

What Does It Mean to Be a Man of God in a Godless World?

Baseball has never been one of my favorite sports, but one very interesting aspect of the game is watching the different types of pitches that pitchers throw. From fastballs to breaking balls to change-ups, those who are highly skilled in throwing the right pitch in the right way and at the right time can leave a batter looking completely humbled and embarrassed. For the hitter, although he may be expecting movement of the ball as it approaches his swing, he may get a completely different movement from what he expected. Even if he guesses correctly, connecting the swing of the bat to the incoming high speed pitch is another matter all in itself. As someone who was born in the late 1950's, I have seen a lot of change in regards to the role and expectations of men, husbands and fathers in Western society, particularly here in the USA.

In the home in which I was reared in the '60s and '70s, my parents would have been considered traditional and old-fashioned. My dad worked long hours and physically demanding jobs in the railroad and timber industry in order to provide for his family, and my mom was either home or working to clean the homes of white women in order to supplement my dad's income. When I reached about nine or 10 years of age my dad got a better and more stable job working in a factory, and he continued to do factory work until he retired. Once my dad obtained factory work, my mom took classes at the local community college, then took a job as a nutrition agent.

During this time in the late '60s and early '70s, there was a big shift going on regarding the role of women in America. Much emphasis was placed on equal rights for women, and rightly so. But as change takes place for one person or group it causes change to also occur in others. For me as a

boy at that time and a man in my 50s now, I can look back on those days and see that for men, the ball was definitely moving. And the truth of the matter is the ball is always moving. But in the midst of curves, dips and all kinds of change, some stability is also necessary in life. There are some things that change (society and social demands), and some things that never change (God and His Word.)

There is a significant battle going on now between the friends of the world system—the popular path—and those who choose to live according the directives of God’s holy Word, the Bible. There are specific instructions God gives us about what to do and what not to do. If we go against His instructions, that is called sin. What we are seeing today is that when those who have chosen to live obedient to Jesus Christ live out their faith, and those actions go against the trend of modern day societal norms, then the Jesus followers are called hateful, intolerant and many other non-complimentary names which I won’t mention here. For me, I am not a hater and neither am I intolerant of people. Just because I don’t endorse or approve of the actions of one person or of a group does not mean I hate them. Jesus, who was God in the flesh, hung out with sinners, but did not sin with them or endorse their sin. He did a divine job of loving sinners but drawing them away from their sin and pointing them to God. As Christians, we must do likewise through the power and the love of Christ.

Proverbs 22:28 says, “do not remove the ancient landmark which your fathers have set.” This had a literal meaning back then, but I also believe it has a spiritual and practical meaning for us today. Landmarks or boundaries were set for the good of everyone. Landmarks functioned as markers for traveling and direction. Boundaries differentiated property ownership, and one people group from another. If these landmarks or boundaries were removed, chaos and confusion followed. People would get lost in their travels and head in the wrong

direction, or become paralyzed, unable to move in any direction. Wars and disputes would occur if boundaries were changed without all parties agreeing to the change.

Similarly, what I see today is confusion and chaos reigning in the social arena in the name of modern progress. What is the modern day role and responsibility of men, husbands and fathers? The landmarks keep moving and the boundaries shifting. Men have, to a large extent, become either passive and afraid to fulfill their God-given role, or they have become frustrated, bitter and angry, and acted with violence at times. Neither is good. When we think of the roles that men and women have, some people may have a distorted view and think that one gender is more important than the other. Absolutely not. Let me explain it by giving this sports example. On a football team who is it that generally gets the glory for when things go well? Usually its either the quarterback or a running back. But football players, coaches and those who know football realize that the game is won and lost along the offensive and defensive lines. You can have the best quarterback ever, but if his offensive line cannot block and keep the rushing defenders off of him, it's doomsday in the passing game. If the best runner is continually tackled in his own backfield because his O-line was like Swiss cheese, then that runner is made ineffective. The quarterback and the running back may appear to be more valuable because of the publicity given them, but take that line away and see how well they produce. Conversely, a team with a strong line, but which has a quarterback who can't throw accurately, and running backs who are not effective runners will not have much success either. Likewise in life, just because men and women, husbands and wives, and fathers and mothers have differing roles do not mean that one is more important than the other. Each is equally valuable in God's eyes, and should be in our eyes also, but we each have our roles to perform.

Yes, society and the world keep changing, and they will

continue to do so until Jesus comes to get His bride, the church. Until then, for those of us who are Christians and believe in the unchanging Word of God, we are faced with clear choices to make and challenges to deal with. How do we live in this world God has placed us in, and walk out our Christian faith in a way that pleases God according to His written Word, the Bible? We have to find the boundaries and the landmarks God gives us to live by in His Word and take our stand there.

For husbands and fathers, we are to be men who are strong in the Lord, and through this source we give strength, protection, provision and love to our families. For all men, single or married, we are to live honorable lives that please God and serve our fellow neighbors and citizens on this earth. If we look to the shifting sands of society for our role models we will get off course and lose our way. But if we find the landmarks and the boundaries God has given, we will know who we are, and what we are to do, and how to do it. So no matter what pitches life throws your way, find your stance in God who never changes, and let the strength of his love empower your swing.