How to Be a Man

Try not to become a man of success, but rather try to become a man of value -- Albert Einstein

Society tells us to "Be the man" and "You're the man," but it fails to give men an accurate picture of what that is. Even in the Bible, Nathan said to David, "You are the man!" . . . "Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes?" (2 Samuel 12:7, 9).

Just because David was "the man" in his time, he had his share of struggles in knowing and in doing what was right in God's eyes, too.

When I think about how to be a man, a lot of ideas, images, and thoughts come to mind. In some ways I wish that I didn't have so many and there would be one clear cut "ideal" way. But in today's world of questionable role models, political correctness, diversity acceptance, and gender confusion, it makes "being a man" a little confusing, and to do so as a Christian, even more so.

Today's churches seem to have varying opinions of what a man should be as well. Some churches have adopted a passive, quiet, "turn the other cheek" sort of man, while other ministries, like the newly developed men's conference, GodMen, have another take. From their website, www.godmen.com they say the following:

"The truth is that on any given Sunday, 60 percent of church attendees are women, and something about church today is keeping men away. We are attempting to create a worship place for men that looks nothing like church. It is a place where men of no religion and men who have left the church break bread with followers of Jesus. Where simply being a man, created in God's image, is celebrated. An environment familiar with and conducive to the way men are made comfortable and the unique way men interact."

Newsweek says about GodMen, "Their purpose: to reassert masculinity within a church structure that they say has been weakened by feminization."

In the controversial book, Wild at Heart, which has sold over 500,000 copies, author John Eldredge says, "When all is said and done, I think most men in the church believe that God put them on the earth to be a good boy. The problem with men, we are told, is that they don't know how to keep their promises, be spiritual leaders, talk to their wives, or raise their children . . . Walk into most churches in America, have a look around, and ask yourself this question: What is a Christian man?"

The bottom line is, "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him" (Genesis 1:27).

To the typical Christian guy, what does that mean? Even more puzzling is, how is that lived out? We are told that we are made in the image of God and we are to live our lives as Christ lived, but
many of those “formative years” in Jesus’s life are not revealed in the Bible. We read about his life as a child teaching in the temple and we know of his years of ministry after he turns 30 years old, but nothing is said of his teenage and young adult years. In some ways, that can leave many questions for the spiritual growth of a man.

When I accepted Christ, I was working in a large company in the Bay Area and didn’t have a lot of other Christian businessmen around me who mentored me in how to live a godly Christian life within the confines of today’s fast-paced society and the world of business. I had to seek out older men who were living godly lives.

Guys, for whatever reason, oftentimes look for role models or “heroes.” Many of us won’t readily admit to doing so, but we want to be around others who exude “manliness,” guys we can “hang” with . . . “real men.” Of course if you asked us how to define “manliness,” you’d get a hundred different answers. But each one of us could probably point out someone who represents it to us.

One person I’ve found in the Bible that I would point to is Boaz. A lesser known character, he represents someone who followed God and lived a life that is relatable and whom I would like to emulate in some ways. Boaz wasn’t a disciple of Jesus—in fact he lived approximately 1000 years prior to Jesus. Boaz doesn’t have a book named after him, and his entire life is only mentioned in three chapters of Ruth. But in those three short chapters, Boaz shows us how to be a man of God, how to be a man in business and how to be a man in a relationship.

How to Be a Man of God

But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness (1 Timothy 6:11).

Many people can “look” like a man of God or “sound” like a man of God, but Boaz exemplified it in who he was, how he spoke and what he did.

- He was a "man of standing"—also known as "mighty man of valor," possessed the finest of qualities (Ruth 2:1).
- He became "kinsman-redeemer"—took responsibility for Naomi and Ruth and their property (Ruth 2:20, 4:9).
- He blessed others—to his workers, "The Lord be with you" (Ruth 2:4); to Ruth, "May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge" (Ruth 2:11-12).
- He spoke kindly to others and was kind—Ruth said, "You have given me comfort and have spoken kindly to your servant" (Ruth 2:13); Naomi said, "He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead" (Ruth 2:20).
- He cared about the feelings of others—"Even if she gathers among the sheaves, don't embarrass her" (Ruth 2:15).

To be a man "of" God, you need to be a man who follows and submits "to" God. Boaz certainly depicted a man whose life was one of consistent submission to the Lord.

How to Be a Man in Business

What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? (Matthew 16:26).

When it comes to world of business, there are many people who believe that selling your soul is a small price when it comes to wealth and fortune. There are examples of this every day on the news and it was a common practice during Boaz’s time. This made Boaz stand out even more as a successful businessman who owned many fields, had many workers and slaves and had the means for much more.

- He cared about his workers—“The Lord be with you” (Ruth 2:4).
- He was astute (knew who worked for him and knew the comings and goings)—“Whose young woman is that?” (Ruth 2:5).
- He was honest and fair---"For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line" (Ruth 4:2-5).
- He was wealthy---"I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelech, Kilion and Mahlon" (Ruth 4:9).
- He was well respected--the kinsman-redeemer and elders were willing to listen to Boaz and blessed him (Ruth 4:1-2, 11-13).

*Life's greatest joys are not what one does apart from the work of one's life, but with the work of one's life -- William J Bennett*

**How to Be a Man in a Relationship**

*Why do men chase women they have no intention of marrying? The same urge that makes dogs chase cars they have no intention of driving -- Author Unknown*

This period of time was marked by immorality and irresponsibility. Boaz was a successful, single older man, and was probably pursued and could have married (or taken advantage of) anyone he wanted to, but he didn't. A younger, widowed woman in an unfamiliar place comes along and catches his eye, but throughout their interaction, he treats her honorably.

- He respected her--"My daughter . . . " (which was a proper greeting based upon the difference in their ages) (Ruth 2:8).
- He ensured her safety--"I have told the men not to touch you" (Ruth 2:9).
- He cared for Ruth and Naomi--"He gave me these six measures of barley, saying, Don't go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed" (Ruth 3:17).
- He acted responsibly with her--he did not send her home in the middle of the night, "Stay here for the night"; he protected the rights of the nearest kinsman-redeemer, " . . . if he wants to redeem, good; let him redeem."; he protected her reputation, "Don't let it be known that a woman came to the threshing floor" (Ruth 3:13-14).
- He would not touch her unless Ruth was rightfully his to do so--" . . .there is a kinsman-redeemer nearer than I" (who has the right to her); He promised he would care for her if given the opportunity--"...if he is not willing, as surely as the Lord lives I will do it" (Ruth 3:13); "So Boaz took Ruth as she became his wife" (Ruth 4:13).

Men are given so many confusing messages these days by society, by the media, by peers and by women themselves. Everywhere we look, we are told how we should be, what we should look like or wear and how we should act. Men are being bounced between macho-ism and metro-sexual-ism. And the only place that we can go to establish a foundation of "how to be a man" is the Word of God.

My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body. Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. Put away perversity from your mouth; keep corrupt talk far from your lips. Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you. Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm. Do no swerve to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.

*(Proverbs 4:20-27)*

*Oh I say the measure of a man
Is not how tall you stand
How wealthy or intelligent you are
’Cause I found out the measure of a man
God knows and understand
For He looks inside to the bottom of your heart*
And what's in the heart defines
The measure of a man

4HIM -- "Measure of a Man"

Cliff Young is a contributing writer to Sandlot Stories (ARose Books). An architect and former youth worker, he now works with Christian musicians and consults for a number of Christian ministries.