

Act Like Men!

Happy Father's Day gentlemen! I thank the Lord for the many faithful fathers in this church. Thank you for being here, for faithfully serving the Lord and serving your family. May the Lord continue to bless you and use you in the most important endeavor of your life, to be a faithful husband and father. And thank God for the many faithful fathers through the years that have shared their leadership and their lives with this church. Carbondale has been blessed throughout its history to have men of vision and mercy serving as its pastors and deacons and teachers. My own father was a deacon in this church at one time. How thankful I am to have had a godly and loving father. So to all of you men and dads, happy fathers day!

Thanks for the welcome after our time away. We really enjoyed the time off. Thanks to the board who suggested it and to our wonderful pastoral staff who kept everything going so smoothly. You had a great sermon series on family while we were gone. Great job Pastors Sarah, Brian and Jeff. We had a great VBS this past week with 150-175 children learning about Jesus. Thanks to Pastor Brittany and all the volunteers who worked so diligently with our children. We also had a group of people helping with a makeover at a church at Prue this weekend. We were able to reuse the lumber from the stage we built in the gym during our remodel to bless this Baptist church and their youth facility. There has been a lot going on. In fact, it has all gone so well, we were tempted to stay gone!

I told Paula last week, other than being broke, I think we could get into this retirement thing, just hanging out together. We still love one another after being together 24 hours a day for a month. That's pretty good. In fact, somewhere in there we celebrated our 43rd wedding anniversary!

People have asked what we did and where we went. We didn't go far and we didn't do much. We spent a week at Grand lake and about a week in Texas and Arkansas. We thought about going to the beach somewhere, but just before we left the doctor put me in a boot because of a problem with my achilles so I decided walking on the beach in a boot wasn't a good plan. After a trip to Texas and up through Arkansas we were going to spend a few days at Branson but I had some kind of inner ear thing that came on rather violently and landed me in the ER at Branson for a few hours. We finally decided the best place for old people and their medical problems was Sand Springs so we came home and enjoyed some peace and quiet. Mostly we read! Not reading for sermons, but reading to refresh. I read three volumes in a series by John

Piper that examined the lives of influential Christians like Augustine, Luther, Calvin, George Whitfield, William Wilberforce, C. S. Lewis. I read a wonderful book by N.T. Wright, *Simply Christian*. I read a book on the life of Eliezer Ben Yehuda, the man who was essentially responsible for the rebirth of Hebrew as a modern language. I read a fascinating book on the Jewish roots of the Eucharist and a couple of others. Most importantly, I read the New Testament. I had decided to read it in a different translation. I mostly read and preach from the NIV but previously I used the NASB. It is actually considered a better translation, it's just not quite as easy to read for modern Americans. It was in reading Paul's letter to the church at Corinth that I ran across a verse that stood out to me. I underlined it and kept replaying it in my head. I felt this was the word I was to share on Father's Day. Paul ended his first letter to the church at Corinth with some final instructions and greetings to and from various individuals. Among those instructions were these: **“Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.” 1 Corinthians 16:13**

That phrase, “Act like men” really struck me. It's a command from the Scripture to all of the males in the house today, regardless of age. Dad's, on this father's day, it is a word for you, but single or married, a father or not, the word is for all of us: It's time to act like men. But what does that really mean? Let's examine this verse. A more literal translation would read like this: **“Watch! Stand in the faith! Be men! Be strong!”**

Watch! Be on the alert! For what? What are we usually watching out for? For an enemy, something or someone wanting to harm us or the ones we love. Paul tells us to be awake, alert, watchful so an enemy of our soul can't sneak up on us and destroy us.

In one of his New Testament letters, Peter puts it like this, **“Be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” 1 Peter 5:8** Men, Dads, there is an enemy prowling, looking for someone to devour. He wants to consume you, to destroy you. He wants to influence you to compromise, to indulge in fantasies of sin so he can ultimately pull you into sin. He wants to disarm you and defeat you so he can ruin and destroy your life, your relationship with God, your marriage, your family, your children. Dad, the devil fears the next generation of saints so he wants to destroy your family so he won't have to deal with your children living for God. He wants to defeat you and destroy your godly influence in your family. It's time to wake up. Be alert. There is an enemy, an adversary, scheming and plotting against you, trying to influence you to compromise, to give up, to give in.

Watch out for anything or anyone that would influence you to weaken your relationship with Jesus or to draw away from the Lord.

Single men. Teenagers. The devil is prowling around, looking to destroy you. He wants to destroy your future. He wants to rob you of your potential, to limit your influence in the kingdom. Get your guard up. Guard your heart. Guard your purity. Be a man of God!

Be alert. Watch! Jesus warned, **“Keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place and to stand before the Son of Man.” Luke 21:36** Jesus is telling us to stay alert and pray so we will be ready when he returns. Be alert because Jesus is coming again and we don’t know the day or the hour so we need to live ready, watching. Live in a way that is pleasing to him. Live so we can escape the judgment that’s coming on this world and we can stand before the Lord, in his presence. Wake up Dad. Wake up men! Be alert! Watch! Don’t let the enemy catch you sleeping. Don’t drop your guard. Keep yourself ready. Jesus is coming and the time is short. “Be on the alert” Paul says, but that’s not all. He continues...

“Stand firm in the faith!” Peter’s solution to that roaring lion that is trying to devour you? He said, **“...resist him, firm in your faith.”** As never before we must stand firm in the faith. What does that mean? That means we must hold to the truth of God’s word, the very foundation of our faith. The spirit of compromise is rampant in our culture, in our world, and in the church. Instead of accepting the authority of God’s word and ordering their lives accordingly, people decide what they are willing to believe, decide how they want to live their life, and then look for a Scripture to back up their position. They look for a church that will agree with them and allow them to live as they please. That’s not how this works. That’s not the faith we are talking about. We are talking about standing firm in the faith that has been delivered to us in the word of God. We are talking about standing firm in the truth of the Scripture that has been preached and practiced by the church for the past 2,000 years. Jude 3 declares **“I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” Jude 3** We must stand in the faith. We must stand upon the word of God. And we can’t stand on the word of God if we don’t know the word of God. This book is life! This book is truth, but we have to read it, study it, believe it, live by it, obey it.

I appreciate the emphasis we have here on teaching the word of God in our Sunday School classes. Mike Atkinson and Pastor Brian have come up with a new series of classes to

help us stand firm in the faith. I want us grounded in the word of God. It is a concern of mine that more and more churches are neglecting the systematic teaching of God's word. I hope you will make a point to attend one of these classes when they're offered and get serious about studying the word of God. There are so many things, so many storms in this life that will shake us, we must be rooted and grounded in God's word so we can stand firm in the faith!

Dad, you need to lead your family not only in coming to church, but in reading and studying and living the word of God. The church needs men and fathers who will lead the way in serving the Lord. So often we are dealing with the brokenness that results from having a fatherless generation. We need fathers to be godly role models in the home. We need men in the church to be role models for those without fathers. We need men and dads to accept your responsibility and stand firm in the faith. The enemy will distract and deceive but he can't do that if you know the word of God and you are determined to live by God's word! Be on the alert. Stand firm in the faith. Then Paul writes...

“Act like men!” He literally says, “Be men!” What does that mean for us, to be men? American culture has a cheapened version and a changing version of what a man should be. Gender roles are changing, culturally the lines of gender are being bent or blurred. What does it mean to be a man? If you ask what it means to be a good man, people suggest being honest, kind, faithful, helpful, caring. If you ask what it means to be a real man people suggest it means tough, aggressive, real men don't cry, don't show emotion, do whatever it takes to succeed, to get ahead. But what does Paul mean when he tells the men of Corinth to act like men?

Earlier in the letter he writes, **“Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.” 1 Corinthians 11:1** Paul is saying, “Follow me as I follow Christ. Be this kind of man, the kind that follows Jesus, that takes God's word and puts it into practice. Be a Christ follower. An imitator of Christ since He was the most complete man that ever lived.” This is what it means to be a real man.

When we look at Paul's letter to the church at Corinth, he has some rather harsh things to say. This church, like all churches, wasn't exactly perfect, so Paul includes words of correction to them. He tells them “you may have countless tutors, but you won't have that many fathers and I, Paul am a father to you in the faith.” Consequently, he says again, **“I exhort you therefore, be imitators of me.” 1 Cor. 4:16.** He says I'm sending Timothy to you and he “will remind you of my ways which are in Christ.” Paul was telling them real men live for Jesus!

Real men live like Jesus. Real men obey the word of God and if you want to know what that looks like on a daily basis, I invite you to look at me and my life, follow me as I follow Christ.

I know that's scary, but shouldn't that be our desire, as men, as fathers, to live our lives so that when others look at us they'll see Jesus? It ought to frighten us because the truth is someone is watching your life. If you're a Dad, your kids are watching to see how you live your life. I don't want to mess up, I don't want to sin because I don't want to have to look at my children and see the disappointment in their eyes. I don't want to fail God and I don't want to fail my family. I hear what Paul is saying, do you? Watch. Stand in the faith. Be a man. Do the right thing. Live for Jesus whatever it takes!

In his letter Paul tells them real men understand their body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. **“For you have been bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.” 1 Corinthians 6:20** In verse 18 he says to flee immorality. Real men don't sleep around. Real men don't cheat on their wives. Real men understand their body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Physically, sexually, what you do with your body, how you live and how you act, it matters because your body now belongs to Jesus. Glorify God with your body.

In chapter 9 he reminds them real men exercise discipline and self-control in their lives. He points them to the athletes training for the Olympic games. **“And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable...Run in such a way that you may win.” 1 Corinthians 9:24-25** Real men run to win – to win an imperishable crown. Real men understand that how we live is about more than just being a success on the job or being able to retire early. It's about eternity. Run in such a way that you win what matters – an imperishable crown of eternal life. Run so that if your family follows you they will follow you all the way to heaven!

In chapter 10 he tells us real men stand up when temptation comes, refusing to surrender but instead, trusting in the Lord. **“No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also...” 1 Corinthians 10:13**

Let me remind you Paul is writing to the men of Corinth. Corinth was a sea port with all of the sin that goes with pagan sailors reaching port. The Temple of Aphrodite was there with scores of temple prostitutes. Prostitution and sexual immorality were everywhere and readily available. Just like today. Paul is writing to men who have now been born again and have come

out of lives of immorality. In chapter 6 Paul wrote, **“Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.” 1 Corinthians 6:9-11**

This was the crowd he was writing to when he says “Be men. Act like men! You came out of this lifestyle. Don’t go back. Act like men (of God)! Remember that literal translation:

“Watch! Stand in the faith! Be men! Be strong!” It’s time to be strong. It’s time to be brave enough to say no to the devil and yes to God. It’s time to be courageous and take a stand against the wicked values of our culture. It’s time to be men refusing to compromise. Paul expected the men of wicked Corinth to take a stand and be brave enough to live for Jesus even though it could potentially cost them everything. If the men of Corinth could stand firm in the faith and be men, so can the men of Carbondale! It’s time to be men and take a stand for Jesus. It’s time to be courageous enough to surrender your heart and life and your everything to Jesus and live for him.

The next verse Paul writes, **“And let all that you do be done in love.”** The most loving thing you can do as a father on Father’s Day is to surrender your life to Jesus, to say yes to living for him. The most loving thing you can do is to serve him and be the man of God your family needs you to be. Men, are you ready to pledge yourself to be watchful, to be on the alert, to stand firm in the faith, to be men who will follow Jesus, to be imitators of Jesus, to be men whom others can follow as well? Are you ready to stand strong, to be strong in your faith and in your commitment to Christ? Heaven is counting on you and so is this church and so is your family, your wife and children. Teenagers and single men, your future wife is counting on you keeping yourself pure and free from sexual immorality. Those children you’ll have someday, they are counting on you being able to say, “I kept myself clean and pure sexually. Follow me as I follow Christ.” I’m asking you to give yourself to God and promise him you’ll be the godly man he is calling you to be. It’s time to act like men. God’s men!

“Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.”