



THE
MENTORING
PROJECT

MAN OF GOD: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE ONE?



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INTRODUCTION: PRECIOUS THINGS EASILY LOST

It is remarkable to me how easily precious things can be lost. An individual can quickly lose valuable possessions such as innocence, integrity, or a good reputation. The church can lose precious things, too, and this seems to be happening today. One ideal we may be losing is that of a strong, Biblical, and confident Biblical manhood. Not long ago, American men were told to get in touch with our “feminine side” (mine is named Sharon), and it’s this sort of cultural foolishness that has resulted in misconceptions about what it means to be a Godly man, a loving husband, a good father, and a faithful friend.

I have little doubt that today’s problem with manhood arises in part from a broader problem in secular culture. So many young men grow up today without a father — or with a father who is inadequately connected with his sons — that there is bound to be confusion about masculinity and the role of a father. The secular media bombards us all with images and models of womanhood and manhood that are simply bogus. Meanwhile, in growing numbers of evangelical churches, the presence of strong and Godly men seems to have receded in the face of a feminized spirituality. In the affluence of our post-modern Western society, guys typically no longer engage in the kind of struggle for survival that used to turn boys into men. Yet our families and churches need strong, masculine Christian men as much — or more — than they ever have. So how do we revive or recover our threatened masculinity? The place to start, as always, is God’s Word,

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with its strong vision and clear teaching on what it means not just to be male but to be a man of God.

The purpose of this field guide is to provide straight, clear, and pointed teaching on what the Bible says to men as men. What does it mean for us to be the Christian men that we want to be, that our families need us to be, and that God has made and redeemed us in Christ to become? The Biblical answers are quite simple, yet very far from easy. My hope is that through this study, you will be enlightened and encouraged and, as a result, the people in your life will be richly blessed.

What follows is a reminder that our first priority as men is our relationship with the God who made us. Then, flowing from God's design in creation, we note three vital principles from the Bible. Finally, we will apply these principles to the main relationships that God provides to men — including spiritual leadership in the home and church.

First Priority: Your Relationship with God Is Essential

We need to be clear from the start that the only way any man will live out the Bible's call to true manhood is through the blessings of his relationship with God. A Biblical view of men begins with God as our Creator: "God created man in his own image" (Gen. 1:27). Men and women were created by God with equal status and value but different designs and callings. But the highest calling of both men and women is to know God and to glorify him — a calling that shapes true Biblical masculinity.

We can see the special relationship between God and mankind in the way God created us. Prior to creating man, God brought things into being by his mere Word. But in creating man, God displayed personal investment: "the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature" (Gen. 2:7). The Lord formed the man with his own hands and created man for a face-to-face relationship of love. This covenant nature of man's creation tells you that God wants to know you and for you to know him. God wants a personal relationship with you.

Just as God "breathed" life into the first man, Christians experience the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit that enables us to live in his righteousness.

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God created man in his own image, to spread his glory on the earth and worship him. Some men today consider worship as something a real guy is not excited to do. However, to know and glorify God is the highest calling and privilege of any man — the foundation for all servant leadership and faithful obedience that follows.

This being the case, the first priority for any discussion of Biblical manhood is that we commit ourselves to the daily study of God's Word — the Bible — and to prayer. Just as the light of God shone onto Adam's face, God's Word is the light by which we know him and enjoy his blessing (Ps. 119:105), supplying the strength described throughout Bible verses about strength.

Immediately after God created the first man, he put Adam to work: "the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man who he had formed" (Gen. 2:8). From the very start, men were to be productive in serving the Lord. After all, what is the first question most men are asked? "What work do you do?" This identification between a man and his work is consistent with the Bible's picture. Men were created to know God, to worship God, and to serve God in their work — a foundation for spiritual leadership. God thus commanded Adam and Eve: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion" over the other creatures (Gen. 1:28).

Let's summarize what we learn about Christian manhood from the first chapters of Genesis:

1. God created man, meaning he has the right to tell us what to do — the starting point for servant leadership.
2. We were made for a relationship with God. True manhood therefore flows from our knowledge of God and his ways, shaping the character of a man of God.
3. God has placed his Spirit within us, so that we can live to glorify and worship him.
4. God immediately assigned the first man to work, showing that Christian men are to work hard and be productive, faithfully living out Biblical masculinity.

We should never talk about the Bible's teaching of creation without noting that the first man fell into sin (Gen. 3:1–6) by disobeying God's command.

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As a result, we are all sinners who fall short of God's creation design (Rom. 3:23; 5:19). It is for this reason that God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to save us from sin by dying in our place and rising from the dead to grant us new life. Christian men live not only according to God's creation design, but also by God's redeeming grace.

However, we should realize that Christ saves us to fulfill the design that was revealed in the first chapters of Genesis for the glory of God and our own blessing. As sinners, our relationship with God is through his Son, Jesus Christ, by the grace that redeems us from sin and enables us to obey God's Word — calling us to be strong and courageous in faithful obedience.

From this first priority flow vital principles for faithfulness as men.

1

PRINCIPLES FOR FAITHFULNESS

The Bible Calls Men to Be Leaders

Most of what we have said is equally true for women as for men, but it is so important that we cannot skip it. But when we look for the distinct calling given to the man, God's creation order highlights our first principle: the masculine calling to lordship. In short, the Lord invests men with headship in their relationships, involving both authority and responsibility — the calling of the head of the household. God is, of course, the high Lord over all people and things. But men are called to serve God by exercising lordship in the spheres of responsibility he places under us.

With this in mind, one of the best summaries of Biblical manhood occurs in a comment the Lord made about the patriarch Abraham:

For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him (Gen. 18:19).

Notice that God expected Abraham to exercise authority over his children and household, which refers to everyone under Abraham's charge. Abraham was to lead in such a way as to ensure that his family kept "the way of the Lord" — that is, lived according to God's Word. Notice as well, that God says it is through Abraham's Godly leadership "that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him." Here is a statement that highlights the vital importance of spiritual leadership. If Christian men do not lead their families, the blessings that God has promised to believers are not likely to be realized. Of course, everyone is called to keep God's ways in faith and obedience. But the man is distinct in that he is charged

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to lead and command: he is given lordship by God — a clear picture of servant leadership marked by responsibility, not tyranny.

Everything in Genesis 2, which focuses on life as God designed it, points to the leadership that God entrusted to the man. For instance, when God made a covenant with mankind, he gave the command to Adam and not to Eve (Gen. 2:16–17). Why didn't God give his command to both Adam and Eve? The answer is that God commanded Adam, and it was Adam's responsibility to make it known to Eve. Similarly, it was the man who gave names to the various species of animals (Gen. 2:19). If you have the right to name something, you are its lord! Adam even gave the woman her name, Eve, as an expression of God's call for men to serve him through lordship (Gen. 3:20).

Exercising Godly lordship requires men to accept responsibility and exercise authority. We find a good example in Ruth 2, when a landowner named Boaz noticed a poor but virtuous woman gleaning in his fields. Boaz realized that women in her position were vulnerable and that not all of his men could be trusted. He made inquiries about Ruth and learned that she had a noble character. So he not only permitted her to glean in his fields but also charged his more reckless men not to bother her, and then made provision for her to have something to drink when she got thirsty (Ruth 2:9). This is Godly lordship! The man accepted responsibility and exercised authority to ensure that a needy woman was cared for and protected. Boaz had learned the priorities of mercy and righteousness through God's Word — priorities that define the role of a husband in the Bible and the wider calling of men to lead with strength and care.

Boaz exercised his God-given lordship to govern his household so that God's will was done, the Lord was glorified, and people were cared for. This is an excellent picture of the kind of lordship to which God calls all men.

What happens when men do not lead? We have already seen God's comment that his promises to Abraham would not come to pass if Abraham did not command his household. Another example is the failure of King David when it came to his family. David is one of the great heroes of the Bible. He slew Goliath and was anointed by God to be king over

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Israel. He led God's people in battle, established Jerusalem as Israel's capital, and wrote a large portion of the book of Psalms. Yet David was an abject failure in his family, and this neglect of leadership would not only ruin David's life but also undo much of the good he accomplished for the people.

Consider the sons of David, who are a roster of famous scoundrels. The first one we meet is Amnon. This son was so infatuated with his beautiful half-sister Tamar that he sexually assaulted her and then publicly humiliated her. As you read 2 Samuel 13, it is obvious that David should have known his daughter's peril and intervened to protect her — a tragic failure in the role of a father. When David did nothing about this crime, Tamar's full brother Absalom took matters into his own hands and slew his brother Amnon, throwing the royal household into turmoil.

Again, David did not lead, but allowed Absalom merely to go into exile. From this exile, Absalom plotted a rebellion that almost overthrew David's kingdom and required a great battle in which many soldiers died (see 2 Sam. 13–19). Even at the end of his life, David had another rotten son, Adonijah, who tried to usurp the throne from David's heir Solomon (1 Kings 1).

The sad truth is that the reign of David ended in turmoil and chaos because he would not lead his household. How do we explain such foolish behavior? The Bible gives two explanations. First Kings 1:6 includes a note about David's indulgence of Adonijah, which we can assume was true for all of his sons: David "had never at any time displeased him by asking, 'Why have you done thus and so?'" David did not take responsibility for his sons and he did not exercise authority over them. He did not find out what was happening in their lives (and more importantly in their hearts) and he did not correct or discipline them. Perhaps David was too busy fighting wars and writing songs to do his job as a father. His failure highlights the importance of men exercising lordship, especially in the home — a sober reminder of the weighty calling of Biblical fatherhood.

But there is another, more penetrating answer to David's failure of leadership. We go back before all these troubles started and discover David's great sin with Bathsheba. Second Samuel 11 provides a warning to

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Christian men who are tempted to shirk their duties at work and in the home. Israel's army was fighting a war, but David stayed home to relax. With his guard down, he was easy prey to the temptation of lust when he saw the beautiful woman bathing. In a short succession that marks his fall as a man, David called for Bathsheba and took her, even though he knew that she was the wife of one of his best soldiers. When Bathsheba got pregnant, David went so far as to conspire in her husband's death so that he could marry her and cover up his sin.

Do you notice that the sins David's sons later committed followed in the pattern of sins they had seen him commit? David assaulted a beautiful girl, and so did his son Amnon. David conspired against a righteous man and covered it up, laying the path that Absalom later would walk. What is the lesson? This is a sobering example of the sins of the father being echoed in the next generation. Christian men must lead. And our leadership begins with the example of faith and Godliness that we set. If we sin — and we do — then we must repent and confess our sin, taking steps to change our evil habits. If we do not set an example of Godliness, our calling to lordship in service to God is likely to end up a sham. And, just like King David, God's blessing will be lost because the man who was called to lead failed to do so.

Before we move on, let's consider some of the things that a Godly man does to lead his wife and family — central expressions of husband responsibility and the role of a father:

- He sets an example by believing in Jesus Christ and living sincerely according to God's Word.
- He ensures that his family attends a faithful church where God's Word is accurately taught.
- He reads his Bible, prays, and calls others in his household to do likewise.
- He takes responsibility for his wife and children, pays attention to them, and exercises his God-given authority to encourage them to live rightly — a practical picture of how to be a good father and how to be a good husband.

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The Bible Calls Men to Be Nurturers

The Bible is such a valuable resource to men. God's Word not only tells us what we are to do but also gives us a pattern for how we are to serve and lead as husbands, fathers, and leaders outside the home. We noted earlier the value of what Scripture says about God's design for men in creation. In fact, one of the most informative statements about Biblical manhood occurs in Genesis 2:15, which I have elsewhere referred to as the Masculine Mandate.¹ This verse sets a pattern that we see all through the Bible, giving men two tasks that enable them to succeed as Christian leaders: "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it" (Gen. 2:15).

The garden of Eden was a world of covenant relationships that the Lord had designed for mankind. Included was marriage, the family, the church, and even the workplace. The Lord put Adam into this garden and also into the relationships that God had designed for life there.

The two words I want to focus on are "work" and "keep." Here is *how* to be a Biblical man. *What* is God-obedient lordship? The *how* is work and keep, two words that set a trajectory for masculinity throughout the Bible. The second of these — keep — means to guard and protect. The first of these commands is work, which means to invest one's labor to produce a good harvest. Here is the second Biblical principle for manhood. The first is that the man is called to lordship. The second is that God's Word calls men to be nurturers — a core aspect of the Biblical Role of a Husband.

The Biblical idea of working — meaning to cultivate and nurture — may be the aspect of masculinity that is most out of sync with traditional ideas in our society. Men are often seen as distant or emotionally reserved. Yet Scripture calls men to strength expressed through care and presence, echoing the charge to act like men and to be strong and courageous (cf. 1 Corinthians 16:13).

Adam's fingers were to be brown with the soil of the garden; likewise, the hands of Christian men are to be brown with the soil of their wives' and children's hearts. Whether a man is at work, talking to someone at church, or leading in his home, he is to take a personal interest and act in ways

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designed to bring blessing and cause growth. This nurturing strength is central to true spiritual leadership.

A husband is called to nurture his wife emotionally and spiritually. Likewise, a father is called to be intentional about plowing up and planting in the hearts of his children. Few things are more injurious to a child than emotional distance from his or her father. There is a reason Scripture places such weight on Biblical fatherhood. God has given men the primary calling of emotional and spiritual nurture, and many fail to do it well.

When a Christian man “works” in the lives of others — nurturing and building up their hearts like Adam in the garden — the beneficiaries delight in his attention and grow under the influence of his love. This is not a weakness. It is the strength of a man of God living out God’s design.

Another way the Bible describes a man’s calling to work and nurture is through the image of a shepherd with his sheep. Psalm 23 talks about a shepherd who is totally invested in the well-being of his lambs, leading them, serving them, and providing for all their needs. This image reflects servant leadership expressed through faithful care.

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.
(Ps. 23:1–3)

This is the servant lordship to which God calls men in the work of nurturing other people, especially our wives and children. It takes effort, attention, and passionate concern and models true spiritual leadership. Of course, these words were ultimately penned about Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep (John 10:11). It is the man who can say these words about Jesus, the shepherd of our souls who leads us to eternal life, who has a heart for shepherding other people. Jesus is the greatest example of true manhood and the ultimate man of God, laying down his life for the nurture and salvation of the people he loves so much, even dying on the cross to deliver them from sin and define Biblical manhood.

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As we close our discussion of this vital matter of working — nurturing and leading the hearts of those we love — let me give some questions to diagnose how we are doing (and how we want to do!):

- Am I close to my wife and children (or others in important relationships), so that I know and understand their hearts and live faithfully in the role of a father?
- Do the people under my care feel that I want to know them, and do I speak to them in a way that encourages and teaches them, reflecting healthy spiritual leadership?
- Do my wife and children (or others) feel that they know me? Have I shared my heart with them? Do they feel that they can join me in the things that I am passionate about? Do they feel that I am passionate about them and their blessing, honoring my husband responsibility?
- As I look to the life of Jesus Christ in the Gospels, what things did he do to show that he cared, to connect with his disciples, and to lead them to spiritual growth that I experience and then imitate as a man of God?

The Bible Calls Men to Be Protectors

The second part of the Masculine Mandate of Genesis 2:15 is to “keep,” meaning that a man guards and protects what God has placed under his care. This is our third principle for Biblical manhood. When David thought about the Lord’s shepherding care of his life, he not only spoke of the Lord leading him but also protecting him: “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me” (Ps. 23:4). Likewise, the *how* of male leadership involves not only nurturing and encouraging but also standing guard to keep people and things safe, exercising faithful spiritual leadership.

Another place in the Bible where we see both “working” and “keeping” — building up and making safe — is Nehemiah 4:17–18, when the men of Jerusalem were building the city’s walls. Nehemiah had the men carry a shovel or trowel in one hand and a sword or spear in the other. This is Biblical manhood in action — strength paired with responsibility, provision paired with protection.

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Just as the Lord is a great model as a shepherd in Psalm 23, the Lord speaks of his guardian care in Psalm 121. There, the Lord promises that he watches over his people: “He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep” (Ps. 121:5). The psalmist notes that “The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life” (Ps. 121:7). God watches over us to protect us and correct us so that we do not go astray. Here is our example as men who keep what has been entrusted to our care as head of the household.

To be a man is to stand up and be counted on when there is danger or other evil. God does not desire men to stand by idly and allow harm or permit wickedness. Rather, we are called to keep others safe within all the covenant relationships we enter. In our families, our presence is to make our wives and children feel secure and at ease, fulfilling the role of a father. At church, we are to stand for truth and Godliness against worldliness and error. In society, we are to take our place as men who stand up against evil and defend what is right, living out the call to be strong and courageous.

The sad reality, however, is that in many cases the greatest danger from which we need to protect our wives and children is our own sin. I remember counseling a man years ago whose marriage was on the rocks. At one point, he boasted that if a man entered their home with a gun, he would protect his wife: “I would take the bullet for her.” But then, in a flash of insight, he admitted, “Actually, I am the man who enters my home and hurts my wife.” We need to protect people under our care from our own anger, harsh words, self-centeredness, and neglect. This self-watchfulness is essential to being a Godly husband and a faithful man of God.

Here are some questions for us to consider with respect to our manly calling to guard and protect:

- Am I aware of the main threats to my wife and children? What am I doing about them?
- Does my wife (or others under my care) feel safe when I am present? What changes should I make to make sure that she does?
- What are my sins that cause harm to other people, especially in my family? Do I care enough about them to deal with my sinful habits? Am I habitually angry? Do I speak abusively or harshly? If so, have I talked

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with my pastor about these things, seeking to change? Do I pray about these sins? What difference would it make to others if I were to repent of these harmful behaviors?

The Bible Calls Men into God-Designed Relationships

What we have seen so far is the basic Biblical architecture for manhood. Men are called to serve and glorify God, exercising lordship in their relationships by “working and keeping,” that is, nurturing and protecting. This vision reflects Biblical manhood shaped by obedience to God’s design. All of these principles flow from the opening chapters of Genesis and are then reinforced throughout the Bible.

Our final topic in this field guide will consider the contexts in which manhood is lived out, namely, the God-designed relationships found in the Bible. Remember when we saw that God “put the man in the garden” God had created (Gen. 2:8)? We can think of the garden as the covenant world of God’s design in which men and women are to live and bear fruit to God’s glory. Primary among these relationships are marriage and fatherhood, highlighting Biblical fatherhood and the role of a father, though other relationships (such as work, friendships, and the church) are also important.

We have made applications to marriage and fatherhood, but let’s focus in a bit more in the next part, especially on the calling of men as head of the household and the faithful role of a husband in the Bible.

Discussion & Reflection:

1. Which part of this vision for manhood challenges the way you think about what it means to live out Biblical masculinity?
2. In which of these areas do you need to grow most? Are any of them a strength for you?

2

BIBLICAL MANHOOD IN MARRIAGE

Genesis 2:18 makes an important statement when the Lord observed, “It is not good for the man to be alone.” Until now in the creation account everything has been so good! God created and then looked on his work and “saw that it was good” (Gen. 1:25). But now the Creator sees something that is not good — this must be a matter of great importance. The problem God observed was not a flaw in his design but something incomplete. God designed men and women to live together in the holy bond of marriage; this is why the Lord went on to say, “I will make him a helper fit for him” (Gen. 2:18). God created the woman not to be a competitor to man, but to be a complement to him, establishing the foundation for the Biblical Role of a Husband.

This clear Biblical teaching shows that men are to desire to be married to a Godly wife. Unlike what is so common today, men are not to shy away from commitment, spending much of their lives “playing the field.” Instead, a man is to settle down, make a commitment in a relationship with a woman, and start a family. This reflects the role of a husband in the Bible, marked by faithfulness, responsibility, and love. Obviously, there are exceptions when this does not happen, and I do not want to make men feel guilty if they have desired marriage and suffered discouragement. The point is that men are to be pro-marriage. We are to raise our sons with the expectation that they will be husbands, preferably sooner rather than later. Proverbs 18:22 sums up the Bible’s perspective: “He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord.”

It is no secret that our generation finds marriage hard to pull off, primarily because we are determined to keep our sins and still expect success. Christian men, who have been forgiven of their sins and who seek to live

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by God's Word, should have confidence entering into marriage, so long as their wife is a committed Christian herself. This pursuit of faithfulness is central to how to be a good husband and to becoming a Godly husband. To marry a non-Christian woman is to be "unequally yoked" (2 Cor. 6:14). This metaphor compares two mismatched oxen yoked together so that they cannot pull as a team. The same is true of a marriage in which one partner is a Christian and the other is not. It is one thing to come to faith in Christ while married to an unbeliever, in which case we should pray for God to convert our wife while we serve and witness the Gospel. But it is quite another for a man who is already a Christian to marry an unbelieving woman.

If we have found the Bible's basic teaching on manhood instructive, we will find these principles vitally important to Christian marriage. The man is to lead by nurturing and protecting. It turns out that this framework fits exactly what the Bible says about husbands in marriage, making this teaching essential for a happy home and faithful Biblical manhood.

Marital Lordship

First, the Bible is crystal clear that a husband is to provide leadership to the marriage, spiritually and otherwise. This calling reflects intentional spiritual leadership and the God-given responsibility of the husband. You can see this emphasis in what the Lord teaches to Godly wives:

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands (Eph. 5:22–24; see also 1 Pet. 3:1–6).

Our first response as men when we read this should be one of humility. God does not tell wives to submit to their husband's leadership because he is smarter, wiser, or more Godly—in many cases, he is not! Instead, the reason for male headship in the marriage is God's design in creation. This establishes the husband as head of the household, not for domination, but for service. Men are designed to lead in a strong-but-gentle, confident-but-humble, Christ-like way, which lies at the heart of the Biblical Role of a Husband.

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Male headship does not mean that the husband makes all the decisions about everything. Christ said that a Godly marriage will above all reflect unity: “So they are no longer two but one flesh” (Matt. 19:6). A married couple should seek to come to agreement, and the husband should lead in this endeavor, fulfilling the role of a husband in the Bible.

For instance, a man and his wife should sit down together and talk through their financial goals. In many cases, the woman will have great input and may be better at managing money than her husband. But the husband should lead the financial decision-making, taking responsibility and applying Biblical principles about stewardship and generosity — an important aspect of husband responsibility. A husband and wife should also decide together which church to attend, with the husband insisting that faithful Bible teaching be given priority.

So it goes with every area of married life: the husband is to lead with an aim toward Godly unity. All these decisions will require prayer, so leadership should always be exercised with humility, joint prayer, and obedience to God’s Word, reflecting the character of a Godly husband and a faithful man of God.

When we think about “being in charge,” the same passage that tells our wives to submit also calls men to Christ-like, servant leadership: “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:25). How did Jesus love his church? By dying for her! Likewise, a husband should put his wife’s interests first, especially her spiritual and emotional needs. When a husband “puts his foot down,” calling his wife to submit, it usually should be to obey Biblical teaching or wisdom, or for the man to make a sacrifice on her behalf. A husband who leads in marriage with Christ-like self-sacrifice will not often find his wife struggling with submission to his headship — this is central to the Biblical Role of a Husband.

Marital Nurture

Men are not only to lead their wives but also to “work” them. That is, they are to nurture them in a way that is analogous to Adam’s cultivation of the first garden. This means that a husband is to have a plan for spiritually and emotionally blessing his wife. He is to consider her growth and well-being

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one of his most important jobs in life. He does not just “marry her and then move on” to other priorities. Rather, he devotes himself all of his married days to building up his wife and encouraging her blessing—an essential part of how to be a good husband.

You see this priority in what the Apostle Paul went on to say about marriage in Ephesians 5:28–30:

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.

Paul means that just as a man has an instinct for meeting his own body's needs — he eats when hungry, drinks when thirsty, and sleeps when tired—a husband should develop a reflex response to the needs of his wife. This attentiveness reflects a healthy husband responsibility and faithful spiritual leadership. This will inevitably come through in how a husband talks with his wife. As a pastor, I have known husbands who speak to their wives the same way they talk to guys in the football locker room. Don't do this. She is your wife! Men should think before we speak, above all to our wives.

The man's call to nurture his wife means that he needs to know what is going on in her heart. And since women are complete mysteries to men, the only way to learn this is to ask her. Just try this: approach your wife, tell her you want to be devoted to her nurture, and ask her what is in her heart. You can be sure she will tell you what makes her anxious, what she is afraid of, what makes her feel beautiful and cherished, and what she prays and longs for. This is useful information for a nurturing husband. A good practice is to pray with your wife every morning, asking her sincerely how you can pray for her. Over time, she will open her heart more and more, trusting your loving ministry, and your nurturing care will bind the two of you together in marital love, reflecting the character of a Godly husband.

So far, I have mentioned the Apostle Paul's teaching on marriage in Ephesians 5. But the Apostle Peter also has valuable teaching in 1 Peter 3:7. This is, in my view, the single most valuable verse for husbands:

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Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

When Peter says we should “live with” our wives, he uses a verb that elsewhere means to “commune.” In other words, we are to share our lives with our wives, not just intersect at meal times and for sex. When he says that we are to be “understanding,” he means that we are to have knowledge about her, primarily the things of her heart. “Showing honor” means to cherish our wives — to say and do things that communicate that she is loved and valued. And we are to remember that our wives are God’s beloved daughters — and, yes, if we neglect our wives, God says he will neglect our prayers. This sober truth shapes the role of a husband in the Bible.

My experience has shown that this principle of “working” — that is, nurturing our wives emotionally and spiritually — is often the missing ingredient in Christian marriages. Men simply do not know that they are supposed to cultivate the hearts of their wives. So for a Christian man to apologize to his wife for neglecting this calling and then to start doing it sincerely (and with her help) will often revolutionize the marriage and bind the couple together as never before — an expression of mature Biblical manhood.

Marital Protection

The second part of “work and keep” is for a man to protect his wife in marriage. In short, the way a husband acts and talks around his wife should make her feel safe. This, of course, includes physical safety, which a man should ensure for his wife. Christian men especially must protect their wives from their most obvious and harmful sins. For instance, too many men display explosive anger or speak harshly to their wives, undermining the trust and security of the marital bond. Whether it is anger or some other sinful tendency, we protect our wives by turning to God’s grace to replace vices with Godly virtues — this is part of being strong and courageous in holiness.

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“Keeping” also includes relationship protection and security, which is so important for a healthy marriage. For example, a wife should feel safe with respect to other women. A Godly man will not make comments about how attractive another woman is, and she will not see him gawking at another woman. Paul’s teaching on sexual purity applies especially to husbands: “Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving” (Ephesians 5:4).

If we want to be happily married, we will not develop close friendships with members of the opposite sex, and we will not get together one-on-one with another woman (this works both ways, as such behavior can only threaten the security of a marriage). If a man has a close work relationship with a woman, he will need to be especially careful to maintain emotional exclusivity with his wife. This kind of self-restraint is part of faithful husband responsibility and reflects the seriousness of the Biblical Role of a Husband. If he is a pastor (like me) and needs to minister to women in the church, he will be very careful not to become emotionally connected.

I have practiced what used to be called “the Billy Graham Rule” and what is now known as the “Mike Pence Rule” for the Christian former Vice President. This rule says that I will never be behind a closed door with a woman who is not my mother, my wife, or my daughter. I will not ride alone in a car with a woman outside my family. I do not get together alone with women at all outside my family, and if I need to have a conversation, I insist on a door being open or at least a window looking into the room. This is wise protection for yourself — both against temptation and slanderous accusations — and it is an important expression of Godly discipline. And while some people will think you stuffy or old-fashioned, your wife will appreciate it very much. She will feel safe in the relationship and confident in your leadership as head of the household.

Perhaps you are not married but only dating. Then let me encourage you that the Biblical pattern for manhood in marriage works beautifully in a relationship that is heading toward marriage. In fact, the best way to develop a marriage relationship is to start practicing the principles that make a good marriage now. This is part of learning how to be a good husband even before marriage. The boyfriend should lead the relationship sacrificially, reflecting servant leadership. He does not wait for her to

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prompt a conversation about “where we are in the relationship”; he brings it up and makes his intentions clear (and yes, sometimes this means he says they need to break up).

When the couple is together, the man does not spend all of his time talking about himself, his work, and his sports teams. Instead, he takes an interest in her and seeks to understand her heart. He asks her what things interest her, what she is learning in God’s Word, and what her prayer needs are. In doing so, he practices healthy spiritual leadership. And he makes her feel safe. This means that he does not pressure her sexually but takes the lead in sexual purity. He talks and acts in ways that make her feel comfortable. Not only is this Biblical pattern a good way to prepare for a Godly marriage, but it is also one of the clearest expressions of mature Biblical manhood.

I mentioned earlier how Boaz took responsibility for the wellbeing of Ruth when she was a widow gleaning in his fields. He was kind to her, made sure she was safe, and generously took care of her provision. Is there any wonder that this story ends with the two of them marrying? We read about this in Ruth 3:9, when Ruth approaches Boaz and suggests that they marry: “I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer.” Notice how she put it — she wanted to be Boaz’s wife because of his Christ-like conduct toward her. This is a powerful picture of the role of a husband in the Bible.

Obviously, no Christian man can ever take the place of Jesus in a Godly woman’s life. But he can love her in a way that reminds her of Jesus. When a man lives this way, he grows into a Godly husband and a faithful man of God. If we follow the Biblical pattern of manhood in marriage, our wives will feel this kind of security and love toward us.

Discussin & Reflection:

1. Do you know any good examples of a faithful husband? Discuss with your mentor what makes him a good example.
2. If you’re married, what’s one area where you need to grow as a husband? If you’re not yet married, how can you begin preparing now to live out the Biblical Role of a Husband?

3

BIBLICAL MANHOOD AS FATHERS

If marriage is the primary relationship that God has designed for a man, fatherhood is probably the most significant role that any man will fill. If a Christian husband is to love his wife like Christ loved the church, then Christian fathers are to imitate the loving character of God the Father in how they raise their children. This vision lies at the heart of Biblical fatherhood and shapes the role of a father in God's design. Fortunately, since God the Father and God the Son read from the same script, the principles we have learned about manhood in general are the keys to how to be a good father.

Fatherly Lordship

A father's authority to command his children is highlighted in the instruction of Ephesians 6:1, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." Notice that children should obey their fathers (and mothers) not because they are bigger and stronger and are able to punish, but because "this is right." It is God's design for fathers to lead their children, and this calling reflects intentional spiritual leadership. Moreover, the Bible teaches that learning obedience to parents is essential to a child's success in life. Children obey their fathers "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land" (Eph. 6:3).

While a father therefore, must exercise authority over his children, giving and enforcing rules, he also should be tender-hearted and kind: "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). This balance of authority and care reflects mature Biblical manhood.

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Fatherly Protection

When discussing the “how to” of male leadership, I have previously considered the “working” before the “keeping.” In this case, I want to discuss the father’s role in protecting and guarding children first because of the vital importance of discipline. Practicing faithful discipline is an expression of Godly *discipline* and a crucial safeguard in raising Godly children.

Remember how King David never “displeased” his sons, with the result that they grew up to be rotten insurrectionists? The same thing happened to Eli, the high priest of Israel, with his sons Hophni and Phinehas. These examples reveal how unchecked behavior can reflect the destructive sins of the father, passing patterns of disobedience from one generation to the next.

Given these examples, it is not surprising that the Bible commands Christian parents to discipline their children. Proverbs 13:24 provides both sides of this calling: “Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.” This discipline is not harshness but loving correction. Proverbs 29:15 says, “The rod of correction imparts wisdom.” Discipline is one of the primary ways a father protects his children from their greatest danger — their own sin and folly.

Fathers must always discipline in self-control, dealing with anger before approaching their son or daughter. Discipline should be private rather than public, aiming at restoration rather than shame. Our goal is for children to understand the connection between disobedience and consequence and then to experience reconciliation afterward.

As children grow older, discipline shifts from physical correction to verbal reproof and instruction. This is most effective when a strong bond of affection already exists. Fathers should clearly explain the Biblical basis for their expectations and the wisdom behind boundaries, helping children internalize truth and grow in discernment.

Fatherly Nurture

Disciplinary protection must be connected to fatherly nurture through discipleship. Fathers must personally lead their children toward faith in the

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Lord and ongoing growth. This nurturing role defines the role of a father and is central to Biblical fatherhood. It is the father who first implores, “My son, give me your heart” (Prov. 23:26), who later gains a hearing when correction is required.

Just as a Godly husband seeks to know his wife’s heart, a Godly father aims for the hearts of his sons and daughters. He does not define success merely by behavior but by character and faith. Discipleship aims at the heart — the desires, aspirations, identity, and purpose of a child. Through patience, presence, prayer, and persistence, fathers model what it means to be strong and courageous in faith.

It takes time and effort to reach our children's hearts, but it is worth it. Fathers give their hearts to their children by spending time with them, sharing life, worshiping together, and walking through hardship and joy side by side. This is how faith is passed on and how children are prepared to follow Christ.

I have come up with a four-step approach to reaching the hearts of our children: Read – Pray – Work – Play.

1. Read

A father disciples his children by reading the Bible to them and talking about Biblical truths. At its best, this will take place in times set apart for family worship, but it also happens naturally as we go through our day. Paul reminds us that “faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17). The only way anyone ever comes to faith in Jesus is through the power of God’s Word. This is why Bible verses for men are not merely for personal growth but for shaping the next generation.

Far too many fathers make the mistake of outsourcing their children’s discipleship. They take them to church, place them in youth programs, or rely entirely on Christian schools. These supports can be helpful, but no one can replace a father’s influence. This is a core truth of Biblical fatherhood and the role of a father in God’s design. You do not need to be a theologian to read Scripture with your children. What matters most is consistency, humility, and faithfulness.

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A father who claims he has no time to read Scripture with his family should honestly reexamine his priorities. It does not take long to read a passage at breakfast or after dinner and talk briefly about it. When a father opens the Bible with his children, he is exercising spiritual leadership and shaping their hearts in ways no one else can. God's Word binds the hearts of fathers and children together in shared truth and conviction.

2. Pray

We nurture our children by praying for them and with them. A father has much to bring before the Lord on behalf of his children, and God delights to hear those prayers. When children regularly hear their father pray, they learn that prayer is not a ritual but a living conversation with God. This habit shapes their understanding of faith, strength, and dependence on the Lord.

A father's prayers should include praise, thanksgiving, confession, and intercession. We pray for our children's character, friendships, faith, and future. We also pray about the things that burden their hearts. Inviting children to pray for us teaches humility and models what it means to act like men who depend on God rather than pretending to be self-sufficient.

In prayer, a father shows his children what it means to be strong and courageous — not by relying on his own strength, but by trusting the Lord. This is how children learn that true strength comes from God.

3. Work

A father should work with his children. This includes chores at home, school projects, service at church, and shared responsibilities. Working together builds trust, discipline, and shared purpose. It also reinforces the truth that work is a gift from God and a calling to be stewarded well.

Whether it is painting a room, mowing the lawn, practicing a sport, or helping with homework, these moments form deep bonds. A father's encouraging presence in his child's work communicates value and a sense of belonging. This reflects healthy Biblical masculinity, where strength is expressed through presence, patience, and investment.

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Children who work alongside their fathers learn perseverance, responsibility, and joy in accomplishment. These shared efforts knit hearts together in a way that lectures never can.

4. Play

Finally, a father connects with his children through play. Play builds joy, safety, and closeness. When children are young, this may mean sitting on the floor with toys or heading outside to play. As they grow older, play may include sports, hobbies, games, or shared interests.

Play communicates delight. It tells a child, “I enjoy being with you.” This is a powerful message that strengthens identity and security. Fathers who play with their children are quietly teaching them about love, attention, and belonging. This kind of presence reflects the heart of a man of God, who mirrors God’s delight in his children.

Laughter, shared victories, and even shared disappointments form memories that last a lifetime. These moments become anchors of relationship when children face challenges later in life.

Bringing It Together

This is a simple but profound framework for faithful fatherhood: Read. Pray. Work. Play. These practices define how to be a good father and prepare men for the lifelong calling of raising Godly children.

This kind of fatherhood requires time, because time is the currency through which a father earns the right to say, “My son, my daughter, give me your heart.” And when a father gives his heart first, his children are far more likely to give theirs in return.

Discussion & Reflection:

1. What kind of relationship did you have with your father? What strengths do you want to emulate, and what patterns do you want to avoid?
2. If you are a father, which of these four areas — Read, Pray, Work, or Play — needs the most growth right now? If you are not yet a father, how can you begin preparing today to live out faithful Biblical fatherhood in the future?



CONCLUSION

Undoubtedly, marriage and fatherhood take up a large portion of a man's relational space, but they are not the only arenas in which Biblical manhood is lived out. God places men into many relationships where faithfulness matters deeply. One of the most important of these is the local church. Scripture calls men to active, committed membership in faithful churches, where spiritual leadership is exercised not through dominance but through service. When God places a man in positions of responsibility, he is to lead with humility, conviction, and faithfulness to God's Word — this is the essence of servant leadership.

Within the church, men are called to “work and keep” in ways appropriate to their roles. A man of God encourages fellow believers, disciples younger men, and guards Biblical truth against compromise. He protects the church not with harshness, but with courage, discernment, and love for Christ's bride. In this way, he lives out Biblical manhood not only at home, but within the body of Christ.

A Godly man also has a vocation. In the workplace, the same principles of Biblical manhood continue to bear fruit. Whether he is an employee or a leader, he works diligently and with integrity. If entrusted with authority, he accepts responsibility for those under his care. A Godly employer builds people up rather than exploiting them, reflecting the characteristics of a Godly man through fairness, honesty, and accountability. He also protects others from corruption, deceit, and destructive workplace cultures, understanding that leadership always carries moral weight.

Friendship is another vital arena for living out Biblical masculinity. Scripture gives us a beautiful picture of the covenant friendship between David and Jonathan. Their relationship was marked by loyalty, encouragement, and

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sacrificial care (1 Sam. 18–20). They guarded one another’s reputations and stood firm in adversity. Such friendships model Biblical masculinity, where strength is expressed through faithfulness, courage, and love for what is right.

As we said at the beginning, the Biblical calling to manhood is simple — but it is not easy. Men are called to exercise leadership over the people and responsibilities God entrusts to them, and they are to do so by “working and keeping” — building others up and guarding what is good. This calling applies across every relationship, whether in the home, the church, the workplace, or friendships.

I would like to conclude by sharing the story of a man who deeply impacted my own life when I was a new believer. I met Lawrence on the night I first heard the Gospel and came to faith in Jesus Christ. He was an older man serving quietly as a deacon at the door of the church I had visited. After my conversion, I began attending regularly, often alone, eager to hear God’s Word and grow in faith. After some time, Lawrence approached me, introduced himself, and asked about my walk with Christ. He invited me to breakfast, where he shared his testimony and patiently taught me how to read Scripture and pray.

Over the years, Lawrence became a steady presence in my life. He prayed for me, encouraged me, and modeled what it meant to be strong and courageous in faith without being harsh or proud. He embodied the quiet strength of a Godly man who understood his calling.

I will never forget Lawrence’s funeral. He was not a famous man and had little worldly wealth, yet the church was filled. Testimony after testimony was given about how God had used him. His children spoke of his love and faithfulness as a father. Others shared how he had discipled them, walked with them through trials, and pointed them consistently to Christ. After the service, one of my fellow pastors said something that has stayed with me ever since: *“It just goes to show what God will do in the life of any man who wholeheartedly consecrates himself to Jesus Christ.”*

Those words capture the heart of this field guide. Imagine what God may do through your life if you commit yourself to the pattern of Biblical manhood revealed in Scripture. Imagine the eternal fruit borne through

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faithful obedience in ordinary relationships. Perhaps one day, others will testify to how God used your life to bless them. But even now, as you live out the calling to be a faithful Christian man, those you love most will be shaped — and blessed — for eternity by the grace of God at work in you.



ENDNOTES

1. Richard D. Phillips, *The Masculine Mandate: God's Calling to Men* (Ligonier Ministries, 2016).



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