

## Noble Subjects

# My Dad's Wisdom

Dad's assessment of organizations was unambiguous to the point of being brutal at times. His classic line was: "First class men, hire first class men. Second class men, hire third class men."

Many a ministry with a fantastic brand (at that moment) was scorched by Dad's disdain when it became apparent that the famous leader surrounded himself with minions and "yes men."

Since then, I have developed more nuanced language for what a "second class man" is. The two most common terms we use are a leader with a spirit of slavery or someone lacking legitimacy.

Today I would like to explore a special niche of second class men and that is misogynists. This is generally defined as the hatred of, or distrust of, women.

Sometimes this is the result of wounds. Rudyard Kipling was raised in a boarding school with the redoubtable Mrs. Holloway whom he considered guilty of "... calculated torture—religious as well as scientific."

From this, presumably, emerged his enduring propensity to portray women as predatory creatures.

Mrs. Holloway does not have a monopoly on wounding boys. A comic strip character recently referred to his deceased mother as "a terrorist in an apron."

Broadly speaking, however, I think most misogyny is the result of the smallness of the man, not his woundedness.

Most babies were born with a propensity to compare. As language and social competence emerge, the lifelong habit of comparing oneself to others emerges unbidden and usually remains unsubdued.

When the results of the comparison are unflattering, a child has three options. He can compete and rise above the chosen metric. He can opt out of competition and embrace inferiority as normative. Or, he can seek a way to tear down the offending high achiever, in order to eliminate the problematic assessment.

Many millions of words have been written as to how each child makes his choice. Often, that poorly reasoned first decision becomes baked into his perspective and lifestyle as years go on.



Humans are broadly designed by God to be competitive. Men are more blatant in the object and manner of their competition. Women can be more subtle and nuanced, but are equally relentless at comparison and the resulting vices.

Rather than attempting to stamp out a quality that has been inherited from most of our ancestors in massive quantities, we would do well to redefine the goal of competition.

For Dad's "second class man," competition meant looking larger than someone else.

For me, the ultimate art form in life is fathering, and I define that as finding and unpacking the treasures God has built into someone else.

Hence, "winning" can be measured by the quality of the people you have nurtured. To the degree that a man surrounds himself by people who live life robustly, with wisdom and perspective, demonstrating passion and incarnating principles, to that degree you have a first class man.

So misogyny is simple and it is the mark of a small man. Cheap shots and devaluing actions against women do not make the man seem strong. In actuality, they reveal him to be small.

A man who has learned to find the treasures in his wife that she was not even aware of, and who has made provision to unpack those treasures is the really big man – one who not only is utterly unperturbed by the immensity of his wife's essence and achievements, but he glories in them.

In the Proverbs 31 portrayal of the virtuous woman, we find a primitive level picture of a good marriage. The tragedy of the passage is found in verse 10. "A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies."

The author revealed his own smallness by assuming that a wife of noble character had to be "found." The hunt for a good wife continues to this day. That man at least had the grace to be utterly unintimidated by his wife's comprehensive excellence in every cultural metric.

Far more noble is the work of Christ who gathers a bunch of people ranging from road kill up to some modest levels of competence, and invests Himself in washing and healing us. THEN He demonstrates His consummate greatness by crafting myriad circumstances to reveal to us what He already knows about our treasures, and to then invest His power in helping us unpack those things.

At no point is He ever intimidated by the most extravagant level of excellence any part of His Bride ever achieves. Rather, He celebrates our journey with a fierce joy, greater than even our own.



THIS is a first class Man, who surrounds Himself with the fruit of His labor, pointing to US as the proof of His manhood.

John 17 stands as the unparalleled indictment of misogyny through the ages.

"I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.

"I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word.

"All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them.

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message.

"I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one. . ."

It doesn't get more clear than that. "And glory has come to me through them."

Jesus' glory did not come from how high He elevated Himself above His disciples. It came from how high He elevated them.

The metric is still the same. Are you a real man? A first class man?

Show me your manhood by the people around you – especially the women – whom you have unpacked to the point that they shine brightly in their own right.

Jesus passed that test with flying colors.

"When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus." Acts 4:13  
NIV

A first class man, **hires** a first class man. But a truly extraordinary man GROWS some first class men.

Men, who can you point to as proof of your manhood?

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