

## **The Cross and Christian Community**

The Cross and Christian Manhood

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### **THE CROSS AND CHRISTIAN MANHOOD Genesis 1-3; Romans 5:12-21**

If you have Bible, and I hope you do, turn with me to Genesis 1. Let me invite you to also pull out the Worship Guide that you received when you came in. We have a lot of ground to cover today, and we're going to (in a sense) be all over the Bible, but we're going to focus in on two main passages - Genesis 1-3 and Romans 5 - as we talk about "The Cross and Christian Manhood." It is obviously Father's Day, and in light of the massive confusion and misperception—not only in our culture, but also in the church—regarding what it means to be a man, I believe it is hugely important for us to pause in our journey through 1 Corinthians, where we're seeing the effect of the cross of Christ on the church. I believe it's extremely valuable for us to pause - much like we did on Mother's Day when we considered the cross and Christian womanhood - to pause on this day and consider the effect of the cross on the way we understand manhood. I want to honor you, brothers, men in this room, on this day, but I also want to challenge you.

Studying for today has been challenging for me. I have walked through this sermon with my wife, and I have tried, with her, to look honestly at my life. I have seen many areas where I need to grow as a man. I am praying that in the next few moments, God will wake men up all across this room to see just how skewed our understanding of manhood is in our culture and to stop acquiescing to that culture, to rise up and by the grace of God to be the men (single men, husbands, fathers) that God has created and called us to be. I want to speak clearly, even sternly at points, because I am convinced that this is a huge need in our culture and in the church and in families and future families represented all across the room.

I want to speak specifically to men today, but in a way that I hope will encourage women and will help you as women know how to pray for men—married women, to know how to pray for your husbands; children, to know how to pray for your dads; single women, to know what to look for in a man when it comes to marriage; and for you as women to know how God has designed you in a way that complements men for your good and for God's glory.

### **God's Design for Men...**

Let's start there, with God's design for men, and really for women also, in Genesis 1:26-28. Follow along there with me as we hear the Word of God. Genesis 1:26-28,

*And God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."*

*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

*And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."  
(Genesis 1:26-28)*

### **God created men and women with equal dignity.**

What do we learn here about God's design for men and for women in the first chapter of the Bible? First and foremost, clearly God created men and women with equal dignity. In verse 26, God creates man and woman in His image, both of them with equal value before God and equal dignity before each other. This is where any conversation about manhood must begin. From the start of the Bible, God in His Word speaks against any kind of male superiority or male dominance. In any culture, any relationship, where man is thought to be better than woman - in any culture, any relationship, where women are treated as inferior, as objects to be used or abused, then we undercut the very design of God.

For all of eternity, no sex (man or woman) will be greater than the other. No person should ever feel superior or inferior because they are a man or a woman. We all have equal dignity before God. Verse 28 says God blessed man and woman, not just with dignity, but with dominion over everything else in all creation—together. This is a truth that's reiterated in Psalm 8:3-8, where we hear that God has crowned men and women with glory and honor, over and above everything else in all creation. God created men and women with great dignity, equal dignity.

### **God created men and women with different roles.**

At the same time, God created men and women with different roles. This is clear in the very next chapter of the Bible, Genesis 2. Genesis 2 contains a parallel account of the creation of man and woman, but this time with more specifics. I want you to read along there with me and listen to the distinct reasoning behind the creation of woman and the subsequent roles that are given to the man and the woman. Let's start in verse 15.

*Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,*

*"This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." (Genesis 2:18-23)*

What a picture! Notice God doesn't just immediately create woman after man in Genesis 2. Instead, God parades all these animals before man for him to name them. What's the point of that? Well, it's not just for man to name all these animals. It's to show man that he is

alone, that there is no one like him. He's looking at all these animals, considering what names match their natures, and in the process, he realizes, "None of these match my nature." In this naming process of animals, man realizes his need for a helper like him.

So God performs the first surgical operation, and man goes to sleep, alone. While he's sleeping, God takes one of his ribs. Now remember, man was formed from dust, and God obviously could have created woman in the same way. Instead, God takes a part from Adam's side—not from his head, his hips, or his feet, but from his side where his heart is. This is a picture of how woman would be, in the deepest sense of the word, his partner, literally, as the text says, his helper. God intentionally forms, verse 18, a helper fit for man.

Now she stands, formed by God, like man and uniquely suited to serve alongside man. Then God touches the man, wakes him up, and says, "You have one more creature to name." Adam opens his eyes, and needless to say, Adam is thrilled. The first words ever recorded of a human speaking, and it's poetry, like song. *"This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."* (Genesis 2:23) See the joy of the first man receiving the gift of the first woman. He goes nuts, singing, "Yes, she is from me, my very flesh. I identify with her, and I love her, and I call her woman, for she came out of man."

Obviously, man and woman complement one another physically. They are created physically in a way that they can multiply together. We won't go into a birds and bees explanation here. There will be more on that the next two weeks when we talk about "The Cross and Christian Sexuality." But suffice to say at this point that they complement one another physically and relationally, in their roles with one another.

This complementary relationship is being denied, disregarded, twisted today into all kinds of ideas and caricatures that are not the design of God, and ultimately, as a result, this complementary relationship between man and woman is being ignored, even by many in the church. Let me give you a heads up. The Bible is, from the beginning, taking us against the grain of political correctness in our day. If we will listen honestly to what the Bible is saying, we will see a beauty in the relationship between men and women that we are so missing in our culture today.

Follow this here in Genesis 2, and then reflected all over the Bible. Man was created to be the head. Now, as soon as I use that word, I want to be clear in how I'm using it, how the Bible uses it. This is the exact language that the Bible later uses in 1 Corinthians 11:3, this book that we're studying, where Paul refers all the way back to Genesis 2 to say, *"I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God."* (1 Corinthians 11:3) The Bible teaches that the head of a wife is her husband. Ephesians 5:23, which we'll talk about more in a minute, says, *"The husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church..."* (Ephesians 5:23)

When the Bible uses this term "head," it's referring to a leadership role. Again, this is not male domination. This is not greater dignity. That would go completely against God's design. We're talking here about role, and that's a key distinction that's familiar to all of us. I am a father, and I have four children. I have a position of leadership in their lives, and that's a good position of leadership. It's designed by God. It doesn't mean that I'm any more human than they are, that I am any more valuable than they are. It's simply a picture of a role that God has designed for me as their father, and it's a good role.

So man, in Genesis 2, is created to be the head, to lead with love in his relationship with woman. To lead with love, to provide and protect her. We read here in Genesis 2:15-17 that man was given the responsibility of working the garden in order to provide. When we get to the next chapter, Genesis 3, which we'll read from in a minute, we realize that man was accountable to God for the protection of his wife in every way—not just physically, but also spiritually.

Man was created to lead his wife with love, and to provide for and protect his wife. And really not just his wife, but women generally. We know this! We all know that when two guys and two ladies are walking down the street, and some attacker approaches the group, there's something wrong if the two guys step back so the ladies will save them. Those are not men. By God's design from the beginning, man is accountable for protection in every way. Any husband who rolls over next to his wife in bed and says, "I heard a strange noise downstairs. Will you go check it out" That guy has issues. He's not a man; he's outside of the design of God. A leader provides and protects with love and feels the accountability for that kind of provision and protection.

Man was created to be the head, to lead with love, to protect and to provide for woman, and woman was created to be the helper. This is the word that is used twice here in Genesis 2 to describe woman. First, in verse 18, "*Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.'*" (Genesis 2:18) Then down in verse 20, the Bible says that amidst all of creation, there "*was not found a helper fit for him.*" (Genesis 2:20) The Bible says that this was not good.

You look at all creation in Genesis 1, and after everything is created, you see the phrase repeated over and over again, "God saw that it was good; God saw that it was good." Then, you get down to verse 18, before sin has even entered the world, and you see that something wasn't good. Man was alone, and he needed a helper that was like him. Man needed someone who was like him, made with equal dignity in the image of God—but also different from him—to help him, with a different role from him. You say, "Well, this sounds denigrating, offensive to woman." The only reason we think that is because we are so confused in our culture. This idea has been so abused—even in the church—but see its original design.

### **God created men and women as a reflection of the Trinity.**

The third truth here about God's design for man (and woman) is God created men and women as a reflection of the Trinity, as a reflection of Himself. See the beauty of our equality and our differences as men and women in the very nature of God. Quick review of the Trinity. God exists as one God in three Persons. We just read in Genesis 1:26 that God refers to Himself as "us." So there is one God in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The mystery of the Trinity. Now think about it. The persons of the Trinity are equally divine. Is the Father God? Yes. Is the Son equally God? Yes, absolutely. Is the Spirit equally God? Without question.

I put Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1 in parentheses there. The Bible says, "*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth,*" (Genesis 1:1) referring to God the Father. But in John 1:1-4, you see, "*In the beginning was the Word...*" (John 1:1) And the "Word" there is referring to Jesus, and the Bible says the Word (Jesus) was "*with God and was God, and all things were made through [Jesus].*" (John 1:1) The Bible talks about the Father as God and the Son as God—both equally divine, and both equally worthy of praise and glory and honor and adoration. Yet at the same time, the persons of the Trinity have different roles, even when it comes to leadership.

The Father leads the Son. He sends the Son into the world, John 4:34. And the Son is subject to the Father. John 5:19-23 beautifully describes how the Son (Jesus) does all that He does according to the leadership of the Father. This is why - I mentioned 1 Corinthians 11:3 earlier, Paul says: "*I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.*" (1 Corinthians 11:3) What the Bible is teaching here is that there is headship and helping in God. The Father is "the head" of the Son. Is that bad? Is that chauvinistic of the Father? Is that offensive to the Son? Not at all! It's good.

We are so programmed in our culture to think that these terms are bad and imply domination, that they make one inferior to the other, but that's not true. Just look at God. There is loving leadership in the Father's relationship to the Son. Neither of them, though, is inferior or superior. Neither of them is domineering or denigrated. Instead, together they are one—loving and leading, being loved and being led, with equal worth and value. This is loving leadership in the context of beautiful relationship, and it's God's good design from the beginning of creation for man and woman.

### **Sin's Distortion of Men ...**

Now the reason why we react against this is because of sin's distortion of men and women in Genesis 3. Let's read what happens there, starting in 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. (Genesis 3:1-7)*

I want to show you here how sin specifically relates to and affects men and women in different ways. Sin certainly affects all of us in the sense that sin separates us from God, that sin is rebellion against God, but I want you to see specifically how sin plays out in man here in Genesis 3. I want to show you a passive effect and an aggressive effect of sin on men's lives, and I want us to think about ways we see this—and men, ways we reflect this—all across this room.

#### **Passive: Sin leads men to abdicate their responsibilities.**

First, passive: Sin leads men to abdicate their responsibilities. This is the essence of what Adam did in verses 1 through 5. You say, "Well, Adam didn't do anything in verses 1 through 5." Exactly. Notice how the serpent, in the very way that he tempted this couple,

subverted the design of God in man and woman. He came not to the man, but to the woman. From the very beginning, he undercut the headship of man, saying, "Eve, you lead the way here." Adam, from all we can tell, was standing right by her, while Eve led out.

You see how important this is when you get down to Genesis 3:17, and God says to Adam, "[Adam,] *because you have listened to the voice of your wife...*" (Genesis 3:17) Notice this. Adam was reprimanded, disciplined by God, yes, for eating the fruit, but even before that, for listening instead of leading. For ignoring the command that, if you'll remember, he was given in Genesis 2:17. If you look back in Genesis 2, you realize that God gave Adam the command not to eat the fruit before Eve was even formed.

Here in Genesis 3, he is completely forsaking, abdicating, abandoning his responsibility before God to lead his wife and to obey God. He should have stood up and said, "Serpent, you have no business questioning my wife about the commands God has given. Those commands came directly to me, and it's my responsibility to be faithful for carrying them out. You can talk to me." Instead, he sits silently by, like a wimp, and does absolutely nothing. That's one distortion of manhood here—man sitting back and abdicating his responsibility to lead.

**Aggressive: Sin leads men to abuse their authority.**

But then - I want you to go ahead and jump down in your notes here and see the other side of the picture, and then I want us to think about how this plays out practically. The other distortion of man in Genesis 3 that we see here is aggressive: Sin leads men to abuse their authority.

Look down in verse 16, where after sin enters the world, God says to Eve: "*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.*" (Genesis 3:16) Now this is part of the curse of sin and its effect on woman, but I want you to notice how it relates to man. The word for "rule" there is not to lead in a good way, but to assert authority by power or strength or force, oftentimes used in the Old Testament, even in an oppressive way. The whole picture is that Adam, in his distorted manhood, would rule or lead with a harshness and forcefulness that is not the design of God.

This is where you go to the other side of the spectrum in man's sinfulness. Here, man is not abdicating his responsibility to lead but is abusing his authority as a leader. Man rises up and says, "Okay, I'm not going to be a wimp in this relationship; I'm going to dominate this relationship." This is why I was careful earlier to say, "Headship is not the same as domination." Headship in Genesis 2 was good, but in Genesis 3, as a result of sin, headship becomes domination and force, a selfish abuse of authority. Men seeking to control women and abuse their position of leadership in their relationship.

Think about it. We see both of these pictures today in men. And men, we reflect both of these sinful distortions of God's design. I've put in your notes some practical pictures of the way this plays out in different men. I was driving back from out of town late last week, and I was listening to a sermon from Mark Driscoll on men and marriage. He helped put some practical pictures to these sinful tendencies in ways that I thought were helpful, so I want to do something similar. In this list of different portraits of different men, I want to challenge you to put aside your pride and honestly ask the question, "How are these sinful tendencies in men playing out in my life?"

Let's start with the passive effects of sin on men, ways that men abdicate their

responsibilities before God. Let me give you some examples, some real-life examples. We'll start with "Won't Grow Up Walter". This is the guy in this room who is dwelling in perpetual adolescence. He's in his 20s, 30s, maybe even in his 40s, and the reason he's not taken a wife is because he has no idea where he would take her. He lacks direction, vision. His life revolves around him and what he wants to do, but he's still figuring out what he wants to do. He's eight years into his undergraduate studies, and he works part-time because it stresses him out. He leans on his mom to help him pay his bills.

He's a nice guy who meets with people and has coffee. He's always looking for a mentor because he refuses to be one himself for somebody else. He just wants to find himself, but he won't take responsibility for himself. So he plays video games like a little boy, or maybe it's some other hobby that's more important to him than the mission for which God has created him. He's abdicating the responsibility that God has given him as man—not only for himself, but for a wife and children—because he just won't grow up.

Then there's "Absent From Reality Andy". Andy has gotten married. He has a wife, and he has kids, and he pays the bills. He takes responsibility for putting food on the table, but that's where his responsibility stops. He sits around the table with his wife and his kids, and though he's physically present with them, he's emotionally distant from them. He never asks his wife how she feels. He has no clue what's going on in the hearts of his children.

Why? Because he's on his phone all the time or on the computer or plopped on the couch watching TV or out in the garage working on his car. He's the husband and the dad who's there, but he's not really there. He's totally absent from the reality of what's going on below the surface in his home.

Then there's "Too Cool Carl", the guy that everybody likes. He's funny, entertaining, always has a good joke, a good quip to get people laughing. He's the life of the party. The only problem is that everybody likes him, but nobody respects him. He wants so much to be liked by his kids that he refuses to discipline his kids. He wants so much to be liked by the people around him that he'll never confront serious issues going around him. He wants to be what everybody around him wants him to be, so he refuses to stand up for what's right and good, particularly when it costs him. There comes a point when even his cool antics get pretty annoying to his wife and his kids. She wants a real husband. They want a real dad who they can respect, not just laugh at.

Or then there's "Blame It On Everybody (And Everything) Else Bob", the guy who has all kinds of reasons why he's not the man God has designed him to be. This or that happened to him when he was young. This or that is happening to him right now. He didn't have a father to show him what manhood looks like.

I want to be really careful here because I know that a huge number of males in this room did not have a good father and have experienced things in your life that have been extremely challenging. I'm not saying those things don't affect us. Have you ever noticed here that as soon as Adam was confronted by God for his lack of leadership in Eve's life, the first thing he did was blame Eve? Verse 12, "*The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.*" (Genesis 3:12) Notice that Adam's blaming doesn't just stop with Eve; Adam blames God. "You're the One who gave her to me, so technically, God, you did this. You made me this way. You gave me these circumstances."

"Blame it on Everybody (and Everything) Else Bob" refuses to take responsibility for being the man God has created him to be because others are at fault. Maybe even God is at fault,

but not him.

And then there's "Rest in Retirement Ron". Notice in Genesis 2:15 that God created man with the specific purpose of working in the garden. Man was created to work. Work is not a product of the fall. Our toil and trouble in work is a product of the fall, but not work itself. Work is a good thing created by God for men to do. Yet, you look at our skewed culture today, and what is the goal for every man? To retire from work as soon as possible. You have all kinds of men who are living for the day when they don't have to work anymore, when they can just rest and relax and do what they want to do, apart from work. And there are other men who are doing exactly that, who've retired and are coasting this thing out with all kinds of rest and recreation until heaven finally comes.

It's unbiblical. Retirement, perpetual rest from work is unbiblical. I'm not talking about those who have physical limitations from certain types of work, and I'm not talking about those who technically retire, but retirement for them means they're now free to work in all kinds of ways in the world for God's glory without needing a salary. What a great thing! Our goal, men, is not to be free from work. That misses the whole point of what you were created for as a man, and it's abdicating one of your primary responsibilities before God.

These are some of the passive pictures of manhood we see among us and around us and in us. Maybe some of us fit these profiles exactly, or maybe there are parts of them that we tend toward. The problem, though, is when we react against these passive pictures, we go all the way to the other side, beginning to abuse the authority and leadership that God has given us as men.

I think about "Tough Guy Tom". This is the guy who thinks that to be a man is to do the opposite of what women do. Women hug and kiss their kids, so this guy doesn't hug and kiss his kids. Women say, "I love you," so this guy never says, "I love you." This guy's tough. He thinks he doesn't show emotions when the reality is the only emotions his wife and kids see communicate that he is distant from them and domineering over them. He barks orders at them. Or maybe he even abuses them—emotionally, verbally, physically. What kind of coward of a man asserts his manhood by abusing women and children?

"Tough Guy Tom" thinks that being a man means he's in charge wherever he is, whether it's at home, at work, or in the church, for that matter. He can't submit to any authority because he is the authority. Nobody tells him what to do because he's a man. The reality is he's an insecure little boy who tries to cover up his insecurity by being stronger than the next guy, louder than the next guy, and tougher than the next guy. That's success for "Tough Guy Tom".

Then there's "Get What I Want Gary", whose aggression leads him to please himself, no matter what it costs. He's the single guy who preys on single girls and charms them emotionally to get whatever he wants from them physically. He's like scores of males across this room who get their kicks downloading pictures and videos of women (or men). He thinks he's a man, but he's a boy who can only find pleasure with himself in his room, alone with a phone or computer screen. Or maybe he acts on his impulses with somebody else, leaving his wife and kids behind, because he doesn't care about anybody but himself. He's "Get What I Want Gary", and he leads for one thing: Whatever works best for him.

Or there's "Living For What Won't Last Larry". This is the guy who's not sitting back in laziness. He's working hard, but that's just where the problem comes in. He works so hard that he defines himself by what he does, how well he does it, and the status and success

he's able to attain in doing it. He makes money, he gets possessions, he acquires position, and he thinks this is what really matters. He doesn't realize that, in the end, it's all going to burn up. It's not going to matter how much money he made, what position he acquired. He's run after the things that this world says are most important, but in the end, he'll have nothing eternally to show for it.

The sad thing is he thinks this is the best way to lead and love his kids, so he gets them what they want. He spends time with them. The only problem is that he spends all his time with them teaching them to do what he's done—run after the things of this world. "Living For What Won't Last Larry" runs his kids all over town playing football, baseball, basketball, soccer, golf, hours and hours and hours on end talking about sports, practicing sports or other hobbies.

It's not that those things are bad in and of themselves. What's bad is he's never even thought about spending hours teaching them what matters, like how to know God, how to read and study His Word, how to pray, how to share the gospel, teaching his sons and daughters how to grow as men and women of God. He neglects these things, and in the end, he leads his children (and his wife) to bank their lives on what doesn't matter. His family one day is going to end up with all the things Larry said are most important burning up, and they're going to be left with nothing in their hands, and it will be because of him. A selfish abuse of his leadership that his kids will pay for in their lives—now and in eternity.

There's "Can't Put Work Down Dan" who knows he's created to work but has forgotten that there are other things in life besides work. His work controls him, and he can't get away from it. He has no boundaries. His phone is always on, and he's always checking his email, and he's always finishing up just one more thing, but those "one more" things just keep coming. Other people set his agenda because he's not man enough to set an agenda himself. He prioritizes what other people want him to do over uninterrupted, uninhibited time with his wife and his kids. Because he can't say "no" to things that don't matter in his work, he inevitably says "no" to people that do matter in his life.

Finally, there's "Put A Good Face On It Frank". This guy sums it up. Regardless of what his issues are, regardless of the weaknesses there are in his marriage or with his kids or in his home and in his life, more than anything else, he just wants to cover it up. He just wants to move on from this sermon as quickly as possible. He wants to pretend like these things are not that big a deal. He doesn't want to talk about any of this when he gets in the car in a few minutes with his wife or his kids, because he's afraid to admit his weaknesses.

There is going to be a strange silence in this man's life from this sermon until he finally realizes that he's not really the man he thought he was, and he's going to have a choice. Every single male in this room has a choice. Will you, on the one hand, refuse to acknowledge the passive and/or aggressive effects of sin in your life as a man? Will you cover these things up? Will you move on from them as quickly as you can, content to live under the cultural illusion that you are a man when the reality is, no matter how old you are, you're a little boy who won't own up to what it really means to be a man?

Or, on the other hand, will you rise up and realize that, in and of yourself, because of sin in your heart and your life, you are prone to all of these things? That you are prone to abdication of your responsibility before God, and you are prone to abuse of your authority from God? Will you realize this, and will you repent? Will you humbly come before the God who made you and admit that, apart from His grace, you will never be the man He has created you to be?

Then will you go to your wife and your children or to the people who know you best (you don't have to do this over Father's Day lunch, but you could if you want), but at some point soon, sit down with them and say, like I said to my wife, "Which of these is me? Where do I need to grow?" And humbly listen and respond. This is the point that I pray you will come to this morning.

## **Christlike Devotion in Men ...**

### **Christ and Manhood...**

Christ and manhood. Right in the middle of this chapter where manhood is marred by sin in Genesis 3, God promises to send a man from the line of woman who would crush the Adversary in this world. Genesis 3:15, "*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.*" (Genesis 3:15) This is a promise that God will send His Son, born of woman, to defeat sin and Satan, to conquer the effects of sin, and to redeem and restore everyone who trusts in Him.

Right after the sin of the first man in the world, we have a promise that another man is coming, and the good news of the gospel is that man has come. His name is Jesus, and Jesus perfectly models true manhood. He is the man that we are all supposed to be like. Not only does He perfectly model true manhood, but He mercifully saves us from our sin and from ourselves. He dies on the cross to pay the price for our sins as men against God, for all our abdication of responsibility and all our abuse of authority, for all our rebellion against God and all our tendencies to assert ourselves before God. Jesus mercifully saves us from our sin and ourselves. Then, when we confess our need for Him—for His grace and His mercy—when we turn from our sin and ourselves to trust in Him as our Savior and our Lord, Jesus personally makes us into the men God created us to be. This is where the cross comes in.

### **The Cross and Manhood...**

The cross and manhood. If you want, I invite you to turn with me over to Romans 5. We're going to go there quickly because we're running short on time, but this is a passage that specifically talks about the contrast between Adam and Christ. The term "man" is used in Romans 5 generically to refer to all of humankind (both men and women), but I want you to think about Christ particularly in light of what we've just talked about when it comes to manhood. Listen to Romans 5:12:

*Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.*

*But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through*

*that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.*

*Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 5:12-21)*

See it! One man's sin - Adam's sin brought condemnation to all men. All men in this room have sinned and have propensities to sin in all of these varied ways. But see it! Another man has come—Christ—and He is the perfect man who perfectly obeyed God as a man, even to the point of dying on a cross. Through His death for our sins, we can be made righteous before God.

Don't miss the point then, men. There has been only one man in all of history who is really a man as God has designed him to be, so the only way for you to be a man is to be found in Him. That is only possible by trusting in what He has done for you. You cannot become a man apart from the cross. It is only in, by, through, and from the cross that you will ever be a man. When you humble yourself, when you throw aside your boyish pride, and you admit your need for God's mercy to make you a man in Christ, then He will.

He's doing it across this room. There are so many men in this room who are walking in Christ, who are exalting Christ, who have left behind worldly pictures of manhood and are thriving in Christ. Amidst challenging men this morning, I want to affirm men who are looking to Christ, and by the power of the cross, you're becoming the men God has designed you to be. Some of you have experienced victory in some of these areas that we've addressed. You used to be these things, but now you're not. I want to encourage you not to think, "Well, I'm glad I'm not like that guy," but to realize, "Apart from Christ, I would be that guy, and I need Christ to keep from becoming that guy."

Think about how the cross of Christ compels you to manhood. This is where I want to give some practical exhortations as you're thinking, "Where do I begin? How do I move forward in becoming the man God created me to be? How do I take next steps?" I want to give you some practical, pastoral exhortations, acknowledging, brothers, that there is no easy answer here. We don't become the men God has created us to be overnight. This is a lifelong journey, so where do you begin?

Begin at the cross, and see that the cross compels us to initiate humble, hard-working leadership in our lives. This is what the cross is all about. The cross is where Jesus, as a man, took responsibility for all men (and women). He humbly came to serve and lovingly walked the hard road to the cross in order that we might be saved.

See His loving leadership in our lives. See it, and be compelled by it. Initiate humble, hard-working leadership in your life, in every area of your life. Strive for purity. Be holy, men, as God is holy (1 Peter 1:13-21). Practice spiritual disciplines. Take initiative in your walk with God. Read His Word. Be long with Him in prayer. Fast. Worship. If you're going to be disciplined about anything, don't let it be video games or working out or getting a paycheck or hunting or fishing or following this or that sport or listening to this or that music. Be disciplined in your pursuit of God over and above everything else.

Flee sexual immorality. Be a one-woman man. Husbands, have eyes for no one but your wife. Single guys, keep your eyes and your hands off of anyone who is not your wife. Flee all forms of sexual immorality—heterosexual and/or homosexual, pornographic or in person, in thought, desire, or in deed. Flee it, men. Just so you know, we're going to spend time in depth over the next couple of weeks talking about how to do this—not just as men, but as men and women, across our culture—so there's a much longer "how-to" coming in 1 Corinthians 6 over the next couple of weeks here. Flee sexual immorality.

Fight material idolatry. Your life is not defined by how much you make and how much you have. Get out of the rat race that says this is what makes a man. It's what makes a fool. Fight material idolatry, and cultivate personal integrity in your life, in your family, in your work. Strive for purity.

Take responsibility; take responsibility in your life. As a single man, for starting a family. We're going to talk more about singleness in a few weeks when we get to 1 Corinthians 7, and we're going to see in Scripture a value to singleness, a goodness in singleness, for the glory of God for those whom God calls to this. At the same time, I'm speaking to men here specifically, if there is going to be any marriage in the world, which is also a really good thing, by God's design it's going to happen because you take responsibility for starting a family.

Single guys, you don't wait for some girl to ask you out; it's your responsibility to lead. If she rejects you, it's your responsibility to make it as easy as possible for her to reject you. Don't make that hard on her. You humbly bow out. So single brothers, figure out where you're going, take responsibility for getting there, and take responsibility for bringing someone with you. Genesis 2:24, *"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to a wife..."* (Genesis 2:24)

Take responsibility for starting a family, and take responsibility for shepherding a family in every way—spiritually, emotionally, intellectually, physically, and relationally. I'm thinking about Mark 12 here. *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength...[And] love your neighbor as yourself."* (Mark 12:30-31) Take responsibility for leading your family to do these things. Husbands, fathers, you are the shepherd in your family, responsible before God for your family's spiritual, emotional, intellectual, physical, and relational state.

Spiritually, is your wife flourishing in her relationship with Christ? Are your children flourishing in their relationships with Christ? This is your responsibility. So many guys think, "Well, I pay for Christian school, or I take my kids to church. I've done my Christian duty." No, if that's all you've done, you've abdicated your responsibility. It's your job to love your kids, pray with your kids, teach your kids to study the Bible, show your kids how to share their faith. It's your job to be their shepherd. So many say, "I don't know where to start." Start by praying with your wife and your kids. Read the Bible with them. Talk about God with them. If you haven't already, lead your family to become committed members of a church where they (and you) can grow and help others grow in Christ. Shepherd your family spiritually.

Emotionally. Your wife wants you to know her, and she wants to know you. This requires more than sitting in the same room with her or sleeping in the same bed with her. This requires work, initiative, you sitting down with your wife and asking her how she feels. What is the state of her heart? How can you serve her heart? Take the initiative. Don't wait for her to come to you and say, "There are some problems in my life or in our marriage that we

need to talk about.” You initiate that conversation. Turn off the TV, stop hiding on the ball field or behind your computer, and ask your wife how you can love her better. That’s your responsibility, and she will love you for it.

Physically. I’ll go ahead and jump there, because it was a conversation like this that I was having with my wife. “Heather, how can I love you and serve you better?” About a year a half ago, she looked at me, and she said immediately, “You can take better care of yourself physically because if you don’t make some changes, you’re not going to be around very long to love me or serve me and your kids.” She said, “You eat horrible, you don’t exercise, you don’t sleep,” and I realized that these things were displaying a lack of love for my wife and my children. I started making changes in the way I eat and in exercising and in creating some boundaries, so that I wasn’t staying up all night, sometimes multiple times a week.

Brothers, I want to exhort you to take responsibility physically for your life and your family. Some of you need to do this with the way you eat, with the way you don’t exercise. Obviously, we know that not one of us, even the healthiest among us, is guaranteed tomorrow, but the reality is that you are a steward of the body you have been given, and you owe it to your wife and your children to steward that body well—if not for your good, at least for their good. And to take responsibility in the same way for the physical health of your family—that together you might love the Lord with all your strength and honor the Lord as temples of the Holy Spirit.

Intellectually, take responsibility for your family knowing God and loving God with all their minds. And relationally, take responsibility for the social health of your family, for the relationships within your family, and with the community (and the nations) outside your family. Show your sons what it looks like to love a wife well, and show your daughters what it looks like to be served by a husband. Show them how to love neighbors and people in need.

You say, “This takes a lot of time. How do I do this?” Now you realize you don’t have time for all your hobbies and your sports and your games and your shows that you thought you had time for because you’re giving your time to things that actually matter, to people who actually matter. See it! This is what the cross compels us to do. Jesus took responsibility for our salvation, for leading us to the Father, so in Him, we take responsibility for starting, for shepherding a family to love God.

Strive for purity, take responsibility, and provide. First Timothy 5:8, *“But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”* (1 Timothy 5:8) First and Second Thessalonians go on to talk about men who don’t work. Proverbs 6 talks about men who are lazy. Men, we work hard to provide, because this is what we were created to do. Now this is not by any means saying that it’s always wrong for a woman to work outside the home, or that there aren’t some rare circumstances where maybe, because of disability or disease or debilitation of some sort, a man is not able to be the primary provider for his home. That doesn’t mean that he’s no longer a man. The point even here is that as a man, he still feels accountability for this, and he desires to provide and works to provide in any and every way he can.

Provide and protect. All of these verses that I’ve listed here describe men protecting their families, in some cases leading out in battle. And that’s the picture—not just in a physical sense, but in a holistic sense. We live in a spiritual world, and we are involved in a spiritual war. Fight the battle, brothers, on all fronts (physically, spiritually, emotionally, intellectually) to protect others in your home and outside your home.

Honor women. 1 Peter 3:7, "*Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman...so that your prayers may not be hindered.*" (1 Peter 3:7) Did you hear that? Honor women, brothers, for if you don't, God will not hear you. Men, if you spend your life taking advantage of women in all kinds of ways—sexually, emotionally—whether it's your girlfriend or your wife or somebody online - if you take advantage of His daughters, God will turn His back on you. Honor women.

And train boys to be men. Dads, husbands, single men, show boys what godly responsibility, humble initiative, hard-working leadership looks like in action. Train boys to provide, to protect, to lead women in loving, gracious, humble, hard-working ways that reflect the very character of Christ. Show them that this is what the cross compels us to do. This is a huge need across our church. Older men, in a Titus 2-type way, we need to take responsibility for showing younger men what this looks like.

The cross compels us to initiate humble, hard-working leadership in our lives, and the cross compels us to show selfless, sacrificial love for our wives. This is Ephesians 5:22-33.

*Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. (Ephesians 5:25-30)*

Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church. How did Christ love the church? He gave Himself up for her. Give yourself up for her. Gentlemen, headship is not an opportunity for you to control your wife. It is a responsibility for you to die for your wife. Daily, to die to yourself to lift her up. The thought of headship in marriage should cause every man in this room to tremble. The last thing any man should ever do is joke about being head of his wife. You are head in the sense that you lay down your life for your wife like Christ laid down his life on a cross. The world tells you that to be a man is to be macho, to defend yourself, to assert yourself, to bring attention to yourself, to live for yourself, and the Bible says, "Sacrifice yourself for your wife."

Love your wife faithfully. Do you realize, husbands, the responsibility we have to represent Christ's love for His bride in the way we love our wives? Men, if you leave your wife, you show that Christ deserts His people. Husbands, if you are harsh with your wife, you show the world that Christ is harsh toward His people. Husbands, if you ignore your wife, you show the world that Christ wants nothing to do with His people. Do you realize how serious this picture is?

It is astonishing how, for a few moments of sexual pleasure, faithless men and women can bring themselves to slander the very faithfulness of Christ before the world. What picture is your marriage giving to the world about Christ and His church? This is why you stay married. Not because the feeling is always there and not because it's easy. But because the covenant of Christ among His people is at stake before a lost and dying world. This is why you stay married. Love your wife faithfully.

Love your wife effectively. Christ loves the church in a way that makes her holy and pure and blameless, so this is how we love our wives—in such a way that they grow in loveliness.

We are responsible for leading our marriages to be holy, and we are responsible for leading our wives to be lovely. How do we do that? By laying down our lives for them. This is what it means to be the head of your family. Love your wife effectively.

Love your wife carefully. *"He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body."* (Ephesians 5:28-30) I love this. Paul almost appeals to our selfishness. "Men, you know how much you care about yourself? Well care for her like that." Nourish her. The language here is emotional, even evocative. And cherish her. The word is literally "to keep warm" or "to comfort." Never be harsh with your wife.

The Bible tells husbands to love their wives carefully because God knows that husbands in their sinfulness will take this headship thing and use it to debase them. God says, "No, you use your position as head in your family to treasure your wife, not debase her." She needs to feel served, not humiliated.

Love your wife carefully, and love your wife completely. The cross compels us to love our wives completely in one-flesh union with them. I know that this is a lot. We have covered a lot of ground this morning, and we have seen huge responsibilities that are heaped upon men—the kind of responsibilities that we would be totally unable to bear and carry out on our own. Some of you may be tempted to think, "I can't do all of this. I just can't do it." If that's what you think, realize that that is the point of "The Cross and Christian Manhood." We cannot be the men God has created us to be on our own. We have tried that in our culture, and it has not worked.

We are driven on this Father's Day to the cross, for the cross compels us to desperate dependence on grace that only Christ can give. To be a man is to be found in Christ. To be a husband is to love like Christ. To be a father is to lead like Christ. You cannot do any of this apart from Christ.

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