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### **W**hat is a real man?

By Melvin E. Barnett

Every male has some idea of the man he wants to be. Deep in the chambers of his heart he has plotted a course to achieve manhood and become a "Real Man". For instance, many boys think smoking around their teenage friends will demonstrate manhood. Perhaps if he can become sexually involved with one or more girls he will achieve manhood according to his spiritually shallow peers.

Unfortunately, when a man has finally measured up, and been accepted by all his buddies, he then must spend what can be a lifelong quest of measuring up with girlfriends, fiancés and ultimately a wife. Perhaps one day if he is smart, he will realize everybody has a different expectation of what a real man should be. Let this be a notice: keeping up with others, and trying to impress people will lead to despair sooner or later (Ec. 11:9). Someone will always have more money; and the competition to own more tools, gadgets and technology will never be won.

Through the years Hollywood has sought occasion to portray men as bozos, losers and fools. These days, if a man has any sense of Godliness he is homophobic, intolerant and/or brainwashed by the evil "right wing". Think of the shows you have watched through the years that have demonstrated this point. Even The Flintstones is guilty of de-masculating the role of husbands and men through the portrayal of selfish simpletons such as Fred and Barney.

The ironic truth is, while Hollywood portrays the perfect man as a lean, muscular (1 Tim 4:8), athletic, multi-talented, rich business (Mat 19:23-24) owner or CEO type who sails on the weekends, dines in fine restaurants, and flies coast to coast during the week using a credit card that never ends, the single women that are past thirty-five and have two children out of wedlock or a busted marriage are starting their lives all over again in search of an ordinary looking man that will hold a moderate job (Pr. 22:2), come home after work, dine at the local pizza or barbeque spot, and love her children like she does. Tabloids and soaps just don't get it, so they continue in their fantasy world only to deceive young gullible women into believing lies about men and relationships.

Young men are equally deceived by the beautiful (Pr 6:25-26) airbrushed women in the swimsuit editions of magazines, porn, and prime-time television. For women to compete with the above mentioned, most would have to dedicate hours a day working out and pampering themselves with expensive cosmetics and various medical procedures that would financially bankrupt any normal family home.

I have often wondered why the Scriptures never delved into the details of marriage, especially marriages of prominent figures in the Word of God. Wouldn't it be great if we could read about Abraham's day to day struggles? We do know that according to scripture Abraham had to be married to every man's dream. We know that Moses picked a wife that had a smart father (Ex 18:17-19). Solomon loved women so much he collected them like coins and stamps. Why didn't God open up the life of one of the Apostles so we could get a glimpse into the day to day joys as well as trials of marriage, raising kids, and such? If we could see into the intimate relationships of great men and women in the Bible we could define the "Real Man".

I am persuaded, after careful examination of Scripture, why we don't see these relationships under a text microscope. For starters, we would likely follow man instead of God. Both women and men would take sides with each spouse and lose the literal or figurative message being conveyed. The fact is, people like to mimic what they perceive as perfection. Could you see churches built all over town proclaiming their doctrinal stands on what they see as a "Real Man", perfect relationships, and tenets according to their favorite relationships in scripture?

One must remember there is only one perfect relationship and that is between the Trinity itself. Even a third of the angels in heaven were not content with their relationship with God. Is the relationship between sinful man and God perfect? No. The Blood provides atonement (Rom 5:11) for our sins; and the atonement is a covering of our weak, pathetic, desperately (Jer. 17:9) wicked heart that must be glorified before entering (1 Cor. 15:50-54) into the presence of Almighty God.

The search for a perfect man on this earth is not only foolish, but will lead to absolute failure down the road. A passionate hunt for the perfect woman is a useless pursuit as well. The quest for the perfect friend on this earth is futile. Finding a faultless guide to raising children by example of others is a useless mission. In fact, anything outside of God's infallible Word when it comes to perfect relationships and expectations of what a real woman or real man should be is categorically useless because of the inevitable failure that comes most likely sooner than later.

The answer to understanding a real man and achieving manhood must come from a source that is perfect and unfettered by the ways of this world. The useless, putrid garbage that oozes from contaminated tabloids and check-out counter magazine racks fall short of an ounce of truth about real men, real women and true love. The newest diet, diet pill, latest celebrity break-up, and 100 ways to have better sex will not lend so much as a word to perfect love and harmony between man and woman and mankind and God. No mortal man will ever discover a better way to peace (Ps 37:37) and understanding of who he is outside of God's Word. Man's knowledge and all his ways can only gratify his flesh instead of feeding his spirit.

In Christianity, a fundamentalist is taught to align themselves with Scripture. As a fundamental Pentecostal I not only align, but I look to Scripture as the final source of all wisdom and knowledge. Those that claim to be Christian, but do not look to God's Word as infallible, find it easy to lean toward an evolving gospel. While we must make changes to survive in this world, God's Word never changes. As the Scripture was inspired to be recorded by the hand of man, the Inspirer is an Omniscient God who personifies the Beginning and End. He doesn't have to change and roll with the flow – God is, was, and is to be.

"Want"... a battle that rages everyday in the life of the saint and sinner. What do I want? What do others want from me? What does my spouse want? What does my boss want? What do my friends want? What does God want? It's all about want -- who will gain control and get what they want.

Ever noticed in the movies, the hero gets what he wanted. The hero gets the girl and someone else loses their money, their fame, and, usually, their woman. Perhaps this mentality psyches young girls to go after the "Bad Boy" type. After all, the "Bad Boy" is always in control. He tells his parents, his boss, and his friends what he will do and what he won't do. Many women see the "Bad Boy" type as security, but deep down inside that "Bad Boy" is a little wounded Pooh Bear that has been hurt and broken and has become callused by the pain and anguish of his wounded heart.

The "Bad Boy" is likely found in all men, but just like goats in a junk yard there can only be one standing on the top of the wrecked car pile. The war to control and get what we want is fought in

the mind of men, women and children. This desire is manifested in infants and stays with us until we die or lose our minds.

The very sound of the word "Man" denotes control unless identifying gender. The term "A Real Man" has all kinds of implications depending on who says it.

The greatest assault against a "Man" is the same disgrace a little goat feels when he looks up at the goat on top of the wreck. He will pursue to scale the junk heap and challenge the goats until he wins the battle or is shamed by failing to conquer. I don't know why a goat has to be king of the hill, but men are no different if they have not surrendered their lives to Christ.

The battle is the same. Men must decrease, and Christ must increase. A "Real Man" is a man that has finally figured out that by lifting up Christ he ultimately gains, through God's promises, what he really wants. The easiest way to the top is by surrendering at the bottom. For a man to prove himself in worldly relationships he must get what he wants. For man to have a pure relationship with the Lord he must give up all his wants and follow God's will. A man must realize he was made in the image and likeness of God. Man must come to terms that God must take full control, and every ounce of SELF, must be poured out while the Spirit of God fully fills that void.

The works of the flesh have to do with the fulfilling of self which is to inadvertently worship the Devil. When we indulge ourselves with self and our wants and desires we give praise and worship to the enemy of our soul. We literally enter into worship and surrender ourselves to the altar of Satan. To surrender self and exalt Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is to truly worship. When we pour out our self and lift up Jesus because we realize we are nothing without Him we began to exercise worship.

When a man forfeits his own will and surrenders to God's perfect will, he is utterly destined to victory. Unlike the goat at the top of the wreck that stands for hours for no reason other than to make a useless point, God sees real men as sheep that are led by his Spirit, feeding on the best and greenest grass. The goats are in bondage to a surrounding fence, encompassing junk, wrecks, and rejects of this world. On the other hand, the sheep are led by their Shepherd to still waters and green grass in the richest valleys with breathtaking landscapes of beauty and splendor.

As a real man picks up his new spiritual weapons which are not carnal, he is fully armed for the fight ahead as well as the tricks and surprises that would attack from behind. A real man submits to seeking after the likeness and image of God. The instructions for his adventurous pursuit are laid out in the Word of God. There is no other way for a man to know God and increase in knowledge than to know God through His Word.

The real man seeks to please God by becoming Christ like in all his actions. Man reads and understands God's Word and takes on the wisdom and knowledge into his soul and spirit. As the Word fills man's heart he is quickened, and the old selfish wants and desires quickly die. As a man unites with Christ he becomes an unstoppable force that is destined to great things. As he humbles himself on this earth to fulfill God's plan he is exalted in heaven to rule and reign with Christ.

The war of "Self" and "I want" cannot abound in the life of a Christian. Will we as men fight the battle of "I want" over God's will? Yes -- and very frequently. Real men must aspire day by day, hour by hour to lift up and exalt Christ and His perfect plan for our life.

As this world produces its "real men" they stand over the wrecked and repulsive junk heaps of this world. The fancy car, the big job, and hot women all boil down to a constant pursuit to beat the other guy and have more. More of what? More guilt, more drugs, more STD's, more health problems, and a fancier car that is outdated in three months. Truth is, the more you own on this earth the more it costs you to protect your assets from others. The world's treasures are always easy prey for those who would seek to topple your throne that is built on a house of cards.

A real man sees the wisdom of God's Word and builds wisely, spends wisely, and pursues wisely. While nobody is perfect, a real man loves his Wife as Christ loved the Church. He takes the role as priest of his house. He seeks after wisdom in raising his children. He is careful to protect his home from those that would destroy his marriage, his children, and his goods that God has so richly blessed him with.

A real man strives daily to personify the very character of Christ. He is a great employee on his job because he is an ambassador for Christ. He is a good dad because he seeks to raise his children in the ways of the Lord. He is a good Husband because he loves his wife as Christ loved the Church. He becomes a good friend because he understands the friendship he has with Jesus. He is a good leader because he has learned to serve with a meek spirit. He is a fair judge because he understands righteousness as well the mercy of God.

A "Real Man" is a true Christian. Is Man perfect? No. A real man understands that for him to lead, he must follow. He knows that in order for him to increase, he must learn to decrease. He knows that in order for him to have, he must learn to give.

We can only learn these truths from God's Word. God desires us to look to Him for insight and direction to becoming a man. Because each man, woman and child in Scripture was imperfect, God knew that in order for us to understand what a real man is, what a real relationship is, we must look exclusively to His Word. The Lord in his infinite wisdom never intended on anyone searching after a family or personality in scripture to emulate. Rather, He intended on each man to be educated in Scripture and strive to emulate Jesus Christ every day of his life.

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