

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

MEN IN CRISIS | REAL MAN. GOOD MAN. GOD'S MAN.

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Alright, well good to be with everybody today. I want to welcome everybody gathered across all of our locations, those of you tuning in online, whatever or however you might be joining us. We're just glad that you are.

If you have a Bible, would you go ahead and meet me in Genesis, chapter 1 on your device or maybe you actually have a paper Bible. You don't have to go very far. Genesis 1 is where we are going to be. That's where we're going to be camped out.

Today we're kicking off a new series of messages and I'm going to explain what that is and, maybe even more importantly, what it isn't here in just a minute.

I just want to give you kind of an invitation into my mind and kind of how I think, which I know is a scary thought. But, this is kind of how I think about a message series, I think about it like preparing a meal. So, before you prepare the meal, you've got to get all of the ingredients out on the kitchen island and kind of get ready.

And that's largely what I want to do today. I just want to put out all of the ingredients on the kitchen island. I want to kind of set the table for where we are headed over the next several weeks together.

And I want to start with this story that came out in the news, maybe you recall hearing about this In 2018 there was a 28 year old male by the name of Ian David Long who was a college dropout and a former marine. At the time he was unemployed, divorced, and living with his mom.

He walked into a bar in Thousand Oaks, California. It was a crowded bar filled with college students. And he tragically began to open fire. There was a police officer on the scene who tried to intercept. Ian tragically turned the gun on the officer and shot and killed him.

But then there was another 20-year-old male in the bar that night by the name of Matt Wennerstrom. Now, Matt was sporting a backwards cap and an immerging beard. He just kind of blended in like an ordinary college student.



But there was nothing ordinary about his behavior that night, because as soon as the gunfire started, Matt and about 7 of his friends began ushering people under pool tables trying to protect them from the raining gun fire.

In fact, one 21-year-old lady, after the event, told a reporter this, “There were multiple men who got on their knees and pretty much blocked all of us with their backs toward the shooter, ready to take a bullet for any single one of us.”

When the shooter stopped to reload Matt and his friends broke out the windows at the back of the bar and they started ushering people outside to safety, risking their own lives in the process.

When everything was over, a reporter asked him his motivation. And here’s how he replied, “My life is taken care of. I know where I’m going if I die, so I was not worried to sacrifice.”

Two young men—you’re already clapping for that. This is going to be a lively service. Alright? And I’m probably over preaching.

So you’ve got two young men in that story. Here’s what I want you to see. One used his masculine strength to take lives; another used his masculine strength to save lives. One was a picture of deluded, toxic, misguided masculinity that is harmful to everyone, both males and females. The other was a picture of directed, focused, and I really like this word sacrificed, a sort of surrendered masculinity that was beneficial to everyone, both males and females.

And I would contend that that has been the unfolding struggle of masculinity ever since Genesis, chapter 3.

So, today we’re kicking off this message series. Here’s the title: Real Man, Good Man, God’s Man. I’ll explain what I mean by those terms as the weeks go on. It’s got kind of a lengthy subtitle but I found it to be necessary to make it this long because it says—this is really what we are talking about—How the Gospel Provides a Picture of Masculinity and Reconciles the Sexes.

Now, I’ve been thinking about this series and praying over it since last summer when I read a book that, largely, a lot of this content is based upon, written by a Christian scholar by the name of Nancy Pearcey. And she wrote a book last summer called *The Toxic War On Masculinity*.

If any of you recognize that author there it’s because a few years ago she wrote a book that I highly, highly recommend called *Love Thy Body*. And last summer she took on this

topic. In fact, much of what you're going to hear in this series is largely informed by Nancy's work on this. If you want to get the book and read it for yourself, I highly recommend that you do so.

Another book that I'm currently reading right now (and ladies, if you're looking for a Father's Day gift for the men in your life, I might recommend this) is called *Fighting Shadows: Overcoming 7 Lies That Keep Men From Becoming Fully Alive*. Now, let me say this. Regardless of your gender and regardless of your age and stage in life, you have likely felt or are feeling the tension between deluded and directed masculinity.

And, unfortunately, we don't hear very many examples of directed masculinity in our world today. We hear more examples of deluded masculinity in the news and on social media—like almost daily.

And if the men in your life—and I say men in your life meaning your dad, you're brother, your uncle, your male co-workers, extended family—if the men in your life are imperfect, and they all are, but if they are godly men, they are running after Jesus, they want to look more and more like Him, they're chasing after Him in their personal lives, then I'm going to go out on a limb and say that you are the beneficiary of that directed, surrendered masculinity.

However, if the men in your life: fathers, uncles, brothers, male co-workers are or have been toxic, broken, selfish, narcissists then you have felt the pain of that and you are in recovery from that right now.

The crisis of masculinity is escalating and very few people are talking about it. Right now the ones who have the most to lose are the next generation of young men and the consequences to everyone are staggering.

One of the things that I try to do is—the first thing I do is that I get up in the morning and I just spend time in my own, daily Bible reading. Because here's the trap that a lot of pastors can fall into—the only time we go to God's Word is when we are trying to get up a sermon. That can actually be detrimental to my soul. And I know it. So, I try to do daily Bible reading that is separate from my sermon prep.

And God, in His mercy, kind of intersected the two this last Wednesday morning because right now in my daily Bible reading I'm in 1 Kings. So, I got up and I got my coffee and I'm reading 1 Kings and I read this verse. Check it out David is about to die. And he's passing the baton of his throne to his son, Solomon, and it says in verse 1: "As the time of King David's death approached, he gave this charge," so that's like the idea of a challenge or a blessing, "to his son Solomon: 'I am going where everyone on

earth must someday go.” Here’s the phrase, “Take courage and be a man.” 1 Kings 2:1-2 (NLT)

And here are the notes that I wrote in my Bible. I was like, “What does that mean? What does it mean to be a man?” That’s a question that very few people are asking or getting answers to. There are a lot of young men today who are left floundering because of it. Few are ever properly initiated and many have never had good, godly examples of it. I can remember growing up and maybe there would be a male authority figure in my life: my dad, a coach, a teacher and they’d say that phrase. Be a man. Man up. Every time I would have to do manual labor and I complained about it my dad would say, “Man, it’s good for you. It will put hair on your chest.” I’m like, “When is that going to happen? I just mowed the yard. Not a single hair.”

Is that what it means to be a man? Grow body hair? Is that what we’ve just narrowed it down to? Few men understand it. We’ve never been initiated to it and we’re just left kind of directionless and aimless.

There is a NYU professor by the name of Scott Galloway, who is an atheist by the way, so he’s coming at this from a non-faith, non-Christian perspective. He’s really, really concerned about the plight of a lot of young men in our society today. He’s done a bunch of studies on it. And here are some of his observations on this. He says right now:

There is no group of people that has recently [recently] fallen faster and further in our society than young men

3X more likely to be addicted

2 and a half times more likely to be homeless

Young men are dropping out of college at a faster rate

They are three times more likely to be addicted than young women, 2 and a half times more likely to be homeless than young women. Young men are dropping out of college at a much, much faster rate. The percentage of females graduating from college is much, much greater than young men.

And then he says this, and I think it’s really important:

Because of the huge advantage that men have had in the past,” and nobody is denying that, and actually we need to celebrate and cheer on the progress of women in our current society, but, “Because of the huge advantage that men have had in the past there is a lack of empathy for the plight young men currently going on in our culture today.

And the consequences are staggering. Here are just a few observable stats right now: Young men are dating at the lowest levels ever in the history of the world.

That's just one observation. This is a stereotype. Not everybody, but it's in large categories:

Many young women have a tendency to date horizontally in age and up, because women mature faster than men and they desire a mate that is emotionally and financially stable.

Young men have a tendency to date horizontally in age and down precisely because they are not emotionally or financially stable.

And they actually don't see a need to date because they have a series of algorithms and companies trying to segregate them from society to convince them that they don't need a relationship, all they need is porn. That they don't need to work, they have Coinbase and Robinhood. They don't need friends, they are bred in discord.

They had conversations with a lot of moms who are really, really concerned right now. They have adolescent or young men as sons and the conversation might go like this. There is a mom. She has three kids, two daughters and a boy. One daughter is studying nursing at Penn State. The other daughter is doing a residency in Chicago. They are both thriving—doing well. Her son, though, is back from college, he's unemployed, living in the basement vaping and playing video games.

And on any metric young men are doing worse and falling faster than any other creating a generation of young men who are lonely, economically and emotionally not viable. And then Galloway puts an exclamation point on the stats with this devastating quote:

“There is nothing more dangerous than a lonely broke young man. The most violent, unstable societies in the world all have one thing in common—too many young men with no prospects.”

The crisis is escalating and the consequences will fall upon the shoulders of women, children, society, and the church.

I know right now... Perhaps many of you listening to this, you know the pain of misguided, toxic masculinity in your life in all of its forms. And we could list them: chauvinism, sexism, assault, dominance, aggression, violence, or an absentee dad. And that's real.

One of the things that I have to do as your pastor is not just teach you what the Word of God says, in recent years I've had to spend just as much time teaching you what the secular script says and how it's in conflict with the biblical script.



Before you can even begin to hear God's Word, I've got to deconstruct the secular script so that you can see the wisdom and light found in God's Word.

The secular script sees toxic masculinity (and that's a real thing). Here's the answer the secular script has provided. Society—you've felt this, you've seen it—society at large usually rolls its eyes at masculinity, dismissing it as an outdated social construct or toxic patriarchy, or tries to cancel the category all together—there is no such thing as male, there is no such thing as female, it's all binary, they all just kind of run fluid. We have got to resist the urge to take our cues from society, reading off of the secular script, and we have got to look to Jesus. The church has to speak to this. It's one of these issues where we can't stay silent on it; we've got to speak to it. And more than speaking to it, we've got to model a way forward so that way people in society can see the light that is found within it.

In fact, if you're kind of fighting with me right now about it, this is exactly what Jesus was getting at in Matthew, chapter 6, when He tells the church, when He says, "I want you to be a part of God's redeeming work to bring the kingdom of God to earth." Your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.

Now, here's where the church has likely fallen asleep. We've gotten bored. And we thought the message of salvation was this, "Okay, I'm a sinner. I'm not as good as I should be. So, Jesus I confess my sins to You. And You are Lord and Savior in my life. "So, now I'm going to try to be a good person. I'm going to read my Bible as often as I can. I'm going to go to church as often as I can. I'm sure there are many good things that I can do. I'm just going to wait until You come back or until I die so that I can go to heaven one day."

That is so bogus. It's this idea of like one day we're going to die or Jesus is going to come back, and I don't know what happened, but we get our wings and we exchange our clothes for a diaper and a harp. That's not heaven. That's hell. That's hell. And that's part of the reason why there are so many disengaged men, "Why would I want to do that?" No, the kingdom of God is already in motion. And it went in motion when Jesus walked out of a tomb. That was the first step. So, what He does is He invites us, men and women, into a mission and an adventure where we are helping Him usher the kingdom of God to this earth.

It's not because He needs us, but because it's a privilege, it's part of His mercy and grace to say, "Man be a part of this redeeming work of salvation that is happening in the world right now."

Right now society is freaking out, losing its mind because it can't come up with any answers. It's all a mess. And right now the church not only needs to know this, we need



to model it. We can't get sucked into the secular script. We have to begin to stand apart and say, "God, here I am, a redeemed man." "God here I am a redeemed woman." "I want to be a part of Your kingdom coming on this earth as it is in heaven."

Listen, man. The world is not stupid. It's not that the world doesn't have some valuable things to say about misguided masculinity. It's that it doesn't say enough. Only God's Word can address the depth of brokenness caused by sin in both men and women and bring about the hope of salvation and healing balm to those wounds.

Now, I just need to go ahead and address this because I just know—I know that even talking about this, that maybe I've already brushed up against some of your woundedness, against some of the pain and trauma in your life.

Maybe you've got... This is a sensitive topic. I know that it is. But I've often found that this is where God can do some of His most transformative work.

And right now maybe you've got some questions for me. I will just try to go ahead and vocalize, some of the questions you're internally thinking about.

First of all, let me just say this. While we're talking about masculinity for the next four weeks in this series, this is not (ladies) a man series.

The next four weeks are not going to be filled with bro talk, about flexing biceps, and bass boats, and bow hunting, and beer drinking, bourbon sipping, and beard admiring. Alright? As glorious as all of those things are, that is not what this is. So, if that's what you thought, let me just kind of put you at ease. Alright?

In fact, it's the opposite. This series is not explicitly or exclusively about or for men, which might sound kind of strange to your ears when we're talking about manhood. But, come on man. Think with me. This series is about the flourishing of both men and women and children. And when men can get this right then the beneficiaries of that are women and children and society and cities and communities and churches.

So, when masculinity goes wrong (and nobody is saying that it hasn't) it has gone wrong but oftentimes when the reaction or the response to masculinity goes wrong it hurts everybody, especially the kingdom of God and the witness of the church.

I want to be super clear. We are not elevating masculinity. However, we're not going to diminish it, shame, or cancel it either. That's the secular script. It's goes from one extreme to the other and it is clearly not working.



We need something better. And I would suggest the better that we need is that we need a gospel vision for what godly, surrendered, focused masculinity truly is, because the answer to chauvinism is not feminism, and the response to feminism is not more chauvinism.

Some of you may be like, “Well, Pastor Aaron, I’m a woman so how much application is there really going to be for me in this series anyway?” And I’m really, really glad you vocalized that question. Because if you’re a woman and you’re like, “What does this series called manhood have to do with me?” Let me just offer a few suggestions. If you are a single woman, where are all of my single ladies at? Yeah they’re there. They all sit down here—all services. Just take note of that.

So, if you’re a single woman and you want to date a godly man and you’re wondering where they all are (and chances are they are not on a dating app) this topic should be of great interest to you. I’m not against dating apps, by the way. So, don’t email me.

I’m just saying if you’re a godly woman looking for a godly man, and you’re wondering where they are the next four weeks should be of great interest to you.

If you are married to a good man, like he’s a real man, he’s got muscles and a beard and he provides and he’s a real man, the stereotypical real man. But you’re like, “You know what? There is something left on the table here.

“He has not really, fully stepped into God’s man. He’s not living with a God ordained character potential and calling in his life.” There might be a whole bunch of reasons for that. The next four weeks should be of great interest to you.

If you are raising sons or grandsons and you are alarmed at the statistics about the next generation of young men, the next four weeks should be of great interest to you. If you are concerned that society is not coming up with any good solutions for toxic masculinity other than to diminish, cancel, or shame men then the next four weeks should be of great interest to you because that’s kind of the solution to the extremes.

I was reading this last week that one study analyzed episodes of Disney’s two most popular tween shows featuring families and they found—check this out—every 3.24 minutes the TV dad acts like a buffoon.

I would say that happens in commercials all of the time. Half of the time child characters react to him with expressions of contempt—rolling their eyes, making fun, criticizing, or ignoring him.

Camille Paglia, who actually is an outspoken feminist, warns that the sweeping condemnation of men is not only harmful to them, but also to women. Here's what she said, "When an educated culture routinely denigrates masculinity and manhood, then women will be perpetually stuck with boys, who have no incentive to mature or to honor their commitments."

And she is dead on. Boys who fail to find a proper pathway to manhood do not stumble into it. They don't accidentally just fall into becoming trustworthy husbands and fathers. And there is nothing more tragic or painful than a woman who marries a boy in a man's body.

But it doesn't have to be that way. Just like everyone else, men will live up to or down to the expectations that are placed upon them.

So, here's where we've got to begin. And this is where... If any of you are trying to figure out, "How do I live my life off of the biblical script rather than the secular script, if I'm trying to build out a biblical worldview," you've got to begin with this undergirding right here. It's really just three words. [Writing on a projected screen] (You guys are actually going to find out how poor my handwriting really is):

CREATION

In other words, what is God's design not only for the universe but for the sexes?

FALL

And then:

REDEMPTION/RESTORATION

You could even say restoration of all things.

Those three words need to undergird all of your Bible reading. Those three words need to undergird all of the issues that you're looking at in society, including all of the political issues. All of that needs to undergird your worldview: Creation, Fall, Redemption.

How did God originally create the world?

Here's another way of saying the same thing. What was God's original intent? What went wrong? And then: How is God inviting redeemed men and women to usher in His original kingdom calling to this world and everything that has gone wrong?

So, with that preface, let's walk through the passage together. Hopefully I've given you enough time to find Genesis, chapter 1. If I didn't, you've got other issues.

So, Genesis, chapter 1. Let me read this for you. It says;

"Then God said," this is the creation account, "Let us make human beings..."

I don't know if you ever had this idea, "Well, God made Adam and then He was like, 'Oh, maybe one day We'll make a woman.'" Or, that Eve was sort of an afterthought. No. This tells us right from the beginning that Eve was part of the picture from the beginning.

We're going to make human beings:

“...in our image, to be like us.” Genesis 1:26a (NLT)

So, here’s what this is saying. God made both male and female to image Him perfectly. So the male and the female complement not only each other, but they bring glory to God because there are aspects of both male and female that image our heavenly Father.

And in this series we can dive into all of the stereotypes of all of that but the stereotypes are often misplaced. Meaning, sometimes we say, “Well, this is what it is to be a male. This is what it is to be a female.” The two perfectly image our heavenly Father and He drew them with distinctions for a reason.

So, we go on in verse 31. It says:

“Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!” Genesis 1:31a (NLT)

Now this is God stepping back looking at male and female, which is part of creation, and God saying, “Man, this is so good. This was my original intent.” That is the biblical script.

The secular script suggests that being male is inherently toxic or unnecessary or that maybe being female is inferior or superior. And we have to reject all of those notions, especially when they enter into the church.

Now, throughout church history there have been some who have wrongly taught or suggested that only men were made in God’s image. I don’t know if you’ve ever heard that or not. Hopefully you haven’t. But there have been some who have suggested that. They said, “Well, only men were made in God’s image, not women.”

However, you read through the Genesis account and you see that that’s not true, because Genesis repeatedly uses the plural pronoun to include both male and female. Let me show you an example of it starting in verse 27. It says:

“So God created,” here it is again, “human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them;” plural pronoun, “male and female he created them. Then God blessed them and said, ‘Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.’” Genesis 1:27-28 (NLT)

Many of you probably have heard the name Jordan Peterson. He was stunned when he read Genesis and he found such an ancient text teaching that said both men and women are made in the image of God and given dominion together ruling over God’s creation. And he would say this, “Both carry within them the divine stamp which is very egalitarian, very appropriate, and I think unbelievably advanced for such an ancient text.”

Now, you might be familiar with all of those passages. By the way, everything that we just read is prior to the fall. So, you might have the question, “Well, did that change anything after the fall?” And, yes, a lot of things changed after the fall, but not this. Because what you see is that after the fall, Genesis restates the creation account, and again uses plural pronouns. Check it out in chapter 5. This is after the fall.

“When God created human beings, he made them to be like himself. He created them male and female, and he blessed them and called them ‘human.’” Genesis 5:1b-2 (NLT) The implication here is that even after the fall both men and women still had a status and a dignity of being created in the image of God. They didn’t lose their original identity or their calling because of sin.

However, because of sin, there were massive implications for both the masculine and the feminine. And it explains so much of the tension between the two and what has gone wrong in our society.

I want to show you an example of this with the temptation that went down. You may be very familiar with this passage but I will read it again through fresh eyes. In Genesis, chapter 3 it says:

“The serpent,” that’s a reference to Satan, “was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the Lord God had made. One day he asked the woman,” (so hold onto that, there’s a reason why I’m pointing it out), “Did God really say,”

By the way, every time Satan tries to trip you up or to confuse you, he’ll attack what God says. This is why God’s Word is always on trial all of the time. “Did God really say? You can’t take that literally. That’s just an ancient text.” He’ll try to twist and manipulate God’s Word because God’s Word is powerful and Satan knows it. So, he’ll get you to question it.

And he says to Eve:

“Did God really say,” and then he presents part of the truth but there is a twist of deception in it. “you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?” And, by the way, that word any is the deception. It’s just a partial truth. And you’ve got to hand it to Eve because she was astute. She was picking up on it. And she says in verse 2:

“Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,’ the woman replied. ‘It’s only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, “You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.””

And Satan's response was to come right back at her and to actually kind of shame and belittle her. He goes:

"'You won't die!' the serpent replied to the woman. 'God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.'" I sometimes wonder after this conversation went down, when Eve was kind of reflecting and unpacking it later if she thought to herself, "You know what I should have said to Satan in that moment is, 'Well, if you'll be like God when you eat it, why don't you eat it?'" And that's really what Satan wanted. He wanted to be like God. And yet, in this moment he gets her kind of confused and befuddled. And it says in verse 6:

"The woman was convinced." Actually, I think he just wore her down, "She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too." Genesis 3:1-6 (NLT)

He was there. Up to this point in the passage it just seemed that Eve was there duking it out alone with Satan. Now, put a bookmark in that. I'm going to come to the fact that Adam was there.

But let me just say this. And I think this is important to point out. For the longest time when I was growing up and I went to Sunday school, I was always so confused because I was like, "Why, why was that apple just so tempting."

Anybody else ever thought that? Maybe just me. Once again, I'm the weird one. I just thought to myself, "Why was that so tempting?" Here's the thing. The temptation was not a crummy apple. Here's the temptation. Come with me on this. The temptation was to get Adam and Eve to focus on what they lacked and to disregard the abundance God had provided.

Let me say that again just to let that sink in. And when I say it, I can see this in my own life whatever the issue is. Here was the temptation and it's still what we are facing today. He'll get you to focus on what you lack and disregard the abundance God has provided.

Where did God put the tree of knowledge of good and evil? He put it in the middle. Good. You guys are listening. That's awesome. He put it in the middle. He didn't put it in the back. He didn't tuck it away in the back 40 somewhere. He put it in the middle, which meant that to get to it they had to walk past all of the abundance God had provided.

They were focusing on what they lacked, “I don’t want any blackberries today, or pears, or pecans. I want the thing that I think is missing. And here’s why. Satan is the god of lack. And he seeks to eclipse the God of abundance so that all we see are the shadows. And that has massive implications including how men and women relate to each other. Because what we do is we just see what we are lacking in the genders rather than God’s redemptive plan of abundance for them.

So, Eve takes the apple. She gives some to her husband. I’m not going to let Adam off of the hook. Stay with me. I’m going to come back to that. But check out what it says in verse 7:

“At that moment their eyes were opened,” they could see, I would say the principalities and principles of darkness and the evil realm—I think they could see and sense all of that, “and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness.” Genesis 3:7a (NLT)
That word for shame is the Hebrew word bosh. And it simply means, “I’m confused. I’m baffled. I’m befuddled.” That word naked includes the physical, but it’s for the first time ever that they felt emotionally and spiritually naked. They were vulnerable and they were ashamed and their response was to hide from each other and they hid from God. And we are continuing to do it today.

So, you go on in verse 8 and it says:

“When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the Lord God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the Lord God among the trees. Then the Lord God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’”

Do you think that God lost them? Do you think God was playing a game of Marco Polo? Did Life 360 shut down? God didn’t lose them. He knew exactly where they were. They just didn’t know where they were.

So, God cries out, “Where are you?” And Adam replied:

“I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid.” At least he’s being honest. “I was afraid because I was naked.”

And God said:

“Who told you that you were naked?’ ... ‘Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?’”

“The man replied,” Here it is, “It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it.” Genesis 3:8-12 (NLT)

Doesn't that sound like a man? Now, we have to laugh at that because if we didn't laugh, we'd cry. Here's the primary, core, sin of a man. And I can say this so confidently because I am one and I can feel this deeply in my life.

Here are the two primary core sins of a man: apathy—Adam was there. The text says that Adam was there. But it read like he wasn't. He was there but he wasn't there. Where was he? Who knows? Out back working on his golf swing. On the couch watching the tournament. He was there but he was checked out emotionally and spiritually. And then the other core sin of a man is aggression, "The woman You gave me..." We over correct back and forth, we ping pong back and forth between those two core, primary sins. Most men understand this and know this and are struggling against it. Most of the women in our lives know this as well.

Mark Batterson puts it so well. He says, "The image of God is our original software; sin is the virus."

The fall has massive ramifications for the relationships between men and women. Let me just show you one here in this last verse in the passage for today. Here is part of the ramifications. This has been mistaught and misapplied so often throughout the years. But God says to the woman, these are the consequences for the virus of sin: "Then he said to the woman, 'I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy, and in pain you will give birth.'" Part of the fall, "And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you." Genesis 3:16 (NLT)

Now, there have been some who have taught this passage or maybe read it and thought that what this means is that it's a command. But it is not written as a command. It is simply stating the inevitable actions of men and women because of sin, "I'm going to control you." "I'm going to rule over you."

But it was never meant to be that way. That is part of the fall. Here's what I mean. Just as the text warns that the ground will produce thorns and thistles, work will become painful toil that humans will eat food by the sweat of their brow, in a very similar way the text does not say that the husband is commanded to rule over his wife, it is warning her that he will attempt to do so because of the shadows of sin.

Now, listen. That does not mean that the man doesn't provide, care for, and protect. That doesn't mean that the responsibilities aren't on his shoulder that he needs to lead out. Jesus would say in the New Testament, "Husbands, love your wives as," what? "Christ loved the church." How did He do that? He went first and He laid down His life.

But this doesn't mean that men rule over their wives. In a fallen world a husband might seek that dominion over his wife as though (this is where we go wrong) she was part of the created order that they were both originally given dominion over.

Pearcy summarizes this so well. She says:

Because Christians have a realistic view of sin and evil, we should be the most courageous in calling it out. We should confront men who use their power to exploit and control women. And we should also hold women responsible who malign men, using derogatory language like, "Kill all men."

And I know by saying what I'm going to say next that I'm walking out on thin ice, but what else is new? I've been on thin ice this whole sermon. The future is not #the future is female. Nor is it male. The future is the body of Christ, redeemed men and women who have stepped into what Jesus died and resurrected for them to be.

And His resurrection is the only thing that can bring about healing to women who have been hurt by deluded masculinity and hope to men who are stuck in the shadows of who God intended them to be.

I've got to tell you, I talk to a lot of men. I talk to a lot of men in our church, our community, our city. And most of the men who I talk to they are good men. Many of them are like, for all practical definitions, a real man.

They are all searching for what it means to be a godly man. They are wondering if it's even safe to ask that question. And they are fighting the shadows of apathy, aggression, loneliness, lust, despair, and shame.

They wonder if there is any safe place to let their guard down and if there is any pathway to being initiated into manhood because maybe their dad dropped the ball on them. Maybe their dad didn't know either because he wasn't initiated.

There are a lot of guys who are closed off and emotionally and spiritually checked out, but I just kind of learned, man, you get around a fire pit, put a cigar in their hands, and all of a sudden they open up.

Or, you get them out on the golf course. I've heard it said that the reason why men play golf together is because they are too embarrassed to say, "Hey, man. Do you want to go for a walk?" There is a lot of truth to that.

Man, I just want you to know that by in large, most of the men who I meet, they really, really want this. They just don't know how to find it. And I'm telling you, the secular script is not going to give any answers. It's got to come from the redeemed. It's got to come from the church.



And, tragically, the church hasn't done this very well—both historically and in the present. We've either gotten it way wrong. Maybe we've emasculated apathetic men and connect this to how God has ordained and made them to be.

So, they just kind of came and just kind of sat while their wives and their daughters actively served. They just didn't get in the game. Or, they go the other way and they got into a little bit of power and they began to exploit it for their own needs.

As a church, we've got to do a better job in this. Most men that I know want this. There are exceptions to that. There are a handful of men that I've met who are predators and narcissists. And this is why, precisely why, we need more godly, masculine men who will act as shepherds to run out the wolves.

So, we've got to lean into our masculine calling knowing that when that happens, women, children, society, communities, the city and the church are the beneficiaries of that.

That's what we're running after in this series. It's to be a part of what Jesus prayed, "Your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven." It's how can we begin to be invited in and to participate in the work of redemption and restoration that Jesus set in motion at His resurrection.

Here's how I want to end today. I'm going to ask you... I know that you've kind of gotten into the habit that as soon as I'm done preaching and I pray then all of a sudden we have a mass exit out to the parking lot. I get it. It's the Traders Point parking lot hunger games. And I know it's dog eat dog and you've got to get out. I get it.

There may be exceptions. You may have something going on. But sometimes I just want to ask us to slow...The Holy Spirit is not done yet.

I just want to ask you to sit in the remainder of the few seconds that we have together. Here's what I want to ask you to do. I want you to vocalize this question right now: What do I need?

What do you need?

Some of you, right now, it's taken all of your strength to even sit through this sermon because of how it has brushed up against the pain in your life. You are overwhelmed with bitterness or you're hurt or you're wounded. You need healing from that. Maybe that's what you need, "I need to heal. I don't want to be bitter. I want to be set free from that."

Maybe you're here today and you're like, "I've just never been given a good, godly example of masculinity. I'm here today, as a man, and I am so ashamed of all of the things that I've got going on in my life and I don't know if there is anybody who I can be real with."

And, honestly, if you were to admit this, man, your best friends that you made were in college, but now you're a 35, 40-year-old man and you're lonelier than ever because you stopped building friendships and you are isolated and alone. And how the enemy picks you off is to get you alone.

What do you need?

"Oh, man. I need comradery. I need comradery. I need friendship. I need relationships. I need somebody who I know and I can say, 'I'm struggling with this,' and he is not going to shame me or cancel me."

I just want to ask you to vocalize that before God right now before we go any farther and ask Him to meet us where we are for the remainder of our weeks together as we seek and ask for God to do a redeeming work that only He can.

I want you to know this: Ladies, you're loved. Men, you're loved. And this is a place where your heavenly Father can give you the mercy and grace you need for the transformation that we all so desperately need.

Father, we come to You right now. We're so grateful that through the resurrection of Jesus we have hope because this world is really, really messed up. We all know it. We see examples of it every single day in our lives and on the news.

God, I pray that You would bring about some healing and some transformation and that You would speak over these next few weeks together and that we could find healing and we could find hope. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

