The Christian Man

Man—The Balancing Act

by
George Creach, MA., L.P.C.

Course II – Unit 5, Lesson 2
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P.O. Box 267 – Lancaster, TX 75146-0267

"If any person be in Christ, he is a new creature..."
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

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Before you begin this lesson, consider what you believe about the way a Christian man behaves and whether you believe you live up to that idea. **Write your thoughts on the enclosed** Response Sheet **and put it away until you finish the lesson.** Next, we recommend that you read the entire lesson through once without looking up the scriptures. **Finally, go back for a more in–depth study before completing the** Response Sheet.

I. Introduction

Too often we see ourselves as flat, one dimensional beings. We see ourselves as just one person. We are not. We are many people rolled into one. We play many roles. We are fathers, husbands, employees, employers, citizens, taxpayers, voters, friends, religious people, club members, athletes, and on and on and on.

This does not mean that we have split personalities. It means that as we go through life, we are expected to act certain ways at certain times. In other words, it is not appropriate to pitch a baseball during a family dinner or at work on the assembly line. Often, what is appropriate in one of the roles we play is not appropriate in another role we play. There are, however, times when the roles overlap. The role of citizen is also involved in the roles of being a taxpayer and a voter. The role of being a father involves the role of being a husband. As we act in our different roles, we make ourselves a complete, mature individuals.

Most people balance their different roles without a thought. Sometimes, the roles are so unlike that they create stress and tension our lives. An example is the guy whose job keeps him away from home for days, weeks, or even months at a time. What impact does this have on his role as father and husband? If the marriage does not end in divorce, there is little intimacy in it. As a father, he does not know his children and has little positive relationship with them. The children, on the other hand, often resent their absent father and rebel against what they see as him abandoning them.

II. Man the Individual

Over three hundred years ago, Thomas Fuller said, "Make not a bosom friend of a melancholy soul; he'll be sure to aggravate thy adversity, and lessen thy prosperity. He goes always heavy loaded; and thou must bear half. He's never in a good humor and may easily get into a bad one, and fall out with thee." What Fuller is saying is that before a man can have a stable relationship with others, whether it is friendship, marriage, or as a father, he must be a complete, mature person. He must be secure in his relationship with himself. Usually, we do not think about our relationship with ourselves, but we have one. How do we see ourselves? Do we see ourselves as competent? Do we see ourselves as loving? Do we see ourselves as kind and gentle? Or do we see ourselves as unlovable, mean, incompetent?

How we see ourselves and the relationship we have with ourselves is the foundation for all of our other relationships. If we do not have a stable, mature relationship with ourselves, we cannot have a stable, mature relationship with others.

A. Adam – Adam was a complete, mature individual when God created him. He was perfect in his relationships with God, himself, his wife, and nature. He remained a complete, mature man until he chose to become something he was never created to be, godlike. When Adam decided that he wanted to be like God, he rejected his basic manhood. He decided that it was not enough to be in God's image, God's steward of the earth, God's man.

What was the result of Adam's rejection of his relationship with God? Yes, he could understand the idea of good and evil, which is godlike. Was it worth the price? No! With this understanding, he also, lost his intimate relationship with God. He no longer walked and talked with God as a friend. He died both physically and spiritually. His relationship with nature was corrupted. At first he lived in harmony with the animals and the earth and had produced ample harvests with little work, now the animals feared him, and he had to toil and labor to scrape out enough food for his family. At first he and Eve were partners and helped one another, now he was to rule over her. He was once confident in being God's image, but now that image was marred, like a person who has been disfigured in a great fire.

In trying to be godlike, Adam lost everything. Men have lived with this loss for so long that we think that it is natural. It is not! It is unnatural in that God did not intend for us to live a life of corruption and exclusion from Him. While we live on this earth, we can regain some of what Adam lost when we turn to Jesus Christ. If we are faithful, we will regain all of it in Heaven.

B. Job – Job is a good example of a secure, mature man going wrong. Job's relationship with God seemed to be strong and secure. God even told Satan that Job was like "no one else on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil." (Job 1:8) God allowed Satan to tempt Job to get him to reject Him. Satan caused one disaster after another to happen to Job. He lost his children; he lost his fortune; he lost his health; his friends accused him of being ungodly, and his wife told him to "curse God and die."
Job's reply was, "I haven't done anything wrong; why is God doing all these horrible things to me? If only I could talk to God face to face and make him see what a good guy I am, then He would treat me better." Job's faith and trust in God gave way to self–pity and blaming God for his problems.

God gave Job his wish and appeared to him face to face. God told Job, "Who are you to question Me? Will you argue with Me? Are you going to tell Me how to run the universe? Do you really think that you can overrule or condemn Me? Now, quit whining, stand up like a man, and tell Me how you think things ought to be." Job's only reply was, "I am sorry for being arrogant and not knowing what I am talking about. Forgive me!"

It is easy to set back and criticize Job, but do we not do the same thing? When things are going well, we sit back and enjoy them and praise God for taking care of us. When things start to go sour, we give way to self–pity and ask God, "Why me?"

Job came to understand that he was wrong in thinking that God owed him and repented of it. How about you? When things start going wrong, do you get mad at God and reject Him? Or do you accept that because we live in an evil, fallen world, bad things happen to good people. Also, frequently things turn out badly for us because of our behavior. How many times have you blamed God or heard people blame God for the results of your/their own irresponsible behavior? When someone gets drunk, gets in his car, has a wreck, killing himself and several others, where does the blame lie? It lies with the person who did it. But often people blame God for allowing it to happen. Is this God's fault? Of course not. Often, it is painful, but we must take responsibility for our actions. Also, we cannot be responsible for the actions of other. Each of us is responsible for our beliefs and behavior whether we like it or not. We need to be like Job; when he recognized his error, he was man enough to admit it.

C. Jesus – Jesus is the supreme example of a secure, mature, complete man. Jesus is the supreme model of what it means to be a man. As we look at Jesus' life, we see a Man who could communicate with all levels of society. He did not care if they were

Jewish or Roman government officials, religious leaders, scholars, illiterate peasants, women (lowest people on the social scale), slaves, Gentiles, Samaritans. They were all the same, people lost in sin needing a Savior. His message to them was always the same. Repent and turn to God. When we look at Jesus the Man, we do not see a weak, effeminate person often portrayed in paintings. He was by trade a carpenter. This type of job required a person who was physically strong. During the three years of His ministry, He walked throughout what is now modern day Israel, the West Bank, and parts of Jordan and Lebanon. If you have ever walked long distances, you know how much strength and stamina it takes. Also during His ministry, frequently He and His disciples spent the nights living outdoors. At times, we see Him staying up for several days at a time. During the night of His betrayal, He was scourged by the Roman soldiers. This was an extremely cruel method of torture by beating. The scourge itself was a type of whip with many cords or lashes, instead of only one, tied to a wooden handle. Attached to the ends of the lashes were pieces of lead, brass, bone, and glass. A person was struck across the back with the scourge, tearing the skin and some muscle away from the body, leaving the veins, inner muscles and sometimes even the intestines exposed. The number of lashes varied, but the scourging usually continued until the person died or was unconscious. Scourging was so cruel that it was illegal to scourge Roman citizens. Jesus did not pass out and was even able to carry His cross part of the way to His crucifixion. As we look at the man who lived such a physical life and suffered such physical abuse, we see a man who was physically strong and had a great deal of stamina.

Not only was Jesus physically strong, He was courageous. When His religious and political enemies attacked Him, He did not pout, whine, or feel sorry for Himself. He stood up to them and censured them calling them “children of the Devil” and hypocrites. When they perverted the holiness of the Temple into a livestock market, He ran the corrupt merchants and their livestock out of the Temple. When they asked Him, “Who do you think you are, talking and acting like this?” He told them that He was God. When Pilate told Him, “Play along with me, and I will get You out of this mess,” He refused.

Jesus recognized the need for civil government and told His disciples to respect it. When asked if He could pay taxes, His reply was “Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's.” (Matthew 22:21)

We see Jesus using the full range of His emotions. We see Him grieved, sad, angry, loving, caring, fearful, courageous. When we look at the total picture Jesus presents, we see a person totally secure in His relationships with God and man. We see an

obedient Son of both God and Mary and Joseph, a close friend, a respectful citizen, a highly effective teacher, a respected religious leader, the embodiment of a real man. When you use Jesus as the model of manhood, imagine what changes will happen in your life.

III. Man the Social Being

Although man is an individual and our individuality is the basis of all of our relationships, we are social beings. We do not live in a vacuum. We live in some form of society. We have a desire to be around others, to feel needed, to love and be loved. It is not easy to balance our need for individuality against our need for sociability. Few of us are good at it most of the time.

Being a social being does not mean being the life of the party. It means that we need some form of relationship with other people.

A. Relations With Other Men – One of a man's biggest social problems is intimate relationships with other men. Too often men relate to one another only in a business or sport arenas. Think for a few moments about the number of times you called or visited a male friend. Did you do it just because you enjoy his company and want to be around him? Did you make up a reason to get together? "Let's get together for golf." "Come over and watch the _____ game." "Let's stop for a few drinks." "We need to get together to work on _____." "Can you come over and help me with _____." When was the last time you said, "I like your company; let's be friends."

   Our society has traditionally frowned on men being intimate friends with other men. Part of this is the fear that they will be considered homosexual. Another, is the idea of being the strong, silent, independent type. If you are a real man, you do not need anyone else. Also, other men were viewed as competitors, not as companions. When men follow this traditional theory, they are cut off from the companionship, knowledge, support, etc. that other men can provide.

   The story of David and Jonathan is a good Biblical example of intimacy between men. One, they had similar interest. Both men were great warriors and heroes of the people. They were both involved in their nation's politics. Jonathan was the crown prince, and David was a high official of the royal court. Two, they were in–laws. David had married Jonathan's sister, Michal. Three, their friendship was more important to them than others' opinions. Jonathan was not afraid to openly try to protect David from King Saul. At one point, Saul even mocked Jonathan for

siding with David and told Jonathan that he would never be king as long as David lived (1 Samuel 20:30–34). Four, their friendship lasted for years. It was not something that just happened overnight, it grew and developed over the years. Five, they made a vow of friendship (1 Samuel 20:11–17). Six, they were concerned for each other's welfare (1 Samuel 20:35–42). When David first heard about Israel's defeat at Mount Gilboa, the first thing he asked the messenger was how he knew that Jonathan was dead. In the lament about Saul and Jonathan's death, David called Jonathan his brother and declared their love for one another (2 Samuel 1:19–27). Also, after Jonathan's death when David became king, he financially and socially helped Jonathan's only surviving son.

When men can be as free and open in their relationship with one another as David and Jonathan were, they can become the mature complete men who God wants them to be.

B. Relations With the Government – Everywhere we look in the Bible, men are active in the governing of their nation. From Abraham, who made treaties with the surrounding city–states and waged wars with invading armies, to Joshua, who led Israel in the conquest of Canaan, to John the Baptist who demanded that the king repent of his wickedness, to Peter, who declared that Christians were to serve the government as long as it did not forbid them to worship God, and to Paul, who used his Roman citizenship to protect himself from unjust government officials, we see men active in government.

Christianity is not a theocratic religion, that is, it does not seek to rule the secular state. Christians, however, are not forbidden to engage in government. There is a major difference between Christians' being active in the political and governmental processes and Christianity being the government. In Romans 13:1–7, Paul talks about the relationship between the Christian of the First Century and Imperial Rome. He tells them to respect and support the government because (1) government is ordained by God and (2) government's purpose is to protect and care for the citizens. One point to remember is that in Paul's time, an inhabitant of the empire, even a Roman citizen, had no say in the running of the empire. All power was concentrated in the hands of the Emperor and his cronies. It makes one wonder what kind of advice Paul would have given if he were writing to people who lived in a democracy like we do today. In Paul's day about the only thing the Christian could do was to pray for the good of the empire. Today, Christians can actively try to influence the government to promote moral and ethical behavior of the government and its citizens. The Christian is not to try to force the government to become "Christian." In fact, this would be impossible

because Christianity's focus is on the individual and his relationship with Christ, not on a so–called Christian nation.

C. Man the Worker – God did not just drop man in the Garden of Eden and tell him to "do your own thing." Instead, man was given the job of (1) ruling over the animals, (2) farming and caring for the Garden, and (3) multiplying and filling the earth. It was only after Adam's sin that work became the struggle and toil we know today.

One of the big lies about work today is that our work is who we are. Nothing could be further from the truth. Work is what we do; it is not who we are. When we get these mixed up, we get into trouble. If we believe that we are our job, what happens when we lose that job? You know; it might have happened to you. We get depressed; family problems increase; self–worth goes down the drain, etc. If we remember that our work is something we do, then when we lose our job, it might cause us some concern and financial problems, but it does not destroy our personality and self–worth.

The Biblical view of work is that it provides us with food, clothing, and shelter. Paul tells the Thessalonians that if a person "will not work, neither let him eat." (2 Thessalonians 3:10– 15) How do we balance this with other scripture which talks about helping those in need. That is the key—those in need, that is, people who have lost their jobs and cannot find another job before their money is gone, people who are ill or handicapped to such a degree that they cannot work, or those who are too young or too old to care for themselves.

Another point to remember is that when a Christian is working for someone, outwardly he might be working for a man, but in reality he is working for God. Also, when you employ someone, treat your employee with respect (Ephesians 6:5–10).

D. Relations with Society – This is a kind of umbrella term that includes all of man's relations: family, government, friends, school, church, business, people on the street. The key to dealing with society in general and individuals in particular is the Golden Rule, "Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you." (Matthew 7:12) If you want the man or lady at the check out stand or the guy you pass on the street or the driver in the car behind you to treat you with kindness and respect, you have to treat them that way first. This does not mean that they will automatically do this (there are always some mean and evil people around), but the odds are better that if you treat them with kindness and respect, they will treat you with kindness and respect.

E. Family Relations – Family relationship will be discussed in Lesson 3.

IV. Conclusion

Man is both an individual and a social being. We can only be complete and mature when we are able to keep both parts of our being in balance. It is not easy; it is a lot of work. As we look at the great men of the Bible, we see that only Jesus, the Incarnate God, could balance the individual and social aspects of His being perfectly. The rest of them tried. Some were more successful than others, but they all failed to some degree. That is the way it is with us today. Does this mean that we should not continue to try balancing our individual and social parts? No! It just means that it is hard to do, but that the longer and harder we try, the more balance we will attain.

Now, please start over and study the lesson and the related scriptures. **When you finish your in-depth study, return to the enclosed Response Sheet and write your answers to the study questions about this lesson.**