

“Challenging Toxic Masculinity Across Religions: A Call for Balance and Equality”

By Joe Blakely

Many religious traditions have, throughout history, upheld gender norms that emphasize male dominance and female submission. These norms can manifest as rigid expectations for men to demonstrate strength, stoicism, and authority while discouraging emotional vulnerability and empathy. Such notions have led to harmful consequences, reinforcing the gender gap, and marginalizing those who do not conform to these roles. In some cases, religion has been used to justify patriarchal systems, perpetuating discrimination and violence.

Some Christian denominations and sects hold patriarchal beliefs, emphasizing male authority within the church and the family. This can lead to the subjugation of women and reinforce rigid gender roles. Additionally, restrictions on women's roles exist within certain Christian traditions, where women are often barred from holding leadership positions in the church, perpetuating a view of male dominance.

In Islamic traditions, some individuals or groups may misinterpret Quranic verses to justify male authority and control over women. This can lead to practices such as the seclusion of women and limits their roles in society. Moreover, in some Muslim-majority societies, an emphasis on male family members protecting the honor of the family can lead to controlling and violent behavior.

In Orthodox Jewish traditions, men are primarily responsible for religious rituals, and women's roles are often restricted to supporting these rituals. This reinforces male authority and can lead to a sense of male entitlement. Additionally, in some Jewish communities, men and women worship separately, reinforcing gender distinctions and traditional roles.

Toxic masculinity in religion is a complex issue, deeply rooted in centuries-old traditions and cultural norms. However, as societies evolve, religious communities are increasingly recognizing the importance of challenging these toxic aspects. By reinterpreting religious teachings, promoting gender equality, and fostering empathy and compassion, faith traditions can contribute to healthier, more inclusive expressions of masculinity that benefit both men and women. This shift is not only vital for religious communities but also plays a crucial role in promoting a more equitable and compassionate world. It is a journey that requires understanding, dialogue, and a commitment to positive change within faith communities.

