

# THE MEASURE OF A MAN

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We are attempting to measure ourselves as men according to the characteristics the apostle Paul listed for mature spiritual men. We first saw that you were to be “blameless” and we compared it to getting a background check. It’s a summary characteristic that says there is no glaring problem or inconsistency in your life.

Then we looked at the phrase “husband of one wife.” It literally translates as “one woman man.” We saw that it has nothing to do with your marital status but is referring to sexual purity. Whether you are single or married you are to practice purity and “maintain your own vessel with honor.”

The third characteristic we encounter is that you be “temperate.”

1 Timothy 3:2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, **temperate**...

“Temperate” is not what you (probably) think it is. It’s not moderation. It’s a different word. The KJV translates it “vigilant,” and that better captures the characteristic the apostle Paul had in mind.

It’s derived from a word meaning *wineless*. It has to do with being alert and sober at all times. A little later Paul says the mature man is *not addicted to wine*. That phrase literally translates, *not beside wine*. While you could drink wine in that culture, and while Paul told Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach, the idea is that you’re not really to be associated with drinking alcohol.

We’ll look at wine and alcohol when we get to the further characteristic. Our word “vigilant” has more to do with having a clear mind at all times. Certainly that precludes being under the influence of wine or alcohol. But it goes well beyond that.

## **It is describing a person with discernment and balance in his thinking and judgment.**

The world is filled with scams and schemes. Christians are especially susceptible to being scammed because we can be so trusting of folks. It seems wrong, somehow, to be skeptical or express hesitation. I can't tell you how many ponzi-type schemes I've seen go through churches in the past three decades.

Some people go from church-to-church looking for prospects. Once they've exhausted a congregation by signing-up everyone they can, they move on to another fellowship then another and another. I'd say they are exhibiting a lack of vigilance. That's not what the body of Christ is for!

Then there is our propensity for believing all manner of weird conspiracy theories. Let me say this: There **is** a vast conspiracy by Satan. Scripture says that men are taken captive by him to do his will.

But that doesn't justify our being drawn-off into useless speculation about black helicopters and the like.

I'd also put in the category of being "vigilant" things like Y2K. Now I can't remember who, if any of you, was building bomb shelters ahead of Y2K! (I stocked up on TP). This isn't a slam on anyone. But, having said that, a "vigilant" man doesn't get pulled into the sensational.

Don't get me wrong: A "vigilant" man is no dummy, either. He can look at trends and make reasonable predictions and take normal precautions. It's all a matter of remaining clear minded and focused.

A "vigilant" man doesn't go off on emotional tangents, either. He maintains a sense of the peace of God. Obviously we all have our moments of imbalance. And there are what we call 'critical incidents' which throw us off for a time. But overall we stay spiritually 'calm, cool, and collected.'

A contemporary application of being "vigilant" might have to do with our approach to the seemingly overwhelming issues facing society today. It would be easy to get so involved trying to resolve society's problems through political and social means that we forget the necessity of preaching the Gospel. One author put it this way,

The greatest contribution we can make is to be everything God wants us to be, as individuals, as families, and as local churches. We'll then see people come to know Jesus Christ and experience personal salvation. Hopefully, God will then bring renewal and revival to our nation (Gene Getz).

Being "vigilant" does not mean you shirk responsibility. It's not an excuse to do nothing if there is something you can do to help. It means you keep what you can do in a biblical perspective.

Evangelical premillennialists like us get accused of being so heavenly minded we are no earthly good. But we're not advocating quitting your job, dropping out of society, sitting on a mountain and waiting for Jesus to rapture us. Get involved - to a point.

Jesus (obviously) was "vigilant." He never took His eyes off of His primary mission, which was the Cross. But it meant that for about thirty-years He did relatively nothing to impact society except learn obedience. Then, for three and one-half years, as He ministered He would often surprise His followers by doing things that didn't seem expedient:

- He went, for example, through Samaria when it was not the suggested route.
- He waited before heading to the house of Lazarus.

He was listening to His Father, being led by the Spirit, never losing sight of what was important.

Balance might be the best word to capture being "vigilant." You understand the times; you understand the Gospel; you respond with a proper biblical balance. You get as involved as necessary without losing sight of what is ultimately important.

Speaking of balance... folks who tend toward pentecostal excesses need to become more "vigilant." Often they are more excited that something happened than they are in determining what God was saying.

Folks who tend toward the other end of the Spirit-spectrum also need to become "vigilant." They, too, are out of balance.

Very few of us have perfect spiritual balance. We trend one way or another. Be honest and let God bring you into better balance in all things.

