

A Real Man

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A REAL MAN

Some thoughts to consider about manhood
Dr. Denis V Smith



WHAT IS A “REAL MAN?”

Around the beginning of the 1980s a book was released onto the market which received unusually good headlines. I do not recall the author, but do remember him being interviewed on a current affairs program on television.

The title captured my imagination, and I am sure, made a fortune for the author.

The book was “Real Men Don’t Eat Quiche!” Do you remember it?

It became a slogan for people wanting to pull a person down a peg or two –

“You can easily see he eats quiche!”

“Can I pass you a piece of quiche?”

“Real men eat steak – don’t offer me quiche!”

And so the phrase continued to be used. An American Grid Iron player, Reggie Jackson ran onto the football field to play. A large banner was unfurled in the stands – “Reggie eats quiche!” I don’t remember Reggie Jackson, but I can figure out what his opposition was saying!

However, when I see the size of some of the Grid Iron Tackles – I remember one called “The Refrigerator” – I don’t think I’d like to take my banner down for their autograph!

“Real men don’t eat quiche?”

I’m not so much interested in what they do or do not eat – I’d like to know, what a real man is.

I give credit to Dr. Stuart Briscoe for firing my imagination about this message. I have preached about the subject of my message many times over the years, but never in the context of how I came to view him in the light of the question that Dr. Briscoe asked, concerning a real man.

It’s important for women to know the answer. When they are looking for “Mr Right,” or have found and married “Mr. Right,” who turned out to be “Mr. Not So Right and he’d better shape up soon or else!” Then this message will take on new importance to the ladies in the audience.

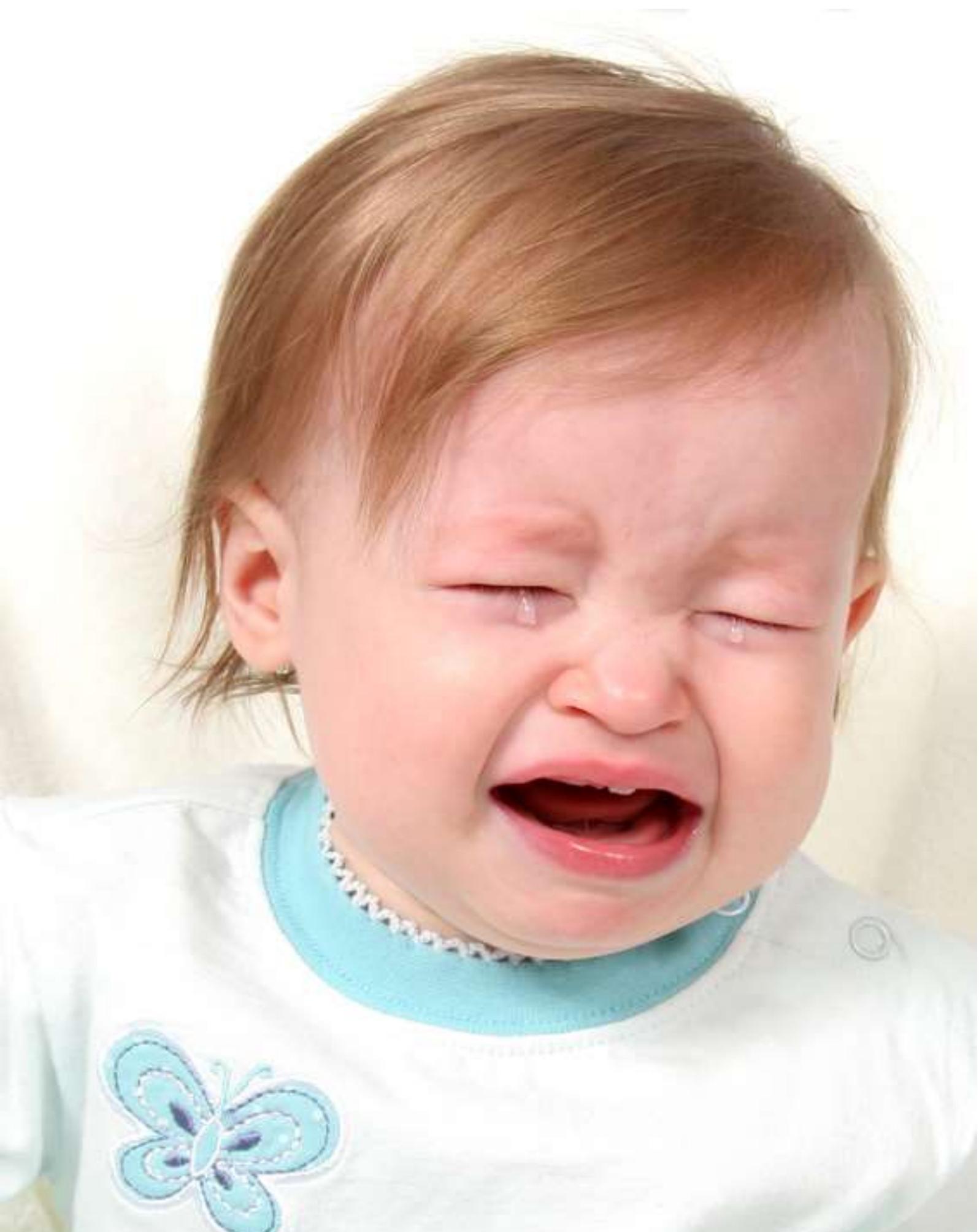
Alternatively, if men are having problems with their self-image and are tired of getting sand kicked in their face on the beach or wearing “Abba” clothes to the wrong venue – they should listen too. “What are real men?” “What is a real man?” “What do real men eat?”

How does society today appraise or assess the qualities of a “real man?” What are the standards?

Although men probably are outnumbered by women in world population, it is definitely a man-oriented world – there’s no two ways about that.

There are a few women called “Dulcie, Jana and Ita” around who make an impact on prime time television and an occasional woman who makes it into the limelight of politics and the theatre – and they are good – I don’t deny that – but by and large, it’s men who monopolise the prime positions of industry and commerce. However, it’s good to see there are changes as women assume greater roles of leadership and influence.

I have heard mothers say to their sobbing children after some misadventure, “Stop crying, men don’t cry!”



And how many of us have been subconsciously brainwashed over the years until we reach manhood and would rather bite a hole in our bottom lip than shed a tear because “men don’t cry?” Who gave this prerogative to women only?

When I was a youngster in Sydney, living near Balmain territory, the slogan came out – “Balmain boys don’t cry!” It’s still around and has become so confusing. Years ago, I read a report of how women can control their husbands – “Cry when you’ve got nothing left to do and every other argument has failed!”

Hold on now – who set that standard?

Many a man would have been better off to burst into tears and release his pent-up emotions, rather than “steel” it out with a stiff upper lip! And on the other hand, tears have been used as emotional manipulation to the point of the destruction of a real communication.

In a book written a number of years ago, called “The 49 percent Majority: The Male Sex Role,” the authors Deborah S. David and Robert Brannon pointed out four themes which seem to define the common conception of masculinity.

Their summary goes like this –

- No Sissy Stuff!
- The Big Wheel!
- The Sturdy Oak!
- Give `Em Hell!

NO SISSY STUFF!

This measure of a man decries a real man doing anything feminine. No female things like cooking, sewing or ironing. No knitting or cross-stitch – unless you happen to be Hulk Hogan or Andre the Giant and then you can do what you like – who’s going to stand in your way?

Essentially, this says – Real men don’t do feminine things – no sissy stuff! This was around when I was a kid – real men never stood for any girl nonsense – girls were “yuck!” [Mind you, that did change.] Who’d want to play dolls and go to tea parties?

Real men play football, tennis and cricket. Not badminton and net ball.



I can remember times when I got hurt on the football field after three guys had tackled me – winded – gasping for breath – wishing the full time whistle would sound so I could find a corner to cry in, and saying to the coach – “I’m fine – real men can take it!”

I wasn’t going to be called “Sissy Smithy!” Sensible, savage, sturdy, strong and stupendous – but not sissy!

THE BIG WHEEL!

This implied that “real men” had to be in control. A man who was a legend in his own bathroom!

The big wheel was always rolling around, independent of anyone else’s opinions.

The “success syndrome” of today’s society tends to promote this.

You’re not really all there unless you can take a can of *Solo* and slap it down in one gulp with fizz running down your face.

Man, you’re in control. So what if you’ve fallen from a rope fifteen metres in the air and skinned your shins on the rocks in the water and winded yourself on a submerged log? As long as you look as if you are in control and a big wheel rolling somewhere – that’s a “real man!”

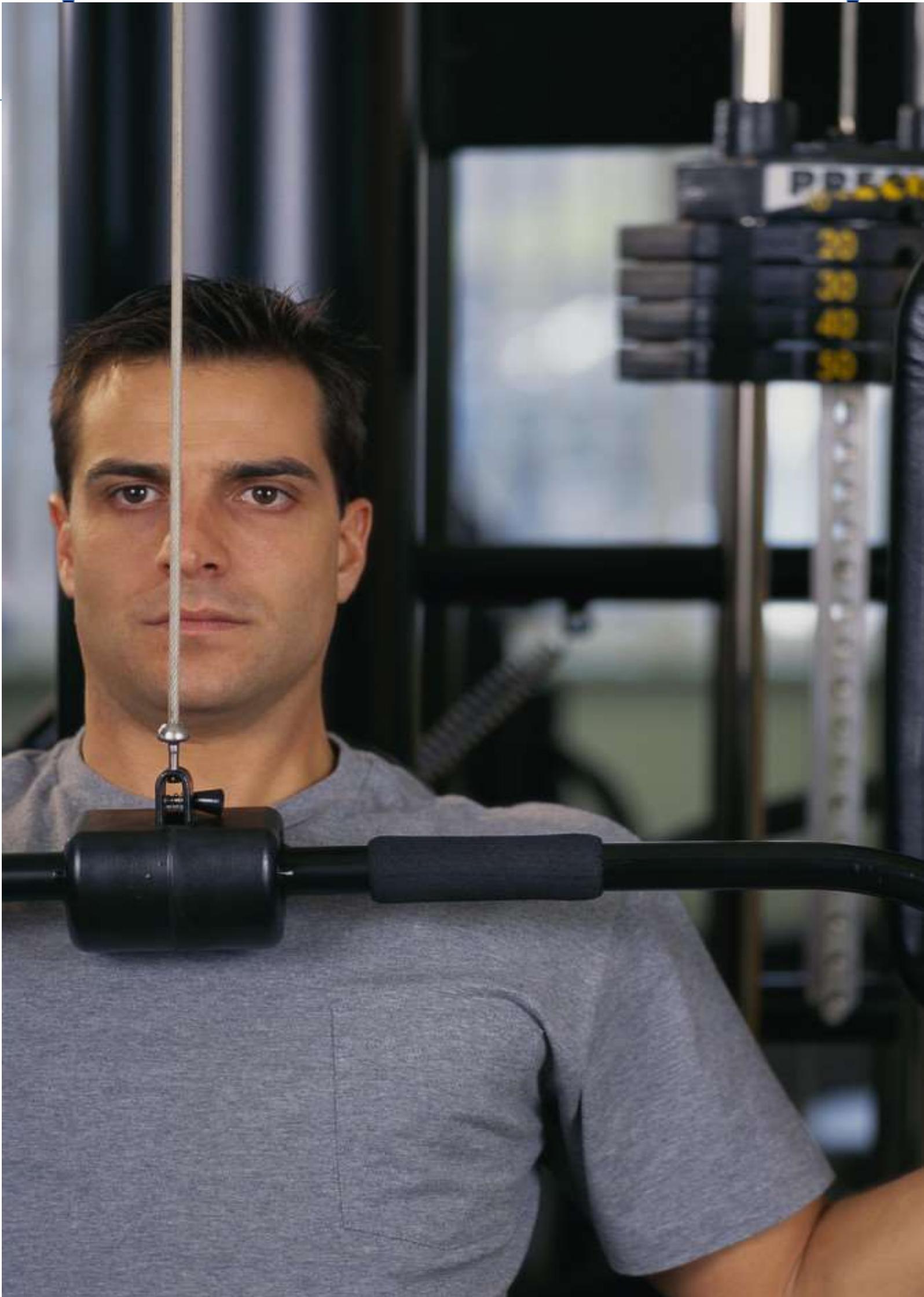
I don’t know why any woman would find a guy who can’t drink from a can of *Solo* without getting it all over his face and shirt worth a second look. And to be attracted to a guy who has to keep his trousers on ice in a Coke Machine – I wonder sometimes?

And remember the yuppie that lets down tyres and then showers in “Big M” – all to prove he’s a big wheel?

Ladies, big wheels only roll away quicker when the going gets tough!

THE STURDY OAK!

This is similar to the Big Wheel type in that it portrays a man who has to be tough, self-reliant and able to stand up to any opposition without a whimper!



He's the guy who pulls trucks back from going over cliffs after the girls leave the hand brake off, sees the truck roll back, so destroys the kid's swing to make a rope and leaves the girl hanging by her makeup.

He's the muscle bound maniac who tramps around the squared circle with a 4 by 2 length of timber over his shoulder and yelling from the top of the ropes to the crowd.

He's otherwise portrayed as the strong, silent genius who has an answer for any question that can be asked on any subject.

He's never moved at supermarket openings while his wife dissolves in tears with the emotion of the moment.

He will never give in under any circumstances to anybody – he just stands there – singing "We shall not be moved!" Immoveable in the midst of calamity!

GIVE 'EM HELL!

I apologise for the language – it's not originally mine – but this man is pictured as aggressive, daring and even violent at times.

He is Rambo in full flight; Matt Dillon with a shotgun in each hand; or Clint Eastwood who stands there with his steely eyed looks, grinding out his trademark words – "Go ahead, make my day!"

He is highly competitive and makes things happen even when there's no need for anything to happen!

So, if we have to describe a "real" man by these standards we will finish up with –

"A blue eyed blonde who can wear frozen jeans and fall off ropes to rescue a can of Solo; who when at the office keeps his staff under pressure [But we don't wilt under pressure because we use Reflex copy paper] as he runs in and out of the office letting down tyres on Holden cars and in his spare time knits football jumpers using crow bars as knitting needles and steel rope as wool declaring "I'm no sissy, man, and if you disagree with me, I'll put a hole through you with my magnum – go ahead make my day!"

Is that the "real man?"

If it is then we are in trouble in society because men:

- Still die at a younger age than women;
- Commit 90% of all major crime;
- Are responsible for 99.9% of all rape;
- And carry out 95% of all burglaries.
- 94% of all drunk drivers are men;
- Commit 70% of all suicides and
- Carry out 91% of all offenses against the family.

What can we conclude from this?

That the No Sissy Stuff; The Big Wheel; The Sturdy Oak and the Give 'Em Hell syndromes are not the "standards" to measure "real men!"

Society's standards on men are wrong and quite frankly, if men were honest enough for a minute of time, they would tell women that they don't want to be those things anyway – it's hot behind the mask some men have to wear.

And it's time we threw away our masks and started to relate to the real world with some real commitment and enjoy real relationships with real success.

It's time we were honest with ourselves and to those of the opposite sex as well as our own gender!

Then where do I go to find out some valid definition of a "real man?" I'm convinced this world has only ever seen one "real man" and his name was Jesus Christ.

But before you get too excited and tell me that you could never measure up to His standard – I agree!

He's not the one I want to talk about. After all, He was the God-man and sinless. I am not like that and far from being sinless.

But I do want to quote Him – because He took a look at the people before Him 2000 years ago and it His statement as recorded by a Doctor, who was accurate with the facts that I want to quote.

From among all the men He could see at the time, or had ever placed the spirit of life within their breasts as they drew their first breath of earth's air, He chose one man and said of him in Luke 7:28:

“In all humanity there is no one greater than John. And yet the least citizen in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”

He referred to the one whom we know as John the Baptist – a rugged and daring individual who graced our world some 2000 years ago – and whose story we have recorded for us in the Word of God.

Of this man Jesus said, “I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John.”

Jesus is saying, “Hey, if you want to see a real man – take a good long hard look at John – in all humanity there is no one greater than John!”

In 2010, some relics found in a small marble sarcophagus on a Bulgarian island called Sveti Ivan, [which translates as Saint John], also included a human tooth, part of a skull and three animal bones.

A research team from Oxford University dated the right-handed knuckle bone to the first century AD, when John is believed to have lived until his beheading ordered by king Herod.

Scientists from the University of Copenhagen analysed the DNA of the bones, finding they came from a single individual, probably a man, from a family in the modern-day Middle East, where John would have lived.

While these findings do not definitively prove anything, they also don't refute the theory first proffered by the Bulgarian archaeologists who found the remains while excavating under an ancient church on the island.

Many sites around the world claim to hold relics of the saint, including the Grand Mosque in Damascus which says it has his head.

The right hand with which the prophet allegedly baptised Jesus in the River Jordan is also claimed to be held by several entities, including a Serbian Orthodox monastery in Montenegro.

“The result from the metacarpal hand bone is clearly consistent with someone who lived in the early first century AD,” Oxford University professor Tom Higham said of the new study.

“Whether that person is John the Baptist is a question that we cannot yet definitely answer and probably never will.”

Bulgarian archaeologists had found a small box made of hardened volcanic ash close to the sarcophagus. The box bears inscriptions in ancient Greek that referred to John the Baptist and the date that Christians celebrate his birth, June 24.

The findings of another Oxford researcher, using historical documents, suggest that the monastery of Sveti Ivan may have received a portion of John the Baptist's relics in the fifth or early sixth centuries.

It's speculative, but interesting anyway.

But let us return to what we know from God's Word.



John had six characteristics which qualified him as a real man.

SINCERITY

When John spoke, people listened! They crowded the banks of the Jordan River and hung on every word he said. His strong and robust voice echoed around the Judean hills.

Thousands knew that John practiced what he preached – he was sincere!

Even Herod, who imprisoned him and was eventually responsible for his death, sent for him while he was in prison. Now Herod didn't take much notice of John's teachings – there is no record that he was baptised in Jordan repenting of his sins – but he was intrigued by this certain quality in John's life – John was a man of integrity!

No one could point the finger of accusation at John and make the case stick. If they could, it would have been recorded in the book that does not gloss over man's frailties.

They couldn't make an accusation stand because everyone knew John was no hypocrite. That's a quality of a "real man."

This world needs men of integrity, honesty and sincerity today.

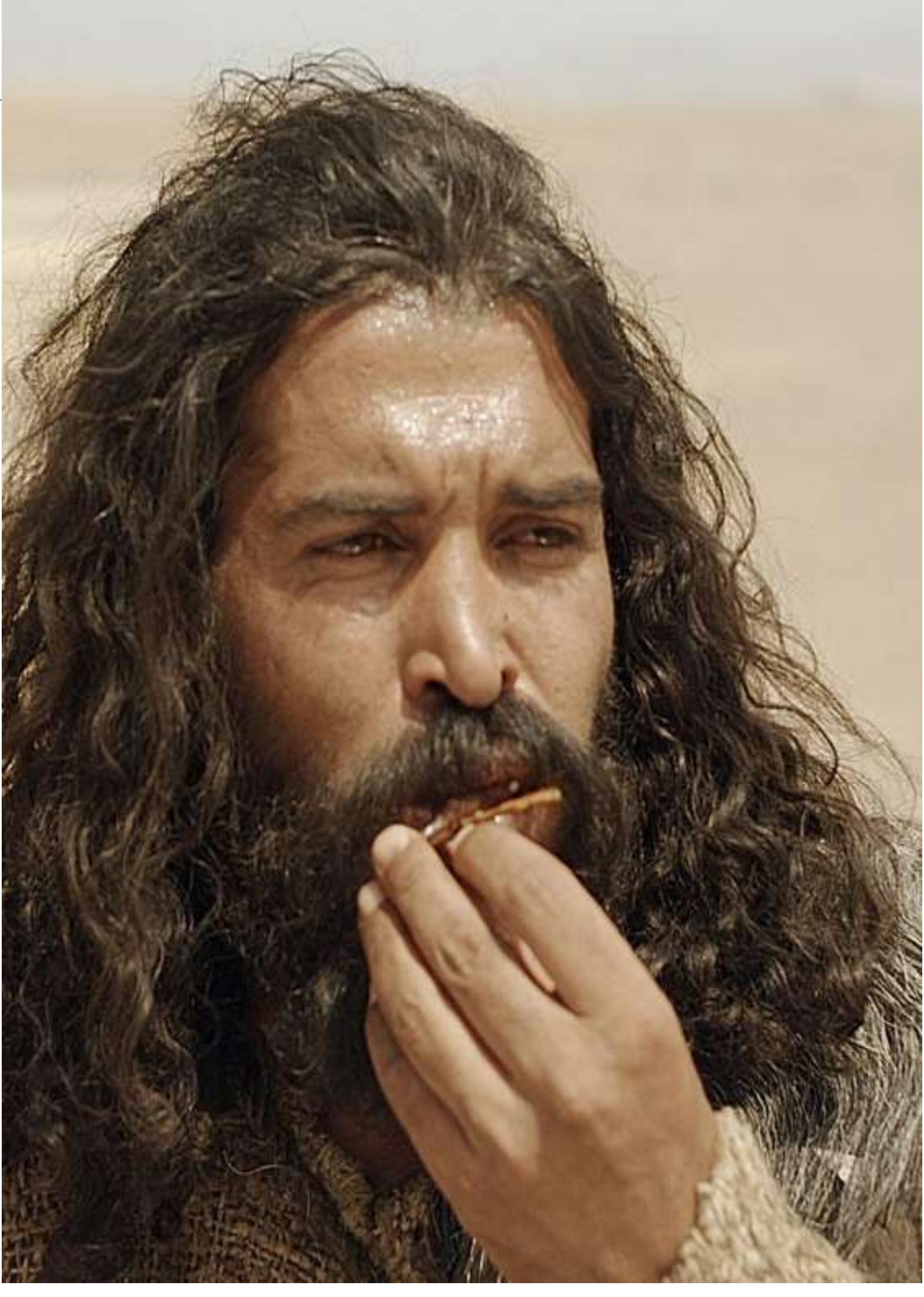
Too many men wear their hypocritical masks and cover up their failings with pathetic platitudes and promises.

Wake up men – what people want to see in us is

- integrity,
- character
- decency
- dignity
- respectability

And ladies, don't take anything less or it will haunt you all your days!

That's the quality of a "real" man!



SIMPLICITY

Now, John is described as a man who wore a cloak of camel's hair, held together by a leather belt and ate locusts and wild honey. [Mark 1:6]

I do not suggest that we revert to the so called "cave man days" and start wearing camel skins, eating grasshoppers and robbing beehives of their honey.

What was true of John was the simplicity of his lifestyle.

He was not madly materialistic. I also realise this was part of his calling and that "real men" know how to provide for their families.

What I am saying is this – his simplicity of life was reflected in the things which were important to him –

- Prayer
- Fasting
- Fulfilling the will of God for his life!

John knew his commission. He proclaimed the kingdom of God was at hand and warned people not to waste their time on anything else until they had prepared themselves for it.

He knew his place. He was prepared to decrease that Christ might increase! He was working himself out of a job – that was his commission and he stuck with it. Sure he had his doubts, but more of that later.

John understood the supreme importance of the kingdom of God. He was in the world but he was not of the world – he was non-complicated about the issues.

He figured if he sought first the kingdom of God and the standards God had for that kingdom, God could take care of the rest.

If his lot was to travel on "shank's pony" and let the limousines of this world pass him by in their dust clouds – well, glory to God! He was simple enough to do the will of God – and that's what he told people to do.

His message was summarised like this – repent and get ready for the King. Change your ways – and know that:

“Converted people were expected to demonstrate change in their lives by a completely different attitude toward God and life itself.”

“Real men” have a simple outlook on life.

They know their priorities.

- God first
- Others second
- Themselves last!

That was John’s simplicity!



CONVICTION

John had a strong sense of conviction in what he believed. This conviction showed up in how he fulfilled his destiny.

There was a reality about his identity – People called him by what he did for God.

Before him had been Joseph the Carpenter and after him would be Peter the fisherman.

But he was known by the name – John the Baptist – John the Baptist.

“Real men” are known by the reality of their lifestyle. It’s good to identify people by the reality of what they are – not just what they say!

I look at a number of my close friends –

One I describe as a “Barnabus” – a real peace maker.

Another is a man of “evangelism” – a passion for souls.

It’s the heart attitude that makes the lifestyle a reality.

What a man really believes in his heart makes his character a reality!

John had real convictions about what he believed and thundered out those convictions to any hypocrites standing among his listeners.

There was no pussyfooting with John. He called a “spade a spade” and expected honesty and reality in the response of people to that message. It is recorded in Matthew 2:5–8

“People from Jerusalem and from all over Jordan valley, and, in fact, from every section of Judea, went out to the wilderness to hear him preach, and when they confessed their sins, he baptised them in the Jordan River. But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to be baptized, he denounced them,

“You sons of snakes!” he warned. “Who said that you could escape the coming wrath of God? Before being baptised, prove that you have turned away from sin by doing worthy deeds.”

“Real men” are not hypocrites!

There is an outstanding portion of John’s statement that every woman [and man] should memorize.

“Prove that you have turned away from sin by doing worthy deeds.”

Unmarried ladies, don’t get caught up with those who habitually sin – they’ll drag you down to their level. “Real men” are not hypocrites.

“Hypocrites” are mask-wearers! They’re one thing in front of you and another behind your back!

They pledge real commitment to your face and boast of their exploits to their friends behind your back!

On one occasion, some of John’s disciples came to Jesus questioning Him as to whether or not He was Messiah.

When He had answered their questions and John’s disciples had gone on their way back to the prison to report to John, Jesus said to the crowds.

“When you went out into the barren wilderness to see John, what did you expect him to be like? Grass blowing in the wind? Or were you expecting to see a man dressed as a prince in a palace? Or a prophet of God? Yes, and he is more than just a prophet. For John is the man mentioned in the Scriptures – a messenger to precede me, to announce my coming, and prepare people to receive me.” [Matthew 11:7-10]

Jesus was challenging the multitude, using John as His role model.

“What did you expect to find?

A man like a piece of grass that could be blown around by the opinions and praises of men?

A man living it up in the best hotels with a Gold Visa Card and an unlimited expense account?

A prophet of God? A man who was solemn, serious and sober and filled with religious piety and worthless jargon?

You were surprised – because what you found was a man who was “more than a prophet” – a messenger of God who wore no mask of hypocrisy and lived his life with conviction and integrity.

That’s what “real men” are – men of conviction, integrity and beyond that – men of purity.

John the Baptist was a man of purity. This is best illustrated when he stood before Herod in the royal palace on one occasion and denounced his immorality.

It didn’t go down too well with Herod.

John stood there and in as many words said in Matthew 14:1–5:

“King Herod, you’re married to Herodias here and that’s not right in the sight of God. Herodias was married to your brother Philip but you and Herodias went to Rome and had an affair. You broke up your brother’s marriage and after you broke up his marriage you got a divorce and went through with this improper new marriage. It’s not right and I’m telling this to your face so you hear it loud, clear, correct and without editorial comment!”

John stood for the sanctity of marriage and the honour of proper sexual relationships!

“Real men” do the same!

They are not influenced by the sensuality of the J. R. Ewings or the sickening plots of “Days of our Lives” or the conquests of our Video Heroes! They are “pure in heart” and reserve their love for the right person, in the right circumstances at the right time – God’s way!

“Real men” are men of integrity, righteousness and purity!



COURAGE

Courage: *noun*. The ability to do something that you know is difficult or dangerous.

Mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty.

Middle English: *corage*, from Anglo-French *curage*, from *quer*, *coer* heart, from Latin *cor* — more at heart

Its first known use in English was in the 14th Century.

Because John was a man of integrity, righteousness and purity, he spoke against the immorality of his day. He had the courage of his convictions.

He refused to allow the world to squeeze him into its mould. It took courage to stand before a king and denounce him. This king had the power of life and death. The only thing stopping Herod from killing John was his fear of the Jewish people.

John was not afraid to stand apart from the crowd and dared to take his stand for what he believed in.

“Real men” do that. They are not sloppy sentimentalists who stand for nothing and fall for anything.

They are not fainthearted, but strong in faith and courage and know the real meaning of commitment and loyalty.

These are men who:

- dream the impossible dream and
- fight the unbeatable foe
- Who stand with their last ounce of courage – and reach the unreachable star!

God give us men of courage. We need men who display:

Physical Courage – this is bravery at the risk of bodily harm or death. Our core values inspire us to do feats of greatness at moments of challenge or confrontation on behalf of others.

Social courage – at the risk of social unpopularity or even rejection by the crowd we show leadership and go against the tide of what others think or do – regardless of the personal consequences.

Intellectual courage – we need to engage with challenging ideas, to question the thinking of society and even risk making mistakes as we seek to discern motives and tell what we think the truth is.

Moral courage – we need to do the right thing, even when the risks involve our possible shame or the disapproval of others. Here our ethics and integrity are challenged and we take a stand to make our words and actions match up with our values and ideals.

Emotional courage – this is when we accept that we might be hurt emotionally and our personal happiness challenged. We pay the price for what we believe. We exchange pain in our commitment to stand for what is right.

Spiritual courage – is on display when we honestly grapple with questions about faith, purpose, and the meaning of life. Even to the point of admitting we do not know all the answers but we will continue the journey until we find the answers.

God give us men of courage. And it all to do with your heart!



VISION

Jesus had said to the crowds,

“When you went out into the barren wilderness to see John, what did you expect him to be like? Grass blowing in the wind? Or were you expecting to see a man dressed as a prince in a palace? Or a prophet of God?”

“Yes, and he is more than just a prophet. For John is the man mentioned in the Scriptures – a messenger to precede me, to announce my coming, and prepare people to receive me.”

More than a prophet?

A prophet was known by other titles – one of them as a “seer.” The prophet was a man of vision – a see-er! One who could look into the future and prepare for it!

“Real men” look past the immediate to the ultimate!

He stands apart from the “instant generation” demanding instant

- coffee
- success
- satisfaction
- gratification
- results

“Real men” have a dimension about their lives that makes them creatures of eternity!

Eternal things matter much. Things of time are judged in the light of eternity!

God becomes part of their everyday focus! They begin their day, committing themselves to God’s eternal purposes – walking under the direction of God’s Spirit and living in communion with the God upon whom they depend.

“Real men” are see-ers – they have a vision for possibilities in the midst of their problems!

When the going gets tough they don’t go shopping and blow their credit rating on their Master Cards – they look to the God who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all they ask or think, according to the power that works in them. [Ephesians 3:20]

“Real men” are more concerned about the long term consequences rather than the short term quick fixes!

What matters to them is that it’s not so much whether they feel good or look good – it’s whether they are good that counts!

And finally



VULNERABILITY

John is an amazing man!

At the River Jordan he proclaims fearlessly the kingdom of God!

He condemns the religious hypocrites with a voice of thunder!

He baptises the repentant multitude with authority!

He rebukes a king fearlessly!

But now he is gaol, he begins to doubt!

He wonders whether he has been mistaken, so he asks his disciples to go back to Jesus and say,

“Tell us. Are You the One John said was going to come, or should we expect someone else?” [Matthew 11:3]

Modern Macho Man Randy Savage believed he was invulnerable! He could not be defeated! Modern “macho” man in Australia believes the same!

According to research, the five most difficult statements for modern man to make are:

1. “I don’t know.”
2. “I was wrong.”
3. “I need help.”
4. “I’m afraid.”
5. “I’m sorry.”

What that means is that by the world’s standards, “real men” don’t admit they are vulnerable. And if they do, their masculinity is in question.

But John was a “real man” and not afraid to admit his vulnerability.

Man is a crazy creature really. We hate to admit we’re lost when we’re driving. “There’s something wrong with the Melways,” we reply.

“Are you sure you know where we are heading?” your wife asks you. “Of course I do!” is our reply. And after thirty to forty kilometres going the wrong way and seeing the sun for the first time in our lives set in the east, we reluctantly turn the car around and blame the poor road signs!

We hate being asked, when we are in the back of the dishwasher repairing a leaking pipe, “Do you know what you are doing?”

John’s vulnerability is reflected in his honesty and humility. He needs to know and is prepared to ask the disciples who follow him, to check it out. That’s humility! How many leaders ask their followers for advice?

John knew deep down that he was only the signpost pointing to Messiah.

Jesus was the light and John the Light bearer; John was the voice but Jesus the Message!

To allow this kind of honesty to escape from his heart, John showed he was a man of trust – he trusted people!

“Real men” trust people!

“Real men” are men of

- sincerity
- simplicity
- conviction
- courage
- vision
- vulnerability

Jesus said, “In all humanity there is no one greater than John. And yet the least citizen in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”

What did He mean by the statement, "And yet the least citizen in the kingdom of God is greater than he?"

I think Jesus was saying, "Sure, look at the qualities of John's life and emulate them if you want to be a "real man."

More than that, He was putting the emphasis where it should be – not on manly qualities – but on the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God should be first – other things come second.

What Jesus was saying is

"A real man is part of the kingdom of God and acknowledges Me as the King!"

The "real man" has come to repentance with an open confession and proves his repentance by his converted lifestyle!

And in addition to that – as a result of that commitment, he can then display all the characteristics of a "real man" –

- sincerity
- simplicity
- conviction
- courage
- vision
- And vulnerability!

You can keep your macho image my friend – "real men" are dependent on the King and His kingdom!

And as a result – the resources of that kingdom become his!
[Matthew 6:33]

What is a "real man?" – Take a good look at John the Baptist. He's a good role model!

And take an even better look at His Master – Jesus Christ – because Jesus gave Him purpose for being a "real man!"

"Real men eat Quiche?"

No sir!

“Real men eat locusts and wild honey!”

The Psalmist said in Psalm 119:73,

“Your hands have made me and held me firm. Give me understanding and I shall learn your commandments.”

And that sir is the prayer of a “real man!”

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