

**Genesis week 9**

Genesis 1:26-28, 31; 2:6-8; 15-25

In His Image pt 4

Masculinity and the Image of God

In various ways we've all lived through some cultural or societal upheavals that have had positive or negative impacts.

Those of us with gray hair would remember two events that change the cultural landscape, and they happened within a 3 month period:

Nov 1963 – The Assassination of President Kennedy

Feb 1964 - ??? The Beatles were on the Ed Sullivan Show

For many of you 9/ 11 /2001 was an event that changed your world.

For some it was 2007 – i.e. The iPhone was introduced.

For most of us here March 2020 brought a whole new world with the Covid pandemic.

There are two tremendously important issues that impacted Western culture that we did NOT experience live, but we are the beneficiaries of their impact:

Langdon Gilkey discusses these issues in his 1965 book, *Maker of Heaven and Earth*.

The second of the two was THE REFORMATION that began in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and was a rediscovery of Salvation by Grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. This past Tuesday Oct 31, was the anniversary of the 1517 date known as the starting point of the Great Spiritual Reformation.

The other culture changing reformation took place 1000 years earlier when there was a rediscovery of the biblical doctrine of creation. As Joe Morecraft notes, "This rediscovery ended the dominance of the Classical approach of Greek and Roman philosophies. Those worldviews led to religious, intellectual, social, moral, and scientific stagnation with a darkness that entailed a sense of dread as their world began to collapse." P. 78 [Genesis: Christ, Creation, & Covenant](#)

As we seek to maintain a biblical view of creation on This side of Eden and the Cross, let's consider what scripture tells us about THE MEN WE NEED based on the scriptural teaching of man, made in the image of God.

Genesis 1: 26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness;

... 27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it...2:15 Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it...2:18 Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."

.22 The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.

23 The man said,

"This is now bone of my bones,

And flesh of my flesh;

She shall be called Woman,

Because she was taken out of Man."

24 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Based on the Creation narrative, there are some key traits to biblical manhood. The NT adds others in light of the person and work of Christ.

Given the context of marriage in Gen 2, some of this discussion will be most directly applicable to married men. But some of the principles apply to single men as well.

1. **As men, whether single, married, single again, or married again, our primary relationship is with our Creator God. If you want to know yourself, you must first know God as your creator. If you prioritize any other relationship, it will short-circuit your God given purpose.** It is a relationship with the eternal transcendent God that provides a meaning for life that can't be changed by our circumstances.

KEEP THE MAIN THING THE MAIN THING – love for God that overflows in obeying His will. “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” Jn 14:15

**Guys (and Gals) we are called to be Cross-eyed First Commandment men (and women) of faith.**

CROSS-EYED in that we see the Grace of God in the Cross in whatever we face.

EX: 3-D book – see the picture that is in the picture You might have to get cross-eyed to do it. In the same way, look for the Cross / The Gospel.

#Where's the Gospel in this?

FIRST COMMANDMENT – No other God's before Me.

Our idols can be hard for us to identify, but our spouse, friends, or kids can spot them. Ask them.

GREATEST COMMANDMENT – ‘love the Lord your God with ALL your heart, soul, mind, and strength; the second is like it – ‘love your neighbor as yourself.’ Deut 6:5; Mark 12:30, Luk 10:27, Matt 22:37

**Being an image bearer means that we are called to love and reflect God in all of our faculties – heart, soul, mind and strength.**

Our vision of life should be one of being a God lover above all else. Every other duty or activity should fit into that category. We need the reminder because we are prone to forget that as we go through the routine of daily life. A key aspect of biblical masculinity is to LOVE God above all else.

Ex: When ASKED, “Tell me about Jim, Tom, Bill, \_\_\_\_\_ etc, would those who know you best include the description, “he loves God above all else” in the top five things they would say about you,... or me?

This first principle means that YOU take responsibility for your own spiritual life. You can't pawn it off on your wife, a group of friends, your church leaders, a parent or grandparent.

Don't blame others or circumstances for a failure to pursue God: - “That woman you gave me”; “I had a bad experience with Christians or a church” ; “my job takes us too much time”; “I just don't have an interest in spiritual things or ‘the Bible’ “

THEN ASK God FOR IT!!

Under this rubric or principle of the priority of our relationship with God, we have this understanding of Biblical manhood...

**Don't outsource your identity to anyone, any accomplishment, or cause other than God.**

We are all prone to find our validation through the approval of others. This is magnified in a social media age. The validation of others pales in comparison to the acceptance and favor we have with God in Christ.

This overall perspective on life is summed up well in the Heidelberg Catechism #1

**(READ TOGETHER)**

**What is your only comfort in life and death?**

**That I am not my own,**

**but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.**

**He has fully paid for all my sins with His precious blood and has set me free from all the power of the devil.**

**He also preserves me in such a way that without the will of my heavenly Father not a hair can fall from my**

head; indeed, all things must work together for my salvation.

Therefore, by His Holy Spirit He also assures me of eternal life and makes me heartily willing and ready from now on to live for Him.

**2. Take responsibility for what God gives you to do - God gave 'mankind' i.e. male and female the work of keeping the Garden and exercising dominion over the created order.**

Prior to the creation of the woman, 2:15 Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

**BIBLICAL MASCULINITY is about taking responsibility for real things and the right cause in REAL LIFE.**

(Achieving high scores or levels in video games doesn't count)

Cultivate and keep. CULTIVATE = to work, till, ; KEEP = to guard, protect, or watch over

Eden was a paradise, but it needed to be worked and kept. We may not live in Eden, but God gives us our own garden where we are to apply masculine energy to cultivate and protect it so that we see things flourish.

**Be ready and willing to WORK and protect the 'garden' that God gives you. Work and live in such a way that you bring added value to your place of work - no matter what it is, as long as it is NOT ILLEGAL OR IMMORAL.** Biblical masculinity brings energy that helps people to flourish and feel protected.

EX: one of the concerns that I've been hearing from managers and employers for the past 15 years is that it is hard to find responsible workers. Laziness and irresponsibility are forms of 'toxic masculinity'.

**We are masculine to the extent that we are faithful and honest in how we go about keeping the "garden" that God gives us.** This is true for single and married men. In a world East of Eden, we may not find the garden job that we think is ideal, but biblical manhood means doing the job or the task heartily in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ - Col 3:17ff.

Real masculinity is NOT ABOUT 'success at any cost or cutting corners to earn a buck or a promotion.'

**Biblical masculinity is about guarding and protecting what God has entrusted to you. Make the women, children, and men around you feel safe, not threatened.**

The people in your world should be safer because you are there - safer physically, emotionally, spiritually.

God created masculinity to bring stewardship and protection to the Garden. Those are positive active traits. The opposite is a form of masculine betrayal, i.e. becoming a threat yourself or becoming a passive bystander in the face of threats. (Hansen The Men we Need p. 73)

**There is an angry threatening form of masculinity that is clearly toxic and dangerous. It should get attention and never be ignored.** If fact, we will host an event here on Jan 20<sup>th</sup> that will help us recognize and respond to abusive forms of behavior. It is free, so please mark your calendars.

**There is another form of toxic masculinity that is not as obviously dangerous, but it may be more common, and it is TOXIC PASSIVITY.** (The Men We Need - Brant Hansen)

(p. 33) Paul and Virginia Friesen are both PhDs and family counselors. They say that in their counseling practice, passive men are a far more common problem than men who are overbearing, physically intimidating, or the other usual things we consider examples of toxic masculinity.

"It can seem benign," Paul says. "A husband finds it's easier to check out mentally and emotionally and concentrate on work, for instance. He just says, 'Yes, dear' or something like that to keep the peace, but it winds up being the downfall of the home."

A husband or father who is passive in terms of the spiritual, relational, and emotional needs of his wife and kids introduces a toxic atmosphere in the home. The danger is not as immediate or apparent, but it is real. We'll see the first example of this in Gen 3.

**v. 23-25 Biblical masculinity teaches men to have appropriate relationships with others.**

“THIS IS NOW ...”

This Gen 2 passage focuses on the male-female relationship, i.e. the first marriage.

What we see is that the first man embraces the woman who is real and is suitable for him so that THEY might carry out the divine mandate to be fruitful, multiply, and have dominion.

This happens through leaving and cleaving to become ONE.

Apart from the vertical relationship with God, biblical masculinity prioritizes marital oneness, for those called to married life.

We might say, “That was a moot point for Adam. He had no parents, and the woman was his only option.” TRUE.

But the fact that God included those words at the beginning before the Fall means that it is the norm for all men who find a wife.

**One aspect of biblical manhood for single or married men is to avoid the fake life of fake women and those to whom you are not married.**

Leaving and cleaving in a bond of trust and oneness is the only path to a relationship where the man and woman can be naked and unashamed.

When another party is brought in through images on paper, on a screen or in person, the bond of oneness and trust is broken by toxic betrayal.

**Biblical masculinity pursues bonds of trust and oneness. V. 24 -25**

HOW IS THIS LIVED OUT? In traditional Christian marriage vows the husband promises to love and ‘cherish’ his wife. We should cherish the one to whom we cleave.

**Making it a priority to notice someone, appreciate someone, honor someone, and hold someone dear—in a visible way is a picture of what we could call “cherish.” Gary Thomas**

It is a way of loving your wife as Christ loved the church.

Eph 5 gives a picture of what real masculinity is by lifting up the example of Christ ...

**25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, 26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.**

**Godly masculinity applied in marriage means that, like Jesus, you are loving your wife into a place of glory.** Barring the impact of issues such as disease or accidents, a husband should cultivate and protect the marriage garden so that his wife blossoms – physically, spiritually, emotionally, and relationally.

Men, we can't do that in marriage if we are not experiencing that with Christ ourselves. As Christian men, we are a part of the Bride of Christ, and He is working to present us in glory. Are we walking in that or are we digging in our heels? EX: JN 15 – Jesus is the vine, we are the branches and God is the one who prunes so that we bear more fruit.

If we are ignoring or resisting God's work in our lives, then we might well become a threat in the garden that God has given us. Instead of cultivating and protecting the garden, we become an aggressive or a

slow-moving toxic weed.

Men and women, I'm not saying this to induce guilt. I'm saying this to underscore how important it is that we bring godly masculinity into the places where God has placed us – marriage, family, work, church, and community.

This is actually very counter cultural.

Brant Hansen makes a good point.... P. 75

Imagine a culture that is practically *designed* to get us to betray our role.

Imagine a culture that trains us to be sources of disarray instead of calm.

Imagine a culture that trains us to see women as objects to exploit or to see a commitment to our own children as optional.

Imagine a culture that lulls us into becoming consumers of entertainment instead of creators of order and peace.

Imagine a culture that lacks grown men.

That culture shouldn't be hard to imagine, because it's where we live.

So, if you make a decision to be a keeper of the garden and a creator of order, peace, and security, you will stand out like . . . like . . . what's the phrase?

Oh yes—a MAN among boys.

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