



International Men's Day

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**Adapted from Men's Day of Prayer
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When Champions are Few

(Ephesians 6:10-17)

We are going to start with a hard question: Are men idiots? Just do a quick YouTube look with the word “Idiot” or “dumb,” and you’ll find an endless number of dumb activities, most of them featuring men. The lack of intelligence is not a determined by gender. However, contemporary culture seems to have decided that men lack intelligence.

Joe Kelly, an author and co-founder of the U.S. advocacy group “Dads and Daughters,” expectations for men are not where they should be.¹ “One evening, after watching Homer Simpson wreck the family car at a monster-truck rally and plunge on a skateboard into Springfield Gorge, my 6-year-old son asked me,

‘Why are dads on TV so dumb?’ wrote John Tierny from the New York Times. ‘Where did we fathers go wrong? We spend twice as much time with our kids as we did two decades ago, but on television we’re oblivious (‘Jimmy Neutron’), troubled (‘The Sopranos’), deranged (‘Malcolm in the Middle’) and generally incompetent (‘Everybody Loves Raymond’). Even if Dad has a good job, like the star of ‘Home Improvement,’ at home he’s forever making messes that must be straightened out by Mom.’”²

Media has great influence in shaping the mind of people. Heroes are slowly disappearing from the screen, and are being replaced by heroines. Female characters are becoming the savior, the most agile and capable of saving the day or whatever the clip/movie situation is portraying. Not only have these attitudes and low standards worked their way into the mind of many men, through media they have

worked their way into the family. If you hear a lie long enough everyone starts to believe it.

“I realize that what I’m referencing here is just a series of commercials and a kids’ cartoon, but there’s an underlying subtext in these tiny slivers of pop culture. Consider: We’re living in a moment when boys seem to be lagging behind women in school; in college admissions and performance; and—as my colleague Sandy Hingston pointed out in her fascinating piece last March—even in life to some degree.

Is it so crazy to wonder whether boys are getting the message that our society simply *expects* less from them? That’s it’s okay to be ... clueless?”³

In 1947 Carl C. Zimmerman, a Harvard Sociologist, published his research in the book titled “Family and Civilization.”⁴ In this work Zimmerman made a direct connection between the fall of major civilizations and the condition of the family unit in these empires. As the family unit deteriorated, so did the empire. He listed a few elements that exhorted destructive influence on the home. Here are a few:

- Marriage lost its sacredness, and alternative forms of marriage were advocated.
- Feminist movements flourished.
- Parenting became more difficult.
- Adultery was celebrated, not punished.
- Sexual perversions abounded, including bestiality, but especially incest and homosexuality.

There's an agenda for the destruction of manhood in society. Without God, men are reduced to animals driven by their evolution-instincts, and that was never part of God's plan. The Seventh-day Adventist church believes in the equal value and contribution of men and women, and young and old to the cause of Jesus Christ. There's no need to minimize one and exalt the other. Both men and women play a crucial role in the family and in the church.

The enemy of souls knows that putting down people because of gender, race, age, ethnic origin, education level or financial status is his most effective strategy. We can't allow that anymore. It is time for us to stand and take the place that God has given us in his cause.

Because of the time in which we are living, the following statement is a challenge for Today's Christian men: "When the religion of Christ is most held in contempt, when His law is most despised, then should our zeal be the warmest and our courage and firmness the most unflinching. To stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the majority forsake us, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few—this will be our test. At this time, we must gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason."⁵

Let's break it down. "When the religion of Christ is most in contempt." What is to hold something in contempt? It means to be disregarded, to see it as unimportant, without value for me. We are living in such a time. Per Zimmerman our country is in the fast lane to falling as a great nation. The country that at one time was considered a Christian Nation, no longer is Christian. A big part of this change has been the change in acceptance and understanding of Christianity.

"When the religion of Christ is most in contempt." There's a movement dedicated to eradication of the concepts of God from daily life in America. It has progressed from getting prayer out of the classroom, to removing the Ten Commandments from public offices. America is fast becoming a secular nation. But it is more than that. It is also considering Christian faith and religion as weak, and those that adhere to it as ignorant people.

"When the religion of Christ is most in contempt." The challenge is greater for men. Religion is considered a thing for the weak. The above statement was written so long ago and yet it's a reality we are facing today.

But the faithful men of Scripture were anything but weak. In Proverbs 24:5 it says: "A wise man is mightier than a strong man, and a man of knowledge than he who has strength"⁶

The Bible introduces men as full of valor, wisdom, and strength:

- Joseph – from prisoner to Egypt's second in command.
 - Genesis starting in chapter 37
- Daniel – Wiser than all the men in the land.
 - Daniel 1:20
- David – Fought Goliath with a sling and a few pebbles.
 - 1 Samuel 17
- Samson – Strongest man that ever lived

- o Judges 13-16
- The Apostles and members of the Early Church
 - o Peter – Preached and 3000 were converted
 - Acts 2:41 and grows to 5000, Acts 4:4
 - o Philip – was transported from one place to another
 - Acts 8:39-40
 - o Paul – from persecutor to persecuted for Christ
 - Acts 9
 - o John – deep fried because of his faith
- The Faith Hall of Fame
 - o Hebrews 11

All these men held something in common: They were filled and used by the Holy Spirit; were covered by Jesus, and they had surrendered completely to Christ. It doesn't take long to see in the Bible the many texts that corroborate that these men were filled with the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament, as well as in the New Testament, we read that it was the Holy Spirit, working in them and through them, the one doing the miracles through willing channels.

Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would be the fuel for the new church and all its children. John 14 and 16 register Jesus' promise for the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. Luke 11 tells us that God wants to give us the Holy Spirit and all we must do is ask. Verse 13 says: "how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

For the work of becoming champions of the faith we are filled with the Holy Spirit, and then we "put on Christ." Notice what Paul says in Ephesians 4:

17 Now this I affirm and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds; 18 they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart; 19 they have become callous and have given themselves up to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of uncleanness. 20 You did not so learn Christ! — 21 assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus. 22 Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Filled with the Holy Spirit, covered by Jesus, surrendered to Christ, so He can do His work of transformation in us. We men struggle with that big time.

We like to fix things, or pretend that we do. Even the guy that can't fix it likes to take care of the fixing of whatever it is that is broken. Nothing gives more pride to a man than to show something and say "I made it!" – "I fixed it!" – "I took care of it!"

I remember visiting my friend Bob. He was an exceptional mechanic. First time I visited with him he took me to his garage and showed me his car. He had designed it and made it from scratch. It was kind of square looking, but it worked, and it had a powerful engine. He was so proud of it, and loved saying "I made it all by myself." As much as we like to make or fix things, we cannot fix ourselves. Only Jesus can fix us. Notice what Paul said about it:

Ephesians 2: ⁷ *that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.* ⁸ *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—⁹ not because of works, lest any man should boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

“His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” My friends, we don’t deserve it. It is grace! Nothing less.

“Not your own doing, it is the gift of God.” Can you imagine what it would be like if works would save us? We would be going around saying “I keep the Sabbath better than you!” Or, “I’m a better vegan than you because at night I duct-tape my mouth so no insects will not crawl in my mouth while I sleep!” You think I’m just being funny? Paul adds “not because works, lest any man SHOULD BOAST!” My friend, God knows us guys. We love to brag.

But this is the part I love: “for we are HIS workmanship!” Can you say “Amen!”? He will do His work in me. All I need to do is allow Him.

Filled, surrendered, covered, transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit and the work of Christ in me! That makes an “End-Time Champion of the Faith!” Friends, without these in our lives we will not make it in the End-Time. It will not be a matter of muscles, brains, creativity, or endurance. There’s isn’t a boot camp for this preparation, except if this boot camp is our spiritual training: filled, surrendered, covered, and transformed.

Why is this important? What will Christian-men face during those days? We are living in the End-Time. It’s imperative for us to understand that today. The challenges that Christians face will come from outside of the church, and from the inside of the church.

Things like corruption, persecution, political battles, peer pressure, and opinions are surrounding us. People are misinterpreting God’s Word. Bible texts are being used outside of their contexts. The individuals in the church that are living their faith based on opinions and false biblical interpretations exert influence on their peers, thus misleading them to the ways of the world.

Jesus’ contemporaries faced the same. *“Men not connected with God, not sanctified in heart and life, have a theory of the truth, as had the Jewish chief priests and elders in Christ’s day—men who made the study of the Old Testament their business. Christ said of these men on one occasion, ‘Ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God.’ Mark 12:24.”*⁷ Do we know the Scriptures? Do we know the power of God’s Word? Have we experienced it?

Today’s Champions of Faith will be like the Minute Men. “In 1774, the Massachusetts Provincial Congress reorganized the Massachusetts militia, providing that one-fourth of the entire militia was made up of ‘Minutemen’ – patriots who vowed to be ready to fight at a minute’s notice. The Massachusetts Provincial Congress charged the Minutemen: You . . . are placed by Providence in the

post of honor, because it is the post of danger . . . The eyes not only of North America and the whole British Empire, but of all Europe, are upon you. Let us be, therefore, altogether solicitous that no disorderly behavior, nothing unbecoming our characters as Americans, as citizens and Christians, be justly chargeable to us.”⁸ God is looking for “Spiritual Minutemen” who will take the challenge and be ready. *“His chosen laborers will be men of integrity. They may, some of them, be unlearned and ignorant men; but grace reigns in their hearts, inspiring them with faith and purifying their motives that govern the outward conduct. They are living examples of the mind and spirit of Christ, known and read of all men.”*⁹

When the Champions were few. Yet they stood for God.

- Joseph ran from a married woman wanting to seduce him
- David ran towards the armed-to-the-teeth giant with a sling and a few stones
- Samson pulled the columns over him
- The three Hebrews stood while the world vowed down to the image
- Daniel knelt and prayed while the lions licked their lips
- Peter asked to be crucified up-side-down
- John didn't care to be fried-up

The champions have been few through the ages. When the test comes your way, will you stand with the few? "To fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few—this will be our test. At this time, we must gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason."

Today I want to invite our men to stand, to decide to be a Champion of the Faith. Men like to be challenged, so I challenge you my friend to be a Champion.

For our little boys gather here, to grow up to be like Daniel or Joseph.

For the young men present here, to decide today to be a Champion.

For our older men, to set the bar high, to stand up for the Lord, to gather warmth, courage, and loyalty, when the champions are few.