

# Let the Men be Men!

Since the early 1970's I have walked with men in "brother" friendships, breakfast meetings, retreats, leadership development and personal mentoring. I have also been disciplined by a very godly man and influenced by many other good men along the way. I have the deepest respect for the masculine mind, heart and soul, and am offended by the way in which men are so often "dismissed."

So many, even church leaders, don't understand masculinity and its spirituality. Good men are made to feel substandard because the church's definition of spirituality is based on feminine responsiveness and expression. Men are judged as less spiritual than women because they respond as men! We need to correct this if we expect to be prepared for the days ahead.

I've seen some really neat guys whose wives, female friends and even pastors were sure couldn't possibly be a serious Christian. They were too quiet about their faith. They didn't go to the altar as often as their wife and weren't as expressive in worship. And they probably weren't dashing here and there chasing the latest religious fad. Yet I saw these men listening carefully. They were contemplative. Their faith was increasingly affecting their life. They loved their families, and their servant hearts led them to do many things unnoticed in the church. Their relationship with God was visible to those who had eyes to see.

## So What's the Problem?

God made man and woman very unlike. Our obvious physical differences are symbolic of the inner differences in emotion and thought processes which shape us and our walk with God.

Masculinity thinks more "big picture" and more contemplatively than femininity. The urgency of the moment is not as important to us as how a matter impacts the overall. Masculinity implies being protector and defender and we often watch and wait to see how something pans out before plunging in. We're more likely to change deeply, than quickly.

Women are not at the altar more often than men because they love God more. It is because they are more immediately responsive than us. Women are not more spiritual than men because they talk about God and His work in their life more than us. They do that because they are more verbal and more feeling based than we are.

The wife might be touched by a sermon, and rub her husband's back or lean on his shoulder as if to say, "Why don't you *do* something!?" But he *is* doing something – he's contemplating. Listening. Watching. He is more likely to advance into the "word" that has been given if he has been affirmed in his masculinity.

It's unnatural for men to express feminine spirituality and that's why we resist it. Some guys try to fulfill expectations - abandoning their masculinity and becoming spiritually feminized. Many simply quit trying because they are not accepted for what they are. They back off and just go along for the ride.

We try to intimidate men by reading statistics about women being more godly in Bible reading, prayer, and church attendance. We tell them that they are resisting what God is doing in the life of

their wife. We say that they like leadership in the world because it allows them to be powerful and domineering, and that it is pride that keeps them from stepping up in the home and church because we are expected to lead as servants there. The more we tell them those things, the further they drop back. We are totally missing the point!

### The Point Is

Women need to feel loved, to affirm and nurture their femininity and help them experience womanhood as God intends. Similarly, men need to feel honored and respected in order to affirm and nurture their masculinity and help them experience manhood as God intends. We actively hinder men when we don't respect them.

The husband is the spiritual head and gateway for his family. The protector. He is responsible to test and judge what his family is hearing and embracing, and to nurture them as God confirms. Christians should not unthinkingly accept the message that is preached or taught, regardless of how trustworthy they feel the message bearer is. Both parts of [Acts 17:11](#) apply.

Husbands have more responsibility and authority in their home, than church leaders do. They should not be circumvented in ministry to women.

### The Place to Start

The place to start is for church leaders to tell men who they are. They bear the masculine part of God's heart. The provider, and defender/protector heart. The brave and courageous heart. They are the one whom God has charged with the responsibility to open and close the gate to influences, powers and opinions that would impact their family.

We need to commend men for being cautious about new ideas, but encourage them to actively consider them and to lead their family into what God confirms. We also need to provide safe settings in which men can candidly discuss and test things they are hearing in the church, without it being a threat to leadership. Men *want* to be responsible, transparent and vulnerable. Many pastors and women have no idea how free and open men are in a setting where they are respected as men.

We must teach that giving men appropriate honor brings the blessing of God upon the home and church – and that dishonoring them, or allowing women to usurp the man's place, gives Satan a legal right to bring confusion and conflict.

We also must free men from the expectation that they express their walk with God in a feminine way. It's fine, if their heart pounds and their eyes fill up – and they run to the altar. It's a good thing if they are demonstrative in worship. But they don't need to be and it's not necessarily a mark of spirituality.

At the same time, we will call women to honor their men. To give them the place of spiritual headship, and respect them as the "man" God has placed in their life and home. This is a heart issue, not a token thing.

We have conditioned women to act very differently than that and it will take time and active effort to bring us back to a Godly position. A godly woman has incredible power to influence her husband, but only if she does it in proper relationship to him. It is often true that the greatest help a pastor can give a woman is to teach her to honor and respect her husband. [1 Peter 3:16](#) and [Ephesians 5:21-24](#) are as true today as ever.

## Conclusion

As in every way in which we are different as men and women, masculine and feminine spirituality are intended to complement each other. The sensitivity and more immediate responsiveness of the wife can enrich the husband. He needs her as he grows in his own walk. But she needs to be influenced by his contemplative response as well. In fact, it is *his* response which ought to most influence the family – which is just the opposite of the present common expectation. They are to walk together, with him leading! It is appropriate for him to say sometimes, “Let’s check this out further before jumping in.”

Pastors, do you realize how much you depend on “results” for affirmation of you and your ministry? Are you aware of how good the “warm fuzzies” of feminine spirituality feel to you? If you expect to help men become men you’ll need to forgo that vanity.

Further, pastors, some of those quieter guys on the fringes are a whole lot more real than the “flash” in the middle of the action. They are the thoughtful, steady and strong guys who will work alongside you for the long pull if you are willing to accept them for who God made them to be.

Women, please rethink some things if you find it hard to release spiritual leadership to your husband. That is especially tricky if you have been walking with God longer than him. He may have a meaningful spiritual walk and a concern for his family, even if he doesn’t meet your definition of spirituality. Don’t plod along year after year, bearing the burden of leadership and asking others to pray for your husband so he can become the spiritual head of the home. The sooner you change your expectations, the more likely he will be to fulfill them.

Men, be a man. Walk confidently but humbly in your masculine spirituality as the primary influencer and the leader in your home. Go deep with God in your own way. Pursue meaningful relationships with other men. Try to know yourself and how you experience God.

Love your wife as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, as in [Eph. 5:25-33](#). Be considerate of her as in [1 Peter 3:7](#). It has consequences! Know that God created her with a greater need to communicate, which at times can mean nothing more than careful listening on your part. And communicate as best you can with her - she needs to hear *something* from you!

Finally men - listen to God, knowing that the authentic Christian life implies constant learning and change. However, don’t let anyone manipulate you into responding in an artificial way. God made you a man - - be a man!

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