

Here's What It Takes to Be a Real Man

In answering this question, some might draw up the image of a rugged male with a tough-guy persona spitting out statements like, "Cross me and you will live to regret it!" Such is not the case from heaven's perspective. As the sixteenth-century church leader, Francis de Sales, pointed out, *"There is nothing so strong as gentleness and nothing so gentle as real strength."*

Real men do not revel in displays of anger, pepper their speech with vile words, or boast of their sensual prowess. Real men enshrine a life based on principles. They are disciplined, steady and patient, knowing "he who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city" (Proverbs 16:32). Real men are protectors, not predators: defenders of the weak, not abusers of those considered inferior.

Real men value purity, knowing, as Ben Franklin advised, *"It is easier to suppress the first desire than to satisfy all that follow it."* Real men passionately love the truth and, like Martin Luther, are quick to assert, *"My conscience is captive to the Word of God . . . Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise, so help me God."*

Real men are unafraid; as John Wesley put it, they *"fear God and nothing else."* Real men have control of their emotions and believe in kindness. They are not interested in holding grudges. Instead, whenever possible, they seek reconciliation—for they realize it often takes greater moral strength to restore relationships than to lash out in resentment and sever them forever. Real men equate forgiveness with honor. Most would agree Abraham Lincoln was a man's man. He was asked after the Civil War ended how he intended to

react to the confederate states. His response was remarkable, *"I will treat them as if they'd never left."*

How indicative of the love of God! Around 620,000 people died in that grievous conflict, and numerous lives were destroyed. What hurt, what pain, what anguish was caused by those who stubbornly defended the evil institution of slavery! Yet after the dust of war settled, reconciliation was on Lincoln's heart, far more than retribution. Nearly a century later, still dealing with the root of prejudice, Martin Luther King insisted, *"The old law of an eye for an eye leaves everyone blind."* Real men are champions of justice in an often-unjust world.

Real men are not petty or shallow; they are deep thinkers. They are courageous visionaries who see the big picture and are willing to sacrifice anything to get there. Real men are not quitters; they are persistent, resilient and tenacious. Knock them down a hundred times and they keep getting back up, ready to try again. Real men are dependable, responsible and self-motivated. They strive with all their might for perfection as an act of worship. Their goal is excellence in all things, whether they are recognized for their efforts or not.

Real men understand the value of time and they strive to spend it wisely. As Rudyard Kipling offered in his famous poem *"If"*—they *"fill the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds' worth of distance run."*

Finally, real men refuse to sit back and watch their culture careening downhill into a pit of destruction without springing quickly into action. They cannot see a dangerous situation without feeling compelled to rise and do all they can to alleviate a problem, launch a rescue or provide a real solution. They are the absolute opposite of those intrepid souls Edmund Burke reproved when he lamented, *"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do*

nothing."

So, it may not be enough to merely be labeled "good men." What this generation needs is "real men." {eoa}

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