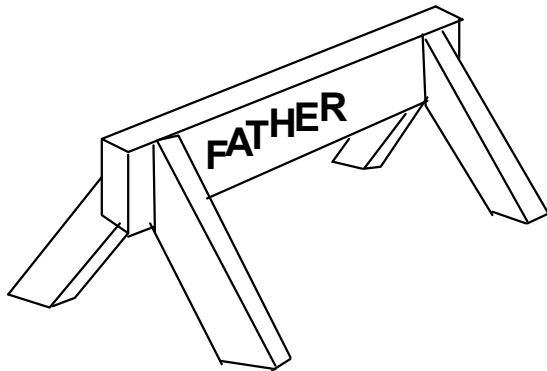


ROADBLOCKS to CHRISTIAN MANHOOD

BEING MORE LIKE JESUS THE MAN



ROADBLOCKS

1. FATHER'S INFLUENCE
2. MOTHER'S INFLUENCE
3. CAREER INFLUENCE
4. UNREALISTIC
EXPECTATIONS
5. HANDLING EMOTIONS
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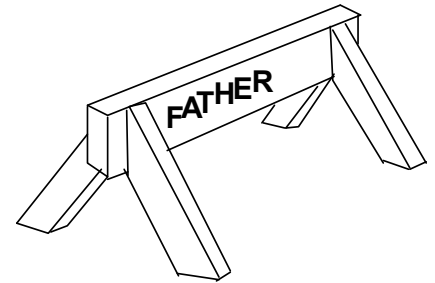
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ROADBLOCKS TO CHRISTIAN MANHOOD

By Jerry Schmoyer

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 being 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. - its 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 its 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 (II 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!

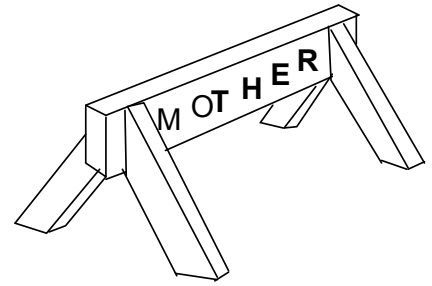
A good example would be Joseph, Jesus' step-father. He gave Jesus up to God when he was 12, but they spent the next 20 years together at home and in the carpentry shop. Imagine the talks they must have had, the close camaraderie and friendship. That's what Jesus needed, and why God gave Him a father 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!

ROADBLOCKS TO CHRISTIAN MANHOOD

By Jerry Schmoyer

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 its 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.

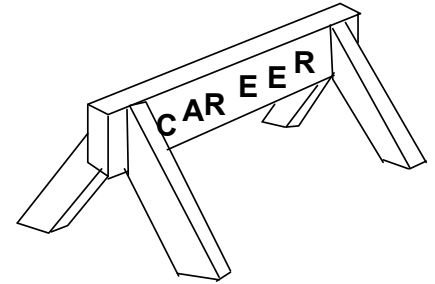
Usually a male takes this step when challenged ("called out") by other men to fulfill his God-given role as a man. If no other male does this, God Himself will do it! Jacob was forced to return home, leaving Laban who out-tricked him. In Esau he meets a situation he can't manipulate (although he tries 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. Its up to you!

ROADBLOCKS TO CHRISTIAN MANHOOD

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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 its 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.

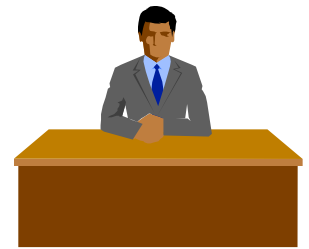
GOD ORDAINED WORK While its true that God created work and designed man to work (Genesis 2:8-15; 3:17-19), He did not create man to overwork. Jethro's advice to Moses when he was working is still good for us today: set limits and share the load or you'll burn out (Exodus 18). We'd do well to heed those 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 was 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 its 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" (II Thes 3:10-12), "He who doesn't work shouldn't eat" (I 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 its 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 laying 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 its called "karoshi" (death from overwork) and it accounts for 10% of working men deaths. In America its 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?

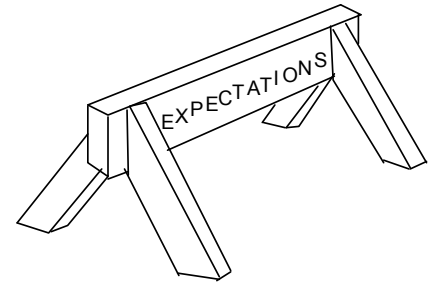
Remember to **pray in detail** about this (Phil 4:6; Lk 11:10). Ask God for His peace (Phil 4:7; Jn 14:27; 16:33). Reprogram your thoughts from work to relationships (Phil 4:8) for this is where true success in God's sight lies. Learn to relax and enjoy it, as Jesus did (Matthew 14:13). Learn your own 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 (II 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.

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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, we 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 blurred 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 its 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 hem 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." Its not the comfortable check-list or projects to accomplish we men are so comfortable with, its 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.



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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 dry,” “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.

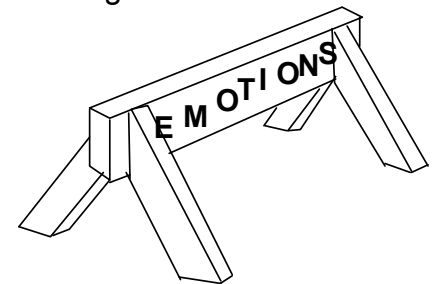
The only examples I had of showing emotion were women, and there was no way I could copy them. Their emotional makeup and mine were light years apart. As I’ve come to realize that men can show emotion as men and not as women that I think I’ve found the key to my own emotions. I’ll never be able to express 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. Its 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

PASSING ON THE BATON We are the first generation of men to try and raise children in an anti-God climate with the family is disarray. We have poor or no role models to go by. However we are setting a groundwork for our children to build on. They will have a start in looking at us. They will begin where we left off and take the baton further than we have. Their children will take it even further. We are the turn-around generation of fathers and men. We won’t make much distance, but we will point our children in the correct direction. Are you doing that? That is what God expects -- nothing more, but nothing less!



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.

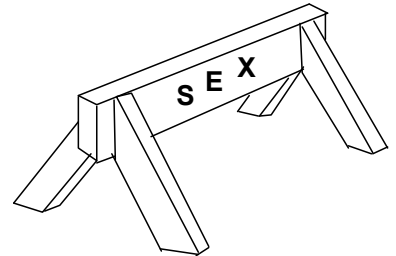
6. Hold him responsible, don't be co-dependent. Don't cover up for his anger or bail him out when it gets him into trouble. That doesn't stop the problem it just keeps him from facing and doing something about it. He must face the consequences of his own actions.

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.

ROADBLOCKS TO CHRISTIAN MANHOOD

By Jerry Schmoyer

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 built 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; II 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; II 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.

ROADBLOCKS TO CHRISTIAN MANHOOD

By Jerry Schmoyer

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!

