

Becoming a Renaissance Man of God

I recently stumbled across a few articles that suggested the world needs more Renaissance Men. This caused me to pause and reflect on what that actually means for guys today. As I read further on the topic though, I saw a parallel with God Buddies: becoming a Renaissance Man will help you become a better man.

Let me explain by starting with a definition.

Renaissance Man Defined

The phrase “Renaissance Man” evolved out of the Renaissance era, a period throughout the 14th and 16th centuries in which there was a flourishing of the arts, sciences, learning, and philosophy.

The term was most often used to reference some of the most talented artists, inventors, scientists, and thinkers of that time period, like Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, William Shakespeare, William Byrd, Dante, Nicolaus Copernicus, Galileo Galilei, and Rene Descartes.



**Presumed self-portrait of Leonardo da Vinci,
located in the Royal Library of Turin**

Here is how Wikipedia describes it:

The terms Renaissance Man and, less commonly, homo universalis (Latin for “universal man” or “man of the world”) are related and used to describe a man (or woman, as “Renaissance woman”) who is well educated or who excels in a wide variety of subjects or fields. The idea developed in Renaissance Italy from the notion expressed by one of its most accomplished representatives, Leon Battista Alberti (1404–72): that “a man can do all things if he will.”

Renaissance Men typically use both left-brain and right-brain types of thinking. They are curious, risk-takers, creative, have perseverance and self-discipline, and a thirst for knowledge and new experiences. They display excellence in physical, intellectual, artistic, and social fields with deep expertise in at least one field but are exceptional in others.

For example, da Vinci excelled as a painter, sculptor,

botanist, mathematician, and learned about much more. He invented prototypes of flying machines, studied human anatomy, and achieved great and lasting fame during his own lifetime.

Today's Renaissance Men or universal men could include musical artist Bono, entertainer Justin Timberlake, inventors Steve Jobs and Elon Musk, and financier Warren Buffet.

Becoming a Renaissance Man

The idea of becoming a Renaissance Man developed from the notion that a man can do all things "if he will". It embodied the basic tenet that man empowered and limitless in his capacities for development. This led to the notion that people should embrace all knowledge and develop their capacities as fully as possible. Thus the gifted men of the Renaissance sought to develop skills in all areas of knowledge, in physical development, in social accomplishments and in the arts.

Since a man's capacity for personal development is "without limits", it suggests that men should develop competence in a wide range of abilities and areas of knowledge.

The ideal state is that every guy should become a Renaissance Man, especially since the ability to do so is easily within his grasp.

Jack of All Trades or Master of None?

In a post titled How to Be Renaissance Man, the Art of Manliness provides a breakdown of four areas that guys need to master in order to become a Renaissance Man:

- Knowledge
- Physical Development
- Social Accomplishments
- Arts

I would also add that all men need to acquire some practical skills or “basics of adulthood” that necessary to succeed in life such as:

- handling minor household repairs
- ability to cook a variety of foods
- managing their budget and schedule
- becoming competent in good etiquette and conversation

You can call these the art of being a gentleman.

Rightfully so, the AoM post has a section though called “*Jack of All Trades, Master of None, OR True Renaissance Man?*” which implies that the proliferation of knowledge and creation of new fields (even creation of subcategories within existing fields) makes it nearly impossible to have the expert-level knowledge in any one field much less many fields.

So the phrase “jack of all trades, master of none” is probably more appropriate but seems hardly aspirational if we can not, in fact, achieve it all.

Renaissance Men Never Stop Learning

Most importantly, Renaissance Men had a thirst for knowledge about many things. They developed an expertise in at least one area but were constantly learning.

Continual learning is more than simply dabbling with a subject by reading an article or book. It means you study deeply enough to fully grasp the concepts and knowledge on a subject in order to properly teach others about it.

So whether you go back to school full-time, enroll in a night school class, or take an online or audio course, continual learning is a critical aspect for men. As they say, if you are not growing, you become stagnant and boring.

Discovering that one area of expertise that becomes your passion gives you a shot at being a Renaissance Man. It also helps you become someone from whom others will want to learn.

Like Renaissance Men, God Buddies Learn

I believe that all men should learn to master at least one field while aspiring for competence in multiple fields.

As I wrote in my post **Traits of a GB Relationship: Teachability and Desire to Improve**, God Buddies want to learn about and from the greatest men in history.

It is often said that “experience is learning from your failures but wisdom is learning from the failures of others”. This wisdom gained can help you manage through your own “successful failures” that you will certainly encounter at some point.

GBs gain wisdom by surrounding themselves with men who help them become better men. We develop a deep, authentic, and trusted relationship with guys who have been down the road ahead of us and encountered the ups & downs of life. This could include engaging with a mentor, a teacher, a coach, a boss, or a coworker. You become a disciple or student – both for personal and spiritual growth since it helps them become a well-rounded man.

So while God Buddies are always learning about many fields and many people, they also study the ways of Jesus Christ.

Achieving Excellence; Not Perfection

One key to being a Renaissance Man comes from acknowledging that you can not achieve perfection in everything.

There are certain Christian traditions and denominations that teach the possibility of “perfection” as the process of achieving spiritual maturity. It is a maturity that comes through the process of “sanctification”, which means you are becoming more holy; not doing everything perfectly.

So while some feel we should continually strive for perfection, I prefer to say we should strive for excellence in

all we do.

I'M NOT PERFECT.
I'M ONLY HUMAN.

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Spiritual maturity comes through a continual union with God to see just how deep and wide His love is for you. This also helps you learn how to love other people just as Jesus did.

It was helpful when I realized that there was only one Perfect Man in history, who mastered and perfected everything and why Jesus Christ has become my role model for how to become a man.

To that end, the next post begins a series about how men learn to understand and manage their emotions; another of the traits of Jesus, the Greatest of all the Renaissance Men!