

## **NEXT: The Gospel and the Next Generation**

Biblical Manhood & Womanhood – Part 2

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### **Genesis 3**

If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, let me invite you to open with me to Genesis 3. We covered a lot of ground last week and we have a lot more ground to cover this week on a vitally important, very interesting subject, biblical manhood and biblical womanhood. How does our gender reflect the glory of God? Does God have a design for men that is different than His design for women? What does the Bible say about these things? Not pop psychology, contemporary culture, political policy, anyone and anything else. What does God say? Then, how does all of this affect the way we pass the gospel on to the next generation? That's the overall question we are looking at. How in obedience to Psalm 78 can we pass faith in God, knowledge of God, on to future generations, to children yet unborn?

We said from the start, it doesn't matter what kinds of programs, activities we have for children, students, if we are not biblical men and biblical women with biblical marriages, biblical parenting, biblical singles, then we will have missed the whole point. So what does biblical manhood and biblical womanhood look like? What does God call us to train boys to be? What does God call us to train girls to be? Same? Different?

John Piper, pastor in Minnesota, said,

The tendency today is to stress the equality of men and women by minimizing the unique significance of our maleness or femaleness. But this depreciation of male and female personhood is a great loss and is taking a tremendous toll on generations of young men and women who do not know what it means to be a man or a woman. Confusion over the meaning of sexual personhood today is epidemic. The consequence of this confusion is not a free and happy harmony among gender-free persons relating on the base of abstract competencies. The consequence rather is more divorce, more homosexuality, more sexual abuse, more promiscuity, more social awkwardness and more emotional distress and suicide that come with the loss of God-given identity.

## **Summary of Manhood & Womanhood in Genesis 1-2...**

So what is God's design for manhood and womanhood and what does this look like in practice? This is what I want us to dive into today—part two. We looked at part one last week. I've got at the top of your notes a summary of manhood and womanhood in Genesis 1 and 2. Then we looked at last week... If you're visiting with us this morning or if you missed last week, then some of what we talk about today may not make a lot of sense. I'm going to try to give you a brief overview here.

I mentioned last week that some of these statements here might even sound chauvinistic or domineering in our context today if they're not understood in light of the context of what Scripture is teaching in Genesis 1 and 2. But we saw three truths:

One, God created men and women with equal dignity, both men and women created in the image of God, in the likeness of God, as representatives of God. Man not superior to woman; woman not superior to man. Any man who belittles a woman is violating the design of God. Any woman who disparages a man is undercutting the beautiful design of God. Men and women created by God with equal dignity. At the same time, created with different roles, roles that don't call into question one's dignity or worth in any way. This is what was clear.

We looked at Genesis 1 and 2 and walked through eight reasons why we know this is true. Different roles—man created to be the head in a position of loving authority, created first by the design of God with responsibility, representation, authority, entrusted by God; and woman created to be the helper. Genesis 2:18 and verse 20, used twice this word, woman created as a helper suitable for man, equal in dignity, different in role, in a complementary way. In a good way, not unfair, not demeaning, because we realize God did all of this as a reflection of Himself.

He created men and women as a reflection of the Trinity. God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit. Equal in essence, worth; different in role. It's not chauvinistic or domineering for God the Father to have authority over God the Son; for God the Son to submit to God the Father. For the Son to sit at the right hand of the Father is not a bad thing. This is a good thing. This is where we see that understanding the personhood of God is huge for understanding our own manhood and womanhood. Created, all of us, men and women, with equal dignity, different roles, for our good and His glory.

Now what I want us to see at the beginning today is how sin has woefully distorted those two roles and we bear—feel—the effects of sin. Broken relationships with men and women abound all across this room. Distorted ideas of manhood and womanhood abound all across our culture. What I want to show you is it all goes back to Genesis 3. So I want us to read it. Now this is a story I'm guessing that many of us have read before but as we read it, I want you to hear and pay attention closely to the interchange between man and woman and the effect of sin entering in the world on man and woman in different ways. So let's read Genesis 3 and then let's ask God help us understand this. Genesis 3:1:

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.*

*And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the*

*Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."*

*The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."*

*To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."*

*And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."*

*The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.*

*Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" Therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life (Gen. 3:1-24).*

Let's pray. Oh God, we confess that we live in a land of confusion and distortion when it comes to your design for us as men and women; that we are plagued by our own sin and by the sins of others in ways that we can't even see this whole picture straight. And so we confess our need for you, Oh God, by your Spirit, through your Word, to bring clarity to our minds and our hearts. Help us to yield—all of us, men and women—to yield to you, to your truth. By your Spirit help us to understand it in our lives, to apply it to our lives and in the process that through Christ you would make us the men and the women that you have created us to be. Toward that end we pray and lean on you in these next few minutes in every way. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## Sin's Distortion of Manhood & Womanhood in Genesis 3...

Alright, sin's distortion of manhood and womanhood in Genesis 3. Every detail here is important. I want to show you how the anatomy and the consequences of sin are intertwined directly with manhood and womanhood. I want to show you how sin affects man differently than it affects woman in Genesis 3, how it expresses itself differently in man and in woman, and how the results of sin are different in man and in woman.

### Manhood...

Let's start with manhood. I want you to see both an active and a passive picture in both manhood and womanhood as sin expresses itself in men and women to see how there's an active picture and a passive picture. So starting with man where we begin really in Genesis 3 with a passive, spineless abdication of his responsibility. This is the essence of what Adam did in Genesis 3:1-5. You say, "Well, Adam didn't do anything in the first five verses of this story." Precisely. He stands by and does nothing.

Notice how the serpent—in the very way that he tempts this couple—he is subverting the design of God. He does not come to the head. He does not come to man. He comes to woman. For all we can tell, man is just sitting idly by. And he's saying to woman, "Why don't you lead the way? Why don't you make this decision?" The serpent undercutting the design of God in the very way that he is tempting. And then you get to verse 17 when God speaks directly to Adam, what does He say? "*Adam, because you have listened to the voice of your wife.*"

Before He even addresses the fact that Adam ate the piece of fruit, direct disobedience to the command of God that Adam had been given, He says, "fundamentally, you listened instead of leading. You stood silently by doing nothing, like a wimp" and then has the audacity when God confronts him in his sin, to blame the woman. Spineless abdication of responsibility that is alive and well today in men, husbands and dads who refuse to lead—who sit, watch TV, play videogames, surf the internet, never come home from work—who don't step up and take responsibility for wives, children, women. Males who think they are men but in reality are little boys who are shirking the responsibility that God Himself has entrusted to them. We see this all over the place. Spineless abdication of responsibility; abdicating the responsibility for headship before God.

So then you go to the other extreme and what you have is a more aggressive picture, selfish abuse of his authority. So the other side of the spectrum in reaction. Man rises up and says, "Okay, I'm not going to be a wimp in this relationship. I'm going to dominate this relationship. I'm going to rule." Some believe that at the end of verse 16, "*he shall rule over you,*" that word there is really depicted as a picture of harsh, forceful, oppressive ruler-ship, domineering, which is a distortion of God's design. That's what we talked about all last week. Headship does not equal domination. God's design is not domination. That is a distortion of God's design: man controlling woman; man abusing his position of authority in their relationship.

You see both of these pictures today, right? You see domination in some circumstances. You see abdication of responsibility in other circumstances. And notice, as a result, how punishment for sin in man's life is then specifically linked to his responsibility. As a result of sin, man will experience pain in his role of breadwinning. Adam had been given a command in Genesis 2:15, "*The Lord God put the man in the garden to work it and to keep it*"—to provide. This is something that man was commanded to do in a way that woman was not commanded to do—working the ground, providing for his home. And God says as a result of

sin, “your working, your toil will bring struggle and eventual defeat.” This is gender specific punishment for sin. Sin’s distortion of manhood.

### **Womanhood...**

Now womanhood—womanhood that God had designed to be good in Genesis 2 that is marred in Genesis 3. Again, see both passive and aggressive dimensions here. On the one hand, passive: spineless dismissal of any responsibility. You see, we can’t misunderstand the picture here. It’s not that woman was not responsible for her sin here in Genesis 3. Man certainly had an ultimate level of responsibility. We saw that last week when God confronts man initially in the accountability for sin. But woman was obviously and clearly directly responsible for her disobedience to God. There is a distorted picture as a result of sin that leads—particularly when it comes to submission—sin distorts this role and causes woman to think, “Okay, well, if I’m the helper, he’s the head, then I’m not accountable for what I do. I’m just the helper.”

Maybe she sees...maybe the woman sees her husband or her children doing something they should not be doing and she doesn’t do anything about it because she says, “That’s my role.” Or maybe her husband is sinning against her—abusing her—and she sits idly by thinking that’s what submission is all about. That is a tragic distortion of biblical womanhood. God has created no woman to be a doormat. He’s created women with the responsibility before God for how they think, for how they live, the choices they make, the way they use and present their bodies.

Side note here, as we come up here on summer around here. I want to say to the women in our midst that you have a responsibility before God for the way that you dress during the summer, not to lead men into sin. Some would say, “Well, that’s their problem if their mind wonders there.” It is their problem and it is most definitely your problem. Do not do what Eve did in Genesis 3, leading your brother into sin. Run from every appearance of that. Guard your brother from sin in every way you can. No spineless dismissal of responsibility.

So there’s passive pictured there and then there’s active or aggressive expression of sin in womanhood, selfish defiance against authority. Now the key here is the end of verse 16 when, as a result of sin, God says to the woman, “*Your desire shall be for your husband.*” Now why is that bad, that the woman will desire her husband as a result of sin? Why is it bad for the woman to desire her husband? What does that mean, desire? Well, you go to the very next chapter, chapter 4:7, and you see the same word, same language used when God is speaking to Cain about sin in his life. Listen to what God says to Cain, chapter 4:7, “*If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well [listen to this], sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.*” Same language there. Sin’s desire is for you. Is it good for sin to desire you? No. Sin’s desire is to overpower you, to oppose you, to work against you. That’s what sin does.

So it’s the same picture that’s being used here in chapter 3:16 when God said, “*Your desire will be for your husband,*” you will desire to overpower him, to oppose his leadership, to work against his leadership. This is defiance of his authority. Your desire will be to usurp his leadership with your own leadership, to fight his authority with your own. Not in a complementary way but in a competitive way. The result of sin in you. You say, “I’m going to do this my way, my rule, regardless of what my husband says or does. I’m in charge here.” That is in a very sinful sense desiring the authority that God has given to man. A picture that is evident in many, many women and many, many marriages. And here, in the same way that we saw God’s punishment uniquely fitted to men, we see God’s punishment in sin uniquely fitted to women.

As a result of sin woman will experience pain in her role of childbearing. Just as God had given man unique, specific role of providing for the home, working the ground, God has uniquely given woman the role of bearing children. Man, most definitely, does not have that role. So God says to woman, "I will surely multiply your pain as a woman, as you bring forth children. In other words, that which I have created you uniquely to do as a woman will bring about pain in your life as a woman. So you put this together and you realize just how much sin is intertwined with manhood and womanhood. This is not just a generic picture of sin in Genesis 3. This is a picture of sin that is a direct assault from the adversary on manhood and womanhood as God has designed it to be.

You can almost picture Satan at the end of Genesis 3 just laughing, saying, "I've got things so distorted now, they'll never figure this thing out." You'll have aggressive men so everybody will say, "Well, you need to be more passive." You'll have passive women; you'll say, "You need to stand up and be aggressive." They'll go back and forth between distortions, i.e., contemporary culture. They'll go back and forth between distortions and they'll never get to the root of the issue. So I want to take us to the root of the issue. When you put all this together...

And the results of Genesis 3 we know are all across this room. The results of Genesis 3 are all over. Marriages in this room, homes in this room, experiences you've had with moms and dads in this room, distortions of men and women all over our culture. So what shall we do?

And this is the beauty amidst one of the, in a sense, the worst chapter in the Bible. We've talked about it before, Genesis 3:15 is a promise of grace. It's called the *protoevangelium*—the first gospel. And it's God saying, in the midst of the entrance of sin to the world, to the serpent, "I'm going to raise up an offspring from woman and He shall bruise your head. You will bruise His heel, you will hurt Him; He shall bruise your head." Some translations say "strike your head"—in other words, destroy you. And it's a promise that God says with the entrance of sin in the world, "I'm going to send one from woman who will conquer sin and Satan and who will bring my redemption."

And so what shall we do in light of the effects of sin all over our marriages and our homes and our culture on manhood and womanhood? What we must do is look to Christ because He is the one who conquers sin and its effects. And this is the beauty of what we realize. Okay? You come to Christ; you are saved from your sins. You trust in Christ as your Lord and Savior and then you begin this process of sanctification where you and I as followers of Christ are being made into the image of Christ. Sanctification—all growing into the image of Christ. This is where we realize that as you and I are being conformed into the image of Christ, we're not just being conformed into the image of Christ generically—certainly some similarities across the board—but we're being formed into the image of men and women and sanctification.

If sin affected and is expressed in certain ways among men and women, then salvation and sanctification will then be expressed in certain ways among men and women. And our salvation in Christ is not just about becoming the people God desires us to be, but our salvation in Christ is about becoming the men and the women God desires us to be. Turning from sinful expressions of manhood and womanhood—sinful inclinations of manhood and womanhood—to, in Christ, be redeemed as the men and women He desires. So that's where we come to God's design.

This is where I want to take the three chapters we've now looked at and some of this is a bit of summary that we've already looked at but I think this is going to help us to lead to

application. I mentioned last week I want to serve the application today—what does this look like in our lives? And this will be the first major step toward that, pulling all of this together, God's design for manhood and womanhood.

## **God's Design for Manhood & Womanhood in Genesis 1-3...**

Now the key is, this here is the ideal, okay? God's design. None of us are there and there are all kinds of different situations represented across this room I know. One of the things I wrestle with most in this text in preparing for this time this morning is sensitivity to what I know are all kinds of different situations in men's and women's lives all across this room. Unique situations in just about every chair. So let's bring it together. Let's see what the ideal is here and then say how can we, from all our different situations, by the grace of Christ pursue God's design?

### **Manhood...**

So starting with manhood, we've seen clearly man's primary responsibility is to lead. He is head. As we saw last week in 1 Corinthians 11 and Ephesians 5, God has entrusted in His design from the beginning, men with the primary—not sole, we'll get to that—but primary responsibility to lead for the good of woman. This was good in Genesis 1 and 2. It's bad from Genesis 3 on because of the way man leads. But it was good in the design of God. Good for man and good for woman.

This is not leadership for self-appeasement, self-gratification, self-exultation. This is leadership for the good of others. Christ is our leader and He is good, right? He is a good leader and so we gladly submit to Christ our leader. God's design, and that's the whole picture, His design is for men to lead in a way that reflects Christ. So God's design is for man to lead for the good of woman. Some say, well what about men who are abusive to women, domineering over women? That's not good and that's not God's design.

There's a manual on church discipline from the second century—a second century manual on church discipline—and this manual gives the following instructions. Listen to this sentence: "If there is a man who is abusing his wife in the church, the pastor should take two stout elders and go visit that home." Yes! Take that boy out back with some men and have a talk.

That is not the design of God. This is for the good of woman and ultimately for the glory of Christ, meaning—follow this—man realizes that he is a leader under authority. Man is not the ultimate leader. He is the head. Christ is the head of man. Christ is the ultimate leader—ultimate authority—and man in the design of God never assumes the authority of Christ over woman.

Man leads in a way that points woman to the authority of Christ. That's God's design from the beginning. That's why God set up the whole picture—to show who Christ is. This is what drives men to lead—good of women and glory of Christ. And in that, man is accountable to God for two things mainly, based upon what we see in these three chapters.

First, man is accountable to God for protection of his wife. Man clearly accountable to God here in Genesis 3 when he does not protect his wife from the adversary. This is what we see all throughout Scripture in spiritual warfare, in physical warfare, in family warfare—man is protector. All throughout the history of God's people in the Old Testament, it's men that go forth to war—not women. You look at the New Testament, Joseph is told by God to protect Mary and his child by going to Egypt. Men are commanded in the church in the New

Testament to protect the body, which I should have put in your notes—really protection of women. Because yes, this plays out, obviously, clearly in a relationship between a husband and wife but in a general sense, we all know this.

If you have two single guys and two single ladies walking down the street together and an attacker comes up, we all know it is not a sign of manhood for the two guys to step back and push the ladies forward. Spineless abdication. We know this. We know this. Any guy who rolls over to his wife in bed and said, “I heard a strange noise downstairs, will you go check it out?” has problems—is outside of the design of God.

Man accountable to God for protection of his wife and for provision, specifically in the home. When God doles out this punishment for sin, He’s directly addressing the responsibility he had given to man to work and to provide—to work the ground to provide for his family. A leader provides. A man feels accountability for that provision.

Now that doesn’t mean sole accountability, i.e., the Bible is not necessarily saying here that women should not work outside the home or it’s wrong for women to help provide in the family. But the primary accountability here is upon man as leader in the home. And that’s important because the reality is there are obviously various circumstances—men who have been disabled, who have been paralyzed, who have something debilitating that has happened in their lives where they are not able to do this. Man, it’s not that he can’t fulfill his manhood, that he’s not manly as a result of this, but he feels the weight of that responsibility. Even if he is not... He does what he can as best as he can. He works but he feels the weight of that accountability for protection and provision as a leader for the good of woman and the glory of Christ. So that’s God’s design for manhood.

### **Womanhood...**

Then womanhood. And you’ll notice here, this is complementary. None of these are intended to stand alone. Where man’s primary responsibility is to lead, woman’s responsibility is to support. She is a helper by God’s design in Genesis 2. She is not devalued by that but she is honored by that, in the same way that the Son is honored before the Father. So she supports—follow this—key words here, through a humble disposition that yields to man’s leadership. Through a humble disposition that yields to man’s leadership.

Now the reason I put disposition there is because I know, I know there are all kinds of different circumstances in this room. That’s what makes this issue really difficult to apply. Because I think about women in this room. There are women who are single, women who are widowed. There’s women who are divorced. There’s women who are married to non-Christians. There’s women who are married to men who claim to be Christians but there’s no fruit of the gospel in their life; men who claim to be Christians but are spinelessly abdicating their responsibility or abusing their authority. Then there’s women who in this room are married to men who obviously are not perfect but are seeking to provide loving, godly leadership, protection and provision.

Which, on a side note, I have yet to meet a woman who has a husband that desires to show loving, godly leadership, protection, provision, humble sacrificial care for her—I’ve yet to meet a woman that is complaining about that; that says God’s design is not good. Now I’ve met a lot of women who have not seen that but when this is there, we see this is good. It is very good.

And so knowing that there’s all these different circumstances around this room, knowing that there’s manhood nonexistent in many cases, the reason I use the word disposition is



because there is in the pattern of God and the design of God, an inclination—a disposition—that He has designed women to desire that, in a good way, that kind of leadership. To not oppose this kind of leadership that we've seen in manhood but to receive the kind of leadership we've see in manhood. There's a disposition that says, "I want to submit. I want to follow loving, godly leadership and authority." That's the disposition there.

Well you say, "What about situations where you've got a wife for example who's really, really gifted; the husband just not so gifted?" Well, should she still follow his leadership? Absolutely. This is the design of God based on position, not on ability. So any husband, any husband, regardless of his gifting or his wife's gifting, any husband knows that his wife has gifts that he does not have. Any husband who is a wise leader is going to maximize the gifts of his wife.

I'm technically senior pastor in this church. First among equals among the elders. But it would be foolish for me to lead in a way that was, "Okay, I do this, I do this, I do this," and it doesn't matter what anybody else is doing. I want to maximize leadership around me. Any wise, good leader, husband in a home, is going to maximize. But the picture is there is a humble disposition that yields to man's leadership, no matter what the dynamic is. There's a desire, there's a good desire to not oppose leadership but to receive leadership.

Then keep going with me. With ultimate devotion to following Christ's leadership. This is key. Because we talked about husband, yes, as the head of wife, but not ultimate head. Christ is ultimate head. And biblical womanhood does not say, "Whatever my husband tells me to do, I'll do it no matter what." No, biblical womanhood has a discerning spirit that is inclined to submit to a husband but is further inclined to submit to Christ. And if her husband wants her to do something that goes directly against the Word of Christ, she yields to Christ over him. So biblical womanhood is not checking brain (will) at the door of marriage, putting the will of husband before the will of Christ.

Example—and I'll make this as general as I can—but a precious sister within our faith family whose husband is not a believer, and she loves her husband. She longs for her husband to come to Christ. The woman I'm thinking of is submitting to her husband. The humble disposition to yield is all over her demeanor, all over the way she talks to her husband, all over the way she talks about her husband—her non-Christian husband.

Now they have come to matters where she has seen in the Word commands from Christ that go against the ways her husband is leading her and so she has humbly said to him, "I want to submit to you, but I cannot disobey the Word of Christ." And she is exemplifying 1 Peter 3:1, "*Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives.*" I'm praying that this husband will come to know Christ through her testimony—a testimony of disposition that yields to man's leadership, her husband's leadership with ultimate devotion to the leadership of Christ.

Woman's primary responsibility is to support and she is accountable to God for affirmation of her husband. In other words, affirming her husband's role. "Yes, I'm a suitable helper for you, designed by God in a complementary way—not competitive way—with you. There are things you need in me and I affirm my need for your leadership." Woman accountable to God for affirmation. There's a reason why Ephesians 5, it says, "*Husbands love your wives,*" and then, "*Wives respect your husbands.*" There's a picture of affirmation there. A woman accountable to God for affirmation of her husband and nurture in the home. She alone is uniquely equipped by God to bear children, to nurture children in a way that complements a

man's leadership of children. He protects, provides; she affirms, nurtures. See the complementary picture here?

Now this is the ideal, the design of God. I know some of you are thinking, "I'm not living in the ideal," and I get that. In a very real way none of us are. And the temptation is to think, "I would if my husband would get right; be a man." Or, "I would if my wife would start living out womanhood." These single guys around me would start getting it right, these single girls around me would start living like the women that God has designed them to be and we could spend all day and you could drive yourself nuts figuring out how to fix the other people in your life on this issue.

## **Application To Our Lives...**

But let's step back and humbly think about application to our lives. Let's resist the ever-present temptation to shift blame and responsibility for lack of manhood and womanhood in our culture, in the church, in our families and in our lives. Resist the temptation to shift blame and responsibility to other people for that and to say, "Okay, in my own life, how God, by your grace, can I be the man, woman you designed for me to be?" And so this is where I want to give you just some practical, pastoral encouragement based upon the Word. Knowing that every situation in this room is very different, what I'm going to try to do here—based on what I've seen in God's design—is to give overall exhortations that might guide application of the Word in your lives. Not, "Okay, here's all the answers," because it really looks different in each one of our lives. But I think these are guiding exhortations and I'm going to put it out there as plainly as I possibly can.

We're kind of running short even on time, so I'm going to fly some of it but I want to be clear, and I hope in a way it's not like these are the thoughts of David but that these are based on the Word of God.

### **Men...**

So men, two exhortations. One, initiate humble, hardworking leadership. Key words throughout here. Initiate—this is leadership, initiation. Not passivity, sitting back doing nothing. Work. Work hard. God made you to work hard for the good of women and the glory of His name. Work at leadership. Husbands, don't wait for our wife to step up and lead. It's your responsibility to lead. Single guys, don't wait for some girl to ask you out. It's your responsibility to lead. And if she rejects you, make it as easy as possible for her to reject you. Don't make that hard on her. You humbly bow out. That's leadership.

Humble initiative. Humble, hardworking leadership. This is part of the essence of biblical manhood. James Dobson, you know, said "America's greatest need is men at home." He said,

A Christian man is obligated to lead his family to the best of his ability. If his family has purchased too many items on credit, then the financial crunch is ultimately his fault. If the family never reads the Bible or seldom goes to church on Sunday, God holds the man to blame. If the children are disrespectful and disobedient, the primary responsibility lies with the father, not his wife. In my view [says Dobson], America's greatest need is for husbands to begin guiding their families rather than pouring every physical and emotional resource into the mere acquisition of money.

Lead. Take the initiative of God and lead, in all kinds of ways. I've listed some here. In spiritual devotion. Is your wife flourishing in her relationship with Christ? Take the initiative. Are your children flourishing in their relationships with Christ? Take the initiative in spiritual devotion. In marital duties. Don't wait for your wife, men, to come to you and say, "There's some problems in our marriage that we need to talk about." You initiate that conversation every time. Turn off the TV. Stop hiding on the ball field, behind your computer or at work. Go to her as your wife, say, "How can I love you better?" That's your responsibility and she will love you for it. Consistently, periodically, sit down with her and say...

I said it a couple of weeks ago to Heather. I promise, it was not like as an illustration for this sermon. I wasn't even thinking about this sermon. We were lying there and I said, "Babe, how can I love you better?" And off the top of her head, two or three things, just like that. Like it was easy, an easy exercise for my precious wife. So do that consistently. This is your initiative, men, to consistently periodically do that.

And then I put potential marital duties there, so single guys, unless God has gifted you with singleness for the sake of ministry and mission—so we're going to talk about that in a few weeks—unless God has gifted you with singleness for the sake of ministry and mission, then grow up and get ready for a wife. Move Halo and X-box and PlayStation down your priority list and start working your tail off for the glory of God. Work hard—school, work, whatever it is that God has called you to, commit yourself to it. Resist the ever-present trend and temptation to prolong adolescence into your 20's and 30's. Grow up. Man up. Take responsibility and before you start thinking about taking a wife, figure out where you're going to take her. Then take the initiative.

There are godly girls all across this church who are waiting for boys to step up and be men. They're filling in where you're slacking off. We've got girls going into contexts, dangerous contexts around the world.

The International Mission Board, who we partner together with and going into unreached people groups around the world. They have a two-year program called Journeymen. College graduates. Journeymen serve for two years, go into some context in the world. One of the leaders there at the IMB said that one of the toughest areas they send Journeymen to is West Africa. Just rugged living out in the middle of the African bush, tough places to share the gospel. He said they had 50 Journeymen go to West Africa. Do you know how many of them were girls? Forty-eight! What is the deal, brothers?

I have thought a lot about why that is the case. I know there's probably a lot of factors but I think one of the main factors is because there are boys in college and in their 20's all across the church who are indulging in pornography night after night after night, exploiting images of women and disqualifying themselves from the purpose of God among the nations. Rise up and be the men God has designed you to be. Potential marital duties.

If we're going to pass the gospel on to the next generation and to all nations, we need men who take responsibility for spiritual devotion, marital duties and parental discipline. Men who don't stand passively by while their kids talk back to their wives. Men who take initiative in humble, loving, godly discipline of children and essential decisions. It's not that man is supposed to make every single decision for his wife and family, but that man will feel the overarching responsibility for decision-making. That his wife and his children will look to him for leadership in decision-making. That he'll be known for making decisions for their good and for the glory of Christ.

It won't be perfect all the time, obviously, but he works hard by the grace of Christ to make wise decisions and will take initiative amidst inevitable disagreements, in those tough decisions, in the times where husband and wife can't come on to the same page. If it's not an issue involving direct obedience to a command of Christ in the Word, that the husband, as head, will feel the weight of that decision and lovingly, caringly, graciously make it, with a commitment to love, lead, guide, protect, shepherd his family in the implementation of that decision. This is not easy, brothers. None of us can do this on our own.

I think this is why the Scripture calls us to look to Christ and by the grace of Christ, lay down your life—our lives—to honor women. "*Honor your wife*," 1 Peter 3:7 says. Honor women. And they are not perfect but that's the beauty of what Adam does in Genesis 3:20, right? Right after the entrance of sin into the world which, by the way, began with woman leading the picture into sin. Sentence of death, basically, from God. He looks at his wife in verse 20, "*The man called his wife's name Eve*." What does mean? Eve means life. And man resists the temptation to run from God and disparage woman for her failures. Instead he believes God and he affirms the grace of God in her life and he says, "You are life."

Men, honor your wife. Do not belittle your wife for her failures. Do not belittle women in different weaknesses—or weaknesses that look different in men and women—but don't belittle her weaknesses. Honor her by the grace of God in her life.

By the grace of Christ lay down your life to honor women and to train boys to be men. Dads, husbands, single men, we need to show boys that godly responsibility, humble initiative, hard-working leadership, initiative, what it looks like action. And specifically, going back, young single men, as long as you prolong adolescence in your 20s and 30's, you will teach teenage boys that they need not grow up because your life looks just like theirs. Train boys to provide, to protect, to lead women in loving, gracious, humble, hardworking ways that reflect the very character of Christ. Exhortation to men.

### **Women...**

Women, incline yourselves toward wise, willing submission. Disposition that is inclined toward wise—obviously not foolish. You need not submit to a man who is abusing you. You take that to the church for some stout elders. But for women in any situation, to incline yourself, first and foremost to wise, willing submission to God in constant prayer. This is key. He is obviously your ultimate authority and He cares for you. Do not underestimate the effect of prolonged intercession before Him.

There are numerous times in my relationship with my wife where I have come to the realization in our life—my life, marriage—and come to Heather and said, "Here's a new realization I found," only to find that she figured that out a long time before and has been praying that I'd get it. So this is good. It's good. Don't underestimate the effect of prayers before your ultimate Head and know that He always hears you. Even when you wonder if He's listening, He's always listening. So yield to Him in constant prayer.

And then to men in certain positions. Meaning if you're a wife, obviously incline yourself toward wise, willing submission to your husband as best as you can in a way that honors Christ, even if he's not a believer, even if he's a professing believer but not being a man. Pray, submit to God and then to him, longing for him to lead, affirming him when he does lead.

And then, church, just a side note to the church. This is where we need to come alongside, especially single moms in our midst, for example. Maybe a husband and his abdication has deserted her with children. There's a major void there that obviously can't be fulfilled by

anyone but a husband as God has designed. But I love the picture in many small groups—and obviously it needs to happen more and more—of single moms who, in the context of a small group, receive good, godly, biblical counsel from men in that small group who care for, have a desire to protect and provide for this woman and her children in healthy, good biblical ways as part of the picture, even the design of leadership in the church. We're going to talk about elders in a minute, but God has entrusted men as leaders in the church that would be a source of pastoral care and wisdom and guidance, especially in an epidemic where men are not stepping up and women need that kind of leadership that God has designed for. And so to men in certain positions, incline yourself to wise, willing submission.

Then for the glory of Christ live in a way that demonstrates godly respect for men. God's design is for women to desire and receive good, godly, humble male leadership, to respect a man's caring initiative to provide and to protect and to work for our good and to live in a way that shows girls how to be women. Show girls what a godly inclination to follow a man's leadership looks like. Show girls how to submit to a man, to a husband, as a church submits to Christ. Teach them to look for men who display the kind of character of Christ. Teach them to guard their heart.

Do not flaunt your girls around, encouraging them to give their heart to whatever new guy comes their way. It's not biblical manhood. It's irresponsible, dangerous divorce practice. Dads, keep your daughters under your protection. Moms, keep her under your nurture until some man is able to come along and show that he will provide for her, protect her, love and lead her for her good and for the glory of Christ.

You see, there's so much at stake here, isn't there? There's so much at stake here. Don't you see, this goes so much deeper than, "Let's have some good programs and activities for kids and everything will be solved." No. Rise up. Be the men that God's created us to be. Be the women God's created us to be. You need to see this. And let's be honest, none of us is perfect in this. The last thing I want to communicate, even in speaking boldly on various points, the last thing I want to communicate is that I'm perfect in all these ways, that I don't have struggles to be the man God desires me to be. There's a real sense of fear even.

Heather and I were talking last night and I was praying that... You say things like—you dive into issues like this in the world and in the culture, it's like you're putting a bull's-eye on your back. So I would covet your prayers for me to be the man that my wife needs, that my children need, that the church needs, and my own leadership as elder-pastor. Other leaders. We need one another in this.

## **Anticipation For The Future...**

We need to walk through this picture together, to spur one another on and to know, in anticipation for the future, that Christ is in us, that He is forming us into His image and that as we grow into the likeness of Christ we will grow into men and women who are reflecting the glory of God. That one day our lives will be redeemed. Oh, brothers and sisters, one day this curse in Genesis 3 will be gone and we will be fully the men and women that God has designed us to be. Before Him and before each other, one day our lives will be redeemed and one day our relationships will be made right with each other as men and women who complement one another and together display the full image of God as male and female.

This is the gospel we hold dear. Jesus died to make us the men and women God created us to be. Jesus died. His death on the cross has everything to do with who we are as men and who we are as women.

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