

Vessels of Honor – Part 7 & 8

1 Thessalonians 4:3-4 *For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his **vessel** in sanctification and honour;*

In the last letter he ever wrote, the Apostle Paul once again stressed to Timothy how important it was to live a holy life, to stand strong, to not become entangled with the world, to depart from iniquity, to flee from lusts, and to follow righteousness. He wanted his young protégé to be a **Vessel of Honor**, so that his life could be useful and effective in God's Kingdom.

2 Timothy 2:19-21 *Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a **vessel unto honour**, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.*

That is our desire as well ... to become **VESSELS OF HONOR**, so that God can be glorified and the devil can be defeated in our individual lives!

When he writes to Timothy, notice that Paul gives us four characteristics that distinguish **VESSELS OF HONOR** from "vessels of dishonor" ...

1. They have purged themselves from iniquity ("lawlessness")
2. They have been sanctified ("set apart, separated, purified, made holy")
3. They are meet ("profitable, good") for the Master's use
4. They are prepared unto every good work ("deed, action")

I hope by now you understand the subject of HOLINESS better than you did before. I hope you realize that holiness is not about fitting into the culture of a particular denomination, and it is certainly not about keeping manmade rules. And if you do have issues with anything that has been taught, by now I hope you are beginning to realize that your issue is with what the BIBLE says, not with what the preacher or the church teaches. If you've gotten this far in our series, and there's still an "argument" in your spirit about some of these issues, please heed the words of Scripture:

Hebrews 10:24-26 *And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to **good works**: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we **sin wilfully** after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,*

James 4:17 *Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.*

Many of you are doing your very best to live an Apostolic lifestyle. Some of you have been doing it for many years, and for others this is all brand new. Some of you adopted this lifestyle even before you fully understood it, simply because you wanted to please God. That is wonderful! Always remember, with holiness or any other teaching of God's Word, **you don't have to understand completely to obey immediately**. It's true of holiness and separation, of tithing and giving, of prayer and worship, of faithfulness and submission, and it's especially true of the NEW BIRTH!

Many of you have already begun to feel the tension between your new life and your old friends. By the world, you've been called a fanatic or a cult member; by religious people, you've been called a legalist or a Pharisee. And that's GOOD, because that's exactly how it was with your brothers and sisters in the first century! Apostolic Christians have always been mocked and persecuted by those who rejected the teaching of the Apostles. And this was certainly true in their lifestyle of SEPARATION.

A fashionable Roman woman used virtually every beauty aid that her modern day counterpart uses. She began the day by arranging her hair and putting on her make-up. She painted her lips, applied black eye shadow, put on false eye lashes, coated her face with white powder, and smoothed rouge onto her cheeks. She wore her hair in an elaborate hairdo, complete with ornate layers of braids. Many dyed their hair blond. Roman women adorned the rest of their bodies as much as their faces. When going out, they would array themselves with jewels, often wearing expensive rings on every finger. Fashionable women insisted on wearing gowns made of imported materials such as silk, even though, pound for pound, silk cost as much as gold.

The early church father Clement commented, "The body of such ladies wouldn't fetch a thousand drachmas, but they will pay ten thousand talents for a single dress. So their clothes are worth more than they are." Even many Roman men wore cosmetics and dressed as lavishly as the women.

The early church discouraged the use of cosmetics and exhorted men and women to be content with simple clothing. Not only was simple clothing less costly, but luxurious dresses were often transparent and clung sensuously to a woman's figure. Clement remarked, "Luxurious clothing that cannot conceal the shape of the body is no covering at all. Such clothing, clinging close to the body, takes the body's shape and adheres to the flesh. It outlines the woman's figure, so that the whole shape of her body is visible to spectators, even though they cannot actually see the body itself ... Such clothing is meant for looking, not for covering."

The Christian's standard of modesty (for both men and women) differed greatly from Roman society. This was particularly apparent in the public baths. Bathing was the national pastime, and public baths were one of the primary meeting places of Roman society. In the early days of the Roman Republic, baths for men and women had been strictly segregated. However, by the second century, even mixed bathing in the nude was customary. Clement described it this way: "They are not embarrassed to strip before spectators, as if exposing their bodies for sale ... They even strip naked in front of their slaves and are massaged by them." However, in sharp contrast to the standard of their culture, Christians taught that men and women should not bathe publicly in each other's presence.

In Roman theater, the favorite dramatic themes were crime, adultery and immorality. Either boys or prostitutes played the female roles. Although the theater was a favorite pastime of educated Romans, Christians shunned the theater with disgust. Lactantius wrote, "They teach adultery by acting it out. How do we expect our young people to respond when they see that these things are practiced without shame and that everyone eagerly watches?" Tertullian added, "The father who carefully protects and guards his virgin daughter's ears from every polluting word takes her to the theater himself, exposing her to all its vile language and attitudes. How can it be right to look at the things that are wrong to do?"

We could go on and on, but let's just say that this separated lifestyle was NORMAL for the first century Apostolics. **They patterned their lives after CHRIST, not after CULTURE.** Originally, Christians were VERY different from the society they lived in. **Their lifestyle was their primary means of witnessing.** It's very convicting to read about them, because you quickly come to the realization that Christians who would be considered to have "above-average commitment" today would have actually been considered compromising, spiritually weak members of the church in the first century!

An individual living like the early Christians would certainly be considered a FANATIC by the church world today. And a whole group of Christians living like them would certainly be considered a CULT. So we are in good company, because that's exactly what happens – **the twenty-first century church world views today's Apostolics exactly the same way that the Romans viewed the early Christians!** Many today are disturbed at "holiness teaching" – but before we mock the LIFESTYLE of the early Apostolics, we'd better have a good explanation for their POWER! These people knew God – and that's why they lived a holy, separated lifestyle.

In today's Apostolic movement, many men seem to think that HOLINESS is just a dress code for women. Absolutely untrue! In fact, **it is God's will that Apostolic men stand out by their ACTION in our culture just as much as Apostolic women stand out by their APPEARANCE.**

1 Timothy 2:8-10 *I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.*

Notice that **WOMEN'S** holiness issues are standards of **APPEARANCE**:

- **ADORNMENT** ("adorn themselves")
- **APPAREL** ("in modest apparel")
- **ATTITUDE** ("with shamefacedness and sobriety")

Notice that **MEN'S** holiness issues are standards of **ACTION**:

- **APPETITE** ("lift up holy hands")
- **ANGER** ("without wrath")
- **APATHY** ("without doubting")

Men, God will **HELP** us, but He will not **FORCE** us! Like women ("in like manner also"), we must make a **CHOICE** to live by God's standards.

APPETITE

When men come before God in worship, they are admonished to approach Him with HOLY HANDS. But, ever since Adam's failure, men have been plagued with out-of-control APPETITES (LUSTS) within their own bodies that war against holiness. **LUST IS EVERY MAN'S BATTLE!**

Appetites are God-given, and are not wrong in themselves. The appetite for food is both natural and necessary in humans, but an unrestrained appetite in this area will lead to obesity and many health problems. Men, God will not REMOVE our appetites, for this would do irreparable damage to our masculinity. But He does expect us to CONTROL our appetites!

The Bible has much to say about our APPETITES; especially those that get out-of-control (LUSTS), for they destroy our spiritual life. Remember that LUST is not just a wrong sexual appetite, but any wrong appetite!

1 Timothy 6:6-10 *But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful **LUSTS**, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

1 Peter 2:11 *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly **LUSTS**, which war against the soul;*

Since the appetites that can cause lust cannot be removed from our lives, there is only one way to deal with lust – it must be subdued by something more powerful. This is precisely why you need the Holy Ghost! **ONLY AS WE YIELD TO GOD WILL WE BE ABLE TO NOT YIELD TO LUST!**

Romans 6:12-13 *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the **LUSTS** thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*

Ephesians 4:22-24 *That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful **LUSTS**; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*

Romans 13:14 *But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the **LUSTS** thereof.*

Galatians 5:16-17 *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the **LUST** of the flesh. For the flesh **LUSTETH** against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*

Ephesians 5:25 *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;*

1 Peter 3:7 *Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.*

One of the major battle grounds for men today is PORNOGRAPHY. You can't give HONOR to your spouse (or future spouse) if you are hooked on erotic imagery. Looking at it actually changes your brain chemistry and creates an ADDICTION. Looking at the FAKE always deadens your desire for the REAL. And no one has ever "turned this off" when they got married!

1 Corinthians 6:15-20 *Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

SEXUAL SIN is like no other sin – it is a sin against your own body, because it opens up appetites that will create a lifelong struggle against you IN YOUR OWN FLESH! And it hurts you on the deepest possible level, because sex is not only physical – it is connected to your soul.

Paul reaches back to Genesis to tell us that when you have sex with someone, part of you is permanently bonded with them. You will always have to deal with it – it WILL affect your marriage, even if you marry that person! But if it's with someone other than your spouse it is especially problematic, because YOU CAN'T "UN-ONE" ONE! Nothing else has such long-range consequences in your life. But young men, you can skip all this hurt if you will just live your life according to God's commandments.

YOU ARE NOT YOUR OWN, so honor God with your sexuality. Sexual activity has predictable outcomes by God's own design, and if we don't live according to His commandments, the consequences are negative (like the consequences of bad nutrition). So, there is no time to waste. If you are dabbling in pornography, fornication, homosexuality, adultery, or any other sexual sin, don't wait. WALK AWAY, AND START TODAY.

Our culture says "No one lives like you are preaching any more – this is the 21st century!" No one lived like this in the 1st century either, and that's why Christianity made such a huge impact on the world and on history!

We think of sin as an ACT. God sees it as a PROCESS with 4 steps:

James 1:14-15 *But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own **LUST**, and **ENTICED**. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth **SIN**: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth **DEATH**.*

DESIRE - DECEPTION - DISOBEDIENCE - DEATH

The devil wants you to only concentrate on the step of DISOBEDIENCE, for two reasons: First, he wants to blind you to the fact that the process has already begun long before sin shows up in your actions. Second, he wants to blind you to the fact that sin always brings death, or separation from God. So, even if you repent, you've lost ground that you must regain.

Most men make the mistake of thinking that they can "handle it." They don't realize how much their inward thoughts affect their outward attitudes and actions. And they don't realize that God already has a problem with lust being in their thoughts, long before it is ever seen in their actions! **Men, we cannot have HOLY HANDS without a HOLY HEART!** There is an unmistakable anointing that rests on men who are living a holy life!

Proverbs 23:7a *For as [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he.*

ANGER

In the modern era, our culture often defines “manhood” as the ability to control one's emotions. This has gotten us in trouble, and we know it, BUT WE STILL DO IT. However, men who refrain from expressing their emotions outwardly usually experience significantly greater levels of stress inwardly. And eventually, that unresolved stress turns to ANGER. Many studies have shown that, while women express themselves across a wide range of emotions, most men tend to reserve their emotional expression until they are angry enough to “let it out.” And that creates BIG problems!

ANGER is simply a strong emotion of displeasure arising from a feeling of injury. Anger is not sinful in and of itself, for the Bible tells us that God can become angry, and even gives us permission to be angry without sinning.

However, anger is sinful ...

- when it explodes quickly, without time to think rationally
- when the injury that causes it is only imagined, not real
- when it is disproportionate to the offense committed
- when it is directed against the innocent rather than the guilty
- when it is prolonged over time and becomes revengeful

Some dictionaries point out that the old English word “anger” originally meant “to choke” or “to strangle.” So we chuckle and think that’s what we would like to do to someone else because of our anger! However, we need to remember that **THIS IS WHAT ANGER DOES TO US!** On the one hand, anger releases a rush of adrenaline that makes you feel powerful and can even temporarily overwhelm pain; but on the other hand, unresolved anger can literally strangle you inside.

Many studies have shown that consistently angry men are more vulnerable to **physical problems** like ulcers, high blood pressure, heart attack, colitis, arthritis, kidney stones, gall-bladder trouble – over 50 major illnesses in all! They are also susceptible to **psychological problems** like substance abuse and aggressive/abusive behavior, and other severe problems in their **interpersonal relationships**. According to doctors, such inner tension accounts for 60 to 85% of all sicknesses today!

Whether anger is **expressed** through words and behavior or **repressed** through denial and internalizing, it is still damaging. Depression is defined as “anger turned inward,” and though it is bottled up for a time, it eventually will blow up in aggression.

ANGER ANNIHILATES NORMAL HUMAN RESPONSES! And the physical damage caused by anger is only exceeded by the spiritual harm it causes. **UNRESTRAINED ANGER IS SIN!**

Proverbs 25:28 *He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.*

Proverbs 16:32 *He that is slow to **ANGER** is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.*

Colossians 3:8 *But now ye also put off all these; **ANGER**, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.*

1. Nobody else can make you angry.

Anger is NOT caused by others – it comes out of your own heart. It is YOUR sin. Your heart is like a sponge – if it gets squeezed, what is inside comes out. The “squeeze” only reveals what was already inside. You can’t control your feelings; you can control how you express them.

Matthew 15:18 *But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.*

2. Anger is always the second emotion in any experience.

Anger is caused by our own unfulfilled desires. You want something for yourself, and someone or something is preventing you from having it, so you lash out in anger. You need to learn to recognize the FIRST emotion in your experience, and express that feeling to them instead.

James 4:1 *From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?*

3. Anger won’t make anyone else do the right thing.

Many times, we think our anger will somehow motivate others to do what we want them to do. But while anger might force someone to outwardly obey for awhile, it won’t change their heart toward you. The Bible declares that anger NEVER produces a godly result.

James 1:19-20 *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.*

4. Anger toward another person is having murder in your heart.

People tend to downplay the seriousness of anger, saying things like “I was just venting.” But Jesus said that anger is having murder in your heart, and that it is a violation of one of the Ten Commandments. Unrestrained anger can make us subject to God’s judgement.

Matthew 5:22 *But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.*

5. Anger makes things worse.

Anger NEVER helps a tense situation. Not only does it fail to produce a godly result, it actually makes things worse. Anger stirs up an atmosphere of strife, and actually stirs up anger in others. So anger always has the opposite effect of what we actually desire.

Proverbs 15:1, 18 *A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger. ... A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.*

6. Anger opens the door to Satan's influence.

When we fail to deal with anger in a timely fashion, either by asking forgiveness, forgiving others, or working things out, we open the door for Satan's influence. Anger is serious! Clear your "list" of offences every day, because if you hold on to anger it becomes bitterness.

Ephesians 4:26-27 *Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil.*

How we handle anger is a HOLINESS ISSUE for Apostolic men! And the greatest motivator for letting go of our anger toward others is that God let go of His anger toward us. We forgive others because Jesus forgave us!

Ephesians 4:31-32 *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and ANGER, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

ANGER IS NOT WORTH IT! AND ANGER IS NOT HOLY!

APATHY

APATHY is defined as "the absence or suppression of passion, emotion, or excitement; a lack of interest in or concern for things that others find moving or exciting." If there was ever a word that describes most modern males who occupy church pews, it would be APATHY. We've raised a generation of men who are quite content to let the women lead in spiritual matters, both at home and at church. It's directly opposite to God's plan!

In his book "Church Planter: The Man, The Message, The Mission," author Darrin Patrick paints a painfully accurate portrait of these men who have never matured spiritually to the point where they can lead their families ...

We live in a world full of males who have prolonged their adolescence. They are neither boys nor men. They live, suspended as it were, between childhood and adulthood, between growing up and being grown-ups. Let's call this kind of male BAN, a hybrid of both boy and man. Ban is juvenile because there has been an entire niche created for him to live in the lusts of youth. Our culture not only tolerates this behavior but encourages it and endorses it. This kind of male is everywhere, including the church.

Ban may be a frightening reality in the church, but he is the best thing that ever happened to the video game industry. Almost half the men between the ages of eighteen to thirty-four play video games every day – for almost three hours. The average video game buyer is thirty-seven years old. In 2005, 95 percent of computer game buyers and 84 percent of console game buyers were over the age of eighteen. Astonishingly, 75 percent of our heads-of-households play computer and video games.

It may be troubling to look at how Ban spends his money, but it is appalling to see how he relates to women. One needs only to follow Ban to "da club" to see what he thinks of and wants from the opposite sex. Again the stats tell the story. Every SECOND, \$3,075.64 is being spent on pornography, 28,258 Internet users view pornography, and 372 Internet users type adult search terms into search engines. Every thirty-nine minutes a new pornographic video is created in North America. On average, 1.3 women are raped every minute. That results in seventy-eight rapes each hour, 1,872 rapes each day, 56,160 rapes each month, and 683,280 rapes each year. One out of three women will be sexually assaulted in her lifetime.

Unfortunately, many young women today have given up trying to find Mr. Right. They are coming to the stark reality that they are probably going to have to settle for Mr. So-So. Ban is good at selling himself as a man, but the reality is that he is just a "man wannabe." It is a transcultural reality that assuming the responsibilities of husband and father makes a boy into a man, but Ban doesn't like responsibility, so he extends his adolescence as long as humanly possible. Curiously, the testosterone and adrenaline that encourage men to seek danger and risk are rarely tapped into for honorable purposes like lifelong marriage and parenting. Instead Ban settles for virtual reality and virtual relationships.

Perhaps one major catalyst for young men's love for recreational sports is that it replicates the kind of challenge and competitiveness sorely lacking from their own personal, professional, and spiritual lives. This would explain why so many men only seem to come alive emotionally on the inside and feel connected socially on the outside to their fellow "weekend warriors." It has become mainstream to be an adult boy.

And to all of that I say, “**WHAT A WASTE!** What a waste of time! What a waste of your God given potential! What a waste of your one and only life!”

It is well known in the social sciences that men are the “reasoners” while women are the “feelers” among the sexes. Even studies of the brain have shown that women perceive things differently than men. In general, men tend to be dominantly “left-brained,” while women tend to be dominantly “right-brained.” The word most descriptive of the left brain is “THINK,” while for the right brain the best word is “FEEL.” For instance, when a husband and wife are making a decision, she may decide largely by intuition (a right brain process). The husband may be slower in deciding since he largely uses logic (a left brain process).

Our Western civilization is so devoted to left brain education that the left sides of our brains grow slightly heavier than the right side during the school years. Statistics show that almost all children rank high in creative and emotional expression before entering school. By age seven, only 10% of children rank high in expression. By the time adulthood is reached, only 2% of the population ranks high in expression. There certainly appears to be some correlation between our idolization of logic and the death of expression! And for this, males in particular pay a heavy price.

Men tend to be THINKERS first, and FEELERS second. However, Apostolic men must realize that their natural tendencies toward logic, skepticism and critical thinking which serve them well in the business world are certainly NOT the foundational principles of God’s kingdom!

Hebrews 11:6 *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

Mark 10:15 *Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.*

Men tend to be the ones who “reason” themselves out of prayer, worship, or even salvation – because it isn’t “logical!” Their cynicism becomes their own worst enemy in their relationship with God! But Paul ties a man’s willingness to overcome this predominantly male trait to a man’s personal HOLINESS. He says that men are to “pray everywhere, without doubting.” An Apostolic man’s faith should be on display, publicly and exuberantly! Just as Apostolic women stand out in matters of EXTERNAL holiness (“appearance”), Apostolic men should stand out in matters of INTERNAL holiness (“action”). Yet how many times have you seen it reversed? Men, if you have failed in these areas, it’s time to STAND UP and STAND OUT!

Micah 7:8 *Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me.*