

Strong Men, Weak Men

A society's health is largely defined by the character of its men. When men are spiritually strong, society is strong; when men are weak, everyone suffers.

"I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them. The people will be oppressed . . . Children are their oppressors, and women rule over them" (Isa. 3:4, 12).

"I go the way of all the earth; be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man" (1 Kgs. 2:2).



The third chapter of Isaiah offers a good description of what happens to a nation in the absence of strong male leadership. In predicting that women and children would rule over Judah, Isaiah was not insulting women and children; he was rebuking the men for not stepping up to their responsibility as leaders. When men shy away from the hard task of leading those under their care, then women and children must step in to fill the vacuum, and the quality of life goes down for everyone. Historically, when men have been weak, societies have gone into decline.

A strong man is not one who is mean, abusive, or overbearing. In fact, when a man resorts to bullying others to get his way, it is usually a sign of inner *weakness*, not strength. His lack of emotional self-discipline is a failure of leadership, not a manifestation of it.

Male leadership is essential at every level of the social landscape. Government, business, religion, military, family—in every

one of these areas, the best outcomes are usually achieved by men rising up to shoulder the burden of leadership for which God designed them. True, sometimes male leadership can be twisted into an instrument of evil (Nero, Hitler, Stalin); but their reigns of terror are ended by *good* men who are willing to sacrifice their comfort—and even their lives—for the benefit of humanity.

The men of the Bible illustrate this truth from several angles. Some were strong and exerted a powerful influence for good (Jesus, Paul, Jeremiah). Some were uniformly weak, resulting in a decline in moral and social stability (Eli, Ahab). Others were strong in some areas, but weak in others (Jacob, David). Many started out weak but gained strength as they grew into their roles (Moses, Gideon, Peter, John Mark). We could argue that a major sub-theme of the Bible is the never-ending task of developing men with character and conviction, men who can serve humanity as good leaders.

In politics, strong men make decisions based on what is best for the country, whether those decisions are popular or not. Weak men pander to fickle public opinion in a desire to be liked.

In the church, strong men have a firm conviction for truth, and defend that truth with integrity and consistency. The convictions of weak men are as tepid as day-old dishwater and are easily swayed by the winds of false doctrine.

In the family, strong men take an active role in building a healthy relationship with their wives, and in teaching, disciplining, and counseling their children in the path of righteousness. Weak men are too busy with their jobs and/or hobbies to devote time to their families, allowing the world to seduce them into a more destructive path.

What makes men strong or weak? To a large extent, strength begins with exposure to other men in boyhood—fathers, mentors, teachers. In the absence of these role models, a young man can still learn how to be strong, but it's a difficult challenge.

When David counseled his son Solomon to "be strong, and prove yourself a man," he was also speaking to every young man who faces the question of what to do with the rest of his life. There is much evil in this world, and a corresponding need for strong men who will stand up to evil and bring order out of chaos.

Young man, decide *now* which kind of man you will be.

— David King