

Act Like Men

1 Cor. 16:13

Jarrett Stephens

I'm calling today's message: **Act Like Men**

It only makes sense with it being Father's Day, and here we are in our second to the last week of our *FaceTime* series. So far, we've talked about growing and strengthening the most important relationships in life. We've covered the relationship with:

- Mom...
- Our marriage...
- Our children...
- With those who don't know Christ...
- With God...

This week, it's all about dad. We're going to address how we can become better dads, have better relationships with our dads, and I believe becoming a better dad, starts with becoming a better man.

I love the **E.M Bounds** quote. Bounds was an attorney and Methodist minister. He wrote in his classic book, *Power Through Prayer* writes: **"We are continually striving to create new methods, plans and organizations to advance the church. We are ever working to provide and stimulate growth and effectiveness for the Gospel. This trend of the day has a tendency to lose sight of the man. Or else he is lost in the workings of the plan or organization. God's plan is to make much more of the man, far more of him than of anything else. Men are God's method. The church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men."**

Now, this message is not meant to take anything away from the ladies today – we certainly are better because of the ladies in our life – be it our mom, our wife, our daughters.

As mentioned in our message on marriage, the wife as God orchestrated and designed is a helper to the man. God saw that man was alone (NOT lonely) and it wasn't good, so he made a helper suitable for him.

Where would we be without the females in the room? Somebody said, "not very far!" – and it's true! It would NOT be a pretty picture and we of course honor you ladies, celebrate you and could not do life without you – for a plethora of reasons.

The message today though is geared toward the man, and it's based off one verse of scripture...but as I have found in my study this week, Paul pulled a great many scriptures together to write this one verse.

1 Cor. 16:13 – "Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong."

Four staccato-like commands – ALL rich in definition that I want to bring out today to hopefully challenge the men to do exactly what this verse says and that is to "act like men".

Now, I never like giving a verse without first giving the context. Paul has been writing the church in Corinth and these are some of the very last words he is writing to close out the letter. He has already dealt with the heavy subject matter and met some of the issues Corinth was struggling with head on...and this church had some issues, believe me!

- There was a lot of dissension in the ranks...
- There was a ton of perversion in the church – someone labeled the church in Corinth – “the Church Gone Wild” ...
- Believers were suing one another over various matters...
- People were abusing the Lord’s Supper – getting drunk and not considering others...

There was a lot going on! Paul wrote to them...rebuked them...he knew that a divided and selfish church was an ineffective church, and this verse that we are looking at here today is included in his closing challenges to them – and essentially what he is saying is, “Corinthian Church, I need you to GROW UP!”

This is the essence of the (v. 13) – “Act like men” means just that – act like men! Paul is calling on the church to stop behaving as children...to grow up...to mature in their faith.

Charles Swindoll – “They needed to set aside their fussiness, whining, and complaining and instead progress toward maturity in Christ, but they had failed to shed their dependence on the blankies, bottles, and binkies that had soothed them in their baby Christian days.”

Now, this was pointed to the entire Church, but I want to direct the message to the men today because I really believe as the man goes, so goes the home...the church...so goes society and culture.

And listen we KNOW this to be true. MOST societal ills can be traced back to men not taking seriously the role God has called us to. I won’t belabor this point because we probably have all heard these statistics, but it’s good for us to recall them and just consider the consequences of choices we make, men and the responsibilities that are before us.

The following numbers are from *The National Fatherhood Initiative*, and I’m telling you the numbers are so overwhelming concerning the need of a man being a man in the home and in our culture, that I struggled with which to bring to you.

Illus. – Fatherhood Initiative slide - Here is just one slide that encapsulates so many of the numbers **(Show Slide)**.

Men, we – MUCH like the church in Corinth are in a war. You see it in these statistics...we feel the truth of 1 Peter 5:8 – every day.

1 Peter 5:8b – “...Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

And so, in this battle against this very real Enemy:

- How do we make sure we stay engaged?
- How do we make sure we are fighting well?
- How do we make sure, specifically as men that we are growing up, maturing in our faith, and being all that God has created us to be in a culture that doesn't care, celebrate or today even refuse to define or redefines manhood?

Illus. Fall series – Which, btw – I wasn't going to do this until next year, but seeing everything that was going on with “Pride month” (NBC Today's.com put out article yesterday interviewing 8 dads explaining how abortion has helped them be the Fathers they are today – tragic reading the article), I was praying and just decided while I was in the mountains two weeks ago that we have to tackle some of these issues head-on as a church.

Everybody else is talking about them...the Church certainly should. So, please be praying for me and the preaching team – those that preach at our campuses. Starting in the Fall – in August, I'm going to do a worldview series and we're going to talk about some of the cultural issues we are facing from a biblical standpoint.

I'm talking about subjects like: biblical sexuality (male and female), sanctity of life, race, politics, money and possessions, evil and suffering. It's going to be a dandy, so pray for me...pray for us. This starts in the Fall.

So, as men, let's answer the question. How do we war, and war well? How do we take our responsibility as men seriously and grow up, mature in our faith and ensure we keep moving forward spiritually?

We take the same advice; Paul gave the church in Corinth that was facing some internal and external obstacles.

1 Cor. 16:13 – “Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.”

It's interesting, these four commands are typically given in the context of war. They are soldier's words...each have a militaristic tone to them.

They are present imperatives which means they are meant to be done in a continual, habitual way. You are always to be watchful. Always to stand firm in your faith. You are continually to act like men (i.e. grow up) and you are to continually be strong.

These are not suggestions, these are commands and to keep it in military terms, success in our job...faithfulness in our job as soldiers is to please our commanding officer, who we know is the Lord, Jesus Christ.

Now, before we break these four commands down and look at them in detail, I do think it is worthy to note that often times in scripture, the Christian life is pictured as a war! Think about that!

This imagery of war and the Christian life being one of a soldier is one that Paul used a number of times:

1. **2 Cor. 10:3-4 – “For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. ⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.”**
2. **2 Tim. 2:3-4 – “Endure hardship like a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.”**
3. **Phil. 2:25 - “Sending you Epaphroditus, my fellow brother, worker and soldier...”**
4. **Philemon v. 2 – “to my beloved, Archippus, our fellow soldier...”**

The point is this: We don't see in the scripture, people coming to know Jesus as Lord and Savior and then this idea of we just begin holding hands with him and walking through flower-laden hillsides.

For Paul, the Christian life was not a whistle while you work mentality. There is a reason he wrote in:

Eph. 6:11-12 – “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. “

The Christian life is pictured as one of people taking sides and battles ensuing...arrows flying...spiritually wrestling with an unseen world that manifests itself here on this earth in physical ways.

To quote **E.M Bounds** one more time: **“It cannot be said too often that the life of a Christian is warfare, an intense conflict, a lifelong contest. It is a battle fought against invisible foes who are ever alert and seeking to entrap, deceive, and ruin the souls of men. The Bible calls men to life, not a picnic or holiday. It is no pastime or pleasure excursion. It entails effort, wrestling, and struggling. It demands putting out the full energy of the spirit in order to frustrate the foe and come out, at last more than a conqueror. It is no primrose path, no rose-scented flirting. From start to finish, it is war.”**

I say all this at the outset for us to understand that we need to prepare ourselves mentally for what we are dealing with in spiritual realm so we can ensure victory in the physical realm.

Men, do you see yourself as a soldier? Fighting for your purity...fighting for your faithfulness to Jesus...fighting for your home...your marriage...your children? You should!

And as a soldier in Christ's army, with the aim of (1 Tim. 2:4) pleasing your commanding officer – how should you war? How should you engage in this fight?

1. Be watchful (1 Cor. 16:13)

It's a word that means to "be alert". It's this idea, men that the threat level is always on red. This is what Peter wrote...we looked at it earlier, the second half of this verse, let's look at the first half.

1 Peter 5:8 – “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

Be watchful! It means be on guard. You always have to be ready because you never know when your enemy is going to pounce – on you...on your family. He looks for opportunities to do what he does best and that is steal, kill and destroy.

In Eph. 6:11 – “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.”

The word “scheme” here means he has a strategic, methodological approach. Satan is NOT like God, he's not all-knowing, but he does watch film on our life, and you better believe that he knows our weaknesses...knows what we're susceptible to...knows where we are easily tempted.

And so, Paul here writes that we are to be watchful...ever-alert! This word here comes from a word meaning “to arise”. It means to get up...wake up! No more sleeping!

Illus. Alexander the Great – remember when I was first preaching, I didn't know what I was doing – *Hot Illustrations For Youth Talks* (Tell Story).

When you are a soldier, you are to be watchful. Secular Greek used this word “watchful” to describe people carefully crossing a river while stepping on slippery stones.

So, you get the picture of what God is calling us to here. As men...soldiers in God's army we are to be watchful...and careful...and ever alert because our enemy is insidious...crafty...cunning...and extremely patient. He will wait you out!

We ALWAYS have to be on the lookout. It's this idea of your head being on a swivel.

Illus. Head on Swivel

The enemy will distort...distract...he'll do whatever he can to create confusion and chaos, and then come in for the kill...knock the snot out of you! Decide today, men to be watchful.

Secondly, if we want to war well...if our aim is to grow up and make progress spiritually, we are to:

2. Stand firm in the faith

Paul loved this idea of “standing firm”. He hinted at this in the previous chapter, speaking about the resurrection of Christ and the hope we have.

1 Cor. 15:58 – “Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”

To stand firm is to be constant...to persevere...it’s this idea that you are not going to be swayed and you aren’t going anywhere. In the Ephesians passage about spiritual warfare, this is a word that Paul used over and over again. Count how many times he uses the word “stand” or eludes to it!

Eph. 6:10-18 – “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.”

Illus. There is something powerful about standing. Think about the times that you stand:

- stand to say the pledge...
- stand when you are meeting someone or introducing yourself to someone...
- stand when you are pumped or excited at a game...
- stand when someone important walks in the room...a bride on her wedding day, a judge in his courtroom.

Standing communicates something. And in this case it communicates that those of us that follow Christ, we are NOT going to cut and run when the going gets tough and the battle gets hard.

NO! We are going to stand our ground...we are going to fight. And we win so long as we (v. 13) “stand firm in the faith”.

- We’re not standing in our own strength...
- We’re standing in the Lord...

This goes back to what I showed you last week, as it relates to our identity. We stand in WHO we are “in Christ” and his gospel!

This is where we put our mind...this is where we put our heart! It's in the gospel that we have hope, strength and endurance for the battles of life.

Paul would write elsewhere (Phil. 1:27 and 1Thess. 3:18) – stand firm “in the Lord”. Our ability to stand against the Enemy...against his schemes, comes from standing strong in the Lord and in our faith.

We need this today! You want me to tell you how I know you are growing up in the faith – one major way?

Illus. Mark height on a wall – One of the ways we mark our height is every time we stand firm in our faith against temptation (cutting corners at work, fudging on expense reports, what we watch when we're by ourselves). Every time we say “yes” to God and “no” to letting our feelings dictate our lives, it's another mark on the wall. When we stand firm in the Lord at work (asked to do something that lacks integrity, and you stand firm) another growth spurt!

If we are going to war well, be committed to grow spiritually so that we can be the men and fathers God called us to be. Let's:

1. Be watchful
2. Stand firm in the faith
- 3. Act like men**

I won't stay here long, but I do think it's interesting that Paul used this terminology here. And again, if you wanted another translation, you could just use the phrase “grow up”.

I want to take some interpretative freedom here and just highlight that he told the church to “act like men”.

Men are to be leaders in the home...this is our God-given, God-ordained role. We are to lead (order in the home) ...we are to protect (go off on this!) ...we are to obviously love our wife and children sacrificially.

This is what men do! I always like to remind you that you can't do this apart from God's word...time with him!

Men, let me challenge you on something...we make room...we make time to do what is important to us (cooking out, golf, fishing, working on that car). Some of us will work hours and hours at the office on a project we are passionate about – we know everything about it inside and out – but then when it comes to spiritual things, we become so apathetic!

We think if we sleep with a Bible under our heads, we'll get spiritual truth in – we don't take that approach with anything else in life and I want to encourage you to reject it today!

Put the time and effort and energy in to grow spiritually...and again, this isn't something you can muster up, God has to give you the desire and the strength to do it!

For some, you need to hear the warning and words of:

Heb. 5:12-14 - “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, ¹³ for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.”

It's time we grow up! We don't act like children! How sad would it be to come over to my house for Father's Day lunch and there you saw me sitting in a high-chair and my wife serving me food like she's flying an airplane! No! The text doesn't say “act like children!

Notice also, that it doesn't say “act like animals!” There is a reason for that too! Hate to break it to you, but your little pets– he's in it for themselves. I know they are a man's best friend, but let me tell you something, they are using you! They want their back scratched, belly fed, walked and taken outside.

Animals are in it for themselves. I love little Rocket, but he's in it for himself! We are to act like men! Not animals.

Illus. Couples Talk – “Thou Shalt not Live in a Locker Room!”

We are NOT children. We are NOT animals. We are to “act like men”, which means we are to grow up into maturity! Take the lead. Be the example (FLC, Dads, Coaching, Ministry – PALS).

1. Be watchful
2. Stand firm in the faith
3. Act like men
4. **Be Strong**

This has nothing to do with physical strength of course. It's this idea of being strong and courageous “in the Lord”. You could use the word “empowered” – because this type of strength comes only from God.

This command is the repeated command we see throughout the Old Testament and when you read these passages, what is asked of the people is seemingly overwhelmingly...it's too big of an “ask” ... the people don't seem to be prepared!

Like this message here! Men, what's expected of us, almost seems like too much!

- ALWAYS be watchful...
- Be ready for war...
- Stand firm against the Devil and his temptations...
- Act like a man...
- Be responsible, grow up, take the lead

Make the list and it can get overwhelming with the pressures we face and are up against...BUT in this, the scripture says, "Be Strong!"

Look, you don't think it was overwhelming for Joshua to take Moses's place of leadership – but what was the word? 3x in the first 9 verses of Joshua chapter one – Be strong and courageous.

When David was charging young Solomon to build the temple – Solomon was young and experienced – what was the word David gave to him?

1 Chron. 28:20 – “Then David said to Solomon his son, “Be strong and courageous and do it. Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed, for the Lord God, even my God, is with you. He will not leave you or forsake you, until all the work for the service of the house of the Lord is finished.”

We can be “strong” because we know God is the “divine enabler”. He gives us his strength as we wait on him and trust in him.

Illus. Right Now – “Let go and let God” – No, we are to trust God and get going! There is a cooperation that takes place. If we want God's strength, we have to submit to his Spirit...do what he tells us to do. We get our strength from him and we walk out obedience in him – it's all him!

And listen, we need God's strength because the battles we face each day, will zap our energy...deplete our resources. We have to continually go back to God and ask him to fill us and renew us.

And this leads me to conclude this message with some encouragement as to how you can encourage the man of God in your life to be all that God has created him to be.

1. **Pray for him** – you would expect me to say this, but I mean it. The single best thing you can do for the husband or father in your life is to pray for him by name and ask God to confirm him to the image of Christ.
2. **Pull for him** – I originally wrote “Praise him”. I don't mean worship, but I do mean lift him up, honor him...most male egos are fragile!

I know we put up a big front, but it's because we are insecure. Be his biggest cheerleader – it'll do wonders! I can have a horrible day at work, but if I come home and Debbie is for me, all good!

3. **Pick him up** – If you see him fall, help him up. Never give up on him. Don't go sour on him. Make it your goal to be the one voice that is always going to be there to reassure him, telling him it's going to be okay.
4. **Push him forward**– I didn't say nag him! What I said was push him...and by this I mean believe in him, more than he believes in himself. Words of affirmation. Belief in him will go a long way! If you don't know what would push him forward, ask him – it's probably something more simple than you would ever think.

Men, let's be all God created us to be. I realize some of you had a great example for a dad...some a lousy example...some no example at all. Whatever the background, we have a wonderful Father in our great God.

Let's look to him, live for him...act like men and be all that God has called us to be.

Let's pray.

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.