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**ATTRIBUTES
OF GODLY
MEN** UNCOMMON
DISCIPLE



TWELVE ATTRIBUTES OF GODLY MEN

There is no shortage of people talking and writing about the confusing state of manhood today. Even biblical manhood is being tossed around from group to group, each influenced by their own cultures of brokenness. Some say men need to be men, stand up and rule. Others say men need to be more gentle than that. To them, men are there to prop up women whose day has “finally come”.

Because of hyper-masculine reactions to the feminization of the Church, the pendulum doesn't really know which way to swing next. But should it be that hard? The fact is, that we have the model man in Scripture to show us the way forward as men. In this article, I'd like to point to Jesus and to what the Bible says about godliness. I'd like to describe twelve traits of biblical manhood and how to learn and live them as we abide in Christ, the Son God, and Son of Man.

ABIDING

Before discussing any traits of Christ, let me point out, the goal for the Christian is to *abide*.

“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5 ESV).

Because Jesus died on the cross for us, we can put our faith in him and receive the free gift of salvation from the just wrath of God for our sin and rebellion. When we are born again through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, we are given a new nature. Just as Christ abided in his Father, we are to abide in Christ.

So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. (John 5:19)

And whatever the Son does, we want to do likewise. This is done by abiding in him. That means we live in him, walk in him, act in him. It is a function of our will to walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh. This is to abide. When we abide in Christ, we can reflect the character of Christ to the world around us. These are just twelve of the godly traits that we can display through the Holy Spirit as we abide in Christ. In Christ, we can be:

Strong	Loving	Tenacious	Humble
Courageous	Accountable	Disciplined	Generous
Gracious	Resilient	Faithful	Focused

For the remainder of this article, we will look at each one and see how we may apply it to be more Christlike and walk in a biblical definition of manhood, contrary to all the world’s definitions. Biblical men are:

STRONG

While we understand that we can do nothing in our own strength, in Christ, we are strong by the power of his strong Holy Spirit dwelling in us. As we abide, we can receive the words that Joshua received on his commission to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land:

”Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”

Notice that strength (and courage) was to come by meditating “day and night” on the Book of the Law. That’s the Bible. We can be strong in the Lord when we know and hold fast to his Word.

COURAGEOUS

There would be no way to have a list of manly biblical traits that included “strong” without also including “courageous.” What have we already seen? “Be strong” goes with “and courageous.” To be strong is to be courageous. One of the most thrilling scenes to read about in the Bible shows young David running out to meet the giant, Goliath, smack talking all the way. Why did he do this when the entire Israelite army, including King Saul, was unwilling to step out and fight? It was because, more than any of them, David knew his God.

“Then David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hand.””
(1 Samuel 17:45-47)

David was full of truth. He'd already been anointed by Samuel as the next king, and he realized that it would not have been God's plan for the Israelites to lose to these “uncircumcised Philistines.” Imagine going into a fight and somehow knowing that it would be impossible to lose. This is how God wants us to move in the earth. We are not only full of the Holy Spirit (if you have put your faith in Jesus), but we are also privy to the outcome of our battle. Jesus is returning and the darkness cannot overcome the light (John 1:5). Satan is already defeated, and we have authority to plunder his house until the sure return of our Lord. So walk righteously and be courageous!

GRACIOUS

Biblical men are not only strong and courageous, but, like our Lord, we are called to be full of grace. God is gracious towards us and shows us how to be gracious toward others. Ephesians 4:32 says, “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

When the Bible talks of how gracious God is, it is saying that God is kind, tender-hearted, and forgiving. This is the gospel. “As God in Christ forgave” us, we are called to do the very same. We are to show grace for others by forgiving those who have “trespassed against us,” not just seven times, but seventy times seven times (Matthew 18:22)! Christ died a brutally painful death to forgive us and to show us that, of course forgiveness is painful. There is always a cost to being gracious. For us, however, Christ paid the high cost. Because he has forgiven us, we can forgive others. We can be gracious.

LOVING

In some ways, what else is there but love? Jesus said that the whole law is summed up in the Greatest Commandment.

“And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” (Mathew 22:37-40)

Paul said this: “If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:3). God is love. You cannot claim to know God but refuse to love. John said that doing that is akin to murder. That may seem extreme, but look at what he said.

“For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother.” (1 John 3:11-12a)

Love is both a feeling and an action. When you don't feel loving, you can do one of two good things: You can go to God in worship and thankfulness for his love for you displayed on the cross, or you can go and show love for the person you are having trouble loving. Pray for them, bless them. Jesus said to love your neighbor, your brother, and even your enemies. If God loved us, biblical men can love others.

ACCOUNTABLE

Biblical manhood is made up of all these traits and more. One trait that helps with all the others is that we would hold ourselves accountable and ask others to hold us accountable as well. Accountability is responsibility. It is knowing what is required of a man of God, and saying, “Yes, I will be accountable for that.” We will certainly go to the Day of Judgment and be accountable.

“I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” (Matthew 12:36-37)

The most important thing about that Day is that we will see that our names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life (Rev 13:8). This is awesome. We are not saved because we are perfect, but because Jesus is perfect. And yet, what we do somehow matters at the Judgment. We will receive rewards based on works done in Christ (Mt 16:27). We will be accountable then, so it behooves us to make ourselves accountable now. Do you believe that the ways of God are the right ways? Then set yourself a standard and commit to it. Hold yourself accountable by telling other men and giving them permission to call you out. Being accountable to brothers in the Church is a great blessing. “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Ephesians 5:21).

RESILIENT (ANTIFRAGILE)

James 1:2-4 says, “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

James has given us the key to resilience. If no matter what is happening, you can see it as in some way the will of God, you can endure anything for his sake. To be resilient is to be able to bounce back from a knock. But it occurs to me that God takes us beyond resilience. I’ve heard lately of a concept called anti-fragility, a concept coined by Lebanese essayist and risk analyst, Nassim Talab. To be anti-fragile is to be someone who benefits from hardship.

It is not only that you bounce back, but you bounce back stronger. James says our trials “produce” something. That’s good news if you like to grow! When you are going through it, understand that God is refining you and transforming you into a more Christlike version of yourself. Peter said it was like the refining of gold (1 Pt 1:7). Biblical men are not just resilient; they are *antifragile!*

TENACIOUS

When I think of tenacity, I think of a pit bull wrapping its jaws around an intruder and refusing to let go. God calls us to be like that concerning his Word, his will, and his promises. Proverbs 4:4 says, “He taught me and said to me, ‘Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live.’” To be tenacious is to hold fast. To hold fast is to be steadfast.

The author of Hebrews tells us, “but Christ is faithful over God’s house as a son. And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope” (Heb 3:6 emphasis added). If we will hold fast our confidence and our boasting in the hope of the gospel, then we get to be God’s house. Being tenacious toward his gospel and his Word causes him to fill us with his Holy Spirit, giving us more power to continue to be steadfast!

If we can be tenacious with God and his Word, then we will have what we need to be tenacious at work, in our marriages, our parenting, and in whatever sphere God calls us to represent him. Being tenacious is simply not letting go of God, his promises, and the call he has put on our lives. Whatever you are doing in his name, do it with tenacity.

DISCIPLINED

Far from being a legalistic works righteousness kind of thing, true discipline is a discipline of dependence and walking by the Holy Spirit in Christ. The Bible talks in a lot of places about self-control. But the secret of self control is that it is really God-control. The Lord gives the strength to command our bodies and yield to his Holy Spirit.

Proverbs 25:28 says, “A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.”

Galatians 5:22-23 says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law” (emphasis added). These verses show us that self-control is a fruit of the Spirit. And by the Spirit, we can make an effort at self control. Paul said, “But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified” (1 Corinthians 9:27).

What would it look like for you to yield to the Holy Spirit and “discipline your body?” Peter said,

“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. (2 Peter 1:3-6 emphasis added).

Because God has granted to us “all things that pertain to life and godliness” we can make every effort to supplement our faith with virtues, including, “self control!” Self control is stewardship of your most basic responsibility, you. By God’s divine power, exercise self-control and be disciplined.

FAITHFUL

In the last section I said that self-control is stewardship of your most basic responsibility—yourself. Another word for stewardship is faithfulness. To be a man who is faithful, is to be a man who seeks to know and do what is right and then to trust God for the outcome. 1 Corinthians 4:2 says, “Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.”

When it comes to faithfulness, it is a huge blessing to know that God is responsible for the outcome of our faithfulness. He promises to provide us what we need if we will faithfully “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” (Mt 6:33a). If we do this, Jesus said, “and all these things will be added to you” (Mt 6:33b). God does almost all the thinking. He shows us the way, and Jesus Christ models it. He calls us to walk in that way, and says he will take care of the rest. This is awesome. The only thing the man in Jesus’ parable of the talents was guilty of was burying the talent and doing nothing with it. He was not faithful. If he’d been faithful and lost the money, he would not have been punished (Mt 25).

When we go before Christ at the Judgment, what we long to hear is, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master” (Mt 25:21).

HUMBLE

C.S. Lewis wrote, “Do not imagine that if you meet a really humble man he will be what most people call ‘humble’ nowadays: he will not be a sort of greasy, smarmy person, who is always telling you that, of course, he is nobody. Probably all you will think about him is that he seemed a cheerful, intelligent chap who took a real interest in what you said to him. If you do dislike him it will be because you feel a little envious of anyone who seems to enjoy life so easily. He will not be thinking about humility: he will not be thinking about himself at all.”

This powerful quote sums up nicely the quality of humility. It was a favorite subject of Christ, who said, “Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (Mt 23:12). What does it mean not to exalt yourself? Lewis is correct that it doesn’t mean going around saying you are a nobody. Humility is simply looking outside yourself. It is thinking about anything and anyone but yourself. It is going about doing what you are called to do, being what you are called to be, and letting God worry about who you are. Most men spend their days working on their identity. They are trying somehow to be exalted in the eyes of men, so that they can be exalted in their own eyes rather than pursuing God, their purposes, and righteousness.

The key is to realize that our identity was covered when God sent his Son to die for us. He then adopted us and set his love and affection on us, giving us the identity of sons, loved by God, created to exalt him. With our identity covered, we don't need to major on who we are. We don't need to have pride, except for the boasting in the Lord that we are privileged to do. Then when we meet another person, we can be interested in them, cheerfully enjoying our lives, secure in our sonship and relationship with our Father in heaven.

GENEROUS

A godly man is like his Father in heaven. The Father is profoundly generous towards us. Look at the bountiful world he created for us. Even sinners are provided for on this abundant earth. Jesus came and died for us to give life abundantly (John 10:10). Therefore, if our Father is so generous towards us, we can be like him, generous to others. In fact, it is our privilege to be used by God. He, himself will be generous to others through our generosity. Jesus tells us,

“Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.” (Luke 6:38)

This is amazing. God doesn't only call us to be generous, but he promises that if we are, he'll pay us right back! We have nothing to lose, and we get to be the agent of God's blessing to the recipients of our generosity.

So why isn't everyone generous, at least every Christian? A lack of generosity comes from a wrong understanding of God's provision. We must be able to trust that God is more generous than we are. “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things” (Romans 8:32)?

God is a generous giver. You will not be able to outgive him, but it would be fun for you to try. See the world as abundant, and see God as lavishly generous. Ask him to help you be the same.

FOCUSED

The final trait of godly men that I want you to consider is that of being focused. God has given us a will to act, but if we do not live in focus of what is true and right and good, we will act haphazardly. Philippians 4:8 tells us,

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

The thing in you that decides what to think about has choices. Choice number one is whether or not you are going to think at all, or if you are going to just let thoughts pop into your head and let emotions and appetites tell you what to do. That kind of passive living will lead you quickly down the wrong path.

Paul tells the Philippians that they can direct their minds, so they should direct them to whatever is good. You can use this article as a tool. What if you took one of these traits each day and gave a standing order to your brain to “focus” on that trait? You could go a whole day looking for ways to focus on generosity, or courage, or one of the others. I promise you that it would make a difference.

Or, to go back to the first paragraph of this article, how are we to abide in Christ?

By focusing on abiding in Christ. This must be a goal, a priority. Not to focus is to allow Satan and the world to tell you what to think about, then what to feel, then what to do. That’s not being a creative image bearer of God. That’s not our calling. Our calling is to focus, seek the kingdom and his righteousness, walk joyfully in our Father and in our purposes. It takes focus to do anything that we’ve talked about in this article. “Set your mind” to this, and you’ll reap the benefits.