

SESSION 1



MANHOOD AND COURAGE

1. Our Journey Together

A. This is the first of four studies exploring at a deeper level God's definition of manhood.

B. Why do we need this definition?

- It's hard to become what you can't define.
- Many men today find themselves either guessing at their manhood or grabbing the latest version the world offers. Both options lead to problems and pain.

Proverbs 14:12: "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."

- Without a God-defined vision of masculinity, men are struggling with their manhood today like never before.
 - More U.S. men ages 18 to 34 now live with their parents than with romantic partners.
 - About 1/3rd of men are either unemployed or out of the work force.
 - "Deaths of despair" – those caused by suicide, overdose and alcoholism – have surged to unprecedented levels among men, rising between 56% and 387%, depending on the age cohort, over the past twenty years.
 - 25% of husbands commit adultery.
 - Close to half of all children of divorce in America have not seen their fathers in the past year.
 - Today, women are the sole breadwinners in 4 in 10 households with children.

2. God Defined Manhood

In **Genesis 1-2**, God calls Adam, the first man, to step up to four life-giving responsibilities that will not only define his manhood, but the manhood of every man after him.

A. A better man courageously follows God's word.

- Man was created with a need for personal instruction to succeed.

Genesis 2:16-17: "The Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die."

B. A better man loves and protects God's woman.

Genesis 2:22: "The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man."

C. A better man excels at God's work.

Genesis 2:15: "Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate and care for it."

D. A better man blesses God's world with his children.

Genesis 1:28: "God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it..."

These four life-giving responsibilities serve as four pillars upon which every man can build for himself a strong, God-glorifying masculinity. In Part 1 of this "Manhood Defined" series, we will examine what it means for a man to courageously follow God's Word. What does that look like? How do you do it?

3. Some Helpful Perspectives On Courage

A. Courage is not the absence of fear. It is moving forward in the face of fear.

"I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear." – Nelson Mandela

B. Men strongly relate to courage.

"The fight is here; I need ammunition, not a ride." – Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky

"Our lives are not fully lived if we're not willing to die for those we love, for what we believe." – Martin Luther King Jr.

C. Courage is not just a "man thing." Women are courageous too! But we expect courage from men first when danger appears!

- The Birkenhead Drill: women and children first.

4. Dangerous Worlds

A. Adam's Garden of Eden

- We think of this garden as an idyllic, beautiful, much-to-be-enjoyed paradise. But this garden was also a war zone.
- The garden was inhabited by a dangerous enemy. Because of that constant threat, man's only hope of surviving and thriving was in following the clear instruction of God's Word.

Genesis 3:1-6: "And the serpent said, "Did God really say, 'You can't eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden. But about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, 'You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.'" "No! You won't die," the serpent said to the woman. "In fact, God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Then the woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for

obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate it.”

- In this moment, Adam was called to courageously step forward and follow the instruction God had previously given him. Instead, he is overcome by the serpent’s false promises, by his willingness to join Eve, and by his own spiritual “do nothing” passivity.
- The story of the Garden becomes a tragic story of failed courage. With it, Adam’s story becomes one of failed manhood.

B. Our World as Men

- Like Adam’s garden, our world is good and beautiful, and filled with an abundance of opportunities and enjoyments. But it too is a war zone.
- We have the same enemy Adam faced.
1 Peter 5:8: “Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”
- We too will be confronted by his lies over life’s boundaries and sin’s consequences (“You won’t die!”). He uses these seductions in tempting us with ...
 - Love of money
 - Lust and sexual temptation
 - Sense of entitlement
 - Pride and/or wanting to appear perfect
 - Envy
 - Shortcuts to success
 - Gluttony
 - Alcohol and drugs
 - Spiritual apathy
- And when we sin, we suffer the same deaths as Adam.
 - Guilt and shame
 - Fear
 - Loss of transparency
 - Isolation
 - Shunning responsibility and blaming others
 - Self pity
- Because our garden is dangerous and our enemy wants to kill us, God gives us his Word which provides direction and leads to life.
John 10:10: “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”

5. The Call to Courageously Follow God’s Word

- A. Courage has been a key ingredient to real manhood since Adam. With it, we press God’s Word into the dangers, challenges, temptations, and**

uncertainties of life. Courage takes God’s Word into the “war zones” of our lives to do battle!

- Courage is faith in action.
James 2:26: “Faith without works is dead.”

B. Spiritual courage is not natural, but supernatural. It grows as our relationship with God grows.

- Courage to follow springs to life when we daily seek and surrender our lives to God and His Holy Spirit.
Psalms 27:14: “Wait for the Lord. Be strong and let your heart take courage. Yes, wait for the Lord.”

C. So practically, how do we fight courageously?

- We must first look to God and believe He is there to help us.
Deuteronomy 31:6 (NIV): “God goes with you; He will never leave you or forsake you.”
Philippians 4:13: “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.”
- We must carry our confidence in God to the fight.
Joshua 1:6: “Be strong and courageous!” (“Rak Chazak”)
- We must boldly step into the fight.
2 Corinthians 2:14: “Thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ.”

Your Table Discussion Questions

1. What’s an example of courage that you find especially inspiring? Share it and tell why?
2. Today we learned, or were reminded, that we live in a spiritual war zone and have a very real enemy “prowling around” seeking to ruin us. How does that reality make you feel? In what ways have you experienced the devil and his temptations in your life? Explain.
3. What’s one area of life that’s difficult for you to courageously follow God’s Word? Be specific. How could applying what you learned today help you? Explain.

Your “BetterMan” Question

Before our next session, take a moment this week to reflect on your notes, and then answer the following question: What possible action step could I take from this session that could make me a better man? Write your answer in the space below.