

# Knighthood and Biblical Manhood – A Christian Perspective on True Manliness

*Lou Whitworth summarizes an inspiring book which lays out the characteristics of a godly man. The ceremonies and the code of conduct of knights are compared to a biblical perspective on Christian manhood. This model encourages us to live in Christ as examples of godly men.*

## A Vision for Manhood

In this essay we will be looking at an inspiring book, *Raising a Modern-Day Knight*, in an effort to learn how we can motivate our sons to live lives of honor and nobility. This book, written by Robert Lewis, grew out of his own experiences as he and some close friends struggled to lead their sons into balanced, biblical masculinity.

C. S. Lewis wrote that the disparate strands of manhood—fierceness and gentleness—can find healthy synthesis in the person of the knight and in the code of chivalry. Here these competing impulses—normally found in different individuals—find their union.(1)

Were one of these two bents given full rein, the balance required for authentic Christian manhood would be lost. Strength and power, without tenderness, for example, give us the brute. Tenderness and compassion without masculine firmness and aggressiveness produce a male without the fire to lead or inspire others.

Biblical examples of these two elements resident in one man are numerous. Jesus Christ, our Lord, revealed both tough and tender aspects in His humanity. Once Jesus expressed a desire to gather the citizens of Jerusalem together as a hen gathers

her young under her wings.(2) We know that Christ wept at least twice: once at the tomb of Lazarus(3) and again as He looked out over the city of Jerusalem and reflected on the fate of those who rejected His witness.(4) However, Jesus could also be very stern. Once He made a whip, ran off the money changers in the temple area, and turned over their tables.(5) And, in the Garden of Gethsemane, His mere glance knocked grown men to the ground.(6)

In Paul, we see the same blend of firmness and gentleness. He poured himself out tenderly nurturing his spiritual children,(7) but he endured more hardship than most soldiers(8) and didn't hesitate to castigate false teachers.(9)

In the Old Testament, we see David, who was a poet and singer, but also a warrior and king. He had the fierceness to kill Goliath, the giant, and the tenderness to provide for the needs of Jonathan's descendants after Jonathan was killed.

Keeping the right balance between our impulses toward power and aggression and the need to be gentle and tender is a challenge most men face. In his book, *Raising a Modern-Day Knight*, author Robert Lewis says that Christian fathers can use knighthood as a symbol, an ideal, and a metaphor for guiding their sons into authentic manhood. In this way opposing drives can be harnessed and balanced.

Now, of course, everyone experiences difficulty balancing competing impulses, but it is specifically the violence by young males that is bringing our society to the verge of breakdown. Our young men need a vision for masculinity that challenges and inspires if our society is to be stable and healthy. In an age of great social, spiritual, and gender confusion, such as ours, there is a desperate need for clear guidelines and models that can inspire young men and harness their aggression for constructive ends.

This is where the image of the knight comes in. Since the Middle Ages these men in iron have fired the imaginations of young men. Knighthood is attractive because of its code and its call to courage and honor. Young men are intrigued by testing themselves against various standards, and the code is inspiring because of its rigor and strictness.

## **The Need for Modern-Day Knights**

In his enthusiastic foreword to Robert Lewis's book, *Raising a Modern-Day Knight*, Stu Weber writes:

*Our culture is in deep trouble, and at the heart of its trouble is its loss of a vision for manhood. If it's difficult for you and me as adult males to maintain our masculine balance in this gender-neutral' culture, imagine what it must be like for our sons, who are growing up in an increasingly feminized world.(10)*

We must supply our young men with healthy, noble visions of manhood, and the figure of the knight, in this regard, is without equal. In the knight we find a conception of manhood that can lift, inspire, and challenge our young men to new heights of achievement and nobility. One authority asserted: "Not all knights were great men, but all great men were knights."(11) According to Will Durant, chivalry and knighthood gave to the world one of the "major achievements of the human spirit."(12)

C. S. Lewis, in his essay, "The Necessity of Chivalry," agreed.(13) He wrote that the genius of the medieval ideal of the chivalrous knight was that it was a paradox. That is, it brought together two things which have no natural tendency to gravitate towards one another. It brought them together for that very reason. It taught humility and forbearance to the great warrior because everyone knew by experience how much he usually needed that lesson. It demanded valour of the urbane

and modest man because everyone knew that he was likely as not to be a milksop.(14)

In Malory's *Morte Darthur* a fellow knight salutes the deceased Lancelot saying: "Thou wert the meekest man that ever ate in hall among ladies; and thou wert the sternest knight to thy mortal foe that ever put spear in the rest." This expresses the double requirement made on knights: sternness and meekness, not a compromise or blend of the two. Part of the attraction of the knight is this combination of valor and humility.

Someone once said history teaches us that, "When most men are soft, a few hard men will rule." For that reason we must do everything we can to build into our boys the virtues of strength and tenderness so they can be strong, solid family men and so society will be stable.

The lack of connection between fathers and sons in our culture, made worse by broken homes and the busyness of our lives, has left many young men with a masculine identity crisis. That's why the ideas in this book are so timely and important. Our sons are looking to their fathers for direction. Fathers are searching for real answers in their attempts to guide their sons into godly manhood. This book provides answers and guidelines for this search.

First, from the example of the knight, fathers have a way to point their sons to manhood with clear ideals: a vision for manhood, a code of conduct, and a transcendent cause. Second, the pattern of advancement from page to knight provides fathers with a coherent process for guiding their sons to manhood. Third, numerous suggestions for ceremonies equip dads with a variety of means to celebrate and validate their sons' achievements.

# The Knight and His Ideals

Now we will turn our attention to the knight and his ideals. In *Raising a Modern-Day Knight*, author Robert Lewis suggests three major ideals for modern-day knights: a vision for manhood, a code of conduct, and a transcendent cause.

**A Vision for Manhood** – The author states four manhood principles: Real men (1) reject passivity, (2) accept responsibility, (3) lead courageously, and (4) expect the greater reward. He suggests that though men have a natural inborn aggressiveness, they tend to become passive at home and avoid social responsibility. These principles, if followed, prevent passivity from becoming a significant problem.

**A Code of Conduct** – The code for modern-day knights comes from the pages of the Bible. Lewis lists 10 ideal characteristics appropriate for modern-day knights taken from the Scriptures: loyalty, kindness, humility, purity, servant-leadership, honesty, self-discipline, excellence, integrity, and perseverance. Modern-day knights must be trained in three important areas. First, the modern-day knight needs to understand that there must be a will to obey (God's will) if there is to be spiritual maturity. The young man must come to know that life is inherently moral and that there is a God who knows everything and who rewards good and punishes evil. He must know that absolute values exist and that the commandments of God are liberating, not confining. Lewis states "True satisfaction in life is directly proportionate to one's obedience to God. In this context, moral boundaries take on a whole new perspective: they become benefits, not burdens."

Second, the modern-day knight needs to understand that he has a work to do that is in keeping with his inner design. This work is not just his profession or trade, but refers to work in his home, church, and community. Life is certainly more than a job, and your son should hear this from you lest he get the mistaken perception that manhood is just one duty and

obligation after another.

A third realm of responsibility for the modern-day knight is a woman to love. The code of chivalry requires that all women be treated with respect and honor. Sons need to see and hear from their fathers the importance of caring for women in general and loving, leading, and honoring their wives in particular.

The knight in training should be taught the value of work, have summer jobs, do chores around the house, and study hard on his school work. The goal here is to establish patterns of industry and avoid sloth so that a solid work ethic is in place as he gets older.

**A Transcendent Cause** – Life is ultimately unsatisfying if it is lived solely for self. Jesus said if you give up your life you will find it, so if you live for a cause greater than yourself, you'll be happy and fulfilled. A transcendent cause is a cause that a person believes is truly heroic (a noble endeavor calling for bravery and sacrifice), timeless (has significance beyond the moment), and is supremely meaningful (not futile).

The only antidote to the futility of life is a transcendent cause and a vision for life that “integrates the end of life with the beginning,” and connects time and eternity. Obviously becoming a Christian, developing a personal relationship with Christ, and living for Him are basic, irreplaceable elements for having a meaningful life.

## **A Knight and His Ceremonies**

At this point, we turn to focus on the importance of ceremonies in the life of a young man. It is said that a knight remembers the occasion of his dubbing (i.e., his installment as a knight) as the finest day of his life. Such is the power of ceremony that it makes celebrated events unforgettable. Ceremonies are also invaluable markers that

state emphatically: "Something important has happened here!"

In much of the world, older men have instinctively seen the wisdom of providing for their sons markers of their journey to manhood. These markers have been in the form of periodic ceremonies or a significant, final ceremony. Following such events there is no doubt in the young man's mind that he has reached the stage in his development celebrated in the ceremony. Later he can always look back on the ceremony and remember what it meant.

After the elaborate physical, mental, and religious disciplines endured and passed in relation to his dubbing ceremony, no medieval knight ever wondered, "Am I a knight?" Such matters had been settled forever by the power of ceremony in the presence of other men. This is what our sons need.

Our sons do not normally have such experiences. As Lewis writes, "One of the great tragedies of Western culture today is the absence of this type of ceremony. . . . I cannot even begin to describe the impact on a son's soul when a key manhood moment in his life is forever enshrined and memorialized by a ceremony with other men."(15)

The author suggests that there are natural stages in a young man's life that lend themselves to celebration. Each stage has a parallel in the orderly steps toward knighthood.

**Puberty: The Page Ceremony** – The first step for a young boy on the path to knighthood was to become a page. He was like an apprentice, and he learned about horses, weapons, and falconry and performed menial tasks for his guardians. Since puberty occurs in a young boy's life around 13 and is an important point in a young man's journey toward adulthood, it is an excellent time for a simple ceremony involving the boy and his father celebrating this stage of the young man's life.

**High School Graduation: The Squire Ceremony** – The next stage on the path to knighthood was the squire; he was attached to a

knight, served him in many ways, and continued to perfect his fighting skills. This stage is roughly parallel to the time of high school graduation. It should be marked by a more involved ceremony led by the boy's father but involving other men.

**Adulthood: The Knight Ceremony** – This is the stage in which the squire, after a period of testing and preparation, is dubbed a knight in an elaborate ceremony. This marks the end of youth and the arrival of adulthood for the knight. For the modern-day knight this stage of life is characterized by the completion of college or entering the world of work or military service. The author suggests this stage as a perfect time to have a celebration marking a son's arrival at manhood and full adulthood. This ceremony should be very special; it should involve the young man, his father, his family, and other men.

## **Some Final Thoughts on Knighthood**

In this discussion we have been looking at Robert Lewis's book, *Raising a Modern-Day Knight*, and discussing knights and chivalry in an attempt to promote the knight as a worthy ideal, symbol, and metaphor for young men to emulate. A question left unasked is why young men might need a stirring, vivid image or concept like the knight as a model. After a lifetime of studying cultures and civilizations, both ancient and modern, the eminent anthropologist Margaret Mead made the following observation:

*The central problem of every society is to define appropriate roles for the men. (16)*

Though Margaret Mead was a controversial figure, and I have sometimes disagreed with her myself, in this statement, I believe she is right on target. Author George Gilder adds a similar insight when he states: "Wise societies provide ample means for young men to affirm themselves without afflicting



others.”(17)

Men need appropriate roles, and they need the desire to live and perform those roles. They need to be inspired to do so. Men need roles that are considered valuable and held to be worthwhile. This is true because men are psychologically more fragile than women and suffer with their identity more than women do, though feminists would have us think otherwise. Why is this so? It is true because “Men, more than women, are culture-made.”(18) This is why it is so important to have a culture-wide vision of manhood.

In modern Western society boys make the journey to manhood without a clear vision for what healthy manhood is. If they get out of control, the whole society suffers. Proverbs 29:18 states: “Where there is no vision, the people perish” [or, “are unrestrained”]. Knights and chivalry can supply a stirring vision of manhood that has been lacking. Yet some may think that the figure of the knight is an inappropriate image to use to inspire Christian young men. Such people need to take a close look at Scripture. The teachings of Jesus and the letters of Paul use the image of the hard working farmer, the athlete, and the soldier to illustrate the points they are trying to make.

Furthermore, there are numerous biblical passages that picture knight-like images, some of whom are angelic beings and others are Christ Himself. Specifically, Revelation is replete with images of courtly life familiar to medieval knights: kings, thrones, crowns, swords, censers, bows, armies, eagles, dragons, chariots, precious stones, incense, etc.

Actually, we are more indebted to the knightly virtue of chivalry than we realize. Many of the concepts and words have become part of our familiar vocabulary. It is from chivalry, for example, that we acquired the concept of the gentleman (notice the dual stress here—gentle-man) and our concepts of sportsmanship and fair play. It is perhaps no accident that

the decline in chivalry parallels the rise of taunting and the “win at any price” attitude among our sports figures.

There is one more aspect to all of this that needs to be emphasized. If we are successful in inspiring our young men to seek to become modern-day knights, we need to remind them and ourselves that one can't become a knight on his own. Our young knights need the company of godly men to be all that they can be; they need the Roundtable. As Robert Lewis states so well: “Boys become men in the community of men. There is no substitute for this vital component. . . . if your boy is to become a man, you must enlist the community.”(19) Why? “First, if a father's presence is weighty, the presence of other men is weightier still. . . . Second, enlisting the community of men results in a depth of friendship that the lonely never experience. . . . And third, the community of men expands a son's spiritual and moral resources.”(20)

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#### Notes

1. C. S. Lewis, “The Necessity of Chivalry,” *Present Concerns* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986), pp. 11-16.
2. Matthew 23:37.
3. John 11.
4. Luke 19:41.
5. John 2:13-16.
6. John 18:6.
7. Thessalonians 2: 5-9.
8. 1 Corinthians 11:23-27.

9. Galatians 5:12.
10. Stu Weber cited in Robert Lewis, *Raising A Modern-Day Knight: A Father's Role in Guiding His Son to authentic Manhood* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Focus on the Family, 1997), vii.
11. Matthew Bennett, "The Knight Unmasked," *The Quarterly Journal of Military History*, vol. 7, no. 4(Summer 1995): 10, cited in Robert Lewis, *Raising a Modern-Day Knight*, 18.
12. Will and Ariel Durant, *The Story of Civilization—The Age of Faith 4* (New York: Simon & Schuster,1950), 578, cited in Robert Lewis, *Raising a Modern-Day Knight*, 18.
13. C. S. Lewis, "The Necessity of Chivalry," 13-26.
14. Ibid.
15. Robert Lewis, *Raising a Modern-Day Knight*, 99.
16. Margaret Mead, *Male and Female: A Study of the Sexes in a Changing World* (New York: Dell, 1968),168, cited in Lewis, 46.
17. George Gilder, *Men and Marriage* (Gretna, La.: Pelican, 1992), 34, cited in Lewis, 46.
18. David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America* (New York: Basic, 1995), 17, cited in Lewis, 46.
19. Lewis, 150.
20. Ibid., 150-51.

# Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus

## How Men and Women Differ

[Sue] Counselor John Gray made a ton of money—and found a ton of grateful fans—in writing his best-selling book *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*[\[1\]](#). This book explored the intrinsic differences between men and women in a way that has helped millions of people understand why relationships between the two sexes can be so frustrating!

[Ray] In this essay we'll be examining some of the insights from this book, then looking at what the Bible says about how God wants men and women to relate to each other. It's no surprise that since God created us to be different, He knew all about those differences thousands of years ago when He gave very specific instructions for each gender!

[Sue] The whimsical premise of *Men Are From Mars* is that many years ago, all men lived on Mars, and all women lived on Venus. Once they got together, they respected and enjoyed their differences—until one day when everybody woke up completely forgetting that they had once come from different planets. And ever since, men mistakenly expect women to think and communicate and react the way men do, and women expect men to think and communicate and react the way women do. These unrealistic expectations cause frustration. But when we understand the God-given differences between male and female, we have more realistic expectations of the other sex, and our frustration level drops.

[Ray] Speaking of which, we do realize that it can be very frustrating for some people when gender differences are painted in such broad strokes, since there's such a large

spectrum of what women are like and what men are like. Both men and women come in different shapes and sizes but by and large, we feel that most will identify with these characteristics.

**[Sue]** With that said, let's look at some of the differences between men and women.

**[Ray]** Men get our sense of self from achievement. We tend to be task-oriented, and being self-reliant is very important to us. You put those two together, and you get people who hate to ask for directions or for help. I'll wander in a store for 15 minutes trying to find something on my own because accomplishing the task of getting a certain item isn't going to be satisfying unless I can do it on my own. For us, asking for help is an admission of failure; we see it as a weakness.

**[Sue]** Women get our sense of self from relationships. Where men are task-oriented, we are relational-oriented. Our connections to other people are the most important thing to us. Instead of prizing self-reliance, we tend to be interdependent, enjoying the connectedness to other people, especially other women. For us, both asking for help and offering it is a compliment; we're saying, "Let me build a bridge between us. I value you, and it'll bind us."

**[Ray]** Men usually focus on a goal. We want to get to the bottom line, to the end of something.

**[Sue]** But women tend to enjoy the process. Not that reaching a goal isn't important, but we like getting there too. That's why driving vacations are so very different for men and women; the guys want to get to their destinations and beat their best time with the fewest stops, and we sort of treasure the time to talk and look and maybe stop at the outlet malls along the way!

## Gender Differences, Continued

**[Sue]** We believe these admittedly broad-brushed differences are rooted in God-created traits. In fact, some Christian authors like Gary Smalley and Stu Weber have addressed them in their books as well.[{2}](#) Ray, why don't you continue with the next point about men—something that's bound to be real surprising?

**[Ray]** Well, yes, men are competitive. Big shock, huh? Whether we're on the basketball court or on the highway, we just naturally want to win, to be out front. Many of us are driven to prove ourselves, to prove that we're competent, and it comes out in a competitive spirit.

**[Sue]** And it's not that girls aren't competitive, because of course we are; it's just that we tend to be more cooperative than competitive. When girls are playing and one gets hurt, the game will often stop and even be forgotten while everyone gathers around and comforts the one who went down. It's that relational part of us coming out.

**[Ray]** Men are often more logical and analytical than women.

**[Sue]** And we tend to be more intuitive than men. This isn't some sort of mystic claim; there was a study at Stanford University that discovered women catch subliminal messages faster and more accurately than men.[{3}](#) Voila—intuition.

**[Ray]** This difference is evident in brain activity. Men's brains tend to show activity in one hemisphere at a time . . .

**[Sue]** . . .Where women's brains will show the two hemispheres communicating with each other, back and forth, constantly. That means that often, men and women can arrive at the exact same conclusion, using completely different means to get there. Our thinking has been accused of being convoluted, but it works!

**[Ray]** Men are linear. We can usually focus on just one thing at a time. That's why you've learned not to try to talk to me while I'm reading the paper. I really struggle to read and listen at the same time.

**[Sue]** Yes, I've learned to get your attention and ask if I can talk to you so it'll be an actual conversation and not a monologue! God made us women to be multi-taskers, able to juggle many things at once. It's a requirement for mothering, I've discovered. Many times I'd be cooking dinner and helping the kids with homework and answering the phone and keeping an ear on the radio, all at the same time.

**[Ray]** Men tend to be compartmentalized, like a chest of drawers: work in one drawer, relationships in another drawer, sports in a third drawer, and so on. All the various parts of our lives can be split off from each other.

**[Sue]** Whereas women are more like a ball of yarn where everything's connected to everything else. That's why a woman can't get romantic when there's some unresolved anger or frustration with her husband, and he doesn't see what the two things have to do with each other.

**[Ray]** One more; men are action-oriented. When we feel hostile, our first instinct is to release it physically. And when we're upset, the way for us to feel better is to actively solve the problem.

**[Sue]** Women are verbal. (Another big surprise, huh?) Our hostility is released with words rather than fists. And when we're upset, the way for us to feel better is by talking about our problem with other people.

## **More Gender Differences**

**[Ray]** When men are under stress, we generally distract ourselves with various activities to relax. That's why you see so many men head for the nearest basketball hoop or bury

themselves in the paper or TV. But there's another aspect of the way we handle severe stress that can be particularly frustrating to women who don't understand the way we are: a man withdraws into his "cave." We need to be apart from everybody else while we figure out our problems alone. Remember, a man is very self-reliant and competitive, and to ask for help is weakness, so he will first want to solve the problem by himself.

**[Sue]** We women handle stress in the exact opposite way, which of course is going to pose major problems until we understand this difference! When we're stressed, we get more involved with other people. We want to talk about what's upsetting us, because we process information and feelings by putting them into words. But merely talking is only half of it; we talk in order to be heard and understood. Having a good listener on the other end is extremely important. No wonder there is such misunderstanding when people are under stress: as a friend of ours put it, "Men head for their cave, and women head for the back door!"

**[Ray]** John Gray gave some great advice when he said that when a man's going into his cave, he can give powerful assurance to the woman in his life by telling her, "I'll be back."

**[Sue]** Works for me! What's next?

**[Ray]** A man's primary need is for respect. There are a lot of elements involved in respect, which he needs both from his peers and from the significant women in his life: trust, acceptance, appreciation, admiration, approval, and encouragement. A man needs to know he's respected. He also needs to be needed. That's why it's so devastating to a man when he loses his job. He gets his sense of self from achievement, and he needs to be needed, so when the means to achieve and provide for his family is taken away, it's emotionally catastrophic.



**[Sue]** It's good for us women to know that, so we can be grace-givers in a time of awful trauma. I think that just as a man is devastated by the loss of his job, a woman is devastated by the loss of a close relationship; both losses reflect the God-given differences between us. Just as a man needs to be respected, we primarily need to be cherished. Cherishing means giving tender care, understanding, respect, devotion, validation, and reassurance. We need to know others think we're special. And just as a man needs to be needed, we need to be protected. That's why security is so important to us. A man needs to be able to provide, and a woman needs to feel provided for.

**[Ray]** One final difference. For men, words are simply for conveying facts and information.

**[Sue]** But for women, words mean much more. Not just to convey information, but to explore and discover our thoughts and feelings, to help us feel better when we're upset, and it's the only way we have to create intimacy. To a woman, words are like breathing!

## **Women's Needs and Issues**

**[Ray]** We have been examining how God created men and women to be different. So it's not surprising to find how many of our uniquenesses and needs are addressed by God's commands and precepts in the Bible.

**[Sue]** In this section we'll consider women's needs and issues, and look at how God's commands fit perfectly with the observations we've made. In the next section, we'll look at men's needs.

As I said above, our primary need as women is to be cherished—to be shown TLC, understanding, respect, devotion, validation, and reassurance.

**[Ray]** And in Ephesians 5:25, we read God's command that

addresses this need: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her." When we think about the way Christ loves the church, we see a sacrificial love, a tender love, and a love that is committed to acting in the church's best interests at our Savior's own expense. God doesn't just want men to love their wives like they love sports—He wants us to love our wives in a way that makes them feel cherished and very special. He wants us to love our wives with a sacrificial love that puts her needs and desires above our own.

1 Peter 3:7 gives further instruction along this line: "You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way." The Greek literally reads, "Dwell with them according to knowledge." The only way to live with your wife in an understanding way is to seek to know her. And when a husband listens and responds to what his wife shares—remembering that women are created to be verbal—she will feel cherished and understood and loved.

The last part of 1 Peter 3:7 continues, "live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman." This isn't a slam on women. When we read this verse, we ought to think along the lines of a fine china cup. It's definitely weaker than a tin cup, but that's because it's so fragile, delicate, and far more valuable. When we serve dinner on our china, we're very careful in handling it, and extremely protective of washing and drying it. We treat our china with tenderness and gentleness because of its fragility and value. That's how we cherish it. And that's how a man is to treat his wife—not roughly or carelessly, but with tenderness and gentleness, because God made women to be treated with special care.

**[Sue]** The flip side of needing to be cherished is our need for security. We need to be protected and provided for. Even when a wife works, she wants to know that her husband is the main provider, or at least truly wants to be and is working to that

end. The burden of being forced to provide for our families is bigger than we should have to bear.

**[Ray]** God created that need for security within women. That's why He puts such a high value on the provisional aspect of a man's character. 1 Timothy 5:8 says, "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." God wants us men to be diligent workers and providers. He created us to bear the burden of providing; women are to be protected from that burden whenever possible.

## **Men's Needs and Issues**

**[Ray]** Men's primary need is for respect and support—to receive trust, acceptance, appreciation, admiration, approval and encouragement.

**[Sue]** I think God intends for wives to meet that need by submitting to our husbands, as we are commanded to do in Ephesians 5:22 and 1 Peter 3:1. Submission doesn't mean giving in or being an overworked doormat; it's a gift of our will. It means submitting to God first, then demonstrating that submission by choosing to serve and respect and be our husband's Number One supporter. Even when a man is more of a jerk than a Superman, he needs the respect of his wife, even if she has to ask the Lord for His perspective on what areas of his life are worthy of respect!

It's interesting to me that in Ephesians 5, at the beginning of the passage on marriage, Paul exhorts women to submit to their husbands as unto the Lord, and then closes this section by saying, "And let the wife see to it that she respect her husband." (v. 33) Submission and respect aren't the same thing, but they're both necessary to meet a man's God-given needs. In the middle of this "marriage sandwich," so to speak, is the awesome command to men to love their wives sacrificially and tenderly, as Christ loves the church. What I see is that

submission and respect is a natural response to that kind of love.

**[Ray]** Another aspect of men's constitution is that we're action-oriented, whereas women are verbal.

**[Sue]** Yes, and that's why I'm very intrigued by the wisdom of Peter's admonishment to women, where he says,

*You wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. (1 Peter 3:1-2)*

To men, words are cheap—and if they're coming from a woman, all too plentiful! What impresses a man is what a person does, not what they say. So here the Holy Spirit inspired Peter to basically tell us to shut up and live holy lives, which is the only language that's going to have a true impact on a man.

**[Ray]** Another characteristic of men is that we tend to be self-oriented, as opposed to women who are more relational.

**[Sue]** It's interesting to me that Paul exhorts men to love their wives as they love themselves and their own bodies (Ephesians 5:28,33). And he does this without condemning them for that self-orientation; he just uses it as a point of reference to demonstrate how powerfully men are to love their wives. From what I've observed at the health club about the way some men love their bodies, God wants men to indulge their wives with some major pampering!

**[Ray]** One last comment. While men and women may be constitutionally different by design, we do share one important and serious flaw: our sin nature. Both genders are prideful and selfish. And that is one reason we find commands to both men and women to serve the other sex. But in the midst of our service, we can certainly enjoy the differences God

planted!

## **Notes**

1. Gray, John. *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992.

2. Smalley, Gary. *Hidden Keys to a Loving Lasting Marriage*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1984. Weber, Stu. *Tender Warrior*. Sisters, Ore.:Multnomah Books, 1993.

3. Smalley, *Hidden Keys*, p. 17.

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