**Biblical Masculinity Defined, Part 2[[1]](#footnote-1)**

[Pray]

**Introduction**

Have you seen the web site “The Art of Manliness?” This site is like a boot camp for guys to learn how to be the classic man. It’s got tutorials on how to tie a tie, “how to shave like your grandpa,” how to grill a steak, fix a car, install a washing machine, and take a lady on a proper date. It’s an interesting site, which reveals that maybe men don’t feel like they’re “manly enough” or lack the skills to be a “man’s man” in today’s society.

But a site like this raises another question. Is masculinity mainly about **skills** [or *even competency levels*]? Could we set up a “man scouts” program, like the boy scouts but for grown-ups, teach guys how to wear a proper suit, start a fire and become an expert in home repair, and then issue certificates in manhood to all who complete the training?

Over the last 2 weeks, we’ve looked at the foundations for manhood and womanhood in **Genesis 1** and seen that men and women are equally made in the image of God. They share equal value, worthy, dignity, and importance. But then in **Genesis 2**, we saw significant distinctions between the first man and first woman and the inclinations that they would have toward fulfilling God’s creation mandate. And in **Genesis 3**, these inclinations were reinforced, as God outlined different consequences of sin for the woman and man. Therefore, the fundamental “building blocks” for rightly understanding manhood and womanhood is beginning with the fact that men and women are designed by God to complement each other with distinct dispositions and beautiful roles to play according to His design.

And today, in our second week on masculinity, we want to focus on how the Bible mainly defines masculinity not as skill levels and talents but according to ***character – character that displays God’s glory through imaging Jesus Christ*. So it’s of utmost importance that men know WHO they should be like, because that will affect their DISPOSITION in how they serve others.** So it’s not primarily about manly skills at the grill or in the garage. Not a macho lifestyle. But humble, initiative-taking, risk-absorbing, sacrificial, responsible, generous, protective, loving, Christ-like **character**. But how can any of us have this type of character? Well it can’t be purchased or downloaded at a seminar. It can’t be earned by following a simple formula. It comes only through having our minds renewed, day in and day out, by the Spirit of Jesus through the wisdom of God’s Word.

So, what does masculine character practically look like? Let’s work through a definition derived from principles found in God’s Word that will help guide our thinking on this topic of biblical masculinity:

**THE ESSENCE OF BIBLICAL MASCULINITY IS A SENSE OF BENEVOLENT RESPONSIBILITY TO TEND GOD’S CREATION, PROVIDE FOR AND PROTECT OTHERS, AND EXPRESS LOVING, SACRIFICIAL LEADERSHIP IN PARTICULAR CONTEXTS PRESCRIBED BY GOD’S WORD.**

Before we jump into the imperatives, let’s first briefly consider that phrase, “a sense of benevolent responsibility.” Biblical masculinity is **self-conscious**. It involves a guy’s **attitude** toward men AND women in the circumstances of life God puts him in. It’s a “benevolent” posture, in that it seeks the good of others **through** sacrificial service. And it is a **weighty stewardship** given by God for which God **will hold men responsible**.

***But responsible for what?*** Let’s get into the rest of the definition, beginning with:

1. **“… TEND GOD’S CREATION …”**

Last week, we learned from **Genesis 2** that God formed the man of dust from the *ground*, and it was the *ground* (more specifically, the garden of Eden) that he would eventually be placed in by God to “*work it and keep it*” (**2:15**). As God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens out of the *ground*, man was given the responsibility of naming the animals (**2:19-20**), therefore continuing his call to tend to the *ground*: which is God’s creation. So how did the Fall (the consequences and curses of sin) affect the man’s relationship to the ground? In one sense, the only thing that changed would be the hardship and pain he would face. So we read in **Genesis 3:17**, “*cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life*”. However, we read in **Genesis 3:23** that God “*sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken.*” As we read **Genesis 2-3**, we see that the man’s God-given disposition to work the ground is affected, but not changed by the fall. (**Ex:** Men introducing themselves – “*What do you do?*” both for good and bad reasons men typically have their identity tied with what they do; hobbies – building a deck or repairing a guitar). This isn’t saying that men work and that women don’t – **they both work in various ways**, but this is saying that men in particular are created by God with a distinct inclination toward working the creation as representatives of God’s dominion. And though this isn’t teaching that all men will be farmers by any means, men were created with a calling to work and cultivate, provide and protect in whatever job and relationships he finds himself within.

Let’s turn to that next phrase: “Provide for.”

**B. “. . . PROVIDE FOR . . .”**

In **1 Timothy 5:8**, we find a strong statement about the need for a man to provide for his family: “*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.”* Do you notice what God is showing us here? In providing for the ones for whom he is responsible, **a man reflects God’s own provision of all that we need for life and for godliness. (ex: my dad’s determination to provide in my family set a good example – encourage hardworking dads listening!)**

Now, this aspect of masculinity most acutely applies in the home within the context of marriage. A husband’s responsibility to provide ***doesn’t mean it’s wrong*** for a wife to assist in earning income. **Proverbs 31** pictures a wife with *ample* *abilities* that extend both within the sphere of the **home** and also **in business outside** the home. What we’re getting at is this: when there is no bread on the table, it’s the husband who should feel the main pressure to get it there. There is no question about whether a wife can work outside. Of course she’s ***able***, it’s whether or not she ***ought*** to: whether work outside the home will assist her in her calling to nurture her family or compromise her ability to fulfill that calling. And that’s what a man is to help lead his family in thinking about, for the benefit of the entire home (*I totally understand every home will have unique differences: no children in the home; physical disability or illness; unemployment; financial debt*). We’ll address this much more in future weeks.

Outside of marriage, applying this verse might mean a son or brother or uncle or grandfather stepping up and providing financially for relatives who need help. It might mean providing financially, or mowing the grass, or cleaning the gutter of an elderly widow within the church. On a very practical level for single men, it definitely means taking the responsibility to pay for a date when pursuing a woman. The notion is that where a man can be helpful materially *in an appropriate way*, he should be sensitive to those opportunities and take the initiative to act on them.

Let’s move to the next word:

1. **“. . . AND PROTECT . . .”**

In **Genesis 2:15**, the man was commanded by God “*to keep*” the garden, which is a word used elsewhere in Scripture in reference to the role of soldiers, shepherds, priests, and even God Himself. It denotes a “watching over”, a “guarding” and “protecting” role for those in their care.

So for example, when God condemned the “shepherds” or leaders of Israel in **Ezekiel 34**, he rebuked them for not protecting his sheep. He said, “*The weak you have* ***not*** *strengthened, the sick you have* ***not*** *healed, the injured you have* ***not*** *bound up, the strayed you have* ***not*** *brought back, the lost you have* ***not*** *sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts... my sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth with none to search or seek for them”* (**Ezek 34:4-6**).

***(When Julie and I had bought our first house about 7 years ago…first year in the house…noise at 2:00 AM)***. The point I’m trying to make is that biblical masculinity senses a natural, God-given responsibility to step forward and put himself between the threat and another person, which would certainly include another woman, regardless if they were his wife or not. *Why?* Not because women are inherently weaker physically, or moral cowards. It’s because men are designed to sacrificially protect others. And this protection isn’t just limited to physical danger. Men in the home should seek to protect their family’s **spiritual well-being first and foremost**. Men who are leaders in the church guard the congregation’s doctrine by equipping the membership to know the truth (ex: **book stall, book giveaways, core seminars, expositional preaching. These aren’t there to entertain us! They are there to protect us!**).

**Ex:** Single guys protecting another sister in Christ by walking her home after an evening service; or working in the children’s ministry to ensure the kids are safe in their classrooms; or standing the gap between two friends who can’t seem to get along, and being a shock-absorber or meditator to bring peace between them.

Isn’t this precisely what Christ ultimately portrayed for us on the cross? He has stepped in between us and God, to bear God’s wrath that was justly against us. This is the supreme form of protection or covering that shows both heroism but also amazing grace and love. Which leads us to our next phrase…

***Encouraging Comments / Questions?***

**D. “… LOVING, SACRIFICIAL LEADERSHIP…”**

In the Scriptures, we see that man has a disposition to take responsibility for others. This becomes formalized in a pattern of leadership for men in various contexts. God gave Adam commands with the expectation that he would lead Eve in obeying and worshiping God. He then established a pattern of male leadership through the priests and kings of Old Testament Israel. Jesus taught His disciples to exercise leadership through service. Husbands are called the head of their wives in **Eph 5**. Men are entrusted with leadership authority in the church in **1 Tim 2** and **1 Cor 11**. So first things first: *To be a man is to* ***welcome*** *(not run from!) the mantle [or responsibility] of leadership. (say 2x’s)*

***So what does a male leader look like?*** (if you have a Bible, please open them to **1 Timothy 3** (on pg. 992 in the pew Bibles provided). I think here it’s helpful to look at **1 Timothy 3** and see what kind of traits are necessary for **elders**, *those men who lead in the local church*. (You’ll notice that aside from the qualifications that he must be “*able to teach*” (**v.2**) and “*not a recent convert*,” (**v.6**) these qualities all have to do **not** with the size of a guy’s muscles or the length of his resume, but with his ***character***, his ***godliness***. In fact, since this list defines the character of an elder, it’s a good description of biblical masculinity in general, and **all men would do well to aspire** to meet this description even if they never serve as an elder in a formal sense. Starting in **v. 1**, Paul writes, *“An overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive,* *for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7 Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.” (****ex:***the wisdom of God in giving His people examples to imitate*)*

But depending on your experience and background, there are a variety of thoughts (both good and bad) that may come to mind when you hear that men are called to “lead.” So let’s try to get at what we mean with a handful of clarifying statements on the meaning of biblical masculine leadership.

*1. Biblical masculinity expresses itself not in the demand to be served,* ***but in the strength to serve and to sacrifice for the good of others****.*

Jesus said in **Luke 22:26** “*Let the greatest among you become as the youngest and the leader as one who serves*.” Leadership, according to Jesus, isn’t a demanding demeanor. Sadly, many leaders today use those under their charge for their own benefit (*and if that has ever happened to you, please understand that is NOT godly*). But if the goal of leadership is helping others toward holiness and heaven, the leading will have the holy aroma of Heaven about it - ***the demeanor of Christ***. So *immediately* after saying that “*the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church*” in **Eph 5**, Paul says, “*Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,* ***to make her holy***” (**Eph 5:23, 25**). (**ex:** in my years of pastoring, I’ve never had a woman seek me for counsel because her husband loved her TOO MUCH!) So any man that uses the word “submit” as some sort of “trump-card” in marriage in order to simply get ***his*** way has drastically misunderstood what it means to be a servant-leader. Men must lead, **but we do so with the prosperity of others in mind**.

We think again of **Jesus** who led his bride to holiness and heaven on the cross. Though he looked weak by the world’s definition of power, he showed infinite strength by rejecting the world’s understanding of power and embodying servant leadership. Like Jesus, biblical men use their leadership not to gain life, but to lay their lives down for the good of others.

*2. Biblical masculinity doesn’t have to initiate every action, but* ***feels the responsibility*** *to provide a* ***general pattern*** *of initiative.*

For **single men** this means that biblical masculinity is evidenced by you taking initiative in your friendships, or with your roommates, to ensure that God is honored in your home and relationships. Practically, you are to raise the bar on being accountability and set the tone for expectations of living above approach. To ensure that what’s being viewed on the computer, or crude-jokes, or a pattern of wasting time isn’t being ignored but addressed.

***Ok, so what about for those men who are husbands and fathers?*** Well, this means that in a family setting, the husband **need not** (***and should not***) do **all** the thinking and planning, but that he is totake **overall responsibility** for initiating and carrying through the ***spiritual planning*** for family life.

**Good examination question for men (single or married)**: Would those who know you best describe you as REACTIVE or PROACTIVE in making plans? In other words, are you characterized as one who is *wisely thinking ahead* or always *having to be told* *what to do*?

\*\*\*If you’re not sure what you’re like, maybe ask another person who knows you well.

“Lean hard on the people who know you best, love you most, and will tell you when you’re wrong.” –**Marshall Segal**

For married men, there will be many times and many areas in the specifics of daily life where the **wife** will plan and initiate numerous things within the house and family. But a husband is likely falling down on his leadership responsibilities if the wife in general – **consistently** – is having to take the initiative in getting the family to church, and gather the family for devotions, and deciding what moralstandards will be required of the children. Do you remember what Joshua said when Israel was gathered together as he exhorted them to stay faithful to God? It says in **Joshua 24:15b**, “*But as for* ***me and my house****, we will serve the LORD.*” (also note **Ephesians 6:4**, “***Fathers****, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord*.”) Of course, in situations where the husband and father isn’t a believer, the wife will have to take on more spiritual leadership (**ex:** Timothy’s grandmother – Lois and mother – Eunice), and much wisdom is needed for those sorts of situations (*if you’re a woman who is married to an unbelieving man, please know you can seek out counsel and encouragement from others!*).

*3. Biblical masculinity accepts the burden of the final say in disagreements between leader and led, but doesn’t presume to use it in every instance.*

Men often fall into one of two extremes when it comes to leadership. Either its “domineering Daniel” or “passive Pete”. The first is to be oppressive and over-bearing. The second is to be passive and apathetic. And **BOTH** are ***dangerous perversions*** of biblical leadership. In marriage and the family, the husband is the one who has to answer to God for the direction of the family, so he must be aware of and embrace the responsibility the Lord has given.

Now, *does this mean that a husband should always make all the decisions by himself?* No…that would be wrong, because God has given the man a helper in his wife, especially if she is a godly woman who speaks with wisdom. Which means, men, we need help! So, I know that in my home, God has called me to be the head of my wife and family…but I’m under no illusion that I’ve got it all figured out. *[Good place for a quick self-deprecating illustration…]*

4. Finally, we should note that the biblical *call to leadership is a call to repentance and humility.*

Every man should humble himself before God in sorrow for his past failures and for the indwelling tendency either to shrink from his responsibilities or to overstep them. 1 Peter 5:6, “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you.” To be a leader, a man must first become humble and recognize he doesn’t have within himself the sufficient amount of wisdom or self-autonomy to lead. God is the one who gives men authority and wisdom and then equips us by his Word and his Spirit.

***Encouraging Comments / Questions?***

**E. “ . . . IN PARTICULAR CONTEXTS PRESCRIBED BY GOD’S WORD”**

Men and women have *all types* of relationships. And these different relationships bring different kinds of responsibilities. The context of their relationships will help to determine the appropriate ways men and women relate to each other. Like Adam, men should feel a sense of responsibility for the well-being of others. However, we must remember that the role of Adam’s authority over Eve was grounded in the context of a covenantal relationship – i.e. marriage! So, a husband and wife will have different responsibilities to each other than two single church members of the opposite sex. An elder and a female church member will relate differently than a biological brother and sister. There are differing responsibilities for the way men relate to women in business, government, friendship, the neighborhood, courtship, engagement, etc.

For now, it’s useful to point out that the Scriptures are prescriptive in formalizing male headship and authority in two spheres of covenantal relationships: (1) A husband is called to lead his wife and family in the home; and (2) male elders (so not all Christian men) are called to exercise authority in the local church.

And though all men will not and *should not* exercise authority over all women, men should still sense a proclivity to feel a responsibility for the good of others. Paul says to Timothy, a younger man, “*Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity*” (**1 Tim 5:1-2**). Guys, do you have any fathers and mothers in the church that you respect and look up to? Any younger brothers you’re taking responsibility to mentor? Would brotherly be an accurate way to describe your relationships with women in the body? Do women feel protected and cared for in a respectful way by your interactions with them? I’d encourage you to take an inventory of your relationships and see if they fit this family-like character.

So that’s our working definition of biblical masculinity**:**

**THE ESSENCE OF BIBLICAL MASCULINITY IS A SENSE OF BENEVOLENT RESPONSIBILITY TO TEND GOD’S CREATION, PROVIDE FOR AND PROTECT OTHERS, AND EXPRESS LOVING, SACRIFICIAL LEADERSHIP IN PARTICULAR CONTEXTS PRESCRIBED BY GOD’S WORD.**

It’s the image of a shepherd. Think of Moses the shepherd-leader; David the shepherd-king; Christ, the good shepherd who came to lay his life down for the sheep. One who tends, provides and protects, serves and leads. Like the Lord in **Psalm 23**, one who leads others to green pastures and still waters for the restoration of their souls and their overall welfare.

Let’s conclude**.**

**IV. Conclusion: Two Men**

**My fellow husbands:** Some of us have neglected our wives by spending maybe TOO MUCH time watching TV or working on projects or doing our little hobbies. Some of us are prone to being lazy and passive. Some of us are too arrogant or domineering. And some of us simply have given ourselves so much to their job or school, that the garden of the home is drooping due to lack of nourishment.

Some men who are **single** have acted selfishly in the way we’ve thought of women. Some have been sinfully passive and ignored opportunities to provide for and protect others around them. Some have forgotten what it means for us to relate to our sisters in Christ with purity. But **all of us** have sinned and fallen short.

But the Bible contrasts two men. The *First Adam* was created to steward God’s creation, to provide leadership for his bride, obeying God’s commands. And he failed. The Second Adam was the perfect man who served sacrificially, used his authority for good, laid down his life for his bride and fully obeyed his Father’s commands.

**Jesus perfectly displays biblical masculinity where Adam, no matter how much he could bench press or how much money he made, fell short of God’s design for masculinity**.

So when we fail like the first Adam, **we look to the second** who both forgives our sins, and empowers us in our weakness and selfishness to love and lead as he has.

**Questions? Comments?**

*Let’s Pray.*

1. **West Hall Intro** - What does it mean to be a man? Strong and silent like John Wayne? Aggressive? Passive? Apart from biology, is there anything unique, anything distinct, anything that that ought to distinguish masculinity versus femininity? Can we even use these categories? There’s lots of confusion today, but in the Biblical Manhood and Womanhood core seminar we want to use the light of God’s word to burn away the fog of uncertainty. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)