

"THE MEASURE OF A MAN"
 (1 Timothy 6:11-12)
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[McKendree U.M.C.; 6-16-19]

--I--

1. Read Text: 1 Timothy 6:11-12 and Pray.
2. How do we (or should we) measure masculinity? What is the measure of a man?

A--Well, if we watch TV, or the internet, or think about famous images of pop culture, we're going to see one set of answers to those questions.

1--In these places, manhood is usually defined by brute, brawn, and buff -- by one's use of power tools, knowing how many HEMIs a truck has, and an ability to recite football stats!

2--Now, I'm being a bit facetious... but not entirely!...

B--...Because today's society / culture tends to idealize masculinity in a way that is difficult to live up to, but also hard to ignore.

3. And yet, if we look at today's scripture, we find a very *different* set of standards set forth for manhood -- a set of standards defined *not* by popular culture, but by God Himself.

A--Here in 1 Timothy 6, we find the apostle Paul talking to his young apprentice Timothy about some of the qualities that men of God are called to practice in their daily lives.

B--And while these qualities aren't *exclusive* to men (they can equally be applied to *women*), since this *is* Father's Day, I'm using them today specifically to describe the life of a Godly *man*.

C--So, what are they? How does *God* (as opposed to pop culture) measure men? And how do these help us ALL better understand and practice our faith?

--II--

4. Well, according to today's scripture, the first "measure of a (Godly) man" is **FIDELITY**.

A--Verse 11 begins by saying "*But as for you, man of God, shun all this...*" -- what exactly are *"all this..."* to which its referring?

1--Well, it's actually whole host of things that Paul talks about in the preceding verse that Verse 9 says will cause us to be "*trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.*"¹

2--In other words... we're to "*shun*" anything that gets in the way of a right relationship with God, others, and ourselves.

B--And *that*, essentially, is the biblical meaning of "FIDELITY" -- it means guarding our hearts and behaviors in such a way that worldly things don't get in the way of our God-given relationships.

1--For example, some of us have difficulty being faithful in our relationships with God, our spouse, families, and even with our own values because we've allowed *unhealthy* relationships to be substituted for the *healthy* ones.

2--Some, for example, try to find comfort from life in the arms of those who are not their spouse, or in the misuse of drugs, alcohol, or nicotine.

3--And the accessibility of online and other types of pornography today causes nearly 40% of all men to struggle in the area of sexuality -- many men have "*affairs of the heart*," even if it's not a *physical* affair.

C--But fidelity doesn't deal only with *tangible* things. Instead, I know many men (and women) for whom *work*, or *food*, or *gambling*, or *technology* have become mistresses.

1--A number of years back I had to make my wife a promise to avoid working on our computer after I got home because she felt she'd become a "*computer widow*," and many of you know that I usually don't answer work-related email on weekends for this same reason.

2--It could be that some of you may have a similar problem right now with your *over-use* of social media like Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram-- don't get me wrong... these are great tools; but some people use them *so much* that it begins to take the place of "in-person" relationship building.

D--So, what is it that's getting in the way of YOUR God-given relationships? Whatever it is... today's scripture invites us to practice FIDELITY by "*shunning it.*"

5. However, I need to say that according to today's scripture, the *only* way that men (or women) can truly be faithful if they practice the second "measure of a man": **FAITH**.

A--The last part of Verse 11 says "*Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness.*"

1--I think what this is really saying is that without faith in God *that's lived out daily*, it's absolutely *impossible* for us (especially for men) to truly practice fidelity and faithfulness in our lives and behaviors.

2--In other words, *Faith* is the key to *Fidelity* -- if we want to be more *faithful* to God, to our spouse, to our family, and to ourselves, then we *first* need to put more of our faith *in* God by the way we live our lives. ²

B--You know, I can think back on various times in my own life where I fell to temptation because I was trying to fight it only in my own strength -- I was trying to grit and bear through it, *instead of* having faith to turn my struggle over to God to fight *for me!*

1--And the times I *did* turn my struggles over to God, HE gave me victory.

2--Now, I've also learned that sometimes turning my struggle over to God means that I have to be willing to confide in Godly men to hold me accountable.

3--But even in those cases, I recognized that *God* was in charge, *not* me --& it was in those times I understood that *Faith* in God (lived out) is the key to *Fidelity*.

6. A final "measure of a man" that I think Paul encourages Timothy (and us) to live by in today's scripture is... **FORBEARANCE**.

A--In Verse 12, Paul says "*Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called...*"

B--In other words, in the face of the struggles and difficulties of life, don't give up, but instead practice endurance, persistence, perseverance, and tenacity. ³

1--In the pastoral counseling that I've done, and even just in observing church life for many years, I've noticed that the men who survive the challenges & pitfalls of manhood -- not just physically, but also who survive emotionally, mentally, and spiritually -- are the ones who've endured because of their faith in God.

2--They've survived challenges to their marriages, families, their work, and survived even when things *didn't* turn out so well.

3--And conversely, I've observed that the ones who end up shipwrecked because of affairs, abuse of drugs or alcohol, addicted to gambling, pornography, or food do so because they've lacked hope, and have simply given up.

C--And yet, Paul's words to Timothy say that faith in God can give us hope to persevere through even the most bleak of circumstances -- *Forbearance*, you see, is also a product of *Faith*, and is therefore a quality that defines a Godly man.

--III--

7. So, while *SOCIETY* measures men by their *brute, brawn, and buff*, *GOD* measures men (and women, for that matter) by their *Fidelity*, their *Faith*, and their *Forbearance*.

A--Now, I don't know where you are in your relationship with God this Father's Day, but Paul's words make it clear that if you want to really live a life of joy and freedom, it starts with us answering a call to be people of faith.

B--For Paul, the real "*Measure of a Man*" is their ***Faith*** in God that produces ***Fidelity*** and ***Forbearance***.

C--Today, ALL of us (men and women alike) are invited to that journey of Faith.

8. [PRAY: (*Invite people to make commitment to faith in God through acceptance of Jesus as Savior for first time, or to renew that commitment...*)]

ENDNOTES:

¹ Things like unbridled lust, drunkenness, misuse of money, gossip, and what Paul describes as "*envy, dissension, slander, base suspicions*, Find these (and others) in 1 Timothy 6:4-5, as well as in the verses (and Chapter) preceding.

² In the words of today's scripture, we can't "*shun these things*" until we first "*pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love,*" etc.

³ As a side point, notice that the NRSV translation of Verse 12a says "*fight the good fight...*" -- as opposed to "*fight the bad/trivial fight....*" In other words, keep your priorities straight -- don't get bogged down in trivialities, or stuck in issues, concerns, and/or attitudes and behaviors that don't have eternal significance.