritan work ethic. We even use Bible verses to support it. "He who doesn't provide for his family is worse than an infidel" (2 Thes 3:10-12), "He who doesn't work shouldn't eat" (1 Tim 5:8). All those who 'succeed' in life, our main examples, are those who work long and hard. We admire that in our culture. To be busy is to be important, or so society thinks! How better can men avoid being close to their families, relating in a personal way, spending time facing their own problems and emotions as well as those of others in their family than by being busy working to provide! But it's a cop-out, an escape, avoidance of what matters in life, what really makes a life successful!

We as men are trained from little on to see ourselves and our value by what we accomplish, what we do, the grades or paycheck we bring home (they're the same thing, really). Many even mistakenly feel that is the main contribution of a man to his family - to provide financially (busy at work) and take care of the house (busy at home). It can be very hard on a man's ego when he can't do it all and his wife has to work to help out.

Cain obviously valued himself by the work of his hands (Genesis 4:1-5). Nicodemus was afraid to publicly stand up for Jesus because of his career being in jeopardy (John 3:1; :13,50; 12:42; 19:39). On the other hand, some like Matthew, Luke and Paul gave up everything to follow Jesus. This doesn't just mean financial security, but job identification, worldly standards of success, and male ego needs.

WOMAN CAN BE WORKAHOLICS, TOO Men aren't the only ones that have trouble with this. Woman can, too. If a woman has a husband who is too busy to meet her needs she can turn to other ways of having them met: children, fantasy (romance novels, soap operas, gossip) or business themselves. They can become compulsive cleaners or homemakers. They can get overly involved as caregivers, helping anyone and everyone they can. We'll see more and more of this in women if men continue in the direction they are going.

CHARACTERISTICS OF OVER WORK When one has a compulsion to work that he doesn't control, that usually opens the door for other compulsions, too, such as smoking, drinking a lot of coffee, eating too much or the wrong kinds of food, being addicted to a certain hobby, etc. Of course, like all 'holics,' workaholics will at first deny it, even to themselves. They will lie and deceive to protect their addiction and to hide their stash (supply). Men who overwork are usually characterized by insecurity and self-esteem problems. Ask yourself this: if you were paralyzed in bed for the rest of your life, how would you adjust? Of course, no one would like it, but some just couldn't live without having to DO something to feel self-worth. Our families love us for who we ARE, we love ourselves for what we DO (that isn't right).

Another characteristic is an inability to relax, feeling guilty when we aren't doing something useful (as if our only value as human beings is when we are turning our something worthwhile). Thoughts are often dominated by work, especially lying in bed: what we've done or what we need to do. Workaholics set high standards and deny themselves pleasures.

The result of this, though, is breakdown. In Japan it's called "karoshi" (death from overwork) and it accounts for 10% of working men deaths. In America it's called Epstein-Barr, Yuppie's Disease, or Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. It breaks down the immune system which opens one for all kinds of other problems and diseases.

THE CURE The first step to any cure is to **admit to the problem**. The problem is within us, not in circumstances or others. "I have a problem. I'm afraid of failure or rejection, I'm unsure of myself as a man, I hide in my work and use that to prove my worth. I neglect my family and other relationships." Admit this to yourself and also to God. Confess it as sin (I John 1:9). Workaholism is sin against God's peace and priorities, and against our families.

Then, **learn to accept yourself for who you are, not what you do**. There is real freedom in this, but it doesn't come easy. Let others see and accept the real you so you won't feel you have to impress them with what you can do. Let God love you and accept you for who you really are, not what you do. Enter into His rest (Heb. 4:10; Isa 26:3; 30:15; Ps 37:8; Rom 8:6). The peace of Christ can only dwell in your hearts when we completely abandon our personal desires in order to put Him first. "THY kingdom (not MY kingdom) come; THY will (not MY will) be done." Galatians 6:10 says "If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ." Who are you trying to please by work: your family? others? yourself? God?

Remember to **pray in detail** about this (Phil 4:6; Lk 11:10). Ask God for His peace (Phil 4:7; Jn 14:27; 16:33). Reprogram your thoughts from work to relationships (Phil 4:8) for this is where true success in God's sight lies. Learn to relax and enjoy it, as Jesus did (Matthew 14:13). Learn your own limits. Discern between what really MUST be done and what doesn't really have to be done, especially at the expense of personal relationships and personal growth. Learn to put off unimportant work and to delegate work (2 Tim. 2:2; Ex 18). Focus on developing relationships. All these things take lots of prayer to be able to do.

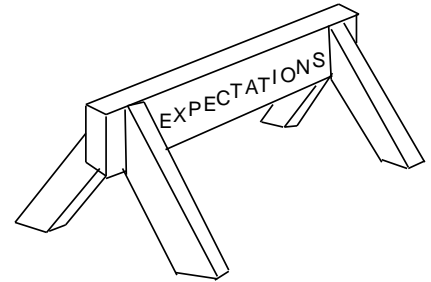
If necessary, **build supportive and caring accountability** to someone who will watch your life and ask the honest, tough questions you need to be asked. A wife is no good for this. Find a mature Christian man who understands and will work with you through this.

The Godly Man – II. ROADBLOCKS TO CHRISTIAN MANHOOD

4. UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

TO THINK ABOUT: What did your grandmother expect of your grandfather as a father and husband? What about your mother of your father? How does that compare to what your wife expects of you?

JOHN WAYNE TO ALAN ALDA I'm part of the first wave of baby-boomers. I was born right after World War II and I grew up with heroes who were larger than life: Generals Eisenhower, Patton and MacArthur. As a young boy I had my own set of heroes: the Lone Ranger, Hopalong Cassidy and Gene Autry. I remembering wanting to grow up and be like these cowboys. I'd wear a white hat, ride a white horse, and protect women and children from the bad guys in black. Truth and justice would always prevail. Then I'd ride off into the sunset and look for other helpless people to protect. I had it all figured out. I knew exactly how to act and what to do as a man. Lines were clearly drawn. It was a no-brainer!



But then someone changed the rules! During my teen years the rebellions of the 60's wiped out my old heroes. John Wayne was out. Alan Alda and Michael Landon was in. All of a sudden men were supposed to be sensitive, feeling men who could relate. However, no one told men how to make this change! Men didn't know what to expect of themselves or others. Just being a provider and keeping away from major sins (ones that would embarrass the family) was no longer enough. Divorce rates doubled and tripled. Roles of men and women and blended and became obscure. Everyone was trying to "find" themselves. The shock waves from this are still with us. Do wives expect too much of their husbands today -- or not enough? Do men expect too much of themselves -- or not enough? What does God expect of men? Does He expect more of us than we do of ourselves -- or less? These are important questions.

EXPECTATIONS OF MEN TODAY John Wayne is dead, replaced by the new Alan Alda type caring, sensitive man. Today our wives want both: the strong, silent provider and protector who is always there as well as the caring, approachable, sensitive, open emotional male. The trouble is that when they want John Wayne we are being Alan Alda, and vice versa. Add to these roles the others a man is given and it can get overwhelming. Men are expected to be spiritual leaders, guiding our families in devotions and spiritual growth. We are to be child care experts, able to care for children from birth through the teen years and cheerfully sharing that workload with our wives. We are to be amateur psychologists, always able to analyze our children's current fears and angers and knowing exactly what to do about them. We are to be home repairmen, keeping everything in running order and maintaining our properties in top condition. We are to be financial experts, able to pay our bills on time as well as invest for college and retirement in the proper funds. We are to provide fun when the family wants to have fun, discipline when things go awry, guidance and direction when the family drifts, and encouragement when times get tough. We are to be part romantic lover, part handyman, and part junior mother. We are to be always available, always in a good mood, always ready to listen or give answers (we always seem to get these mixed up, giving solutions when we should be listening, or not saying anything when we should be giving opinions). If we fall short in any of these roles we are stamped as not committed to our family, not 'walking with God,' not having right priorities, or not being a good enough manager of our time.

As other relationships and support groups fail, more and more is expected of the family. People used to have close, supportive relationships among neighbors, extended family (parents, uncles, siblings), and even at work. Our society today is that these relationships have become shallow surface relationships at best, leaving the family to meet all our needs. I'm not saying that is wrong, for the family is the foundation of everything else in God's plan. I am saying it's going to take a bit for families to catch up, to get 'on line' to meet these needs.

DO WOMEN EXPECT TOO MUCH OF MEN TODAY, or are these legitimate expectations? Personally, I hope they're not realistic for I myself just can't meet them! They're fine for goals and something to shoot for, but to label myself a failure because I don't do them all and do them right seems too much to expect. I am to be in the role of God in my family, for God leads and provides through me. Yet I know God will never let me function so well that my family won't need Him. Being a jealous God He will make sure I fall short so that they need to keep turning to Him instead of me. I don't think God expects as much of me as my family does. He knows my limits and weaknesses and seems to accept them (Psalm 103:10-14). I am to be moving in the direction of better meeting all these expectations, but can't let the fact that at the present I fail undermine me (Phil. 3:13).

DO MEN EXPECT TOO MUCH OF WOMEN TODAY, the flip side of this question, is important, too. If we were honest we would admit we do. We expect them to be part mother, part seductress, part nurse and part financial and spiritual consultant. In addition, we expect full time house keeper (cleaning, cooking, shopping), full time teacher and child care provider, and full-time friend and lover. We expect them to comfort us, encourage us, pick up after us, follow through on all the details we miss, remind us, draw us out emotionally, and always be quick to forgive us. That's not a job description I'd like to live under, either!

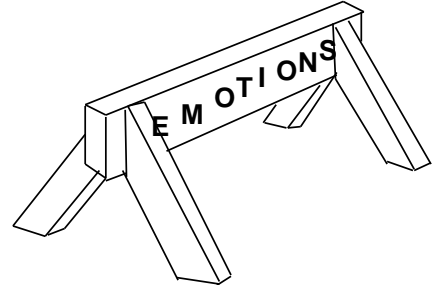
WHAT DOES GOD EXPECT OF MEN TODAY? All the passages about husbands in the Bible focus on relationships: with God, wife and children (Ephesians 5; Colossians 3; I Peter 3; etc.). They don't say anything about being the first to put up the storm windows, driving the latest model car, or impressing the secretaries at work. Financial provision is important, but way down on the list of priorities. Being open and honest, loving and caring, giving and getting emotionally, these seem to be the things God expects of men. We don't need to have all the answers but we do need to keep turning to Him for them. We don't have to be able to do everything, but do need to do the things our wives and children need to be all God wants them to be. This is more an attitude than a work list. It goes back to Jesus' command to being a servant (Mark 9:35; 10:43). If we are to be in the image of God in our family, then that means being a servant like Him (Jn. 13:16; 15:20). It means washing feet (John 13). It is an attitude of "Ask not what your family can do for you but what you can do for your family." It's not the comfortable check-list or projects to accomplish we men are so comfortable with, it's an attitude of putting others needs first and doing our best to meet them, whatever they may be. It means caring and trying, laying down our life for our family, just as Jesus did for us. This is what God expects, for us to be servants in deed and attitude.

The Godly Man – II. ROADBLOCKS TO CHRISTIAN MANHOOD

5. HANDLING EMOTIONS

TO THINK ABOUT: How did your father handle his emotions?

I grew up hearing (verbally or non-verbally) “big boys don’t cry,” “big boys don’t ...”. Boys couldn’t hold hands when walking to school, boys couldn’t like sewing, cooking or poetry. Boys had to keep their emotions hidden. I had some of the world’s best teachers in that at home: my father, grandfather and uncles. My TV heroes were the same way (The Lone Ranger, John Wayne, Superman, etc.). Women seemed to like this and considered it a manly strength. Then all of a sudden somebody changed the rules and men were supposed to be open, emotional and sharing. Alan Alda and Michael Landon became what women wanted in men. The trouble was, no one taught men how to make the switch! Almost overnight I was supposed to express my feelings and emotions, be sensitive, apologize and even cry! I’m not saying that that isn’t a better way to be, but I am saying that I’m still trying to make the switch.



The only examples I had of showing emotion were women, and there was no way I could copy them. Their emotional makeup and mine were light years apart. As I’ve come to realize that men can show emotion as men and not as women that I think I’ve found the key to my own emotions. I’ll never be able to express emotions like my wife does, but I don’t have to be as shut down and turned off as my role models growing up. I can experience and show emotions in my own way -- as a man.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN is that God created men to be objective and run by hard rationalization. What was missing was soft emotion, subjectivity. God built that into women, but not the objective rationalization. That’s why men are to be the leaders because they are better suited to not being swayed by emotions but make objective decisions. That is why it takes one of each to have a full set to complement each other.

EXPRESSING LOVE is improving for men today. It is encouraged and allowed, and men are improving in that area. I learn a lot from my sons about expressing love. We try to allow them to show it in their own way and they continue to do so. I’m working on unlearning my early training and learning from them to touch and hug and kiss. It’s great!

EXPRESSING ANGER is much harder for men. We either express it too freely (and others live in fear of our anger) or stuff it until it explodes. Along with this comes a slow, steady flow of sarcasm, criticism and withdrawal. Side effects include strokes and heart attacks. Few men grow up with a good role model of how to handle male anger. We become afraid of our anger, feel guilty about it, and fear rejection because of it. As Christians we think we must never experience anger. We know letting it explode doesn’t improve things but just adds another problem. When we do try to express justified anger (“righteous indignation”) it comes out as hostility, judgment and condemnation. We don’t use it to solve a problem but to destroy the opposition and win the battle. Instead of communicating with the one we are angry at we withdraw into our head where we analyze, blame, formulate arguments, recall evidence and put together a fool-proof case to prove ourselves right. In our withdrawal and self-righteousness, we can easily bring out our mate’s anger toward us.

Then we feel even more in the right and self-righteous because, after all, she's out of control and I'm not!

PASSIVE MEN and WILD WOMEN are a common pattern that develops from this. The man is withdrawn, the woman takes her hurt (rejection) out on him as anger and frustration. This happened with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Children learn it from parents and carry the pattern on into their own marriage. The man runs from woman anger for it reminds him of his mother's anger toward him and he doesn't know how to handle it as a man. In a strange way a man feels that he has 'won' if his wife gets angrier than him.

To understand what is behind this, remember that anger is a secondary emotion. Sinful anger (not 'righteous indignation') is an easier way to handle deeper emotions like pain, hurt, rejection and fear. Until these are admitted and worked through for what they are, though, the emotion won't be handled correctly. Women are often more attuned to their emotions and quicker to express them, in the right or wrong way. Men are hesitant to recognize their emotions and often not good at labeling them ("fear," "hurt," "anger," "rejection," etc.). We still fear emotions and ignore them, thinking that is the solution.

THE SOLUTION for men is to be honest with yourself and allow yourself to feel and admit your emotions. Learn to label them and seek what is behind them (the root cause). Learn to honestly convey these to your wife, even if it starts with writing them down. Listen to her observations and recommendations. She knows emotions and she knows you! Do lots of praying about it, asking God to heal you from the past and make you sensitive to yourself.

HANDLING A WILD WOMAN, one who has problems with anger herself, is not easy because men fear woman anger from childhood on since mothers often resorted to that to control their boys. Admit and work through that. Do what is best and right for her when she is angry, even if it means her anger will be directed at you. Don't take the easy out for your own protection. Doing what is right will be hard at first, but inside she will respect you and after a few times will come around much better. She'll feel more secure if she knows you'll stand up like a man and help her handle herself. Often women don't want to control by their anger, they just need someone to help them stop. Do that by lovingly challenging her to stop when angry.

HOW CAN A WIFE HELP HER ANGRY HUSBAND?

An angry man needs to know that his wife is on his side and accepts him no matter what. She must:

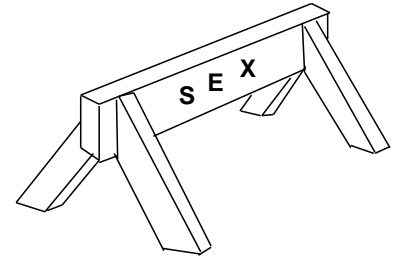
- 1. Be his friend, not his mother.** He doesn't need a mother but a friend who will treat him and insist on being treated by him as an equal. You can't live for him. You can encourage him in his problem-solving but not try to solve his problems for him.
- 2. Appreciate him, don't nag him.** Especially don't nag about things that make him feel like a failure, like his ability to provide for his family. Tell him you appreciate what he does do. Be content.
- 3. Affirm him, don't criticize him.** Affirm him for what he is and what he does. Compliment him for his good points. Make sure he knows you love him for who and what he is, not just what he does.
- 4. Give him space, don't crowd.** No one likes to be pushed or controlled, especially men. Men are intimidated when their women can't accept them the way they are. Let him know you're satisfied and available to listen, then back off to pray and wait. Pushing him may cause him to make some exterior changes to get you off his back, or it may cause an explosion at you.
- 5. Give him time, don't rush him.** His anger built over years. It won't go away overnight.
- 6. Hold him responsible, don't be co-dependent.** Don't cover up for his anger or bail him out when it gets him into trouble. That doesn't stop the problem it just keeps him from facing and doing something about it. He must face the consequences of his own actions.
- 7. Give to him, don't withhold from him.** Don't leave him (except for your own or your child's safety). Love, forgive and support him. Don't put up walls. He needs your friendship, not your judgment.

The Godly Man – II. ROADBLOCKS TO CHRISTIAN MANHOOD

6. SEXUAL DISTRACTIONS

TO THINK ABOUT: Where did you first learn about sex?

Think about the things you heard men say about women and sex this past week: comments, jokes, experiences, etc. What is the stereotype picture they paint of women? What is the stereotype implied of men? Why are they this way?



THE PROBLEM Sex functions as a mirror. We meet ourselves in it and often we don't like what we see. Perhaps no area so quickly and accurately cuts to the heart of who we are as our sexuality. Our inner thoughts and appetites are revealed through our sexual response. Often we are filled with conflicting thoughts and desires, the result being lots of confusion and a source of temptation and sin. Single men often feel guilty about their sexual needs and thoughts. Married men don't feel comfortable with their sexuality but assume others do. Most men reveal only a small layer (the acceptable part) of their actual sexual thoughts and lives, feeling that if others could read their thoughts they would be seen as perverted.

A big part of this confusion and misunderstanding is because of the unrealistic sexual stereotypes that are often build into men when young. While we reject the talk of others as well as the world's perception of male sexuality, it usually is our only exposure to the area of male sexuality (not how a man functions sexually, but his emotional reaction to his sexuality).

Men just don't talk about sex, so wrong ideas are continued. Christianity doesn't always help, for often sexual discussion, prayer requests or questions are taboo. The silent message is to pretend you have it all together. We teach our sons to handle money and other things, but almost nothing about sex (except how it functions). This continues the lack.

Men are confused about their sexuality, but often women are even more misunderstanding of it. Women seem to understand themselves pretty well (there is a lot of good information and an open attitude available for them). Unfortunately, they think men are sexually wired the same as they are, but that is FAR from the truth. All of this is a formula for failure. It is fertile ground for Satan to sow temptation and sin, in deed or thought. How can we break out of this terrible pattern?

THE MYTH OF THE 'MALE ANIMAL' One misconception men and women both have is that male sexuality is purely physical, almost animalistic. We think women are the ones with their emotional needs tied up with their physical needs, but men are no different. Men don't have affairs for the sex but for the ego-building approval their emotions need. Often the wives they leave are prettier and sexier than the 'other woman.' The same is seen in pornography. That is buying a fantasy, a substitute, an escape. The fantasy is of the woman being open, needy, submissive, responsive to the man looking at her. The fantasy isn't just the sex, but the woman responding sexually to the man by appearing naked before him. That's what makes it wrong, even sick. The equivalent for a woman is romantic fantasy (soap operas, romance novels, etc.). Both are lusting for something God hasn't provided, based on wrong ways of getting legitimate needs met. Both are self-centered and self-serving. Both point to the emotional nature being behind the sexual, in men as well as women.

ARE FANTASIES SINFUL? Yes! Lust of any sort is sin. Jesus says so (Mt. 5:27) and something in our conscience screams out that it is wrong! We know our wives would be hurt by our lustful thoughts. It is hard to stop, though, for it often has been a pattern in a man's mind for years past.

Satan keeps popping the thoughts in at the worst times. Also, our weak male egos (emotions) are fed by it. Nothing is wrong with nudity (Genesis 2:22-25) and everything is OK in marriage (Heb. 13:4; Song of Solomon 7:1-11), anything outside marriage is wrong (Ex. 20:14; Dt. 5:18). For physically breaking this the penalty was death by stoning (Lev. 20:10). Jesus says that thoughts are just as sinful (Matthew 5:27). The mental sets the stage for the physical act (James 1:13-16). Sinful thoughts are sin (Psalm 66:18).

THE MYTH OF THE FEMALE MOTHER One of the reasons men are open to temptation by other women (in thought and action) is that they have a harder time really relating to their wives, especially in a sexual way. Too often their wife blends into their mother and both roles merge together. The wife replaces the mother in being the care-giver, the responsible one, the one who scolds her naughty boy or rewards her good boy. Wives often take on that role and 'mother' their husbands, as they saw their mothers do to their fathers. This makes sex for a man difficult. How does one go to bed with his 'mother'? Thus, he blocks off his emotions and acts like an emotionless animal, and she drops the mother role to take on more of a mistress role. That's why men wish their wives were more spontaneous, novel, experimental and initiating. Actually, men are more inhibited than women! For a woman sex is a romantic expression of the whole relationship. For men that is a threat, something to be avoided. Sex is another performance-based identity with his frail ego riding on it.

CONTROLLING WRONG SEXUAL THOUGHTS/EMOTIONS

First men must **get rid of the source of temptation**. Run, flee from it (I Cor 10:13; Mt 5:27-30; 18:7-9; 2 Tim. 2:22) as Joseph did with Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39:7-20). Study yourself to see what/when you are tempted most. What is happening with your relationship with your wife at the time (have you just had an argument, etc.)? Cancel cable, avoid the sexy secretary, don't listen to jokes or conversations that place thoughts/pictures in your mind (Mark 9:47). Make a commitment to not look lustfully at a woman (Job 31:1) and exercise the mental discipline to carry it out, replacing it with thoughts which are pure, good, noble and right (Philippians 4:8). Men can't keep impure thoughts from entering their minds, but they are responsible for what they do with the thought (rebuke or entertain). In this day and time, with sex everywhere, there is no lack of temptation. It must be resisted, though. Because no one can read another's mind, men think they can play around with sinful sexual thoughts without consequences. Not so (Proverbs 6:27)! Remember, though, temptation is not sin. Just because you are tempted doesn't mean you sin. Temptation doesn't have to be confessed as sin (I John 1:9), but if you accept and feed the thoughts then you must confess that.

That is the second part, **replacing it with what is good**. Ask God to help you develop your holy lust for your wife and her alone. Pray about this often, even before sex (out loud together or to yourself). Pray before tempted when you sense it is a time temptation may come. Memorize appropriate Scripture (Psalm 119:9,11; I Thes 4:3-8; Job 31:1; Prov 6:27; Mark 9:42f; Eph 5:3-7; 2 Tim 2:22). Find a good male role model/mentor and talk to him, learn from him, ask him to hold you accountable by asking you tough, honest questions about your thoughts and sexual life.

The Godly Man – II. ROADBLOCKS TO CHRISTIAN MANHOOD

7. EXPRESSING SPIRITUALITY

TO THINK ABOUT: Who are more spiritual, men or women? What do you base your decision? How do you define 'spirituality'?

Why does it seem women are more spiritual than men? Is it because they are more sensitive to things of the spirit? Is it because they are better at intimacy and developing relationships? Is it because they are less self-sufficient and independent than men? Or are they not really more spiritual than men but just have a different way of showing their spirituality, a way we have come to equate with greater spirituality because there is more emotion and intimacy involved with it? These are hard, but important questions to answer. Personally, I think the truth lies somewhere between the two. I think it is partly because we define spirituality in feminine terms (intimacy, emotion, etc.) and partly because men often are weak at developing intimacy and relationships. This doesn't mean a man must act more 'feminine' in his handling of emotions, for he can still handle them as a man but in a more expressive way. In order to understand this completely we must define 'spirituality,' too. To me spirituality is living in close dependency on God's Spirit, putting spiritual values above temporal, developing our spirit over body or soul. It's an attitude of 100% commitment to God more than an outward set of standards. Any hypocrite can outwardly appear 'spiritual,' as the Pharisees did. It's only what's in one's heart that counts, though.



To more fully understand this let's look a little more closely at the spiritual differences between men and women.

WOMEN ARE MORE INVOLVED IN SPIRITUAL ACTIVITIES THAN MEN Since men are 'doers' more than relaters, they equate spiritual with 'doing,' and their wives do more than them. Women can and do attend more meetings and Christian activities, have their devotions and Bible study, listen to Christian radio and read books (women read 80% of the Christian books published). By this standard we often judge women more spiritual. While this could cause or result from deeper spirituality, it in itself isn't necessarily so.

WOMEN PRAY DIFFERENTLY THAN MEN What is the main difference between your and your wife's prayers? Why do women feel more comfortable praying out loud? Men typically pray short memos to God, direct and to the point. Women tend to be more flowery, detailed, emotional and personal in their prayers (as in all their communication). It's easy to see how what comes more natural to a woman can be interpreted as greater spiritual depth. Is it, or is it just what comes naturally to her? Since I'm not a woman I don't know, but I no longer agree that my prayers aren't as 'good' as my wife's because I don't express my sincerity or feelings in the same way she does. It's been freeing and has removed a lot of guilt to realize that! Now that's no excuse for me to be quick, cold and distant in my prayer life, but no longer do I feel I have to whip up Nancy's emotions to really pray.

Take Jesus as an example (what better example is there). Notice His prayers in the Bible. He prayed like a man: short, to the point, direct. Now I know He had long periods of pouring out His heart to God, too -- sometimes staying up all night to do so. Still, He prayed as a man, and if He could so can I!

Once a man gets a hold of this it can really take away a lot of the discouragement he feels about his prayer life. However, that is just the first step. It's much more difficult for a woman to

understand this (I'm glad so many of you women read this!). Thus, in praying out loud a man still often feels he isn't as good a prayer as his wife. It doesn't come as naturally or flow as picturesquely. That's more a mark of the natural differences between men and women in all areas than it is a mark of deeper spirituality by women, though. Often in churches the pastor feels pressure to pray 'feminine-type' prayers so everything can better worship, and that just reinforces this wrong stereotype. Give this some thought and discussion in your family.

WOMEN HAVE A DIFFERENT PERSONALITY STRUCTURE AND NEEDS THAN MEN Think of the typical church structure: nice decorations, flowers, curtains, robes, liturgy, poetry, meditation, quietness, singing, sitting still in one position for a long time, sharing feelings, and making polite small-talk. Does this sound like how a group of men would act if they got together somewhere? Men focus on doing (so the work day is often the highlight of the church year as far as men's involvement and fellowship goes) and women on being. Women comprise most of the church attendees. Thus, often men feel left out in church. It is harder for them to fully participate and feel part of things, thus they feel that it is because something is wrong with them. Women often respond to God's love and compassion while men are more apt to relate to His power and sovereignty. There needs to be a balance between these in preaching and music. Men have different spiritual needs than women, and when they aren't met men don't grow. Does your church meet men's needs? Does it know what they are? Do you know?

To summarize and conclude, I can only speak from my own experience. I wish I had the overflowing emotions and spontaneous sensitivity in prayer that my wife has. However, I don't. While that is a good advantage, there is also a disadvantage. Being more rational and objective, a man is less apt to be emotionally swayed. That's why men are to be the leaders (I Timothy 2:11-15). If God made me this way to lead, He isn't going to say I am less spiritual because of this. Adam was fine the way God made him, but there were some empty spaces that only Eve could fill (emotional, relational). He needed her for these, she needed him for the rational, objective overview of things. Together there was a fullness, a wholeness, which wasn't there individually. The same is still true. Men and women complete each other when they become "one flesh." Different doesn't mean inferior or superior, it just means different. Men show their spirituality differently than women. That's OK. Together, though, there is a real balance and depth that neither can have alone.

Men, pray with your wives. Pray out loud. Talk about and share spiritual things. Don't feel inferior. Don't be intimidated by her feminine ways. Don't hesitate to be yourself. Don't try to be her, there is already one of her in the family. Be what God made you to be, without excuse or apology, without inferiority or hesitancy. Let her be herself, you be yourself. That's how God made it, and together you form a strong union that blends strengths and covers weaknesses. Don't use your male tendencies as an excuse to not grow more personal, more open, more intimate with God, but do feel free to do it your own way and if that differs from your wife remember it's because God made it that way. God made men to become "one flesh" in many areas, not the least of which is spiritual!

The Godly Man
III. GODLY MANHOOD
LESSONS FROM MOSES

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1. Making Godly Decisions
2. Being a Godly Father
3. Aging in a Godly Manner
4. Defusing an Upset (Angry) Wife
5. Handling Ungodly Anger
6. Setting Godly Goals

The Godly Man – III. GODLY MANHOOD LESSONS FROM MOSES

1. MAKING GODLY DECISIONS

Decisions: some are easy, others are hard. Some we don't mind, others we dread. Some are so clear they make themselves, others it seems we lose no matter what we decide. Still, this is an important part of being a Godly man. Ever since Eve made her very wrong decision, God has put decision-making in the man's job description (I Tim. 2:11-14). Think for a minute: what is the hardest decision you have ever made? Which decisions still give you the most trouble? Why are these so hard for you? Making Godly decisions isn't always easy. This difficulty isn't something new to us, either. Let's look at Moses for some principles about making Godly decisions.

MOSES' FAMILY BACKGROUND. Moses came from a godly family in a time when most people just went through religious motions. His father, Amram (Ex 6:20; Num 26:59), and mother, Jocabed (Ex. 6:20; Num 26:59) are both from the tribe of Levi. Jocabed means "Glory of Jehovah," showing something of her parents' faith. When born Moses had a 12-year-old sister, Miriam (Ex. 2:4; Num. 26:59) and a 3-year-old brother, Aaron (Ex. 7:17). As the baby of the family, Moses would have been anything but a natural leader. Last-borns are usually spoiled, indulged, not taken seriously and not given a lot of responsibility. None of this prepared him for future work.

God had his hand on Moses in a unique way from his birth (Ex 2:2) for there was something special about him from the start (Acts 7:20). Even Pharaoh's daughter, a woman named Hatshepsut, recognized this when she found a three-month-old baby when going to the river to worship (Ex. 2:1-10). Moses was 'planted' there so she would find him, for they could no longer hide Moses and they felt (rightly so) that her mother's heart would have mercy and spare him. Thus, Moses was able to be raised by his parents until about 4, and they were paid for doing it! This early influence kept him committed to God the rest of his life (Prov 22:6).

WHAT A CHILDHOOD! Moses then grew up in the Egyptian city of Thebes. I'm sure it was hard leaving his birth family to go live with another. Still God took care of him. Families today who split can find comfort in this. As the only son and heir Moses was probably indulged and had everything done for him. The woman who found and raised him, Hatshepsut, was a very intelligent woman and great leader. She had a great impact on his life.

When a male grows up with a woman or women as his main care-givers (mother, grandmother, teacher, baby-sitter, Sunday School teacher, etc.) he finds he is more comfortable around women than men for the rest of his life. Also, he develops a dependency on female acceptance, affirmation and approval. This can be very manipulative, however, and keep a man from making decisions he feels he should because of the female rejection the decision may bring. This pattern was built into Moses, and will eventually contribute to the breakup of his first marriage. To make matters worse, Moses was a sensitive introvert and Hatshepsut a strong-willed, controlling, domineering woman. To keep her approval and acceptance Moses would have done all he could to please and impress her.

WHAT AN EDUCATION! Moses got the best education available anywhere in his day: archery, horseback riding, swimming, wrestling, reading & writing (hieroglyphics, Akkadian cuneiform, Ugarit, Hebrew, Egyptian, etc.), mathematics, music, and administration. Usually, Cecil B. DeMille overdoes his Biblical heroes, but Charlton Heston probably doesn't even come close to being as great as Moses really was. Tradition says he was a genius in several areas, including math, writing/poetry, music and leadership. His athletic ability and physical appearance seem to be tremendous, even up to the day he died (Deuteronomy 34:7).

One historical tradition about Moses tells about the time when, in his early 30's, Egypt was invaded by the Ethiopians. One by one the four Egyptian generals led their armies against the Ethiopians as fast as they could get to them, but each was defeated. The stories goes that Moses gathered the remnants of the armies, called up the national guard, by brilliant leadership skills and strategy defeated the Ethiopians and saved Egypt. Of course, he was a national hero!

MOSES' OPPORTUNITY History tells us that Hatshepsut had no brothers to become Pharaoh so the man she married was the next Pharaoh and she became queen. She reputedly strongly influenced him, poisoning him to get rid of him when tired of him. For a while it seems she even dress and ruled as a man. It seems she married again, though. She had no sons to follow in line, only one daughter. Her husband, though, had a son by a concubine whom he wanted to replace him. She opposed this, preferring Moses whom she carefully groomed for this top position. Whomever the daughter chose to marry would be the next Pharaoh, and the daughter loved Moses. Moses was a winner, used to everything going his way. He assumed that would happen here, too, but something interfered that caused him to have to make a life-changing decision.

MOSES' DECISION You see, as next Pharaoh Moses would be the head of Egyptian pagan religion, the top priest. He would lead in sacrifices and worship to idols. Even more, he himself would be considered a god and receive worship as such. This caused a great problem for Moses. Think of all the good he could have done the Jews had he been the Pharaoh, why give it up just because of this? Then what about Hatshepsut -- how could he go against his strong-willed, controlling mother after all she did for him? The rejection would be tremendous! What about the woman he loved and whom loved him? What about the life style he loved and fit in so well with?

As all men did and still do, his self-image was built on what he did. His career identity gave him his prestige and his identity. That's why men want to know what another man does, that's how we label and categorize each other. Men who retire or are unemployed seem to loose something their purpose and meaning. This isn't right, but it's the way it is. Moses would have to give up virtually everything, and what would he get in return? You see, this wasn't an easy decision. Any one of those factors would make it hard for any man to make the right choice: pressure from a woman (especially if we've been trained to give in), career identity, rejection by a loved one, giving up life's comforts and perks, and public opinion. This was certainly the biggest decision Moses ever had to make. What should he do? What would you have done?

MOSES' DECISION God Himself tells about Moses' decision in these words. "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward." (Hebrews 11:24-26) What a tremendous stand Moses made! All because he gave up immediate gratification for what was best in the long run. Family peace, job security, opinions of others, personal pride and ego, his own ease and comfort -- none of these were as important to him as doing what God wanted him to do. Sometimes it's not as clear what God would have us do, but if we, like Moses, are committed to doing His will whatever it is, He will make sure it gets done.

Which of these influences that Moses had to overcome give you the hardest time deciding to do what God wants? Is it your parent's approval? Maybe it is keeping your wife and children happy with you? Could it be you use your work to find your identity and that affects your decisions about work? Or perhaps your own pleasures and comforts are hard to give up? Then, too, losing power and prestige in the eyes of others may have too much influence. Learn from Moses. He had hard times because of his decision, and probably even questioned it whole on earth, but for the last 4000+ years (since he's been in heaven) you can bet he hasn't regretted that decision! Make your decisions now based on how you will feel about them in 4,000 years.

The Godly Man – III. GODLY MANHOOD LESSONS

MOSES

FROM

2. BEING A GODLY FATHER

If your family had to describe you as a father in one word, what would it be? Are you satisfied with that image as a father, or do you want something better? I guess a better question would be: are you really able to do what is necessary to be a better father? I carry that guilt around with me, and I think I'm not alone. I don't want to live with regrets of what I should have been and done. I know what I should be doing (at least I think I do), but doing all those things day after day isn't so easy. It wasn't easy for Moses, either.

MOSES THE REFUGEE Moses had it made. He was in line to be the next leader of the most advanced nation in the world. He had all the training, skills and opportunities one could want. He gave it all up, along with the love of the woman he wanted to marry, to follow God. Now one would think that such a sacrifice would earn God's blessing in everything he did. Not so. Moses had an anger problem. He stuffed it, called it 'frustration,' and tried to ignore it. It kept raising its ugly head, though. When it did he'd put his hand through a wall or kick a dent in the car. Then he'd feel guilty and defeated, vow to never do it again, and the cycle would start all over again. With Moses it wasn't a wall or car, it was an Egyptian slave master (Acts 7:23-29). Instead of hanging a picture over the hole in the wall, he buried the body in the sand (Exodus 2:12). At this very emotionally vulnerable time Moses was hit with something most men can't handle very well -- rejection (Acts 7:25-29). Instead of responding to his sacrifice and leadership, the Jews mocked and rejected him. His sensitive male ego felt hurt, and that always shows itself in fear or anger (or a combination of the two). Moses handled it like many men do: he withdrew -- all the way to Midian (Acts 7:29; Exodus 2:15). When he cooled off he committed the whole situation to the Lord and trusted Him to take care of Moses (Heb. 11:27; Romans 8:28).

RETEST! We can't run from or withdraw from problems, for they follow us. Moses found himself facing the same thing: male shepherds taking advantage of female shepherds. He helped the women and ended up spending the next 40 years with them (Exodus 2:15-21). There is often a fine line between sinful anger and righteous indignation. Here Moses stayed on the right side of that line.

MOSES THE FAMILY MAN Moses lived with Ruel ("friend of God") whose priestly title was Jethro. He married the first-born daughter and they had two sons (Exodus 18:3-4): Gershom ("banished to a strange land," Moses accepts his place before God but is a bit bitter) and Eliezer ("My Father's God was my helper," he is putting faith in God, but God still isn't his personal God). It was one thing for Moses to trust God when he was on top in Egypt, but to trust when he is on the bottom in the desert is another thing!

MOSES THE FATHER We don't have much information about Moses as a father. We can easily read between the lines when we see how his relationship with Zipporah turned out (next article), and it's obvious he wasn't in charge of his family as God wanted him to be (Exodus 4:24-27). God expects men to lead their families in godliness (I Timothy 3:4-5). Unfortunately, when you look at men in the Bible and church history, you find that very few were really able to fully meet these standards. Often we learn more from what they did wrong than what they did right. Eli the priest was such a man.

ELI THE FATHER Eli was the top leader in Israel in his day. He was the leading civil/secular leader as well as the high priest. He held these positions for 40 years and carried them out with faithfulness and excellency (I Samuel 4:18). He was a godly man, a man of deep faith and commitment. However, his sons were very rebellious. They stole meat which was offered to God (I Sam 2:12-17) and even had sex with various women right in the Tabernacle (I Sam 2:22). The people encouraged Eli to do something about it (I Sam 2:22), as did a prophet (v. 27-34) and even God Himself (3:11-12). Still, Eli didn't do anything. Even though the boys were grown, he was still responsible as the high priest, and also because he didn't raise them to obey God. How could such a godly man have such ungodly sons? Why would they rebel against the God their father loved? What causes MK's and PK's to have such a bad reputation? I think it's because Eli put his work for God and country before his family. As little boys, his sons resented that which seemingly took their father from them and rebelled against it. Instead of wanting to grow up and be like Dad, they hated all he stood for because he withheld from them what they needed most: himself! Do you see your family in any of this?

GOD THE FATHER Many years ago I realized that my view of God is the same as my view of my earthly father. There is both good and bad in that. I know that as a father I am the sovereign authority in my children's lives, the one they totally depend on for protection and provision. I am 'god' to them. How I treat them is how they will later feel God treats them. If I am overly strict, or inconsistent, or distant and busy, or easily manipulated, or rule by fear, or withhold love, or expect perfection -- whatever I am they will see God as being. I don't want to build an improper picture of God into them. I try to ask myself how God would handle a certain situation and respond in the same way. Ask yourself: what image of God do you have that came from how your father treated you? What kind of an image of God are you building into your children?

GODLY FATHERS TODAY Fathers are responsible to pray for their families, in detail, specifically for the needs of each person. This takes time. Job, one of the good fathers in the Bible, did this (Job 1:4-5, 10). Fathers are to lead in family devotions. This doesn't have to be long or deep or profound, just read a passage and share your thoughts about it, then pray. A man's insecurity, fear, and avoidance of intimacy make this one of the hardest things for men to do on a consistent basis. Yet it is of the utmost importance. Fathers are to use daily opportunities to teach and reflect the truths of God by word and example (Deuteronomy 11:19-21). Regularly taking time alone with each child to talk, play and pray is also key.

Being a godly father isn't easy. In fact, humanly speaking it is impossible. Yet that is the responsibility God gives us. Therefore, He also gives us the help we need to carry out that role. It's not just a responsibility but a privilege, about the highest privilege a man could want! It can be very rewarding and satisfying. It means putting others before ourselves and our needs. It means treating others like God treats us. It isn't easy, but nothing worthwhile is. It's a task worth sacrificing for. Its benefits and rewards will last for eternity!

The Godly Man – III. GODLY MANHOOD LESSONS FROM MOSES

3. AGING IN A GODLY MANNER

Life doesn't always turn out like thought it would. Young men always assume they will achieve a certain measure of success and prestige in their chosen career as well as in life itself. Most have to realize somewhere around their middle years that it isn't going to happen. That doesn't mean their life is bad as it is or is a failure, but that they need to adjust their sights downward a bit. That certainly was true of Moses.

CAREER CHANGES Moses was groomed to be the next Pharaoh of the leading country of its day. He had all the education and luxuries the world could offer. Before he knew it he found himself far removed from Egypt, spending his days and nights walking behind a flock of sheep. Instead of leading armies and nations he was leading dumb animals. Instead of planning cities and military campaigns, he was planning the next day's pasture for his sheep. Instead of fine food and rich clothing he was dusty, sweaty and ate poor food. No longer surrounded by insightful advisors and beautiful women, now he was completely alone. Why? Because he put God first and followed Him! It seemed like God had demoted him for his failure to free the Jews from bondage. Instead, God had promoted him to the next level of training to prepare him for God's ultimate purpose -- the deliverance of the Jews from Egypt.

DESERT CURRICULUM God was using this time to humble Moses and make him pliable and usable. He had to learn contentment and patience. What better way to develop a shepherd's heart than by spending time with sheep. What was coming next (the Jews) would be much more difficult to shepherd than just sheep! God was mellowing and maturing Moses. Moses had worldly knowledge and skills, now he needed spiritual ones. It was probably during this time that Moses wrote down the book of Genesis as well as Job. It seems like God had forgotten him, but Moses was right on track for God's next career change, but he didn't know it.

MEANWHILE, BACK ON THE RANCH... In Egypt the Pharaoh had died, and with that the death sentence against Moses was lifted. The people had endured 40 miserable years and were finally ready to follow God's deliverer to freedom. All they needed was the right leader.

OUT OF RETIREMENT Assuming his usefulness and productivity was over, Moses was coasting until a younger man could take over with the sheep so he could lie in his tent until death came. He was in a rut with no stimulation and had gotten mentally lazy. Nothing was stretching or challenging him -- until God came with a new assignment: go back to Egypt and lead 2 1/2 million slaves to freedom, turning them into a function nation of God's chosen people! Now there is a real challenge!

"THANKS, BUT NO THANKS" While Moses was duly impressed by God putting in a personal appearance to him, he had no desire to do what God said (Exodus 3 - 4). He has slowed down and was in a retirement mind-set, coasting in to the end. However, he had put himself out to pasture way too early. He was just getting to the point where God could use him, not retire him.

Today many men seem to make the opposite mistake. We try to keep going long after it is time to slow down and pace ourselves. It's hard for men to realize they can't do as much as they could and won't reach the goals they assumed for themselves in younger years. Male ego is so wrapped up in our careers what we accomplish with our lives that it is hard to settle for less. Those

who accomplish great things with their lives aren't happy and don't find peace, but the rest of us still think that when we hit it big life will be fine!

CONTINUAL PROCESS OF FINE TUNING It's very important for Christian men to continually make small adjustments mentally as they age. If they don't a significant event or birthday will hit one hard. This often knocks a man off balance so he grabs for something to steady himself and reassure him he's still young. Usually, he'll grab for something like a sports car or young woman. We can't fight or hold back aging, it's so much better to keep making the mental adjustments that need to come so we can have a balanced picture of where we are.

Since everything in our society focuses on being and staying young, moving away from that takes mental adjustments. We no longer have our whole futures before us. We may never achieve what we thought we would. We can no longer produce the quantity of work we once did and must focus on quality instead. We are forced change our definition of what 'success' is (success is being in God's will and doing what He wants -- whatever that may be).

In seminary I assumed I would be like all their typical graduates: large church, write some books, maybe travel and speak (or have people come hear me). Here I am: 50 years old, been in the same church for the last 15 years and it's the same size as when I got here (50 on a very good Sunday). Yet I believe I'm where God wants me doing just what He wants. I've had to change my definition of success. I no longer can teach Bible studies every night of the week. I have to make physical and mental adjustments as I age.

TESTOSTERONE DECLINING Starting in the 20's, testosterone declines by 50% by middle age. Eventually it drops to where it was when puberty started. We can't run as fast, compete with the younger men at work, or do what we used to be able to do. When we try to keep up, our body tries to produce more testosterone but can't. The result can be depression, nightmares, loss of memory, hot/cold flashes, insomnia, boredom, loss of sex drive, etc.

WHAT'S A MAN TO DO? Those without Jesus, who have only this life and that's it. They panic as they age (and rightly so). We can, and must, keep this life in perspective with all eternity. God is preparing us for something better, too -- and that's serving Him for all eternity in heaven! He calls the shots in our earthly station and worldly 'success' but what really matters is being a godly man, husband and father. Moses slowed down prematurely. We usually don't slow down soon enough. neither way is right. Acknowledge your physical decline without thinking it makes you less of a 'man.' Enjoy today without getting overly concerned about the past or future. Keep active and in good health (rest, diet, exercise). Make sure you are in God's will and be satisfied with that (Philippians 4:11-12). Don't take your present situation as failure, but as God's perfectly planned training course to prepare you for whatever He next has for you. Don't hang onto the world's ideas about masculinity, 'success,' productivity, youth and such things. Immerse yourself in God's word and be filled with His Spirit. Renew your mind (Rom. 12:1-2) and attitude in Him. Enjoy life right where you are.

The Godly Man – III. GODLY MANHOOD LESSONS FROM MOSES

4. DEFUSING AN UPSET (ANGRY) WIFE

A recent “Rose is Rose” cartoon pictures Rose storming out of the room while her husband follows, asking “Is it about a person, a place or a thing? Is it larger than a breadbox?” Without answering Rose leaves and slams the door. Their son says, “What’s the fame called?” Dan answers: “It’s called ‘What are you angry about?’ and you’re too young to play!” While there really isn’t anything funny about this ‘humor,’ it does strike a familiar cord in all of us. Often we as husbands don’t know what we’ve done wrong until our wives are upset, and even then we often don’t realize what it was we did (or didn’t do). the TV show *Home Improvements* is a good example of this. As the show reveals, women often are upset for justifiable reasons. If men would better understand them then a lot of heartache would be avoided.

MOSES’ SIN OF OMISSION Moses and Zipporah had the same problems. Moses obeyed God and headed to Egypt with his family (Ex. 4:20-23), but one night God struck Moses down and was about to kill him (v. 24)! Doesn’t that seem strange? Moses is finally obeying God and doing what He wants, but God is about to remove him? Moses seems unable to do anything, but he obviously knows what God is righteously indignant about and has Zipporah correct the omission. *At a lodging place on the way, the LORD met and was about to kill him. But Zipporah took a flint knife, cut off her son's foreskin and touched feet with it. "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me," she said. So, the LORD let him alone. (At that time, she said "bridegroom of blood," referring to circumcision.) (Exodus 4:24-26)*

Because of his continual, willful disobedience God was about to take Moses’ life. Why else would God hold him so accountable? Moses obviously knew what the sin was -- he hadn’t circumcised his youngest son (who was anywhere from a young boy to an adult). This is the sin unto death (I John 5:16), where God removes a believer in sin to keep his sin and its influence from growing. He did this with Saul, Ananias & Sapphira (Acts 5), Corinthian believers (I Cor 11:27-32), and others. Satan wants Moses to disobey and die, but God gave Moses a last chance.

“YOU BLOODY JERK!” Why hadn’t Moses circumcised his second son? It seems Zipporah is really against it! She has to do it now, for it was customary believe then that to deny a dying request would bring a curse on her. It is obvious she doesn’t want to do it, though. She threw it at his feet (better translation than “touched” his feet), called him a “bloody bridegroom,” took her sons and left. Instead of following her and being with his family, Moses followed God to Egypt. God provided Moses’ brother, Aaron, as companionship for Moses (Ex. 4:27f). Still, this event ended their marriage. Zipporah’s father tried a reconciliation a year later but it totally failed. Moses’ price in obeying God is the loss of his family - both wife and sons. Later on, God would provide a godly, faithful wife for Moses (Num. 12:1).

WHY ZIPPORAH GOT ANGRY. What happened to Moses and Zipporah? At first it seems to be all her fault for not submitting, and she is accountable for that, but it isn’t that simple. Marriage problems never are. It seems Zipporah did go along with Moses in the beginning, for she had their first son circumcised. Now she has had it with Moses. The circumcision on top of moving their family hundreds of miles from home is more than she can take. Why? Well, we know she is the firstborn in her family (the oldest had to marry first - Ex 4:21), typically a strong, determined, independent type person. Moses, a third-born, would have been more a natural follower. Also, Moses seems to have been gone from home a lot with the sheep, leaving her to take care of the home and children. That can bother a woman, and rightly so. Then when the husband comes in

and says they are moving from all she knew it gets too much. Her family and friends were where she turned to have her needs met, for it doesn't seem Moses was meeting them. Now he expects her to leave them. This sets her up inside for an explosion. The circumcision was the spark. Perhaps she wasn't as spiritually attuned as Moses, and resented him imposing his beliefs on their sons. Maybe it was just the straw that broke the camel's back. Whatever, the scene on the way to Egypt was set up by years of unmet needs.

Isn't uncommon for an easy-going man to find he has an upset woman on his hands. Abraham had that with Sarah (he didn't meet her needs for security and protection), as did Isaac and Jacob with their wives. As with them, this is often a pattern passed on down from generation to generation. Following the pattern, they grow up with, a girl wants a husband who won't boss or dominate her and a boy wants a wife who will be like his mother and not demand him to take care of all of life's little problems and headaches.

WHY WOMEN GET ANGRY. After marriage women get frustrated when they don't feel their needs are being met as they'd like. This may be legitimate or perhaps they are expecting too much. Whatever it is, the result is the same. Add to this the fact that many women have a hard time trusting men (because of past experiences with father and boyfriends) and are afraid of giving up control. Little girls can't control little boys physically, so they learn a better way -- with their emotions and feelings. Little boys grow up being afraid of their mother's anger, and that carries right over with their wives. Then, like Moses, they give in to keep the peace until they finally have to make a stand about something and the results are ugly. Just because a woman fights her husband for control doesn't mean that, deep inside, she really wants it. Often she'd prefer him to be strong enough to take the control from her, in a gentle and loving way, instead of letting her have her own way. Men don't realize this. She can't change herself. Even if he realized what she needed, most men have no idea how to handle an angry woman!

Getting angry back makes things worse (anger works OK for women, but men just aren't able to do anger and have anything good come of it. Giving in is wrong, for man is the leader and God gives him the guidance for the family. God holds the husband accountable and responsible. What are men to do about this?

HOW TO HANDLE AN ANGRY WOMAN First and foremost a husband must look for his blame in his wife's anger. After all, a woman is a responder, someone who reflects back what's been built into her. What needs of hers aren't being met? Does she feel 100% loved and secure, protected and provided for? Men, admit that your passivity often causes her anger. Avoid extremes. Honestly convey your feelings and emotions but not in anger or accusation. Don't stuff your feelings, but don't dump them, either. If she shows overt anger, watch out for your more subtle, hidden fighting styles: ignoring what is important to her, withholding love and attention, pointing out little mistakes of hers, putting off work she needs you to do, putting up emotional walls between you, being too busy to be available, avoiding serious discussions, turning off the romance, taking the children's side against her, or using 'humor' (sarcasm, teasing, jokes at her expense) to pick at her. Remove the log in your eye before you attack the speck in her eye. Learn about the role PMS can play in her emotions and be understanding about that and other factors that influence her. Remember what happened to Moses.

Every marriage relationship takes adjustment. Two people who are quite different (opposites do attract) have the potential for great richness together, or great turmoil. It's up to you, men, to determine which it is. Ask yourself: "How would Jesus respond? What would Jesus say? What would Jesus do? How does Jesus see my wife? What does He want for her?" Put yourself in her place, remembering the Golden Rule. Pray constantly for patience, wisdom, love and self-control. *"I CAN do all things through Him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13).*

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5. HANDLING UNGODLY ANGER

We've all seen the news reports of the quiet, withdrawn man who one day goes berserk and kills his family or fellow employees. We wonder, "What could cause a man to do something like that?" Yet at the same time we know, we most men have that hidden black beast of anger hidden down deep inside. Most of the time we can keep it hidden where no one sees it, but every once in a while it escapes and runs free -- and it's not a pretty sight to behold! What is it with men and anger? What is it with men and any kind of emotion?

MOSES: AN ANGRY MAN Moses tried to hide his beast his whole life, but in the end it got him! We first see it when Moses killed the Egyptian who was hurting and Egyptian slave (Exodus 2). God put him in a desert for 40 years to learn self-control.

When God appeared to him and told him to go lead the Jews out of Egypt Moses obeyed. He gave God's message to Pharaoh. However, we read that he was "furious" with Pharaoh after plague 9 (Exodus 22). God brought about the Jew's deliverance from Egypt with the death of the Egyptian firstborn (Ex 12), and then by opening the sea for the Jews to safely escape (Ex 14). The Jews traveled to Mt Sinai, defeating the Amalekites on the way (Ex 17). Through all of this Moses exercised exemplary self-control, obeying God despite the criticism and complaining of the people. At Mt Sinai, though, when Moses was getting the 10 Commandments and rest of the law from God, the people built and worshipped a Golden Calf. When Moses came down from the mountain and saw this, the ugly monster of anger raised his head again. Moses broke the 10 Comm. (God made him write them himself the next time).

For the most part Moses was very humble (the humblest man ever - Num 12:3). He grew spiritually and mellowed. When the Jews rebelled and refused to enter the land because of the giants he was faithful. When they tried to kill him, he was courageous. When he, too, had to wander for 40 years until the next generation had its chance to enter, he was patient. Finally, the time came to enter the land, what Moses had wanted to do 80 years before!

The black beast of anger came out again, though, just before the Jews entered the land. They were out of water and complaining -- "singing the desert blues" again. Once again Moses and Aaron took the problem to God who mercifully said He would provide water as Moses spoke to the large rock nearby (Num. 20:2-9). But instead of just speaking, Moses derided the people and took credit for what God was about to do (v. 10). Then he struck the rock twice in anger (v. 11). Publicly God kept His word and provided water, but privately He dealt with Moses and Aaron by telling them they could not enter the Promised Land (v. 12-13). For God to do this shows that this obviously was no minor, one-time sin. It was the culmination of a lifelong pattern, 120 years of trying to control his anger but failing. Moses meekly accepts this discipline and only once asks God to remove it (Deuteronomy 3:23-26) but the damage has been done.

ANGRY MEN TODAY How many men today wish they could go back and remove the damage done but an outburst of the demon of anger? While often men have trouble with all emotions, especially compared to how comfortable and natural women are in expressing their emotions, it seems anger is the most troublesome. Some men allow it all out, shouting and raging, controlling others by making them afraid of their anger. Most men, though, are afraid of anger both in themselves and in others and so try to avoid it at all costs. As little boys we learned to hide anger, for it only brought greater anger and/or feelings of rejection from our mothers. We probably didn't have a father who showed us a good, mature example of how to handle anger either. It always got us in trouble so we learned to stuff it.

Stuffing it, though, is like trying to deal with a live hand grenade by hiding it under your coat. Suppressed anger doesn't go away. It simmers, then boils, and finally implodes, often devastating the man and his family. Emotional and/or physical health are ruined. Much of the physical ills and stress men deal with today is from hidden, unresolved, often unadmitted anger.

What can we do? Letting it all hang out is sin, so is ignoring and denying our anger. When we do try to express it, it often comes out as hostility and makes things worse instead of better. Women can 'do' anger and get away with it, even accomplishing some positive things by it. Men can't 'do' anger -- it just blows up in our face and makes everything worse! Have you ever noticed that when your wife gets angry, it's your fault. But when you get angry, that's your fault, too! No wonder we withdraw in our minds to rationalize, self-righteously looking down at our out-of-control-wife, while we feel superior because we don't get so carried away over nothing! Yet, if the truth were known, it is usually our refusal to take the things that matter to our wives seriously that cause this anger in her! We can't win by out-angering her, but we can win by being passive and withdrawn, and it drives her crazy (rightly so, for marriage isn't a win-lose proposition, but working together for the best of both as one).

Most men fear women anger, and women can use the threat of it to manipulate men into doing what they want. However, when this happens a woman loses respect for the man, for down inside she needs him to do what is right, to control her in love, to take the reins from her hands. When we don't do what we feel God wants but give in for the sake of peace we are sinning against God and our family. We MUST do what is right, in kindness and love, no matter the consequences. If you keep in mind that most women have a hard time trusting men you'll understand better why they act this way. Fathers, boyfriends, even previous husbands, have hurt them and let them down, so they are afraid to open themselves up to hurt by trusting again (this is what happened to Sarah when Abraham said she was his sister).

HANDLING ANGER AS JESUS DID We can't ignore anger, nor deny it. In fact, there is a time to get angry and it is commanded of us (Ephesians 4:26a). It must be handled, though, and not allowed to remain for long (Eph 4:26b). We must control it, and not it control us, as evidenced by Jesus braiding a whip in his anger before chasing the money changers out of the temple (John 2:15). Ask yourself: "How would Jesus handle this anger" and then do the same thing.

I think the key to handling anger in yourself or others is to realize that anger is a secondary emotion, always a result of hurt or pain. It is a wrong, immature way of responding to hurt, for pain must be admitted and felt, then taken to Jesus to have it removed. Anger seeks to remove pain by transferring pain back to the one we feel hurt us. We know anger doesn't really do that, but we keep on trying just the same. To be free from anger, forgive the hurt! To respond to an angry woman, find out what hurt her. Apologize if necessary, reassure her, and do what you can to remove the hurt and increase her trust in you. Ask God to remove your own fear of anger, both in yourself and in others. Anger is an emotion, a very strong one. Still, the beast can only be tamed by your mind: by understanding it and what causes it, by doing what is necessary to correct or prevent it, and by regularly taking it to God in prayer. It isn't a beast that we need hide and fear. It doesn't have to come take control of us periodically. It doesn't have to live inside. It can be killed -- by the blood of Jesus. Only in Him can we be free from that demon, but that freedom is available and it's easier than we may think. Face and defeat it with Jesus' help, but don't put that off. Who knows when it will next try to attack!

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6. SETTING GODLY GOALS

Men, do you ever wonder how you will be thought of after you die? What will you be remembered for? When those who loved most and knew you best gather around your grave and think of you, what will be going through their minds? “He was _____.” If they would write a short phrase on your tombstone summarizing your life and what you stood for, what would those words be? I know what I want mine to be: “Man of God.” That’s been my life goal for a long time. I often feel I’m getting further from it instead of closer to it, though. How am I to meet that goal? How am I to take control of my life so that it counts for something I want it to count for? Perhaps looking at the life of Moses will help.

GOD’S EULOGY OF MOSES After being told by God that he wouldn’t enter the Promised Land because of his lifelong failure to get control over his anger problem, the Jews traveled through Moab to get near the Promised Land. Aaron died, God sent serpents to discipline the complaining people, and Balaam was hired to keep the Jews out of Moab. After numbering the people again, Moses stepped down and appointed Joshua the new leader. He taught the new generation (the book of Deuteronomy contains his teaching), then he went up Mt Nebo. He was in fine health (Deuteronomy 34:4-7) and had no fear of death.

God allowed him to see the Promised Land before taking him home. I wonder what went through Moses’ head as he thought back on his life. Was he satisfied with it? What would he have changed (besides the times his anger got him into trouble and hurt those he loved)? Did he, like Paul, feel he had fought the good fight and finished his race (2 Tim. 4:7-8)? It is a goal of mine to come to the end of my life without any more failure and guilt than I now have. I don’t want to regret the direction my life went, the use of my time, my priorities in life. I want to know I have spent my life the way God wanted me to spend it.

I’m sure Moses had regrets, but I know God said his life counted. “Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew fact to face, who did all those miraculous signs and wonders the Lord sent him to do in Egypt -- to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.” (Deuteronomy 34:10-12). I’d love to have God write something like that on my tombstone! His life wasn’t a failure. It wasn’t perfect, but it counted in what was important.

How did Moses manage to do that? Did he just ‘give it his best shot’ and hope for the best? No! He learned earlier in life to plan for what mattered, to set priorities to meet his goals. He learned this from his father-in-law, Jethro (Exodus 18:13-26).

SETTING PRIORITIES

When the Jews left Egypt they had no government, no training, no one to give advice or settle disputes but Moses. Thus, he was busy from early morning to late at night every day handling petty arguments, making decisions, giving advice and helping people. There would be crowds around his tent at all times awaiting their turn (Exodus 18:13-26). He was burning himself out, the people were frustrated and impatient waiting, and Moses was unable to do what was most important for him to do: pray, (v. 19), teach everyone (prevention of problems is better than correction of them - v. 20), and train assistants (v. 21). Like the early apostles who needed deacons to help relieve them so they could make their time count best (Acts 6), Moses needed to

do the same thing. He was advised to delegate, let others help with the easier situations. Thus, he would be freed up to do the best instead of just something good.

You know, it's easy to stay busy doing good things. But often that keeps us from doing the best things we could do with our time. Moses had to see what was most important and make that his goal. He has to realign his priorities around God's goals for him. If not, he wouldn't have been able to make his life really count.

GOAL SETTING TODAY Since Moses couldn't do everything that screamed for his attention, he had to decide what to do and what not to do. We budget our money to make it count, knowing it is a limited resource. Failing to do this results in serious problems. We must do the same with our time, for the same reasons. Goals are like stake posts in the distance to help us plow a straight line with our life, to help us get and stay on track with what God wants and stay on track. Setting goals helps us look forward, not backward. It helps us objectively divide our limited resource (time) so it is spent where we know it will count most. Goal-setting helps us make some hard choices about what to leave out of our lives, which needs to meet and which to let go. I've been doing this for years and it has helped me a lot. Let me share a simple format that can help you get started. Adapt and adjust it any way you need.

	DAILY	BY NEXT YEAR	END OF LIFE
FINANCIAL			
PHYSICAL			
SOCIAL (relationships)			
MARRIAGE			
PARENTAL			
SPIRITUAL			
Prayer			
Worship			
Bible knowledge			
Use of Spiritual Gift			
EDUCATIONAL			
CAREER			

I suggest you start by filling in the "end of life" column first, then "by next year" and finally "daily." Pray about these. Don't worry if you can't get them all done at once, just pick a few areas God would want you to start on. Talk to your wife about this. She has insight and advice that can really help. Lots of times women can see what is really important much easier than men. Doing this can be very revealing and enlightening. You'll be surprised how much you'll learn about yourself and your life. Start applying what you learn. It'll improve your life and family now, and have eternal results. Remember, men, we are writing our own eulogy now by how we live. What do YOU want on your tombstone? You're writing it by how you live.

The Godly Man
IV. GODLY MANHOOD
LESSONS FROM ELIJAH

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1. Idolatry's Subtle Pull
2. God Provides for His Own
3. Crisis Praying
4. Men of Integrity
5. Avoiding Rationalization
6. Courage to Speak Up for God
7. Overcoming Depression
8. Men Need Friends

The Godly Man – IV. GODLY MANHOOD LESSONS FROM ELIJAH

1. IDOLATRY'S SUBTLE PULL

Elijah is one of the unsung heroes of the Bible. He usually isn't rated with Moses, Abraham, David and Daniel, but he certainly should be! He did great things for God. His prayers of faith are unequaled. His boldness in standing up for God is legendary. Yet he was a man like us. He experienced intense fear and deep loneliness. Sometimes he doubted God. Other times he allowed his anger to distort his thinking. Still, God used and rewarded him in a great way. He did many, many miracles -- more than anyone in the Old Testament except Moses. He never even died but was taken to heaven without death. When Jesus needed someone to fellowship with, God sent Moses and Elijah to speak with the transfigured Jesus. Learning about Elijah, and discovering principles men can apply to their lives, will be an exciting adventure. For most, studying Elijah is fresh territory. Let him speak to you today.

THE MAN WITHOUT A PAST Despite being such a special, important man, we know nothing about Elijah's past. He just pops onto the scene in I Kings 17:1. Nothing is mentioned about his parents, his early years, when or how God called him to serve Him, if he was married -- nothing but that he was from a town named Tishbe. Tishbe has never been discovered by archaeologists, and we don't even know where it was located. Thus, Elijah steps into history as a man without a past. But, then, it's not our past that God is concerned about. It's our present and future that matter to Him! No matter what your past is, God wipes it clean and uses you from this day forward.

THE NATION WITH A PAST While Elijah didn't have a past, the nation of Israel certainly did! They failed to trust and obey God as their king and insisted on having a king like everyone else (I Sam. 8:7). Never try to be like 'everyone else' -- it usually ends in disaster. Saul's reign was a disaster. David started out well but then sinned and suffered the consequences the rest of his life. Solomon, his son, only partly obeyed God. His many pagan wives brought their idols and heathen gods with them and established idol worship in Jerusalem. When the nation split, Jeroboam, the king of the northern 10 tribes ("Israel"), set up golden calves in Bethel and Dan. God clearly showed how he felt about this at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 32:31-35). God clearly forbade idolatry (Exodus 20:4-5). Still, Ahab had non-Levites be the priests (I Kings 12:31) and offered sacrifices (v. 32) to these idols. He claimed they were still worshipping God (Jehovah).

FROM BAD TO WORSE This continued until Ahab became king, and then it got much worse (I Kings 16:30). He considered it "trivial" to commit the sins Jeroboam had committed (v. 31). He married Jezebel, the daughter of a pagan king and priest who followed in her father's footsteps. Instead of the awful sin of worshipping Jehovah in the form of golden calves, he brought in pagan gods to worship. Ahab and Jezebel brought in the worship of the Philistine god Baal and his consort (female companion) the goddess Ashtaroath. These were gods of fertility and were worshipped in the most immoral sexual excesses. By the way, Ashtaroath was known as Eshtaroath by the Germanic tribes and forms the basis of our 'Easter' practices today (eggs and rabbits are symbols of fertility). In Rome she was known as 'cupid', the goddess of lust!

Well, this made God angrier than anything the Jews had done so far (I Kings 16:33). Thus, He withheld rain on the land for over 3 years, as Elijah told Ahab would happen (I Kings 17:1). Whether God told Elijah to say this, or Elijah knew it would happen because God had promised this curse on idolatry (Deuteronomy 11:16-17; 28:23-24; Lev. 26:19-20) and went on his own initiative we don't know. However, it happened, God supported all Elijah said and there was no

rain (James 5:17). Either way, it took tremendous courage to stand against the idolatry of the day. Everyone was doing it, it seemed the modern thing to do, the sophisticated current fad in worship! Also, it appealed to the flesh for it was a very sensual worship. The only way we can see what a major stand Elijah took was to put ourselves in his shoes. Actually, maybe we are in his shoes today more than we think!

MODERN IDOLS While idols are still worshipped in many parts of the world, and even by some 'Christian' groups, for the most part we aren't tempted by images of people and animals in wood and stone. We are too 'enlightened' to fall for that! We'd never worship a calf made of gold -- we just worship the gold! Just because we don't have those kinds of idols doesn't mean we don't have any idols at all! An idol is anything that we put before God, that means more to us than Him, that we turn to in order to have some need met. Everyone has something first in life, and if it isn't God it is an idol.

We have as many and varied idols today as the pagans did. Some worship other people (like Elvis Presley, Madonna, their favorite singer or athlete, a movie star or a financial or business success). More common is worship of things: a car, house, boat, dress, piece of jewelry or whatever. Greed is rampant today, and is an idol (Matthew 6:24). When possessions or things come before God they are idols. When our faith is in our financial resources and insurances we aren't trusting God (Matthew 6:33). When we find meaning and satisfaction in our job, career, position, income or possessions we are idolaters. Men often measure themselves and their 'success' by these standards.

Other false gods today include sex. Society is saturated with it, must as in the days of Ahab and Elijah. It is hard to stand against! Immoral or impure thoughts or actions are idols as God clearly says (Eph. 5:5). We turn to this to fulfill needs that should be met other ways.

I think one of the biggest dangers Christian men have is to make their relationship with their wife and children their idols. Jesus clearly says HE must be first (Matthew 10:37-38). When we are more concerned with what our family thinks of us or doing things they will like than we are of what God thinks of us and doing what He wants (even if it isn't popular) then we are making these people idols for we are putting them before God. If we are unwilling to give them up to God to do whatever He chooses in their lives we are making them idols. If we value their approval more than God's, if we look to them for all our meaning and satisfaction, if can't say "no" or make the tough decisions based just on what GOD wants, then they are idols!

IDOL-PROOFING YOUR LIFE Honestly and prayerfully seek your own mind and heart. Ask God to show you any idols you may have (Psalm 139:23). Anything that comes to mind as perhaps being too important about, commit to God in prayer. He is a jealous God and wants ALL of us (Ex. 20:5; 34:14; Dt. 5:9). Develop a close, personal, intimate relationship with Him so you won't need any substitutes. "Dear children, keep yourselves from idols" (I John 5:21).

The Godly Man – IV. GODLY MANHOOD LESSONS FROM ELIJAH

2. GOD PROVIDES FOR HIS OWN

We are all very familiar with how God provided for Daniel in the lion's den and his three friends in the fiery furnace. We know how He provided for Abraham, Joseph and David. However, we aren't always as aware of how He provided for Elijah. Elijah delivered God's message of coming drought to Ahab (I Kings 17:1), who probably just laughed -- until it was obvious there was a drought. Then, instead of responding to God's warning, he just blamed Elijah for the problem and tried to take it out on him.

GOD'S STRANGE PROVISION When Elijah's life was at risk, God spoke to him (v. 2) and told him to go hide in a cave in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan River (v. 3). As is typical of the way God works, He doesn't change circumstances or remove our problems, but He does help us through them. He never promised to end our troubles, but He always has promised to help us through them (Matthew 28:20; I Cor. 10:13; 2 Cor. 12:9; etc.). There God showed Elijah a brook that still had water for him to drink. His food, however, was brought in daily by ravens. These were considered unclean by the Jews, but God is showing Elijah that He can and will use anything and anyone for His work -- even fearful Elijah. Depending on these birds to bring food each day must have been very humbling to Elijah, as God meant it to be. Still, Elijah obeyed. Each morning the ravens brought bread and meat in the morning and evening.

What they brought wasn't take-out from a local restaurant! It was their own food which they left behind. They found or stole bread and vegetables. They killed small animals and birds. By God's guidance they left some of this behind for Elijah to cook and eat.

Now put yourself in Elijah's place. He had nothing to do but sit in a barren desert all day. Inactivity for any man, especially for one used to lots of activity and accomplishment, is very hard. There is no clock to punch, no list to cross off work completed. God is using this time to slow Elijah up so He can deepen his faith. Not only does Elijah have nothing to do, he has nothing to think about, and this is even harder for a man. All he has to do is wonder if the birds will make their next drop-off, and what he'll do if they don't! For a man to not be able to provide for himself but to be at the mercy of other's provision is probably hardest of all. Most men would hate having nothing to do but sit around analyzing their thoughts and feelings day after day! We've been trained to value our worth by what we accomplish. We don't seem to accomplish anything we don't feel we have any worth. God, however, was accomplishing something much greater in Elijah than anything Elijah could produce with his hands. God was using this to mature and strengthen his faith.

Elijah was learning that God would provide. God provided for his physical needs when he needed the food. God wasn't early (providing far ahead) or late (after he was sick from hunger). God was always right on time. Elijah needed to learn that, as does every man. God also provided for his emotional needs -- birds to keep him company. They provided some contact with life. He had to avoid people or he could be found out by Ahab and killed. He got to know the birds and their various mannerisms and distinctive habits. They provided companionship. I think that's why God used birds instead of something like manna.

Moses was in a desert for 40 years as God taught him to trust Him moment by moment. Joseph learned that lesson in prison, Paul in Arabia and Jesus in the carpenter shop. God has ways of showing each man that he needs to depend on God moment by moment. We are so independent and self-sufficient that it doesn't come naturally to trust him. We try to take care of everything on our own. That's why God allows some area we can't control and need him day by

day. It may be health, finances, family difficulties, career stress, time pressures, emotional issues, thoughts we can't control (lust, greed, anger, fear, etc.), but whatever it is God allows it there so we learn to trust Him day by day and moment by moment.

After about a year Elijah started to really learn he could trust God for his daily provision. Then do you know what happened? The water level started to go down, slowly at first. Each day the stream got narrower and narrower until finally it was a trickle. Finally, even that stopped and there were just occasional small pools in the deeper sections. It wasn't long until these turned green and rank. This, too, was to increase Elijah's faith. At just the right minute (not too soon and not too late) God again spoke to Elijah (v. 8).

GOD'S STRANGER PROVISION God then moved Elijah on to stage two in his training program. he had to go to a Gentile widow and eat the last of her food (v. 9)! This was even harder on his male ego than being fed by an unclean bird! Still, Elijah obeyed (v. 10-11). As it turned out this Gentile woman was a believer in God (v. 12) and trusted what Elijah told her, sharing the very last of her food (v. 13-15; Philippians 2:3-4). It must have been hard for Elijah to take that, for men would certainly prefer to come to her rescue, bringing food for her. Instead, he eats the last of her food. Still, in faith she cooperated. She is very similar to another Gentile woman of faith from this very same area that will one day come to Jesus and be complemented by Him for her great faith (Matthew 15:24f).

What happened was even more miraculous than the ravens! Each time the last of the flour and oil was used, it was miraculously replaced by the time it was needed for the next day's meal (v. 16)! God again provided daily, as the need arose. If God would have sent Elijah to a large, well-stocked farm and given barrels and barrels of provision ahead, Elijah would not have learned to trust God day by day, moment by moment. That is what God needs to teach us all.

GOD'S STRANGEST PROVISION The story doesn't end here, though. It continues on in your life and mine. We see how God used this to prepare Elijah for the coming work and tests that were in store for him. God is using things in your life and mine now to teach us to depend on Him day by day. Men aren't naturally good at that. We're better at being self-sufficient and independent, taking care of our self and our loved ones, making sure everything goes smoothly. It hurts our ego to have to trust God, to know there is a part of our lives not going like we'd like it. We may even blame God for allowing that to continue. However, it is that very situation that God uses to teach us to continually depend on Him.

Each one of us has our Elijah-story about God's daily provision. What is it in your life? Where do you need to keep trusting God day by day, moment by moment? What is not under your control like you'd like? Are you continually trusting God with it? Or are you blaming Him for allowing it to continue? Are you trying to solve it on your own? Do you feel like a failure because it continues? Trust Him with it, moment by moment, like Elijah did. He'll never let you down. His provision won't be early, but it won't be late! He WILL provide!

The Godly Man – IV. GODLY MANHOOD LESSONS FROM ELIJAH

3. CRISIS PRAYING

How many times have you prayed this week? No, I mean how many times have you REALLY PRAYED this week? There is a big difference, you know. When do you do your most sincere, intense, focused praying? If you're like most of the rest of us, it's in times of difficulty. There is something about being in a really tough situation that motivates us to pray better. When we are in a crisis, when things are out of control and we are experiencing a high level of discomfort, our focus on prayer increases. Think of times in your life when you were in a real crisis: what did that do to your prayer life? The same thing happened to Elijah, too.

ELIJAH: A MAN OF PRAYER Elijah had been praying for his whole life. He was a great man of prayer. he prayed and God sent a drought for 3 1/2 years (James 5:17). He prayed for housing and food and God provided a brook and ravens, then a widow woman. Now God has greater things for him. God prepares us for big challenges by starting us with smaller ones. We have to pass the smaller ones to get to the larger ones.

ILLNESS STRIKES The context for this stretching of Elijah's faith begins with the son of the woman he is staying with getting ill (I Kings 17:17). Despite his prayers, the boy gradually gets worse until he dies! Before Elijah had been watching a stream dry up and die a slow death. Now it is watching a boy die a slow death. God provided when the stream died -- what about the boy?

THE WIDOW'S RESPONSE When the boy died the widow responded by blaming Elijah. "What do you have against me, man of God? Did you come to remind me of my sin and mill my son?" How do you respond when you are blamed for something you didn't do? Usually, we defend ourselves and attack back, pointing out imperfections in the other person. Her first reaction is "Whose fault is it?" "Is it judgment because of past sin?" Like with Job, we assume difficulties come to us because God is punishing us for sin. This can never be (Romans 8:1).

ELIJAH'S RESPONSE How do you think this made Elijah feel? Everywhere he goes disaster follows. Drought comes to the land, then his brook dries up, now the son of the woman providing for him dies. We know Elijah had a tendency to pity himself and get depressed (I Kings 19:1-4). These were perfect circumstances for Elijah to feel sorry for himself and start blaming God. Men today, too, must watch out for that -- it's sin! Elijah took this all to God in prayer, though. That's the only thing we can do!

A CRISIS PRAYER Elijah took the boy to his room and poured his heart out to God in a loud, emotional cry: "O LORD my God, have you brought tragedy also upon this widow I am staying with, by causing her son to die?" "Why did you do this, God?" is what he prays. This may not be a great example of faith and trust. It doesn't show a submissive servant spirit, does it? It is an honest pouring out of the frustration and confusion, anger and wondering that is going on in him. He just doesn't understand why God is doing this, and God doesn't tell him a thing!

Then Elijah lay on top of the boy face to face, hands to hands. He cried out to God: O LORD my God, let this boy's life return to him!" Nothing happened, so he did it again. Suppose he would have stopped then. I wonder how many blessings God has prepared for us, but we don't persevere in prayer and therefore don't receive them. After doing this for the third time God

brought the boy back to life! God answered Elijah's crisis prayer. Why? Because it was theologically profound? It wasn't. Because of his deep faith? It wasn't. His prayer was just an honest, to-the-point turning to God in need. God understood Elijah's frustration and anxieties, fears and short comings. That should make any man feel great!

God doesn't expect long, flowery prayers of praise and deep theology during times of crisis. All He wants is honesty. Elijah prayed like a typical man: direct and right to the point. That's OK. That's how most of Jesus' prayers were, too.

WHY? Why did God allow this to happen to Elijah and the widow? He could have prevented it, why didn't He? God always has good reasons for allowing these things: reasons that have to do without growth and His glory. The widow needed this to realize that Elijah was a man of God (I Kings 17:24). Elijah needed this to see God's power and the importance of prayer. We need crisis situations to focus our prayer, become more intense and sincere. These are elements we should carry over into our prayer life at all times. God allows crisis situations to help us learn crisis praying. The next crisis you face, remember Elijah and pray!

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4. MEN OF INTEGRITY

In ancient China, the people desired security from the barbaric hordes to the north; so, they built the great Chinese wall. It was so high they knew no one could climb over it and so thick that nothing could break it down. They settled back to enjoy their security. During the first hundred years of the wall's existence, China was invaded three times. Not once did the barbaric hordes break down the wall or climb over the top. Each time they bribed a gatekeeper and then marched right through the gates. The Chinese were so busy relying upon the walls of stone that they forgot to teach integrity to their children.

Unfortunately, the same is true today. Too often selfish personal goals come before anything else in life. Honesty of character is no longer admired as it was in Abe Lincoln's day. Lawyers, politicians, used car salesmen and many others have reputations as being self-serving and not always to be trusted. This isn't isolated in a few professions, though. Retail loss from employee theft is almost twice that from shop lifting, and shoplifting itself is quite high! In addition, statistics show most high school students admit they would cheat on an important exam. Integrity, honesty, character - these today are not what they should be.

Good examples of men of integrity are often hard to find today. The Bible has numerous ones, though: Nehemiah, Daniel, Joseph, Obadiah and many others. Surprised to see Obadiah's name there? Are you wondering what he did that was so great? Well, the Obadiah I am talking about isn't the one who wrote the book by that name. The one I'm referring to was a contemporary of Elijah. Let's call him Obadiah # 2. His story is in I Kings 18.

ELIJAH RETURNS TO AHAB After two years with the widow, being prepared by God for what has for him next, God tells him to return to Ahab and deliver another message (I Kings 18:1). Even though the word was out to have Elijah shot on sight because he was the most wanted man in Israel, he obeys without an "if," "but," or "later." Men of integrity do what God wants them to do, no matter what the personal cost. If it means losing a promotion, looking bad in front of others, taking a financial loss, going against the wishes of wife and/or children, or having others think less of you, men of integrity do what Jesus would do in a situation.

MEET OBADIAH # 2 Obadiah was in charge of Ahab's palace (v. 3), a very influential position. In addition, he was a very devout believer in the Lord (v. 3). God always had his people in strategic positions just at the right time to do His will: Joseph and Moses in Egypt, Daniel in Babylon, and Nehemiah & Esther in Assyria. Still, it takes a very committed believer to come through when God needs Him. It takes a man of character, of integrity, to obey God and do what is right no matter what the consequences.

The job God had for Obadiah was to, at the risk of his own life, to hide and feed 100 of God's prophets for Jezebel was killing all she could find (v. 4).

OBEDIAH MEETS ELIJAH One day Ahab sent out Obadiah to help find food for his horses and mules (v. 5). He was obviously more concerned about how the drought would affect his own possessions than he was about the people for whom he was responsible! Men of character put the needs of others before their own comfort and 'things.' Ahab has never been accused of being a man of character!

Anyway, Obadiah met up with Elijah who was on his way to see Ahab (v. 6-7). It must have been encouraging and uplifting for these two believers to find the other was all right and to be able

to talk about the things of God with another person. That didn't last long, though, until Elijah told Obadiah to go tell Ahab that Elijah was here (v. 8). Obadiah fell apart in fear at this (v. 9) for Ahab had spread the word that anyone who saw Elijah and didn't bring him in was as good as dead! After all he had done for God and to hide the 100 prophets, now he feels God is deserting him and sending him to his destruction (v. 10-14).

Elijah understood, for his life was in even more danger. He assured Obadiah it would be all right for him because Elijah would come turn himself this very same day (v. 15). As a result, Obadiah passed on the message and Ahab went to meet Elijah (v. 16).

MEN OF INTEGRITY It takes integrity to do the right thing when there is chance of pain or loss because of it. It takes integrity to obey God when it will cost us something. Integrity means doing what is right, what God wants you to do, what Jesus would do -- no matter the consequences. Integrity means being faithful to your wife in every action and thought, no matter how your marriage is going. Integrity means you faithfully minister for Jesus in whatever capacity he has given you, regardless of the results or response. Integrity means you keep your promises to family and friends. Integrity means that all your business, financial and personal dealings and thoughts are pure and righteous.

The words that house speaker, Jim Wright, quoted upon his resignation, really hit home; Horace Greeley had a quote that Harry Truman used to like: "Fame is a vapor, popularity an accident, riches take wings, those who cheer today may curse tomorrow, only one thing endures -- character."

Integrity means you are "sincere" in all you do. You see, the word "sincere" comes from two Latin words meaning "without wax." Artificers of Middle Eastern countries fashioned highly expensive statuettes out of a very fine porcelain. It was of such fragile nature that extreme care had to be taken when firing the figurines to keep them from cracking. Dishonest dealers would accept the cracked figurines at a much lower price and then fill the cracks with wax before offering them for sale. But honest merchants would display their uncracked porcelain wares with signs that read, "sine cera," "without wax."

God has YOU in a strategic position, to reach some that no one else is in position to reach. Don't respond in fear, like Obadiah did at first. Overcome that fear with faith. Trust God and obey by doing what you know he wants you to do, whatever the price. Become men of integrity. The world needs that. God needs that. Your family needs that.

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5. AVOIDING RATIONALIZATION

Adam blamed Eve for his sin. Eve blamed the serpent for hers. Aaron blamed the fire for making the golden calf. Saul blamed his soldiers when he didn't kill all the Amalekites. Pilate blamed the Jews for his not releasing Jesus. It seems blaming someone else has been around since the beginning. Everyone today has an excuse for their failure, a justification for their sin, a rationalization for their errors. From little on we perfect the skill of explaining away our wrong actions and putting the blame on someone else. Siblings, parents, the boss at work, our mate, even God gets blamed -- just so we don't have to admit to our own sin. What motivates us to always make excuses? What's behind this compulsion?

AHAB BLAMES ELIJAH When Obadiah brought Ahab to Elijah, Ahab's first response was to blame Elijah for the 3-year drought in the land (I Kings 18:16-17). Now Ahab was the one who brought God's warning that Israel's sin (idolatry, immorality, greed, etc.) would result in God's judgment, a drought, to motivate the people to turn back to God. As king, Ahab was responsible for the people, especially since he and his wife Jezebel were the ones responsible for turning them from God. But instead accepting responsibility for the drought, he blamed Elijah! It's always easier to blame someone or something else, isn't it? Children do it, women do it, men do it. It's more dangerous when men do it, though, because men are responsible not only for their own actions but for their families and churches. Like Ahab, though, we look to place blame elsewhere. We don't like it when we are blamed for something, but we are still quick to find a way to pass responsibility for a sin or error to someone else.

ELIJAH RESPONDS TO AHAB How do you respond when blamed for something? Elijah handled it like a man. He coolly pointed out the facts, that it wasn't his fault (I Kings 18:18-21). He told Ahab to take responsibility for his own sin.

WHY WE BLAME OTHERS Why is it so hard to hold ourselves accountable, to admit our mistakes? I think it's our pride. We feel we must be perfect, always right. If we aren't we think less of ourselves and feel others do, too. We grow up thinking we must be perfect, we fear the consequences of sin, so we deny responsibility. We aren't secure enough ('man' enough) to admit our failures and shortcomings, to say we are sorry and ask for forgiveness. We can't love ourselves when we do that and we think others can't, either. Inside we feel guilty, knowing this isn't right, but that just seems to drive us to pass the hurt on by hurting others. We're like little boys who got caught and are afraid to admit it. What a terrible, destructive habit this becomes! It hurts us and those we love. It keeps us from maturing and being like Jesus. Men, PLEASE honestly admit your problem with this. Analyze what causes you to do it. Confess it to God and those you hurt. Ask God to search you and remove that from you (Psalm 139:23-24). It's a bondage Jesus can help you break if you admit the problem and go to Him for help!

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6. COURAGE TO SPEAK UP FOR GOD

Real life stories are always more exciting than fiction. One of the most exciting events of all time was the showdown between Baal and Yahweh on Mount Carmel almost three thousand years ago. It certainly goes down in history as one of the classic confrontations of all time. More exciting than any Superbowl, more important than any political event, more far-reaching than any UN debate, and more conclusive than any military victory, it is certainly an outstanding event. What made it so important was that God's people were trying to serve Baal and Yahweh. They wouldn't choose one or the other. This victory caused them to choose God. The story is found in I Kings 18.

THE STAGE IS SET When Elijah challenged Ahab to a showdown to see whose god was more powerful the stage was set (I Kings 18:19). Thousands of people came for they were starving during the drought and blamed Elijah (v. 20). Mount Carmel was the perfect stage: high enough to be seen by all yet with slopes gradual enough for all to get close.

Baal was the farm and storm god whose voice was thunder. Yet he couldn't get crops to grow or bring rain in 3 1/2 years. Asherah was the goddess of sex and war. The European goddess of fertility, 'Easter,' is the same as Asherah. Jezebel brought her worship into Israel, for her father was a priest of Asherah. Both were worshipped by awful, immoral orgies of the worst kind. Elijah challenged the people to choose between their God, Yahweh, and the god of their pagan neighbors, Baal. They wanted the best of both. They didn't want to abandon Yahweh but they didn't want to give up Baal and the sexual excesses in his worship, either. Elijah said they must choose, but they remained silent, refusing to commit themselves (v. 21).

THE CONFLICT BEGINS Evidently Jezebel and her 400 prophets didn't show up, ignoring Elijah's challenge, but Ahab and his 450 prophets of Baal did come (22). Elijah passed on the instructions God had given him: get two bulls, sacrifice them on an altar, and let the more powerful god win by sending fire to burn the sacrifice, thus having it ascend to him in smoke and heat (23-24). Elijah let Baal's prophets do the choosing and go first so there wouldn't be any charge of dishonesty against him (25). However, Baal didn't send any fire despite all his priests did (26). Elijah taunted them unmercifully about their god's failure to show up, disrespectfully even implying he couldn't hear them because he was 'out taking a leak' (Hebrew idiom in v. 27). The prophets of Baal cut themselves and tried to get his attention by bloodshed. Satan, who is behind all false gods, is a lover of lust and blood and violence and pain and suffering and death. Still, God wouldn't allow Satan to start Baal's altar on fire (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6). That must have frustrated Satan as he saw how the whole event was unfolding.

THE CONFLICT ENDS Then Elijah rebuilt God's altar, which obviously hadn't been used (29-31), probably using the whole time to preach to the people, reminding them about God's power as seen in the Passover, Red Sea crossing, Jericho's fall, sun moving back, etc. When he was done rebuilding the altar, he had huge amounts of water poured on it (32-35) making sure no one would ever accuse him of hiding a spark in it somewhere or cheating in any way.

Then Elijah prayed (36-37), making sure God got the credit and not Elijah, and asking that this would cause the people to take a stand for God and His truth. Immediately fire fell from heaven, burning up the sacrifice, wood, stones, soil and water (38)! This obviously was no trick. There was nothing subtle about this! Fear fell on all the people as they heard the roar and felt the

heat, knowing God could have destroyed them with fire for their sin (39). The people did repent and turn back to God, recognizing His greatness (39) and vowing to follow and serve Him and Him alone. The prophets of Baal were killed (40) and the nation turned back to God. What a tremendous even this was!

THE IMPORTANCE OF TAKING A STAND There is a clear contrast here between Elijah's taking a courageous stand for God and His truth and the people who stayed silent, refusing to commit themselves one way or another. God wants, needs, expects men to be like Elijah.

While we may not find ourselves in a situation as Elijah was in, there still are plenty of opportunities where we can stand like Elijah or remain silent like the people. At work situations come up where we can either keep quiet or stand for God. Off-color jokes are told -- how should we respond? Something dishonest is suggested or done -- what do we say? Spiritual things are mocked -- what do we do? Someone is criticized or gossiped about -- what is our reaction? Too often we choose the silent way, pretending we don't hear or staying out of it. We don't have to make a scene out of everything, we are to be wise and sensitive in our response, but when God wants us to take a stand we **MUST** do so.

This also happens with relatives who criticize, mock, or just share views that aren't what God would have our children believe. Do we remain silent or take a stand? Lot didn't stand against the evil influences of Sodom and Gomorrah despite it bothering him inside (2 Peter 2:7). Joshua did take a stand with his family, and challenged all others to do the same (Joshua 24:15). Each man has to decide which comes first: doing what is right for family and God or what is easiest for self.

Perhaps the hardest place to take this stand is right in one's own family. Too often a man will remain silent and keep his convictions to himself if he thinks his wife or children will get angry or upset with him. From little on up, many boys are trained to fear woman-anger and do all they can to avoid it. Thus, they end up being influenced and manipulated by women. Instead of being the leader as God commands (1 Timothy 3:3-5) they let have the final say and, as in the case of Eve, end up in disobedience to God (1 Timothy 2:12-15). God leads a family through the man, so men must be sensitive to God's leading and courageous enough to lead the family in the direction they feel God wants them to go. Eli let his sons set their path and didn't have the courage to stand up, and the results were disastrous. We can't excuse ourselves by saying our wives are more spiritual, know the Bible better, etc. We often learn from our fathers how to avoid conflict and slip by, in effect letting our wives and even children lead. We claim to be the leaders, but we are careful to do that which they want and which they agree with. When it comes to overruling, saying no, stepping in and taking over a bad situation, or anything like this we often find it very hard to do so. Like the people in Elijah's day, we remain silent. We are always to speak in love, be patient and considerate, and take other's opinions into account. But remember, men - **The buck stops here!** Pray for courage to always do what God wants and to take a stand when necessary.

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7. OVERCOMING DEPRESSION

There's an old fable that says the Devil once held a sale and offered all the tools of his trade to anyone who would pay their price. They were spread out on the table and each one labeled: hatred, malice, envy, despair, sickness, sensuality -- all the weapons that everyone knows so well. But off to one side lay a harmless looking wood-shaped instrument marked "discouragement." It was old and worn looking but it was priced far above all the rest. When asked the reason why, the Devil replied, "Because I can use this one so much more easily than the others. No one knows that it belongs to me, so with it I can open doors that are tightly bolted against the others. Once I get inside I can then use any tool that suits me best."

If the enemy can't puff you up with pride, he will try to dampen your spirit by discouragement. It's his best tool! Does it work on you? It worked on Job (7:3-11), Moses (Num 11:11-15), Jonah (4:3) and Jeremiah (15:10-18), all who were so depressed they wished they were dead! It also worked on Elijah!

Everything was going great for Elijah: the people had repented; the priests of Baal were killed and the drought was over. He even accompanied Elijah back to town after all this happened (1 Kings 18:46). In fact, he ran the whole way (about 20 miles) in a pouring rain. He was helping and encouraging Ahab as he was heading back to tell Jezebel about what happened. Unfortunately, it all went downhill from there, resulting with Elijah really depressed.

The **TIME** of Elijah's depression is quite surprising (v. 2-4). He wasn't depressed when fed by a raven or widow, nor when facing Ahab or the prophets of Baal. It wasn't until after it was over, when he experienced an emotional let-down, that he got depressed. Always watch, after every high point in life the only direction is down. If we go by our emotions we'll let our feelings control, as did Elijah. Elijah was drained emotionally and physically from the day's activities -- and that is fertile ground for self-pity and depression, especially in introverts like Elijah. At its root, depression is self-pity. We feel sorry for ourselves, thinking things are too hard and God isn't fair to us. It is a self-imposed pity party! Elijah is a perfect example:

What **TRIGGERED** his depression was a single threat of a defeated woman. Queen Jezebel said she'd kill him for what happened. She rejected her husband Ahab's lead and refused to repent and turn back to God. Instead, she told Elijah she'd have him killed in 24 hours if he didn't clear out of town (1 Kings 19:1-2). She was powerless to carry out this threat because everyone had turned back to God. There was no reason for him to get depressed. The immediate cause of depression seldom is valid. It's just the timing of it more than anything else. At most any other time he would have easily taken this in stride!

Elijah's **TORTURES** were the same as ours (v. 4). He ran away from his friends and responsible, he was disgusted with life and prayed for death, he felt all alone, as if no one cared about him. All that comes from self-pity, from going by emotions instead of rationally remembering God is still in sovereign control of everything.

The most important part, though, is God's **TREATMENT** for Elijah. God didn't browbeat him or make him confess his sin. He gently worked with the root problem, the cause of the depression. First, he let him sleep then sent an angel to feed him so he could sleep some more (v. 5-8). That

is important when depressed. Our **physical** being must be healthy in order to overcome depression. Proper food, rest and exercise are a must to keep us from giving in to emotions.

Psychologically God let Elijah talk, get it off his chest (v. 9-10), and God just quietly listened. God doesn't argue, try to point out reality, etc. Elijah isn't ready to receive it yet. God patiently lets him get it all off his chest. Then God reveals Himself to Elijah.

Spiritual God revealed Himself to Elijah in a still, small voice (v. 11-15), not in a powerful, supernatural way as Elijah wanted. God was not in the strong wind, earthquake or the fire, but came to him in a still, small voice. It's hard to listen for that when feeling sorry for ourselves, but that is the only way we can get back in touch with God.

Then God gave Elijah work to do (v. 15-17). When depressed stay faithful to your responsibilities. God then explained that Elijah wasn't alone as he thought (v. 18). Knowing we aren't alone is very important. This seemed to help Elijah get out of his depression.

Still, there was always a **TRACE** left, for victory over depression is never permanent. It can always come back. It was something Elijah always had to watch out for.

Final **TRIUMPH** comes only by faith in God and His Word (Rom. 8:28; James 1:2-3; I Cor. 10:13; I Thes. 5:18). Read and memorize this to help.

The hymn God Moves in a Mysterious Way has been a source of great comfort and blessing to many of God's people since William Cowper wrote it in the 18th century. Yet few people know of the unusual circumstances that led to its composition. William Cowper was a Christian, but he had sunk to the depths of despair. One foggy night he called for a horse drawn carriage and asked to be taken to the London Bridge on the Thames River. He was so overcome by depression that he intended to commit suicide. But after 2 hours of driving through the mist, Cowper's coachman reluctantly confessed that he was lost. Disgusted by the delay, Cowper left the carriage and decided to find the London Bridge on foot. After walking only a short distance, though, he discovered that he was at his own doorstep! The carriage had been going in circles. Immediately he recognized the restraining hand of God in it all. Convicted by the Spirit, he realized that the way out of his troubles was to look to God, not to jump into the river. As he cast his burden on the Savior, his heart was comforted. With gratitude he sat down and penned these reassuring words: "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform; He plants His footsteps in the sea, and rides upon the storm. O fearful saints, fresh courage take, the clouds you so much dread are big with mercy, and shall break in blessings on your head."

Remember Elijah and learn from him about how to avoid and defeat depression. True and lasting victory can and will only come by trusting completely in Him, no matter what.

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8. MEN NEED FRIENDS

Male friendships are rare. David & Jonathan come to mind, but very few others. Jesus was close to His disciples, and Paul had a good friendship with Mark and Timothy. Still, good male friendships are very rare. Perhaps that is one of the reasons so many men are struggling today. Men need friends. God made them that way.

When Elijah got over his depression, with God's help (I Kings 19:1-18), God made a provision to help keep that from happening again. God provided Elisha at this time in his life (v. 19-21). Elisha stayed with Elijah for the rest of his life, being with him at his death (2 Kings 2:1-4). Not surprisingly, no severe bouts of depression are recorded in Elijah's life again.

Men have a deep-seated need for friends, but there are many difficulties in men initiating and cultivating personal relationships. I must admit I don't have any close male friends. All my best friends (those I share personal and intimate things with) have been girls. I grew up in an all-woman world and so felt more comfortable and accepted by women. My sister Judy, my cousin Mary Jane, my friend from church Linda, and friends of recent years like Nancy Kremm and my wife Nancy, all are female friends.

I never learned how to make close friendships with men. We can work on a project together and enjoy each other's company. We can joke, play softball, discuss the Eagles, or many other things. But talk about my feelings and fears? Express my appreciation for and need of him as a friend? Share my failures and hurts and tears? Suppose I called one of the men in my church that I feel comfortable with and asked him to meet me for lunch one day because I miss his company and would like to spend more time with him than I have been doing? How would that go over? See what I mean. Now suppose I ask him to meet me for lunch so we can go over some long-range planning for church programs or some such thing and there would be no problem! This proves my point -- men's relationships are utilitarian, always serving some function or purpose. They aren't just for the joy of each other's company.

For men, friendships either just happen or they don't. If they don't fall in place men usually don't work at developing or pursuing them. Men just don't know how to do that without feeling (or thinking they are perceived as) gay, unmasculine, or just somehow different. Men work at hiding their real emotions, especially from other men. Men don't make commitments to each other. That's why relationships like David and Jonathan stand out so strongly. Gale Sayers and Brian Piccolo in "Brian's Song" is another exception that proves the rule. Apart from a few examples like there, men have no role models of how to develop male friendships. My son, Tim, from when he was young, always said he liked to have girlfriends because with boys he always felt like he had to compete with them in some way. I don't know where that comes from in men, or how to get rid of it, but it is a fact of life.

For another thing, men don't admit their problems to other men. I counsel many times more women than men. Men don't ask advice, even when lost while driving. It is "unmanly" to turn to others for help.

Is this lack of male friendship so bad, though? Why should a man bother having a male friend if he has a wife? Is anything lost by men not having a male friend? I think so. Even Jesus needed and cultivated male friendships. He had the 12 whom He invited to live and work with Him 24 hours a day. From them He had 3 specially close friends (Peter, James and John) to enjoy an even deeper level of intimacy (sharing the Transfiguration, etc.). Even closer to His heart yet was John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Jesus leaned on his chest during the Last Supper. (It is an unwritten rule today that men never touch other men outside of carefully understood gestures like handshakes, slap on the back, playful arm punch, etc.) Jesus needed them with Him, and wanted them praying with Him as He went to Gethsemane. It wasn't just because He wasn't married. A good male friend can be someone you can bounce things off of you can't bounce off your wife (sexual temptations, feelings of inadequacy, fear of failure, frustrations and hurts from your wife, stress of work, etc.). I think there is a place for close male friendships today. We all know that widows adjust to life much better than widowers, and I think this is one reason why.

Could this be why so many, many more men than women become workaholics, alcoholics, drug addicts, etc.? I'm sure it's one of the reasons women have a much easier time witnessing to other women than men have witnessing to men. If we don't develop relationships with other men how can we help reach them for Christ and help them grow spiritually? Is this why Christian manhood is often so much weaker than Christian womanhood today? I don't know the answers to all these things. I don't even know if there are answers. I do know, though, that this is an area worth considering. It's not easy being a man. It's harder being a man alone. Satan's strategy is divide and conquer, and I think he's done that pretty well with men. I'm not the only one he's done it with. It doesn't have to stay that way, though.

Jesus is our example in this area as in all others. He had friends. He picked twelve special men to spend all their time with him. From among these he was extra close to Peter, James and John, the inner 3. It seems He was closest of all, though, to John. John leaned against Him during the last supper (men never touch men today, except for a handshake or slap on the back). Jesus needed His friends to pray for Him in Gethsemane. Although they let Him down, He still reached out to them. If Jesus needed friends, so do we. If Jesus could have friends, so can we. Follow Jesus example and

The Godly Man

V. SAMSON & MALE

SEXUALITY

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The Godly Man – V. SAMSON & MALE SEXUALITY

1. UNDERSTANDING SEXUAL COMPULSION

We live in a world that turns everything backwards from the way God wants it to be. couples live together before getting married. Women get pregnant then decide if they want a baby. Lust precedes love. Youth is valued over the wisdom and experience of age. External things are worshipped and internal qualities and values denigrated. Self-control, gentleness, submission and kindness are seen as weaknesses while assertiveness, self-centeredness and rudeness is valued. We admire physical strength, even worship it, but moral strength is neglected, mocked and ridiculed. What a time to live! What an immature age it is. Yet unfortunately there have been other times like this in history. Samson lived in one such time.

In a time of national weakness and turning from their spiritual roots, God sent an angel to a family in Israel to tell them that He was sending a deliverer to turn them from bondage to victory and from serving self and sin to serving God (Judges 13:1-23). Unfortunately, the deliverer himself ended up in bondage, too -- and that is our story, the story of a man named Samson. Samson was a man strong physically but weak morally. Instead of learning from his conquest, we must learn from his defeat. Still, many lessons are there to be learned for Samson was a man very much like men today and he lived in a time very much like today.

SAMSON'S YOUTH Samson grew up 'different' from other boys his age. For one thing, he was the only child of parents who had not been able to have children (thus we can assume they were older - Judges 13:3). In addition, he was raised by different standards, Nazarite standards of special devotion and consecration (13:7, 13-14). Even his appearance would have been different from other boys his age for his hair was never to be cut. He seems to have been spoiled, indulged, used to getting his own way (14:2, 3b). Even though they asked God how to raise him (13:8), it doesn't seem they taught him control. Self-control and discipline weren't built into him, perhaps because his shy, fearful (13:22) parents gave in to his wants knowing he was special. Add to that a special physical ability and strength (IF he had it even to some degree then) and we see that Samson didn't have a typical childhood.

Reading between the lines seems to allow us to say Samson was sheltered, shy and self-conscious. He obviously had a problem with responding in anger and revenge. He seems to have had lots of time on his hands without work or friends to occupy him.

He did develop a personal relationship with God and accepted His gift of salvation, for we read that God's Spirit started to "stir" him to free his people from Philistine oppression when he was a youth (13:25). He would have gone through bar mitzvah at about 13 years of age. I'm sure he was sincere in his faith, but a combination of personality traits and upbringing set him up for a severe test when he reached manhood.

SAMSON'S DECISION TO MARRY Samson grew up in a good Jewish town, sheltered from the awful sinfulness of the pagan Philistines who lived nearby. There was no boundary between Israel and Palestine in that area, cities of each were interspersed throughout the region. Pious Jews kept strictly to themselves, though. As a Nazarite Samson grew up in a culture where women were very modest, quiet and withdrawn. There was very little contact between unmarried men and women. Perhaps plans had even been made for Samson to wed a local village girl. Then everything changed.

For some reason (and we have no idea what it was) Samson went to a nearby Philistine town named Timnah (14:1). Why he went to his mortal enemies no one knows. Why was he

attracted to that which God was stirring in him to destroy? Why have anything to do with that which was under God's judgment?

In a very influential time in life, when he as a male was quite open and susceptible, Samson was hit with pagan sensuality in a very ripe form. Tall, blond, brazen Philistine girls would come up to him and openly flirt. Their extreme immodesty and gross immorality probably both attracted and repelled young Samson. Perhaps his elderly parents had not properly prepared him for such things. Anyway, Samson found he had a real weakness of the flesh for sexual things, a weakness that he would never learn to control and which would eventually kill him. Instead of turning and fleeing, as Joseph did from Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39:12) and we are told to do when his with temptation (I Corinthians 10:13), he gave in.

Immediately he wanted to marry a girl from there (14:2; 3b). He mistook lust for love. He didn't know her well as a person (as later developments will show) but was just taken by her outer appearance. Satan used one of his favorite temptations on Samson at a vulnerable time in life and he fell fast and hard -- as have many men since. This wrong start led to a life of misery and defeat because of lack of sexual control. What a sad story, but how common today.

THE PROBLEM OF LUST TODAY It's not hard for men today to identify with Samson. A 1993 Promise Keepers survey of 1,500 men showed that 51% struggle with masturbation; 51% fantasize about having sex with women other than their wife; 15% have been unfaithful to their wife and 33% regularly look at sexually oriented material (videos, magazines, etc.). Things today are sexually oriented.

It seems like life has few mysteries left. Science has an answer for everything. Man had turned from God and the supernatural, putting himself in its place. Still, something in man cries for a little transcendence. Sex seems to provide that. It's the only thing we can't analyze under a microscope, can't figure out, can't bring under our power. There is almost something magical and mystical about its power. No wonder we even call our female models "goddesses". This shows man thirsting for something greater than himself, something above and beyond everything else in life. This is a spiritual yearning that only God can fill, but man is trying to fill it with sex instead. When we fixate so much on naked bodies we are just showing a need to go even deeper, to lay out our souls naked before God. Our preoccupation with sex, which in many has become a compulsion, shows a deeper longing for something real and meaningful in life. Sex has become Satan's substitute for God, an idol many now worship. But idols never satisfy, and we know what God says about idolatry.

In a day and age when addictions and compulsions seem to be abounding, we must recognize that sex is one of the leading bondages. Evangelists, church leaders, pastors and Christian men by the score are being defeated and destroyed by this. Even worse, most men deny the power that sexual compulsions have over them. "I can stop any time I want" is the lie they believe. They are heading down a greased sliding board, gaining speed and momentum, promising themselves they can and will stop. Even after they crash in flames at the bottom, they fail to see the real problem. Samson didn't.

SEXUAL ADDICTION & COMPULSION TODAY Have you ever thought you needed help for your sexual thoughts or behavior? Do you ever feel that sex is controlling your thoughts or actions? Have you been fighting a losing battle to limit your sexual thoughts or actions which you know are wrong? Are you starting to feel helpless and doubt if you will ever change? Do you seem to fall into the same pattern of sin, always feeling guilt, remorse and depression afterwards? Do you promise that will be the last time, only to find yourself in it again? Do you fear the hurt and damage your sexual sin can cause the ones you love, but find yourself unable to stop and stay stopped? If these questions prick your conscious then you need to admit that, like Samson, something too powerful has a hold of you.

COMMON TRAITS IN ALL ADDICTIONS & COMPULSIONS There are some traits all compulsions & addictions have in common, be it gambling, drinking, drugs, sex or whatever. These include:

1. Using this to escape the root problem instead of working it through. They deaden the pain of rejection, loneliness, insecurity or anxiety. They mask the pain and provide a quick escape but never get to the cause of the pain.
2. The compulsion progresses, getting stronger instead of staying the same or weakening.
3. It takes greater levels or amounts of the stimulation to produce gratification. Tolerance to lower levels is built, like the alcoholic who can drink a lot without getting drunk.
4. Withdrawal symptoms occur when the 'drug' is unavailable.
5. Thoughts become so obsessive the person finds themselves doing things they didn't want to do and promised they would never do again. The same pattern of seeking the 'drug,' obtaining it and using it follows like a ritual.
6. Shame and guilt result afterwards -- blaming others, God or self. The anticipated relief is short-lived, if it comes at all. The person feels dumped, trashed, miserable.

THE COMPULSION OF SELF-STIMULATION Usually for men this starts with self-stimulation. Studies show that 62% of married men do this. Often it is justified, explained away as normal and all right. But it is sin. The wrong thoughts that accompany it are sinful (Matthew 5:28). It makes sex an end in itself (one's own physical joy) instead of a means to an end (show love to mate). Our bodies don't belong to us to use for ourselves, but to our mates to use for their pleasure (I Cor. 7:4). Plus, anything not of faith is sin. Finally, it's inconceivable to think of Jesus doing or approving this.

CAUSES OF ADDICTIONS & COMPULSIONS The cause starts in childhood, especially in abusive or dysfunctional families. When a person is unable to have real intimacy with another, to really give one's self without reservation, to overcome feelings of rejection or failure, sexual compulsions often compensate. Sex becomes a way of escaping pain and substituting reality with a fantasy world. Society conditions us to this, for everywhere around us we see lust replacing love and substituting for real closeness. Satan works with this, too. His demons magnify openings we give him and keep working on them, putting thoughts and desires into a person's mind. Often this follows family lines, going from grandfather to father to son.

THE SOLUTION TO SEXUAL ADDICTION & COMPULSION The solution is in Jesus, and Jesus only.

1. Remember, sex itself is not sinful. There is nothing wrong with nudity (Genesis 2:22-25) or sex in marriage (Heb. 13:4; Song of Sol. 7:1-11). Any and all sex outside of married love is wrong, though (Ex 20:14; Dt 5:10; Lev 20:10) but that doesn't mean sex is innately wrong or sinful. It's like money, it's our attitude to it and use of it that makes it right or wrong.
2. Also, sex starts in the mind. Mental lust leads to adultery (James 1:13-16), and in fact IS adultery already (Matthew 5:27-28). It's not the tempting thought or the unexpected sight that is sin, but what we do with it. Sin starts in the mind, so does victory over sin. It starts there, so it must stop there. What a person does with the first thoughts determines the whole direction of the sin pattern. That is the place for the whole 'ritual' to be broken. You can't stop half way down a greased sliding board, you have to stop before going down it. The first rung of the ladder is our thought life -- that's where it must stop!
3. Take a stand for purity in thought and actions with Jesus' help. Make sure you think only of what is noble, right, pure, lovely and admirable (Phil 4:8). Flee the desire to entertain sinful thoughts (I Cor 10:13) or commit sinful actions (Genesis 39:12-13). Resist (James 4:7) by running to Jesus in prayer. Use the Bible, memorize verses, sing Christian songs, call a friend to pray for you -- do whatever is necessary when sinful thoughts hit.

4. Get to the root cause. Work through childhood pain which keeps you from intimacy. Ask God to show you what you need to realize and remember. It doesn't have to be a childhood of overt abuse, any kind of rejection hurts! Forgive those in the past who have hurt you. Confess your bitterness and hate and ask God to remove it. Pray for God to heal you, forgive you and restore you from the results of past hurt. Learn to develop true intimacy with your mate and God. Allow others to get to know the real you and make an effort to get to know them better. Ask God for wisdom so you will see how your compulsion substitutes for real intimacy and so you can clearly see the difference between lust and love. Renew your mind by memorizing Scriptures such as Psalm 25:3-4; 101:2-3; 103:8-14; 119:9-11; Mt 4:4; 18:3-11; John 17:19; Eph 6:10-16; Heb 2:12; I Jn 3:8; 4:4 and others.

5. When you do fail and sin, confess the sin and accept God's forgiveness. Confess (I Jn 1:9) it when you entertain wrong thoughts, do wrong things, put your pleasure before your mate's or withhold pleasure from your mate. Admit it as sin. Don't blame, excuse, justify, punish yourself, etc. Then make sure you forgive yourself by accepting God's forgiveness (Psalm 103:8-14).

6. It is very helpful to become accountable to a Godly person. The 12-step programs success is based on two things: admitting one has a problem they can't beat alone and allowing themselves to be accountable to others for help in overcoming their addiction. This is successfully used by many Christian 12-step groups who deal with sexual addictions, too. Find a mature Christian of the same sex to hold you accountable by asking you the tough questions regularly and praying with you. Your mate can't do this, you won't be honest because you don't want to hurt them. Find someone you can talk to, who will accept and love you no matter what. This is an important part of the healing process and of learning true intimacy with another person. Professional counseling is often necessary and very helpful.

This whole area of sexual compulsions and addictions is relatively new but just starting. There will be much more of it as we continue in the 'last days' (2 Timothy 3:1-7). For the sake of those around us, for the sake of those in our family, for our own sake this is something we as Christians must stop ignoring and pretending doesn't defeat fellow believers. We must be as open about and supportive of those fighting this sin as we are of any other sin. Satan is using it almost unhindered to defeat many of God's people. We must be aware of it and of God's solution to sin -- the blood of Jesus!

12 STEPS TO VICTORY OVER SEXUAL ADDICTION (based on 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous)

1. Admitted I am powerless over my compulsiveness and that my life had become unmanageable (Rom 7:17-18; Ps 116:1-9; Jeremiah 9:23-24; 2 Cor 12:9)
2. Come to believe that Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit could restore me to sanity (Phil 2:13; Prov 28:26; Rom 5:8; Ps 30:2-3; Mt 8:1-3; Mk 9:24)
3. Made a decision to turn my will and life over to the care of Jesus Christ (Rom 12:1; Prov 3:5-6; Gal 2:19-20; Ps 40; Mt 11:28-30)
4. Made a searching & fearless moral inventory of myself. (Lam 3:40-41; Ps 139:23; Mt 7:1-5)
5. Admitted to Jesus Christ, to ourselves and another human being the exact nature of my wrongs. (James 5:16; I Jn 1:9; Ps 32:1-5; Gal 6:2-3)
6. Am entirely ready to have Jesus Christ remove these defects of character. (James 4:7-10; Jer 10:23; Heb 12:1-2; Hosea 10:12; Micah 7:18-20)
7. Humbly ask Jesus Christ to remove my shortcomings and sins. (I Jn 1:9; Isa 1:18-19; Isa 662; Ps 32:1-2)
8. Make a list of all persons I had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all. (Luke 6:31; Mt 5:23-24; 6:14-15)
9. Made direct amends to them all except when to do so would injure them or others. (Mt 5:23-24; Mk 11:24; Heb 12:1; 2 Cor 5:19; Col 1:20-21)
10. Continue to take personal inventory and, when I am wrong, promptly admitted it. (I Cor 10:12, Ps 19:12, I Cor 10:12; Ps 26:2-3; Gal 6:4-5; I Tim 1:19)
11. Seek through prayer and meditation to improve my conscious contact with Jesus Christ, praying for the knowledge of His will for me and the power to carry that out. (Col 3:16; Prov 2:3-5; Ps 1:2; James 5:13; Rom 8:26; Col 3:16)
12. Have a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps and try to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all of life (Gal 6:1; I Pt 3:15; Isa 61:1; Ps 96:1-4; Gal 6:1; 2 Cor 1:3-4)

The Godly Man – V. SAMSON & MALE SEXUALITY

2. UNDERSTANDING HOMOSEXUALITY

Several years ago, God clearly led us to start a Bible study in New Hope, Pa. After much prayer and seeking God's help we started. As we were to begin the first session a young man walked in and immediately asked if God could save someone who was gay. He was obviously speaking of himself, and also obviously under God's strong conviction. Just a couple of minutes later he gave his heart to Jesus right there in the middle of the whole group. For a while he was full of excitement grew spiritually, but it wasn't long until he started to withdraw and before long broke all contact. He was back in his previous lifestyle. I don't know what happened to him. I wish I could have done more. My understanding of homosexuality was so weak that I just didn't know how to counsel or work with him. What are the causes of homosexuality? Is it normal? Does God make some people that like the same sex and others that like the opposite sex, like He makes some who like chocolate and others who like vanilla? Bible-centered information about this is now available. I'll try to summarize what I've learned.

CAUSE OF HOMOSEXUALITY

We saw last time that Samson was deeply influenced by his parents. He was an only child of older parents who indulged him. This clearly impacted his whole life. His parents didn't even do more than voice a mild concern when he wanted to marry a Gentile unbeliever whom he barely knew (Judges 14:1-6). Evidently he had a weak father.

Often when a child has a disappointing relationship with their same-sex parent they seek to have that need met through a sexual relationship with a person of the same sex. If a child doesn't feel loved and secure, if they feel rejected, then often turn to a substitute to meet those needs. Statistics show that a high percentage of homosexuals come from an abusive family. When a female is sexually abused by a male she may so hate males that she totally rejects them and turns to females for sexual love instead. A boy who is sexually abused also feels the shame and guilt, but the pleasure that also comes (the physical climax) confuses him. Without a mature male showing him love in godly ways, he may find himself drawn to this since it is the only 'love' he has known. Satan's demons take an experience like that and put thoughts, ideas and desires in his mind and opportunities in his path. This is especially true in a culture that has turned from God (Romans 1:24-26).

To make matters worse, the substitute love and acceptance gives temporary relief. Many find that an easier path than having to face the pain and hurt from the past and work them through. Also, the anger that masks the pain is often taken out on parents and the world in general by their turning against society and being homosexual.

Of course, this doesn't happen to all children who feel rejection from their same-sex parent. All current statistics show that only about 1% of the male population is exclusively gay. There aren't nearly the numbers they claim.

We must remember that we all have a free will and, while some sins may be more easily overcome, there is no excuse to remain in any sin. The Bible does clearly call homosexuality a sin (Rom 1:26-27; Lev 18:22-23; 20:13-16; Dt 23:17, 27:21; Gen 19:5-8; Judges 19:22; etc.). If God says it is wrong, He must also provide a way out for those caught in its trap.

CURE FOR HOMOSEXUALITY

Much of what was said in the previous article about sexual addiction applies here.

First, it must be **confessed as sin**. There can be no excuse or justification, no blame or self-pity. It must be confessed (I John 1:9 - admit it is sin) and the person's desire must be to not remain in that sin but we willing, with God's help, to never commit it again. Also, God's forgiveness must be accepted (Psalm 103:8-14). Accepting God's forgiveness and forgiving one's self can be the hardest part!

Second, the person must **depend on God's strength** to overcome the sin and change. Spiritual warfare praying when tempted, close contact with a prayer partner, regular fellowship with other Christians, meaningful daily devotions, memorization of Scripture -- all of these are important factors. One must depend moment by moment on the power of the Holy Spirit to bring victory.

Third, **understand the causes** from the past that opened one up to the sin. Forgive the person(s) involved. Turn to your Father-God ("Abba") and ask Him to heal you from that and meet your unmet needs.

Finally, **learn right relationships** to the same and opposite sexes. Reach out and open yourself up, trusting God and others to show acceptance and love. It takes time, but learn to rightly relate to others.

OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD HOMOSEXUALS

As with all in sin, we are to love and reclaim the person while rejecting the sin. While that is easier to say than to do, we must remember that sin is sin. No sin is worse than any other. Jesus paid for every sin. God forgives and forgets, so must we. We are not to judge or condemn but to love. While humbly warning about the consequences of the sin of homosexuality (in this world and the next), we must show love and acceptance to the person themselves. More rejection is NOT what they need. God can and does forgive any sin. They are no worse than us and need the love of God as much as we do!

Ask God to help you have the right attitude to these people so that you can show God's love to them. Then pray for opportunities to practice that and be sensitive to chances to reach out in love with the GOOD news of Jesus.

The Godly Man – V. SAMSON & MALE SEXUALITY

3. UNDERSTANDING MANIPULATIVE WOMEN

A recent “Sally Forth” cartoon starts with daughter Hillary saying to her mother: “I assume you let Dad play poker tonight instead of going out to dinner with you.” Sally replies, “It’s not a matter of LETTING, Hilary. We discussed it like adults. I recognized it was important to him to play, and he came to recognize that I was displaying remarkable understanding.” Next Hilary says, “So not you can extort whatever you want from him?” “That sounds so ugly,” Sally replies. “Let’s just say I’m in an advantageous bargaining position.”

We’ve all been in positions where the other person was in an ‘advantageous bargaining position’ over us. It makes us feel, well, MANIPULATED. No one likes being manipulated, but we all seem to be able to do it to others. Manipulation is a dishonest, sneaky way of getting control. Love, faith and trust are replaced by power, control and pressure. Manipulation can and will destroy relationships and marriages. That happened to Samson’s marriage.

THE MARRIAGE Samson wanted to marry an unbelieving Gentile woman in direct disobedience to God’s clear command. Still, he was head over heels in lust and no rational arguments could change his mind. On his way to the wedding (Judges 14:8) he passed by where he had earlier killed a lion that had attacked him (14:4-7). Knowing that, as a Nazarite, he wasn’t allowed to touch a dead body, he touched it anyway in getting honey from a bee hive that had developed within the carcass. He knew it was wrong (14:9) but did it anyway. Giving in to small lusts always precedes giving in to larger lusts, and Samson shows an inability to deny his fleshly lust for food. Indulging the fleshly lust for food (too much, too sweet, etc.) often preceded indulging the fleshly lust for sex. Thus, fasting can really help overcome sexual lusts, for if one can learn to have victory over this basic desire of the flesh, then that self-control can be applied to the lust for sex. Try fasting to defeat sexual temptation, it works!

When he arrived at his wedding feast, Samson threw a customary drinking bash (v 10). There is no reason to assume he abstained from alcohol at his own wedding. This broke the second part of his vow, that to not drink fruit of the grape. After breaking the first vow, breaking the second was easier. The first sin opens the door and makes it easier to sin again.

At this wedding celebration thirty Philistine men were assigned to Samson as his companions there. Why not Jewish men? Well, godly Jews wouldn’t have anything to do with a pagan love feast. More than that, though, it doesn’t seem Samson had male friends, Jewish or Gentile. He seems to be the kind of man who is comfortable among women but not men. That probably started because of his relationship to his more capable mother who had the predominate role in his childhood. She was the one who told him he was doing all right and made him feel like a man. He bonded with her, not his weaker, more distant father. Thus, he wasn’t able to relate to men and grew up with a need for female approval. More about that later.

THE MANIPULATION During the wedding celebration, which lasted several days, Samson gave the Philistines a riddle with a wager of 30 sets of fine clothes (v. 12-14). Another lust is seen here: gambling. He wants something for nothing. One lust always opens the way for others. His weakness of character is also revealed in that it is evident Samson needs to be the center of attention, impress others, and feel superior and in control of others.

When they can’t get the answer and don’t want to pay up, the Philistines put pressure on Samson’s new wife to get the answer for them (v. 15). Instead of honestly telling her husband of the threat and doing the mature thing, calling off the bet, she uses manipulation to get Samson to tell her the answer so she can pass it on (16a). She uses typical female tools: guilt, tears, “If you

really loved me...” Only children (like Samson) and extroverts (also like Samson) are more susceptible to pressure like this because of their need to be liked, but Samson holds out for a full seven days (16b-17).

Obviously their relationship is selfish, immature, and lacking the basics to make a marriage. She manipulates him (16a), he withholds from her (16b), she is disloyal to him (18) and he puts his parents before her (17, see Genesis 2:24). They are each just using each other. Finally, she wears him down, though. While as a general rule men may be stronger than women physically, women develop tools to more than compensate. As little girls learning to control stronger boys their age they soon learn to manipulate. Often they see this exemplified in their mothers and other women. They soon discover that, while they can't out-muscle a man, they can out-emotion a man, and that is what happens.

Rejection, criticism, disapproval, guilt, tears and other weapons become the arsenal of the ungodly woman, and sometimes godly women, too. Men need to feel like they are pleasing their women, like they are providing in an approved way, and like their women are proud of them. A man's ego and basic needs are built on these. It's even stronger when a man needs a woman's approval to feel good about himself as a man. Thus, any perceived rejection or criticism can be devastating.

Most men really have a hard time with a woman who is angry at them. Not only does it bring back bad memories of their mother who would reject them when she got angry at them, men would rather avoid than face strong emotion. Therefore, many men will give in to keep the peace, do most anything to avoid their wife's anger. They learn this survival technique growing up with their mothers, and they see their father's doing this same thing for the same reason.

To avoid this men, fall back to a more passive role, 'read' their wives to see how to respond and what to do, and then say or do the safe thing. This undermines a good relationship, though. Women, if they realize it or not, need a man who is strong enough to take control in a gentle loving way, even (especially) when they are out of control. God leads the family through the man, not the woman, for a woman's emotional nature can be easily misled as Eve was by Satan (1 Tim 2:12-15). Man is to lead.

Another way this passive role fails is in the sexual relationship of a husband and wife. For women sex is a romantic expression of their relationship. She needs the man to be the aggressor to be assured he loves and wants her. That is why she needs to hear "I love you" so often. For a woman sex breaks down walls and they need that. For men the emotional closeness of sex can be a threat, a danger of failure. Thus, men tend to let women take the lead. This is really compounded when that mother-son gets carried over by the wife and husband. How can there be a mother-son pattern during the day and then that mother become a passionate lover at night? It is up to the man to take loving leadership and break those patterns by not being manipulated but taking the lead as God requires. Man must find his needs met in God, not by another woman, even his wife. To the extent a man is dependent on his wife, to that degree he won't be free to carry out his God-given role as leader.

THE MURDER Anyway, back to Samson. Finally, Samson gave in to her nagging to keep the peace (v 17b). The result was that their relationship, such as it was, was destroyed (20). Control, manipulation, giving in to keep the peace, these all destroy relationships. When the men told him the answer to his riddle (18) Samson knew she had been disloyal and cared more about herself than him. In childish, immature anger Samson storms out of the marriage, kills 30 Philistines to get their clothes and pay off his debt, and moved back home (19).

Watch out for manipulation. It destroys. Learn to recognize it and with God's peace and power resist it. Find approval in God alone. There is no such thing as an advantageous bargaining position among married people who love each other and are committed to serving each other first.

The Godly Man – V. SAMSON & MALE SEXUALITY

4. UNDERSTANDING MALE SEXUALITY

Suppose you were traveling in another country and walking around some evening. As you walked you came to a building where people were lined up to enter so you got in line. They seemed excited as they seated themselves facing a stage. Everyone applauded and cheered as a man walked out with a large tray covered with a towel. Wild music started to play and lights flashed on and off. Slowly the man would lift one corner of the towel and then another, allowing the audience to catch a glimpse of what was under it. The people cheered louder and louder. Suddenly the towel was totally removed and everyone went wild as the lights dimmed. What you saw before all went dark was a nice, fresh pork shop! What would you think? Was there something wrong with their appetite? Suppose as you left you noticed a magazine stand with pictures of pork chops on the cover and inside. Pork chops were used to sell cars, mufflers, clothing -- anything and everything. TV programs and movies were rated as to how much pork chop was shown. Jokes and general conversation often focused on pork chops. People carry them around to entice the opposite sex. What would you think of a culture like that? Have you caught my analogy yet? That is the way our country is about sex!

"It's different," you say. "Pork chop lust is weird, but sexual preoccupation is just a normal and natural thing." Unfortunately, that's true of the time and place we live. Seeing it as normal is the result of growing up in 20th century western civilization. Sexual addiction is becoming more and more common and studies show that 70% of Christian men struggle with sexual sin of one kind or another. Something must be done. By looking at Samson's life we can learn valuable lessons about this very defeating temptation.

SAMSON'S SEXUAL ADDICTION We pick up the story of Samson sometime after he left his wife in rage and hurt. After a while his desire for her became stronger than his male ego so he returned to her (Judges 15:1). It seems lust is motivating him, not love. He is thinking of his needs, not hers. He isn't interested in a relationship, just sexual gratification.

HOW TO SURVIVE AN AFFAIR To his surprise, though, Samson finds out she now has another husband and he is unwelcome (v. 2). What is one to do when they discover that their mate has been unfaithful? Revenge and bitterness is no option for the Christian. The hurt and pain must be taken to Jesus. It can't be stuffed down inside nor let loose on the offending person. We must forgive as Jesus forgave us. We can't forget, but we can give up any thoughts of revenge and handle our pain with Jesus' help. Good counseling and the support of a few godly friends is important, too. Pray for healing for both of you, ask God to remove the thought of what happened and treat the other person as a restored person, as you'd need to be treated were it you. That's what should be done, but that's not what Samson did.

Instead, he let his hurt turn to anger. His wounded male ego exploded on innocent animals and people (v. 3-5). In childish immaturity he catches 300 foxes, ties them together, and sets them on fire to run through dry grain fields, thus destroying many Philistine crops. That just brought revenge on him, and his ex-wife and family were burned to death (v. 6). Samson then killed many Philistines (v. 8). He ended up killing a thousand Philistines (v. 9-17) with God's strength, but then ended up whining like a spoiled child when he was thirsty from it all and couldn't find any immediate source of drink (v. 18). God patiently provided (v. 19-20).

THE ADDICTION CYCLE Awhile later Samson repeated the same pattern, going to the Philistines for sexual gratification. This time it was to a prostitute (16:1-3), a practice that would ultimately

cost him his life. Understand that not everyone who struggles with sexual sin is an addict, but just like with alcohol or smoking or drugs, when a person isn't able to stop on their own they are addicted. Samson showed signs of a sexual addiction.

First there is a **PREOCCUPATION WITH SEXUAL THOUGHTS**. Thoughts start running through the mind, bringing a mild rush of adrenaline (James 1:13-14). The adrenaline rush gets addictive, as does the escape from reality the thoughts bring. We assume acting on our thoughts will be the solution to our problems. This is where the cycle must stop. If we don't bring our thoughts captive (2 Cor 10:5) at this point it will be much harder later in the cycle.

The **RITUALIZATION** stage of the cycle is when one starts acting on their thoughts. This usually takes a similar pattern each time. For Samson it was going to Gaza, a Philistine town where prostitutes were readily available. For men today it may include surfing the net late at night, hanging around a certain magazine stand or book store, going to a video store when the wife is away, walking past a certain secretary's desk or many other things. Thoughts of sin are conceived (James 1:15a) and grow.

ACTING OUT usually follows the ritualization pattern. The sin is committed, in action or in mind. Then comes the **GUILT & SHAME**. As James says, sin gives birth to death (1:15b-16). Instead of life we get death. Instead of joy there is sorrow. Short-lived pleasure is replaced by a long time of pain. Emptiness fills us. We end up feeling trashed afterwards. We promise we'll never do it again. But before long the cycle is repeated. This addiction cycle must stop at the very start -- what we do with the first thought (Matt. 5:28).

THE APPEAL OF A NAKED FEMALE Samson gave in when he saw a good-looking woman (Judges 15:1). Why do naked women look so good to men? Remember the first time you saw a naked woman? How did that affect you? Why is it such a big thing for a man to see a naked woman? Evolutionists say it is a natural way to keep the human race going, but the Bible says God made things that way (Gen 2:22-25; Prov 30:18-19). Naked animals are no big deal, and (until recently) women aren't affected by naked men like men are by women.

I think God made it that way to reward man for his extra load as leader and so he'd be drawn to his wife to touch her (which a woman needs). Nakedness stands for intimacy. For a woman to show a man her naked body shows she trusts and needs him, she is responding to his masculinity (that's the reason pornography is so appealing - but nudity in that way is a big lie). God wants men to enjoy their wife's body (1 Cor 7:4-5; Song of Sol 4:5-5:1; 7:1-8). Men have a hard time with emotional and spiritual intimacy, and often use physical intimacy as a substitute.

This would be fine if only one's naked wife was attractive, but other women are still appealing to men. We still have a sin nature and a free will choice to obey God or sin. It's built into men today from little on up to 'check out' each woman as to her sex appeal. It becomes a habit, a bad pattern, and Satan's forces keep putting such thoughts in a man's mind to get the addiction cycle started. Also, we all have a thing about 'forbidden fruit' that makes other women sometimes seem more appealing. We know our wife's imperfections and want to see only perfection, so are tempted to view pictures of other women. How would we feel if our wives compared our bodies or sexual abilities to other men?

Appreciating a naked women is natural and God-given, but it must only be one's own wife. To so look at or think of any other women in that way is adultery (Matthew 5:28). That's what led Samson to sin, and King David as well (2 Samuel 11). Joseph knew himself well enough that he knew he had to run from the sight of a naked woman not his wife (Genesis 39). God always provides that escape (1 Cor 10:13) but we must take it. That's the place to stop the addiction cycle.

The Godly Man – V. SAMSON & MALE SEXUALITY

5. UNDERSTANDING HOW TO HAVE VICTORY

In 1985 hard core video rentals amounted to \$75 million. In 1992 that figure rose to \$490 million. By 1996 it was \$8 billion, an amount larger than the revenue from all of Hollywood's movies as well as all rock and country western concerts. More money today is spent on strip clubs than Broadway, off-Broadway, theaters, opera, ballet, jazz and classical performances together. Some studies say that as many as 70% of all men, including Christian men, are caught in some form of sexual sin. There is an open availability of sexual images and activities. There are X-rated TV channels in motel rooms, cable TV brings pornography into the average American home. Anything can be easily found by anyone on the Internet. Respectable video stores and magazine and book stores carry that which a generation ago would have been unthinkable. What's the solution for hooked Christian men ?

Unfortunately, the church isn't attacking the problem. Men are ashamed to admit this sin and ask for prayer. They don't share with each other or go for counseling. It's each one for himself, assuming he alone struggles with this monster. However, there is a solution. There is help. There is a way out. His name is Jesus.

1. SEX ITSELF IS NOT SINFUL Just like money (I Tim 6:10), sex itself is not sinful. It is our attitude to it and use of it, the place it plays in our life. It, too, is a God-given gift to serve us, but nothing for us to serve. Adam and Eve were naked and not ashamed, for sin hadn't entered (Genesis 2:22-25). Godly sex in marriage is pure and good (Heb 13:4; Song of Solomon 7:1-11) and God watches and approves of a husband-wife sexual relationship (Song of Solomon 5:1). Sex not with one's mate is what is sinful (Ex 20:14; Dt 5:18; Lev 20:10; Prov 6:20-28).

2. SIN STARTS IN THE MIND Sexual thoughts of anyone other than one's wife are wrong and forbidden. Entertaining them leads to adultery (James 1:13-16) and in fact is itself adultery (Mt 5:27-28). Once one starts down a greased sliding board stopping is almost impossible. Sexual sin must be defeated when the first thought enters (2 Cor 10:5). Knowing when they usually hit helps, too. It may be after a fight with one's wife, completing a successful business deal, feeling alone, when anxiety strikes, etc. Knowing what triggers the thought pattern is very helpful.

3. SIN MUST BE ADMITTED TO AND CONFESSED Unlike Adam and Eve who blamed others for their sin, we must acknowledge and confess it (I John 1:9). We must accept the responsibility, not make excuses or blame others, not justify it explain it away. Ask God to clearly show you your sin (Psalm 139:23-24). Confession should include taking back any access the sin has given to Satan's forces in one's life. Then comes the hard part -- accepting God's forgiveness (Psalm 103) and forgiving ourselves.

4. DEVELOP A CLOSE, SOLID RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD Without the wisdom and power of God's Spirit we cannot understand and defeat sin. Only an intimate relationship with God can meet our needs so we don't have the same pull to meet them with a substitute like sexual sin. Jesus was tempted in all ways we are and overcame by depending on God (Heb 4:15).

5. ADMIT YOU CAN'T OVERCOME SIN ON YOUR OWN As in all 12-Step programs, one must admit his own inability to conquer his thoughts or actions by his own strength. How can the flesh subdue the flesh (Romans 7:18-19)? If we think we can we are stronger than Samson, godlier than David, purer than Joseph and wiser than Solomon.

6. BE WILLING TO PAY THE PRICE TO GET AND STAY FREE It's not easy to get free from sexual sin, and to honest it usually is just the shame that it brings that we regret, not the sin itself. We don't have a real disgust for the sin itself, it continues to have great appeal. The sin does, to some extent, meet some legitimate needs (but in an illegitimate way). It is a great mental escape, a momentary high from the adrenaline that the anticipation brings and the pleasure of the act itself. There is also the thrill of the chase, the appeal of the forbidden fruit, and the challenge of the hunt. It's only natural to take the path of least resistance, and breaking a pattern of sexual sin is not that! One usually stops only when the pain of continuing is greater than the pain of stopping. It takes a strong commitment to be willing to pay the price to get free! Getting into the sinful pattern/addiction happened over time, and so does getting free. You must be willing to endure emotional pain or anxiety instead of escaping or deadening it with sex. You must be willing to do without intimacy instead of substituting for it with sex. You must live with unmet needs, unmasked pain, boredom, and intense cravings for your sexual substitute. Freedom comes, but only when one is willing to pay the price (Matthew 5:29-30).

7. BELIEVE YOU CAN HAVE VICTORY IN GOD Many men stay defeated because they don't believe they can ever have victory over their sin. In their own strength they can't. God doesn't remove our lust but He gives us power to overcome it. We are a new creation (Rom 6:1-7) and have a power greater than sin within us to help us (Romans 6:8-14) if we let him. That is our free will choice. In order to have victory, though, often demonic footholds must be broken. They can come from sexual sins our fathers or grandfathers committed (Exodus 20:5), or from sexual unions we formed in the past (I Cor 6:16). Those openings must be put under the blood of Jesus.

8. TAKE A STAND FOR PURITY IN YOUR THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS Starting in our mind we must make sure all our thoughts are pure (Phil 4:8-9). We must commit ourselves to keep these things out (Job 31:1). We can't just remove what is wrong, we must replace it with what is right. Pure thoughts must replace impure. Listen to Christian music or tapes of the Bible. Memorize scripture verses (Ps. 25:3-4; 101:2-3; 119:9-11; Mt. 4:4; 18:3-11; Jn. 17:19; Eph. 6:10-16; Heb. 2:12; I Jn. 3:8; 4:4). In order to really purify our thoughts, it is often necessary to get to the root cause and work through the childhood pain which keeps us from real intimacy so we need the false intimacy that sexual sin seems to provide. Ask God to show you what you need to remember. Get insight into how that affects you today. Forgive those in the past who have hurt you. Pray for god to heal, forgive and restore.

9. LEARN TO DEVELOP TRUE INTIMACY WITH YOUR WIFE By developing true intimacy the need for the false substitute will lessen. This takes total openness and honesty, being vulnerable to hurt and rejection. Accept your wife as she is and ask for God's love for her. Pray that your sexual needs would be met with her (Prov 5:15-19). Enjoy her body as God intended it (see article 4 in this series). Spend lots of good time with her, relating and loving her as God wants you to do. Learn from her how to be intimate emotionally and spiritually.

10. BECOME ACCOUNTABLE TO A GODLY MAN While we have all kinds of blocks against this, finding a godly man to support, encourage and hold us accountable is very important (James 5:16). Our fear of exposure and rejection, male pride and ego which tells us we don't need any help and ignorance of intimacy combine to keep us from reaching out to someone else. Our mate can't do this. She won't ask the tough questions and we won't always be honest. If I can help anyone in this area please contact me and I'll gladly do what I can.

There is freedom from sexual sin, despite what the enemy might be telling you! It isn't easy, but it is available. Putting it off won't make it any easier. Resources are available (God, the Bible, others), but it is up to each one to be willing to pay the price. Are you now willing?

The Godly Man – V. SAMSON & MALE SEXUALITY

6. UNDERSTANDING SEXUAL SAFEGUARDS

Years ago, there was a movie in which some shipwrecked men were left drifting aimlessly on the ocean in a lifeboat. As the days past under the hot sun their food and fresh water gave out and they grew deliriously thirsty. One night, while others were asleep, one man ignored all previous warnings and gulped down some salt water. He quickly died. You see, ocean water contains seven times more salt than the human body can safely ingest. When a person drinks it he dehydrates because the kidneys demand extra water to flush the overload of salt. The more salt water someone drinks, the thirstier he gets. He actually dies of thirst.

Lust works the same way. Many men thirst desperately for something that looks like what we want. We don't realize, however, that it is precisely the opposite of what we really need. In fact, it can kill us. It killed Samson.

SAMSON & DELILAH Unable or unwilling to stay away, Samson continued to hang around the loose Philistine women of the area. He “fell in love with” (Judges 16:4) Delilah. Actually, they were both using each other for their own needs, which can hardly be called real ‘love.’ He used her for sex, but never trusted her. She used him for power and financial gain. Each were thinking only of themselves. Despite knowing she was trying to get his secret and destroy him, he continued to play with danger and keep going back to her, getting closer and closer to telling her the secret of his strength. (Judges 16:5-15). Five times she betrayed him, five times he lied to her, but the sex continued. Finally, in pride and self-confidence, and to stop her nagging, he told her his secret (v. 16-17). When slept after sex his hair was cut, breaking the third Nazarite vow (no juice from grapes and no touching a dead animal) and taking his strength so he was easily overpowered and arrested (v. 18-21). He was blinded and forced to push a beam in a circle all day, grinding grain for the Philistines as oxen did. What a sorry way for a prophet of God, a judge of God's people, to end his life. His was literally and physically blinded by lust until he hit bottom. What a picture this is of reaping what you sow. First sin blinds (2 Peter 1:9), then it binds (2 Peter 2:19) and finally it grinds (2 Peter 2:22). This did cause Samson to take a good, honest look at his life and where he had gotten himself.

SAMSON & DEATH God used that time in Samson's life to work. When his strength was gone he had to turn to God for strength and help. He hit bottom, with no place to look but up. Satan, who had inflamed his lust for so many years, now trashed him. He felt the full weight of his sin and guilt. It was obvious his life had been wasted. Something started happening in Samson during this time. God used his suffering to begin to mature him, and for the first time we see him praying, asking God for help and putting God's will before his own (v. 28). His faith grew (Heb. 11:32). When taken to be mocked by the nation, God returned Samson's strength one final time, allowing him to kill many Philistines (v. 22-31). Unfortunately, the Jews didn't repent and follow up on this opportunity for deliverance, but all clearly saw God as the sovereign and just ruler of nations and people.

Samson's life was, in effect, wasted. He had no control over lust and sex. Satan used that to defeat David, Lot, Solomon and many others. He successfully destroys many Christian men today the same way. Unless we are all very careful watchful and alert, he will get us, too.

GUARDRAILS Just as dangerous roads have guardrails to protect drivers from plunging over the edge, so God has provided guardrails for Christian men to be able to safely navigate the curves and dangerous portions of life. These can keep us from plunging into sexual destruction.

1. A Strong Relationship With The Father is the first guardrail (Prov 5:1-2). A solid spiritual relationship with God is the surest protection against destruction. Invite God to examine your thoughts (Phil 4:8-9). Take captive any thoughts that aren't pure (2 Cor 10:5) before they grow. Study and memorize Bible verses to help with the battle over lust (1 Thes 4:3-8; Job 31:1; Prov 6:27; Mk 9:42-47; Eph 5:3-7; 2 Tim 2:22; 2 Cor 10:5; Psalm 139:23-24).

2. An Extreme Caution With Other Women is the next safeguard. Do whatever is necessary to keep yourself from being tempted in action or thought (Matt 5:29-30). Don't even allow yourself to look at another woman and lust (Job 31:1). Be careful, too, of any relationship with a woman where you enjoy and look forward to her company. Sexual relationships start as good friendships, but any male-female relationship that isn't totally brother-sister in all aspects can easily lead to sin.

3. A Wide-open Relationship With Our Brothers is another guardrail. We all need someone who loves us enough to challenge us to total purity (James 5:16). We need accountability, encouragement and prayer support which can only come from a close brother in the Lord who understands and cares.

4. A fulfilling Relationship With Our Wife is the final essential ingredient (Prov 5:15-19). If your relationship with your wife isn't what you'd like, it's up to you as the man to change that. Be the husband you need to be no matter how she responds. Pray and fast for her to be the wife you need. Pray daily for God to give you a love for her like you had in the past. Treat her as if you have that love, and God will quickly put it in your heart. Learn to develop a close intimacy with her. The grass always looks greener, but never is.

Billy Graham says "There must be firm control of the sex impulse. This God-given instinct has been dragged through the gutter by modern thinking, and we have made a cheap toy out of the most sacred gifts God has ever given to man. Our procreative powers need to be dedicated to Christ."

Be careful when the world, the flesh or the devil try feeding you some salt water. It may seem initially invigorating and refreshing, but it leads to death. Control your thirst for sexual things. Drink of the water God has provided (Prov 5:15-19) and don't even think about any other. Make that commitment now. Job says "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl" (31:1). Let's all make and keep that same commitment ourselves. Let's not wait until it is too late, like Samson. Let's do it NOW.

The Godly Man – V. SAMSON & MALE SEXUALITY

7. UNDERSTANDING SEXUAL OPPRESSION

(From the Life of John Newton)

John Newton was a tremendous man of God, greatly used by Him to spread His message of grace and salvation. John's life wasn't always that way, though. He himself is a prime example of God's grace. He's best known for writing the hymn "Amazing Grace." John, however, had much trouble with sexual temptation and sin. It was only by God's grace that he was delivered. That grace is available for us today, too.

JOHN'S EARLY LIFE John was born July 24, 1725, in London, England. He had a godly mother who taught him the Bible and prayed for him. In fact, she wanted him to be trained as a preacher, but she was sickly and died when he was 7. His father was away a lot for he was a sea captain. He remarried and started taking John to sea with him when John was 11. John quickly fell into gross sin. Several times he tried to reform his life but failed.

Although he spent much time at sea, his heart wasn't in being a seaman for he had a girl, Polly, whom he wanted to marry and spend time with. Irresponsibility and carelessness caused him to end up on a British Naval vessel fighting France. He worked his way up to being an officer but lost it when he went AWOL to see Polly. He was flogged and put on a ship going on a 5-year tour of duty. John was sure Polly would be married by the time he returned. He was such a detriment to the ship that they traded him to a slave ship for another sailor.

SEXUAL BONDAGE BEGINS At 19 years of age John had free access to any slave woman he wanted. He went wild! "I rejoiced that I now might be as abandoned as I pleased, without any restraint. I not only sinned with a high hand myself but made it my study to tempt and seduce others upon every occasion." As a sailor he was so bad that the slave ship wanted to trade him back to the British Navy and John didn't want that. As soon as he could, he left the ship to manage a slave warehouse in Africa.

As manager of the slave warehouse, John had unlimited access to the women there. However, he became so sick he almost died and ended up in slavery himself. He had a terrible master who caused him much suffering, but before too long was traded to a new owner who liked him. Again, he was able to constantly sleep with African women. He was so engrossed in his sinful life style that he didn't want to leave Africa. It was only the thought of Polly that pulled him home.

SALVATION BY GRACE Again John was unwelcome on the ship that took him home because of his filthy language, awful morals, drunkenness, and anti-Christian attacks. He constantly mocked the gospel and Jesus. He had a reputation as one of the most vulgar and blasphemous of men, worse than most of the pirates he associated with. Then it all changed.

On March 21, 1748, at 22 years of age, John turned his life over to Jesus. The day before he had been reading Thomas A Kempis's Imitation of Christ and read "Life is short and uncertain. Today a man is vigorous and tomorrow he is cut down, withered and gone." He came under deep conviction. That same night a terrible storm hit the ship and it seemed they would sink. The ship was severely damaged and only barely managed to stay afloat. John found himself calling out to God for mercy -- if such a sinner as he could find mercy! Only Bible verses about judgment came to mind, but he humbled himself and found God's mercy. "I see no reason why the Lord singled

me out for mercy, unless it was to show, by one astonishing instance, that with Him 'nothing is impossible.'"

SEXUAL STRUGGLES CONTINUE John apologized to his father and stepped up his courtship of Polly. His whole life changed and he reveled in his new-found forgiveness and peace. Spiritually he was on fire and grew as a Christian. He got a job as first mate of a slave ship, though, and a few weeks after sailing found he was as bad as ever before. He stopped reading his Bible and praying and had no Christian fellowship. He was unable to resist the sexual temptations and sunk right into sexual sin again. "I was almost as bad as before. The enemy prepared a train of temptations and I became his easy prey. For about a month, he lulled me asleep in a course of evil, of which a few months before I could not have supposed myself any longer capable." Although he tried resisting, he was helpless to have any victory. "I was fast bound in chains; I had little desire and no power to free myself." He had first choice of the women on the slave ship. Today we would say he was addicted to sex. "If I attempted to struggle, it was in vain." How many men can identify with that bondage and misery!

GOD'S GRACE BRINGS DELIVERANCE Again John got so sick he almost died. He had no hope of mercy or forgiveness. He realized he could not change and was helpless in his sin. He stopped making promises or commitments about "next time" and "never again." He threw himself upon God's mercy, a broken and totally defeated man. "I made no more resolves, but cast myself upon the Lord to do with me as He should please." With that came forgiveness, and peace returned. In fact, he never sunk to those same depths again. "Though I have often grieved His Spirit and foolishly wandered from him since (when, alas, shall I be wiser?), His powerful grace has preserved me from such black declensions as this I have last recorded."

Eventually he got out of the slave trade entirely and entered the ministry. God used him in a small town to faithfully spread His message. As John's own testimony spread, so did his influence. Many found hope and deliverance through John's message of grace.

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF JOHN NEWTON What lessons can we learn from John? First and foremost, victory over any sin only comes by God's grace. Sometimes He removes the temptation at salvation, but often it just seems to get worse. Dormant for periods of time, it again and again raises its ugly head to bring sin, guilt and misery. It was only when John realized that he couldn't defeat it, no matter how hard he tried, that he was able to see God's victory in his life. There is no program, no strategy, no magic formula to bring victory -- it is only by God's grace. Any pride in ourselves or our ability to change (Prov. 16:18). God did discipline him when he sinned to get his attention: twice he was so sick he almost died. By his own admission, a fine wife to honor and be worthy of was also a help to keep him from slipping back into sexual sin. On a later voyage he wrote to Polly: "I was once no less eager after their pleasures than they (the crew members) are now. But you have so refined my taste since, that nothing short of yourself can thoroughly please me." That should be our prayer, too.

It's all by grace, nothing we can do or deserve. Falling on God's mercy is our only recourse. Promises of change, punishing ourselves for past failures, trying our hardest, all these fail for the flesh (sin nature) cannot control the flesh. Only the Spirit can control the flesh, and only when we 100% come to the end of our rope and throw ourselves upon His mercy. Have you done that, or are you still struggling on your own? Learn from John Newton. It's only by God's grace and mercy that victory comes. That's no excuse to sin, but it does give us hope no matter how bad things are. It also shows us our total need of Him -- which is something we all, like John Newton, need to learn.

The Godly Man – V. SAMSON & MALE SEXUALITY

8. UNDERSTANDING SEXUAL SIN

(King David)

Sin can ruin your life. No one ever plans for that to happen, still that is always the result unless God in His mercy intervenes. Sin is a free will choice. The consequences are inevitable. God's principle still stands: reap what you sow (Gal. 6:8). It usually always starts small and seems 'innocent,' but the results are disastrous. Warning signals are ignored and destruction is inevitable. That happened to the *Titanic* and it will happen to us, too. Examples of this are myriad. Although he is often used as an example of this, there are still many lessons we can learn from David.

DAVID'S WEAKNESS FOR WOMEN God had clearly said that His kings were to only have one wife (Deuteronomy 17:17). When David disobeyed that, the end result was inevitable. That passage also said the king wasn't to build up a large army and depend on his own military might but to trust in God (Deuteronomy 17:14-16) and David was able to obey this part and trust in God. If only he would have obeyed and trusted in the second area, too. As big a temptation as trusting in pride and power are for men today, lust is even a bigger one.

David's first wife was Michal, the daughter Saul gave him for killing Goliath. When Saul turned against David he took her back and married her to another man. David then married Ahinoam, Abigail, Maacah, Haggith, Abital, Egai and Bathsheba. He later got Michal back as a wife, too. In addition to these eight wives David had at least ten concubines. By his wives David had twenty-one sons and one daughter. David had a very large, messed-up family and suffered many negative consequences of his actions.

A lust for women was the crack in David's armor, and he passed this on to his son Solomon who had 700 wives and 300 concubines. They turned his heart from God (I Kings 11:3). That is what God's warning in Deuteronomy 17 said would happen. Solomon broke the first prohibition, too, for he built up the army and started putting his faith in it instead of God.

POLYGAMY TODAY Do you have a weakness for women? Be honest with yourself. Most men, even good Christian men, are susceptible to lust and sexual sin. What about you? How many wives do you have? Many Christian men have more than one wife. They have the women they are married to. Then they have a second wife: sexual fantasies. A third wife may be pornography. From there it gets even worse. We might not see them as other wives, but that's what they are. They steal our affections and sexual desires, leaving our first wife short-changed or her due. They substitute. They steal our hearts. They take our time and money. They alienate our affection. They are 'other wives.'

David couldn't buy a pornographic magazine or watch cable TV or a video. He married another wife. That was his centerfold. Today we don't have to marry another woman, we can seemingly get them 'free' in a magazine or on TV. You can even download another wife off the Internet! Men, just how many 'other wives' do you really have?

And remember, these wives have children, too. Their names are "shame," "guilt," "defeat," and "misery." They can even be "poverty," "divorce," "disease," and "death." Who needs wives and children like these? Who needs to take away from the woman God provided?

DAVID DIDN'T EXPECT TO PAY All David wanted was some entertainment to fill a dull, boring evening (when he should have been at work for God leading God's army). Instead, he ended up in

deception, murder and adultery. Before long his family was split over this and by the next generation the direct results were a split in the nation. David, his family and the entire nation all went downhill from there. That wasn't David's plan when he saw Bathsheba from the roof! David thought he could have some fun without any serious consequences. He played with fire and got badly burnt. David never thought that, just because he let that first lustful thought grow into an action, he'd have such a steep price to pay. Satan never whispers that part of things into our heart. He talks only of the present, never of the future. But the present is fleeting and the future always comes.

This sin with Bathsheba was the first domino in a row that included the death of his infant son, his oldest son Amnon raping his daughter Tamar, Absalom killing Amnon to avenge the rape, Absalom's almost-successful attempt to overthrow David's kingdom, and Absalom's death. What a price to pay for letting an innocent lustful thought grow to where it became an action! By the way, when is the best time to stop a lustful thought? When is the best time to stop a fire that has started in your house?

Other consequences continued. Ahithopel, David's close friend and trusted advisor for decades, sided with Absalom in his rebellion (which is why it was almost successful). Why would he do this? Bathsheba was his granddaughter. See how sin works?

Remember, this wasn't a one-time slip David made. He's been stretching and burning his conscience for years. If he hadn't given into his lust when he took his second and then third wife, he would have better been able to resist that first impulse to sin with Bathsheba. A man who gives into his lust when young has a much harder time controlling it when older.

It may be that David never did get over his 'thing' for women, even after paying this bitter price. When he was old and his circulation was bad, a young virgin was brought in to sleep with him and keep him warm (1 Kings 1:1-4). Granted, nothing sexual happened, but why not one of the women he already had? Why a new one, a young one, a virgin? More than likely, he was just repeating his life-long pattern. When David had a need, he compromised and looked for some new sensual stimulation to meet that need. Is that what you do?

WHAT ABOUT YOU? What more can I say? The story speaks for itself. Sin can ruin your life. No one ever plans for that to happen, still that is the way sin works. The only antidote is the blood of Jesus: accepting God's free gift of salvation, coming back for cleansing each time one sins, and depending on God's strength for victory over all sin. First, though, the sin must be admitted. Unless we admit to ourselves that we have a problem we will never strive for a solution. Admit your helplessness to have victory over sexual sin, be it a thought pattern or action. It's no different than any other sin. Victory is available in Jesus. For some it means a mental choice to stop lust before it grows in the mind, for others it may be a change in daily patterns (where you go, what you watch, etc.), for others it still means getting counsel or finding a friend to hold one accountable. Whatever it is for you -- do it! Sin can ruin your life!

The Godly Man – V. SAMSON & MALE SEXUALITY

9. UNDERSTANDING SEXUAL TEMPTATION

(Joseph)

The Lewis and Clark expedition had a great impact on this nation as well as on many individual lives. One such man was John Colter. He traveled west as part of Lewis and Clark's party, but didn't return with them because he wanted to stay and explore more of the fabulous land he had been exposed to. He was the first white man to witness the geysers of Yellowstone and many other wonders of the west. For many years he survived despite constant danger. Then one day he was surrounded and captured by some Blackfoot Indians. Instead of killing him on the spot they decided to make a game of it. They stripped him naked, gave him a 300-yard head start, and then started chasing him. The ground was rough rock and prickly cactus, and soon his feet were cut and bleeding. He ran for his life, though. Blood streamed from his nose and mouth from the exertion but he couldn't slow down. He'd be dead if he did. One Indian almost caught up with him, but he was able to turn, surprise the Indian, and kill him first. After running six miles he found a river. He hid for hours in icy cold water under a raft while the Indians searched for him. Under cover of dark he went upstream, exhausted, half-frozen and nearly delirious from exposure and loss of blood. He knew of a trading post 150 miles away and headed in that direction. Seven days later he walked, naked, bleeding and hungry into the Bighorn compound. In that moment he became a living legend. Stripped of everything and against the worst odds imaginable, John Colter outran pursuing Blackfeet for 156 miles.

RUN! What an example he is to us of running for our lives, our spiritual lives. Oh, that we would put that much effort into running from temptation and sin! If we see the deadly danger behind temptation and sin we would turn and run for our lives. That is the only appropriate response to that which would pollute our soul and kill our holiness.

JOSEPH THE RUNNER Joseph in the Old Testament is a perfect example of this. I won't go into the whole story of his life because you can read it for yourself in the Bible starting in Genesis 37. Joseph was sold into slavery by his jealous brothers and became a slave in a very well-to-do household. God blessed all he did and before long he was put in charge of the entire household. Since his master was often gone, he was in the top position. His master was a fine man, but the master's wife was an immoral woman. She tried to do everything she could to seduce Joseph (Genesis 39:7-20). When nothing worked and he fled from her physical attack, she accused him of rape and his master threw him into prison! What a reward for virtue.

Instead of quickly passing over the temptation Joseph faced, let's see what we can learn from it. Joseph was young, probably good looking and well built, and good at whatever he did. Thus, Potiphar's wife was challenged by him. It must have been her own ego that made her want him. She was trying to use him for her emotional pride and physical pleasure. It isn't hard to see Satan behind this. He doesn't know all God knows, but it wouldn't have been too hard to piece together some of the clues (brothers and father to one day bow down to Joseph, etc.) and see that God has something special for Joseph in the future. It was obvious Joseph was a man God was using and would use even more in the future. Therefore, Satan hit as soon as he could. He didn't play around; he went for the kill right from the start. He used one of his first stringers (Potiphar's immoral and self-centered wife) who no doubt was very beautiful and appealing (why would Satan use ugly bait?). She was always there, always inviting, always displaying her wares, always

available. Joseph was like any normal young man with normal desires and hormones. It must have been a real temptation!

WHY DID JOSEPH RUN? Why would Joseph resist? If she was willing and he was naturally curious, and no one would find out -- why not? That's the way it is seen today. If no one gets hurt, so what? No doubt her husband knew of her ways and chose to overlook them and pretend the gossip he heard wasn't true. If it wasn't Joseph it would be someone else. Joseph's resistance had nothing to do with his loyalty for his master. He had a great loyalty to consider: his loyalty to God (Genesis 39:9). He considered this a "great evil" and "sin against God." Each man must choose his own moral standards. What we are when no one is looking is what we really are. No one was looking at Joseph, no one would know, no one but God. That was enough. Joseph lived his life knowing God was always watching. Do you?

That's why Joseph ran. He ran from her, but I think he also ran from himself. Inside he knew if he didn't move fast he'd be lost! It wasn't that she was about to physically overcome and force him, it was that he found himself very tempted and attracted. What scared him was how easy it would have been to give in! Does that ever scare you? It should. Joseph ran from himself more than he ran from her. God didn't remove the source of temptation, but God did leave an open door for him to run through. Today, too, God always gives us a "way of escape" (I Cor. 10:13) for us to run through. RUN -- not walk. If we don't run we won't make it.

LESSONS IN RUNNING TODAY John Colter ran for his life. He was trapped and was a goner if he didn't put distance between him and his enemies. He had nothing but his free will, and he used that to escape the danger. Why aren't we as serious about escaping sexual temptation and sin? Is it because we really don't see it as the evil danger it is? Is it because we are intrigued and, while we don't want to get caught and destroyed, we want to hang around a bit and 'enjoy' the temptation or sin a little longer. An Indian with a spear is an obvious danger, a friendly smile from a girl in a short shirt doesn't seem as dangerous. Believe me, it is. You don't have to believe me, down inside you know that yourself. Act on what you know. Don't flirt with destruction. Satan uses the same traps and bait today as he did with Joseph.

Leave your coat and run, as Joseph did. Cancel your cable. Throw away your video store card. Drive home a different way. Avoid going past that secretary. Go the opposite of that book store at lunch. Completely cut off that 'innocent' flirtatious relationship. Fire that seductive employee. Quit your job if necessary and get another.

Sin always has a price, and that is especially true of sexual sin. It makes no difference if it's an action or 'just' a thought. Sin is sin. Sin always costs, and it costs more than anyone wanted to pay. That is especially true of sexual sin. Ask David. Ask Samson.

Remember John Colton. Remember Joseph. We have two choices: run or sin. It's your choice. Make the right one!

The Godly Man – V. SAMSON & MALE SEXUALITY

10. LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF SAMSON

I. SAMSON'S BACKGROUND 13:1-25

A. ANNOUNCEMENT OF BIRTH 13:1-23

NAZARITE: 1. No grape products of any kind (juice, fruit, raisins, fermented wine, etc.)
2. Not touch dead body - thus vegetarian in a meat-eating society
3. Not use razor on any part of head - wild unshaven look wherever went

B. BIRTH 13:24-25

II. SAMSON'S MARRIAGE 14:1-20

A. DECISION TO MARRY 14:1-7

IS MASTURBATION SIN?

1. Can't do it without wrong thoughts
2. Makes sex an end in itself (physical joy), not means to an end (show/share love)
3. can't picture Jesus doing it
4. Whatever is not of faith is sin - Rom 13:14
5. Body belongs to mate, not self I Cor 7:4

CAUSES OF HOMOSEXUALITY

1. Relationship with parents when CHILDREN (rejection, abuse, etc.)
2. SATAN's work & perversion in last days

B. MARRIAGE TAKES PLACE 14:8-18

SIN 1: TOUCHING DEAD BODY

SIN 2: DRINKING ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

WOMEN MANIPULATE MEN

WHY Can't control men physically so use greater relational skills

Starts when young girls defending selves against boys (watch older girls, women)

HOW Men need women's approval to feel good about self as man

Fathers often not make boys feel like men, need mother's approval

Mothers manipulated sons, so set up for same with wife!

Give in to avoid female anger, rejection, scolding, etc.

CURE Right relationship with wife, not need to earn her approval to feel OK about self

Needs met by God, within self, not left-over 'mother' role in life

Courage to stand against it, in love & gentleness

Plan of action decided ahead of time - how to respond when feel manipulated

Go by mind, not emotions (old patterns broken)

C. MARRIAGE ENDS 14:19-20

III. SAMSON'S REVENGE 15:1-20

A. WIFE'S REMARRIAGE 15:1-2

HOW TO SURVIVE AN AFFAIR - what to do if mate unfaithful?

Forgive her as Jesus forgave you (can't forget, but give up thought of revenge)

Take your hurt to Jesus to remove it, not stuff it (men not good with emotions, ESP this kind of hurt, usually lash out in anger, want to hurt back)

Ask self to respond as Jesus would, not let weak male ego control

Support her in working through consequences of her sin

Pray for healing for both of you - Ask God to remove thought of it

Treat her as restored, as you'd like to be restored if it were you

B. REVENGE TAKEN 15:3-5

C. PHILISTINES KILLED 15:6-20

IV. SAMSON'S IMMORALITY 16:1-21

A. WITH A PROSTITUTE 16:1-3

MID-LIFE CRISIS: if correct adjustments not made, more open to sexual sin (meet needs)

ADDICTION TEST

1. Have you ever thought you needed help for your sexual thinking or behavior?
2. Do you often feel that sex is controlling your thoughts or actions?
3. Have you been fighting a losing battle trying to stop or limit sexual thoughts or actions which you know are wrong? Do you feel helpless and/or hopeless to change?
4. Do you find yourself using sex to escape, relive anxiety, or so that you'll feel better?
5. Does your sexual sin interfere with a good, wholesome, guilt-free sex life with your wife?
6. Is there a 'secret side' to you that no one knows about, that you would be ashamed for your wife or anyone else to find out about? Do you sometimes feel you are living a double life?
7. Do you resort to wrong images or memories during sex with your wife? Do you feel emotionally distant, empty and 'dirty' afterwards? Do you feel like you 'use' her?
8. Do you have a hard time relating intimately in non-sexual ways, really opening yourself up and honestly letting others get to know you? Do you hide parts of yourself from your mate, hold back from real intimacy with her, and substitute sex for total emotional intimacy?
9. Do you go in binges -- sometimes going weeks or months without sinning only to fall into it again?
10. Do you feel you need to talk to someone about this in order to have victory, but are too embarrassed or ashamed to do so, feeling trapped and alone in your sin?

SEXUALLY ADDICTED COUPLES

1. Is there is an unspoken agreement that sex substitutes for intimacy?
2. Does your sex life and sexual need for each other 'carry' your relationship?

HOW THE ADDICTION CYCLE WORKS

PREOCCUPATION: starts with thoughts, bring mild rush of adrenaline

Escape problems, not work it through - 'high' to cover inferiority & insecurity feelings

Memorize Scripture to use when tempted (like Jesus)

Prayer before, during & after important for this (FASTING key to gain self-control, etc.)

RITUALIZATION: activities repeated prior to final sin

THE HUNT - 'ritual' leading up to sexual release (images, books, videos, thoughts)

Typical pattern developed of where to go, what to watch & think, read, etc., etc.

Plan of action to prevent repeat - not just white-knuckle it, replace with something better

ACTING OUT: committing the sin

SHAME: guilt, trashed, promise to never do it again

despair of ever being free, promises to never do it again remade

CYCLE REPEATED: but cravings intensify, need greater and greater 'fix'

WHY NAKED WOMEN LOOK SO GOOD

God made it that way for man - Gen 2:22-23; 2:25; Prov 30:18-19

Please man, give him special reward to make up for extra work load of leader

To draw him to wife, to touch and love her (which she needs)

God created men to find pleasure in wife's body - Song of Sol 4:5-6, 12-16; 5:1; 7:1-8

That's why people told not to withhold body from mate - I Cor 7:4-5

"We have found in counseling that too few husbands know the virtue of nudity with their wives. Our spirits pour forth to one another much like electricity. We need the current of each other. Clothes tend to insulate. A husband needs the power of his wife's body against his, quite apart from sexual union. All too few husbands and wives understand that verse, 'Let her breasts satisfy you at all times.' During the day husbands need to hug their wives long enough to let that current which flows from her pierce the heart to refresh and strengthen it. Woman was taken from the rib of man. Man protects woman by his strength and logic, but woman protects the heart area of man. Her breasts satisfy him when held against his chest. Her energy fills and warms all his thinking with wisdom and gentleness. In sexual embrace, husbands most often fail to touch, hold, and kiss the breasts long enough. Men need to feed, sensitively and quietly, a long time upon their wives' breasts. The command is to "LET her breasts satisfy you at ALL times." It is fulfilling and satisfying to both partners. A man who is fully satisfied in his wife's embrace, who truly feeds upon her love, is not easily tempted to another. Who would take a bologna sandwich to a banquet? Only his own wife is a fully satisfying banquet to his heart and soul and spirit and body. Let husbands pray that god will reveal to them the true gift and power of their wives' love for them. It is not that we are too sexual, but not sexual enough, because we do not discover how to meet and nourish, cherish, embrace, and feed upon one another's love as we ought."

John Sanford, *"Restoring the Christian Family"*

B. WITH DELILAH 16:4-21

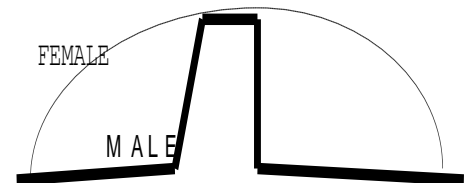
SIN 3 HAIR CUT

SCARS OF SIN

SIN BLINDS: to God, truth, Christlikeness, freedom

SIN BINDS: enslaves, in bondage to it, can't stop it

SIN GRINDS: no freedom but tedious, tasteless empty life



IV. SAMSON'S DEATH 16:22-31

The Godly Man – V. SAMSON & MALE SEXUALITY

11. HOW TO HAVE VICTORY OVER SEXUAL SIN

1. SEX ITSELF IS NOT SINFUL

- a. Nothing wrong with sex, nudity - *"and they were naked"* in Eden - Genesis 2:22-25
- b. All is fine in marriage - *"marriage bed is undefiled"* Hebrews 13:4; Song of Solomon
- c. Sex outside marriage, wrong & condemned - Ex 20:14; Dt 5:18; Lev 20:10; Prov 6:20-28

2. SIN STARTS IN THE MIND

Mental lust = LEADS TO Adultery - James 1:13-16; IS adultery - Mt 5:27-28
Understand your OBSESSION & HUNT pattern, very first starts of sex sin

3. SIN MUST BE ADMITTED TO & CONFESSED

Remove the veil of secrecy
Accept the blame, tell God about the sin - I John 1:9
Take back any access the sin gave/gives to Satan
Accept God's forgiveness, reject guilt Satan puts into mind and heart

4. DEVELOP A CLOSE, SOLID RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Invite God to examine your thoughts - Phil 4:8-9; Psalm 139:23-24
Thoughts that aren't pure we are to *"take captive"* 2 Cor 10:5
Replace with God's Word - I Thes 4:3-8; Job 31:1; Prov 6:27; 2 Tim 2:22

5. ADMIT YOU CAN'T OVERCOME SIN ON YOUR OWN

Can't have victory over the flesh by power of the flesh Romans 7:18-19

6. BE WILLING TO PAY THE PRICE TO GET AND STAY FREE

Not easy to get free, because the sin meets a legitimate need (in an illegitimate way)
Must be aware price to pay if try to stop (count the cost to stop)

7. BELIEVE YOU CAN HAVE VICTORY IN GOD

God doesn't remove our lust but gives us power to overcome it
Believer NEW CREATION in Christ - not under total control of flesh any more - Rom 6:1-7
When tempted to sexual sin immediately make a choice: slave to sin or free? Rom 6:8-14

8. TAKE A STAND FOR PURITY IN THOUGHTS & ACTIONS

BE PURE in thoughts and actions whatever the cost - Phil 4:8
FLEE, DON'T FIGHT! (Joseph did, David didn't) I Cor 10:13
Get to the root cause; Replace misinformation with God's truth
Replace with God's truth - Memorize Ps. 25:3-4; 101:2-3; 119:9-11; Mt. 4:4; 18:3-11; Jn. 17:19;
Eph. 6:10-16; Heb. 2:12; I Jn. 3:8; 4:4
Rely on God's grace minute by minute

9. LEARN TO DEVELOP TRUE INTIMACY WITH GOD & WIFE

Work on developing true INTIMACY with wife and with God - Psalm 103:8-14
"Intimacy" from Latin 'intimus' ("innermost") = emotional and spiritual connectedness

10. BECOME ACCOUNTABLE TO A GODLY PERSON

Need someone who loves and is honest enough to challenge us to total purity - James 5:16

Encourage us to remain pure, hold accountable, encourage, restore when sin