

Challenging Issues

This is one of a series of booklets on challenging issues facing Christians today. It is written with the conviction that God's word the Bible is relevant and needs to be studied and applied sensitively.

manhood

One of a series of study guides to help Christians think through difficult issues in a helpful and informative way

Challenging Issues

Manhood

**A Bible Study produced by
The Social Issues and Resources Committee
of the
Presbyterian Church in Ireland**

Foreword

This is one of a series of studies on Challenging Issues facing Christians today. It is written with the conviction that God's Word, the Bible, is relevant and needs to be studied and applied sensitively.

Our hope is that this series will help Christians to think through these difficult issues in a helpful and informative way.

Robert Liddle

Convener of the Social Issues and Resources Committee

Other studies in the Challenging Issues Series:

Disability

Homosexuality

The Family

Available from the Board of Social Witness, Church House, Belfast BT1 6DW.

Introduction

In recent years the traditional dominance of society by men has been challenged. While the move towards equality for men and women is to be welcomed, sometimes men have felt unsure of their new role and the advancement of women has been perceived as a 'zero sum game' in which gains by women are perceived as losses by men. In addition, some social indicators such as performance in GCSE and A level exams show girls outperforming boys. In the media men can be portrayed as predatory or lampooned as overgrown children in contrast to assertive, confident women. Again, families in which the mother is the stable factor and men come and go are increasingly common. Against this background it is imperative that the Church teaches and encourages men to live an authentic maleness.

This series of studies falls into three parts.

The first set of topics deals with what a man is as one half of God's unique human creation. It is important to look at this because too often we lose sight of our common humanity and consider women to be 'inferior' to men. This is destructive to true Christian masculinity.

A second set of topics looks at the roles that men play in families. With the 'traditional family' under pressure on many fronts it is important to distinguish what is Christian from what is merely cultural so that we can embrace God's eternal principles and from them develop appropriate contemporary patterns of family life.

The third set of topics looks at 'A man in Christ'; in particular they look at what sets the Christian man apart from the non-Christian man, what role can be played by older men and how a man should understand service in the church, especially leadership.

A set of Scripture references is given for each topic. This sums up the main thrust of the Bible's teaching and will guide your thinking about the topic. Second is a question that seeks to draw out some of the implications of the Bible's teaching. Third is a question that attempts to explore practical suggestions about how a local congregation can live out the Bible's teaching together.

In answering many of the questions it will be easy to slip into Christian jargon. 'Quit yourselves like men' and resist this stoutly by putting all answers into everyday language!

Following each topic is a blank space. Try being a man of action by using this for jotting down at least one concrete action that you can take, based on what you have been thinking about (this can be either you (singular), as an individual or you (plural) as a group). This action should be identifiable and realistically attainable. Ideally you should tell someone to whom you can be accountable for doing what you have said you will do.

A Man in Society

1

A man is a human being

Gen.1:27, 5:1; Lev.19:15; Ecc.3:20; Is.40:6,7; Rom.3:23.

- a. What does every man have in common with every other man?
- b. In what ways does contemporary society show that it believes that some people are of more value than others? What can our church do to resist this?

2

A man is not a boy

1Cor.13:11; Prov.22:15; Luke 7:32

- a. What are the main differences between a boy and a man?
- b. In what ways does our society blur the distinctions between boyhood and manhood? What can our church do to counteract this?

3

A man is a friend

1Sam.18:1-4; 19:1-7; 20:1-42; Prov.17:17, 27:6, 10; Jn.15:13

- a. What are the characteristics of a good friend and what are some of the limits of friendship? In what ways do male friendships differ from female friendships?
- b. How might our church encourage men in forming strong and appropriate friendships?

Q
4**A man may be a worker**

Ex.35:30-36:1; Col.3:23; 1Thess.4:11; 2Thess.3:10

- a. Work is a good thing, given by God but we must not judge a man's value by the work that he does. What are the main problems for a man who is unemployed, especially long term unemployed?
- b. Discuss how we can use our jobs as opportunities for doing mission.

Q
5**A man needs to relax**

Gen.2:2,3; Ex.20:8-11; Mark 6:30,31; 1Cor.9:25-27; Eph.5:29; 1Tim.4:8

- a. Are there any forms of recreation that are particularly appropriate for Christian men? Are there any that are particularly inappropriate?
- b. What advice would you give to a busy young father about how he and his family should spend their Sundays?

Action Point:

A man in the family



A man is a son (family member)

Ex.20:12; Matt.15:3-6, Eph.6:1-3

a. What does it mean to honour aged or infirm parents?

Note: Num.35:17-27, Ruth 3:9-4:6 The same Hebrew word lies behind both Kinsman and Avenger. In the Old Testament special responsibilities fell on the shoulders of the oldest son. These included avenging wrongs done to the family and rescuing family members who had got themselves into any sort of trouble. This responsibility extended beyond the nuclear family to the wider circle of relatives.

b. What is the contemporary relevance of the 'Kinsman-redeemer'?



A man is a sexual creature

Gen.1:27; Song 4:1-7; 1Cor.7:3-7

a. What do you think are the main differences between the male and female approaches to sex?

b. In what ways do you see human sexuality being exploited and abused in our community today? How can our church help young men to see things in a more righteous way?

**A man may be a husband**

Gen.2:18, 23-24; Ex.20:14; Eph.5:21-33

- a. What does it mean for a husband to love his wife, 'as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her'?
- b. In what ways does our culture's expectations of husbands differ from the Bible's expectations?

**A man may be a father**

Gen.18:19; Deut.6:6-7, 20; Prov.22:6; Eph.5:4

- a. What advice would you give to a father of teenage children?
- b. What contribution could your church make in providing good role models for boys?

Action Point:

A man in Christ

10

A Christian man is a son of God.

Rom.8:14, 19; 2Cor.6:18; Gal.4:6,7; Phil.2:14-16; Heb.2:10-12, 12:5-13; 1John 3:1,2; Rev.21:7

- a. What makes a Christian man different from a non-Christian man?
- b. How could your congregation set about establishing an evangelistic programme specifically aimed at men?

11

A Christian man may be a 'grandfather'

Lev.19:32; 1Kings 12:1-16; Ps.37:25, 71:18; Prov.16:31; Joel 2:28/Acts 2:17; 1Tim.1:2,18; Titus 1:4

- a. What special roles can retired men play in the life of your congregation? What special contributions can an older Christian man make in a community in which single parent families are increasingly common?
- b. How can your congregation identify and help meet the needs of elderly men in your village, town or city?



A Christian man may have special responsibilities in the service of God.

Ex.18:13-23; Acts 6:1-6; 1Tim.2:8, 3:1-13, 5:17-20,

- a. What roles in the Church are particularly appropriate for men to fulfil? Are there any that are particularly inappropriate?
- b. How does your church encourage men to use their spiritual gifts in the service of God? To what extent is it important that men take responsibility for leadership in the local congregation?

Action Point:

Further reading

Here is a selection of books from a large number available in Christian bookshops.

Dittes J	<i>Driven by Hope: Men and Meaning</i> Westminster, John Knox, 1996
Eldredge J	<i>Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secrets of a Man's Soul</i> Thomas Nelson, 2001
Engstrom T	<i>Add Life To Your Years</i> Tyndale (USA) , 2002
Green M	<i>Thank God It's Monday</i> SU, 1994
Grudem W (ed)	<i>Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood</i> Crossway, 2002
Jackson L & Gascoyne B	<i>Dead Men Walking</i> Kingsway, 2002
Hughes RK	<i>Disciplines of a Godly Man</i> Crossway, 2001
Lewis H & Roberts D	<i>50 Outlines for Men's Meetings</i> Kingsway, 2001
Means PA	<i>Men's secret Wars</i> Fleming H Revell, 1999
Parsons R	<i>Sixty Minute Marriage</i> Hodder and Stoughton, 1994
Parsons R	<i>Sixty Minute Father</i> Hodder and Stoughton, 1995
Perkins B	<i>When Good Men Are Tempted</i> Zondervan, 1997
.Van Leeuwen MS	<i>Fathers and Sons</i> IVP, 2002

'Pastoral' Organisations

Care for the Family (General Christian family issues)
3 Wallace Avenue, Lisburn BT27 4AA Tel. 028 9262 8050

Christian Guidelines (General Christian counselling)
7 Queen Street, Belfast BT1 6EA Tel. 028 9023 0005

True Freedom Trust (For problems with sexual orientation)
PO Box 13, Prenton, Wirral CH43 6YB Tel. 0151 6530773

Work

Here are a few examples of support groups for Christians at work.

Christian Businessmen's Fellowship
Firefighters for Christ
Civil Service Christian Union
Christian Engineers Association
Association of Christian Teachers (also Northern Ireland Assoc. of Ch. Teach.)

Various workplaces or groups of workers have informal Christian fellowships

Sports and Hobbies

Here are a few examples of Christians finding fellowship through a common recreational interest.

Christians in Sport
Christian Golfers' Fellowship
Christian Motorcycle Association
Fireblade Ministries
Christian Surfers UK
Christian Rambling Club

