

Manhood Restored

Matt Chandler – February 4, 2018

Good morning. It's good to see you. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. We're going to be in 1 Corinthians 16 for the first part of this sermon, and then I'm going to put up a series of texts for the second part. Now I want to tackle a subject today... It has actually been on the agenda for quite some time, and yet it ends up landing in a season of life in 2018 where I'm all the more provoked to preach it.

I want to talk about something I have seen grow more and more out of favor, and that is to talk about manhood and what it means to be a man. The reason I think this sermon that has been planned out for a while lands in a perfect time is that more and more and more the very concept of masculinity is being looked at and viewed through the lenses of what is problematic, and yet what I want to argue is it's a lack of biblical masculinity that has actually led to a lot of the turmoil and brokenness we're seeing in our culture.

If you're a woman here today and you're like, "Oh my gosh. I came on 'Man Sunday'?" I just want you to breathe, because I think you have a big role to play in all of this. I don't think I'm talking to the men and you're over *here* and this has nothing to do with you. I think this has *everything* to do with you, and I want to lay out a couple of reasons why before we dive in. The first would be as a member of this body, as our mothers, as our sisters, as our daughters, God has placed you here to encourage men to act like God would have them behave.

Secondly, and I said this during our *Beautiful Design* series, and I want to say it again. The reason it's massively important for you to understand what God is calling men to is so that you might think biblically and have high expectations for how men approach you, treat you, and talk to you, so that you have a biblical filter by which you can say, "That's not okay. You don't get to talk to me that way. You don't get to treat me that way," and you're standing on the authority of the Word of God and not some whim in your soul.

What we're talking about today is extremely important, and I think it comes at a time in our culture where there are two predominate false narratives that are killing us. The first false narrative is what I'll call the *machismo narrative*. If you're my age or older, I would almost guarantee you grew up with this. Here's what I wrote: "Machismo severs the emotions and sets up sexual conquest and athletic prowess as measures of masculinity."

If you grew up with a dad who was like, "Quit crying! Suck it up! Be a man! Men don't act like that. Quit acting like your sister," all of that is machismo nonsense. Brothers, anybody grow up in that house? "Quit crying. Quit feeling what you feel. Men don't *feel*; we *do*." It's machismo. It's ridiculous. It's toxic to the male soul, destroys human flourishing, and teaches that brute force and violence, as well as misogyny, are masculine. It's a lie. It's killing us.

I had an opportunity to go down to South Texas this week, take a little break, hang out with some friends, and chase white-tail. (Save me the email. Don't email me about how we shouldn't do that. I'm going to send you back some texts from Genesis and a picture you don't want to see.) We're sitting around this table and talking about how we grew up, and of the four men at that table, three of the four had this kind of upbringing.

Our dads aren't evil men. They had given themselves over to a picture of masculinity that's very, very popular and yet wrong. "Suck it up. Don't feel. Quit crying. Men don't cry." Gosh, that cuts out Jesus. It cuts out King David. If you would like to go one-on-one with King David, manly man, all my cash is on him. It ain't a lot, but I'm going to win. I'm going to double it up, even though the odds are not going to be in your favor. The dude killed a bear and a lion with his hands. I know you CrossFit, but my guess is you're going to get yourself lit up.

This is one of those false narratives. When men embrace this narrative, you get Harvey Weinstein. That's what you get when this narrative is the norm. "I am entitled. It's mine." Violent brute force. "I take what I want. I get what I want. I'm a man!" It's a lie. It's from hell. It's demonic, and our daughters and sisters bear the violence of this, but it's not the only false narrative.

The other false narrative (this one is predominately if you're 30 and under) is that there *is* no difference, there *is* no distinction between the man and the woman. There's nothing for the man that's not also for the woman. It flattens out gender, makes it fluid, and teaches there's nothing distinct a man is called to and nothing distinct a woman is called to. It's just that we're humans and we've been called to act Christianly wherever we go.

John Piper, who's a friend of mine... We actually disagree a lot around this subject, but here's where I do agree with him. He says when we teach this, when we flatten God's call on little boys to become distinctly men, we forfeit both great restraint on male vice as well as a "great, God-ordained incentive for male valor." I love that sentence.

I want to answer two questions. That's all we're going to do. It's going to be quick...for me. First question...*Is there a distinction between being a male and being a man?* Can you be a 40-year-old with a penis and not be a man? (That's probably the first time some of you have heard that word in church. It's fine.) Second question...*Do men have a unique responsibility as men?* Those are my two questions. Let's dive in.

1. *Is there a distinction between being a male and being a man?* Let's look at 1 Corinthians 16, starting in verse 13. This is in the conclusion of the letter to the church at Corinth in a section your Bible probably calls *Final Instructions*. "**Be watchful, stand firm in the faith...**" If you're going to circle anything, I would circle that. "**...act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.**"

I love this. He's making a distinction... Our songs and movies and shows are trying to get you to buy this lie that distinction means inequality. That's not true. Difference does not mean not equal; it just means different. What Paul is writing the church at Corinth here is, "Hey, act like a man." This literally translates, "Play the man," which I like.

He's making a distinction here. "Don't act like a woman. Don't act like a boy. Don't act like an animal. Act like a man." You might even feel some tension as I say that. This is the air we're breathing right now that I'm not allowed to say these things, and yet the Word of God bears its weight on this issue for the good of all humankind, especially the good of women and children.

Act like a man. Play the man. What does that mean? Well, he puts all of these commands around this imperative to act like a man. What does it look like to not be male only but to be a man? He begins to build it out. Here's the first one: "**Be watchful...**" This is "Pay attention." Here's how I would simplify it: "Don't be silly. Be serious."

Now let me tell you what I'm *not* saying. I would just encourage you. Brothers, you need to be the ambassador of fun and joy in any place you operate. You just need to bring the fun. So I'm not

saying, "Be crusty." I'm saying, "Don't be silly." Do you know who's silly? Little boys. Does anybody have little boys? They're absurd.

I love them *as* little boys. I would not want them to lead, execute, or build. They're silly. I love it. I have one. He's silly, like all of his little friends are silly. Men aren't silly; they're serious. Full of joy, full of life, ambassadors of joy, but not silly. They're watchful. They understand the stakes that exist in their home and in the world. They're watchful.

Then this one is, I think, the most important: "**...stand firm in the faith...**" I love that. Every one of those words matters. He's saying, "You want to act like a man? Then you stand firm in the faith." Not "Stand firm in your discipline. Stand firm in your abilities. Stand firm in your will." No, no, no. You stand firm in the finished work of Jesus Christ for you. Why? Because men are prone to shame.

If anyone knew how often men, without question, think they're not good enough, think they're failures, think they'll never measure up, think they cannot win, it would blow their mind. This is one of the great ways the Enemy destroys biblical masculinity, because all we see is our failures, and most of us have in the back of our minds our dad telling us we're never going to measure up.

What Paul is saving us from here, what God is trying to save you from is in this moment, as we walk through this, and you go, "Oh my gosh, I've blown it," to not downshift into insecure shame but to stand firm on what Christ has said about you. See, standing firm in the faith gives you the best opportunity for genuine masculinity. It enables you to lean into your weaknesses rather than hide them.

Brothers, we have bought the lie that strength, not being soft, not being weak, not struggling is somehow masculine, and yet standing firm in the faith means we have the strength to own our weaknesses and then paint a picture of gospel forgiveness for all to see. The more you project strength, the weaker you probably are.

Have you ever heard "The loudest one in the room is probably the weakest one in the room"? I don't know what that means about me, but this is the idea of if you're standing firm in the faith... Let's just unpack it. Brothers, if you're standing firm on your ability to be super-dad, super-husband, super-Christian, super-worker, what happens when you fail? Notice I didn't say *if* you fail. What happens *when* you fail? Shame.

What happens when you experience shame? Men always respond to shame either with withdrawal or aggression. Let a man feel shame, he's going to withdraw and pout or get angry and lash out. And who gets lashed out on the most? Usually wives and children. So do you want to act like a man? Don't be silly. Stand firm in the faith.

That helps us understand what he commands next: "**...be strong.**" What does it mean to be strong? Well, what it means to be strong is to keep leaning into Jesus, keep trusting in Jesus, keep getting back up, keep believing in the grace of God. Brothers, you are going to fall short, and God's known, and he has made a way for you to...

In your failures, you'll reflect the gospel to the world. Who can offer you that but Christ? In your shortcomings, you show yourself to be the man. Work can't give you that. Spouses can't give you that. Children can't. Who can give you that but standing firm in the faith? "I've fallen short of the glory of God, but Christ has made a way." So we confess, we repent, we out the Devil as a liar, and we step into our destiny. This is what happens when you play the man.

Then from there... I love this. "**Let all that you do be done in love.**" The motivating force of biblical masculinity is love. Think about how different this is than the machismo message or even the more gender-flat message. The motivating force of biblical masculinity is not physical strength alone. It's not kind of burly, hairy chest who shoot deer and gut them with their fingernails, who aren't afraid of anything and *want* somebody to say something to them. It's not being able to squab. It's not being able to fish. It's not being able to climb a mountain. It's not any of those things.

The motivation, the fuel for biblical manhood is love. It makes the engine run. I'm telling you, we're all twisted. We think manhood has to do with the colors you like or don't like, the hobbies you do or don't do, and the Bible is going, "No, no, no." King David played the harp and wrote poetry, and he was a man after God's own heart, who, for the record, had his own lapse into machismo ridiculousness and was still called a man after God's own heart.

Brothers, quit being so hard on yourself. God knows. Love is the motivating force. If you want to say this phrase to your boys, "Be a man," you'd better not be talking about their emotions. You'd better not be talking about their hobbies. You'd better not be talking about their feelings. You'd better not be talking about that stuff. You'd better be talking about *this*. This is what it means to be a man. Do you want to play the man? This is what it looks like.

So, is there a distinction between a male and a man? Yes. I've said it for a long time. There are a lot of boys who can shave. This is the stuff I'm laying before my son. This is the stuff I'm laying before my daughters. "Don't be fooled. There are a lot of males who look like men but are little boys on the inside...hurt, broken, foolish little boys." I'm just encouraging my daughters. I don't know if they'll listen. I'm just hoping they will. "Don't bring boys to our house."

If you're thinking, "Oh man. Can that exist at 16 or 17?" It can be trending that way. I'm teaching this to my son. I'm not saying to him to give in to this lie that to be good at sports and to flirt with girls somehow makes you a man. I want to continually say, "If you want to grow out of being a little boy, if you want more freedom, if you want more responsibility, if you want to grow into the things you long for, this is what it looks like."

2. *Do men have a unique responsibility as a man?* Here's the argument, and I do understand it. I don't want to take away from the argument, because I believe there's some truth to the argument, but I want to nuance it. The way this flatness gets taught in a way that has some truth to it (I just think it can be carried too far) is that any command God would put on the man is also put on the woman, so all of us are just being called to be Christian people.

So it's not just the man who's called to serve; it's also the woman who's called to serve. It's not just the man who's called to lead; it's the woman who's called to lead. It's not just the man who's called to sacrifice; it's also the woman who's called to sacrifice. Here's what I say to that: yes and amen a thousand times, and yet when the Bible has the man and the woman in view at the same time, he does not give the same commands to both. He creates distinction between the two.

So, yes, we're all called to gentleness. Yes, we're all called to service. Yes, we're all called to sacrifice, but in the Bible, where the man and the woman are in view, God creates distinction. Not inequality, not oppression, not a lack of justice...distinction. Let me show you what I mean. Colossians 3:18-19: **"Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them."**

So you have the man and the woman in view, and God does not say, "Y'all, quit being harsh with each other." He creates distinction with the man and woman in view, does he not? He says, "Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting, and, men, don't be harsh." Why? Here's how I want to argue. God is restraining a sinful compulsion in men to be harsh. Can women be harsh? Yes. Do they have, by and large, the same compulsion, the same volume on the same scale as men? No.

I'm basing that on 20 years of ministry, where men have a tendency to respond to stressors with harshness toward women. So he makes the distinction here. "Wives, submit as is fitting. Brothers, men, don't be harsh." What's happening in this distinction is God is restraining a compulsion in the heart of masculinity while calling him to valor. "Don't give into your impulse of harshness. Instead, surrender and fight to be gentle and kind to your bride." That's distinction. It's different.

When I'm looking in the face of my boy, I'm calling him to this. I'm saying, "If by God's grace you meet a woman and marry, you're going to feel the stress and weight, and you respond to that with valor, little son. You respond with courage and ferocity of never responding in harshness. When you do (because you will), you own it before the Lord, and then you own it before your wife." Then I have to actually show him that.

How many of you were here when we got to celebrate my 15 years here, saw that video? Here's a funny story about that. I'll just out myself as an illustration. I had no idea Lauren was filming that. I had been out of town a bunch. I was running a little low, and Lauren and I got in this huge fight over something absurd. It was huge. Then she's like, "I've got to go," and I was like, "Well, go then." I didn't even know where she was going.

She was coming up to film the video for my deal. So she's on video. She's like, "I just love who he is at home." I had no idea. Then we're watching the video. I was like, "Baby, that is so sweet. You're so great. Thank you for saying all those things." She was like, "I shot that video that day you were being a complete..." She's a godly woman. I don't know what you filled in the blank with there, but to the pure all things are pure.

I know when I'm being a moron by the grace of God. He triggers something in me. He's like, "Hey, you're doing that thing. We've talked about this. You're doing it." So when Lauren came home, I got an opportunity to go, "Hey, listen. That's absurd." She's like, "Well, I think..." "No, no, no. Listen. I'm not even letting you do that. That one is on me. I just want to own that."

Then what happened? In my weakness, in my foolishness, in my harshness, I got to paint a picture of the gospel, that then when Lauren forgives and responds in love, I'm reminded of the greatness of God's love for me, and there was this reconciliation. It was just a beautiful opportunity to own sin and repent of harshness and step into the valor God has called me to as a husband and father.

Dads, ever deal harshly with your children? Have you ever noticed that on Mother's Day...? Mother's Day sermons are always like, "Moms, you guys are so great. Where would we be without you guys? The whole world would fall apart if moms weren't being moms." Dads always get a different message. They're like, "What's wrong with you? Why are you the way you are? We don't have any flowers for you today. Good God! Act like a man." We always get this kind of drive-by shaming.

Sometimes in the Bible... Like, moms, have you ever exasperated your children to anger? Any mom go, "No, no, no. I have exasperated..." Why didn't the Bible tell you guys not to exasperate your kids? It's on us. It's "Fathers, don't do this." He creates distinction, and it's not something that is unequal or unjust; it's God's good design. Let me do *this* one now. Ephesians 5:22-30:

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands."

That sounds so absurd and insane, and you could take that verse and go, "That's why women get abused. That's why bad things happen. That's what Harvey Weinstein, #metoo, #churchtoo, Larry Nassar... This kind of idea is what leads to that kind of abuse." I would argue the exact opposite: what comes next *crushes* that kind of abuse.

"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 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."

In all cases of abuse... You find me a violent, abusive man and I'll show you a little boy who hates himself. That's what the text just said. You show me a violent man who's verbally, emotionally, spiritually abusive and I'll show you a grown body with a little boy inside who hates himself. Now let's finish the text.

"For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.'"

Here we have it again. We have the man and woman in view, and God creates a distinction with his commands. There are three commands here given to the man that are not given to the woman. Now, we can find other texts that would call the woman to *sacrificial love*. That's in the Bible. If you're a Christian, sacrificial love is something you're called to.

Spiritual direction. We can find other texts in the Bible that command Christians to lead and to lead in and out of their giftings. Those things are in the Bible. We can find verses in the Bible that would call all Christians to be serious about protecting the least of these, and yet in *this* text, with the man and woman in view, God creates distinction.

He says here that the man will love his wife like Christ loved the church and that he laid down his life for her. He did not say that to the woman. He did not say, "Here's what you need to do: you need to die. Sacrificial love for your husband." That's not the command. The command is on the husband. "Die to yourself." Sacrificial love in the marriage belongs to the man.

Is there an aspect where the woman is to deny herself also? Yes, but the distinction with both in view from God is "Husband, you love your wife like I love the church and that I gave my life for her." The distinction being made here is that it is men who are called by God to sacrifice for the flourishing of their wife and their family.

It is given to the man to die to self so that, according to another text in the Bible, the woman might look like a well-watered vine, that children might flourish, not under the exasperation of a father who provokes anger but, instead, the kindness of a father who speaks life, lays down his life, gets up early, stays up late, gets into the kids' souls, and encourages them.

Rules are really, really easy. Going after the hearts of our children is a bit more complex. That requires you actually to be watchful, to not be silly, to be paying attention. This is given to the man: sacrificial love.

We also see here that man has been given *spiritual direction*. I think we've probably experienced that. I think more often than not...not always, but more often than not the man sets the spiritual climate of the household. If you're a single mom, I don't want you to lose any heart here. God specializes in stepping into what is broken and not ideal and doing something powerful in it.

So if you're in that place where you're like, "Oh my gosh. We're just 28 minutes in, and I married a boy, and I can't get out. I know what the Bible says about that. For goodness' sake. What am I going to do? He doesn't care. I drag him here, and even now he's on his phone. He's not even listening to you." (Don't think I didn't see a couple of heads pop up right there. I didn't see you; I just thought it might be happening.)

What ends up happening is there's this spiritual climate that is created by a husband and father stepping in with sacrificial love to say, "In this house, we're going to be serious about Jesus Christ. We're going to talk about Jesus. We're going to think about Jesus. We're going to pray to Jesus. We're going to consider Jesus. We're going to orient our hearts and our home around the person and work of Jesus Christ. We're going to be alive and joyful in that. Our home is going to be filled with laughter because God is good, our sins are forgiven, and our future is secure. So this house will be a house of laughter."

Lastly, he has been given *physical care*. Anytime I talk about physical care, I think opponents, people who think this is foolish and what I'm saying is harmful, will always bring up a scenario like this. They're like, "Okay, so the man is supposed to have physical care. What if the man was in a terrible accident and is in a wheelchair and is sickly and broken and the woman is like a professional CrossFitter? Does he still have to defend her? Does he still need to physically care for her?"

Okay. Is that normative? Is that everybody's story? Like, that's kind of the normal situation out there, that men are dainty and weak and women are ferocious and ready to kick the trash out of someone? I'm going to try to tease this out, knowing I'm on really thin ice. It seems to me that the more we're creating movies about women who are able to kick butt and take names, men are going, "Let's go, then."

There's this big celebration about heroines, and it seems that the response of men has been, "Let's see about that." If one in three women are in abusive relationships, if we're seeing the #metoo, #churchtoo, all of this brokenness in our world... I'm not saying women shouldn't be celebrated. I'm saying when you say, "No, no, no. A woman is as physically dominate as most men," you're setting up a collision that will not be good for women and children. It has been given to the man to protect. It's the command on him.

Do I think there's a woman out there who might be able to take me? Probably. But if there's a bump in the night, I'm not going to go, "Lauren, get Norah and go check that out." You would think me to

be a dirtbag if I did. We know this intuitively. Gosh, even the media celebrates when men get in the way of harm for women. We know this, and yet we want to buck against it to flatten out gender in a way that has dark, dark results in our day and age.

Now, again, something is being restrained in the man here, and he's being called into valor. Do you hear me? Something is being restrained in the man. The impulse of men is not sacrificial love; it's selfishness and comfort. That is the impulse at the heart of every man, because every man is sinful. That's his impulse.

So what do these distinct commands on the man do? It restrains that and calls them to valor. "You will fight for your wife, for your children, for your church, for your home to be a place where the love of Christ is seen and cherished. I'm giving it to you. Enter into valor. Restrain the impulses in you that are contrary to my design on your life."

The same thing could be true about spiritual direction. I think one of the bigger lies the Enemy has hatched on men is that earnest, angst-filled prayerfulness is something women do, and we're the doers. We get things done. We build. We don't sit around with tears on our face and pray. Yet our battle is not against flesh and blood. It's actually fought in the heavenlies.

How do I know this is true? I know this is true because there's a prayer team here at The Village that prays for and contends for our church and for my family and me, and I think there's one man on it. One man, because we're so busy *doing* we can't get in the actual fight. Do you realize that doing with your hands...? I'm not an anti-doer, but doing without earnest prayerfulness is actually retreating.

If we believe the Bible and the fight we're in is not against flesh and blood, then to become doers and punt earnest, zealous prayerfulness and view it as somehow effeminate, we actually retreat from the battle, not run into it. I'm just telling you, brothers and sisters, hell quakes at the prayerfulness of men.

You let men get serious about wetting the floor with their tears to see the kingdom of God come, to see the power of the Spirit unleashed... The Enemy cannot have that, so put it in the heart of man that that's what women do. By the grace of God, women do it, and we're probably seeing a lot of beautiful things because they do. Is there a distinction for the man by nature of being a man? Yes, I think there is.

Now how do we move forward in this? Well, I think there's a temptation, specifically in men, to reinvent themselves. I know guys from college who were a very specific way, and now I meet them and they're completely different people. They dress differently. They've kind of reinvented themselves. It's not hard to reinvent yourself. You have the ability to create an online persona. You can move. Yet God has never been about reinvention; he has always been about rebirth.

Brothers, I think one of the worst things you can do is hear all this and go, "Okay, *that's* what I'm going to do." That's not standing firm in the faith; that's white-knuckled discipline. White-knuckled discipline does not produce the kind of fruit your heart is hungry for or your wife and children are hungry for or our church is hungry for.

I love John, chapter 3. You're going to find a lot of John references. I'm going to be preaching through John in the fall, so it's just one of those things. Every time I'm in something, I'm like, "Oh, Jesus said in John..." John 3:1-3 says...

"Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.' Jesus answered him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.'"

The questions Nicodemus is asking are, "When is the kingdom coming? How is the kingdom coming? What do we do to get into the kingdom?" Jesus does not give him a list of things in which he can reinvent himself. "Well, stop doing *this* and start doing *this*. You need to act more like *this* and stop acting like *that*." He said, "You want to see the kingdom? You have to be reborn." That was as confusing to Nicodemus as it is to many of us.

In fact, Nicodemus asked the crazy follow-up question. "How can someone who's old climb back into their mother's womb?" Nicodemus is like, "I know my mom. She's not going for this." Jesus' response is, "You, who are Israel's teacher, do not understand these things?" Brothers, what God has for you is not white-knuckled reinvention but rebirth by the blood of Jesus. It's not "Do more, try harder." It's "Stand firm in the faith. Lean into your weakness. Trust Jesus is King."

What he has for you is salvation. The reason I have to say that is I am convinced many of you are like, "Oh my gosh. I've already blown it. I have been exactly what you're describing. I have an ex

right now who hates me so much. I've got kids who don't want to talk to me. I have been a monster." Look. Don't reinvent; be reborn. Maybe that means you need some legitimate help.

Maybe for the first time in your life you confess your sins and repent them to Jesus Christ and then go get the help you need. It'll be the most masculine thing you've ever done. Terrorizing your ex-wife and children certainly wasn't masculine. You want to be a man? Repent, confess, believe on the name of Jesus, and let's get help. Make a call. Ask for forgiveness, and then let it be. "Well, she's not going to forgive me." Okay, but that's not on you.

What's on you is to seek it. Not manipulate and demand and pander. Don't apologize to try to get an apology out. You own it before the Lord and before others, and you begin, for maybe the first time in your life, to mirror the gospel, finally. Don't shift into insecure shame. Melt into the rest found in Jesus. It'll take confession. It'll take repentance. I just know some of us need help, men. We're not from homes where any of this was modeled.

We know we lash out. We know we're harsh. We know that when we're stressed our compulsion is aggression and not kindness, and yet the Spirit of God bids you, by his power, to restrain and step in with great valor to God's call on your life. Brothers, one day at a time that leads to one week at a time that leads to one month at a time for 40 years for a type of fruitfulness in our wives, children, daughters, and sisters that's beyond our current imagination. It's a good life.

The Spirit of God has not called you to do or be what he will not empower you to walk in. May we be this kind of men here. Sisters, might you encourage and speak life into us as we seek this, and single ladies, might you set up a category for manhood that would net out the boys. Marrying a boy sets you up for a long, difficult life. Might we, by the grace of God, play the man. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for my brothers and my sisters. I thank you in this place for the men who have given themselves over to this, who have by your grace sought to love like this, serve like this, live like this, encourage like this, build up like this. We ask forgiveness for where we've fallen short. I pray that even as we sing and consider and think that you would bring to our minds places where we have sinned against wife or daughter or children or others and there might be a holy compulsion in us, for the first time, to play the man through confession and repentance.

I thank you that there is nothing behind us that has more power than the cross of Christ and no current struggle you cannot cover, heal, break, put back together, and make whole. I pray for my

brothers in here...I wish not to shame them in any way...who internally are broken little boys. I ask for your healing power in their hearts for their joy, for the good of their wives and children, for the good of this church. Help us. We need you. Thank you that you have empowered us to step in and walk in what you have commanded us to walk in. It's for your beautiful name we pray all these things, amen.

© 2018 The Village Church