

Role of Men in the Church

Session 6

Man as Set Apart - Noah

Genesis 6 - 8

“I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them...So make yourself an ark...Go into the ark, you and your family, because I have found you righteous in this generation” Genesis 6:13, 14, 7:1

“Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens, and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.” I Peter 2:10 - 12

- I. The challenge faced by men to be set apart in the world today.
 - A. Despite the value we place on individualism, we are social creatures. We want to be liked, to fit in, to be on the team at work, good members of our neighborhood, “members of the club.”
 - B. The world today has been described as a lonely place despite the crowds around us (what David Riesman called “the lonely crowd”). Loneliness and isolation are among our greatest fears. Few men want to feel “out of place.”
 1. Among our greatest fears (despite our praise of individualism) are loneliness, isolation and not fitting in.
 2. We abstract our identity as men from cues given by men in the world (we are “other directed” rather than “inner directed”). For example, many men are more likely to ask subconsciously “What should I feel about this?” than “How do I feel about this?”
 - C. We live in a world where men (and women), even if we realize we are different, have difficulty “feeling different.”
 1. The watchwords of our society are “diversity”, “anything goes”, “do your own thing”, “just do it”, “melting pot”, “live and let live”, etc.
 2. As long as we don’t “abuse” another person, we are for the most part free to do what we want (worship God or worship Satan, go to church or go to a ball game, read scripture or pornography).
 3. To look at us during the week, for the most part, we don’t look all that different in dress or behavior from the man in the next cubicle at work or the neighbor next door.
 4. We work the same types of jobs in the same settings as most other persons in our society. There are virtually no “respected” jobs in our society

toward which men in the church feel an aversion (from psychiatry to politics, from teaching to banking).

- II. The challenge to the church of setting apart its men.
 - A. The scriptures make clear that we are set apart, resident aliens in this world. “God’s elect, strangers in the world”. I Peter 1:1
 - B. Yet we don’t want to feel like resident aliens in the church.
 - 1. The old spiritual “you’ve got to walk that lonesome valley. You’ve got to walk it by yourself...” doesn’t ring true for us today. We don’t view the Christian walk as a lonely walk.
 - 3. Perhaps the most frequent reason people give for leaving a particular congregation is “Nobody spoke to me. I never seemed to fit in.”
 - C. Spirituality is the “in thing” and we like it. Being spiritual (as opposed, for example, to atheistic) is becoming the rule rather than the exception. We can be spiritual as “new agers” as well as Christians.
 - D. Our work in the church is very much like our work in the world. If we are salesmen in the world, we may use basically the same techniques to “sell” the salvation found in Jesus. If we are accountants we may keep the church books. (There is nothing inherently wrong with using our worldly talents for the Lord. Rather, at times, we blend our secular work and our sacred work.)
 - E. We don’t emphasize being set apart as part of the Christian identity, that is, set apart as an individual. Rather we tend to emphasize our church family (a natural desire among Christians), “one nation under God” (the fellowship of all men and women), and unity (who can argue with unity?).
 - F. Our idealized behaviors, such as the ideal behavior of a Christian father, may not that different from society’s view of the good father (faithful in marriage, spends time with the kids, listens, shares in household responsibilities, etc.).
 - G. We may have undergone a dramatic change with our conversion, but does that change set us apart? Rather, we may be exchanging one support group for another (support from the church is to be desired but it doesn’t necessarily set us apart).

- III. Noah, a man set apart by God.
 - A. Noah was different from the beginning. In contrast to the evil men and women on earth at the time, “Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord...Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God.” Genesis 6:8, 9
 - 1. For all times, God has elected some people and set them apart, “Neither the sexually immoral nor idolators nor adulterers...nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified [set apart like the sanctuary of the Jewish

- temple is set apart from the world], you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” I Corinthians 6:9-12
2. Our fear of the doctrine of predestination has at times blinded us to this election. “God works for the good of those who loved him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son...those he predestined, he also called; those he called he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.” Romans 8:28-30
 3. God can choose anyone. Yet the men (and women) he selected as leaders in both the Old and New Testament were already different, set apart by their own behavior. He chose individuals who were not afraid to be different though they were not always doing right. Consider the loner shepherd David, the apostle Paul before his conversion, the hot headed apostle Peter, and Simon the Zealot.
 4. He selected men who were distinguished by their behaviors, not necessarily by their professions of faith. He at times even seems to target persons who are willing to argue with Him, such as Abraham, Moses, and Elijah.
 5. Ultimately he selects people who bend to His will and are willing to be set apart from the world.
- B. God drew a circle around Noah and his family and set them apart from the rest of humankind. “I am going to put an end to all people...So make yourself an ark...” Genesis 6:13, 14.
1. Does God draw a circle around the church? Will God condemn some people living today? As in the time of Noah, God judges humankind.
 2. Whatever God’s judgment, the scriptures are clear that, as Christians, we are different, a circle has been drawn around us, and we are separate from the world.
- C. God developed a special relationship with Noah. “I will establish my covenant with you.” Genesis 6:18
1. We enjoy special relationships at times to the degree that these relationships have unique rights.
 2. We are less inclined to enter special relationships when they entail unique responsibilities.
 3. Our unique role as Christian men (and women) involves both unique rights and unique responsibilities.
- D. Noah was obedient to God’s will. “And Noah did all that the Lord commanded him.” Genesis 7:5
1. A key characteristic of being set apart is heeding God’s will and not the will of those around us.
 2. We hear many voices calling to us today. Undoubtedly Noah heard many voices questioning his boat building. Yet we have no record of Noah being swayed by those voices.
 3. We speak about some people who are “in a zone”, as if they have blocked out everything around them while concentrating upon some task (working on a task at work, playing defense in a basketball game). Christian men

should work upon “being in a zone” as men set apart for God, as was Noah. Totally focused upon doing the will of the Father.

- E. By being set apart, Noah and his family were saved from the fate of the world. “Noah came out, together with his sons and his wife.” Genesis 8:18
 - 1. Salvation for Noah and his family meant that they had to be set apart from a world which was faced with death and destruction. To them, it was clear that they were different from those around. Do we have the same sense of being different from the world? Do we see a world “slouching toward Gomorrah” as Robert Bork suggested? Do we realize that our journey is a different journey than that of the world?
 - 2. Noah also saved his family and set them apart through his faithful acts. Do men today have confidence that through their faithful acts others in their family can be brought under the protection of God?
- F. Because he was set apart by God, Noah was given special responsibilities, unique responsibilities and limits are set on his actions. “ ‘Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth. The fear and dread of you will fall upon all the beasts of the earth...Everything that lives and moves will be food for you...But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it.’” Genesis 6:1-4

IV. Setting men apart for the work of the Lord.

- A. Recognize those men who have already set themselves apart, who are willing to be independent. These men may seem “different” and they may make us uncomfortable, but their willingness to be different should be recognized. What are some examples?
 - 1. The man (and woman) who decides they will not have a TV in their house.
 - 2. The husband (and wife) who decides that his family will manage on less financially because he wishes his wife to home school their children.
 - 3. The man who refuses to work in a setting where he feels that he cannot be honest and ethical.
- B. “Draw a circle” around our men and their families. By recognizing that the world is at times a hostile place, that it's tough to be a Christian in the world, that the church is truly different than the world, we draw this circle. Some examples include:
 - 1. Focus more on the “initiation” of men into the church (remember Session 3).
 - 2. Convene a special prayer time which recognizes the problems men face in work, both holding their jobs and living up to God's standards in the workplace. (We have done this at Brooks to some extent.)
 - 3. Be more open about many of the problems with our multi-media society and the influence of that media upon Christians. The church is not in the business of public censoring, yet we should be open about what we view as potentially damaging in the media.
- C. Encourage men to develop a special, individual relationship with God through Jesus. Means for accomplishing this include:

1. Accentuate the importance of individual prayer as well as group prayer (a number of men at Brooks engage in small group prayers).
 2. Highlight the importance of independent, self-directed study of scripture.
 3. Assist men to find their unique “call” from God. Distinguish the individual call from the call to the church as a whole (our approach with ministries is a step in this direction).
- D. Emphasize obedience to God’s will, not because obedience saves but because the saved are obedient.
- E. Rescue our brothers who are failing (dying) in the world. Help our brothers to recognize that salvation (and happiness) comes through the work of the Lord, not through success in the world.
1. If a brother has significant financial difficulty, work with that brother to assist him during difficult times.
 2. Develop church based programs to combat addictions (similar to AA).
- F. Emphasize that God has a special responsibility for every man. The church may not always be able to dictate that responsibility. Perhaps each man should seek on his own to find God’s unique work for him.
- G. Always remember that we are resident aliens in this world.

“He upholds the cause of the oppressed
and gives food to the hungry.
The Lord sets prisoners free,
the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down,
the Lord loves the righteous.
The Lord watches over the alien...”
Psalms 146:7-9

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