

Manhood in a Boy's world

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Romans 5.18-19 / Fathers Day 2016

Happy Fathers Day! Next to being a husband, being a father is the greatest joy of my life. I never knew just how “dad” I was until I planted a church with a bunch of people a couple years younger than me who are like “hey want to go hang out...every night?” And while I really do, I can’t go out *every* night because...I’m a dad now. I coach kids sports, I have bought enough chicken nuggets to fill this entire room floor to ceiling, and with no shame I will tell you I love my mini-van. I’m such a dad. Dads we love you and we love families and we really consider ourselves to be a family here at Mercy. So, today just seemed fitting to have a family day to celebrate this big family God has given us together. Listen if you don’t really consider yourself a part of Mercy yet, we do hope today is a day you’ll feel at home with us. We are finishing our service at 11:30 and then we’re going to have a picnic lunch with games and everything outside. I hope you will stick around today for lunch and get to know us a little. Don’t worry if you didn’t bring anything we brought extra expecting you to be here.

Parent Commissioning

As a part of celebrating Fathers day, we want to celebrate the families God is giving mercy. The scriptures hold a high value on the family and we want to affirm that value which is why we take a couple of times during the year to do what we call “Parent Commissioning.” I want to introduce you to these parents and their children and then say a little more about what this all means.

[Introduce Families]

We call this moment “Parent Commissioning”

Because the bible places a specific calling & promise on your life when you become a parent. And we want to acknowledge both.

The Calling is to walk with God, then teach your children to know God and how to walk with him. Deuteronomy 6.6-7
And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

Today parents we are reminding you and affirming you in God’s calling on your life to make the word of God central to your parenting. That every day your child’s character will be shaped by *something*. The way they look at the world around them will be determined by something and the most influential person on training them how to interpret their world will be **you**. So God says let the word of God be

on YOUR heart. Then, make what is central to your own heart central to your family. Show them the world through the lens of scripture. And that doesn't mean in a classroom, it means when you are sitting around, when you are on a walk, bedtimes, mealtimes. Always. He's saying saturate them with the truth of God's word that has so captured your own heart. Hear me out, their salvation belongs to the Lord and not to you, but God placed you to teach them about Him that they might worship him also.

Not just a calling, parenting also comes with a promise:

Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate. (Psalm 127:3-5 ESV)

Heritage means gift. The promise is that your children are a blessing to you. Which just means God showing his love to you. They are a reward even. Which is hard sometimes if they never sleep to see them that way. But this truth is one encoded into the human experience. Which is why we all nod at this truth. Children are a gift...I only needed to hold my son for 5 seconds 8 years ago to know...oh man my whole world has changed and this is the greatest gift ever! And God gave you that gift for a purpose. The psalmist calls them arrows. Arrows are meant to, one day, be shot out at an enemy. That's why the man with many will not be put to shame. But the deeper meaning is that you are to raise

them to be sent out as gospel warriors to strike the heart of the enemy. And that starts with your calling. The greatest reward you will have as a parent is watching your children live a life FULLY devoted to the gospel and to God's mission. Which goes back to your calling. Teach them now in the little things. And watch them flourish later as followers of Christ.

So what we are going to do is pray over these parents a prayer that commissions them in their role to raise up their children in the knowledge of the Lord. And then we are going to pray over you church. Because one of the beauties of being the covenanted body of Christ together is us uniting with one another to show Christ to each other. And sometimes these kids are going to need to hear it from uncles and aunts and big brothers & sisters when they tune out mom & dad.

Pastor John is going to pray for us.

Today we are kicking off our first summer together as the Mercy Church Family with a little bit of a shortened worship time together and then a picnic. Next week, we jump into our new series called “grow.” Jesus’ last meal with his disciples and he shows them how to grow up as his followers. I think this will be so formative for us. So excited. I needed to wait until next week though because I felt really compelled to take advantage of this weekend to share something I am really passionate about.

In honor of today being Fathers day I want to talk about...men. Men. One of our team members said yeah but aren't you alienating half our people to talk about men? Nope. Some of you are men, some of you want to be men, some of you have a man, and some of you want to get a man.

This sermon is really for my 4 kids. I have 2 boys and 2 girls. The 2 boys see me as a large tackling dummy. If they could body slam me when we wrestle they would. They are animals. And I love it...right now. But as they grow up its my job to teach them how to be the men God calls them to be. My 2 girls are precious. Daddy is their world. I dance with them, play prince & princess with them, and give them flowers. I love it. My job is to teach them what a real man looks like. Not some video game addicted moron who texts their feelings and has the self-control of a 2 year old. When I walk my girls down the aisle, God-willing, it will be to give them away to a *man* who I believe will lead them in Godliness. Which means I gotta teach you all as well

because I keep hearing about some arranged marriages in the 2 year old room where my youngest daughter is. Today is for all of us.

I'll tell you why this is so important. The overall quality of life in a community is directly tied to the state of manhood in that community.

- Stronger Men become stronger fathers, which has a huge impact on their children.
- In 1960 11% of children lived in fatherless homes. Today 33% of children grow up apart from their fathers. One in 3. Statistically, children growing up in fatherless homes are more likely to die in infancy, live in poverty, end up in prison, to use drugs, to be abused, to be overweight, or dropout of school.¹

Men have an incredibly profound impact on their kids.

And on the spiritual climate of a city as well. The number one indicator of whether or not members of a home will become Christians is if the man in the home is a Christian. **If the child is first to get saved, then 3.5% chance everyone else in the household will follow; mother, 17%; father, 93%.²**

¹ The statistics for this paragraph come from *Father Facts* 6 (National Fatherhood Initiative; 2011), 18, 23, 66-78

² From *33 Series*

Pastor Tony Evans used to say, *“When God wants to change a city, he starts with a church. When he wants to change a church, he starts with family. When he wants to change a family, he starts with a man. When the man is changed, the family is changed, the church is changed, the city is changed, the state is changed, the nation is changed.”*

We live in a time where there is real confusion over what it means to be a man. Simple question for you: **What is a man?** That’s our question for today. What is a man? You can build a whole healthy society around the right answer to that question.

In College – the answer was Man Maker. Man maker I’ve told you guys before about. We did apparently manly things like “Dizzy Ax” where you spin around 10 times and then tried to chop a tree. I know. Special. Then guys told us not to look at porn...and that was what it meant to be a man. Not that compelling of a definition of what it means to be a man. Little confusing

What about defining manhood *today*? For me to even speak of the male gender is something that can no longer be taken for granted as the past 12 months here in our city has created a new vocabulary of gender identity most people didn’t have before. Now more than ever a clear and compelling vision for manhood is needed for our church and for our city.

Today’s goal: I want to give you a compelling vision for manhood. I want to show you the big vision God is calling men into and I want it to be something you can drive after. So we are going to do 2 things. I’m going to show you a passage in the bible that contrasts two examples of manhood, and then I’m going to lay out the definition of manhood I live by and am raising my family by. We are going to look at Romans 5.18-19.

[18] Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. [19] For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

In these two verses the apostle Paul is summarizing the effect of the two representatives of mankind that we all fall under. He presses the two captains of humanity side by side against each other to show you the stark contrast between the two. And the reality is every man will walk in the shadow of one of these two men. Check it out.

2 Representatives of Manhood in Scripture

The first is **Adam**. The first man. In case you aren’t real familiar with the Genesis story here is what happens. God creates Adam, puts him in the garden and gives him the following responsibilities:

- 1. God gave Adam a will to obey.**

God made Adam & then gave him a simple framework to live by. Man was to submit to the authority of God. God has given us a will greater than our own to obey. God spoke in the garden to Adam, clearly dictating right and wrong. Genesis 2.16-17

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

It is the same for us today. God has given us his direction to follow. Greatest movie with worst philosophy ever: Sandlot. Babe Ruth comes into the kid's room at the most inspirational moment of the movie and says, "Just follow your heart kid, you'll never go wrong." Terrible Advice. It's just NOT TRUE! Your heart is twisted and always discontent. Follow your heart and it will leave you empty, hurt, and destroyed. God has given us something better than our hearts, better than culture, better than our instincts; he's given us *his* playbook. The creator has given us his manual to follow. We are to chart our course using his map and no one else's.

2. God gave Adam a work to do.

We talked about this last week so I'm not going to elaborate. You can get last week's sermon on work but Adam was designed to work. To create and cultivate. He was to develop God's creation into something good for mankind. This is a significant social responsibility. To be proactively generating good for his community.

3. God gave man a woman to love & care for.

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." Genesis 2.18

All the animals go by... male & female counterparts and Adam is like...where's my female? God created Eve to come alongside Adam as a companion for intimacy and fellowship. And Adam wakes up to Eve standing there before clothes were invented and was like....WHOA! This at last is for me! Bone of my bone & flesh of my flesh. Good job God.

The woman was to be a helper to Adam and Adam was to provide for and lead her. We see this elaborated on in the New Testament. Adam was to lead his wife as God led him. Hear me: they were both created equal in God's eyes. People who bash the bible for being misogynist usually haven't read it. They are equal before God with different roles. And Adam's role, which is reinforced to all men in Ephesians 5, is to love his wife by sacrificing for her & caring for her needs above his own.

Those are his 3 responsibilities. A will to obey, work to do, woman to love.

And those of you familiar with the genesis story know what happened next. Adam & Eve are hanging out in the garden and a snake comes up and starts talking to Eve. Should have been a warning right there but whatever. First thing snake does is question God's will. Genesis 3.1:

Now the serpent was craftier than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"

Did God actually say? The snake teaches Eve to make herself the authority of her life instead of God. And then watch what happens...

Genesis 3.6

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was *with her*, and he ate.

Ya'll, I'm not sure if you see this or not that's why I highlighted it, but Adam was standing right there. And THIS is the moment Paul is talking about in Romans 5. It's this moment where Adam is standing right there beside his wife. Paul blames Adam for this epic failure right here.

[19] For as by the one *man's* disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

God held Adam responsible for the actions of his wife because ADAM was the one he'd given the instructions to and the one he'd put in charge. Yes, Eve is to blame as well and God holds her accountable, but she isn't alone. Adam failed.

That's the Adam story. Now I want to show you how Paul is contrasting it to Jesus. And in doing so I want to give you what I hope will be a compelling definition of manhood. I learned this definition 10 years ago as a part of a group of guys who went through a study written by Robert Lewis called Men's Fraternity. It has become the drumbeat of my life.

Every wedding I do, before the bride comes in I pause. Shut everything down. Everyone is like...where is the bride? But because I love her and him, I'm not going to let her get married to a *Boy with a beard*, and I'm not letting a boy with a beard take the responsibility of another life. *Her* parents are usually appreciative. So I look at the guy and I charge him to live out THIS type of manhood.

A true man: Rejects Passivity.

Adam was passive in the garden. He was...remember (put 3.6 back up) *with her*.

Guys, Adam was just standing there. Adam- was 'with her'- passive and silent

In a moment when he could have stepped up, he is **just standing there. ARE YOU KIDDING ME!?** If a snake comes up to my wife...and definitely if it starts talking to her...I'm going Jason Bourne on that thing. If you know me you know I'm not an outdoorsman. I want to be but I'm still a rookie. Snakes creep me out. Every snake I see I assume is the

snake in this story. So at first I want to climb up the closest tree and scream like a 7 yr old girl because I hate snakes. And if I'm by myself...yep. And you'll never know.

But if I see ANY snake in my yard, near my family, I'm a different guy. I'll find a way to defeat it. I once killed an 8 ft black snake with a kitchen knife I duck taped to the handle of a 3 iron. Because I didn't have yard equipment and that snake had taken up residence in my friend's birdhouse right where the kids were playing. You are like "aww Spence that was a good snake...." No such thing.

Point is...I took care of business. Adam was standing by WATCHING while disaster was happening to his wife and to the whole world.

Men have been living in Adam's shadow ever since- across the globe there's injustice, racism, and poverty and what are we doing? **Just standing there.**

Why are so many men decisive and focused and effective in areas of life that don't really matter (video games, sports,) but they are tentative, uninspiring, lazy and passive in the areas that matter most (family, church, community)? They are mostly just scared and afraid to fail.

I think about it like learning to hit a baseball. Been teaching my kids this past spring. Growing up I would stand in the box & when the pitch came I just stood there. You can NEVER hit a ball if you just stand there. You can still miss if you swing, but you will certainly miss if you never swing. Many men need to step up and swing the bat a few times.

We are living in the shadow of the first Adam, but we must follow example of second Adam.

Jesus rejected passivity:

"Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. " Philippians 2:5-9 (ESV)

The example of Christ- embracing humility and self-sacrifice for the good of others. Jesus did something. He saw mankind without a hope, set to be eternally separated from our heavenly father, and he acted. He did something. He acted and initiated- the true man rejects passivity.

The first Adam is just standing there; the second Adam acted for the sake of others.

A true man: Accepts responsibility.

Adam failed in the three specific responsibilities that were given to him by God. A will to obey, work to do, woman to love.

Jesus however accepted responsibility for a **will to obey:**

"My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work." John 4:34 (ESV)

This is a hard one but a true man accepts the responsibility

to obey the will of one who is greater than himself. I think this is truthfully where the rub is for men. C.S. Lewis called Christian conversion a rebel soldier laying down his arms in surrender. I think this is a good image for us as men. We don't want anyone in charge...but us. We want to call the shots. That's the shadow of Adam in us. It's the whisper of the serpent. "Has God really said?"

It's funny that we want to be a warrior. We want our boys to have the courage & fortitude of a knight in shining armor. But we are often unwilling to submit to our king. The true man believes God has a greater plan & purpose for his life than he does. He's a knight, a man of honor, who fights to the death for his king.

Jesus accepted responsibility for a **work to do**:
"I (Jesus) glorified you (God) on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do." John 17:4 (ESV). He saw his work & didn't run from it. He didn't take a short cut to get the job done 70% right.

Jesus accepted responsibility for a **woman to love**:
"Husbands love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." Ephesians 5:25 (ESV)

How did he love his bride? He gave his life for her sake. Adam tried to protect his own neck by letting Eve taste the fruit. A real man understands he is called to love and care for his wife, not to use or abuse her, but to lay down his life for her.

Not just physically, but to die to himself and his own needs for the sake of hers
moving from the shadow of the first Adam toward the light of the second Adam, Jesus Christ.

The first Adam gave into passivity, he stood beside Eve with his manhood pants down when he could have stepped up and led both of them to follow God's will, not their own. The second Adam- Jesus—rejected passivity by following God's will even when it meant giving up his life on earth. The first Adam shunned his responsibilities. The second Adam accepted responsibility.

A true man: Leads Courageously

Adam failed to lead in the garden. He stood there & watched. Jesus was a man who led his disciples by providing direction and protection.

He told his disciples "follow me." Matthew 4:19 (ESV). Then later he would say...if anyone wants to follow me they must take up their own cross and follow me. See Jesus modeled for them the life they would one day have to lead and then he invited them to walk that road with him.

Now the great hope of the gospel is that we don't have to be just like Jesus. We can't be. The weight of trying to be perfect is not one we were meant to bear. But we are called to model, however imperfect, the great hope of the gospel for others.

True men need to be able to say to others “follow me as I follow Jesus”. Not from a place of arrogance, but from a place of humble courage. We need to show others around us, through our example, the path of following Christ.

You know what is missing in so many churches and in so many cities? Competent grown up men who will sacrifice their time, talent, and treasure to ensure the next generation of boys will grow up to be men of God.

I see this in Kids ministry. Guys say “Oh I don’t know about doing that.” I’ll go ahead and tell you I want the manliest men we have serving on our kids team & student teams. Because I want my boys & my girls to have examples to follow as they grow up. Men who run hard after Jesus and lead courageously with their lives.

Men who aren’t afraid to take risks for the glory of God, who aren’t afraid to step up and defend a helpless person against a bully, to sacrifice his time to tutor a kid who needs some help, to choose the ethical way forward in his company. The man of courage. That’s who I want to run with for the next 40 years. And it’s who I want my boys to be like and my girls to look for. It’s what I want our church to look like.

Men, I know you have a fear of failure. Or at least, I know I do. But we must recognize that fear for what it is...fear. And when God calls you to something...there will be an element of fear to it. I always think on Joshua 1 when I hit a decision

or life moment where fear starts to creep in. Joshua is told, “Moses is dead. Now I’m calling you to lead God’s people. Get up and go to war.” Joshua is a brand new leader. His mentor is dead. God can I do a few practice years or something? How about more wandering in the desert? That seems easy. Nope. Wartime. Risk Time. And God says **“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”**

God gives him a job & a promise. You have the same thing. Lead...and I will be with you. If you want to be a true man, you must realize you have a job and a promise. You can stand idly by, or you can chose courage. And let me say something: the way you know you are in a courageous moment is that there is fear involved!

EX: move to charlotte & plant a church. THAT WAS A RISK! But a vision for what I believed God was calling me to lead me onto a path surrounded by fear.

LEAD COURAGEOUSLY! The great character trait lacking in young men today is courage.

Guys, I can’t even get into dating right now...but lets put it this way: The guy who chooses the courageous way to approach dating a girl will win her respect. Even if it doesn’t work out, she will respect you. But you try to sneak-a-date...try to get through the friend zone into a dating relationship without ever asking her out...that’s cowardly. Stop being a coward, man up, and ask her out! You think

she's gonna say yes to marrying you one day if you are too cowardly to even ask her out? Nope.

Lastly,

A true man: Expects the greater reward

Here's what I'll say to this. This is the perspective of a man who has been changed by the gospel. These other 3, many other religions could teach them. They are Christian because they are God's design, and that is why other faiths will see value in them also. But this sets Christian men apart and it drives everything.

See the gospel says the main problem with you is that you, like Adam, chose your way over God's way. You sinned. And the effect of that sin, the penalty of that sin, is death. That was Adam's penalty and it is your penalty. You can't pay the penalty though. You've sinned against an infinitely perfect God so your imperfect payment will never be enough. No amount of good deeds can cleanse your record.

But God refused to leave you to die in your sin. So he sent Christ to die in your place. And by dying for your sin he released you from the penalty of sin. And the effect of that release is that now you can be reconciled to God. Sin was separating you from him. But now because of what Christ did you can come home to him. This is why Paul says the enemy of death has been defeated and that to be absent from the body is to be present with Christ. Because we have the hope of heaven.

And on top of that, the man who believes in the gospel has an awareness that God has met his deepest need here on earth. Not only will he rest in the hope that one day he will be with Christ forever, but God is also providing for him here and now. His worldview is completely changed.

See Adam didn't trust God's provision so Adam went looking for a reward. He went against God's decree to try and make his own way. But Christ surrendered himself to God's decree and is now seated at the right hand of the father.

You've got to expect God's greater reward here in this life and in the life to come. There will be moments whether it's choosing patience with your children or upholding your integrity in the workplace, or sacrificing your time to help another guy out, those things of giving your life away like that have to have embedded within them – the expectation that *in this is reward*, and to believe God for it. That God has designed the world to work in such a way that you will experience reward of some kind in this life when you live according to his design. AND, that even when this life is hard you can go through it with peace and joy because you have the assurance that this is not all there is. I'll say it this way: The hope of heaven is the great buoy of the character of true men.

Trust God has a better reward for you than what the world seems to offer.

A close friend of mine sacrificed a job opportunity last year that was incredible. Pay & influence would have skyrocketed him into another stratosphere. But it was going to cost him 80-100 hrs/week and a move to a location where his family would have really struggled. And he let it go. Because of this definition. Courage meant trusting God to provide and choosing family over the dollar and he's experienced great reward through that.

I look at the decision to love and be faithful to my wife that has yielded an incredibly deep & rich friendship now 12 years in and I can only imagine what it will be 30 years from now.

I know men that have chosen Christ over porn addiction. And they experience the reward of freedom from this addiction that leaves them empty.

Men, this definition of manhood is simple and I hope you will embrace it. Dads, I hope it will help you lead your families. May we reject passivity, accept responsibility, lead courageously, and expect the greater reward. God's reward.