

Russell Kelfer

God Needs Gentle Men

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Series: I Timothy

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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God Needs Gentle Men

The world in which we live is confused about who it is. It is searching for its identity. It is desperately trying to become *somebody*. It has been said that were we as a society to be destroyed, no one would be able to identify the body. We lack the elements of integrity and ingenuity and intensity that once characterized man. We are a people scrambling to become nothing...frantically rushing downhill at a breakneck speed to see who can be the first to destroy himself. We long to be *like everyone else*, even at the expense of not being recognizable at all.

Our morals are decaying at such a rapid rate that even Christians have stopped sounding the trumpet and are accepting as normal the kinds of offenses that God in ages past has considered evil enough to wipe civilizations off the face of the earth. The identity of woman as she existed for generations has been scrapped for a new one. The identity of our young people no longer rests its weight upon living up to the standards of their ancestors, but rather of laughing them to shame. All of society seems to be in a mad dash to the cellars of life to wallow there until time ends.

And no one has lost his identity more than the male of the species. Middle-aged men are committing suicide in record numbers because they reach a certain stage in life and realize they *don't know who they are...and if they are who they think they are, they've failed*. Men want to be macho men on the football field and in beer commercials, but they want to salvage the right to accept homosexuality as normal if they so choose.

Athletes are no longer recognized as much for the feats they accomplish as for the salaries they draw. Their identity is in what they can take from the establishment; but before long they take so much *they are the establishment*, and they can't handle that. Coaches are no longer known for what they instill in their

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players, but for how many games they win. Their identity is in winning, and so, when they lose, *or when they don't win as many as they did last year*, they're dumped into one of life's gold-plated garbage dumpsters and left to rot.

If you were to ask the average man on the street today what makes a man a man, you would get a variety of answers, but most of them would make no sense at all. And if you were to measure those answers alongside the standards of the God of Eternity, I promise you they would not even make a mark.

But God's Word *does* have a measuring stick to determine whether or not a man is really a man. It isn't how many cigarettes he can smoke just after the big roundup. It isn't whether or not he can throw down a beer just after he wins the big race. In fact, man is so confused, that now Mr. Macho has to ask for "Bud Lite" to be a *real man*. Figure that one out. No, God's man will be measured by a standard so unlike the world's standard that it shatters the imagination. But one good thing about it, *it will never ever change*.

It is the same today as it was when the Apostle Paul sat down in Macedonia and dictated those letters to Timothy in Ephesus. And, praise God, should He tarry ten thousand more years, it will be the same. What God expects of a man is eternal. And so you can risk your life to achieve it, give your life to obtain it, and bet your life it'll last.

God is looking for *a few good men*. But he left us no doubt as to what that man will be like, and he left us no doubt that there are no exclusive rights. Any man who gives his heart to Christ can be one of those few good men.

Does your heart begin to pound within you with the knowledge that *it can happen to you?* You know, it's *not too late*. You may have missed a blessing or two by not walking through God's gallery of greatness in quest of identity when you were a youth, but whatever days you have left can be bathed in the wonder of spiritual transformation. Beginning today, you can reach with all you possess for the glorious privilege of having the mind of God displayed in your life. And you need not wonder how you'll look when you do. Just read I Timothy, chapter three.

There the apostle is dissecting the male spirit to see how it appears when it's working right. We have been examining his lab reports these past few lessons and found that God is looking for

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“blameless” men, men whose lives are lived without consistent areas of potential accusation. He’s looking for “one-woman men”, men whose hearts so beat for the wife of their life that they not only remain *with* them, they remain loyal *to* them, so loyal they would give their lives *for* them as Christ gave His to for the church. And in our last study, we learned that God is looking for calm-hearted men—men who, like Jesus, stand strong amidst the temptations of life, but rest at ease in the storms of life. Unlike their current TV counterparts, a real man in God’s eyes doesn’t shoot somebody or beat up on somebody just because he doesn’t get his way or get the girl. He’s a calm, consistent, restful man, who knows who he is in Christ, and therefore, as the Psalmist said,

Therefore will not we fear, even though the earth be removed,
and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the
sea;
(Psalm 46:2 NKJV)

(Russell’s humor—Now I’m grateful for the three men in this class that still speak to me and little by little the women are acknowledging my existence again. We went through a few weeks when they didn’t look at me. The three men, granted I have paid them to do so, have continued to be my friends but I may lose them this morning.)

Today we add to our God’s-eye account of the man after God’s heart. Our outline and our title look like this: God Needs Gentle Men.

- 1- The Heart of a Gentle Man
- 2- The Dynamic of Dignity
- 3- Where Your Treasure Is

So we continue our look at the character of the man of God. God’s question was: “*Are you calm in the storms of life*”? Today we ask three more questions to round out the first section of Paul’s application form. They involve three Greek words that he used to describe the man God is seeking to find to lead the church on to the end of the age. Those three words and the accompanying three questions form the basis for this study.

THE HEART OF A GENTLE MAN

Our first word from the apostle’s dictionary of character is the word *eipekes*. Its definitions vary from patient to longsuffering to one who does not insist on his just rights. Many later translations,

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in an effort to combine those attributes into one have settled on the word “gentle”.

Just what is a *gentle* man? How close is he to what the world calls a “gentleman”? E. W. Bullinger, in his Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament, defines this word, which is really only used in this one place in Scripture, like this:

Gentle: fitting upon, not insisting on just rights; not only passively un-contentious, but actively considerate, waiving just and legal redress, and tempering strict justice with gentle equity.

Here is a man of God in the real world. The pressures mount; the battles rage; he is taken advantage of; his rights are denied; he is wrongly accused; he is blamed for what he could not control, and credit is given for what he has done to his worst enemy. His boss is a tyrant. His wife is a nag. His neighbors are presumptuous. Ah, but he is constant, as constant as the day is long. So someone takes advantage of him? That’s God’s problem. So his rights are denied? He has none. Jesus, the righteous one, has all the rights. God can do with his life what He chooses. He is wrongly accused? So what? So was Jesus. And he has given to us the glorious privilege of entering into His sufferings by being accused as well. His boss is a tyrant? What an opportunity to demonstrate I Peter 2. His wife is a nag? What an opportunity to demonstrate Ephesians 5. He is the Savior’s man, and so his responses are gentle, kind, considerate, *regardless of whether or not he deserves what he gets*. He knows that were he to get what he deserves, he would spend eternity in hell.

The calm man was basically God’s man under temptation or under trial. The gentle man is basically God’s man under unjust attack. And he does not simply grit his teeth and hold his ground. He *responds* with gentle love. Again, Jesus is our example: “When He was reviled, He reviled not again, but committed himself to Him who judgeth righteously.” He says, “Father, did you see what that guy did? I’m not qualified to judge him, Lord, I’ll leave that to you. I’ll just love him, instead.” That’s the heart of a gentle man. Whether or not the nature of God is in control of his life can be seen when he does what is right, and yet suffers for it *graciously*. There’s the key word *graciously*. He doesn’t just endure; He responds with grace and gives back love for evil. You

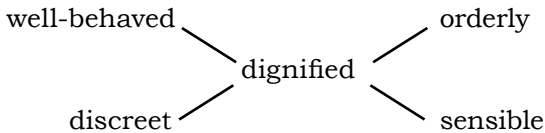
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see, the man of God who has a gentle spirit has lost his rights, he gave them up at Calvary. So no matter what the enemy throws at him, he has no basis with which to retaliate.

Be careful when you pray for a gentle spirit. Remember the meaning of the word *gentle* is *patience*. God will likely test your patience. And the trying of your faith works patience.¹ So when you pray for a gentle spirit you are saying, “Lord, please put me over the barbecue pit and turn up the heat a little bit and get rid of some dross.” And what’s let will be a more gentle spirit. (That took care of some of our potential to pray, but if we mean business that is what we will do.) He may allow those who would abuse you and refuse you and excuse you to enter your life and create havoc just to see how you’ll respond. The natural man will *react*. He will demand his rights. He will plead his case. The man of God will *respond with love*.

THE DYNAMIC OF DIGNITY

The second word in today’s study of the gentle man is the Greek word *kosmion*. It, too, is only used in this one place in Scripture. It is defined: “well-behaved, orderly, dignified, sensible, discreet”. Diagrammed, we might look at the word this way:



The godly man is a dignified man. That means he is well behaved; he is discreet; he is sensible; his life is orderly. They all are the essence of dignity; a quality, like gentleness, which is no longer in vogue, until you open the Word of God.

The word “dignity” literally means “one who demonstrates excellence”. It is a standard of behavior that reflects nobility and class. In the spiritual realm, it means a kind of demeanor that doesn’t stoop to the standards of the world, but rather *wherever he is*, the dignified man draws people up to the standards of God.

He is well-behaved. He just doesn’t risk doing things that might bring reproach to God’s name *even if the world and the church agree it’s okay*. His standard of conduct is the Scriptures, nothing less. He knows when humor is in order, and when it’s not; and he knows crudity in humor *is never in order for the*

¹ James 1:3

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Christian. He knows when to talk and when to listen. He never dresses to call attention to himself at either extreme. He has good manners, not to prove he's somebody, but to keep from being an offense to anybody. He knows any stumbling-block he creates might keep people from the Christ he serves. He knows that one idle moment of sarcasm might bruise another person or cause another person to take up an offense. God's man is well-behaved. Are you? If Christ were to use your behavior at a football game as an example in heaven to the angels of a *kosmion* kind of life, how well would you do? Or how about your behavior at a party? Or in the locker room? Or in the living room?

He is discreet. He keeps confidences without your having to remind him. He doesn't ask others to pray for you so he can let them know your secrets. He has a built-in sensor that tells him when certain conversations are not appropriate. He doesn't go on about the problems at church in the presence of unbelievers. He's too discreet to do that. He keeps family problems in the family, and best of all, between himself and God.

He's punctual. God's nature is such that He is always on time. We set our clock by God. We send men to the moon by God. He doesn't vary a millisecond from the schedule that He has laid out. A man of God is always on time.

He's orderly. A man of God is neat. His office doesn't look like a front for a garage sale. It's orderly. It *has to be*. He represents a God whose universe is founded on order. So the dignified man keeps his office, his car, his study, his life neat and orderly. (I didn't mention closets because my wife is here.)

Finally, he's sensible. He simply uses common sense. He's reasonable. He keeps his heart in harness to the Word and doesn't ride off on every tangent that comes along in order to please his emotions. His family can count on him because he knows where he's going and he stays the course. He's a man of dignity: well behaved, discreet, orderly, sensible. He's the essence of the gentle man.

WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS

Word number three is *aphilargoron*. How many of you men would say you're *aphilaragoron*? Hopefully you are. The word comes from two words "*phileo*" meaning "to be fond of", and "*arguros*" meaning "silver". The alpha prefix means that it literally

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says “one who is not fond of silver”. Many current translations simply read “not covetous” or “not a lover of money”. It is used only one other time, in Hebrews 13, where it reads:

Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

So we may boldly say: “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?” (Hebrews 13:5,6 NKJV)

“Don’t be a lover of silver,” the Holy Spirit is saying. Don’t be paranoid over God’s provisions to meet your needs. Or is the problem how God defines the word *needs*? He has said that *He will never leave us*. (We are guaranteed of His presence forever.) And He has said that *He will never forsake us*. (We are guaranteed of His provision forever) What then can man do; what can happen on planet earth to take away that which is eternal? Nothing. Absolutely nothing. Neither life nor death nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come...not height, not depth, nor *anything else* can separate us from the love of God. Nothing.

So if we are anxious about our tomorrows, one of two things has happened. Either God has abdicated His throne or we have confused ourselves about what it is we will need tomorrow. If we have to have more things, better things, newer things to satisfy us, it’s no wonder we’re anxious. Now listen carefully. God didn’t promise us that we could keep the things we have. We live in an age where we don’t think that could ever happen. If all we’re after are things eternal, and we believe we can trust God to give us those things, then men why should we be concerned? Why should we be anxious? It isn’t just that the “lover of silver” is aggressive in the pursuit of things. The literal meaning is that he has a twisted vision. He looks at life and focuses his eyes on what is passing away.

He is covetous, longing for that which won’t last at the expense of what will. If you reread that passage, you’ll be reminded that the opposite of covetousness is contentment. Contentment is satisfaction with your lot in life, knowing that this is not your real home and these are not your real treasures. The man who is covetous or a “lover of silver” is not just one of the men of this world who muscle their way to the top of the corporate empire, he is anyone who is *not satisfied to live his life at his present standard of living or less*. That man will make all the wrong decisions in

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life when the heat is on. Why? Because his vision is blurred. He's looking at a spiritual world through physical glasses. So he can't see. And he'll do a horrible job of running the church. Why? Because his priorities are all wrong.

What Paul is really saying is that a man's heart must so beat for God that *it doesn't matter whether or not he ever gets a newer car or another car or a better car*. It doesn't matter whether or not he gets that new job or that better job or that other job. All that matters is doing the will of God. And if the will of God involves staying where he is, doing what he's doing, making what he's making—*he's content*. Why? Because he's found something worth far more than silver. He's found a bank where moth and rust can't corrupt, a safe where thieves cannot break through and steal.

A man with that vision of God's priorities is fit to run the church. Because the church is a body of people brought together for *spiritual reasons*. God's man loves God so much that to love silver would be preposterous. He sees "things" only as a means to an end, and like Paul, he's content with little or he's content with much. And most of us are unwilling to wait for the change. We like it instantly don't we? God grows trees and trees take time.

There you have the portrait of a "gentle" man. He is a man after God's own heart. Why? Because he has no rights. Others can use him, even abuse him. He'll quietly stand as Jesus did. Falsely accused? That'll be his Father's problem. Life unfair? He knows that. But God isn't. He knows that, too. So he's restful and gentle even while he's being badgered about by a vicious world.

So the repairman came late and charged too much? Does he release a valve of hostility? Why should he? It's God's house and God's car and if God wants to use it to bring a lost repairman into the picture, he'll gladly contribute some of God's money to do so. After all, his response to that repairman is eternal. The bill isn't.

So his wife is unjust in her demands and unfair in her expectations? He praises God and draws on His grace. God gave him that wife. And there will be no test taken him but such as is common to man. God is faithful. He will not test anyone beyond his ability to bear it, but will, with the temptation, also provide a way of escape. And the children are watching. The neighbors are watching. That new Christian up the street is watching. They

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know what *they* would do. They're wondering what God would do. The gentle man shows them. So the gentle man is a dead man. Dead to rights, if you will. And whatever life throws him he quietly gives back to God, the only one whose shoulders are broad enough to handle it.

Not only is he gentle, he's dignified; never insensitive or indiscreet. And this gentle, dignified man of God has his eyes focused on another kingdom, not on what he can buy, where he can go, or what he can get out of life.

So it is that God is looking for a few *gentle* men. A few men who are willing to become progressively more Christlike in their lives, because they are becoming progressively more Christ-controlled in their hearts. It won't happen overnight. And there is the rub. Most of us are looking for instant cures. God is looking for gradual change. God grows trees. Trees take time. But given enough time and given deep-enough roots, they will one day flourish. Jeremiah said it this way:

Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, And whose hope is in the LORD.

For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; but its leaf shall be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit.
(Jeremiah 17:7,8 NKJV)

That's what God is looking for— fruit-bearing men to lead the church. And the fruit they will bear will be the fruit of a calm, gentle, dignified, contented heart. So evident will it be that he is *different*, that the world will stand in awe. And he will stand in the storms of life unscathed.

In closing, men, I ask you take these three questions home this week, and ask your wife or a friend to help you honestly assess the degree to which you are manifesting the fruits of a gentle man. The goal is not to discourage you, but to encourage you to continue to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. You have only one reason for living. Do we not want to be pressing ever constantly toward the goal for that one reason?

Get alone with God and specifically ask for the essence of His nature in those areas:

1- Are you progressively becoming a more gentle man?

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When crises come, have you stopped claiming your rights, and demanding your way? Are you “dead to rights”, so you can be “alive in Christ”?

2- Are you becoming increasingly characterized as a man of dignity in Christ? Are you more and more known as one who is punctual, orderly, discreet, and wise in your judgment?

3- Is your heart becoming more and more fixed on things eternal? Do the things you thought you had to have now seem less important in the light of the treasures in Heaven that will never perish? Are you investing in people at the expense of things? Or are you still coveting things at the expense of people? The answer to that one question will tell you a lot about your walk with God.

The God of Eternity is looking for men. Gentle men. The world is confused and uncertain even about what makes a man a man. The man of the world has no identity. Everything he gives his life for passes away. And when it does, he no longer is who he thought he was.

Not so with God’s man. From eternity past, God has had a plan for a man to be a man. It was for him to be a *gentle man*. Dear God, please finish the work in us that You came to do. It may be painful; it may be slow. But, oh, God, it will be worth it all to become *gentle men at last*.

Our loving Father,

We sense a feeling of great inadequacy as we approach this passage. We see from the mirror of the Word what a gentle man should be. As we look in the mirror of our own lives and see our response to testing, our response to unjust accusation, and our response to the world’s iniquities, we don’t like what we see.

Some of us, Father, look into the mirror of the Word and see that we ought to be men of dignity, punctuality, orderliness, and sensibility and see that we are not.

Some of us look into the mirror of the Word, Father, and see that we ought to be men who are continually becoming progressively more heavenly minded. We’ve stopped being lovers of silver, we no longer are striving to get but are striving to give. Yet, we look into the Word and realize that’s not really true.

Thank You, Father, that You didn’t demonstrate what a man ought to be to discourage us, but to let us know what we are

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in becoming , if we will just turn loose and let You be Yourself.

Some of us have been trying too hard, Father. We've been trying to be what only You can be in us. We need to relax and lay down our lives and, again this morning, commit our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto Thee which is our reasonable service. Some of us just need to quietly understand that it takes time and we must not give up the battle, but we must change our priorities.

Some of us this morning, Father, need to be reawakened to the reality that little by little we have changed our priorities and that we will never become the gentle men God wants us to be unless we repent.

Thank You, Father, that You were tough on us because You want to use us. Thank You, Father, that You are gracious to us because You know that we can't do it. Thank You for being our Father.

In Jesus' Name,

Amen.

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