

Authentic Masculinity

Good morning. Happy Father's day, men.

This morning I have a few give aways. In a fun and celebrative way, I would like to give a small gift to three men this morning.

First, who is the father in the room who has the longest honey-do list? Ladies if you might help me out here... which dad in the room is never gonna see another Monday night football game with his boys? For you, we have a heated neck massage machine, because you probably are not going to get any neck rubs until you make a little more progress on your list.

Second, who is the newest father in the room? For you we have a Stanley Mechanics set of tools guaranteed for a lifetime. The reality is that your kids will lose them before you break them. But you always feel a little more competent with a guaranteed tool in your hand.

Third, which father in the room has the most young kids? Okay, for you, there really isn't anything we can do except keep you hydrated and caffeinated! So we have some Gatorade and a Starbucks gift card for you.

The reality is, there are few things that we feel so unprepared for, and so excited about, as we do being a father. Probably nothing is a greater challenge in life... not just when your kids are at home and young, but as they grow and leave the nest; as they mature and start families of their own. As you caught in the video, fathers are needed to provide a safe place, to provide wisdom, and to stabilize the family in the midst of struggle and turmoil. Being a dad is not an easy job... but it is a highly significant one.

I am approaching my 50th birthday. And over my lifetime I have experienced a huge amount of chaos regarding masculinity in our culture. For decades, there has been a cultural confusion regarding what it means to be a man and a husband and a father. Never before has our culture seen such a radical disintegration of the family. Over the last few decades, our modern, secular, and feminist culture has sought to neuter a healthy and beneficial vision of masculinity. Once noble images of chivalry and knighthood have been replaced by caricatures of self centered men behaving badly; or men who are incompetent or incapable or passive. Manhood is no longer a calling to fulfill, it is a problem to overcome. And this chaos regarding manhood is not stabilizing our society, it's unraveling it.

Our confusion regarding masculinity and fatherhood is threatening our nation. In 2001 the US Dept of Health and Human Services felt compelled to step in. They saw the most basic of societal institutions, the family, as being in desperate trouble. So in 2001 they launched the Fatherhood Initiative with this statement: *The President is determined to make committed, responsible fatherhood a national priority ... [T]he presence of two committed, involved parents contributes directly to better school performance, reduced substance abuse, less crime and delinquency, fewer emotional and other behavioral problems, less risk of abuse or neglect, and lower risk of teen suicide. The research is clear: fathers factor significantly in the lives of their children. There is simply no substitute for the love, involvement, and commitment of a responsible father.* (Quoted from Michael Craven, Truth in Culture Weekly, June 18, 2010.)

Never before has our culture needed a clearer presentation of a healthy and vibrant masculinity. Never before has our society needed men who understand their calling as men and husbands and fathers. Never before has our society needed men who will embrace their God-given roles and serve Christ with passion and courage. Today is Father's day. And so today I would like to address the men. And gentlemen, this morning I would like to remind you of your calling as men. I want to encourage you to remember God's intention for a man. I want to recall with you what the Scriptures paint as a healthy vision of manhood. This morning I want to review for you what God says are five bedrock pillars of manhood...five timeless characteristics of authentic masculinity...five essential attributes to be a successful husband and father. Let's pray.

Let's look at our first characteristic of authentic manhood. The **God Intends a Man to Reject PASSIVITY and Take RESPONSIBILITY**. God's expectation is that a man will be one who is not passive, but engages. Taking Responsibility, not living passively is God's intention for a man.

Remember back with me to the earliest time, back to God's design and intention for men and women in His creation. If you go back to the book of Genesis, you would find in chapters 1 and 2 that God designed and created Adam and Eve. And in that creation, God gave Adam three primary responsibilities as the leader of the family. First, Adam was Given God's instructions and he was to obey them and pass them on to his family. Second, Adam was given a work to do - he was to cultivate the garden and provide for his family. And third, Adam was given a woman to love, Eve. Adam had a word to obey, a work to do, and a woman to love. But remember what happened? In chapter 3 of Genesis, Adam commits the first sin. Do you remember the account? Turn there. READ 3:1-6.

Did you know that in the bible, Eve is not seen as having the first sin, Adam is. So if Eve was the one who ate and fell into the deception of the serpent and gave the fruit to Adam, how is it that Adam sinned first? Look more closely at vs. 6. READ.

Did you see it? Where was Adam when Eve was being propositioned by the snake? Where was Adam when she ate of the fruit? The text says she gave to her husband 'with her.' He was right there with her during the temptation and the eating of the fruit. At the moment where authentic manhood called him to act responsibly, to take charge spiritually, Adam just stood there. He was passive. He refused to accept the responsibilities entrusted to him by God. And guys, we have been imitating Adam's example ever since. Have you ever wondered why the Bible so aggressively calls men over and over to love our wives, to instruct our children and to lead our churches? Because we have a fallen nature. A nature that comes from Adam. A nature that shirks responsibility. A nature that is passive and just stands there. A nature that avoids engagement. Left to our human nature, we have a tendency to avoid responsibility.

But friends, we don't have to be defined by the first Adam. The Bible calls us to be defined the ways and actions of the second Adam, Jesus Christ. Unlike the first Adam who stood flatfooted in the face of evil, Jesus aggressively took responsibility. Like Adam, Christ also had 3 specific responsibilities. He was entrusted with a word to obey—His Father's. He too was given a woman to love—the church. And he was given a work to do—to redeem the lost.

Jesus response to his responsibilities is summed up in John 8:29. In the midst of a long day of ministry, Jesus is clarifying who He is and why he has come. And in the midst of this, he makes an amazing statement.

READ JOHN 8:29.

What an incredible contrast we have between the first Adam and the last Adam! The first Adam disobeyed God's word, exposed and failed to protect God's woman from evil, and didn't carry out God's work. But on all three counts Jesus Christ did the exact opposite. He always did God's will. He accepted His responsibilities. He accomplished God's work! He obeyed God's word. He laid down his life for His bride the church. He carried out God's work by sacrificing himself on the cross.

Gentlemen, the stability of our culture and the health of our families hinges on whether we take responsibility. Let's face it, men, our societies issues are our issues. We are responsible for the upheaval of our society. Men commit 90% of major crimes. Men commit 100% of rapes. Men comprise 94% of drunk drivers. Men commit 95% of burglaries. And men commit 91% of the offenses against the family.

Gentlemen, write down the word - ENGAGE! Don't just stand there! Take Responsibility. the first pillar of manhood is to reject passivity and take responsibility.

The second characteristic of authentic masculinity is to have Steadfast CONVICTIONS. This is one of the areas that so goes against the grain of our culture. We live in a society that wants ethics and morality to be relative and negotiable. But the God of the Bible is a God anchored in truth. And so our ethics and morality are not relative and negotiable. They are based upon timeless principles of truth that have been handed to us by a loving God. God designed us. And God designed the world. And God designed the natural and moral laws that govern our lives. Our role as men is discover and live out God's truth. Our role is to discern and apply God's truth to every decision we face.

Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 16:13-14. READ. Paul is giving some parting comments and at the end of the letter he gives two packed verses that help us as men to understand what it means to act like men. But the one I want you to zero in on here is the phrase, "stand firm in the faith." In other words, don't be a person without any convictions who gets tossed around. Be someone who has a solid footing, who has a good three point stance spiritually.

Dad's, you want to hear some amazing statistics? According to a study that was published in 2000 by the Swiss Government regarding the role of Dads on the spiritual formation of their children. Did you know that if Dad is not engaged in going to church at all, and mom was faithful, that only 2% of their children ended up going to church as adults in that society? But if mom was not engaged at all, and dad was the one who was faithful in his commitment to Christ and His church, that 44 percent of those children embraced the faith of their father.

Men, these kind of statistics are born out over and over again. Our steadfast commitment to living by God's game plan as given us in the Bible - our commitment to having and living out steadfast convictions is one of the keys of our masculinity.

Just this week I have had had several opportunities to live by something other than conviction. They were opportunities to compromise morally and to give in as a parent. And those opportunities often come when we are worn out and worn thin... and that is exactly when we must stand firm in the faith. One of the greatest

gifts you can give your wife and children is to be a man who lives by steadfast convictions that come from God's Holy Word.

As men, we were designed not just to be able to stand firm, but also to love generously. Authentic leadership is not just about responsibility, it is about love. Authentic men are both strong and loving. **The third characteristic of masculinity is that God Intends a Man to LOVE Loyal.** God's expectation that we love our family fiercely, not neglect them.

Turn with me to Ephesians 5. This is probably one of the most defining passages in the bible regarding husbands and wives. And unfortunately, too many see this passage as a call for the wife to submit. But as the bedrock for that call is another call. And it is for the husband to love. Look with me at vs. 25. **READ.** Guys did you hear that. The epitome of manhood is to love your wife the way Christ loved the church - by complete and selfless sacrifice.

Stuart Webber writes of a woman who sent him a poem in a feminine cursive that distilled in twelve lines what she titled, "Life in a Tomb." (Warrior page 117-8)

*The emptiness of 20+ years.
The loss of hope
The battle for joy with a good man
A man content to be alone
(but who needs me to be the keeper of his house, the mother of his children)
A companion but no communion
How can one endure contented
With so little
Amidst so much material?
I worry for my soul
Living without love.*

Relational despair is running rampant in our culture. It has become a way of life. A family restaurant in Portland has added this statement in one of their ads: We will we cater for you weddings, for your rehearsal dinners, for your showers, your anniversaries, your birthdays, and your divorces.

In 1912 there was only one divorce for every 12 marriages. By 1932 it had doubled to one divorce for every six marriages. And in 1990, we had one divorce for every two marriages nationwide. In some areas of the nation today it is approaching a one to one ratio. And sadly, many of the people who remain married, like the woman in the poem, are hanging on to hope with the thinnest of threads.

Someone has said that getting married is easy. Staying married is difficult. And staying happily married for a lifetime is considered one of the fine arts. Gentlemen, God's intention for a man is that we be both tough and tender. That we not only have steadfast convictions, but that be selfless and loving.

Guys, loving your wife is the best gift you could ever give your kids. And loving your kids is the best gift you could ever give your wife. Men, love is captured by commitment displayed in time. Our wives and children are the most important people in our lives. They need quantity time and quality time. They need commitment displayed in loving action, not just words. They need to be taken to the pool, they need to kick around the ball, they need to go on dates, they need to play games, they need romantic getaways. Love is expressed in commitment displayed in the time.

Reject Passivity and Take responsibility. Have Steadfast Convictions. Love loyally. And now that brings us to our fourth characteristic of manhood. **The fourth pillar of authentic masculinity is that God Intends a Man to SERVE Sacrificially.** God's expectation of us as men is that we will be sacrificial servants, not self-centered tyrants. Sacrificial Service, not greedy selfishness is God's intention for a man.

Do you remember in the book of Mark, in the tenth chapter when James and John try to pull a fast one on the other twelve and ask for the best places in Christ's eternal kingdom. This hacks off the other twelve and they are arguing among themselves. So Jesus brings them together and explains that they have his concept of greatness confused. His concept of greatness is servant-hood.

READ Mark.10:42-45. Did you hear that? Even the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve! Guys, if we want to be like Jesus we must come to our marriages, our families, and our churches as servants. We must come to give our live in service to others, not the other way around. God did not make you king of your castle, he mad you servant of the home!

Men, do you remember what the last big action is that Jesus took with his disciples right before he was to be betrayed and crucified? Do you know what he did in his last moments? Besides instructing them in the upper room, he actually did one activity with them that became the defining standard of leadership for the early church. He washed their feet. Their dirty, slimy, dusty, hairy, stinky feet. He put on the towel. He saw himself as a servant. Then he washed their feet. He did the most menial of tasks. And afterward, he told them why he did this. To set them an example

Men, we need to do the same. We need to don the towel. We need to see ourselves not as men who get whatever they want, but as servants who make another's life better. And we need to wash some feet... and that means changing diapers and cleaning up spit up. It may mean mopping the floor, running the vacuum or going to the store. Maybe even, heaven forbid, doing some laundry. Ask her. What is the one thing I could do for you right now that would make your life easier? And then do it. And we need to instruct our children that serving is the hallmark of leadership.

And guys, if you are like me, when you do some of these things, you expect your wife to stop and act like the world just shifted on its axis! Just maybe that's not what servanthood is all about... God intends for a man to take responsibility, to have steadfast convictions, to love loyally, and to serve sacrificially. But there is one more defining mark of authentic manhood. One that brings all of these together.

The fifth pillar of masculinity is that God Intends a Man to LEAD Courageously. The fourth characteristic of authentic manhood is that a Man needs to lead with courage, not recoil in fear or anxiety. Courageous leadership, not cowardly behavior is God's intention for a man.

Turn with me to **1 Chronicles 22:11-13.** David is preparing to die and he is instructing his son Solomon in his new role as the leader of the nation. And this is what he passes on to Solomon. **READ.**

Solomon was given a clear responsibility, to build the house of the Lord and to lead Israel. He was given careful advice, to follow God's word. And he was given a clarion charge—to be strong and courageous. God doesn't need cowards to lead nations or families, he needs men of strong character and courageous leadership. Being a man is being a courageous leader, especially in the face of opposition.

Friends, our role as husbands and Fathers is to provide leadership with courage for our families. God has set the direction and spelled out the values for our marriages and our children, but he has left the implementation of these to us. We must reject passivity, take responsibility, have steadfast convictions, love loyally, serve sacrificially, and then lead with courage. I have made a lot of mistakes. Let me share a few tips to help you understand what it means to be a courageous leader.

First, being a courageous leader in the home means **initiating, but not demanding**. This is a hard one to keep balanced, especially with teenagers who may want to test your leadership. Men, even in times of distance and hard times, keep initiating. The best think you can do, is not give up or just demand time. Courage is to keep initiating the right thing even when they don't seem to be responding. Keep asking to spend time, to get breakfast. Keep holding them to the standards and calling them to high morals.

Second, being a courageous leader means **directing, but not dictating**. We all understand how hard this one. How do you keep your family and children moving in the right direction without at times being a director? I think one of the best ways is to ask questions...

Third, being a courageous leader means **persevering, not capitulating**. There will be few times in your marriage and parenting and leadership where you have to just say, "Sorry, this is what we are going to do. This is what we must do." But when those times come, then you must persevere. You must not capitulate to the easy road. Courage is persevering.

At the end of his life, Winston Churchill, the great English Prime Minister who guided Britain to victory in WWII defined leadership in a most interesting way. He said that England was like a lion with all of the heart and strength it needed. But it was missing something. It was he who provided that special something. He said it was his privilege to provide the lion's roar—the thunderous and clarion call of victory. Men, your families are full of heart and strength. But it is up to you to provide the roar.

Gentleman, it is time for us to stem the tide and change the direction of manhood. It is time for us to embrace our calling as God's men. It is time to stop being passive and take responsibility. It is time to not waver, but have steadfast convictions. It is time to stop neglecting our wives and kids and start loving loyally. It is time to shun selfishness and serve sacrificially. It is time to set aside cowardly living and lead with courage. This is what God intends for a man. Take Responsibility. Have Steadfast Convictions. Love Loyally. Serve Sacrificially. Lead Courageously. These are the pillars of manhood. And men, you are the pillars of our culture. It is time for us to embrace His calling and embody His character.