

WHAT MANHOOD REALLY LOOKS LIKE

Phil. 2:19-30

Good morning! To all our fathers, Happy Father's Day! Today is quite different for me. I don't have a father to greet. I mean, my dad went to be with the Lord three months ago as you know. My dad was a not a perfect father. But he was perfect for us. He cared for us and he loved us. But I didn't know that until I graduated from college. You see, when I was growing up, I never felt my dad's love. I knew in my mind he loved us but he didn't express it just like other dads in the Philippines. They are kind of reserved. It's our culture. Many of you know how my dad was so quiet. So, I grew up wondering whether he even cared about my needs, my studies, etc. Actually, I thought he became aloof from me ever since I became one of the Jehovah's Witnesses when I was 16. I remember he became angry but he didn't express it like he shouted at me or scolded me.

Then, one day, when I was 21 I think, a friend of mine came to me and said, "Rolly, last night, I had a wonderful conversation with your dad. You know what he said? He said he was very proud of you because of you accomplishments in school and the way you have been generous to your siblings and how you helped out when he was out of job." My friend went on and on how my dad really appreciated me and loved me. I was stunned to hear that. I never realized that I was in his heart after all. That's when I came to the conclusion that he is the best father of all even though it wasn't apparent.

Tomorrow we will be attending a virtual Celebration of Life service for him. They will have it in California. So, I'm looking forward to that. And daddy, I know you're in heaven, but I know you can hear me, so let me greet you, "Happy Father's Day! See you later!"

Ok. Now, since it's Father's Day I'm going to share a message addressed to our fathers, who else? But not only to fathers but to men in general. After talking about our mothers and women last month and how Jesus gives them to us for our own good, I'm going to talk about how God wants men to behave for their own good and their families. Amen? I thought I heard Ate Rose say "Amen!"

Let me share with you a poignant story of a loving father. One evening a father arrived home feeling tired after a long day's work. After his wife greeted him and went back to the kitchen, he slumped on a soft chair and tried to relax. Then, his three-year-old daughter came and greeted him, "Daddy, I'm so glad to see you!" "I'm so glad to see you, too, sweetheart," he said and hugged his little angel. Then, she said, "Let me get something for you." "Sure," he said with delight as the little girl scampered away. After a minute, she came back holding a glass of clear water and smiling, she said, "Here, daddy" as she held out her hand. He smiled back and took the glass which felt so cool to the touch and drank it up to the last drop.

Feeling energized once again, he said, "That was really good, sweetheart. By the way, where did you get it?"

With a twinkle in her eyes, her daughter replied, "From the toilet."

He was aghast! But he managed to say, "Thank you."

That is what a true father is like. Loving children despite their mistakes.

This morning, I'm going to share with you a message on **"What Manhood Really Looks Like"**. This is based on Philippians 2:19-30. Let me read.

In his book entitled Missing From Action: Vanishing Manhood in America, Weldon Harbenbrook tells us about four kinds of men being promoted as models of manhood but aren't true masculine roles.

One is what he called the Macho Maniac. This is Dirty Harry, Rambo, Clint Eastwood, Diehard, Robocop. Deny all your feelings, ignore the law, never complain, never apologize. Just sweat and lots of it.

Accomplish the impossible every eight minutes, take anything you want and bully people. That's the Macho Maniac model.

The second kind of model is what he calls The Great Pretender. This is the Archie Bunker type of person who builds up his self-worth by constantly belittling someone else especially his wife and his family. He rules over his family while everyone actually ridicules him behind his back. He's frightened by the world so he keeps everyone at arm's length by his constant caustic talk.

The third model he gives is what he calls The World Class Wimp. This is the Dagwood Bumstead type of person who is so inept he's constantly outwitted by his children, his wife and even his dog. Nobody takes him seriously. He's a bumbling idiot. His motto is "Blessed are the passive for they shall avoid conflict at all costs."

The fourth wrong model he presents is what he calls The Gender Blenders. These are men who are confused about their sexual identity. They don't even pretend to be masculine. In *People* magazine there was a psychologist who asked his seven-year-old nephew whether Michael Jackson was a boy or a girl and the son said, "Both."

I think this book is saying that the American male is suffering from an identity crisis of epidemic proportions. Is there an alternative? Sure, there is. Just look at the Bible. You find God's model.

The Bible teaches that you don't determine a person's greatness by the value of their wealth but by the wealth of their values. Specifically, God over and over through Scripture gives us five key values, which you find in every great person. We're going to look at them this morning. Five values. And Paul gives us two examples in the Bible, Epaphroditus and Timothy, who both model these five values. In Philippians 2:20, he says of Timothy, *"I have no one else like him."* He's very rare. And of Epaphroditus he says *"honor people like him."*

And he gives us a list of characteristics seen in these men. This morning, I'm going to share with you what these characteristics are. These are the **five characteristics you find in all great people in God's book.**

1. COMPASSION: Putting relationships before results. Or people before profits.

An example is Timothy, Paul says. V. 20-21 *"I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ."* Timothy is a man who puts relationships before results.

This is not natural for me. It is my nature to focus on results, not relationships. My guess is this is true of most men. We're very result-oriented. Often women tend to be more relationship oriented than men. We've got to work at this. Paul says that there are 3 that remain, faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love. The Bible says if I have not love, I'm nothing.

You see, the greatest things in life aren't things. Jesus says *"For what shall it profit a man, though he should win the whole world, if he lose his soul?"* (Mark 8:36 GNV) We've got to look at relationships to God and to each other. People last, profits don't. People are going to last for eternity. Profits won't. I've found it's very easy to get so easy with business but I forget the relationships in my life – family, friends, and other people.

"All the others seem to be wrapped up in their own affairs" is what the Phillips translation says. The man who's all wrapped up in himself is not a Daddy. He's a mummy. You know, an Egyptian mummy. You know, the average father spends less than two minutes a day with his children in serious conversation. How do you develop relationships like that? You can't. "I'd love to play ball but I don't have time ... I'd love to help out but I don't have time ... I'd love to do this but I don't have time ... I've got to go make a sale, close a deal, run a race, whatever."

God is looking for men with compassion, who put relationship before results. We've got to balance these things. The interesting thing is that when you put people before profits it makes your business profitable. Read Leadership is an Art by Max De Pree. He was CEO of one of the ten most admired companies in America according to *Fortune* magazine. The whole book is about how you put people before profits and it becomes profitable. It's a book based on Christian principles. It's in my list of must-read books.

2. CONSISTENCY. Putting character before conformity. This characterize men who are not afraid to be different from culture. They're not afraid to stand alone for what's right. They say, "I don't care what everybody else thinks. I don't care what they're doing. I'm going to do the right thing."

I read the story of Tom Larson, a Christian, who was vice president of a company and wanted to make some ethical decisions. The people wanted to make some unethical ones. He wouldn't do it. As a result he got fired. Within a year later he's back as president of the company. God honored his efforts.

An NFL pro who played in the Super Bowl was offered a front page feature in *Playboy* magazine. He said "I'm a Christian. That's not right." Other guys would be jumping at the chance for that kind of publicity. Character before conformity.

v. 22 it says **"Timothy has proved himself...he has served with me in the work of the gospel."** The word "proved" literally means "tested character". He didn't bend to pressure. He was a man of conviction.

You see, an opinion is something you'll argue about but a conviction is something you'll die for. God is looking for people of conviction. There's the old saying, "If you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything." What do people in your life know you stand for? Football? Whatever team you like? Do they know any more than that about your life?

The kind of people who make an impact with their lives are people of conviction. When you study history, you find that the people who've made the greatest impact in the world were not the smartest people, were not the most educated people, were not the wealthiest people. The people who changed the world were those with the deepest convictions for good or for bad. They believed it from the depths of their hearts. And they lived it out.

The temptation in the Metro DC area is that we tend to be half-committed to a bunch of things, rather than 100% committed to the things that really count. That's what God's looking for. Lives of conviction, lives who put character before conformity.

Proverbs 10:9 *"The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out."* The bottom line is integrity. The world is interested in image. God is interested in integrity. Image doesn't last. It's going to be gone overnight. Who was on the cover of *People* magazine three weeks ago? Nobody knows. But character lasts a lifetime. Say "Billy Graham" and what comes to your mind? Integrity. That's why he was voted more than 50 times since 1955 as one of the 10 most admired men in America. Integrity - that's the bottom line.

We must constantly be checking: Is my private life consistent with my public image? If it's not I'd better change it. I'd better not be living Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. I need to be constantly evaluating, Am I being consistent in my lifestyle publicly and privately? Inconsistent fathers produce insecure children. Unreliable husbands produce unstable marriages.

3. COOPERATION: Putting collaboration before competition.

Paul who wrote this was a spiritual superstar. He was probably the most gifted man who ever lived next to Jesus Christ Himself. Yet even he recognized that we accomplish more when we work together, when we get beyond the "not invented here" syndrome.

My ideas are good and your ideas are good but our ideas together are better ideas. He says if you really want to make an impact with your life, you need to be a person of cooperation. Work together with people. Don't be a Lone Ranger, a hot shot by yourself. You work with others.

In v. 25 notice there are three means of cooperation. These are three ways we're to relate to each other if we're going to make an impact with our lives. *"I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier"*. God expects me and you to develop close relationships with other believers for three reasons.

Paul refers to Epaphroditus as "my brother". Therefore, he considers him a part of the family of God, the church. The church is a family. We're all related by blood, the blood of Jesus. The Bible calls other Christians "brother" 133 times. It's the most used term – brother. Some of you grew up in churches where they called people "Brother --- and Sister --- ". I think that's a good term. It's a term of endearment. It's a warm term. It says we're all in a family. We talk about this all the time but it usually isn't until a crisis that you understand what it's all about.

Sometime ago, a member of our church had a crisis with the sudden death of her husband. She received phone calls, visits, flowers, and care from people in the church because she had developed relationships. Certain folks from the church even volunteered to look after her children and picked them up from school. She realized then the true meaning of a church family. She realized that it was in a crisis that this stuff really works.

The church is a family. But it only becomes your family if you choose to get involved, if you choose to develop the relationships where you have an extended family of brothers and sisters to help you when you go through the tough times.

Not only is the Christian life a family but it's a ministry. Paul also calls Epaphroditus a "*co-worker*". Meaning, they've been given the same task, the same mission. In short, as brothers and sisters, we work together, serve together.

Then, Paul also say "*fellow soldier*". It means, we're all in the same army. It's a battle out there. It's tough. You get knocked around. The Bible says we've got the same enemy – Satan. And it is the duty of all of us together to support, to encourage, to defend, to put bandages on each other when we get wounded when we're out there in the battle.

You're not going to make it alone in your Christian life. The people that God uses are men and women of cooperation. They cooperate with each other. You need real friends. That's why we talk over and over again about finding a church home. Fil-Am isn't the only one. There's lots of good ones in the area. Find one and get involved, get in a small group. You can develop relationships. You say you don't need it? You don't need it now, you think, but you do. Judges 20:11 "*So all the men of Israel got together and united as one man against the city.*" There's incredible power in unity. Snowflakes are pretty fragile but if enough of them stick together they can stop traffic. That's true with us. By myself I can't do a lot. By yourself you can't do a lot. But together we can make an impact.

In a couple of weeks, we're going to celebrate Independence Day here in America. The Declaration of Independence was signed by 56 men. These men represented the 13 colonies under British rule. When they galvanized together and issued that declaration, the undermanned, poorly trained colonial soldiers took on and won against the mighty British army. It's the power of unity. When God's men are unified, when God's women are unified, it is incredible power and impact. It's like dropping a large rock in a pond and witnessing the waves that it makes.

4. COMMITMENT. That's the value that makes you great. Putting Christ before comfort. In the second half of v. 25 through 27, Paul says of Epaphroditus,

“who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs...he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him.” This is the story where Paul was in prison in Rome. There’s a church in Philippi who decided to take an offering and send some money to pay for Paul’s bills while he’s in prison. They’ve got a guy in the church that said he’d take it. He was a courier and his name was Epaphroditus. This was no small errand because it’s 832 miles between Rome and Philippi in Greece. There were no cars. There were no trains. There were no planes. Basically he’s going to make an 832-mile journey on foot. If I asked you to take an offering to Florida, would you walk there? Now you understand what we’re talking about. Epaphroditus says, “I’m going to put the cause of Christ before personal comfort. I’ll make the 832 mile journey on foot to deliver this offering to Paul.” But while he’s on the trip he catches some kind of infection. He gets this disease and gets very sick. Evidently it’s a deadly disease. The word that says he was ill is the same word used in other parts of the Bible where people got ill and they died like Lazarus and Dorcas. This is not postnasal drip! This is a deadly disease. He nearly died.

Have you ever been on a business trip and been extremely sick? Do you know how miserable that is? All you’re thinking is “I want to get home!” But Epaphroditus didn’t do it. He didn’t cop out. He didn’t turn around and go back to Philippi. He kept on, went all the way to Rome, delivered his stuff and then eventually got back home. He was persistent in spite of his pain. He was committed to finishing the task. God is not impressed with great starters. He’s impressed with great finishers.

He was persistent. The cause of Christ comes first. He put the cause of Christ before comfort. Many times in my life I’ve put comfort first place in my life. But I really want the cause of Christ to be first place in my life. Most of us say, “I’ll live for the Lord when it’s convenient.

I'll go to church as long as there's not a good program on the TV today or as long as I can get out of bed early." God is looking for men who'll pay the price.

James 2:17 "*Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by actions is dead.*" This means I only believe the parts of the Bible that I do. If I don't do it, I don't really believe it. God is looking for men and women of action, of initiative, who put feet to faith. They are doers of the word. They're simply active.

5. COURAGE is the fifth value. Putting service before security. You take risks for God's kingdom. You serve God and others with reckless abandon. V. 29-30

"Welcome him in the Lord with great joy and honor men like him because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me." The word "risking" is literally a gambling term. It means "hazarding". It's the same word used in crapshoot, rolling the dice, staking everything on the roll of the dice. He says that's what this guy did. He put service before security. Epaphroditus was God's great gambler. He gambled his life away for Jesus Christ.

When I read that kind of thing, I ask myself, "Is my commitment to Christ deep enough to cause me to risk anything?" I think it is. How about you? Is your commitment to Christ deep enough to risk anything? To risk your time, to risk your reputation, to risk your finances. When He tells you to do something are you willing to do it, to take the risk?

I care very deeply about this. I think a lot of churches today are filled with what I call wimp religions – Christianity with no teeth. No challenge, no commitment, no sacrifice, no heroes, no dedication. They sit around and sip tea together.

I think one of the men who demonstrated true courage is Eric Liddell. His life is told in the movie "Chariots of Fire".

We know him as one who did not run in his favorite heats in the 100 meter dash in the 1924 Olympics because they were held on a Sunday and he instead ran in the 400 meter dash which he won. What many of us don't know is the year after the Olympics, he went to China as a missionary. He served in the town of Xiaozhang, an extremely poor area that had suffered during the country's civil wars and had become a particularly treacherous battleground with the invading Japanese. Liddell's first job as a missionary was as a teacher at an Anglo-Chinese College for wealthy Chinese students. He believed that by teaching the children of the wealthy, they would become influential figures in China and promote Christian values. He got married there in China to Florence, a daughter of Canadian missionaries.

In 1941 life in China had become so dangerous because of Japanese aggression that the British government advised British nationals to leave. Florence, who was pregnant with their third child, and their other two children left for Canada to stay with her family when Liddell accepted a position at a rural mission station in Xiaozhang, which served the poor. He joined his brother, Rob, who was a doctor there. The station was severely short of help and the missionaries there were exhausted. A constant stream of locals came at all hours for medical treatment. Liddell arrived at the station in time to relieve his brother, who was ill and needing to go on furlough. Liddell suffered many hardships himself at the mission.

Eventually, the Japanese invaded China and took over the mission. In 1943, he was interned at the Weihsien Internment Camp with the members of the China Inland Mission. Liddell became a leader and organiser at the camp, but food, medicine and other supplies were scarce. While fellow missionaries formed cliques, moralised and acted selfishly, Liddell busied himself by helping the elderly, teaching Bible classes at the camp school, arranging games, and teaching science to the children, who referred to him as Uncle Eric.

In his last letter to his wife, written on the day he died, Liddell wrote of suffering a nervous breakdown due to overwork. He had an inoperable brain tumour. Overwork and malnourishment may have hastened his death. Liddell died on February 21, 1945, five months before liberation. Langdon Gilkey later wrote, "The entire camp, especially its youth, was stunned for days, so great was the vacuum that Eric's death had left." According to a fellow missionary, Liddell's last words were, "It's complete surrender", in reference to how he had given his life to God.

While he was still living, he was asked on one occasion if he ever regretted his decision to leave behind the fame and glory of athletics. Liddell responded, "It's natural for a chap to think over all that sometimes, but I'm glad I'm at the work I'm engaged in now. A fellow's life counts for far more at this than the other."

We've got guys like that in this church, in other churches. Guys at their own cost go and serve in poor parts of the country and in poor countries, to go to mission projects. That's what counts. That's what makes a difference.

Romans 12:1-2 *"So then, my friends, because of God's great mercy to us I appeal to you: Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer. Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind."* (GNT)

Paul says "Offer". I have to ask myself constantly, "Rolly, what are you offering to God who you owe everything to?" Are you offering God your time? Does any of your time go to God? Are you offering God your talent? Are you serving others in the name of God?" God is looking for people who put service before security.

Mark 8:35 *"Only those who give their lives away for My sake and the sake of the good news will ever know what it means to really live."* (LB)

I meet so many bored, frustrated, unfulfilled men. I meet them all the time in the work that I'm in. Why is it? Why is it that there's so many unfulfilled men? Because they've lost the spirit of adventure. They have nothing significant to live for. Life is more than just have a career, retire and die. There is meaning to life. There is more to life than just career and recreation. God never meant for me to use all my time and energy just on that. He wants to use me in a ministry, in a way that I can make an impact with my life.

2 Chronicles 16:9 says, *“The eyes of the Lord run to and for throughout the whole earth looking for people that He may show Himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are perfect toward Him.”* God is looking for people to use. I think God is looking for men of compassion and consistency and cooperation and commitment and courage.

Paul says, “I've got nobody else like Timothy.” I read that and say, “Why? Why aren't there more godly men around? Why are they so rare? The greatest challenge that you will ever face in your life is the challenge to be a man of God. The greatest challenge you will ever have in your life is the challenge to live 100% sold out, turned on for Jesus Christ in front of your family, your business associates your friends. It's not for wimps. The question is: Are you man enough to do it? Am I man enough to do it?”

These are two just ordinary Joes – Timothy and Epaphroditus. Two thousand years later we're still talking about them. Millions of people have read about these guys in the Bible. Why? Because they were men of value. When I read this I think, “What is going to be the long term effect of my life?” You need to ask yourself that question, what's going to be the long term effect of your life? I want mine to count for eternity.