

Men Wanted

TEXT: Ezekiel 22:30.

In our previous lesson, we briefly introduced some of the challenges of the home in general. In this lesson, we will discuss the responsibilities of husbands and fathers in particular; in the next, we will talk about wives and mothers.

Long ago, God said, “And I searched for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one” (Ezekiel 22:30). The children of Israel had greatly sinned, and destruction was imminent. God said that He sought a man to raise the wall, to bridge the gap, but such a man was not to be found.¹

One of the greatest needs of any society is the right kind of men—godly men, devoted men, courageous men, men who will step out and take the lead—but often such men cannot be found. “I searched for a man . . . ; but I found no one.”

In days past, I have worked with congregations where it sometimes seemed that we emphasized everyone and everything except the men. We had special programs for the women: They did most of the visiting; they took care of the sick; they had special classes on how to be better wives and mothers. We were concerned about our young people and made special provisions for them, saying, “They are the leaders of tomorrow.” That is true and good—but what about the leaders of today, the men? Until the

men in a congregation are fired up and working for the Lord, any program of work that congregation undertakes will be crippled.

What kind of men do we need in society, in the church, and in our homes?

WANTED: MEN WHO ARE CHRISTIANS—REAL CHRISTIANS

First, we need men who are Christians—real Christians. Someone has facetiously said that there will be no marrying or giving in marriage in heaven (Matthew 22:30) because there will not be enough men to go around. Of course, that is not the reason, but I know what he meant. I have known too many husbands who seemed to think that the words of a grand old song are “Take my *wife*, and let *her* be consecrated, Lord, to Thee.”² A preacher whom I know suggested that the church has too many “brothers-in-law.” That was his ironic way of referring to husbands whose wives were Christians although they were not.

If you are a man and not a Christian, I encourage you with all of my being to become one. I encourage you to do that, first of all, so that your own soul will be saved. You cannot be saved on the basis of someone else’s righteousness. Paul stressed that “each one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Romans 14:12).

An imaginary story is told of a man, not a

¹A similar passage is found in Jeremiah 5:1.

²The song actually says, “Take my *life*, and let *it* be. . . .” Frances M. Havergal, “Take My Life, and Let It Be.”

Christian, who had a dream. In the dream, he died and went to the gate of heaven. When he tried to enter, the gatekeeper asked, "Who are you?" "I'm sure you know my wife," the man said. He gave her name and began to tell the gatekeeper how his wife had attended church, studied, prayed, worked, and helped others. He told what a fine Christian she was. "But you can't enter heaven because your wife was a good Christian," the gatekeeper said. The man protested, "But my wife lived the Christian life for me and went to church for me." "Very well," said the gatekeeper, "now she has gone to heaven for you." You must become a Christian yourself in order for your soul to be saved.

If you are a father, you also ought to become a Christian in order to help save the souls of those in your family. Whether or not you realize it, you have tremendous influence as a father—either for good or for bad. You may not actively oppose your wife or deliberately thwart her efforts when she tries to do right; but by simple neglect, you can undo the positive influence she would otherwise have on your children. The influence which men have is emphasized throughout the Bible, in passages such as 2 Timothy 2:2, where Paul told Timothy, "And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful *men*, who will be able to teach others also." (Emphasis mine.)

Because I am concerned about you and your family, I want to speak as plainly as I can: Without Christ, you can never be the man you should be. You can never be the husband you should be. You can never be the father you should be. You can never be the right kind of influence.

Once Plato³ was asked, "What is man?" He replied, "A two-legged animal without feathers."⁴ Can you be distinguished from the animals only by the fact that they have four legs and you have two? Are you different from the birds only because they have feathers and you do not? Certainly not! Rather, you are higher than the animals because God gave you an immortal soul (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Realizing this, are you *living* as though your soul will someday

face God in judgment (Revelation 20:11–15)? You can never be all that a man should be until you are a Christian man.

WANTED: MEN WHO ARE FATHERS—REAL FATHERS

Second, we need men who are fathers, real fathers. Someone may protest, "But I *am* a father." I am using the word with all of its biblical implications. Just having a child in your household no more makes you a true father than having a book in your house makes you an author.

The Bible places a heavy responsibility on those who would be fathers: "And, *fathers*, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4; emphasis mine). Many believe that the mother is responsible for taking the lead in teaching the children what is right, but that is not so. It is the father's job. The father, first and foremost, will be held accountable for how his children are reared.

God said of Abraham, "For I have chosen him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice" (Genesis 18:19a). God had confidence in Abraham to be the spiritual leader in his home. Can God have the same confidence in you?

In his great farewell speech to the Israelites, Joshua said,

And if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me *and my house, we will serve the Lord* (Joshua 24:15; emphasis mine).

Joshua was able to speak for his entire household. Why? Because he was willing to fulfill his responsibilities as a father.

To be that kind of father takes time. From the time my first daughter was born, one of my primary aims was to take whatever time was necessary to rear my children to be faithful Christians. I had seen too many preachers who were so busy helping others that they neglected their families and thus lost one or more of their children from the Lord. Looking back, I can tell you that fatherhood is not easy. Any father must struggle to find the time (or make the time) to be

³Plato was an ancient Greek philosopher.

⁴Plato, quoted in Herbert V. Prochnow and Herbert V. Prochnow, Jr., *A Dictionary of Wit, Wisdom, and Satire* (New York: Popular Library, 1962), 172.

with his children. That time is essential.

I understand that you are busy. You may sometimes be overwhelmed by all the responsibilities that life has piled upon you, but do not sacrifice your children on the altar of success and accomplishment. Judas sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver. When he realized what he had done, “he went away and hanged himself” (Matthew 27:5b). Today, many fathers are selling their children for a bigger house, a better car, a more influential position.⁵ How will they feel when they finally realize what they have done? To adapt familiar words from Jesus, “For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his child? Or what will a man give in exchange for his children?” (See Matthew 16:26.)

WANTED: MEN WHO ARE LEADERS—REAL LEADERS

Third, we need men who are leaders—real leaders. By this, I do not necessarily mean public leaders. Rather, we need men who are willing to take the lead in spiritual matters, whether public or private.

God has ordained that men should take the lead. The Holy Spirit gave specific qualifications for elders, or bishops; and those qualifications limit them to men (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6). When the New Testament speaks of the public services of the church, women are told to “keep silent” (1 Corinthians 14:34) and not to “exercise authority over a man” (1 Timothy 2:12).

When we think of great figures of the Bible, our minds often go to outstanding men. Noah exemplifies courage and obedience. Abraham is a great example of faith. Job is held up as an example of patience. Joseph provides an example of a pure life. Caleb’s optimism would be hard to exceed. David teaches us about trusting in God. After the resurrection of Jesus, Peter provided dynamic leadership. For hard work, who could improve on the example of Paul?

Do not misunderstand me: I am not saying that no great women are mentioned in the Bible. Some, perhaps, even surpassed the masculine

⁵Some parents rationalize and say, “Oh, I’m not working all hours of the day and night for those reasons. I’m doing this *so my children will have a better life than I had.*” The end result is the same: They are neglecting their children.

examples I have cited. What I am saying is that, as a rule, God chose men to take the lead. God wants men to blaze the trails of service and usefulness; God wants men to see what should be done and see that it gets done.

In giving his reasons for wives to be subject to their husbands, Paul said, “For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve” (1 Timothy 2:13). He also wrote that “man was not created for the woman’s sake, but woman for the man’s sake” (1 Corinthians 11:9).

The Bible teaches that, scripturally and naturally, the man should take the lead; his failure to do so would be wrong, unscriptural, and unnatural. I do not know why that is God’s arrangement. I have wondered if God gave this instruction because man’s nature is to “let someone else do it.” (I have noticed that in service organizations where both men and women are members, the men are often willing to let the women take the lead—and do most of the work.) Whatever God’s reasons, the Bible is clear that men should be the spiritual leaders—in the church and in their homes.

How often men fail in this regard!⁶ Consider the matter of attendance: I have seen men drive up to the church building and let their wives and children out of the car before they drove home to spend another godless Sunday.

This headline appeared in a newspaper in Corpus Christi, Texas: “Mother in Church, Father Dozes, Child Dies.” The story related the death of a small child who was left at home with the father while the mother attended church services. Instead of watching the child, the father fell asleep, and the toddler walked into a small body of water and drowned. An even greater tragedy is that, on a spiritual level, this story is repeated in thousands of homes each Sunday morning. While the mother is in church, the father is dozing, and the children are dying spiritually—because the mother cannot train them alone.

Consider the matter of home teaching and training. We have already noted that the Bible places this responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the father (Ephesians 6:4). In spite of this,

⁶The examples I give are ways that men sometimes fail to take the leadership in my part of the world. You should give examples that are typical in your part of the world.

some children have never heard their names on the lips of their fathers in prayer.

What about working for the Lord? Women shoulder a multitude of responsibilities. In some congregations, if the women did not visit, did not help others, did not try to reach the lost, those necessary tasks would simply not be done.

I have male friends who were upset about the “women’s liberation movement.” They complained about “women taking over.” At the same time, as far as anyone could see, they never took the lead in anything. Yes, some men would like for all women to do exactly as they say, but they have never accepted the God-given responsibility that goes with being a man.

A thought-provoking article entitled “Why Rome Fell” appeared in the *Oklahoman and Times* newspaper in Oklahoma City some time ago. Here is a portion of the article:⁷

Dr. Maurice E. Linden, prominent Philadelphia psychiatrist, has called for “restoration of male leadership to the male” in America.

He told a news conference that America, like ancient Rome, is undergoing “a hedonistic yielding to prosperity.”

Roman prosperity led to a change in the role of women, he said. They became powerful and aggressive at the expense of men. . . . He called this the beginning of the fall of the Roman empire.

I suspect that Dr. Linden was right. Too many of us want the privileges of being men without accepting the responsibilities. May God help every father to take his rightful place as the leader in the spiritual growth of his family.

CONCLUSION

We have not exhausted the list of qualities needed by men of God. Someone compiled this list of “The Ten Most Wanted Men”:⁸

1. The man who puts God’s business above any other business.

⁷As a rule, we try to avoid distinctly American illustrations in *Truth for Today*. My impression, however, is that the lack of male leadership is not limited to the U.S. The statements made in the newspaper article can be applied to many other societies around the world.

⁸The title of this listing is derived from the fact that law enforcement agencies sometimes release a list of the “Ten Most Wanted” criminals. This spiritual “Ten Most Wanted” list was printed in church bulletins years ago, under “anonymous” authorship.

2. The man who brings his children to services, rather than sending them.

3. The man who is willing to be the right kind of example to everyone he meets.

4. The man who thinks more of his Bible class than he does of his Sunday morning sleep.

5. The man who measures his giving by how he is prospered rather than by whatever he has in his pocket.

6. The man who goes to worship services for Christ’s sake, rather than for himself or anyone else.

7. The man who has a passion to help rather than to be helped.

8. The man who sees his own faults before he sees the faults of others.

9. The man who has a willing mind rather than a brilliant mind.

10. The man who is more concerned about winning souls for Christ than he is about worldly honor.

The challenge I am presenting is “Let us be *men*.” When David was giving his final admonitions to Solomon, his son, he said, “Be strong, therefore, and *show yourself a man*” (1 Kings 2:2b; emphasis mine). First Corinthians 16:13 gives this exhortation: “Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, *act like men*, be strong.” (Emphasis mine.)

May God help us as men to behave as men—to take the lead in becoming Christians. Let us take the lead in drawing our households closer to the Lord. Let us take the lead in all that is good and right.⁹

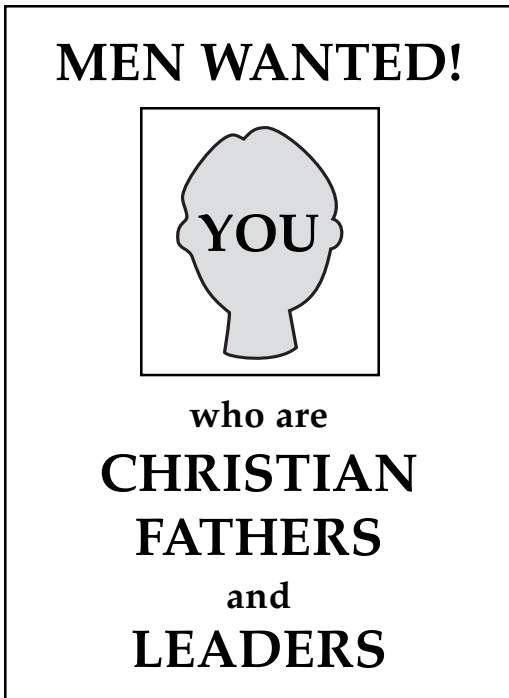
NOTES FOR PREACHERS AND TEACHERS

If you like to use visual aids, here is an idea. Make a “wanted poster” similar to the one shown on page 5. Lightly tape strips of paper over the words “Christian,” “Fathers,” and “Leaders.” Tape a sheet of paper with a large question mark on it over the “You” section at the top.

As you present the lesson, pull off in order the strips of paper from the words “Christian,”

⁹If you close your sermon with an invitation to be baptized or to be restored to faithful Christian service, first encourage all men present to respond to the Lord in whatever way they need to. Then expand your invitation to include everyone who is present.

“Fathers,” and “Leaders.” At the close, pull off the sheet of paper with the question mark and stress that “We want *you* to be a Christian father and leader.”



This idea can also be used with an overhead projector.

“God, Give Us Men!”

God, give us men! A time like this demands
Strong minds, great hearts, true faith and ready
hands;

Men whom the lust of office does not kill;
Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy;
Men who possess opinions and a will;
Men who have honor; men who will not lie;
Men who can stand before a demagogue
And condemn his treacherous flatteries
without winking!

Tall men, sun-crowned, who live above the fog
In public duty and in private thinking;
For while the rabble, with their thumb-worn
creeds,

Their large professions and their little deeds,
Mingle in selfish strife, lo! Freedom weeps,
Wrong rules the land and waiting Justice
sleeps.¹⁰

Josiah Holland wrote those words near the end of the nineteenth century . . . on the heels of

¹⁰Josiah Gilbert Holland, “God, Give Us Men!” *The Best Loved Poems of the American People* (Garden City, N.Y.: Garden City Books, 1936), 132.

a tragic civil war. It was a dark, dreadful hour. During that time there was a desperate need for such men in the city, in the state, in the nation, and in the churches.

The same need exists today. Perhaps you have prayed in your own way, “God, give us men . . . godly men . . . gracious men of conviction . . . men of integrity.”

Adapted from *You and Your Child*
Charles Swindoll

A Call for Men

In the *London Times* back in 1920, the following notice appeared in a small square:

Men Wanted

For hazardous journey. Small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful. Honor and recognition in case of success.

Sir Ernest Shackleton

There were no added inducements, just the signature of a famous Antarctic explorer. From all over England, answers and offers poured in.

Today Jesus is calling for men and women who are willing to make any sacrifice necessary. “Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me’” (Matthew 16:24).

From “The Geraldine Voice,” weekly bulletin of the 25th and Geraldine church in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Men Included

A news item in the *Houston Post* told of a young man thirty-eight years old who died, leaving a wife and four children. What made this item newsworthy was that the young father and husband died of polio, a disease which could have been prevented if he had heeded the warning of medical authorities. His love for his family caused him to insist upon their taking the polio vaccine, but he did not think it necessary for himself. He thought it was only for women and children.

As great as that tragedy was, the greater tragedy is the man who thinks that religion is only for women and children.

From the weekly bulletin of the church in Yukon, Oklahoma