

The Power of Christ-like Leadership

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[0 : 0 0] There's no doubt that the biblical roles of male and female are under attack in the modern world. Male leadership and male masculinity, not that you get any other kind of masculinity, but you've got to be specific these days.

Male leadership and male masculinity in particular are being undermined in the modern social media, where the world sees man as automatically toxic.

If you've heard of toxic masculinity, you will understand what I'm talking about. The answer of the modern world is to feminize man and leave no trace of his masculinity because it's toxic.

And there's nothing that can be redeemed, it just has to be totally changed. And the answer is very often to turn man into a woman. Here's an example of that kind of thing that we see today.

On the left is a... looks like kind of a manny man, a dapper man from the 1940s. Some of you might still look like that today, that's okay.

[1 : 0 4] And then there's a modern man from 2017. I just need to say that he doesn't look happy to me.

I think he got dressed up like that. But you don't just see that in the fashion shows around the globe, but you see it in social media, you see it in the way that men and women relate to each other.

And this confusion has led to a crisis of identity in men and women, especially maybe in the younger generation, the ones that spend a lot of time on TikTok and online.

And there's complete confusion as to what our roles should be, especially in marriage. This is further complicated in that the traditional male role model has been shaped by the Bible.

And so people are asking, if men are toxic, does that mean that the Bible is toxic? Is that the problem with the world? The Bible's answer is, not at all.

[2 : 1 2] In fact, the Bible helps us understand what male roles should be. But at the same time, the Bible admits that something has gone wrong.

The answer, however, is not to get rid of gender roles, but for men to regain masculinity, biblical masculinity, and to do so in Christ.

And that will help us what it looks like to being a man in the home. And so before we look at man's role in the home, we need to know what he was created to be and what went wrong. And so we're going to look at the challenge of leadership.

The challenge of leadership. Now, contrary to popular opinion, men didn't evolve from frogs and snails and puppy dog tails. I think that's meant to indicate that there's something yucky about boys.

And if you're a little girl, that's true. And as a little boy, I can conquer. But the problem is that that gets taken over into manhood and men are still seen as somewhat yucky.

[3 : 22] But men didn't come from this. We weren't made yucky. We were made amazing. The Bible says not only are we created in God's image, but we were made to rule as kings in this world.

That's why we read Psalm 8. I'm just going to read a bit of it and it will pop up on the screen. The psalmist says, What is mankind? What is man that you are mindful of him? Human beings that you care for them.

You have made them a little lower than the angels and you crowned them with glory and honor. You made them rulers over the works of your hands. You put everything under their feet.

Depending on your translation, it can say their and them. And the psalm does refer to male and female. But the Hebrews actually, the older translations are probably correct.

I think the one that Nick read. What is man that you are mindful of him? You have made him a little lower than the angels. You have crowned him with glory and honor.

[4 : 30] You have made him a ruler over the works of your hands. And as I said, the psalm is talking about both male and female. So it's not specifically saying to men, you are going to rule over your woman.

It's very interesting that in the New Testament we've spent time in Ephesians and other passages. It doesn't tell men to rule over and it doesn't tell women to just obey them.

There's one spot where it does tell them to do that. But in general, women must submit to men and men must submit to Christ. And that's how they are to lead. But our focus is on the male role model today.

And so we are going to spend our time looking at that. The thing is the big temptation as a man is when you are called to lead, is that when the going gets tough, you want to give up easily.

Some are quicker at giving up than others. But there is a temptation not to be responsible and to go passive. So on the one hand, we've called to this amazing task of taking God's rule and shaping the world.

[5 : 43] And it's not a small task, it's a big task. And the temptation for men is to go, whoa, that's a little bit hectic. I'm just going to take a little bit of a backseat. I don't know if I can do that.

On the other side is men who, when they don't get what they want, they've been called to a task and they don't get it, they get aggro and they take the thing by force.

When it doesn't work, they, I'm a guy, I'm a king, you must give me this. And so there's this, this two temptations for men to be passive on the one hand and to be, I'm going to call it overactive or reactive.

Too aggressive on the other hand in doing what God wants them to do in the world. Just to talk about this passive failure of man for a bit, we see this straight away in the story of Adam, in the first man, where he failed at being the leader to protect his wife just in the moment when she needed to be protected, when evil came knocking on her door.

If you'll remember, Adam and God made Adam and Eve and they're more or less happily doing what God wants him to do. And then the snake comes into the picture, the devil.

[7 : 02] And he wants Eve to not do what God told him to do. The problem is, and man's task at that point, as this ruler, this being crowned with glory and honor, a little lower than the angels, was to say, hey, no, no, no, we're not, this thing isn't the snake thing, that's a bad thing.

We need to watch out for that. And he didn't do it. What he did, is he just stood there and did nothing. So this verse from Genesis 2 should be up on the screen.

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.

We all know the stories that she should not have done that. But here's the clincher for the guy. She also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate it.

Can you believe it? Here's this being, created in the image of God, meaning he's got God-like power to get stuff done on earth, and he's standing helpless, hopeless, all hunched up, I don't know what to do.

[8 : 28] He goes all passive, not doing anything, spiritually just shrugging his shoulders. A terrible failure of biblical manhood at that point.

A terrible failure of leadership. He was called to protect that which he loves from harm, and he whisked out. So that's the one temptation for us guys to watch out for.

We're going to pick it up when we get to Ephesians again. To be passive and not to be active in doing the right thing and doing God's will. Especially when the going gets tough. Especially when people don't want to do what God wants.

To stand up and to be counted is to be a man. But there is likewise a danger in being the opposite of passive, and that's being too reactive, too aggressive.

And in the story of Genesis, just a few chapters later, we see that in the story of Cain and Abel. Adam and Eve had two sons, Cain and Abel.

[9 : 32] Cain gets jealous of Abel, and he gets frustrated because God didn't accept his sacrifice. But he gets this little frustration, and he's like, why did God do that?

Why didn't Abel, you know? But it's just a little thing. It's not a big thing. But God can see what's going on. And God says to him, he warns Cain to control his frustration.

He's meant to take the lead over it and subdue it. But he doesn't. He gives in to his feelings. He picks up a rock and smashes his brother's head in.

So there, that's a picture of a man that's too reactive, too aggressive, too quick to use physical force to get what he wants. But before we move on, I just want to make this point.

Men, you cannot escape what God has made you to be. You're made in his image. Which means you are made to lead, and through your leadership, you're going to have a lasting impact in the world.

[10 : 48] For good or bad. Depending on how you use your leadership. You can be too passive on the one hand, or too reactive on the other, but both are going to have devastating consequences in the world and in your family.

And that's what we want to look at a little bit later. It's going to have a devastating impact in the home, where the most vulnerable people in your life need you not to be passive nor aggressive, but to lead like the ultimate man, Jesus Christ.

And so that's the challenge of leadership. Being too passive on the one hand, being too aggressive on the other hand. We all fall into one or two of those categories at certain points in our life.

How are we to live as men? Well, we need to live like Jesus does. He shows us what true godly leadership looks like. And so we're going to look at Jesus, the pattern of Jesus' leadership.

Now to fix this problem of men not knowing where to draw the lines of being too passive or too aggressive, God sent Jesus to show us the kind of man that God wants his men, or God wants men to be.

[12 : 02] When you look at Jesus in the Gospels, in the story of the Gospel, and we've tracked him over the last few months with Matthew, haven't we? Well, I just ask you, do you get a picture of a man that's passive?

That wusses out? That's not the picture I get from reading Matthew. And you know that's not the picture of Jesus. But on the other hand, you get a picture of someone who's quick to anger, who's going to quickly sort people out.

And if they don't listen to him straight away, he's going to call down the wrath of God on them. No, that's also not the picture you get of Jesus. You get a picture of a man who is both active in leading, but compassionate and patient.

He is relentless in his pursuit of holiness and purity. He calls out the hypocrisy of the people around him for not pretending to be worshipping God. He's going to call people out, he's going to stand up and tell them what's going on.

But he's endlessly patient with people who are getting it wrong. And he doesn't belittle or hurt those who need help. And he doesn't stand by and do nothing when they're struggling with a problem in their life.

[13 : 10] The place where we see Jesus' leadership, the most magnified, the most shown to us, image to us, is at the cross.

That Psalm 8, and you all, we read Psalm 2 earlier. If that person that Psalm 2 and Psalm 8 describes wanted to not be crucified, he wouldn't have been crucified.

And so the thing that kept Jesus on the cross isn't the nails. It was his love for us and his obedience to God. He could have commanded legions of angels and easily come down off that cross or not gone there in the first place.

He could have given into his emotions and anger and wiped everyone out. He could have given into fear and fled and been passive and said, oh, this is not quite for me.

But he was implacable in his love for his people and in obeying God. That moment in the Garden of Gethsemane before his crucifixion. We see him there at his most human, but also I think at a very manly point in his life.

[14 : 36] So he knows he's in trouble. He knows what's coming and he knows he needs help. So he calls his friends, guys, you need to come with me. I need your prayers. I need you now. This is going to get very hectic.

But he doesn't skedaddle. He could have given them the slip on the way to the Mount of Olives, just side alley. Lots of men will choose that option.

You can't blame them. Jesus goes to the garden and he begs God, please, if you can, take this cup from me. But he knows it's not possible.

And so not my will, but your will be done. And give me the strength to go and do it.

As he's praying there, Judas pitches up with the armed guards to arrest him. And that's where a passive Jesus or a scaredy cat Jesus, then he's gone.

[15 : 40] Okay, boys, listen. This is all good. This is, but here are the guys with the clubs and the swords. We need to, let's do this another time. So imagine Jesus had done that. Whist out like so many men.

And then we would all be in trouble. On the other hand, he could have been like, okay, boys, the guys with the swords and clubs are here. Peter, bring that sword, buddy. And he just takes them all out.

That wouldn't have worked either. Because then none of us would be reconnected to God.

We would still be fighting this battle between passivity and over-reactiveness, over-aggression. But Jesus goes to the cross. He gives himself up to death for his people.

He's obedient to God. And that's the picture that the Bible uses of how men are to be in the home. This picture of sacrificial love. No matter what it costs, for the people that you need to help, you're going to stand up and be counted.

[16 : 44] And so, I'm going to go now to Ephesians 5, and look what it looks like to lead like Jesus in the home.

To lead like Jesus in the home. So how must men lead in the home? Given that what we've said about man being this image-bearer of God, of being a ruler, but of these two temptations that he faces, of being passive and giving over rulership to someone else, you make the decisions, or no, I'm going to make the decisions and you're going to know about it.

How must men lead in the home? There's no wonder that Paul says, no, I want you to lead like Jesus does. Because that's the best way that you can lead.

And so the best way you can lead at home is to love men, is to love your wife, the same way Christ loves the church. Now, we're not talking wishy-washy feelings of romantic love, although that's okay.

It's more than okay, you need it. Okay, we're not talking about reenacting scenes from the Titanic here. As much as your woman might want you to do that.

[18 : 04] And you can be really brave and do it and take a video and send it to us. But love here is an action, not just a feeling. In fact, that's what you see in Christ.

He does feel. Christ does feel. When he sees pain, the Gospels say he's deeply moved in his stomach.

He does feel. But his love is not based on his feelings. It's based on his obedience to God, and it ends up in action.

men, you lead in the home the way that Christ loves, through sacrifice and having your wife's spiritual good as your highest priority. So I'm just going to read from Ephesians 5.

And from verse 25. Verse 25. Verse 25. 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.

[19 : 32] So Jesus puts his people first in his life. He puts the church first. He gives himself up for the church. And it's interesting that the church is described as a woman, because that explains the relationship that we, even as men, have with our king.

He's our high king. We are. We receive his help in our lives. He doesn't need our help. Jesus puts the needs of his people first to the point of death.

And men, God calls you to love your wife in the same way. All the men are like, yeah, yeah, no, we've got that. For sure. And there's nothing new here.

But of course, men will say that they love their wife to death, but, or they struggle to put the dishes away sometimes. Or struggle to control their tongue.

Or struggle to do those chores that you've been promising for six months to do. As a sacrificial love puts your wife first and takes an active role in making her beautiful and holy.

[20 : 53] You know, men are good at taking care of physical needs. Now, I love my wife. Yes, of course. How do you know? Well, I mean, I told her when we got married. I mean, okay, well, there's a house.

It's good. Nice car. Good. Stuff that she wants. Good. And then we've ticked that box. And so many men are like, well, what else do you want? They're like, I'm giving you the stuff. I'm giving you the stuff. Guys are like that with each other.

We like the stuff. We don't need the love stuff. We just want the stuff. But as a leader, that's only part of what a person needs.

And in fact, we know that as well as men. There's her mental and emotional needs. And guys are a little bit, that's when we get a little bit, ooh, yeah.

So men, how well are you taking care of your ladies, your wife's mental and emotional needs? And you're like, well, I try. You know, it's important that the Bible says that man must love his wife and not necessarily understand her.

[22 : 02] Do you understand her? Do you understand her? Do you understand her? Do you understand her? Do you understand her? Do you understand her? I mean, you can try. No, of course you get to know her and you love her. It's not that you totally don't understand her. Is that my phone?

You got it. Thanks. You've taken care of her. There's still the mental and emotional needs. That takes hard work. And then the most important thing actually, her spiritual needs, we're like, oh, ew. You know, it hadn't even occurred to me to lead. It's not that you totally don't understand her. It's not that you totally don't understand her. Is that my phone? No. You got it. Thanks. You've taken care of her.

Physical needs, tick. There's still the mental and emotional needs. You know, it hadn't even occurred to me to lead her spiritual needs.

But that's what you're called to do as the leader in the home. Jesus says you need to put her spiritual needs front and center.

Look what Jesus did by giving himself up for the church. Verse 26 and 27. He gave himself up for her that he might sanctify her, make her whole.

[23 : 11] Holy, that's what that word means. But it's a beautiful picture of being cleaned, 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.

We'll look at what that means in a minute. But for now, men, this means that you need to take the lead in getting both you and your wife to church regularly. He says, yeah, yeah, we come to church regularly.

No. You need to take the lead in praying for her and praying with her.

Learning to respond to her sin the way that Jesus does to yours, with patience, forgiveness, and understanding, but also to deal with it.

Not just to let it lie. Say, we need to have some conversations about things here. You need to talk about things that are getting in the way of her relationship with God.

[24 : 27] And when you do that, you'll find that you uncover blockages in her relationship with you very often. Of course, it depends on how you do it. But men, don't let the woman take the lead here.

In my experience of going to church, for some reason, women tend to take the lead and the guys tend to take the back seat. Oh yeah, she'll get them to church.

She'll get the kids to church. And if she doesn't want to go to church, then you're not too hassled about it. Guys, you can't do that. Because then you're just replaying the problem of Adam and Eve.

And you're causing big problems to come into your family and into your wife's life and into your life. And the reason you want to do this is there's this promise in these verses that you'll make her more beautiful to God and therefore to you than you thought possible.

You've got to get involved because your marriage is actually a picture of how Jesus works with his people. So there's a picture of, in verse 26 and 27, of Jesus making the church beautiful by taking care of her spiritual needs.

[25 : 37] And then you'll do the same if you make that a priority in your life. Because then over time, she's going to become more holy. You also need to become more holy.

So it's not a matter of her needing to become more holy, but you don't need to. No, you both have to. But you've got to take the lead because that's going to give the best effect in her becoming more and more holy. Something that God loves.

Getting rid of all the stuff in her life that there's anxieties and the things that bug everyone. They don't just bug you, they also bug her. And you get that stuff sorted out by going to church, by reading the Bible, by taking the lead.

Not letting her take the lead. But there's one other thing that Paul points out as to why you want to get involved and take the lead properly in your marriage.

And that's because marriage is a picture of how Jesus works with people. Marriage is a picture of how Jesus works with people. So we're just going to go down to verse 31 and 32 there in Ephesians 5. Paul writes, Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

[26 : 56] And he says this mystery is profound. I'm saying that it refers to Christ and the church. And so there's this profound reality that there's this correspondence or equivalence or sameness between the covenant with your spouse and the covenant Jesus makes with his church.

I get the following quote from John Piper who looked at this and he says, God modeled marriage on the covenant love between Christ and the church, not the other way around.

God didn't set up the covenant and then look around for an illustration. He set up marriage knowing that it's the best way to describe or enact or dramatize in some way the relationship between Jesus and you.

And so marriage is a witness, a drama, a parable, a picture. You can even call it a sacrament.

It's a picture that enacts what God is doing in the world. Your marriage is a picture of the covenant love between Christ and the church. If that's true, we're going to look.

[28 : 22] Here's my question to you men. What picture does your marriage paint of how Christianity works? What picture does your marriage paint of how Christianity works, of how Jesus works with people and of how Jesus works with his church?

Just have a thought about that for a minute. Your marriage is a picture of how Jesus is with people. And if I'm on the outside looking in, what does your picture tell me about Jesus?

Maybe you're a bit too much like Adam. Passive. Not leading in spiritual matters. Ah, you do if you have to, but you don't really take the initiative.

If it happens, it happens. If it doesn't, no big deal. Maybe you do this a lot. How about, hey, we should go. Hey, we should go. But have you thought about what that says about Jesus?

You're saying that Jesus does that. Ah, I'm not that interested. Ah, it's a bit of a lust man. You're portraying Jesus as passive, unassertive, going with the flow, and not really bothered to get things done.

[29 : 49] Is that accurate? Is that even a good picture? In fact, what that is, is a blasphemous picture. Because you're bad-mouthing Jesus by your passiveness. Because you're making outsiders go, oh, that's what Jesus is like.

Ah, I don't need him. He's just doing nothing. But Jesus is a king. He leads. He's active. He challenges evil. He calls out hypocrisy.

He sets people free. He calls them to follow him on this journey. He's got a mission, a purpose, and a goal. And so if you're on the passive side of this little manhood equation, you've got to move that dial over towards more activity.

Leadership for you means making decisions and sticking to them. Going to church. Praying at home. Starting something like a family worship time if you have to. And don't go and say, oh, we need to do this.

Just do it. Don't say you're going to do it. Just do it. And we all know what will happen. Oh, your wife is going to love you for that.

[30 : 56] Because they know what's right. They know what's good. You don't have to tell her, yes, you know, I already have given thought. Well, I'll leave the communication up to you. You decide how you break this news to your wife that you're going to take spiritual leadership in the home.

But maybe you're on the other side. This overactive side. This over aggressive side of leadership. And you love this fact that men is the head of the home. Women must submit to him.

And often your men are like, oh, yes, okay, I'm the king. You must obey. I have a friend of mine in England. A lovely Christian couple.

And in England, you know, the whole toxic masculinity is really big. And they love to play a joke on friends that visit. And they'll have a braai.

And then he sits there. And he says, woman, fetch me my beer. The English people, what?

[31 : 58] You can't talk to her like that? But she's playing along. Yes, my lord. And she brings out this ice cold beer. You should try that, guys. But actually, they've got a lovely relationship.

And their marriage is full of laughter. And it's good to play fun like that. But maybe you're too aggressive and too demanding. Maybe you're too nitpicky over the smallest slight or perceived wrong.

Always calling out the things that you see that is a problem. Being quick to let others feel or displeasure or disdain. Demanding immediate holiness and obedience.

Okay. What picture does that paint of Jesus? Just imagine Jesus going around being aggro with everyone. Every time they didn't instantly respond to his teaching.

Or belittling people when they struggle. You wouldn't want to follow a guy like that. It's not nice. And that's why Jesus didn't do that.

[33 : 01] I mean, he spent three years trying to convince Peter who he was. Three years. And Peter denied him. And afterwards he says, hey, don't worry about it.

Let's be friends again. In fact, this was his whole mission was to help people in trouble and be patient with them and taking time with them.

He was patient with that woman at the well. Look how gentle he was with that woman who poured perfume on him at one of the dinner parties. So, go to Jesus and study what he's like with people for you to, men, for you to get your leadership style correct between passivity and aggression.

If you're over-aggressive and you're quick to let people know whether they're wrong or belittle or shout or use physical force or demand your rights or keep...

If you find yourself repeating, yes, but I'm the head of the house, you have to do that sometimes. But you don't have to do it all the time. If you find yourself on that side of the dial, you need to tone it down.

[34 : 19] Not towards passivity, but towards gentleness and empathy and patience. And see people like Jesus saw them and takes the same amount of time.

After all, he's taken the same amount of time, if not longer, with you. Jesus didn't use his position of power to make people feel worse.

He helped them. That's your calling, men. In summary, men, if you're too passive in your leading, in leading your spouses, you're making Jesus out to be a wuss.

If you're too aggressive, you make him out to be a tyrant. And the world is tired of toxic men that dominate in an ugly way, but they're also tired of passive men that force leadership onto others that are actually where you should be leading.

And so the only way to settle this accusation of toxic masculinity is to lead like Jesus. That is the only way your marriage is going to be a picture of the gospel.

[35 : 28] So men, that's your calling. No one else has what a Christian family has. You walk into a Christian home and you almost immediately sense it.

There's this calmness. It's like a place of nurture in a world of chaos and confusion, or it should be. A place of wholesomeness. A place of renewal and new life.

Where the power of Jesus and God is being worked through you to your wife and your family. And to a world that's watching and dying for godly leadership.

That requires hard work and requires a lot of prayer. I'm going to pray for us. Heavenly Father, what a high and mighty calling it is to be a man of God.

To be a Christian man. To be a prince, a ruler, a leader under the king of kings. Lord, we confess. Oh, we get this wrong so often.

[36 : 39] Lord, with you there is forgiveness and there is power to change. So, Lord, be merciful to us, men.

You were patient with Peter. You need to be patient with us. Help us, Lord, by your spirit, by your word, by the community of saints, of other men, to help us to be the godly man in the home that you want us to be.

Amen.