

# Men After God's Own Heart

## The Marks of Biblical Manhood

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### Introduction

- We live in a cultural moment when the world is aggressively trying to redefine manhood and womanhood—even to the point of blending them together.
  - But no church will be effective in service or pleasing to the Lord if the men don't act like biblical men.
  - The Lord has designed men to lead, both in the home and in the church. If we don't do that His way, we will lead people astray.
- We also live in a time in which masculinity is viewed as positively “toxic.”
  - Certainly there have been abuses. The world has corrupted the good gift of male headship into cruel, heavy-handed domination. That is sin to be repented of.
  - But the answer to those abuses is not to so stress the truth of men's and women's equality that our distinctiveness is minimized or lost. The answer to men's mistreatment of women is not to mistreat men, or to erase gender distinctions all together.
  - Piper: “The consequence of this confusion is not a free and happy harmony among gender-free persons relating on the basis of abstract competencies. The consequence is rather 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.”<sup>1</sup>
- The redefinition and/or deprecation of masculinity and femininity does not result in blessing, because it is rebellion against God's good design. God has designed that men flourish most when women act like women. And God has designed that women flourish most when men act like men.

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<sup>1</sup> John Piper, *What's the Difference? Manhood and Womanhood Defined according to the Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1990), 16–17.

- If that is true, then it is imperative that we know what it means, according to Scripture, for men to act like men and women to act like women. This seminar focuses on key marks of biblical manhood.
  - We'll address four of those marks in this seminar.
  - For more, you can look up the sermons I've preached on this topic in GraceLife, or purchase a book I've written on the subject, entitled *Biblical Gender and Sexuality: Biblical Sanity in a World of Confusion* (CLC, 2024).

## **I. The Biblical Man is a Leader**

- Ephesians 5:23 – “For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church...”
- 1 Corinthians 11:3 – “But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman.”
- Grounded in Creation
  - The roles of male headship and female submission are not incidental later additions to male and female identity, but are original and essential to it.
  - These complementary roles do not have their origin in the fall, when sin corrupted our relationships, but existed in the “very good” (Gen 1:31) state in which God created humanity.
- Six Testimonies from Creation
  - God created the man first (Gen 2:7; cf. 1 Tim 2:12–13)
    - Paul sees the primacy of Adam’s creation as the ground for his taking a leadership role in the church.
  - God gave His command to Adam (Gen 2:15–17)
    - God entrusted Adam with the responsibility to be Eve’s teacher of the Word of God, and not vice versa.

- God created the woman from the man (Gen 2:21–22; cf. 1 Cor 11:7–8, 11–12)
    - According to 1 Corinthians 11:7–8, men and women fulfill different roles under God’s design, because woman comes from man rather than that man comes from woman.
    - But this does not argue for superiority or inferiority, even as Paul quickly observes that, though woman’s creation is from the man’s rib, man is born through the woman (1 Cor 11:11–12).
  - God created the woman for the man (Gen 2:18; cf. 1 Cor 11:9)
    - 1 Corinthians 11:9 – “For indeed man was not created for the woman’s sake, but woman for the man’s sake.”
    - Genesis 2:18 – “Then Yahweh God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him’” (cf. Gen 1:28).
  - Adam names the woman (Gen 2:23)
    - Naming shows authority (Gen 2:19; 41:45; 2 Kgs 23:34)
    - Eve “found her own identity in relation to the man as his equal and helper *by the man’s definition*.”<sup>2</sup>
  - The man initiates the formation of a new family (Gen 2:24)
    - The responsibility to form a new household belongs to the head of that household.
- ➔ Fundamental to the identity of man, from the very beginning of his existence and before sin, is that the biblical man is a leader.

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<sup>2</sup> Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship: Genesis 1–3,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 103, emphasis original.

- Leadership is Not License, but Responsibility
  - The biblical emphasis isn't so much on the leader's *right* to govern as he sees fit as his *stewardship* to lead in a way that both (a) honors God and (b) benefits those under his charge.
  - Though Eve sinned first (Gen 3:6), God holds Adam accountable (Gen 3:9). Creation is cursed because of Adam (Gen 3:17). Sin enters the world through one man (Rom 5:12). In Adam all die (1 Cor 15:22).
  - Adam is the head of the human race. As the leader, the man bears the burden of primary accountability for the spiritual and moral health of the family.
  - Masculine leadership, then, means taking responsibility. It means being willing to be held accountable, even when you personally may not be at fault. If there is something spiritually amiss in your household, you, as the husband and father, bear the ultimate responsibility for that, because God has made you head.
    - There is nothing less manly than passively abdicating your leadership role and shirking responsibility.
  - Adam's transgression consisted in abdicating his God-given headship and shirking responsibility. He failed to lead, teach, and protect Eve, leaving her vulnerable to the enemy's attacks.
  - Satan's temptation consisted in making Eve the spokesman and representative of the family (Gen 3:1), inverting the God-ordained design of headship and submission.
  - Ultimately, the fall of the human race traces its origin to the first man's abdication of his leadership responsibility and following his wife into disobedience.
- Eschewing Passivity, Taking Responsibility
  - If you will be a biblical man, you must be a leader—one who takes responsibility, eschews passivity, takes action and initiative, makes decisions with clarity and conviction, and confronts conflict with boldness and grace.

- “Mature masculinity...feels the responsibility to provide a general pattern of initiative.”<sup>3</sup>
- Wives should not feel the burden of primary responsibility to make the household run while husbands passively respond to her initiative. Men must be imaginative and reflective, thinking about what needs doing for the family to thrive.
  - Prayer at mealtimes, Family devotions, Bringing family to church
  - Strategic spiritual leadership of your wife
  - Strategic romantic pursuit of your wife
  - Aware of children’s behavioral issues and plans for addressing it
  - Leading informed discussions about children’s education, family finances, etc.
  - Addresses conflict without blame, seeks forgiveness first
  - Strategic planning for meaningful involvement in local church and evangelism
- ➔ Eschewing the weakness of indecision and procrastination, the biblical man runs toward responsibility. His leadership is deferential but decisive. He is neither impulsive nor paralyzed.

## **II. The Biblical Man is a Lover**

- 1 Corinthians 16:13–14 – “Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.”
- Titus 2:2 – “Older men are to be...sound...in love...”
- 1 Timothy 1:5 – “But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”
- Colossians 3:19 – “Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them.”

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<sup>3</sup> Piper, *What’s the Difference?*, 31.

- Ephesians 5:22–33 – “Husbands, love your wives, | just as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself up for her, ... So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. ... Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.”
  - The greatest Man who ever lived was love incarnate. Christ’s love for His bride becomes the pattern for every husband’s love for his bride.
  - Sacrificial Love: The Lord Jesus Christ subordinated His own interests, convenience, and well-being to the benefit of His bride.
    - Leadership is loving. Headship is humble.
    - Luke 22:25–27 – “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called ‘Benefactors.’ But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant. For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves.”
    - Jesus may have looked weak, as He served everyone else, even unto dying a criminal’s death. But it was nothing but pure, holy, manly strength that enabled Him to say no to the temptations of Satan, of the world that lay in Satan’s power, and of any preference of His own comfort or ease over and above the benefit of the church.
  - Having been loved this way, you also are to love this way.
    - You are to sacrifice the fleshly comforts of idleness, ease, and recreation for the sake of benefiting those you love and are responsible to lead.
    - It will cost you something (perhaps sleep, leisure time, or hobbies) to pursue Christ faithfully enough to be a man worth following.
    - You are to sacrifice the freedom of being driven by your emotions or the spontaneity of the moment, so that you live an ordered, disciplined, intentional life.

- You don't go home *from* work; you go home *to* work.
- "The gospel makes men who hate selfishness and crave selflessness."<sup>4</sup>
- First Adam vs. Second Adam
  - One of the first results of Adam's abdication of his headship and fall into sin is blame-shifting. "The woman whom You gave to be with me..." (Gen 3:12).
    - "It was her fault; kill her, not me!"
  - The loving, manly, Second-Adam-like thing to do would have been to give up himself for her: "Lord, I failed to lead my wife and keep her safe from temptation. Take me instead of her. It was my responsibility. I'll bear the guilt of her sin and mine."
- ➔ The biblical man neither makes excuses nor shifts blame. He takes responsibility and lovingly sacrifices himself for the benefit and protection of those he loves.

### III. The Biblical Man is a Provider

- Ephesians 5:28–29 – "So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but *nourishes* and *cherishes* it, just as Christ also does the church."
  - Nourish (*ektrephō*)
    - Only here and Eph 6:4 in NT, but often in the LXX in the context of raising children or providing for the needs of others.
    - Genesis 45:11 – "There I will also provide for you, for there are still five years of famine to come, lest you and your household and all that you have be impoverished."
    - The man sees to it that the physical needs of his wife and family are met.

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<sup>4</sup> Owen Strachan and Gavin Peacock, *The Grand Design: Male and Female He Made Them* (Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus, 2016), 154.

- Cherish (*thalpō*)
  - Literally, “to make warm” (BDAG), in the sense of “to care for”; to clothe and shelter.
  - Only here and in 1 Thess 2:7 (“tenderly cares for”)
  - The man gives himself to providing for the needs of his wife and family.
- Providing for Physical Needs
  - Genesis 2:15 – “Then Yahweh God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it”—literally, to *work* it and to *watch over* it.
    - God put man into the garden to work. Man was created to be a worker.
    - Work is not a product of the curse of sin; it is man’s natural element.
    - Work is part of the original paradise.
    - One of the chief temptations for men is laziness, viewing work as a necessary evil rather than a blessing from heaven. But biblical men are not lazy; they are hard workers.
    - We must fight the temptation to laziness by considering that work is part of our identity. God has created men to work hard, precisely so that we can earn enough money to provide for the physical needs of those whom God entrusts to you to nourish and cherish.
  - God curses the man and woman in ways that reflect their distinct spheres of responsibility within their natural domains—the woman with respect to her domestic relationships (Gen 3:16), and the man with respect to his vocation as a worker of the ground (Gen 3:17–19).
  - The primary burden for putting food on the table and a roof over the heads of the family falls to the husband.
    - This doesn’t mean that a woman cannot work, or that there aren’t seasons in life when a wife could work outside the home.



- It does mean that a husband ought never to willingly put his wife in a position to feel the pressure of having to earn money so that the family can survive.
  - Piper: "...when there is no bread on the table it is the man who should feel the main pressure to do something to get it there. ... A man will feel his [manhood] compromised if he, through sloth or folly or lack of discipline, becomes dependent over the long haul (not just during graduate school!) on his wife's income."<sup>5</sup>
- Providing for Spiritual Needs
    - In the same way that men are responsible to put food on the table so that the family is well-nourished, they are also responsible to put *spiritual* food on the table, so that the family may be sustained by the blessings of the Word of God and the means of grace.
    - Ephesians 5:25–27 – “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.”
      - The husband is to be a sanctifying influence upon his wife, ordering his life in the service of his wife's spiritual growth.
    - Genesis 2:15–17 describes God giving Adam the command not to eat from the tree, with Eve being created later. God entrusted Adam with the responsibility to instruct his wife concerning the Lord's Word and to see to it that she apply it in the way God intended.
    - 1 Corinthians 14:35 encourages women who desire to learn spiritual matters from their husbands, which shows that men are to be competent enough in the Scriptures that they are able to answer their wives' questions.
    - In Ephesians 6, Paul commands children to obey their *parents*, using the generic term *goneús* to speak of both mother and father. But in verse 4, he specifically charges *fathers* to bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

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<sup>5</sup> Piper, *What's the Difference?*, 39.

- Spiritual Provider

- A man of God who studies the Word, loves the Word, and practices the Word
- A man of prayer, who communes with God and does battle with sin on his knees
- A man who is an example of good deeds (Titus 2:7) and can set the spiritual pace for others; one whose spiritual life is worthy of imitation
- Taking the lead in family worship
- Praying for the sanctification of your wife and children in specific ways
- Leading in regular, vital participation in the local church
- Cultivating an atmosphere of discipleship in the home (Deut 6:7)
- Taking initiative in disciplining the children (cf. Heb 12:7, 9)

#### **IV. The Biblical Man is a Protector**

- Genesis 2:15 – “Then Yahweh God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it [*shāmar*]”—literally, to watch over it (cf. 3:24; Job 13:27; 29:2; 33:11).
  - Adam was to guard the Garden. He was to be a protector from the beginning of his existence.
- Ephesians 5:25 – “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her...”
  - The innocent Lord steps between His guilty bride and omnipotent Justice (Isa 53:4; Gal 3:13; Rom 5:9).
  - The greatest demonstration of protection was how Christ protected His bride from the deserved wrath of God. When Paul calls husbands to love our wives like Christ loved the church, he calls us to protect them.

- Protecting against Physical Danger

- If there is a physical threat of any kind, “mature masculinity senses a natural, God-given responsibility to step forward and put himself between” that threat and the one he’s protecting.<sup>6</sup>
  - Checking on the noise in the house late at night
  - Accompanying a classmate or co-worker to her car
  - Standing on the street-side of the sidewalk
  - Piper: “Women and children are put into the lifeboats first, not because the men are necessarily better swimmers, but because of a deep sense of honorable fitness. It belongs to masculinity to accept danger to protect women.”<sup>7</sup>
  - “If someone had to die, I thought it should be me.”<sup>8</sup>
- Your size and your strength are irrelevant. What matters is that God has made men to be protectors. If someone has to suffer harm, it should be us.
- This is why it is a perversion of the grossest kind for men to be abusive to women and children. Those designed to protect from harm must not become instruments of harm.

- Protecting against Spiritual Danger

- 1 Corinthians 16:13 – “Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.”
  - Men must have an alertness about them, so that they can spy out the spiritual dangers that threaten those they’re charged to lead, and issue

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<sup>6</sup> Piper, *What’s the Difference?*, 41.

<sup>7</sup> Piper, *What’s the Difference?*, 42.

<sup>8</sup> Joelle Goldstein, “Hero Boy Who Saved Sister in Dog Attack Feels Face Scar Is ‘Something to Be Proud Of,’ Says Dad,” *People*, July 30, 2021: <https://people.com/human-interest/wyoming-boy-bridger-walker-who-saved-sister-in-dog-attack-feels-proud-of-scar-says-dad/>

warnings and perhaps even intervene, so that no spiritual harm comes to their loved ones.

- Spiritual dangers are ever-present
  - In the world: wickedness via TV, movies, the Internet, even the news
  - In the “church”: false teachers and false teaching that corrupts sound doctrine
  - “...holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.”
- Men must know the content of Scripture as well as the whole of what teaches (i.e., doctrine/theology). You’re to be the resident theologian in your home.
  - Titus 2:2 – “Older men are to be...sound in faith...”
  - Titus 2:6–7 – “Likewise, urge the young men...in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine...”
- Offering loving correction (Gal 6:1)
- Laboring in prayer for your family
- Setting standards for what TV shows, movies, and music will be allowed, protecting them from ungodly influences
- Setting standards for what clothing will and will not be worn, protecting them from becoming the objects of the lust of unprincipled men
- Taking the initiative in reconciliation, protecting against bitterness

## **Conclusion**

- Summary: Leader, Lover, Provider, Protector
  - Leadership takes responsibility and serves
  - We are to love sacrificially

- The provision and protection that we furnish to our families is both physical and spiritual
- This is God's design for men.
- Gospel-motivation: Though we fall short of these things in practice, in Christ we have redemption for the forgiveness of these transgressions. We are raised with Him to walk in newness of life, and we must do battle with sin in the strength of grace.
- Young men: Aspire to this
- Older men: Practice this, and model it to the younger men
- Single women: This is what you are to seek in a husband
- Wives: This is what you are to help your husband to be
- To all: Press on by grace to walk in the fullness of what Christ has purchased for us