

Manhood Defined

Unedited Transcript

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Well, good morning, men. As I think about coming to speak this morning and realizing that it is one of the last two times I'm going to be here, I was reflecting on some of the things that have happened and some of the unique things about my speaking after Friday morning Bible study. I hold a couple of records for speaking at the Bible study.

For example, I'm pretty sure I hold this record. I know I hold the second one. I'm pretty sure I hold the record for the only person who slept through the speaking portion and showed up halfway through the Bible study. This was eight or ten years ago. I had made the mistake of agreeing to do the Bible study at the end of a West Coast trip, got home with a delayed flight at 4:00 in the morning our time Wednesday night, was totally thrown off, woke up and it was five till 7:00. I was supposed to be speaking at the Bible study. We've reversed the table time and the message that morning and everything worked out fine.

The second one that I own the record for is I'm the only person that has made an audience member bleed at the Bible study. Maybe we should bring some film. I've got a little video of this next week. We should probably show that. We'll do that. Jim Seibert, our uber volunteer, sat up here at the front and one day I was doing an illustration with a ceramic little statue and I pretended to fumble it and it dropped on the ground. I was talking about how it was ancient and my great grandmother got it from Europe and blah blah blah and all this stuff. It was really from the Dollar Store. Then I grabbed another one and I said it's actually from the Dollar Store. I threw it down and laughter and all this kind of stuff. I saw Jim kind of go like this a little bit. Afterwards, he comes up to me and there's a big spot of blood on his shirt where one of the shards from the thing had pierced his shirt and cut him and it bled all over his shirt like this. You guys in the front rows, y'all are a little worried this morning probably at this point.

We're going to talk about manhood defines today. We're going to look at Genesis chapter 2, if you want to turn in your Bible. *Manhood Defined* today and *Manhood Demonstrated* next week. You know, yesterday when I woke up, my wife, Ruthy, said, "You know, I just don't feel all that well. I got a headache." We've got a lot going on now with all the transition stuff: moving, house and stuff, insurance, just all the things that you have to do and a lot of stress on her with her work and different things. It seems she was all out of sorts. I was trying to figure out is she mad at me. Does she really not feel bad? Is there something else going on? Did I not do something? Has anybody felt like this before? Am I the only person that thinks this way?

I was talking to a guy recently and we were talking about church. He said, "You know, I just don't want to go to church anymore. It doesn't seem like I get anything out of it. I go there. I listen to the message, same message I've heard years and years and years and years. I just don't know if I want to do that anymore." I talk to men all the time and their work that feel like they're unfulfilled, that what they're doing doesn't matter, that they're just kind of checking things off the list. You think about all of these different kinds of dissatisfaction that men deal with. What do they have in common? Well, often they

have in common that we feel like we should be making a difference, but we know that somehow, in the moment at least, we're not.

My wife has got all this stuff going on and I'm thinking I should be doing something. I don't know what it is, but down deep inside, I know that I should be having some kind of an impact on my wife. This guy going to church, just sitting there, he knows he's not supposed to be going and sitting there. Of course he doesn't like church if he just goes and sits there. We're supposed to be engaged. We're supposed to be making a difference. Where does that come from? Well, I believe that comes all the way from the very creation of who we are as men and the foundation of who we are as men.

If you look at Genesis chapter 2 verse 5, it says this, "When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plants of the field had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land and there was no man to work the ground." Now, did you realize this? This has only been probably in the last year or two that I've really seen this and some other teachers and people have helped me learn more about it. Notice that the two reasons why God had not yet allowed the land to be fruitful. One, there was no rain. Number two, there was no man to work the ground. Man's labor, man's creation is intimately involved with the fruitfulness of the earth.

Go on down. Let's keep going in verse 6. "A mist was going up from the land, was watering the whole face of the ground. 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. The Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east and there he put the man whom he had formed." Notice he creates man. Now he can make a garden. Now the earth can be fruitful because there's a man to work it. "Out of the ground, the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

Skip down to verse 15. "Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it." Man has this job to do, to shepherd, to cultivate the creation that God has given him, this responsibility that he's given him to make this unfruitful world fruitful in the garden of Eden. Then, verse 18, "Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him.'" Now the earth wasn't fruitful without man and so man is made to help the earth be fruitful. Now God says it's not good for man to be alone. Why? Because he's going to ask man to be fruitful and multiply. Well, a man by himself can't be fruitful and multiply. What happens? Skip down to verse 20, the second half of verse 20, "But for Adam, there was not a helper fit for him so the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man. While he slept, he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh and the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man, he made into a woman and brought her to the man."

Here you have a woman being made out of man because man is unfruitful. There's a kind of a pattern that we see in this passage. That pattern is that man is given responsibility for the garden, that he is asked to tend and cultivate, he's asked to work it, he's asked to act, to move in the spirit of responsibility that he has so that the garden would then be fruitful. We sort of see this picture in terms of the creation itself. The earth, as I've said, was there. There were no plants that we creating food. There was no garden. The earth was unfruitful so God creates man. God says, "I need a man to manage and shepherd this creation." Out of the earth, notice it's from the dust of the earth that man is created, and that man is created for the earth to cultivate and tend it so that I can be fruitful the way that God intended it. Then man is unfruitful. It's not good for a man to be alone. God, out of man, taking a rib just like man from made from the dust, woman is made from the rib of man. God creates a woman for the man so

that she could be a helper suitable to him so that he can be fruitful and do the things that God has called him to do. This is really in the very foundation of the created order for us as men.

The big idea today is where God has made you responsible, you need to move to make the unfruitful fruitful. The first point here is responsibility. We have a responsibility. In this case, God has given Adam the garden. He's given Adam his wife. Those are the two primary responsibilities that Adam has been given by God. What happens in Genesis chapter 3? It doesn't take long. The serpent comes into the garden, talks to Eve, deceives her, and what does Adam do? He is standing right there with her and he just allows this to happen. He allows both of the spheres of his responsibility to be violated. Therefore, there is a curse that comes into the world. The earth is cursed. Adam was supposed to be a blessing to the earth and he led to the cursing of the earth. Now, it's only by the sweat of our brow that we're going to be able to get food. We're going to have to fight with thorns to get food because Adam did not act in the area of his responsibility.

One of the questions that we should ask ourselves is: What has God made me responsible for? Where is the areas of responsibility in my life? It may be obvious. An obvious one would be something like our families, our marriage, our workplace, our churches. You know, there's another question and this comes from Pat. You've heard it before. Where do I most see the sting of the lack of the gospel in my life? In the areas of life that I'm involved in, where do I most see the sting of the lack of the gospel? It might be in my son's fifth grade class. It might be with some of the kids on the little league team that my son plays on. It might be through the boy scout troupe. It might be with my neighbors. It might be with a coworker. It might be with a vendor or a customer. God might be calling me to play a particular role in that place where the gospel is not having any kind of an influence and people are suffering because of it. The curse has taken hold and it's devastating lives. Is God calling me to actually takes steps to do something about it? Is that an area of responsibility for me?

The second thing that we see with *Manhood Defined* is that we are supposed to have movement. We're supposed to be able to move. We're supposed to be able to tend the garden, to cultivate it, to care for our spouse as Adam should have. When that serpent comes in and is talking to Eve and Adam is standing right there, what does Adam do? Does he step in front of Eve and say, "No, no, no, no. You're not slandering God on my watch. That's not what God said. Don't tell her that." Does he do any of that? No, he just stands back and says, "I wonder what's going to happen. I wonder if somehow this is going to work out. Maybe if I don't do anything, everything will be okay."

Any guy in here ever felt that way? Probably all of us, right? There's a temptation to passivity, to not wanting to rock the boat, to not wanting to get into conflict and yet God says, "Hey, I need you to move." Instead of stepping up, so many men step back. What happens is we end up feeling impotent in some of the most important areas of our lives. We're scared to take a big challenge. We don't want to rock the boat at home by challenging our wives. We say, "You know what? This is not that big a deal." A lot of these things aren't a big deal for a year or five years or twenty years, but when the kids leave home, it's just the two of you and it's getting worse and worse. Listen, the problems you have now, except for God's divine work in your life, they're just going to get worse and worse as you get older. I'm worried about how I'm going to be when I'm 75. I know how bad I am at 50. I'm thinking, "Oh my goodness. I need some help." Those things that annoy people about you, unless you allow God to continue to shape you and work in your life, those things just get worse and worse and worse.

If we're not willing to step into it with our wives and actually challenge and confront and talk and work through things, then guess what. It's just going to get worse. So many guys are afraid of that because

you don't want to rock the boat. We just have some friends, light friends, some acquaintances because it's too hard to be vulnerable and I don't really want to let anybody get to know me. Maybe if they really knew what was going inside, I mean, it takes too much energy. It's just easier to have some guys I can go fishing with or watch the game with. I don't really need real friends. Then, five years down the road, ten years down the road, we end up in some very devastating places. Why? Because we didn't move. God says we need to be in real relationships with other men. So many men are just sort of floating down whatever river, whatever current has them at the moment, and then they wonder why they end up in some places they never wanted to be. God made us for more. He made us to be men who create, who can produce, who can shape, who can transform. We need to be willing to work in the areas that he's called us to be responsible. That leads to fruitfulness.

Adam was going to cultivate the garden. He was supposed to protect the garden. He failed and so now everything is hard. The story of the rest of the Bible is how God is reversing that curse. I love looking at the Bible through these big picture ideas like, for example, worship is a big picture idea to think about through the whole Bible. You know, obviously God's walking with Adam and Eve in the garden. Then you have the tabernacle and the temple and Jesus says, "I'm the new temple. Now you have the Holy Spirit within you." The worship leading all the way to Revelation. You can take these themes, nearness to God is another one very similar to the worship, you can take that theme, presence of God, and trace it. The battle of light and darkness, trace that all the way through the scriptures.

Well, one theme that you can see all the way through the scriptures is God's desire to make the unfruitful fruitful. For example, Joseph, he gets sent to an unfruitful land in a time of famine so that he can make it fruitful to save the people of God. How about King Saul? An unfruitful King Saul is replaced with King David so that he could become the iconic king and the one who would eventually spawn the Messiah who would be in the line of David. God sent Nehemiah to an unfruitful, broken down city. Why? To make it fruitful, to rebuild the walls, to repair the city, to make it be what a city should be. The ultimate example, God sent Jesus to redeem unfruitful people. What happens with Jesus? The blind see. The lepers, who are separated from the people of God, who are separated from the worship of God, the lepers are cleansed. Even the dead, the ultimate curse, the dead are raised. What is Jesus doing? He's reversing the curse and he's making that which is unfruitful become fruitful. He's bringing about the blessing that God intended.

The big idea is that when God has made you responsible, you need to move to make the unfruitful fruitful. That's what manhood, that's one of the ways that you can define manhood is someone who is able to move to bring fruitfulness out of unfruitfulness. The question is: How do you actually do this? I mean, it's one thing for somebody to just give you a list of stuff, but how does someone actually help become the kind of man see this be a reality in their lives? I'm going to give you five things that I would encourage you to think about that would help you become this kind of man.

The first thing you might need to do and all of us need to do is to repent. We need to repent. There are probably some areas in your life where you've been wasting your time, where you've been pursuing some things that don't matter or you've been pursuing some things that are just outright evil. Either way, it's a distraction from your actual purpose of your manhood where God has called you to be responsible to see fruitfulness come out of unfruitfulness. We need to change our minds. We need to ask God to change our hearts. We need to ask God to give us new desires, a new love for him, a new vision for what he wants to see in our lives. The first thing would be to repent.

The second thing is to discipline yourself. It takes effort to do this. Philippians says workout your salvation with fear and trembling. This is supposed to be serious. We need to recognize what's at stake and we need to take it more seriously. This is what we were made for. In my family, I remember multiple episodes with our kids and it seems like a common lesson. Maybe your kids went through this. I'll pick on my youngest for a second because he was a great athlete. Every now and then, he would say something to me about what he wanted to accomplish. You know, "I'm going to hit five home runs this year or I'm going to do this or I'm going to make this team." Whatever. I'd say, "That's great. What are you going to do to make that happen? How do you want to work on that?" "I don't really want to work on it. I just want to see it happen." This is common and you probably saw this with your kids. It might be with grades or it might be with other things that they're trying to do. They have these desires, they have this image of what the outcome they would want to have, but they're not willing to put the work in that would lead to that kind of outcome. Well, you know, that's understandable and it's maybe even somewhat cute in a twelve-year-old. In a 35-year-old, it's a big problem.

We need to discipline ourselves to try to accomplish the things that God has called us to. We're grown men and we just need to step up in some areas. If we're not spending time in the scriptures, we just got to do that. If we're not praying, we've got to pray. If we're not investing in our kids, we've got to do that. Spending time with our wives, communicating. If we don't have some real friends, you're just going to have to make the effort to get some real friends. I mean, at some point, we have to do the things that God is calling us to do so that we can be men who can bring fruitfulness out of unfruitfulness.

The third thing is to be determined. We need to be able to move in spite of opposition and circumstances. Listen, the world does not want you to be a godly man. You understand this? The world, the flesh, and the devil are aligned against you being a godly man. You're going to have all kinds of temptations; you're going to have all kinds of forces opposing you. You're going to have to fight through those things to see this become a reality in your life.

Think about Joseph. We talked about him a few minutes ago. Think about all the setbacks that Joseph had, especially in this idea of fruitfulness and unfruitfulness. He's got this blessed life with his father. What happens? His brothers take the blessing of that life and they turn it into the cursing of death when they fake his death and send home the bloody coat to his dad. They take the blessing of family and replace it with the curse of slavery. I mean, the opposite of what should be happening is happening in Joseph's life.

Potiphar's wife took the blessing of integrity and replaced it with the curse of lying and deceitfulness. Joseph exhibits integrity, exactly what you'd hope to do, and what ends up happening? She lies about it and he gets thrown in prison. In prison, the blessing of freedom was replaced with a curse of being in jail, being in prison. In spite of all these setbacks, these ways that Joseph could have said, "God, I don't know. Why are you doing this to me? I'm trying to do the right thing. There's lots of other guys you could be picking on that are doing all kinds of crazy evil stuff. Why are you doing this to me?" That's not what Joseph said. He continued, he had determination, and he went ahead. Even in prison, he ran the jail. He's interpreting dreams for people as God commanded him to do. He's faithful. He has determination because he wants to be the kind of man that God called him to be. Ultimately, the end of that story of course is the reconnection with his family and the fact that he saved the people of God through his wisdom and foresight. We need to be determined to fight through our circumstances.

The fourth thing is we need to fix our priorities. We have to see what God sees. We can't put our hopes and dreams into the wrong things and then look to God to bring fruitfulness. Listen, if you're going to

college football games and hunting trips and whatever 26 weekends a year and then you wonder five or six years from now why your kids and your wife don't really want a lot to do with you, I mean, it shouldn't be that hard to figure out. If you're working 75 hours a week and four or five years from now, your wife says, "Hey, I just don't feel like I know you anymore." Not a big surprise.

We need to fix our priorities. We need to value the things that God values. The reality is that our culture is going to deceive us and blind us. This culture has so many things to give us to distract us from what's really important. I mean, if you think about just how much time you can spend on this. You probably saw the little joke cartoon that says, "Hey, honey, why don't we have some people over tonight so we can all stare at our phones?" I mean, that's what happens. You get in a crowd of people, everybody's like, especially the younger folks are. It could be all the trips you can take or all the Netflix you can watch or all the sports your kids can be involved in or the projects you can accomplish at work or the new ventures you can start and on and on and on. There are so many ways that this world is going to try to distract you away from the things that are really important.

I was with a man the other day who was describing how he has the freedom to do this. He's been blessed. He's an entrepreneur. He has adjusted his schedule so that every morning he exercises with his three young boys. He puts two of them in a stroller, he puts the other one on a bike, and they go for a little run together and he waits and does that. He works a little bit at home. They wake up, get their breakfast. He does the exercise deal with them and then he goes and actually goes to the office. He said, "I want them to, first of all, know that I'm with them. Second of all, want them to see that we're going to be committed to this, that we're disciplined to do this. The thing that I really want them to know is that I'm going to be with them, that I care about them." That's a guy who is making a priority. You may not be able to do exactly that. I'm not using that as a strict something that everybody should do. I'm saying the example of someone who's rearranging their priorities to accomplish fruitfulness in an area where God has made them responsible. Those are the kinds of decisions that all of us should make.

Finally, the fifth thing is that we need to seek spiritual power. Notice in Genesis chapter 2, who is it that made the garden grow? The temptation is to think it was Adam, but it says here, "And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food." God made the garden grow. You say, "Wait a minute. You just told me that Adam was responsible for bringing fruitfulness out of unfruitfulness." Yes, he was, but God makes the garden grow. I don't understand all of that. I don't know all the ways that those two things work together. I know they're both true. Without Adam, God did not have a fruitful garden and yet even with Adam, God was the one who made the garden grow. We have to seek spiritual power. There's no set of if you do A, B, C, and D, you're going to have perfect children. If you do these four things, you're going to have a perfect marriage. This is how to have a great career. That doesn't work that way. God has to give us spiritual power.

Look at the promise to the disciples in Acts chapter 1 verse 8, "You shall receive power." He said, "You shall receive power." Have you ever thought about that? What word would you have put there if you were writing the book, the way we normally think? I might have said faithfulness, consistency, wisdom. I don't know. What are the things the disciples would have needed? They would have needed a lot of things. Jesus said, "You will receive power." How often do I really feel like I'm getting power from God to tackle tough things in my life? Is that even a category that I have? Hey, here's a conflict at work and this thing needs to be resolved. I'm praying, "God, would you give me power to step into this? I pray that you would allow me to bring resolution here because this is going to be very unfruitful if somebody doesn't figure out how to bring fruitfulness from it and I want to be your man to figure that out." Ever prayed a prayer like that? We need to seek spiritual power.

Look at Romans chapter 8 verse 11, "If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you." How do we have life? How do we have energy? How do we have power? It's because of the Holy Spirit and it's the same Spirit that raised Jesus Christ from the dead. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to us.

When I deal with that situation with Ruthy, I have to make the decision: Am I just going to step back and let this sort of go its own way and hope that everything works out okay or am I going to actually pray for power and say, "Hey, Ruthy, are you doing all right? Tell me what's going on. How can I pray for you? What did I do to mess up? Do I need to change something? Do I need to take care of something?" It's hard for us to ask some of those questions because we feel like we're idiots, we should know these things. Of course, after you've been married long enough, you realize not too much. A lot of things going on there that we're not going to know. That doesn't mean we can't step into it. The same thing in our workplace, the same thing with our kids, the same thing in relationships. We need to seek God's power to allow us to move to carry out the responsibilities that God has given to us.

As we think about the big idea then, when what God has made you responsible, you need to move to make the unfruitful fruitful, where God has given you responsibility. All the areas of your life that he's asked you to be involved in, how can you step in in His power to make that which was unfruitful become fruitful again?

Now, next week we're going to look at *Manhood Demonstrated*. I'm going to give you three ideas about manhood. I'll preview those. We're going to talk about pursuing, protecting, and producing. We're going to talk about what does it actually look like to move in a man's life. Then we'll also briefly touch on the nature, I believe, of women that's important. Three ideas for women and how we can help, those of us who are in relationships either married or friendships or whatever else, the women, some of their three primary callings: to invite, to nurture, and to partner. How can we be a part of seeing women become everything that God wants them to be?

Let me give you a couple of applications for today. First of all, I'd ask this question: Are you stuck in some aspects of your life right now? I know that a lot of guys have gotten in ruts and maybe you are stuck in a habitual sin or maybe you are in a disappointing situation, a difficult situation that you have sort of lost hope. Maybe it's your marriage, maybe it's your work environment. I would just challenge you to pray and ask whether or not the Lord might be calling you to rethink whether or not that situation is really hopeless. Is God's power available to you even in that situation that's been so difficult for you for so long? If you're stuck somewhere in your life, I'd just would ask you to pray about whether or not God might want you to make a change there and whether He might not be able to lead you in that direction.

Secondly, I'd ask you to take stock and see are there some areas in your life where God has allowed you to see fruitfulness? What has He used you to accomplish? We ought to appreciate those things. Some of you have been amazing dads. Some of you, great husbands. Your wives have been so blessed and their lives are completely different than they would have been if they hadn't married you. Some of you guys are interacting with children from other families that look at you as their dad, essentially. What a blessing that's been to them. Your workplaces, you have coworkers that literally, some of you, one of the most important things about working where they work is the fact that they get to have a relationship with you. Some of you, that's true about. Where has God shown you his blessing of

fruitfulness through your life? Let's praise him. Let's thank him for those things this morning. Let's recognize that that's what he's called us to be and to do as men.

On the other hand, are there places where you feel like, "I'm just not really seeing a lot of God's power in this area of my life. I mean, I'm just kind of getting by." Those neighbors that we never really talk to or we talk to a couple times, and every now and then, we'll see them outside before they put the garage door down, and it's kind of always gnawed at the back of your mind that maybe we ought to do something but it's easier just not really to do anything because we've lived here ten years. How awkward would it be to go over there and talk to them now? It's just kind of gnawing there. Maybe it's something with your kids or maybe it's something in your marriage. Let me just ask you today: Would you pray and see if God might give you power to move, where you could actually do something?

The last thing we want to do is give up. The last thing we want to do is lose hope in these situations. The big idea for today, where God has made us responsible, we need to move to make the unfruitful fruitful. When we do, there's a joy that we get to participate in that is unbelievable because we know that this is what we were made for.

Let's pray.

God, we thank you so much for this morning and for your Word and for what it says to us about how manhood is defined. Lord, we thank you for Jesus, the second Adam, who demonstrates this completely and perfectly, that a man who came to bring blessing where there was cursing, to bring fruitfulness where there was unfruitfulness, who had your power, the power of the Spirit to do life-changing miracles. Lord, we know that you have called us to also be men of power, that we should be men who are so surrendered to you, who have so aligned ourselves with your will, that your spirit is able to work through us. You said that you wanted us to bear much fruit as your disciples.

Lord, we pray today, would you encourage us in our lives where we are seeing that great fruit? I know with the men in this room, there's so many amazing things happening across this city. Lord, I pray that you would also convict us of the places in our lives where we have allowed ourselves to settle, where we have forgotten our calling, where we have forgotten what it means to be a man. I pray that you would remind us, that you would challenge us, that you would lift our eyes so that we might give ourselves wholly to you, first of all, and then to the responsibility and the calling that you've placed before us so that we could move to see the unfruitful become fruitful. For your glory, we pray in Jesus' name, amen.