

## Men's Gathering Message - November 1, 2014 - Mark Mitchell

### Introduction/Opening Illustration

40 minutes. 40 minutes. That's all it took for the successful completion of the most important American manhunt to take place in our lifetimes – of course, I'm referring to the killing of Osama bin Laden which occurred on May 1, 2011, approximately 10 years after his authorization of the worst terrorist attack to take place on American soil.

40 minutes. That's less time than it takes to commute from here to DC in rush hour traffic on a rainy day. That's less time than most of the TV shows we might watch now-a-days in a typical evening.

40 tension-filled minutes for the President and his staff as they watched this mission unfold from the White House Situation Room. 40 imperfect-but-well-executed minutes for the Navy Seals who carried out this mission in service of this country and those who died on 9/11.

How were they able to execute so critical a mission hundreds of miles from home in a foreign country in such a short a period of time? There are more factors than I understand or can possibly go into today, but I'll highlight just three:

1. The men involved were highly trained Navy Seals who were taught how to execute their missions with precision and discipline.
2. The men involved spent many months in diligent, repetitive preparation until they could walk through every step of this mission in their sleep
3. The men involved knew exactly who they were looking for. They knew how to recognize Osama bin Laden.

This last point seems so obvious that it almost shouldn't be mentioned. But it's huge. They needed to make sure they got the right guy. They had to be able to recognize him.

Now, most of us will never engage in a mission that, from a human perspective, is as high-stakes as the killing of Osama bin Laden. But, brothers, I believe the call to biblical manhood *does* have some similarities. God *has* called *each* of us to a biblical mission that requires discipline and diligence. God is determined to make each of us into biblical men and that preparation will involve rigorous and even repetitive preparation. And finally, just like those Seals, we need to be able to recognize our target. In order to hit the target of true biblical manhood, we need to know how to recognize it.

I hope, by the grace of God, in some small way, I can help us with this task this morning.

And let me just say right now, thank you for being here. Thanks for getting up earlier than you prefer on a Saturday morning to hear from God's Word, fellowship with the brothers and to be sharpened as men. Whatever sacrifice was involved in you being here, I thank you for making it.

Let's ask for God's help.

[Prayer]

My outline for this talk is in three parts:

1. The Misconceptions of Manhood
2. The Meaning of Manhood
3. The Making of Biblical Men

## 1. The Misconceptions of Manhood

Before we begin to define what true manhood is according to the Bible, let's take a few moments to explore what manhood *is not*. Listen to the following misconceptions and see if you've bought into any of their lies.

- You're a real man because you love to hike and hunt and kill things that are bigger and faster than you are.
- You're a real man because you drink alcohol or smoke cigars (legally of course).
- You're a real man because you play contact sports – like football or basketball or chess (just checking to see if you're awake. And if any of you actually play contact chess, see me afterward. I want to know what that's like!).
- You're a real man because you're a Type A leader, you've got a charismatic personality, you're executive material, and you play paintball with ex-Army Rangers on the weekends just for fun!

Some of you may have bought into lies the other way around. Here's the flip-side:

- You feel less than a man because you prefer reading over wrestling.
- You feel less than a man because you're quiet or introverted.
- You feel less than a man because you have real fears – fear of speaking in front of others, fear of sharing the gospel, fear of standing out in a crowd, fear of heights or spiders or whatever.
- You feel less than a man because interacting with women or girls doesn't come naturally to you. It may be just plain hard.

Probably at some point in our lives, every one of us has bought into one or more of these lies. I know I have. They're all wrong. None of them have anything to do with what the Bible describes as true manhood. All of these misconceptions miss the mark of what true manhood is according to God's Word.

And brothers, this should give us hope. Hope that by the grace of God and through the power of God's Spirit, each one of us can be a true man according to God's intention in Holy Scripture.

Listen. Whether you're short or tall, young or old, fat or skinny, athletic or artistic, introverted or extroverted, good with your hands or good with your brains, God has called you to be a godly man made after the image of Jesus Christ his Son. And, if you're willing to embrace a vision of true manhood according to the Bible, and if you're willing to yield yourself to God's power by the work of God's Spirit, a true Christ-like man is exactly what God will make you to be.

So let's identify our misconceptions and then let's reject them as a first step toward embracing what it means to be a true man. Point 2 is...

## 2. The Meaning of Manhood

My goal this morning is to do a couple of things.

1. First, I want to define as faithfully as I can from Scripture what true manhood is.
2. Second, I want to challenge you and inspire you to embrace this vision of manhood and surrender yourself to God's plan to make you into a man after the image of Christ

There is far more to be said about biblical manhood than I can address this morning, so I'm going to keep things simple by focusing only on what biblical manhood is in its essence, not all its expressions.

I believe John Piper in his booklet *What's the Difference* hit the nail on the head when he distilled biblical manhood down to three specific things: leadership, provision and protection. I'll say it this way.

**The essence of biblical manhood involves leading, providing for, and protecting women according to our differing relationships, and God's plan is to increasingly build these things in us until each of us uniquely reflects the image of Christ.**

I'm going to show you where this comes from in God's Word, primarily drawing from Genesis 2.

But before I go there, I want to make one important point from Genesis 1 and it's this: both men and women have been created in God's image and are therefore equal in personhood, dignity, and importance. This is clearly established in Genesis 1:27.

Genesis 1:27 (ESV)

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.

Three poetic lines expressing three distinct truths:

1. The first line emphasizes divine initiative. "We came from God"
2. The second line emphasizes the divine image. "We resemble God" (stamped)
3. The third line emphasizes divinely created distinctions. "We are male and female"

Male and female have been created by God and equally reflect the image of God. This means equality of personhood, dignity and importance. Men, we must be grounded in this truth before we consider differences and distinctions between men and women.

Now, let's look at Genesis 2 and begin with leadership. We're going to see 10 different ways male leadership is implied from the Scriptures.

## Leadership

1. Adam was formed first (Genesis 2:7)

Genesis 2:7 (ESV)

<sup>7</sup> then 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.

This is the truth the apostle Paul appeals to in 1 Timothy 2:13 to establish male leadership in the church.

2. Eve was formed *from* Adam and *for* Adam (Genesis 2:18, 22)

Genesis 2:18, 22 (ESV)

<sup>18</sup>Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." <sup>22</sup>And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

This is the truth the apostle Paul refers to in 1 Corinthians 11:8, 9 to establish the headship of husbands over wives.

3. Adam exercises leadership by naming the animals and also his wife (Genesis 2:20, 23; 3:20)

Genesis 2:20, 23 (ESV)

<sup>20</sup>The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field <sup>23</sup>... she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

Genesis 3:20 (ESV)

<sup>20</sup>The man called his wife's name Eve...

4. The man (not the woman) leaves his parents to form a new household (Genesis 2:24).

Genesis 2:24 (ESV)

<sup>24</sup>Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

5. Adam is the one God calls to account after the Fall even though Eve sinned first (Genesis 3:9).
6. Adam's punishment is not only because he transgressed, but also because he abdicated his leadership role ("you have listened to the voice of your wife") (Genesis 3:17).
7. God uses the term "man" to refer to the entire human race (Genesis 5:2).

Genesis 5:2 (ESV)

<sup>2</sup> Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created.

8. God imputed sin to all mankind through Adam, not Eve (Romans 5:12-21).
9. Wives are called to submit to their own husbands (Ephesians 5:22-24).
10. Men are called to exercise governing authority in the local church (1 Timothy 2:11-12).

#### Provision

1. The man is placed into the garden to “work” it (Genesis 2:15).

Genesis 2:15 (ESV)

<sup>15</sup>The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

2. God introduced pain into the uniquely male and female domains of calling – the woman's experience of childbirth, and the man's experience of work. Each of these areas are now painful and frustrating (Genesis 3:16-17).

#### Protection

1. Genesis 2:15 – The man is placed into the garden to “keep” it (Genesis 2:15, cf. Numbers 3:7-8, 18:7). These Scriptures indicate that “keeping” also carries the idea of guarding or protecting.

### **The essence of biblical manhood involves leading, providing for, and protecting women according to our differing relationships...**

- Leadership – This looks like *loving initiative*.
  - In love, take initiative toward the women around you.
  - Pay attention. Notice opportunities. Take initiative. Use your gifts, your intellect, your strength to improve things around you.
  - Mobilize the gifts, abilities and intellect of the women around you to improve things.
  - Husbands in particular are called in Ephesians 5 to love our wives as Christ loved the church.
  - Young men & singles: You can begin to embrace this as sons and brothers and friends.
  - We don't have to always initiate everything, but we should feel responsibility for a general pattern of initiative wherever God has placed us.
- Provision – This looks like *diligent service*.
  - Our Father in heaven established a pattern of work in Genesis 1 and he calls us to follow his example. He provides for us as his children (Matt 6). Jesus provided for our greatest need – our salvation. A husband should feel the responsibility to provide for his household.
  - Jesus said, “I am among you as one who serves.” (Luke 22:27)
  - Let's work hard where the Lord has placed us. It is in keeping with biblical masculinity to embrace hard work, even when it's frustrating.

- There's nothing wrong with wives sharing the load by contributing to the household. But husbands should feel the responsibility.
- Singles, cultivate an ethic of hard work while you're students and in whatever you do for your jobs.
- Protection – This looks like *willing sacrifice*.
  - Be willing to put yourself at the disposal of others for their good.
  - Be willing to suffer for the safety of the women around you. Embrace what's uncomfortable and hard. Protect your home or your domain from physical enemies and spiritual enemies.
  - Husbands, we are to love our wives as Christ loved the church and sacrificed himself for it. This is the pattern we're called to follow.

Jesus is our role model. He is the perfect man. Listen to this quote:

When you look to Christ you are beholding real strength, fortitude, character, determination, zeal, conviction, endurance and courage. But, like all things Christ, it's counterintuitive. It does not come out in bravado, but humility. True strength is found in restraint, and not dominance. Fortitude is seen in quiet suffering and not hardheadedness. Character is visible in consistency, and not status. Determination is evident in patience, and not headstrong belligerence. Real zeal is aimed toward God, and not found in self-determination. Real power is doing what you should, instead of what you'd rather...

If Jesus is what it means to be a man, then any biblical definition of manhood will of necessity have a cross in it... At the center of biblical masculinity is the cross of Christ and the sacrifice that comes with it.

– Byron Forrest Yawn, *What Every Man Wishes His Father Had Told Him*, pages 44-45.

**The essence of biblical manhood involves leading, providing for, and protecting women according to our differing relationships, and God's plan is to increasingly build these things in us until each of us uniquely reflects the image of Christ.**

### **3. The Making of Biblical Men**

God is the one who makes us into men. We don't get there by self-determination, pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps, or "digging deep within ourselves" to strive to be better men. God as our loving Father takes it upon himself to use his own means to make us into the men he wants us to be.

We're all called to be men made according to the image of Christ, but we're not all going to reflect this in exactly the same way. It's going to look differently according to our unique personalities and God's particular call on our lives. Consider this:

- God has designed your strengths and weaknesses.

- God has determined your gifts and your limitations.
- God has ordained the unique details of your life circumstances – your ethnicity, your birthplace, your family, your personality, your station in life.
- Even your unique sin patterns, which God knows full well, are not a deterrent to him. God will use the hammer and anvil of life circumstances to break us of our allegiances to sin in order to sanctify us and make us like his Son. And when he's done, as we submit to him, who we are at the end of our lives will hardly resemble who we were at the beginning.

## **Illustrations**

- Jacob (Genesis 27-35)
  - By nature he was a deceiver, a manipulator, one who by his own scheming would seek to manipulate circumstances to his own advantage.
  - God allowed Jacob the deceiver to be deceived by his uncle Laban and as Jacob was running away, God got a hold of him and wrestled with him and left him with a physical limp and a heart that was more yielded and dependent on God.
- Joseph (Genesis 37-50)
  - By nature he was gifted, but lacked tact and wisdom. He may have even been a bit arrogant, self-confident.
  - But God got a hold of him because God planned to use him. God used 13 years of hardship and mistreatment including betrayal, slavery, treachery and imprisonment to forge him into the man God would use to save his people from famine.
- Gideon (Judges 6-8)
  - By nature he was fearful, weak and insignificant.
  - But God got a hold of him, and God's Spirit came upon him and made him into a mighty warrior, through whom he brought about a powerful deliverance for the people of Israel.
- David
  - By nature, he was a shepherd boy, one who cared for and protected sheep. God gave him a natural courage and the mentality of a fighter.
  - God raised him up and established him as the mightiest king of Israel. The shepherd of sheep became the shepherd of God's people chosen by God to fight God's battles and protect God's people. God forged him into a man after his own heart and made him Israel's valiant king.
- Peter
  - By nature he was impulsive, brash, quick to speak. He had natural God-given leadership gifts but he was proud and he was prone to let his words get ahead of his brain.
  - But God got a hold of him. God humbled him. Many times. Peter didn't learn easily. He had a tendency to slip back into old sinful patterns. But Jesus made him a rock on which his church was built. And the man who was so full of selfish pride ultimately gave his life in humble submission to the will of his Savior, as tradition would say, crucified upside down.
- Myself
  - By nature, I was skinny, shy, timid, kid who lacked confidence in many areas. I was academically gifted but socially awkward (despite the fact that I was strikingly



handsome!). I was fearful, easily hurt by the criticisms of others, and had little to no desire for leadership positions.

- But God got a hold of me. He used my academic gifts to make me an engineer. He repeatedly put me in difficult situations often dealing with difficult people where I was regularly uncomfortable. He made me confront my fears of failure and my craving for people's approval and affirmation. He took this fearful, timid kid and made him a pastor.

- You

- What is your unique story? How has God been working in your life to make you into the man he's called you to be?
- What difficult life circumstances is he using to bring about the image of Christ in you?
- The same God who was at work in Jacob, David, Joseph, Gideon, Peter and Paul is the same God who is at work in you.
- God is the maker of men. Are you embracing his good work? Or are you kicking against it? God has remedies even for that. We can't outsmart him so we may as well submit to him.

God is calling all of us to be men made in the image and likeness of Christ

### **Closing Challenge**

If you've not trusted in Christ, then you're still in rebellion against him. Jesus calls you today to turn from living for yourself, trust in Christ for salvation, and then begin living in submission to him.

For those of you who have trusted in Christ, how is God calling you to grow in leadership, provision, and protection?

- The home needs men made after the image of Christ
  - Husbands – loving and laying down their lives...
  - Fathers – loving and leading their kids...
  - Brothers, sons, friends...
- The church needs men made after the image of Christ
  - Initiative to solve problems
  - Using your gifts and strength to make the church stronger
- The community needs men made after the image of Christ
  - Initiative in the workplace, neighborhood
  - We're called to make disciples of Christ.

Finally, our ministry to men here is called Men's Community. And that's for good reason. You won't become the man God is calling you to be in isolation. This will only happen in community. As Dave has shared the vision for the Men's Gathering, it's about "doing together what we can't do alone." As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.

Through Men's Community I want to see younger men and older men connected together and mutually strengthening and sharpening each other.



- Young men, find someone older to connect yourself to and learn from. Humble yourself. Be honest. I don't know about marriage. I don't know about relationships. I need a vision for my life. I want to be more decisive. I want to know how to lead a family.
- Older men, find a younger person to invest in. Start with your family. Invest in your wife and children - they are your first priority. Make yourself available to a younger man. Share your experiences. Share your failures. Share your successes. Tell them how God worked in your life to bring you to where you are. You've not arrived. God has much more he wants to do in you. But you have something to give.

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