

# THE MEASURE OF A MAN

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We are attempting to measure ourselves according to the characteristics the apostle Paul listed for mature spiritual men. A man must be like this in order to be considered for leadership in the church. A man ought to be like this regardless any position in the church.

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 [physical body] with honor.”

The third characteristic we encountered was “temperate.” It described a person with discernment and balance in his thinking and judgment who is not given to unbiblical extremes.

Then we discussed what it means to be “sober-minded.” We saw Paul use that word in the sense of not thinking more highly of yourself than you ought. Instead you learn to be content as the part of the body God has made you.

Now we come to “good behavior.”

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

The Greek word is *kosmios* and can be translated “of good behavior,” “well behaved,” or “respectable.” We get our english word *cosmetics* from the root word. In that sense it means “well-ordered” or “to adorn.” Cosmetics put a woman’s face in order and adorn her natural beauty.

For the most part we men don't wear facial cosmetics... *At least, I hope not!* But we do make choices of products and objects that "adorn" our bodies and our lives. The things we choose to adorn us say something about who we are and about Whose we are.

When Paul wrote to Titus he told slaves they were "to **adorn** the doctrine of God our Savior in every way" (2:10). They could either detract people from Jesus or attract them to Him depending upon their life and lifestyle choices.

Since we mentioned cosmetics, let's start with your face. Do you realize that facial hair has historically been much more than just a matter of personal preference? I did a little research into the beard in history.<sup>1</sup> Facial hair, or the lack of it, has expressed everything from religious belief, to political classification, to one's position in society.

- In ancient Egypt, beards were the norm for all men, but for the Pharaoh, his carefully cultivated beard was in fact a symbol of his power and authority.
- Very complicated and careful hair styles (including beards) can be seen adorning statues and embossments of gods, kings, soldiers and other notables from Mesopotamia and Persia.
- It is obvious that any Assyrian, Babylonian or Persian man was socially unacceptable without a carefully cultivated beard.
- The idea of a beardless Greek philosopher is unthinkable.
- Ancient Rome didn't follow the Greek tradition and the beard was considered to be more or less barbarian. All Roman emperors had shaven faces until Hadrian, who admired all things Greek and who, wishing to imitate Greek culture, introduced the beard to Roman high society.
- The Middle Ages saw a preference for shaven faces.
- Some renaissance of the beard was brought by the religious Reformation. Protestant leaders with beards (following the example of the Old Testament prophets) helped to popularize wild beards.
- Revolutions brought in the romantic bearded appearance. Europe saw a resurgence of the beard after the Napoleonic Wars, culminating in the revolutionary year of 1848. Goatees and moustaches adorned the revolutionaries, and also the new emperor, Franz Josef I. Soon, many European crowned heads (for example, French Emperor Napoleon III,

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<sup>1</sup> <http://sechtl-vosecek.ucw.cz/en/vousaci/p0.html>

Russian Tsar Alexander III and Prussian King Friedrich III) were displaying magnificent beards. Monarchs led by example, and thus the second half of the 19th century became the “golden era” for beards.

- All of that was ended by the First World War. The beard didn't fit the battlefield (mainly because of newly developed chemical weapons and the need to wear gas masks), and the golden time of the beard ended.

Abraham Lincoln was the Republican nominee for president of the United States. Election Day was less than a month away. Lincoln, a lifelong beardless man, received a letter written by Grace Bedell, an 11-year-old girl from Westfield, New York. Written October 15th, 1860, the letter urged him to grow a beard. It reads (in part),

I have got four brother's and part of them will vote for you any way and if you let your whiskers grow I will try and get the rest of them to vote for you you would look a great deal better for your face is so thin. All the ladies like whiskers and they would tease their husband's to vote for you and then you would be President.

He did and was the first president with a beard.<sup>2</sup>

So, you see, we can think all we want that facial hair is simply a matter of personal preference. In reality it is an adornment that communicates something about ourselves. While we have more freedom in modern America to have or to not have facial hair, it still might say something depending upon its kept or unkept condition and your status in society.

**All** our outward choices either detract or attract folks to the Gospel.

Clothing is the most obvious way we as men adorn ourselves. I need to take into consideration both biblical principles and cultural norms. Does what I wear in any way detract from the Gospel? Will it attract people to me so I can share with them? Is my clothing appropriate to the occasion - even if I don't want to dress a certain way?

The car I drive, or how many cars I own, can detract or attract. My house or houses and the neighborhood I choose to live in can attract or detract.

My hobbies and pleasures can detract or attract. What you eat and drink can, too.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://home.att.net/~rjnorton/Lincoln50.html>

This quality, “good behavior,” serves as a reminder to think about these kinds of outward things. It doesn’t tell me what clothes to wear or which car to drive or where to live. But all those things are important for me to seriously consider if I want to be in a position to reach others for the Lord.

Another emphasis suggested by “good behavior” is to be on your best behavior at all times. You can be appropriately dressed and still act inappropriately.

Paul summarized all this in First Corinthians when he said,

1 Corinthians 10:31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10:32 Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God,

1 Corinthians 10:33 just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

Paul subordinated everything he ate and drank, and everything he did, so as to be in a place to minister to others. He had to consider three very different groups: Jews, Greeks (Gentiles), and the church. It was quite a social juggling act! But he did so happily so as to offend no one.

Again I emphasize: **There is no list to consult.** But you *do* have the Lord to consult about all of these things.

If you have a daughter, there may have been a time when you had to tell her she was dressed or otherwise made-up inappropriately.

Well, God has you as His son. You, too, can dress inappropriately.

Don’t. Let your Father choose **all** your outward adornments so that you can be used by Him out in the world.