

We Need Men—1st Corinthians 16:13-14—6/19/2022

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On Mothers' Day last month, I offered some biblical thoughts on women, children & mothers to remind us of the clear wisdom of Scripture & the value & need for God's design.

So today on Fathers' Day, I'll offer some biblical thoughts on men & fathers & the wisdom & value & need for God's design.

We need men & boys & women & girls to understand what the Bible says about manliness & how to find it & encourage it & support it & how males can grow into it & pursue it for the good of others.

Only the church has an objective standard & governing authority outside of the shifting sands of trending opinions.

So the church needs men to stand up & lovingly lead with conviction that transcends the latest surveys or poll numbers.

We need women who will do the same in their roles, but today we highlight the call to truly distinctive biblical masculinity.

Much could be said but we'll focus on one phrase used many times in Scripture that would've been easily understood in biblical times.

Our culture has attacked & undermined this vital virtue of men & we need to revive mature manhood.

Now that sexualizing children & mutilating their anatomy & public promotion of perversion is rampantly pushed as normal, it is far past the time to sound the alarm for men to stop fearing being men.

It is far past the time to repent of passivity & silence for the sake of precious children & women & all of society.

We need men to be biblical men & to hold each other accountable for the glory of God & the Gospel & for the good of everyone we know.

Statistics can be cited of problems from the absence of a father in the home, from the absence of a steady male anchor.

So rather than fearing all the risks that may come occupationally or relationally or financially or in other ways, we need to cast off fear & lovingly share truth & lead in faithfulness & protect & provide.

Turn in your Bibles to 1st Corinthians 16:13 where we find our phrase for today, this command from God to act like men.

It is a command for all the Christians in the church at Corinth, but it is particularly to men & its wording says something about manhood.

Follow along as I read 1st Corinthians 16:13-14. [READ]

This comes amidst Paul's closing greetings that we won't get into except to note it's a summary of what the church at Corinth needed.

It was a church filled with immaturity & emotionalism & pride & factions & showmanship & worldliness & & undisciplined sin & unholiness & selfishness of all kinds.

So if you are troubled over similar problems in today's churches & denominations, realize that it's not new & the answer hasn't changed.

To sum up part of the answer, we need men to be men—we need leaders to *be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong & let all they do be done in love*.

And we need all Christians in appropriate ways to be spiritually alert & to stand firm in the faith with courage & strength & love.

But note this is particularly masculine & that would've been known in Paul's time & throughout time as distinctive for men.

The phrase is translated "be men of courage" in the NIV & the NKJV leaves out reference to manhood and simply translates it "be brave."

The Greek word is a verb form of the noun for man or husband.

It has an a-n-d-r Greek root where we get the English word “android”.

Before it was a phone operating system, the word *android* was used to describe a robot that was made to act like a man.

Technically a gynoid or feminoid is a robot like a woman.

In Greek, the term [aner-andros] specifically refers to a male and the verb form [andrizomai] means to act like a man.

So 1st Corinthians 16:13 is a clear reference to manliness & manhood that includes being brave & courageous & strong.

Since the Holy Spirit used it that way through the Apostle Paul, we learn that this strength must be part of godly manhood.

In our times, I need to state that there are only 2 genders defined by biological sex & more transcendently defined by God our Creator.

In God’s design of equal complementary companions, His Word describes different roles that are distinctively or exclusively more male or female.

So we want to let His Word speak to us in language that would’ve been taken for granted historically but may be rejected in our time.

We want to let God’s Word give some context of what it means to be masculine, of what makes up mature manliness.

We affirm that these verses do urge all Christians in a way to be courageous & strong & steadfast in faith, but the default background & meaning is that this would be obviously characteristic of mature men.

We need to recapture that sense of manhood for men first & foremost to begin to understand its application to all Christians.

So from this context of verses 13-14, I’ll offer 5 descriptions of what we need from all Christians & especially need from men.

We see 1st that we need spiritual awareness—that all Christians & especially leaders & men need to have spiritual awareness.

So that’s point #1—value spiritual awareness.

You see that first in 1st Corinthians 16:13—*be on the alert*.

That means you need to realize that you are involved in a war & being passive & lazy & undiscerning is not an option.

The curse in Genesis 3 warns of men sinning by domineering abusiveness on the one hand or passive laziness on the other.

It is wrong to be a self-serving, arrogant, uncaring, despot, but it is also wrong to be passive & toned down & chilled out doing nothing.

That’s not God’s design that He gave from the beginning before woman was even created in Genesis 2.

God gave man leadership responsibility before He demonstrated man’s need for an equal companion & helper & God made woman.

That’s not a sexist or misogynist or warped or evil idea—it was God’s idea & He is good & wise & we should listen to Him.

God did warn against the male temptation to be a tyrant & He urged men to value the good & necessary complement that woman is to man.

So we need to guard against both extremes of men oppressively ruling over women & of men passively not leading.

And that temptation to passive laziness—or the temptation to escape to other areas to rule—war against being spiritually alert.

Guys—if you check out & try to coast & take it easy & assume the influences your family faces are not so bad, then you are asleep at the wheel as you drive your family into destruction.

Ephesians 6 is 1 of many passages picturing the Christian life as a war.

1st Peter 5:8 says the devil is like a lion seeking to devour & 2nd Corinthians 11:14 says the devil disguises as an angel of light.

So we need to be aware that some dangers come straight at you & others are disguised as good ways to signal virtue & be praised.

We need biblical discernment to guard against being taken over or tripped up by such assaults against God’s truth & goodness.

That requires being a disciple & follower of Jesus who eagerly studies Scripture to grow in understanding & application.

It is to have heart of Psalm 119 valuing God’s Word above all & praying like Psalm 119:66, “*Teach me good discernment & knowledge, for I believe in Your commandments.*”

Proverbs pours out wisdom from a father to a son & we need that pursuit with our kids & others younger in the faith.

And we all need to have the hunger to listen & learn, to be taught & to receive instruction & counsel.

As Proverbs 1:8 says, “*Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching.*”

Proverbs 3:1 says, *My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments*, & 4:10 says *Hear, my son, & accept my words, that the years of your life may be many.*

Proverbs 5:1 says, “*My son, be attentive to my wisdom; incline your ear to my understanding,*” & 7:1 says, “*My son, keep my words and treasure up my commandments with you.*”

Proverbs 23:26 says, “*My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways.*”

Do you talk to your kids like that?

Do you appeal to those younger in the faith like that?

Or do we all think that sounds too intense & we wouldn’t want to come across too pushy or serious or extreme?

Listen to the intensity & seriousness of Proverbs 2:2-5—“*Make your ear attentive to wisdom, incline your heart to understanding; for if you cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding; if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; **then** you will discern the fear of the Lord, and discover the knowledge of God.*”

That doesn’t sound relaxed or easy-going, does it?

We don’t want to hear words like Hebrews 5:12-6:1 when it says: “*Though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity.*”

Discernment takes practice & work & study & training & we ever need that as we strive to value spiritual awareness.

But we must do more than merely knowing truth & error, more than merely discerning right from wrong in our spiritual awareness.

We must move 2ndly to steadfast conviction as a 2nd area 1st Corinthians 16:13 commands of all believers & especially men.

Read 1st Corinthians 16:13 again. [READ]

1st *be on the alert*, which we described as spiritual awareness.

2nd *stand firm in the faith*, which we'll describe as steadfast conviction.

A 2nd vital value of manhood is steadfast conviction.

Steadfast conviction puts spiritual awareness into action with decisions & defenses & warnings & directives for spiritual warfare.

The passive temptation for men is to fail to take a stand, fail to be clear, to be weak & wavering & vacillating & give no direction & allow everyone to do whatever they want.

Men may fear failure or love comfort or lack convictions or any other number of excuses to escape rather than stand firm.

Sadly some leaders see dangers & wonder how to distract from them instead of warning clearly of danger & confronting error.

To avoid being unpopular, some scheming church leaders try to craft ways not to be direct in a way that would be clear & inescapable.

Like the new phrase, "*let's make abortion unnecessary*" as if the problem is not that abortion is violent murder.

That kind of obfuscation falls short of naming evil by pointing to more socially acceptable fixes that may be good.

But isn't abortion is always UNnecessary because it is murder?

Yes it is—and we dare not soften the reality of that truth to pander to political or occupational or societal pressures.

Softening that reality by saying something less offensive is not standing firm in the faith—instead it's sinking into squishy quicksand that silences solid biblical convictions.

That is not what people of the truth should do & it is certainly not what men who are called to lead with clear truth should do.

For example, 1st Corinthians 15:58 says, "*Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.*"

Colossians 1:23 encourages believers to "*continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard.*"

Psalms 1 says the righteous are "*like a tree firmly planted*" & that's what we need from all Christians & especially men.

We need to value (1) spiritual awareness & (2) steadfast conviction.

Then 3rdly we need to value stable courage.

Stable courage is a bit of what's packed into that phrase *act like men*.

It does not say to act like boys because boys can be immature & unseasoned & unwise as desires tempt them to be unstable.

But mature manhood is what's depicted here that is sober-minded as 2nd Timothy 4:5 puts it & having sober judgment as Romans 12:3 says.

1st Corinthians 14:20 says, "*Do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature.*"

And Ephesians 4:13-15 says we want to "*all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ.*"

To act like men, we must be stable & grounded in truth to reject fads that can deceive well-meaning immature believers.

That stability feeds courage to stand firm no matter the cost, to speak the truth in love whatever the risk or potential consequences.

That requires being knowledgeable in the Word, disciplined in practice of the Word, & devoted to persevering in the Word.

That is the mature & brave commitment to live out solid biblical convictions that is so needed by all Christians & distinctively by men.

That stable courage is closely connected with the final phrase in 1st Corinthians 16:13 & so I want to add that one here & then give more background on these two phrases used together.

Point #4 is to value secure endurance—secure endurance is trait #4.

Secure endurance or you might also phrase it strong perseverance or strong endurance in the sense that the settled convictions are stable & held courageously for the long haul.

All of this is done with strength that is deeply secure in Christ & His Gospel promises at a level that perseveres to the end.

We don't need guys who give up when it gets tough.

We all need biblical strength—& we especially need men to exemplify & lead with that strength in our marriages & families & churches.

Read 1st Corinthians 16:13 again. [READ]

This pictures a soldier in his bunker watching in every direction, holding firm in his position, prepared for whatever happens.

Envisioning that picture in the spiritual realm is the point as that brave readiness is characteristic of manhood.

This is the faith-based strength of a good & godly leader who has the character & the biblical mindset to teach sound doctrine & refute error.

In that sense, the qualifications of church leaders in 1st Timothy 3 & Titus 1 are the mature character & doctrinal clarity that all men should aspire to increasingly.

This “act like men” term occurs only here in the NT, but a number of OT verses give a fuller picture of this kind of strength & courage.

Though the OT was written in Hebrew, the Greek translation of the OT called the Septuagint was popular in the time of the NT.

And that Greek translation of the OT—the Septuagint or LXX as it's abbreviated—can help understand how Greek words were used.

The Septuagint affirms what it means to act like men by translating these as commands to be strong & courageous.

The passage you are probably most familiar with is in Joshua 1 so let's turn there in our Bibles to see what we can learn.

Joshua 1 is where God was speaking to Joshua as Joshua prepared to lead Israel into the Promised Land.

Read along with me in Joshua 1:5-9—Joshua 1:5-9. [READ]

God was telling Joshua the way to prosper as he led Israel into the Promised Land, telling him what was important as a leader.

And what did God tell Joshua 3 times in these 4 verses?

Be strong & courageous or of good courage or very courageous—God said that in verses 6, 7, & 9.

The word used in the OT Greek translation each of those times for being courageous is the “act like men” word in 1st Corinthians 16:13.

As Israel faced real battles, physical strength was not the focus.

As Israel entered the Promised Land, the issue was never readiness for hand-to-hand combat, but readiness for faithfully following the Lord.

We see that in verse 6 because the command to be strong & courageous is followed by God's promise to give the land.

Then note in verse 7 that the same command is linked with the purpose of the people obeying God's ways.

So verse 8 focuses on the centrality of God's Word and how Joshua should meditate on it and obey it.

Then the 3rd time for the command is in verse 9 where God simply promises to be with Joshua wherever he goes.

So all the focus for strength & courage is upon God's promises & God's person & God's presence & overall providence.

So to fulfill the command of God to be strong & courageous, the greatest focus was on knowing God & His Word.

That is true in 1st Corinthians 16:13 just as it was for Joshua.

So being strong & courageous requires more hours getting to know God & His promises than hours training on the battlefield or at the gym for mere physical profit.

That doesn't mean physical training is sinful because exercise can be helpful in being a good steward of our health.

But it does mean that biblical strength for manhood is primarily about our understanding of & relationship with God.

And that means we need to be more soaked in Scripture than in stock markets or sports pages or politics or news or hobbies.

We need to know doctrine and how to make decisions and how to think biblically and how to counsel others and act in faith.

Men need that for our own strength & we need it for others.

To lead others, we need to be anchored with deep enough stability that we don't waver when resistance comes or when we are not popular.

Listen—if you change your behavior or beliefs based on the company you are around—if you act one way with Christians & another way around others, then you are not a mature man.

You may be biologically male & you need to embrace that, but you are not acting like a mature man in the sense of 1st Corinthians 16:13.

Biblical men are not chameleons changing their colors to match their surroundings.

Biblical men are defined & directed by divine truth that never changes that stabilizes them not to change when others cave to peer pressure.

So we need to know what bunker God wants us dug into & how to watch out for enemy fire & respond with truth to guard our commitments and protect those around us.

That won't happen if we're wasting our lives on imaginary virtual battles or fighting for stuff that doesn't matter or foolishly majoring on every minor & making mountains out of molehills.

Real strength is ever-growing is God-centered roots in biblical truth with courage to follow God's promises & commands.

It's fighting the fight of faith to honor God no matter what with a steady readiness to face whatever comes.

Leading is not 1st about a plan or program or skills or abilities.

It's first about conviction, about the biblical truths that give definition & direction to who we are & why we are here.

So for the good of our marriages & children & church, we need men devoted to owning & growing in this spiritual strength.

Internal character & conviction was what Joshua needed to be a leader.

And Moses' last words to Israel and to Joshua included the same charge with the same words in Deuteronomy 31.

Then Joab the commander of David's army also passed along the same words in 2nd Samuel 10:12 after giving Israel a battle plan.

And David passed on these same words in his dying words to his son Solomon who would reign after him in 1st Kings 2.

1st Kings 2:2-3 reports that David told him, "*Be strong, therefore, & show yourself a man. Keep the charge of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, & His testimonies, according to what is written in the Law of Moses, that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn.*"

In this repeated charge, you hear again the focus on spiritual strength & courage, spiritual manhood that required faith & obedience through all of life's responsibilities.

1st Chronicles 22 & 28 record similar words as David charged Solomon to build the temple for God & to lead as king.

And Hezekiah gave the same charge in 2nd Chronicles 32 as Jerusalem faced Assyrian siege & God came to their rescue.

This often-repeated theme is what we all need as a kind of internal empowerment to trust God and walk in His ways.

Psalms 27:14 says to everyone, "*Wait for the LORD; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD.*"

And Psalm 31:24 says, "*Be strong and let your heart take courage, All you who hope in the LORD.*"

So again, there is a sense that both men & women need this internal strength as we trust the Lord & follow His Word.

It comes to those who are dependent on God's help & grace while waiting & hoping in His promises.

So in addition to a thorough knowledge of God's Word, this devotion to strength requires intense & persistent prayer.

To be brave to step out in faith, we must be growing both more assured in God's truth AND more dependent on God's power.

It's kind of one of those biblical paradoxes—to be strong we must feel our weakness & depend fully on God's faithfulness.

So guys, if you want to make a difference, that means you can't be consumed by video games & entertainment & sports & other escapes.

You need to be the guy who is gladly mocked when he has no clue who the trending pop icon is because he has spent his time instead building character that transcends the trends.

You need to be the guy who doesn't pander to his peer group to try to be cool but instead stands up & speaks truth that we all need to hear.

To do so, you must root yourself in truth & soak up good teaching & be around godly men who are good examples.

You can't be lazy-minded and pray when you feel like it and expect one day you'll just wave a magic wand and be strong.

We need to build this foundation from as young as possible & never slack in vigilant training to know & grow as men.

That's what it means for 1st Corinthians 16:13 to say, "*Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.*"

And again, the implication of the verse is that you will know what that means because you know men who model it.

This verse applies to all Christians & it requires men to set the standard of what it should look like in God's designed role of leader.

The strength of our faith & the courage of our convictions influences the people around us with direction & protection.

We want to be available for others to lean on & follow & catch the strength striving by God's grace & for God glory.

Godly manhood has internal vigor to live a self-controlled, devout life of worship & faithfulness that sets an example.

That's why we must value (#1) spiritual awareness, (#2) steadfast conviction, (#3) stable courage, & (#4) secure endurance.

And then verse 14 adds, *"let all that you do be done in love."*

How appropriate in context with this passage & in the context of encouraging biblical manhood to finally value servant-hearted love.

So note point #5—value servant-hearted love.

Leadership must be loving in a way that sacrificially serves others.

There is a temptation to think that the most self-confident, self-advancing people make the best leaders.

It is tempting to think of the best leaders as the people who get first in everything they do & want everyone to think they are the greatest.

Many leaders even think they are good with people because they know how to manipulate & coerce people to do their will.

But that is not the biblical model of loving leadership and manhood.

To understand biblical strength, we must say that manhood includes sacrificially loving & serving others' spiritual good.

That means if you have biblical knowledge, you get involved in people's messy lives and lovingly try to help them.

It involves speaking whatever truth will prove helpful and doing whatever work will bring spiritual blessing.

It is loving self-sacrifice to meet others needs.

It is not love in the worldly sense of sentimentality that approves of whatever people want to do & permissively tries to be nice while silently trying not to rock the boat or offend.

Love dies to ourselves—dies to being liked or honored because we care more about the spiritual good of those we love than we care about whether they affirm or appreciate us.

That's hard to do with a tender heart of patience & prayerful concern & yet it must partner with the strength of verse 13.

That kind of leading over time gains trustworthiness that is so needed in our individualistic culture where no one trusts others anymore.

That kind of example can be a powerful way for others to come to the most trustworthy Leader of all, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Seeing Jesus as the most sacrificially loving & lavishly giving Leader should make us all eager to trust & follow Jesus.

And in trusting & following Him, we can let His example & His Word define & direct us in how to live.

His Word says a lot about manhood & we can't cover it all in one message, but I trust you see how we need men & what that means.

I trust you see how we need men as the model of this verse.

I trust you singles & young people see what to seek for yourself as a man or what young ladies should seek as a future husband & I trust we all see what to honor & encourage.

I trust we see love defined in context with spiritual strength.

I trust this has been a timely reminder today on Fathers' Day.

And I trust we realize how awesome Jesus was to live all these truths perfectly without ever failing in any way.

Jesus spoke what we needed to hear while sacrificially giving all we need to have & He is the ultimate model we follow.

Of course, we all fail God's good designs & we can only begin to change by first grasping who Jesus is & what He's done.

We as men and women and boys and girls all fail these biblical goals of strength and love and much more & we deserve to be punished.

Yet Jesus paid the penalty for sin to set us free from sin's penalty forever & from sin's power now increasingly.

In doing that, Jesus not only provided for His people, He also modeled the sacrificial love of true spiritual leadership.

We can never rightly lead or follow anyone unless we first and foremost begin by following Jesus.

And following Jesus starts with trusting His life, death and resurrection to provide all we need to get right with God.

Then in a right relationship with God, we can be empowered by His Spirit to live God's wise designs as men & women.

If you are not sure you have that right relationship with God through Christ, then please talk with one of us and let us help you today.

Or if we can help clarify or counsel you in any of these truths, we'd love to help in applying God's Word.

I pray that you have entered into a life of following Christ and are on the road of living God's role by grace through faith.

And I pray you more clearly know what to strive for and look for in biblical manhood and womanhood.

I thank God for how many of you in this church know this & are striving to live it in your roles & families & responsibilities.

We are richly blessed to enjoy fellowship among so many unique & powerful expressions of manhood & womanhood lived out with love for Christ & His Word.

Men, I encourage you to begin or continue the habits that lead to maturity & be actively involved in loving & leading others.

And ladies, I pray that you understand what kind of man to encourage and what kind of leader to follow.

And I pray that we all better grasp how all Christians—men & women & boys & girls, can be alert, steadfast, stable, strong, & loving.

This passage urge us to value (1) spiritual awareness, (2) steadfast convictions, (3) stable courage, (4) secure perseverance, & (5) servant-hearted love.

May God help us all in applying these truths faithfully.

Pray with me as we close.