

Reconstructing Manhood

DATING, MARRIAGE & FAMILY: On Being a Baby Daddy

Rough Transcript

Brett Clemmer

Brett Clemmer:

Well, good morning. It's great to see you all here and all around the country, all around the world that are watching and listening to this online. Really happy to be here. As Pat said, we are continuing our series *on Reconstructing Manhood*, really confronting the lies, I guess you could say, or at least the misunderstanding that our culture has about what manhood really is. I've been talking to a lot of younger guys lately, and asking them this question, "What does the church need to do to reach younger men more effectively?" One of the things that they say all the time comes down to this idea, we need a reliable definition of masculinity. Because the culture is giving us a wide range of definitions of masculinity, and many of the definitions conflict with each other, even within our culture. You have everything from the hyper macho to the hyper feminist and everything in between. It's probably not one continuum, it's probably a constellation of ideas about what manhood really is.

We are going to use a different source for our definition of manhood. We're going to use God's word, which is been around a while, sort of stood the test of time, right? Here's the most important thing about it, is not just that it's been around a while, not just that it stood the test of time, but it actually works. It actually works. There's nothing arbitrary. As we say at *Man in the Mirror*, as Pat likes to say, we have a system perfectly designed to produce the results that we want. Today, we're going to talk about... I was trying to come up with a title that would get people's attention, and it certainly got attention around the office, *On Being a Baby Daddy*, *On Being a Baby Daddy*. So what we're going to talk about is marriage and family, and I'm going to stretch that out to girlfriends, marriage and family.

Why did I use this phrase baby daddy? Now, I want to admit to you, I did something, I did a field test on the phrase baby daddy, and I sent it out to a bunch of guys, to some of the guys in the room. I said, "Do you know what a baby daddy is?" All but one knew what it was, so Fred Mateer is the purest man I know, he did not know what a baby daddy is. So, Fred, I think that speaks highly of you. I'm not going to give the other names, because you all should be ashamed of yourself for what you wrote back to me. No, I'm just kidding.

So what's a baby daddy? Well, a baby daddy actually, I think, is a great metaphor for what society tells us about manhood in the area of marriage and family. Because what a baby daddy is is the guy that gets a girl pregnant and then leaves. Okay? That's all it is. Pretty simple. It's that girl's baby's daddy. Now, there may be some baby daddies listening to this. There may be some baby daddies in the room. My goal is not to trash baby daddies. My goal is to trash the concept though that that is an acceptable, or desirable is probably a better way of saying it, that that's a desirable process to be involved in. That's not good. You can't say, "Oh, that's a great outcome." Right? It reveals, I think, behind it, underneath it, sort of a deeper understanding of manhood, a deeper philosophy of manhood that says, "Being a man is about getting what you want, regardless of the consequences, and even more so, regardless of the consequences to other people."

SHACKING UP AND BABBY DADDIES

So we see this idea of... This first point I've got, shacking up and baby daddies. It's like this idea of guys, of men and women moving in together and having a complete relationship in just about every way but outside the bounds of marriage.

You might say, "Well, that's just modern thinking." Yeah, well, it's dumb. It doesn't work. It literally doesn't work. Your chances of staying together with a person that you have moved in with without the idea of an emotional and spiritual contract, that you're going to through thick and thin stay together, and then sealing that in the eyes of your church, your community, and your God, and then for you to... I mean, if you think about it that way, just logically you know you're less likely for that to last. Just logically, right?

I'm not trying to be holier than thou, so let me give you a couple of examples of this. I have a young woman friend of my daughter's that I met and I knew for a long time. I follow her on Facebook. She had been writing for several months about her life and how great it was and there's pictures of her German shepherd and there's pictures of the camper that she lives in and there's pictures of the boyfriend that lives in the camper with her and the German shepherd, and this great life that she had and how they went on these wonderful hikes and had these great experiences together, and how he was always there for her when she came home from work, and how the dog was always there for her. And then I saw her one day, and I could tell something was wrong. I said, "What's wrong?" She said, "I kissed my boyfriend goodbye to go to work one day in the last week or two, and when I came back he was gone, along with all of his stuff." She was heartbroken. It'd been a year.

I looked at her and I said, "I'm so sorry that that happened to you." It made me angry that a guy could think that he could do that to this beautiful young woman who was smart and intelligent. I mean, she's a critical care nurse, great athlete, I mean, just young and alive and full of energy, and she is abandoned, just abandoned. My heart was breaking for her. I looked at her and I said, "I said, after we talked for a little while, I said, "Can I say something hard to you?" She said, "Yeah." I said, "Never again should you give a guy all the benefits with none of the responsibilities." Don't do that. It's not good for you.

I had another couple that I knew, that I was good friends with, and she said to me, "Yeah, we're moving to..." I can't remember the city, Nashville or somewhere. And I said, "You are? Where's your ring?" She said, "Well, I mean, we're going to get engaged when we get there." I said, "I hope so. Because if you don't, you will have moved across country with a guy for his job and then, if it doesn't work out... Are you okay with that? Are you okay with maybe perhaps being in a city that's a new place for you and..." "Oh, no, that'll never happen." And you know what? They got engaged, they got married, they have a kid now, it's great. It's like playing craps. Worked out great for one, didn't work out so great for the other.

So there's just this mentality in the world that it's... I mean, try it out. Just try it out. Make sure you're compatible. I have news for you: you are not compatible. Can I get an amen?

Amen.

You are not compatible. Marriage isn't about compatibility. Marriage is about compromise. Marriage is about sacrifice. Marriage is about changing and growing because somebody else challenges you to change and grow. That's not compatibility. That's hard. That's difficult.

So, I want to give you a different way of looking at... This is the culture's view, I think. It's just this idea of shacking up and then the consequence of that is you could become a baby daddy and then it's just culturally... I mean, even if you'd say, "Oh, it's not really acceptable," I mean, there's sort of wink, wink, nod, nod in our culture about this. This is not a great way to be a man in this area of your life. And we can go into... I mean, especially for the kids, we can go into statistics about what happens to kids that

grow up in a home without a dad. Higher rates of educational failure, mental health issues, involvement in the criminal justice system, I mean, there's all kinds of consequences for this attitude that... "Well, you know, if she gets pregnant, we'll just deal with it." We're not even going to go to abortion, okay? Like we don't need to have that conversation about killing a baby and really devastating a woman's emotional wellbeing for a long, long time is the consequences of that.

THREE PRINCIPLES: LEAD, PROVIDE, PROTECT

So, what do we want to do? Well, I want to give you three principles in this... it's a big huge area, okay? The big huge area is girlfriends, marriage, or dating, marriage and family. But I want to give you these three principles because I think they apply in all three of these areas. Let's talk about this. These three principles are lead, provide, and protect. When you are thinking about how to be man in your dating relationship, how to be a man of integrity in your marriage, how to be a man of impact in your family, here's three rubrics that you can think of: leading, providing, and protecting.

Let's talk about leading. Where do you want to lead your girlfriend to? Where do you want to lead your wife and your kids to? I got an easy answer for you: you want to lead them towards Christ. You want to lead them towards Christ. So how do you do that? Well, part of that is you want to remind them of who God is and what he does. If you've got a Bible, turn to Joshua, chapter 4. There are tons of passages about helping the children remember, helping the people remember what God has done. So let me just give you this, this is more of a story, it's kind of a cool story.

Joshua's leading the Israelites into the promised land, and there's this story in the first seven verses of what God tells Joshua to have the people do and then they do it. In verse 8, "And the people of Israel did just as Joshua commanded and took up 12 stones out of the midst of the Jordan, according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel, just as the Lord told Joshua, and they carried them over with them to the place where they lodged and laid them down there. And Joshua set up 12 stones in the midst of the Jordan in the place where the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the covenant stood, and they are there to this day." They are there to this day, isn't that fascinating, at the point this was written. And Joshua sat up..." I'm sorry. And Joshua sat up the 12 stones in the midst of the Jordan, they are there to this day. Verse 10, "For the priests bearing the ark stood in the midst of the Jordan until everything was finished that the Lord commanded Joshua to tell the people according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua."

Then if you go down to verse 20, he says, "And those 12 stones which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up at Gilgal, and he said to the people of Israel, 'Listen, when your children ask their father in times to come, "What do these stones mean?" then you shall let your children know, "Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground, for the Lord, your God, dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, that you may fear the Lord, your God, forever.'""

You want to lead your family well? You want to lead in your marriage or lead in your relationship? Set up memorials. Remind your family what God does for you. Lead your kids and your wife and your girlfriend through scripture together. Get in a small group or study the scripture together so that you can remember what God has done. You want to lead your family, lead in these key relationship towards God, towards understanding who Jesus is and what he did for us. If you want to write this down, just write down Psalms 78, that's another chapter that you can go to that talks about reminding the children what God has done.

All right? So that's leading. The next thing is providing, and how do you need to provide? Let me give you this quick rubric. You need to provide for your, in this area of your life, for physical needs, emotional needs, and spiritual needs. Physical needs, emotional needs, and spiritual needs. You can go on the Man

in the Mirror website and look up some articles about living within your means, in your physical means. I'm just going to say that's a really good concept. You can live above your means, you can live at your means, you can live within your means. If you're going to provide financially for the people around you, you need to live within your means. That means there's margin. That means that if your car needs a big repair, you don't have to be paying for it for four years on a credit card. You live within your means. That's one way to think about how do I provide for the physical needs of my family, well, I can have a good handle on my finances.

What about the emotional needs? Turn to Psalm 103. We need to think about the emotional needs for our family, and God is our example of this. As a father... Psalm 103:13. "As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him, for he knows..." The next verse says, "He knows our frame." He knows our frame. Do you know the frame of your girlfriend, of your wife, of your kids? That implies an intimacy, a knowledge of how they're made and who they are so that you can provide for them emotionally. Then we talked about really providing in spiritual needs, it's really that idea of leading them towards God.

Then the third thing is to protect, right? When you think of protection, what do you think of? Well, I think of danger. What are the dangers that you need to protect your relationship with your girlfriend in? What are the dangers that you need to protect your wife from? What are the dangers you need to protect your kids from? And they're all around us. So if you're not paying attention, I would just submit to you that if you want to step up and be a man in these areas of your life, you've got to pay attention and you've got to be ready to protect them from the dangers that could hurt them.

And that's not just... I mean, there's not a guy in this room that if they saw their child in the middle of a street and a car racing towards them wouldn't shove their child out of the way, right? In a way, that's easy because it's so tangible, it's obvious, your reaction. But there's a ton of things that we don't think about, little things here and there. Not checking in with our kids when they come home from school to find out what happened. Not keeping track of what they're looking at and interaction with on social media. If you haven't been watching what's been going on lately, like Facebook, which owns Instagram, knows, they know from research that Instagram is bad for pre-adolescent girls. From research, science. You know how they all keep saying, "I believe in science"? Well, only when it's convenient. The science says that if you have a pre-adolescent girl, she should not have Instagram.

Do what you going to do, but I think it's pretty obvious what you should do, right? We're putting smartphones in the hands of our sons, and it's just... What's the over/under on the number of clicks I can get to a picture of a naked woman? Three? Four? I don't know. It's not a lot. It's not hard. So, how are you protecting your family?

In all of these things, I think we have a rubric. The rubric is a very specific concept, but really quick, if you can see this graphic, what you'll notice is I didn't put like lead, provide, and protect in a list, I put them in circles, and the circles are interlocking because these things all overlap with each other. It's not a, here's the lead circle, here's the provide circle, here's the protect circle. They all overlap. They interlock. So you're constantly, probably, always doing all of these at the same time. Anything that you do out of love for your wife and children or for your girlfriend, they all probably have elements of these all built in.

So what's the overarching rubric? I think the overarching rubric can be found in a couple of different passages, and these are classic passages. We're going to look at Ephesians 5 and then at Ephesians 6. Ephesians 5:25-28 says this: "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." If you have a Bible, a physical Bible or a digital one, highlight the words or underline the words "gave himself up for her." Because I think that's the rubric. "That he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way,

husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife, loves himself." He who loves his wife, loves himself.

And then if you skip down to the next chapter, Ephesians 6:4 says this: "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." Do not provoke your children to anger but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. You have to do the first half, all right, you can't just zip to the second half.

So what's the rubric here? I think the rubric is sacrifice. Here's the Big Idea: **you reflect God's image when you love your bride or your bride-to-be, when you love your bride and children sacrificially.** If it doesn't cost you something to love your wife, to love your girlfriends, to love your children, if it doesn't cost you anything, I don't know that it's really love. I mean, it's affection, probably, it's mutual benefit, but we're not called to have mutually beneficial relationships with our spouses or with our children. We're called to love them sacrificially. We have to be willing to give something up that we want, to put ourselves in harm's way at times.

What might you have to sacrifice? Well, let's look at these three areas really quick. Let's say you're dating a woman, all right? And you're thinking, "How can I love this girl sacrificially?" Well, first of all, you have to put her needs above your needs. Right? You have to put her needs above your needs. How do you do that? Well, the first thing is you have to pay attention. Not make it all about yourself. Ask lots of questions. What does she need? Well, I can tell you some things I know she needs. She needs safety, so you need to not be a danger to her and you need to protect her from other people that might be a danger to her. That might mean not putting yourselves in situations where you're going to be in danger. You might want to think about where you go. By the way, I'm not talking about adventure sports here, that's totally fine, to be endangering that way. I'm just kidding. Be careful still. So she needs safety.

She needs security, right? She needs security and she needs integrity. So when I say integrity and security, those two things go together because this is exactly what I'm talking about. She does not need to think that the only way you'll stick around is if she has sex with you. That is not loving a woman sacrificially. Somebody said, "Ow." I don't know where that came from, but... I hope that was metaphorically ow and not an actual oops. Right, I mean, just flat out, that if she's a woman of integrity and you're a man of integrity, you can't make that expectation for the relationship or you're out of there. I mean, that's just horrible. It's not protecting her. It's not being sacrificial. Again, are you putting your wife's needs in front of your own needs? I think all this that refers to your girlfriend refers to a marriage relationship.

For me, my example was, I really, really loved working. A lot of us, we're made to work. Genesis 2, before the Fall, God put Adam in the garden to work it. Day one, we're designed for work. But in the corruption of the Fall that happens, work becomes harder, we have the same drive to accomplish things, but now it's harder to do it. So, we get consumed by it. For me, that meant at one point I was just gone all the time, just traveling everywhere. "Oh, I'm doing this for my wife." Come on. Right? I mean, ultimately there's money in the bank to pay the bills, but really what I'm doing is meeting my own needs. I've talked to guys before, they are like, "Yeah, I took this job that was going to make me more money and it was the worst decision I've ever made because it just stole time away from my family." So how do you sacrifice within your marriage is that you put your wife's needs before your needs.

Now, again, I'm not talking about an extreme of an abusive wife who's irrational, and that happens, and then you need to deal with that, go to your pastor, go to a counselor, but in the typical marriage that we have, let's just be honest, most guys are programmed to put their needs in front of their wife's needs, especially on the meta level. We need to be willing to put their needs above our needs.

There's a great example of that in this Bible study of a guy that I've known for a long time, because I work with his wife. I've never seen a couple that's better at, each one of them, putting the other's needs

above their own. By the way, that's the secret sauce of a happy marriage, is not that you put her needs above yours and then she gets to do whatever she wants, but this isn't a women's Bible study, so I'm not talking to women. But ultimately what you'd like to see is both people living by this principle, because when you're both sacrificing for each other, I mean, that's bliss, right? That's bliss. So if you're wondering who that is, just come talk to me. I don't want embarrass them any more. Sorry, Rick.

Thirdly, what is this sacrifice, this mindset of sacrifice look like with your kids? I'm going to tell you, dads, you're not cool. You're just not cool. Don't try to be. If you find yourself with your kids going, "Dad, you're so cool," one of two things is happening: they want the car, or you're not really providing boundaries for your kids that's leading them, that's providing for them, and especially that's protecting them. If your kids aren't ticked off at you once in a while for not getting to do something that they really want to do that you know is bad for them, and you have to sacrifice... You have to make a short term sacrifice of affection, perhaps, to get the long term benefit of protecting your children. Trust me, parents are complete idiots from the time their children are about 13 to 22, and then suddenly we get smart again in the eyes of our children, because then they finally have some perspective to look back and realize that that thing that you wouldn't let them do was actually a good decision on your part. But you're going to have to sacrifice, sometimes you're going to have to sacrifice peace, ease... you're going to have to actually sacrifice that and sometimes you're going to have to have conflict.

Now, how do you square this with "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger"? Well, that's not being arbitrary. That's setting up boundaries clearly so that you have those boundaries to refer back to. You can say, "Hey, remember, we said these are the boundaries. This thing that you want to do, it's outside of those boundaries. Therefore, we're not going to do that. I'm sorry that upsets you. I know it's really cool to go to whatever concert you want to go to with a bunch of people I don't know until 2:00 o'clock in the morning, but we're not going to do that. We have a curfew or we have a rule that I know who you're out with," or whatever those things are. You set up these boundaries so that it's not arbitrary.

What makes kids... In my experience with my own kids, what ticked my kids off the most is when I said A but I enforced B, on either side of that. On either side, like I said this was okay but then this is not okay, or even worse, we set boundaries and then we'd let the kids go outside those boundaries, didn't acknowledge that we were letting them go outside the boundaries, and then all hell breaks lose. Anyone experience with that? Yeah. Because you didn't keep your boundaries, and then when you try to pull the reins in, they're angry, right? So this don't provoke your children to anger, this is as much a systemic approach to parenting as it is a incidental approach to parenting. Does that make sense? Set up boundaries so that your kids understand them, that then ends up being the discipline and instruction of the Lord, and of course you're going to be informed by what scripture tells us is appropriate and inappropriate for us to do and then apply that into the context of our kids.

GIRLFRIENDS, WIVES AND KIDS

So, girlfriends, wives, and kids, we want to be men who are willing to sacrifice, to put their needs above ours, to lead them towards a relationship with God, to provide for their physical, emotional and spiritual needs, and to protect them from the dangers of a world that does not have their best interest at heart. Here's our Big Idea: **you reflect God's image when you love your bride and children sacrificially**. So this is the final comment I want to make, is the first part of this, you reflect God's image. What do I mean by that? This is how God loves us. This is how God loves us. He leads us towards himself, he provides for our needs, he protects us from the dangers of the world, the flesh, and the devil if we will lean into that relationship. So we want to imitate our heavenly Father in our relationship with our kids. We want to imitate Jesus, who calls the church his bride. Think about those five words that we underlined in Ephesians 5, said, "Gave himself up for her." Jesus did that for us, and we need to do that in these key relationships.

Let's pray. Father, thank you so much for your word that has stood the test of time. Lord, it not only has been around a while, but it's full of wisdom and knowledge. It's profitable to show us how we should be righteous, to correct us when we're wrong, to show us the way we should go, to train us in righteousness, Lord, in rightness, in the way that the world is supposed to work. So, Father, would you help us to rely on your word? Father, would you help us to follow the model of Jesus as we live sacrificially for our families, for our brides, and even for our girlfriend? Lord, would you continue, Father, not just to protect us from the evil one, but Lord, to help us set up memorials to remember what you do for us and to set those up in these key relationships, so that we can always remind people of the goodness, the greatness, the grace, the mercy and the love of God? In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.