

4 Traits of an Authentic Man

I want to destroy a very persuasive lie that has crept into the church and into the hearts of men.

The over-masculinization of men.

How often are we told that “getting in touch with our feelings” is getting in touch with our “feminine side”? We have been encouraged to be stronger, more stoic, more independent, more ... well, you get the point.

The truth is it's a lie. A myth.

We are being told that to truly be in touch with our masculine side is to go outside and kill something or build something or eat something or doing something “manly.” I am not knocking those things, but are those the things that truly define being a man?

Churches have typically responded with one of two extremes:

- Men's retreats, where we provide all the “manly” activities
- We offer a space at a table to share our deepest darkest secrets with complete strangers. Neither of these are bad in and of themselves; but God calls us to something greater.

Why am I passionate about this? Because it's killing us:

- Men are alone: recent research suggests that men have no close friends.
- Men commit suicide at a rate 4 times higher than women.
- Depression in men is being called a “silent epidemic.”

The reason? Because expressing our God-given emotions is seen as somehow un-masculine. Nothing could be further from the truth.

What Defines Manhood?

Are there certain stereotypes that men are constantly trying to live up to or down to? My dear friend and former co-worker Glenn Stanton wrote a book called *Secure Daughters, Confident Sons*. He writes this:

"Don't you think the world becomes a better, happier, and healthier place when men are encouraged to become the best version of who they already are? That's part of our job as parents raising boys. Still, we are wise to remember that Clint Eastwood is not Albert Einstein is not Harrison Ford is not George Washington Carver is not Abraham Lincoln ... is not your husband or your son." ()

Each man that Glenn highlights is so different, yet in their own innate being, they help us define masculinity. In fact, we are commanded to live differently. I believe there is a better way.

Here is a familiar passage:

"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Colossians 3:12-17, ESV).

In some circles within culture, and even the church, we would look at some of these words and sentiments and believe this

was written by females for females; compassion, kindness, meekness, love, harmony, singing psalms and spiritual songs, thankfulness.

Do you see it? Do you hear it? We are called by Christ to live and do this life differently. We are being called into true relationship with each other.

We are more than the stereotypes that our culture has defined man to be. No one completely lives up to any stereotype because each of us is unique, defined not only by our DNA and genetic makeup, but also by our own experiences and education. Truly, there is no one else—living, dead, or yet to come—that will ever be exactly like you.

Aren't all men just trying to find their purpose and motivation? Whether believing in God or not, all men are trying to live up to or down to expectations placed on them by the people and culture that surrounds them.

What if our lives as men were identified by the characteristics of Colossians 3? This passage of Scripture reveals four traits of an authentic man:

1. Be authentic. *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."* Look, we can't keep the work of Christ to ourselves. We have to be in relationship with other men. Let me challenge you to find one other man—one man—and develop a close friendship where you can be truly authentic.

2. Extend grace. *"... compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."* As men we need to be able to speak both truth and grace into each other's lives.

3. Affirm men. *“Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved ...”* Honestly, we need to stop telling men where they keep falling short. Stop lecturing men. No one is harder on a man than a man himself. Start leading them. Create a safe place for men to be true to who God is calling them to be ...

4. Be thankful. *“And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”* As Christ transforms us and we surrender to His process, we are grateful for the work He is doing in our lives.

Authentic manhood occurs when we fully embrace the person God is calling each of us to be as well as instilling that in each other. We do that in a community where men feel safe enough and cared for enough to truly come to terms with that.

Not only will we be thankful but also the families, churches and communities we serve and lead will be strengthened.

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