

THE HERALD

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The Manly Virtue of Magnanimity

By Kevin DeYoung

John Witherspoon was the president of Princeton (then called the College of New Jersey) from 1768, when he arrived from his native Scotland after a career in pastoral ministry, until he died in 1794. Twice during his presidency—in 1775 and again in 1787—Witherspoon preached a message before commencement on a theme we don't hear a lot about today. "My single purpose from these words at this time," he told his students, "is to explain and recommend magnanimity as a Christian virtue." In a day when presidents (from both parties) have been known to berate their opponents with foul language, in a cultural context where courage is often in short supply, and in an online world where offendedness is promoted next to godliness, we could all use a fresh exhortation to magnanimity.

The title of this article calls magnanimity a "manly virtue." By that, I don't mean that magnanimity is unique to men or that women are not also called to this trait. After

all, Witherspoon calls it a Christian virtue. But I do think magnanimity is a virtue particularly befitting to manhood, and that manhood bereft of magnanimity is especially lamentable. When the Apostle Paul enjoined the Corinthians to be strong, to stand firm in the faith, and to "act like men" (1 Corinthians 16:13), he was calling men and women to courage, but he was also embracing the notion that fortitude in the face of opposition is what we associate with manliness.

According to Witherspoon, magnanimity entails five commitments: (1) attempting great and difficult things, (2) aspiring after great and valuable possessions, (3) facing dangers with resolution, (4) struggling against difficulties with perseverance, and (5) bearing sufferings with fortitude and patience. In short, the magnanimous Christian is eager to attempt great things and willing to endure great hardships.

Witherspoon took for granted that the world approves of magnanimity. His concern was that some might conclude that calling men (like his Princeton graduates) to strength and valor and ambition does not fit with the tenor of the gospel. Even today, if you hear the word "masculinity" at all, it

is likely to come after the word “toxic.” Christians have often struggled to know how godliness and manliness mesh. But virtues, Witherspoon insisted, can never be inconsistent with each other. He noted that while the gospel would have us mourn for our sin and cultivate a humility of spirit, we are also “called to live and act for the glory of God and the good of others.” This means that the truly pious man, in striving for greatness, will seek to gain possessions more valuable than earthly riches. “The glorious object of the Christian’s ambition is the inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away,” Witherspoon preached to his students.

Christianity is not opposed to ambition, but ambition will look different for the Christian. “Everyone must acknowledge,” Witherspoon said, “that ostentation and love of praise, and whatever is contrary to the self-denial of the gospel, tarnish the beauty of the greatest actions.” True greatness does not lie in self-promotion, endless bravado, and passing along our own praise. Likewise, manliness does not mean we must be larger than life gunslingers and gladiators who swagger into town ready to kill or be killed. There is more than one way to be brave and many ways to be strong. Not everyone will be gifted with brains or brawn. Not everyone will have the opportunity for world-altering heroism. “But,” Witherspoon noted, “that magnanimity which is the fruit of true religion, being indeed the product of divine grace, is a virtue of the heart and may be attained by persons of mean talents and narrow possessions and in the very lowest stations

of human life.”

If magnanimity calls us to attempt great things, it also compels us to endure great suffering. Merriam-Webster defines magnanimity as “loftiness of spirit enabling one to bear trouble calmly, to disdain meanness and pettiness, and to display a noble generosity.” Would that this describe our political leaders, our intellectual leaders, and Christian men more generally. While we all should disdain pettiness, there is something particularly discomfiting when a man feels the need to advertise the offenses against him and swing at every offender. The magnanimous person does not bear grudges, does not wallow in self-pity, does not demand penance, and does not stoop to settle every score.

In the end, the two parts of magnanimity are inseparable, for the great man is measured not only by what he does but by what he does not do. We would do well to be more like David pardoning Shimei than the sons of Zeruah looking for the next enemy to execute. Bearing burdens, eschewing meanness, and setting an example of noble generosity is not just a saner and more effective way to live; it is the way of the cross. For the manly virtue of magnanimity is the way of the One who accomplished great things by defeating His foes, even while crying out, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Taken from: <https://clearlyreformed.org/the-manly-virtue-of-magnanimity/>

Are You Faking On Social Media?

By: Paul David Tripp

We all know that people don't put their real version of life on social media, which is full of struggles and disappointments. We curate the best, the funniest, and the most attractive version of ourselves for the watching world to like.

Take the parents that plan a day trip for their family, with the hopes of experiencing joy, gratitude, and bonding. But the outing is hardly peaceful. The siblings fight the entire time, and the parents lose their patience and say things they regret.

But at the end of a conflict-filled day that you swear never to do again, the parents snap a family photo with fake, forced smiles and post on Instagram with the caption, "Great day out with the family!"

Social media can be dangerous because it allows us to create a false identity of who we are.

What is our identity as followers of Jesus Christ? First John 3:1-3 is an incredibly helpful and encouraging passage:

"See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He

is. And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure."

If you need a reminder about your identity as a child of God, this passage says it all. It covers your past identity, your present identity, and your future identity.

Being secure in your identity as a child of God removes your need to be regularly liked, praised, accepted, affirmed, respected, and agreed with.

In this life, John says that you can expect that the world won't understand or affirm you because it did not understand or affirm Jesus.

And that's okay. The Creator and Lord of heaven and earth, who rules all things by his wisdom and power, placed his love on you and named you as one of his children.

So the next time you sit down to scroll or post on social media, stop and remind yourself of who you are by means of glorious, adopting grace. Remind yourself of the identity you already have and, because you do, the identities you do not need.

Here is your freedom from frantically seeking horizontally what you've been given vertically!

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This content was originally posted on the Wednesday Word, a weekly devotional with Paul Tripp on www.paultripp.com"

FUNNIES

Before listening to little ones' chests, a nurse on a pediatric ward, would plug the stethoscope into their ears and let them listen to their own hearts. Their eyes would always light up with awe. But she never got a response equal to four-year-old David's. Gently he tucked the stethoscope in his ears and placed the disk over his heart. "Listen," she said. "What do you suppose that is?" He drew his eyebrows together in a puzzled line and looked as if lost in the mystery of the strange tap-tap-tapping deep in his chest. Then his face broke out in a wondrous grin. "Is that Jesus knocking?" he asked.

Pastor Smith always preached for only twenty-five minutes. For years he had done this. You could set your clock by it. But one Sunday he went on and on. It was fifty-five minutes before he stopped.

Later someone asked him what happened. "I always put a cough drop in my mouth before I preach," he explained. "It always lasts twenty-five minutes. When it's gone, I stop. But today I made a mistake. Instead of a cough drop, I put a button in my mouth."

High school student, Nathan Sohmer of Idaho, conducted an experiment in science class a few years ago that reveals a serious problem. He told his classmates and teachers that they should sign his petition to ban

a dangerous substance. This substance - dihydrogen monoxide - he revealed, is a component of acid rain. In its gaseous state, it can cause serious burns. Accidental inhalation can kill. To make matters worse, it contributes to soil erosion, decreases the effectiveness of automobile brakes, and its presence has been detected in some terminal cancer tumors. Virtually all of the 50 students and teachers signed the petition with no questions asked. How about you? Would you sign? Or would you have thought to inquire, "Just what is dihydrogen monoxide?" Or did you realize that the petition they signed called for a ban on H₂O -Water.

A young girl visited a farm one day and wanted to buy a large watermelon. "That's three dollars," said the farmer. "I've only got 30 cents," said the young girl.

The farmer pointed to a very small watermelon in the field and said, "How about this one?" "Okay, I'll take it," said the little girl. "But leave it on the vine. I'll be back for it in a month."

Two friends were watching the eleven-o'clock news. A report comes on about a man threatening to jump from the 20th floor of a downtown building. One friend turns to the other and says, "I'll bet you ten bucks the guy doesn't jump." "It's a bet," agrees his buddy. A few minutes later, the man on the ledge jumps, so the loser hands his pal a \$10 bill. "I can't take your money," his friend admits. "I saw him jump earlier on the six-o'clock news." "Me too," said the other, "But I didn't think that he would do it again!"