
A Task Too Great

A brief summary of the seemingly impossible task that God has given to men to be leaders in the workplace, as a father, as a husband, and as a churchman.



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My Purpose for Writing This Book

I did not grow up in a Christian home. However, my parents did a wonderful job raising me and giving me a fun childhood. They took me to countless baseball practices, weekend baseball tournaments, and we went camping a lot over summer and spring breaks. They taught me how to work hard and how to be a respectful young man, and for that I am grateful. One thing they were not qualified to do was teach me the ways of God's word. We never went to church when I was a kid, except for maybe an Easter service here or there. It wasn't until I was a junior in high school that I got invited to church by joining my friend's youth group, and it wasn't until the summer after I graduated high school that the Lord saved me. By God's infinite wisdom and sovereignty, I didn't have an immediate example of what it looks like to be a Christian man, and I know there are other young men out there who are in the same position I was in. Men are called to be leaders and I understood what the bible said about husbands, fathers, employees, and churchman, but practically, I had no clue what it looked like. The practical outpouring of leadership is what I lacked. I didn't have the daily example of a father loving my mother according to the bible. This is not to say my father didn't love, he was a great father, and God used him in my life in mighty ways, but he lacked the Holy Spirit. My father taught me many great things like how to work hard, how to have fun, and how to be dependable. I didn't know what it looked like for a father to train his children according to scripture.

This book is a product of my up bringing. Things I wish I would have known as a younger man getting ready to go into my first job, preparing for marriage, expecting my first child, and serving in the church. A look under the hood of what it means to be a godly man. I am still a student of the principles outlined in this book and need to grow in many areas that we will dive into. I have a great father, even though he was not saved, but some don't have any father in the home. Fathers are abdicating more and more from their biblical responsibility to lead, and this puts young men at a disadvantage. You will never be able to replace the impact of a godly role model, but my hope is that this book is a help to those young men who never got to see leadership lived out in the home.

This book can also serve as a refresher, a reminder of what God has called men to be. Reminders are good; they make corrections in our lives and bring to light things that we have forgotten about. For example, the love and care you had for your wife in the beginning of marriage could be but a distant memory in your current stage of life. This book could encourage you to love your wife again as God intended husbands to do.

Any man of God can benefit from this book. Sometimes when we are confronted with God's word, it can seem like a task too great, something that is far above our own abilities. However, my goal with the pages ahead of you is to give practical application to what God calls us to do and show how He will give us the strength and grace to accomplish it. This will be practical application for some who have never seen it lived out and a reminder for some who have forgotten as they've progressed through life. Regardless of your reason for picking up this book, I am thankful to God for His faithful, equipping grace to accomplish His commands so that I am able to even write this book to help other men along the way.

Part 1: The Man

There are many theories in society about how man came to be, how man should be, and what man should worship. My hope in this chapter is that you can understand the foundation of man and the implications that follow for us. Having this groundwork will enable us to see clearly through the deception of the world and our own sinful heart. We have to know who mankind, all people, is in order to understand how men, males, are called to be leaders and to better apply the principles that will be discussed in this book. This chapter is the concrete foundation so we can build a sturdy framework and eventually a strong house throughout the pages to come.

Chapter 1 | The Beginning

Just like any road trip you start by packing up the car and then heading to the gas station to fill up the gas tank. It's not fun but necessary for a good trip. No one likes being unprepared like forgetting to bring a toothbrush or shoes. And there is no sense in packing up the car just to head down the street. No, you intend to drive vast distances which underscores the importance of filling up the gas tank to make sure you can get to your destination. Think of this chapter as packing up your car and heading to the gas station before a fun road trip. We have to pack and fill our minds with the knowledge of man's beginning before we can understand how he is to lead under God's guidance.

We first must ask and answer four basic questions as part of this preparation for our journey on manhood. These four questions create the outline for this chapter and give us a starting point in our journey to understand how men are to lead.

1. Where did man come from?
2. What is the purpose of man?
3. How is man affected by the fall?
4. What is God's redemptive plan for man?

Where Did Man Come From?

The questions "Where did we come from?", "Why am I here?", and "What is my purpose?" have been asked by humans for centuries, and it is not just scholars who ask these questions. Anyone with a beating heart wonders where they came from and how they got here. It is innate in all of us to ask these questions. The complexities of the human mind, emotion, and body speak to a creative Designer. If you adopt an understanding that we come from a random act of molecules, have evolved over millions of years, or we were formerly monkeys, then there really isn't any point to life other than to live life while you have it. This view is empty and unfulfilling. That creative Designer, mentioned earlier, is God Himself. He, in His infinite wisdom and sovereignty, decided to make man in His own image. He also decided to make you for the time and place you are in right now. It is not a mistake you are here.

The Bible starts, in the book of Genesis, with the creation narrative: how God created everything we see with just the power of His words. God speaks and things are created, what immense power God displayed and continues to display through creation. God created everything we see in six literal twenty-four-hour days and then rested on the seventh day.

1. Day one God created the earth and light.
2. Day two God separated the water from the air.
3. Day three God created the land and the vegetation.
4. Day four God created the sun, moon, and stars.
5. Day five God created the creatures of the sea and sky.
6. Day six God created the land animals and man.
7. Day seven God rested.

We will focus on day six where God created the pinnacle of His creation: mankind. God chose to create man last, which highlights man's prominence over the rest of creation. It's just like that old saying that says, "you save the best for last." Genesis 1:26-27 reads, *"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. So, God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.'*" God was directly and intimately involved with creating man, but not just God the Father. We see the words "Us" and "Our." *"Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness."* There were others involved here, and that points to the Holy Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. They were all involved in the creation of the universe and of man. Paul echoes this in his letter to the Colossians when he states, *"for by Him all things were created,"* (Colossians 1:16). The "Him" Paul is referring to is Jesus, God the Son.

Unlike the rest of creation, man is specifically made in God's image. The Hebrew word used for "image" has two connotations: "copy" and "representation". We are made like Him and made to represent Him. Stated another way, we are made like God and made to represent God. Made to represent the God of the universe, Holy and magnificent God the Father. That gives a whole new meaning to life, doesn't it? We are made in the likeness of God, not just a random chance of atoms forming together. We were made with intentionality and purpose by our sovereign creator. What an

amazing truth that should drive men to really think about who they are acting in light of this truth.

We must understand and have the framework that God is the beginning of man and above man. Without God, there is no mankind. Since God created man, man can't be God. Man has been created and thus can't be elevated higher than the One who created him. Man, being created by God, makes him obligated to submit to God. Everything man does must be viewed in light of God the Creator. Ecclesiastes sums this up well: *"Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes. Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things."* (Ecclesiastes 11:9).

What is the Purpose of Man?

God created man to rule and have dominion over His creation. Genesis 1:28 affirms this when it says, "God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." One way for mankind to rule over God's creation is to create more people to be on earth. Two people can only cover so much land, so, to help in this task, God tells man to multiply, procreation between a male and female, in order to properly subdue the earth.

Psalm 8:4-8 reads, *"What is man that You think of him,
And a son of man that You are concerned about him?
⁵ Yet You have made him a little lower than God,
And You crown him with glory and majesty!
⁶ You have him rule over the works of Your hands;
You have put everything under his feet,
⁷ All sheep and oxen,
And also the animals of the field,
⁸ The birds of the sky, and the fish of the sea,
Whatever passes through the paths of the seas."*

How is Man Affected by the Fall?

We can't properly understand man without understanding the fall of man, that is, the moment when sin entered the world. Man didn't make it far before sin entered the scene. Three chapters into the Bible is all it took for man to fall and the rest of mankind would never be the same. What is sin? The answer is multidimensional, but when you think about sin, think about it as missing the mark, being rebellious, transgressing, betraying, being unrighteous, straying away from God, lawlessness, willfully disobedient, ungodly, wicked, and breaking God's law. Fundamentally, sin has to be understood through the lens of God, the Creator of all. Sin is a violation or breaking of the Creator-creature relationship. When man sins, man breaks that relationship and puts self above God and asserts autonomy over the Creator of the universe.

Genesis chapter three gives us the story of how mankind fell. We see the introduction of the serpent, who is Satan, who lied and told Eve that eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that God had previously forbade, would be good to eat from. He told her it would enlighten her and make her like God. Eve was deceived and ate of the fruit and gave some to Adam to eat. Adam, in a moment of weakness and abdication of leadership, ate of the fruit as well. They both ate of the fruit and both sinned against God.

Adam is referred to as the representative head of humanity. Scripture places the primary responsibility for sin entering the world on Adam. Romans 5:12 says, *"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin,"*. This is due to Adam's prominence as male and as the head of Eve. Even though Eve was the one who was deceived by Satan and ate of the fruit first, it is Adam as the head who did not correct Eve but partook in the sin with her. Sin fundamentally changed the world as God created it and there are several ramifications that follow sin entering the world:

Death as a consequence for sin.

As soon as Adam and Eve sinned, they realized they were naked, and they covered themselves with fig leaves. This is the first time they felt guilt for sinning against God. Genesis 3:7 says, *"Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew*

that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves waist coverings.” Later, in verse twenty-one, God makes for them coverings made of animal skin, signifying the first death after creation. Before sin entered the world, everything was perfect as God had intended it to be. There was no death and no need unmet; it was paradise. With sin in the world, one of the first things God had to do was sacrifice an animal, both to atone for the sins of Adam and Eve and to cover them as well. He covered their sin externally with the loin cloth and spiritually with the animal sacrifice. Romans 6:23 tells us, *“the wages of sin is death”*. Death follows sin, and those who do not submit to God in this life will live in eternal death in the next life.

[Man’s relationship with God is severed.](#)

God intended to have a perfect union with man before the fall, but this union was destroyed upon sin entering the hearts of man. Man was cut off from God and made His enemy. This is echoed in Paul’s letter to the Romans, *“For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”* (Romans 5:10). Paul also states in his letter to the Ephesians that before salvation we are spiritually dead: *“And you were dead in your offenses and sins,”* (Ephesians 2:1). To be spiritually dead means that you are alienated from God. What was once a beautiful communion between man and God has turned into a war and there will only be one victor, God.

With man being an enemy of God and spiritually dead, this brings forth God’s wrath and judgement. Romans 1:18 says, *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of people who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”* Ephesians 5:6 also says, *“for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.”* God brings wrath and judgement to His enemies. We all have a desperate need to be reconciled back to God.

[Relationships with others are made more difficult.](#)

Marriage between a man and woman is a beautiful thing, but with sin, it has been made more difficult. God told Eve after the fall, *“Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you”* (Genesis 3:16). Desire here should be thought of in a controlling sense. God foreshadows struggle and strife in the most intimate earthly

relationship mankind can enter into. The wife will want to control and lead when that is the role of the husband. The husband will want to abdicate from his leadership and with that comes a snowball effect of difficulty for going against God's design.

Look outside of the marriage relationship and it is obvious through murder and war that it is difficult for man to live in peace with others. This is true not only across different cultures but even in your own hometown or any major city in America. Horrible acts of violence are committed daily. The son of Adam and Eve, Cain, killed his own brother, Able, out of jealousy. Able didn't even do anything to Cain, Cain was just jealous of what Able had. History should be evidence enough that man has a problem. We are in constant turmoil with others.

[Creation is actively working against man.](#)

God charged man with subduing the earth and ruling over it, but with the introduction of sin, God cursed the ground that man was supposed to rule over. "Cursed is the ground because of you, in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life" (Genesis 3:17). "Thorns and thistles, it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face, you shall eat bread" (Genesis 3:18-19a). Man's relationship with earth will be difficult and man has not yet subdued the earth like God has tasked man to do. This will only happen with the return of Christ, which Isaiah predicts: "*They will build houses and inhabit them; They will also plant vineyards and eat their fruit. ²² They will not build, and another inhabit, they will not plant and another eat; For as the ^{lifetime} of a tree, so will be the days of My people, And My chosen ones will fully enjoy the work of their hands. ²³ They will not labor in vain,*" (Isaiah 65:21-23). This is describing the coming millennial kingdom of Jesus here on earth. Only then will we be able to rule over the ground as God intended for us to do. It will be a glorious time with our King ruling perfectly on Earth.

[What is God's redemptive plan for man?](#)

Despite man being inherently sinful and in rebellion towards God, He lovingly decided to save some, through the work of His son Jesus Christ, that He foretold about in Genesis 3:15. "*And I will make enemies of you and the woman, and of your offspring*

and her Descendant; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise Him on the heel.” It is important to understand the reason for God’s salvation and that is to bring Himself glory and honor. “Yet he saved them for His name’s sake, that he might make known his mighty power” (Psalm 106:8). “Therefore, say to the house of Israel, ‘This is what the Lord God says: “It is not for your sake, house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. ²³ And I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord,” declares the Lord God, when I show Myself holy among you in their sight.” (Ezekiel 36:22-23). God saves for His sake, not for ours. Just like creation starts with God, so salvation starts with God as well. God saves people through the work of His son Jesus Christ. It is not the purpose of this paper to dig into the finer details of salvation, but Paul in his letter to the Ephesians outlines the necessities of the gospel.

Ephesians 2:1-10 reads, “¹ And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you previously walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³ Among them we too all previously lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the rest. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our wrongdoings, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the ages to come He might show the boundless riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”

Verses one through three outlines what life is like before salvation. We are described as being dead and walking according to the prince of the power of the air, which is Satan. We lived only for our lusts and fleshly desires. We indulged in our sin,

and we are called children of wrath. Verses four through seven paint a beautiful picture of God's mercy and love by saving us and making us spiritually alive while we were His enemy. While we were indulging in our sin, God still chose to save us. It is because of His kindness that He saved us, and we go from being an enemy to being raised up with Christ in the heavenly places. Verses eight through ten tells how we are saved. We are saved by the grace of God through faith in Him. Salvation is a gift and the only One we can boast in for salvation is God Himself. We are described as His workmanship and He prepares our good works for us to do.

It is by this framework that we will discuss leadership. Man being created by God. Man being inherently sinful. God saving sinful man because He is gracious and merciful. This is the starting point. Man is not autonomous or here by accident, and you are not here by accident. God has called men, male, and women, female, to different roles. We are created with an equal amount of worth but two distinct roles. Men are called to lead in all areas of their lives: as a husband, they are called to be the head of the wife; as a father, they have authority over their children; as a churchman, they are called to shepherd the flock of God; and as an employee, they are called to work heartily for the Lord. It is the aim of this book to practically lay out what it means to be a leader in these four areas: the workplace, as husband, as father, and in the church. It is important to know that not all men will lead the same way and not all men have to lead as the main man in charge. Not all men are called to be elders or deacons, nor will they understand how to lead their wives and children, and no man is a perfect leader, myself included. My hope is that this book is a help, a look under the hood, to the pragmatism of leadership in these four areas of life and give guidance as to how you can practically apply it to your life.

Part 2: The Employee

God has intended man to work from the beginning. Work is not a result of the fall but part of God's creation plan for man. In Genesis 2, before sin entered the world, God gave Adam his first job: *"Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and tend it."* (Genesis 2:15). God has made man to be profitable. He has given man opposable thumbs to efficiently grab and manipulate tools, the ability to solve problems, a capacity to work hard both mentally and physically, and the ability to learn. When sin entered the world, work was made difficult. Sin entered when Adam and Eve ate of the fruit that God told them not to eat from. After they sinned, God told Adam and Eve, *"Cursed is the ground because of you; With hard labor you shall eat from it, All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; Yet you shall eat the plants of the field;"* (Genesis 3:17b-18). The job of cultivating the ground has been complicated, though not impossible, because of sin. As a result of this curse you now see poor crop yields, droughts, weeds, insects eating the crops, animals eating the crops, and much more. Maybe you have never farmed before, so these examples don't make sense. In today's day and age, it could look like the internet going down, an unreasonable customer, lazy fellow employees, or needing that one thing that was forgotten in the office supplies order.

Work is hard, but work is good and intended by God for us to do. Paul speaks of work in his second letter to the Thessalonians when he says, *"if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either."* (2 Thessalonians 3:10). The bible says that if you do not work then you should not eat. God hates laziness. It is understood that in some circumstances a man may not be able to work due to health reason. It is also understood that situations happen that force companies to have to lay people off, which could result in not having a job. In instances like the Great Depression, the recession of 2008, and the recent recession due to COVID-19, many individuals lost their jobs, including men who are called to provide. Being between jobs is not sinful or lazy since there will always be circumstances that are outside our control. These unfortunate situations call for reliance on God and actually require the man to work hard and problem solve. The man that finds himself here will have to get creative on how he will

provide by looking for any work he can get until he can acquire a steady job. Regardless of what job it is, we are called to work hard for the glory of God.

Chapter 2 | The Boss

Our Witness

A boss can make a job be an enjoyable experience, but they can also make it miserable. Regardless of if you think your boss is great or not, the Bible speaks on how you are to act towards them. God tells us in His word you are to obey earthly masters. *“Urge slaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be pleasing, not argumentative, ¹⁰ not stealing, but showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.”* (Titus 2: 9-10). You can’t control how your boss acts towards you, but you can control how you act towards them. You are called to be subject to or come under your boss. Practically this means not arguing, not stealing, and being trustworthy in what you are charged with. This puts God on display to others. It is not uncommon, in fact it is far too common, to hear others speak poorly about their superiors. They complain about all that they make them do, they speak on how they could do such a better job than them, and they slander the very person who employs them and allows them to earn a wage to provide for themselves and their families. We have all been guilty of these sinful acts outwardly and in our hearts. God calls us to something different. He calls us to be men who display Titus 2:9-10 in the workplace. It will seem odd to fellow co-workers when you don’t jump in on bashing your boss for the “terrible” job they do or when you remain joyful in the extra hours of last-minute projects thrown on you or when you choose to tell the truth to your boss instead of lying to make yourself look better. This will be a witness to those you work with that you are different. This difference is based on the fact that, as a Christian, you have an even greater boss.

Our Desire

God is the boss of all bosses. He is the chief reason as to why Christians do what they do. He is the master, and we are the slave. Who you work for vastly outweighs what you do day to day in your job. It doesn’t matter if you are a garbage man or an owner of a big business; if you are saved, you work for God and your desire is to please Him above all else. Our work should be viewed as service to God. Paul in

Colossians says, ²³ *Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord and not for people,* ²⁴ *knowing that it is from the Lord that you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.*” (Colossians 3:23-24). God is the driving force for us to be an excellent employee. We should work hard and produce quality work simply because God has chosen to save us, and we live to serve Him.

[The basis for our new desire](#)

This desire to please God comes from our new identity with Jesus Christ. He has clothed us in His righteousness. When God sees us, He no longer sees us as an enemy but as a son. This identity in Christ frees us from the ups and downs that accompany work, and it anchors us in the Gospel of Christ. We no longer have to get frustrated at employees, stress about the presentations, or be anxious about not getting the promotion. Jesus is the ultimate reason for our joy, not our jobs, because He has already provided for us our greatest need: salvation from our sins! He is the perfect sacrifice for our sins that we could never offer with our own lives. We rightly deserved God’s wrath, but Jesus took on God’s wrath for us. This is what Christian joy and contentment are based upon. Believers not only have a new identity in Christ but are described as a new creation. As a new creation, new desires will begin to be manifest in our lives. This comes from Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians when he says, ¹⁷ *Therefore if anyone is in Christ, this person is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Sebastian Traeger, in his book titled *The Gospel at Work*, has this to say about our status as a new creation and its effect on how we view work: *“When you are secure in your new identity in Christ, and when you embrace your new assignment from him, you are free to stand firm amid all the nauseating ups and downs of life at work. You have anchored your soul to something that is truly immovable.”* The believer is now free from the pull of the world to instead pursue the things of God and the good works that God has prepared for us. God as the chief master of our lives and Jesus as the center piece for the believer’s joy and contentment will play out in our good works.

Doing good deeds does not mean only helping the less fortunate. It is living in a way that puts God on display for all to see. This means being trustworthy, not being anxious, and trusting God are all types of good works to be done by the Christian. These works are not things we can just do on a whim. They are actually prepared for us by God. Paul speaks of this in his letter to the Ephesians, *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”* (Ephesians 2:10). *“Workmanship”* is another way to say creation. We are a new creation made by God; Workmanship gives the idea of a work of art or a masterpiece, which ties us back to 2 Corinthians 5:17 talking about the new creation we are in Christ. God makes us and then God prepares good works for us to walk in. This is more than just a father setting his son up with a cushy job. This is God giving us the tools necessary to live out a life that is glorifying to Him. God prepares them so that we can walk in them. This does not mean we get to take a back seat and have no responsibility. God, through His servant Paul, tells us to *“work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you”* (Phil. 2:12-13), meaning that even though God is the One who does the work, we are still responsible to step out and accomplish the task. This work that God calls us to is not easy. Earthly work can get busy, and anytime you bring multiple sinners into the same room, sin is bound to happen, and bosses can be unruly in their authority. Without Christ, there is no hope, but with Christ, we have hope. *“Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters, be firm, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”* (1 Cor. 15:58).

What If I Don't Have a Job?

Even if you are between jobs or looking for your first job, you can know and trust God that He is faithful and He will provide for our needs. This is not to say this is a happy or easy time for anyone to be in. This can be a difficult situation for any man. You add a wife and kids to the equation, and this can really weigh on a man. But our joy cannot be shaken because it is rooted in the immutable work and person of Jesus Christ. Understanding that you serve the Lord and not man is essential in times like

this. It is easy to fret and be anxious if you only serve man because you are at the whim of an imperfect creature. However, the Christian can have hope knowing he serves the sovereign God of the universe. Jesus, as part of the Sermon on the Mount, gives us a great picture of God taking care of His children. He starts by giving a command to not be worried about what to eat, what to drink, or to what you will wear. Then He asks, *“Is life not more than food, and the body more than clothing?”* (Matthew 6:25). Jesus then directs the listeners to nature and points out the fact that the birds of the sky don’t farm and don’t have barns to store food, yet God still feeds them. Jesus asks the question, *“Are you not much more important than they?”* (v. 26). What Jesus is saying is that the birds have food and a home because God provides even for the birds. How much more will He provide for one that He calls His child? Jesus makes this same argument with the lilies of the field that are here one day and gone the next. God still clothes every one of them. Jesus says that the Gentiles seek all of these things: food, clothing, and shelter, and that God knows you need these things but worrying about them is not the answer. The answer is this: *“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided to you”* (Matthew 6:33). Our concern should not be for the material things of this life but on the things of God and the good works that God has prepared for us to walk in. What wonderful encouragement this is if you find yourself without a job! This is the hope we can have regardless of what occupation we hold.

Chapter 3 | The Fight for Excellence and Contentment

The Pursuit of Excellence

It is okay to have a prominent position at work, and it's okay to strive for advancement. Just because you are the "Christian" guy at work doesn't mean you have to be the pushover or be the one that does all the tasks that no one else wants to do. Yes, be humble, do tasks that maybe wouldn't be normally asked of you, especially if you are a boss, manager, or supervisor. While this doesn't have to take all your time at work, this is a great opportunity to show your employees or those under you the love of Christ. On the opposite end of the spectrum, if you are the new guy, low man on the totem pole, do things that aren't asked of you as well. Take on responsibilities that no one else will take on. A desire to work hard and do the job well in a less desirable task is a great opportunity to show off Christ to your superiors at work. In the workplace, it is often your actions that really win people to Christ.

God has sovereignly placed you at your place of work and gave you certain desires and abilities in order to be more effectively used by Him in order to glorify Himself and shine His glory onto others. He has built some men to be supervisors, CEOs, shift managers, or an employee. There is nothing wrong with being the guy who comes to work every day as an employee who doesn't have any authority over people. There is also nothing wrong with being the man in charge. Society today makes you think that you have to be the man in charge. God has not made every man the same. Not everyone is made to be the CEO of a company and that is okay. As a man, we have to be content and thankful with how God has built us. Embrace how God has made you, and when this happens, it frees you up to worship and glorify God even more with your work.

It is common to think that ministry can only take place within the contexts of church, Sunday morning, midweek studies, and with fellow church members. This is a narrow view of the ministry that God has called us to as followers of God. You can be just as effective for God's kingdom at your work as you can on Sunday morning. Where is your heart at? Is your heart passionate for Christ while at church events and nowhere else? If that is the case, this inconsistency needs to be fixed. God has called us to be faithful in the home, at church, and at our jobs. All areas of life are grounds for ministry.

God calls us to do all things with excellence. If we are slack at work so we can be with family more or be more involved with ministry, we are not being faithful to the employment God has given us. While these are good things and need to be done with excellence as well, we can't neglect work for the sake of the others. Often times with advancement in careers, more time is needed to do that job well. Time is a finite thing; if more time is needed in one area of life, then it has to be taken from another area. This is a difficult truth for some to swallow. On one end of the spectrum, you have the guy who tries to keep everything the same; he just keeps adding to his plate but adjusts nothing in his life. Then on the opposite end of the spectrum, you have the guy who completely neglects one or more areas of his life as his plate starts to get full in another area. Both of these end up being bad. This does not mean that you can't be a faithful husband, father, and churchman, while still excelling at work. It means you have to fight for your time in all areas of life.

The Gospel at Work

As an employee of a company, you are most likely working with people who do not believe in God or maybe have some watered-down ideas about who God is. It is no mistake that you work where you do with the people you work with. As a Christian it is important to understand that your employer didn't hire you to be an evangelist to spread the gospel throughout the company. While God's design for you is to make disciples as outlined in Matthew 28, this will look different depending on the circumstances. All this to say, it is not always appropriate to just share the gospel with all of your coworkers during work hours.

It is true that God's desire is for people to be saved through the proclamation of His gospel. The gospel has to be central to everything we do as a believer in Christ. This means that sharing the gospel and living out the gospel in a way that others can see is a necessity. But how do we accomplish this in light of having a job in the secular world under a, more likely than not, secular boss?

It's not as simple as setting up your cubical as a counseling center in order to share the gospel. You are being paid to perform and contribute to the company that employs you and allows you to put food on the table. If you are continually skipping out

on your tasks in order to share the gospel with others, you should expect to be fired or at the very least talked to by your boss. Yes, zeal for others to hear the gospel is good but how that zeal is lived out will be dependent on the context of the situation.

In the case of our work, God calls us to work hard at the tasks given to us and to obey our bosses. It is not obeying your boss to neglect your work for the sake of the gospel, by trying to start a revival at work. It is actually a better witness to be faithful to your work and to complete that work above the expectations set for you. We have to trust that God will bring up opportunities for the gospel to be shared. The man who is faithful to his work and seeks to complete it with excellence and is also humble and kind is an being an awesome example of what it means to live out the gospel. Be a model of what the gospel does to a changed heart. Model the love of Christ, as well as what it means to pursue excellence in our work for the glory of God and not man.

When this foundation is laid, the foundation of modeling the gospel and Christ-like living, the gospel has fertile ground to grow. The coworker who sees inconsistencies in the life of the Christian will often be hard to the gospel because they have seen a poor example of what the gospel is in the life of their Christian coworker. In their minds it doesn't add up. You are telling them one thing but you yourself are living another way. We, Christians, have be consistent in what we say and how we live. This is hard to find in this culture and it is a breath of fresh air when it is found. It has the potential to be a life-giving breath of fresh air when this is found in the life of a follower of God.

Contentment

The question that needs to be asked is where is your contentment? Is it in your work? Or is it in God's only Son Jesus Christ? As a Christian, the obvious answer is that it is in Christ. But does your day-to-day life reflect that? It is easy to get caught up in the daily and seasonal grind of work. Other than sleeping, it is where you spend most of your time. Work can also be a place where you get recognition for a job well done. It could give you status among your peers, and it can allow you to buy things the society deems important. These things are not inherently bad, but is your desire for these things more than your desire for God?

Misplaced priorities create discontentment in God and temporary contentment in something else. I say temporary because anything other than God will not last. It will eventually fail you, but God and the work of Jesus on the cross is forever. Trying to find contentment in anything other than the cross of Christ is futile. We have been saved from our sin! Because of this truth we should be thankful and content in Christ. Trying to find contentment in work can lead to absent fathers in their children's lives, absent husbands, and absent men in the church. Absent meaning their heart is not in it. Yes, they will see their kids and wife and will be at church on Sundays, but it will be as a roommate and observer. You see them every day, but you don't know them, you don't spend much time with them, and you could be just as happy with another roommate.

God has called men to be more than just a roommate to their family and has called men to lead the church under His headship. These responsibilities can't be neglected, but they are only possible when we are content in the right thing: God. When Jesus is the Lord of your life, all of your roles and responsibilities will be a joy for you to live out. This does not mean that it will be easy but, you won't feel the need to find your fulfillment in your job.

Thus far we have talked about contentment in your job as a whole, but there is another aspect that needs to be discussed and that is contentment in what you get paid. It is understood that you get paid for the amount and quality of work you put in. This has been commonly understood even before money was a thing. Back in the day, you would work for food or shelter. Today we work for money, which allows us to buy food, shelter, and clothing. Our sinful nature has fooled us into believing that we need more. Clothes aren't good enough; you need a specific brand. A house isn't good enough, you need a specific size in a specific location. Food isn't good enough, you need this ultra-healthy, locally sourced, and fresh food. I will be honest; I am a fan of this type of food. You can have all of this stuff society throws at you as long as you can afford the price tag that goes with it. We live in a society of luxury and social media that props this lifestyle up. Christians get sucked into this mode of thinking as well. The question you have to ask yourself is am I prioritizing these things above God? Is my wage just a means for me to attain a certain lifestyle? Or is your wage a gift through which God is allowing you to provide for your family, give to others, and give to the Church. These

are two very different ways of viewing your wage. One prioritizes possessions and one prioritizes thankfulness to God.

Are you spending more time at work just so you can afford that boat? Are you willing to be dishonest if it means advancement and more pay? Are you willing to cut corners so you look better than your peers and can get that end of the year bonus for selling the most stuff? These are all real-life situations and happen on a daily basis around the world. As a Christian, we are not immune from them and have to constantly fight against this urge and live a righteous life. Having an attitude like this show a distrust in God. In that moment of ill-gotten gain, you are saying, "God what you have provided and how quickly you are providing it is not good enough. I am taking matters into my own hands now."

Thankfulness

Thanklessness has become an epidemic in American culture. The desire for more has consumed the minds of people and they forget how fortunate they are to live in this day and age. For example, the convenience of technology. Every day we hold mini super computers in our hands that are faster and more sophisticated than the computers they used to take men up to the moon in the sixties. Modern medicine has improved immensely compared to a generation ago. Transportation has developed in leaps and bounds from even a decade ago; vehicles are more powerful, safer, and more luxurious than ever before. Even though we are able to benefit from all of these advancements, we still want more. We want a nicer car; we get frustrated when our phone takes a couple extra seconds to download a picture; we get upset when the doctor doesn't give us all the answers, we expect him to. It is easy to exhibit thanklessness. Thanklessness is a self-centered problem. It happens when we take our eyes off God and put them on ourselves or other things. The things of the world can't satisfy so we will always be left wanting more.

How does this thanklessness trickle into our work? Work is a means by which we earn a wage. We get paid for the amount of work we put in and the quality of our work we do. Then when payday comes, and we have paid all of our necessary bills, we can go spend that money, on things that interest us. To spend money on interests is not

bad if we have a heart of thankfulness, but we can become ungrateful when our wage can't provide for the things that we think we need. If this is the case, then the work becomes a means by which we can get the things we want as opposed to something we do to worship God. We get jealous when everyone else gets the latest phone, even though our phone works just fine. We begin to covet what others have. It is a game of keeping up with the Jones' and your work is the vehicle by which to keep up with them. This means more time in the office and cutting corners in order to look good in front of others so you can get that raise. This is evidence of a heart that is set on the things of the world and not God. We become unthankful to God for what we have. The word of God tells us, "*in everything give thanks*" (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

So, no matter what your job is, you are called to have a thankful heart. God is not calling us to perfection but to faithfulness. There will be times of extreme difficulty in your job, and it can cause you to not be thankful like you should, but in time, by the work of the Holy Spirit, you can get to a heart of thankfulness toward God for the job you have and the wage you earn. After all, it is God who has placed you at your job.

Part 3: The Husband

Marriage is the smallest unit that God has created in order to weather the storm that is this life. Marriage can be a small piece of paradise, a small sliver of sunshine in this dark and ever darkening world. Within this unit God has called just one to lead and that is the man. Like with all other things, this role and relationship has been tainted by sin. Our own sinful nature seeks to drive us away from the role of husband that God has called us to. Satan has deceived us and downplayed the part that husbands have in the marriage relationship. We can't play the victim card here. We men are responsible to live up to the standards that God has set.

It is my hope that through this chapter you will see the incredible importance that husbands have in the marriage relationship. I pray that clarity will be brought, and a drive will be created in you to be the husband that God as called you to be.

Chapter 4 | The Head of The Wife

The relationship of husband and wife is a wonderful relationship to be in, and all praise be to God for strong marriages. The gap between getting married and having a solid marriage is a difficult bridge to gap. Every strong marriage has to have a strong husband or at least a husband who knows what is required of him and is working towards that end. I fear that not a lot of men actually know what is expected of them as the head of the wife. I know I didn't when I was getting married. This can stem from a lack of understanding of what God's Word says or a lack of understanding of how to live out what God's Word says. Paul gives a lovely illustration of the marriage relationship in Ephesians 5:23 which will serve as the backdrop for this chapter, *"For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body."* While we aren't the savior of our wife, that title belongs to Christ alone, we are described as the head of our wife, and this, men, is a weighty task given by God.

Headship, in a general sense, can be defined as a person who is in charge or a person of prominence. From an anatomical perspective, the head is the upper most part of the human body. It also houses our brains which is our body's internal command center. Some other uses of "head" are head of household, head of the table, head cook, or head of the class. When you reference the head of something, it is usually to point out its prominence and to make it distinct from the rest or the body or crowd.

Now, just because the head is a place of prominence, does not mean that the rest of the body or group is useless. Each member is necessary and plays a role. You also can't suggest that since someone is head of their class that the rest of the class is dumb. It is improper to think that everything outside of the head, the place of prominence, is inferior. You can't infer that since someone is at the head of the table everyone else at the table is a servant or not important. Take the human body for example. The head without the lungs is useless; the brain needs oxygen in order to function. Similarly, the brain needs the feet in order to execute its commands to move the body from point A to point B. The rest of the body is absolutely necessary. So, when we talk about the husband as the head of the wife, it is not to say that the wife is not necessary or inferior. The wife is critically important in the life of a man who is

seeking to lead in his marriage. Without the wife, the husband can't function as a head. She deserves, by God's sovereign design, to be regarded as a vital member of the marriage relationship.

It is part of God's design that the man is the leader, and the woman is in the place of helper or companion. All the way back in the beginning when God created man and woman, Adam and Eve, God created Adam first, and then out of Adam He created Eve. Paul, explains this relationship in his first letter to the Corinthians, "*For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; ⁹ for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake.*" (1 Corinthians 11:8-9). It is no mistake that God created us this way. We know this was not chance. God does not work according to chance but according to His wisdom and sovereignty.

If we go back to the creation narrative in Genesis one and two, God made earth and then He made Adam as the sole human on earth. For a little while, his only companions were animals. Then God said that it is not good for man to be alone, he needs a suitable helper, and animals will not do. Genesis 2:20 says, "*The man gave names to all the livestock, and to the birds of the sky, and to every animal of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him.*" Up to this point in the creation narrative, everything that God had created was considered good. The lack of companionship for Adam is the first time we see something that is not good. So, in His infinite wisdom, He created for Adam a helper that would be a compliment to him, a worthy companion. Genesis 2:22 reads, "*And the Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man and brought her to the man.*" God makes out of Adam's own body the first woman.

The order of creation is pivotal for every man to understand, but more importantly for the husband. It is by God's own design that the woman is made for the man. Husbands today abdicate from their role as leader and that stems from a lack of understanding that, as a husband, we were made to be a leader. There is no escaping this role. If you are a child of God and you are married, this is something you have to do.

The Headship of Christ

In order to understand better the headship of the husband we have to understand better the headship of Christ. Christ in His headship functioned in a couple major ways: His love, His service, and His submission to God's will.

The love of Christ

His headship is displayed through His love. He loves first, He loves unconditionally, and He loves sacrificially. We need Jesus' example of what love is before we can love God and others. John describes this well when he says, *"We love, because He first loved us."* (1 John 4:19). Our ability to love comes from the fact that Jesus loved us first. It's like a car; in order to drive you, have to put the fuel in. The love Christ has shown us is the fuel we need to be able to love others. Love does not come to us naturally; it has to be modeled to us and it is modeled nowhere better than in the work and person of Jesus the Son of God.

Christ's love is not conditional. It is solely based on His own will and desire. There is no better example of this than Christ dying on the cross while we were His enemies. Romans 5:8 says, *"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* We displayed no love for God before His grace and mercy consumed our hearts. In fact, earlier in Paul's letter to the Romans he says, *"There is no righteous person, not even one; there is no one who understands, there is no one who seeks out God; They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, there is not even one."* (Romans 3:10-12). Paul makes it clear that the death of Christ on the cross was accomplished not because of anything that we did. He did it because He chose to love us in spite of us. His love is unconditional.

Christ's love for us lies in the fact that it is sacrificial. His love was evidenced by His willingness to give up everything to go to the cross and die for sinners. God sacrificed His only Son so that we could have a relationship with Him. John 3:16, *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son"*. Jesus Christ being fully God and fully man sacrificed His glory in order to be like us and die for us. Paul describes it better when he says, *"who, as He already existed in the form of God, did not consider*

equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself by taking the form of a bond-servant and being born in the likeness of men.” (Philippians 2:6-7). Jesus even sacrificed His own life out of love for us. Hebrews 7:26-27, *“For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens; ²⁷ who has no daily need, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because He did this once for all time when He offered up Himself.”* The sacrifice of Jesus was complete, and His resurrection from the grave proved that God accepted it as a substitute for sinners who put their faith in Him.

[How do we live this type of love out?](#)

The love we have for our wives is rooted in the undeniable truth that we are commanded to by God. Ephesians 5:25, *“Husbands, love your wives,”*. If you look at the Greek word “love” used here, it is an active imperative meaning action is required on our part and it is commanded of us. We don’t have the option to not love our wives. Not loving your wife is an offense against God himself. The love we have for our wives isn’t based on how good dinner was, how clean the house is, or gifts they give us. We need to love them unconditionally.

[The Service of Christ](#)

Secondly, He led in service. Mark 10:45 says, *“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”* What this is saying is that Christ’s death on the cross was done out of service to the church. We generally think of love as the reason for Christ going to the cross for us, and while this is absolutely true, we can’t forget the truth that He did it to serve us as well. The bible over and over again echoes the importance of a servant mindset.

The husband is called to sacrificially serve his wife, whom God has given him. Service to the point of death. Now most instances of service to your wife will not call you to risk your life, though it does happen. But having this sacrificial mindset to your service will help you to lead the way God has intended you to lead.

The bible recounts when Jesus’ disciples were arguing which of them is greatest and Jesus responds with this, *“the one who is the greatest among you must become*

like the youngest, and the leader like the servant." (Luke 22:26). This puts a stop to any believer in Christ thinking they are the greatest. Even if they are in a more prominent position, they are called to be a servant.

God puts the husband as the head of the wife, and it is easy to assert this status and lord it over our wives. As husbands, we need to remember Jesus' words when He likens the leader to the servant. The essence of the leadership we are called to is service.

Another example of the incredible service Christ displayed is when He washed His disciple's feet before the Lord's supper. John 13:3-5 says, "*Jesus, knowing that the Father had handed all things over to Him, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God,* ⁴ **got up from supper and *laid His outer garments aside; and He took a towel and tied it around Himself.* ⁵ *Then He *poured water into the basin and began washing the disciples' feet and wiping them with the towel which He had tied around Himself.*" The idea of dirty feet is far different than our idea of it today. They didn't own shoes back then. They only wore sandals without socks and the roads were unpaved and made out of dirt. The feet needed to be cleaned in order to keep the house clean and it was an honor and privilege for the host to provide a servant to wash the feet of their guests. Jesus understood His place of prominence and washed the disciple's feet anyways. An even more amazing fact is that Jesus already knew that Judas would betray him, yet He washed His feet anyway.

Now husbands are not called to wash their wife's feet as was the custom for entering a house in the time of Jesus. While this might be nice, we are called to sacrificially serve our wife in the same attitude of Christ, not necessarily the same action. Jesus, being the supreme, preeminent Son of God, took the form of a servant, even going so far as donning the attire of a servant and washing feet, one of the more dirty and gross parts of the human body. The service of Jesus displayed here is unconditional on anything that the disciples did. He served out of humility and love for those under him. He could have just as easily rebuked one of the disciples and had them perform the task, but Jesus knew this would be a powerful picture of what was to come and how He expected His disciples to live and lead.

Our place of headship should never be wielded in a way that we assert our authority over our wife. Instead, we are to model the love and service of Jesus. As a husband, you will be given many opportunities to serve your wife. In the same way, your wife will be given many opportunities to serve you, but the tone of service within the marriage relationship has to be set and start with the husband. Service can be something small like helping her with the laundry or watching the kids so she can get some girl time. Service like this in the day-to-day life moments is essential because it shows your wife that you love her. Now men can't skip out on their other responsibilities just to help with the laundry, but it is a balance of priorities. Service can also be big things like giving constant care and attention to a sick wife because of the cancer treatment she is going through or if she got in a bad car accident. She may require help to get in and out of the bathtub, get dressed, or make food. This is real life, and it could happen to anyone at any time. Are you prepared to serve in this way as a husband?

Christ's Desire for God's Will

His headship was about the will of God. Jesus did not seek His own way but the way the Father lead Him. This is especially evident in the Garden of Gethsemane. Listen to Jesus' prayer, *"My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will."* (Matthew 26:39). The word "cup" would have been known as a figure of speech for God's wrath. Jesus here is praying for a possible way out that. If there was another way to atone for the sins of His chosen people, He was asking God to make it known. Jesus intimately knew every excruciating detail of His death, but more importantly, He knew He would be separated from His Father. Even with all of this knowledge and yes, a desire for another way, He ends by saying, *"but as You will."* Jesus was saying that it was His desire and will that the cup pass from Him, but He wanted His Father's will to be done and not His own. What an amazing display of submitting to the will of God! Jesus goes on to pray with the same motivation, *"My Father, if this cup cannot pass away unless I drink from it, Your will be done."* (Matthew 26:42).

Men, we do not know how God will lead our family, but we have to be ready to put aside our wants, desires, and dreams and follow God because His way is better. It

is a difficult line to balance; on the one hand you are called to lead and on the other hand you are called to submit to the will of God. How do we lead and submit at the same time? How do we know the will of God? These are legitimate questions, and the short answer is to pray. Pray to God constantly. See Jesus as the example. In His time of greatest need, in a time when He needed guidance from the Father on high, He prayed. He was agonizing and grieving over this event, but He didn't "pick Himself up from His bootstraps." Instead, He went to His knees and prayed. Headship requires a deep and constant dependence of God.

Headship of the husband is evident in the creation order. God made man and then He made woman out of man to be a companion and helper to him. Headship is a place of prominence, but that is not to be lorded over your wife. As the head, your duty to lead has to be steeped in love and service. In order to function properly as the head of the marriage relationship, dependence on God is required. This is no easy task we have been called to, but with the help of the Holy Spirit, Jesus as our example, and dependence on God the Father, we have hope.

Part 4: The Father

The relationship between parent and child is a vitally important relationship in the sight of God but has been diminished in the sight of the world, and this trend has slowly crept into the church. The world paints parenthood as an inconvenience to your career, to your free time, and to your happiness. It is clear from scripture that God has intended this relationship be one of respect from both parent and child. We usually think of the child having to respect their parents, but the parents have to respect the child as well. How this plays out will look different depending on if you are the child or the parent, but the principle remains the same. For example, the child doesn't get to bark orders to the parent and then say they are being disrespectful for not obeying them. It is, however, not the same when the roles are switched. The parent tells the child what to do and the child, out of respect for their parents and God, should obey. This is a simple example of the outpouring of respect, but it goes deeper than the external workings of respect in the parent-child relationship.

Parents are to have regard for their children; they are precious gifts from God. Psalm 127:3 speaks of them in this way, *"Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward."* We should see children as a gift and rewards from God and not an inconvenience. He goes on to say, *"Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; They will not be ashamed, when they speak with their enemies in the gate".* A quiver is a case used to hold arrows. A "full quiver" in the literal sense means you have all of your arrows in the quiver ready for battle. You are fully loaded. In the time of the Old Testament, especially among God's people, having many children was seen as a reward and a blessing, as described in Psalm 127. The same way a full quiver would be a blessing to someone in battle, your sons could fight with you in battle, work the field, and provide for you when you get old. Daughters could help prepare food, make clothing, and take care of the house with their mother. There was a certain amount of regard and thankfulness to God they had for their children.

This blessing is also portrayed in Psalm 128:3 which says, *"Your wife will be like a fruitful vine, Within your house, Your children like olive plants, Around your table."* The wife is referred to as a fruitful vine, something that produces fruit. It is the hope that any

plant would produce fruit and it is no different for the wife when she is described as a vine but with the hopes of her bearing children. The Psalmist here speaks of children as olive plants around the table of the father. It is no mistake that the author used an olive plant to describe children. The olive tree is considered the king of the trees in Israel. The oil from the trees were used to anoint priests and kings and used in the lamps to light the tabernacle. By describing children as an olive plant, God is highlighting the value and the high standing that children have to the parents. With the imagery of children as olive trees around the table, we get the sense of loyalty and fellowship between the parents and child. This runs completely opposite of the way the world sees the parent-child relationship. Children are seen as an inconvenience to the way people want to live. For those who have or who plan on having children, God has called us to a deeper relationship with our children. He has also called us to be stewards of our children. God has entrusted us to raise these children.

A plant needs time to be nurtured properly. It needs to be watered and get plenty of sunshine. Take an apple tree for example. If you do nothing to the tree, most likely it will wither and die. We have to be faithful to water the apple tree and prune it if we expect it to produce tasty fruit and flourish. It takes time to do this, just like parenting does. This is the role stewardship has in the parenting relationship, and one of the practical ways this plays out is through training.

Chapter 5 | The Father as Trainer

As a parent, there is an expectation that you will be involved in the building up of your child. Parenting is very much a contact sport. You can't parent well from afar. The fact is that you will influence your child regardless of if you desire to or not. Even if there is a lack of intentionality from the parent, the child is still picking things up. For example, let's say you have parents who are never home and when they are home, they don't give any meaningful attention to their kids. The kids could possibly begin to develop habits of being self-willed and independent as a result of this. Where there is intentionality in parenting, there is hope that the child will learn to understand and respect authority. Ultimately, our desire for our children is to fear God, who is the greatest authority. Deuteronomy 6:1-2 says, *"Now this is the commandment, the statutes, and the judgments which the Lord your God has commanded me to teach you, so that you may do them in the land where you are going over to take possession of it, ² so that you, your son, and your grandson will fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged."* We need to teach and train our children to fear the Lord!

There is a distinction that needs to be made between teaching and training. To teach is to cause someone to know. To train is to cause someone to do. Clay Trumbull said it well in his book Hints on Child Training, "Teaching gives knowledge. Training gives skill. Teaching fills the mind. Training shapes the habits. Teaching brings to the child that which he did not have before. Training enables a child to make use of that which is already his possession. We teach a child the meaning of words. We train a child in speaking and walking." Both are essential in parenting. As Deuteronomy 6:1-2 laid out for us, we are to teach our children, but how are we supposed to train them and in what areas are we as parents to train them? A couple of key areas that need to be focused on in training is in faith, self-control, obedience, and lastly, we will be looking at discipline as a tool in our training.

Training in Faith

Faith is putting trust in someone or something you can't see. It is common when trying to describe faith to bring up the example of sitting in a chair. You can't see the internal workings of that chair, you don't know how much weight it can hold, and you don't know if one of the screws is missing. Sure, sitting down in a chair is commonplace and there are plenty of funny stories of chairs breaking when someone goes to take a seat or as a kid, you would move the chair when one of your friends went to go take a seat and they would fall. For the most part, we don't think twice about sitting in a chair. No one asks, "hey is this chair going to hold me up?" or "What is this chair made out of? I'm concerned that it's not strong enough to hold me up." We usually just blindly take a seat. We have faith that it will hold us up. A chair is just a silly example, but it illustrates the idea of faith. Now how do we as parents train our children to have faith like this in God the Sovereign?

Training your child to have faith

Faith is not foreign to your child; it is innate in every human being. God gives us the ability to have faith when He knits us together in the womb. The newborn baby has faith that he or she is being provided for, which allows them to stop crying in the middle of the night after the mother comes and nurses them. The young child has faith that their dad will catch them before they fall down when they are learning to walk. The older child has faith in their parents to come comfort them when they wake up in the middle of the night from a bad dream. And the teenager has faith that their parents love them which allows them to not sneak out at night to find love somewhere else. Your child has faith, that is not the issue. We have to train our children Who to have faith in and that is our sovereign God.

Faith through prayer

Prayer is one way we can display faith in God the Father. Training our children to pray to God with the expectation that they will get what they pray for is misleading to the child. This trains the child to trust in themselves and gives them a task to complete with a predictable outcome. However, the child will be disappointed to see that the new

toys they prayed for are nowhere to be found. Yes, we want to ask God for things and He absolutely has the power to answer any prayer we send His way, but we have to balance teaching these truths to our children. We have to train them to have faith in God's sovereignty, not what they themselves can do. Give them, at a young age, the truth that God is in absolute control of every aspect of life as we know it. Remember Genesis 50:20 as you seek to train your child in this, *"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to keep many people alive."* What may seem like a bad situation could end up being a really great one. It is healthy and good when God answers your young child's prayer with a no. It gives us an opportunity to point them to the sovereignty of God.

Faith through actions

Your child's actions give another insight into where the faith of your child stands. Does your child act in a way that is according to their own will and desires or the will and desires of God? If they are acting in their own will, then it is proof where they have their faith. It is common to think that good behavior brings forth blessings from God and bad behavior brings curses from God. This puts all the trust and hope of your child in themselves. It makes God either the "happy grandfather" who spoils the grandkids or the "authoritarian" who takes the fun out of everything. Both of these depictions of God couldn't be further from the truth. We must train our children to expect difficult times, to expect trials, and to have faith in God that He is in control. We must not forget the story of Job. He was a wealthy man and a righteous man in the sight of God. He was what the world would call "good," but God allowed Satan to take everything from him: his wife, kids, home, and wealth. Yet Job remained faithful to trust God. It is unhealthy for your child to think that if they just obey, everything here on earth will work out for them. The second it doesn't work; they are going to blame God. It is setting them up for failure and an opportunity for your child to put their trust in something else. Paul outlines that it is by faith that we are saved! It is the key to which eternal salvation with the Father exists. Paul says in Ephesians 2, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith."*

We need to heed the warning of Jesus when He said, *“but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depths of the sea.”* Young children can have faith in Jesus as Lord! Parents need wisdom and to pay careful attention to how they train their children towards faith in God. This is the most important thing we can train our children in and can also be the biggest stumbling block if done flippantly.

Another warning comes from Paul in 1 Timothy 5:8, which reads, *“But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”* The word used for “provide” does not just refer to physical needs. It also tells the reader that they need to take thought of, prepare, and cause change. To make ready or suitable or equip in advance of for some use, event, or other purpose. This goes beyond a house, food, and clothing and taps into the spiritual side of life as well. Forethought is required and is essential in providing spiritually for our children. We have to study our children to see where they may be weak and seek to build them up, so they don’t fall prey to those weaknesses. What good is it for a father to provide the physical needs of a child but neglect the spiritual? The physical things will eventually burn with this earth, but the spiritual is forever. Men, there should be a sense of urgency in providing spiritual guidance to your young ones.

[Training Your Child to Have Self-Control](#)

You generally wouldn’t use the word “self-control” to describe a child. They speak out of turn, they run when they should walk, they cry when it’s not warranted, and lash out in anger when a toy gets taken from them. Children lack self-control in the simplest of tasks. When I was a kid, I would drink so much soda that I would cause myself to throw up. This happened multiple times, so many times in fact, that my parents had to warn my friend’s parents if they had me over for dinner. Children are not born with self-control. They often know what is right and wrong but fail to act on it.

The time of childhood is fertile ground for training in self-control. Proverbs 22:6 says, *“Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he grows older he will not abandon it.”* Clay Trumbull speaks on this very principle in scripture when he says, “It is in a child’s earlier struggles with himself that help can easiest be given to him, and that

is of greatest value for his own developing of character.” Start young with the hope that God is going to bless your efforts in this life with visible change in your child or in the next life when He rewards you for your efforts in stewardship of your children. As a parent, all you can do is be faithful to the task God has given to you. Clay Trumbull has another helpful quote, “Many a man’s life course is saddened through his hopeless lack of that self-control to which he could easily have been helped in childhood, if only his parents had understood his needs and been faithful accordingly.”

The world has kicked self-control to the wayside. The world wants you to indulge in every desire that comes to mind. It rewards entitlement and tells you to block out anyone who is trying to stop you. This thought process combined with a child who has not been trained in self-control is a concoction for disaster. Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians says, *“Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. So they do it to obtain a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.”*²⁶ *Therefore I run in such a way as not to run aimlessly; I box in such a way, as to avoid hitting air;*²⁷ *but I strictly discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.”* We need to train our children to this end. This is the standard that is expected of believers and if our hope is for them to believe in Christ, then we should prepare them accordingly.

Training Your Child in Obedience

Obedience is often seen as a convenience rather than an expectation. It is nice when they obey right away, but we don’t expect it from them. We make excuses for their disobedience. We say things like, “Oh they are just being kids.”, “I don’t think they heard me.”, “They didn’t understand what I said to them.”, or “They didn’t nap well today.”. Instead, we need to expect first time obedience from our kids. God Himself calls children to honor their parents, *“Honor your father and your mother, just as the LORD your God has commanded you, so that your days may be prolonged and that it may go well for you on the land which the LORD your God is giving you.”* (Deuteronomy 5:16). A major way a child can honor their parents is through joyful, timely, and willful obedience. Jesus displayed this type of obedience while He was a child here on earth.

According to Luke 2:49, when Jesus was 12, He knew who He was, the very Son of God, *“And He said to them, “Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father’s house?”* Jesus, who created everything, who stands as preeminent above all of creation still obeyed His earthly parents. Luke 2:51 says, *“And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued to be subject to them;”*. The word used for “subject” gives the idea of subordinate and submission and it is used to describe Christ.

We are ultimately training our children to be subject to God the Father. Paul says in Ephesians 6:1, *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.”* Paul also says in Colossians 3:20, *“Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing to the Lord.”* Training your children to obey, in light of what scripture says with God as the authority, is setting them up to obey God past childhood. Children obey parents only because that is the way that God has designed the family dynamic as evidenced in His Word. The father, who is above the child, is to love the child and not cause them to get angry. Children, who are subject to the father, are to obey because God has called them to do so. Obedience to their earthly fathers is obedience to God the Father. Train in this way.

In the realm of self-control and obedience, God has given parents a tool to help in the training of children toward life in godliness. That tool is the rod, or discipline. Let me be clear, I am not advocating open season on your child’s rear end. The rod is to be used wisely, out of love, and always done in a way that points to the fact that they are disobeying God. We discipline not because our children have done anything to us, but because they have sinned against God.

[When to Get This Done?](#)

The task of training a child is no small feat and chances are you have or will have more than one child. This quickly becomes a balancing act between, work, being a husband, being involved in ministry, sleeping, and taking care of the house. How do we fit this in our twenty-four-hour day? We take advantage of every moment we are with our children as an opportunity for training. This means it can happen during the seemingly mundane moments in life when we are getting ready in the morning, when

the lawn needs to be mowed, when errands need to be run, and when we are eating dinner. This is not an exhaustive list, but you get the idea. If you are waiting to train your child when it is convenient, then you will be vastly underwhelmed at how often that will be. I highly encourage special one-on-one time with your kids, but this can't be where the bulk of your training is done. The bulk is done in the trenches of everyday normal life.

There are things that can be set up to help facilitate conversation and training throughout your day with your kids. Dinner can be transformed from a time of just filling our stomachs to a time of conversation and training. With the invention of fast food and long workdays, dinner has been diminished to just a time to fill up and get on with the rest of the evening, but dinner can and should be more. It can be a sweet time when the whole family is together, especially as kids get older, to fill everyone in on how the day went, for fathers to correct unbiblical worldviews that kids may be picking up at school or from friends, and to show love and attention to children by being concerned with their day and giving them an opportunity to speak and share.

Chores is another area of life that can be transformed from just a list of tasks to a time where fathers can pour into their children and train. Take your kids with you to the local home improvement store. Make your kids help you pull the weeds over the weekend. Have your kids help you change out the dead light bulb. Fathers need to be intentional! We can't wait around for training opportunities; we have to be proactive and use the time and tasks we have to facilitate training in our children.

One-on-one time with your child can be life changing. It can be simple drives to the store or more elaborate times of a planned camping trip or going to get some ice cream. This allows the father to prioritize one child for a short amount of time. These are formative times that are neglected by parents today. We have to spend individual time with our kids. This does not have to be as frequent but is just as important as the things stated previously. Walls usually break down and the child becomes more vulnerable, allowing you as the father to show how much you care and offer deeper levels of training that you may not have been aware of. It gives you special insight into how your child is wired and what they are struggling with.

Fathers be intentional and don't let the busyness of the day be your excuse for not training your child. You will only get busier, and each day is one day closer to your child being an adult. When that day comes, will you be satisfied with the job you did, or will you wish you had done more? We can always do more, but it is our goal to be faithful to the task of training bestowed on us.

The Rod as a Tool

What happens when your child doesn't obey you? Are you merely using your words and telling them the same thing over and over again? Children will push the boundaries and force you to make a move. They are smarter than we give them credit for and will pick up on your tactics. If you tell them to pick up their toys or to eat their vegetables and there is no consequence for doing otherwise, then what makes you think they are going to obey? We have to train our children at a young age that there are consequences for disobedience. They need correcting and this is a good and healthy thing. Proverbs 29:17, *"Correct your son, and he will give you comfort; He will also delight your soul."* This is always done because of their disobedience against God and not us. We have to constantly point them to God.

Discipline is an act of love. It shows us where we are being disobedient and sets us back on the right path towards righteousness. Discipline can be described as instruction or training used by God to train his children in righteous living. The very essence of disciplining is training toward life in godliness. The author of Hebrews outlines the love aspect of discipline when he quotes Proverbs 3:12, *"For whom the Lord loves He disciplines, just as a father disciplines the son in whom he delights."* The author of Hebrews goes on to speak of the powerful life changing capabilities discipline has on us, *"For the moment, all discipline seems not to be pleasant, but painful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness."* (Hebrews 12:11). Salvation is our child's biggest need, and we need to train them with the expectation that one day they will call on Jesus as Lord. We must hold them to that standard because their eternal soul depends on it. God is sovereign, but we are responsible to be good stewards of our children.

Part 5: The Churchman

God has decided, in His infinite wisdom and sovereignty, to use men to lead the church both in office held and in the general lay sense. Do not think that since you are not an elder and don't have the desire to be one that you can't lead within the church. This is a preposterous thought and diminishes the power of God within you. Through reading this chapter, my hope and prayer is that you will see the essential role men have within the church body. Every man has a part to play, not just the guys up front.

Chapter 6 | The Under Shepherd

In order to understand what an under shepherd is, we first have to understand what a shepherd is. A shepherd, in the literal sense, is someone who herds, guards, and tends to sheep. Sheep are not smart animals and can't defend themselves; they will not survive without the care of a shepherd. A shepherd as it relates to God and the bible is one who cares, guards, and tends to the people of God's church. A shepherd who tends sheep and a shepherd who tends to God's people have similar job descriptions, so to speak, but one has an infinitely more important task at hand. The shepherd of God's people is caring for eternal souls. This is a great task and can only be performed with the utmost care. The Great Shepherd of God's people is Jesus Christ Himself. He ultimately is tending to God's people, the church, but He allows us to partake in the shepherding of God's people as under shepherds. What a wonderful work that God allows us to partake in. Imperfect people partaking in the work of a perfect, sovereign Creator. While women have the ability to shepherd God's people, within the context of other woman and children, the main brunt of shepherding is done by men.

Teacher

God tasks men with leading the local church through elders and teachers. Teachers are those that teach God's word. In this sense, I am speaking of the more formal kind of teaching, as in up in front of the congregation. Every person who is saved should be prepared to teach others about Jesus Christ and share the good news of the gospel, but men are held responsible for teaching God's word to the church. In every example in the New Testament, men are the ones who are teaching the congregation. This is part of the way that men can partake in shepherding under the guidance of the Great Shepherd.

Teaching is not to be taken lightly. It is with high reverence for God and His word that we teach what His word says. James tells us, "*Do not become teachers in large numbers, my brothers, since you know that we who are teachers will incur a stricter judgment.*" (James 3:1). James is telling us that there are consequences for teaching

wrong doctrine. Those who teach contrary to God's word will be judged for it. Teachers will be held accountable for every word they speak.

Paul gives an exhortation to his son in the faith, Timothy, when he says, "*remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines,*" (1 Timothy 1:3). The essence of teaching is to instruct someone. Paul is telling Timothy to teach men in a way that they stay away from wrong doctrine. This is also a qualification for any man who desires to be an elder. Paul in his letter to Titus explains, "*holding firmly the faithful word, which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it.*" (Titus 1:9). Right doctrine is essential in shepherding the flock of God. We have to be men of God's word, have convictions that are based on it, and live lives that are transformed by it. Right doctrine is essential.

Paul continues his exhortation by outlining the goal of our teaching, "*But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*" (1 Timothy 1:5). When we are allowed to shepherd God's people, it has to be done in love. This is the overarching requirement for not only shepherds but for any child of God. Paul says that if you lack love in your teaching of others, you are like an obnoxious noise, "*If I speak with the tongues of mankind and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.*" (1 Corinthians 13:1). It doesn't matter how well you can connect to the audience, how smart you are on the subject, how eloquent you are in your delivery, if it is not done out of love, you have missed the mark. This takes careful thought and attention on the part of men to be effective shepherds under the great Shepherd. Love is essential.

Paul ends his exhortation with a reminder to Timothy of the consequences of not correcting wrong doctrine. He says, "*Some people have strayed from these things and have turned aside to fruitless discussion,⁷ wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.*" (1 Timothy 1:6-7). Wrong doctrine does not produce fruit since it is described as fruitless. Those who teach wrong doctrine are usually doing so for personal gain, to have a following, or in the hopes that people will think highly of them. They fail to remember the heart of teaching others and that is to love. Instead,

they love themselves. Remember our passage in James, *“Do not become teachers in large numbers, my brothers, since you know that we who are teachers will incur a stricter judgment.”* (James 3:1). Ultimately every man is responsible for the choices they make, but we, as men and those tasked with teaching, have to be faithful to teach sound doctrine out of love to the flock of God.

The Office of Eldership

Elders are men used by God to shepherd the flock. While elders have to be able to teach, that does not mean that every man who teaches is considered an elder. An elder is a man specifically set aside by God for ministry to the local church and takes accountability for the souls under his care as an elder of a congregation. Unlike the teacher, who is speaking to an audience, the elder is focused on the souls of the individuals. They get in the trenches with the sheep of God. They are the ones implementing church discipline. They are the ones hunting wolves who are seeking to harm God’s flock. They are making decisions on who should lead specific ministries. They are the ones who, at the end of the day, will have to give an account for every soul that God has entrusted to them. This is not the same for those who teach.

Not just any man can become an elder. There are strict qualifications that a man must meet, and they are outlined in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Paul in his letter to Titus outlines the following qualifications: *“⁵ For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, ⁶ namely, if any man is beyond reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of indecent behavior or rebellion. ⁷ For the overseer must be beyond reproach as God’s steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not overindulging in wine, not a bully, not greedy for money, ⁸ but hospitable, loving what is good, self-controlled, righteous, holy, disciplined, ⁹ holding firmly the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it.”* (Titus 1:5-9). There are many things that the elder cannot be, but the overarching characteristic of a man who is an elder, or seeking to become an elder, is to be above reproach. This means that are above disapproval from people. They are an outstanding example of good character, not only to the church, but to the outside world.

Likewise, Paul gives similar qualifications to Timothy. *“It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. ² An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, skillful in teaching, ³ not overindulging in wine, not a bully, but gentle, not contentious, free from the love of money. ⁴ He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity ⁵ (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), ⁶ and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into condemnation incurred by the devil. ⁷ And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into disgrace and the snare of the devil.”* (1 Timothy 3:1-7). Again, the overarching character quality of an elder is to be above reproach. Paul sums up this idea in verse seven, both within the church and outside the church, a man who holds the office of elder or one who aspires to be an elder has to have a good reputation of integrity. Paul also adds to this list of qualifications a qualifying statement saying that a man who aspires to be a shepherd or an overseer in the official sense we are talking about here is a good desire. Yes, you will have to give account to God Himself for the souls He puts under your watch, but this desire, if there, is a good desire.

[Leading Outside of Eldership and Teaching.](#)

You may be thinking, “I don’t want to be an elder and I can’t teach. I guess shepherding is not for me.” This is false. Shepherding, in the unofficial sense, can be any act of love and care we show to others. Maybe someone you know in the church lost their job. You can bare that burden with them and encourage them through carefully loving them with the Word of God. Someone else could be having a tough time with their kids misbehaving, and you can come alongside them. Still, someone else in the congregation has a wrong view of men’s and women’s roles. You can lovingly show them what Scripture says. Forget about the office of elder and the status one can get who is an effective teacher. This is what God has called men to do. Men are leaders in the home and within the church. The call by Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, for Christians to bear each other’s burdens, has to be modeled and initiated by men. *“Bear*

one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2). Men we can't be idle within the church. Even the new guy with minimal bible knowledge doesn't have an excuse to sit out. If you have been saved, you know enough because you know the gospel. In times of greatest need, with proper administering, the reminder of the gospel will be a warm blanket to the soul of the hurting. Men, you are armed with the knowledge you need to help.

When men act in this way, it brings unity to the church body. Paul again in his letter to the Colossians says, *"¹² So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so must you do also. ¹⁴ In addition to all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity."* (Colossians 3:12-14). Manhood by today's standards is not described as; kind, humble, gentle, and patient, but men who are saved have to display these characteristics in order for unity within the church to be possible.

Part 6: The Action

Now that we have an understanding of what God calls us to as men, we can't just let this be head knowledge. We need to use it to produce God-glorifying action and we have to take initiative. God will give us opportunities, but we have to take responsibility to act on those opportunities while being filled with the Holy Spirit. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he calls believers to walk in the good works that God has prepared. Paul uses walk to describe our action. There is work involved, not just knowing what to do in your head. God can do mighty things through the man who is willing to be led in action by God. The time is now to love your wife. The time is now to train your children. The time is now to build those relationships at work. The time is now to jump into ministry and serve. We too often wait for the opportune moment to start things. There is no perfect time, just start and God will be faithful to produce fruit in your labors.

Chapter 7 | The Initiator

Thus far, we have gone over many principles that we as men should be seeking to live out and implement in daily life. It is not good enough to just know about these principles, but we have to be men of initiative. To take initiative means energy or aptitude displayed in initiation of action. Don't let this just be knowledge that you have gained, but let it produce action in your life. Let this action be aimed at glorifying God in all that we do. *"Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all things for the glory of God."* (1 Corinthians 10:31).

In the Workplace

Take advantage of the opportunities God gives you to display and share the good news of Jesus Christ. If it is your desire to share the gospel with your co-worker, which it should be, then work on that relationship. There are times when off the cuff gospel presentations are warranted, but a co-worker is someone that you will see on a regular basis. Plant seeds like the parable of the farmer. *"And He was saying, 'The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; ²⁷ and he goes to bed at night and gets up daily, and the seed sprouts and grows—how, he himself does not know. ²⁸ The soil produces crops by itself; first the stalk, then the head, then the mature grain in the head."* (Mark 4:26-28). Be like the faithful farmer. Plant seeds and God will be faithful to grow those seeds according to His will. Be mindful of your work and don't neglect it. After all, you are being paid to do that work, and your livelihood depends on it. However, we can't just wish and hope for gospel opportunities. We have to pray for them and seek them out. Yes, God is sovereign, but we are responsible to do the work. Take the farmer mentality to work and plant those seeds.

Christians are also called ambassadors for Christ. *"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."* (2 Corinthians 5:20). God had chosen to use us in the lives of others in order to bring about salvation in their lives. In order to be an effective tool used by God, we have to get out of the tool shed, go, and be used. We can boldly enter into relationships at work knowing that God is the One guiding us and placing us where we are at. *"For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power*

and love and discipline.” (1 Timothy 1:7). Allow yourself to be used by God knowing with confidence that He is at work in you.

As a Husband

The husband has to be the one who sets the tone in the marriage. This can prove to be a difficult task considering the fact that we are at work all day, involved in ministry, and have kids to train. God, in His infinite wisdom, does not specify an amount of time we need to spend with our wives. He doesn't specify what exactly we need to do in order to love her like Christ loves the church. The lack of specificity can bring ruin to some men, and it can be freeing to others. I think this general command is an opportunity for us men to depend on God and be guided by the Holy Spirit. We must take initiative spiritually and take inventory of the heart of our wives. This falls under the realm of caring for our wives and pushing her towards sanctification. This involves talking to her and asking questions. I am not one who can claim to be an expert in this area, and in fact, it is a struggle for me, and God is guiding and growing me through it. By His grace, I am getting better at it.

We can't take initiative if we do not know what is weighing on the heart of our wives. This is vital to our leadership. How can you lead someone if you don't know them? Yes, it is true that generals lead many numbers of men in battle, but husbands have been called to more than just commanding people. We have to care for them. We have to care for our wives. Men, we will have to give an account to God for the souls under our care. Let the fear of God guide you, push you even, to take the necessary steps toward the care of your wife. This will look different for every relationship so you will have to study your wife to take the best approach. However, I can outline some practical ways to get started.

Ask questions. Be interested in your wife. The end of your day can't be simply watching TV to unwind after a long days work. Our work as husbands does not end when we get home. No, but a different type of work begins. The work of loving our wives. Ask her how her day was, but also study her and your surroundings. Is she stressed but not telling you? Are the kids running rampant throughout the house? Is the house in shambles when it normally isn't? This is real life and shame on us if we can't

love our wife enough to read the situation and offer a helping hand. When we can read the situation and take initiative, this will feel like a heavy burden lifted off your wife's shoulders. This is just one example and a very practical example, but it is one way we can show love to our wife.

Spending alone time with your wife will be a blessing to both you and your wife. This can be as simple as sitting on the couch after your kids are in bed or as extravagant as a twenty-fifth wedding anniversary trip away. This is time where you can be undistracted in your ever constant study of your wife. This is where you can get a glimpse inside her heart and hear about what she is struggling with. This gives us husbands an opportunity to speak encouraging words and to use God's word in the most loving and gentle way possible to allow God to change and strengthen our wives. Heart change takes time and can only be done by God, but the moments when we can have boldness to act on them are powerful moments in the life of the marriage relationship God has brought you in. This, men, has to be done! We can't sit on the sidelines when it comes to the sanctification of our wives. We have to be willing and able to be used by God. This is what we are called to by God as husbands.

As a Father

It's not enough to simply provide a nice life for your children. If it is your desire for your children to know and understand who God is and be able to see the world through the lens of what the word of God says, then we have to be active in our leadership and not put training off. It is so easy to put training off, and before you know it, your kids are grown up. Fatherhood does not end when your child heads off to college or moves out of the house, but it does change, and you will not have the ability to form and shape them like you do when they are young. When they become adults, they become independent from you. Your opportunities are limited to the times they approach you for something or when they ask you for advice, as opposed to when they are young and still living in your house and you see them daily. It's the same reason why cramming for a test the night before doesn't work as efficiently as setting aside time to study weeks before your test.

How you respond when you come into your home after work not only affects your wife, but it affects your children as well. If you see that time after work as “me time” and you kick off the shoes and turn on the TV, then your children will be starving for much needed dad time. Sometimes they need the stern voice and discipline of a loving father. Sometimes they need to get some energy out and run around with you. They could even just want to read a book with you. It doesn’t really matter what exactly it is, but they need your undivided attention. The father that gets down on their kid’s level and plays, whether it be house, cars, hide-n-seek, or basketball, is a father who is investing in the future relationship they will have with their kids as teenagers and then adults. This is hugely important to young children. It shows them that you care about them and that they are important. Make time for your kids even when it’s inconvenient. This falls on you as the father to do this. Take action, fathers. Your children will only be young for a short time so there is no time to waste.

As a Churchman

While God remains sovereign over His church, and rest assured, He will build His church, God gives us an opportunity to participate in that work for the growth of His Kingdom. Ministry today is plagued by busy, lazy, and apathetic men. We are good at making excuses for why we can’t participate in ministry. “I’ve already served this week”, “I met with them the other day”, “I’m tired”, “I don’t know them”, “I’ve never done that before”, “I’m not ready”, or “I have nothing to offer” I am guilty of using all of these excuses, and I’m sure you have used a couple of them. Excuses do not come from a place of courage and faith in God. God will require that we take courage men! Courage is a good thing. Courage is described as mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty. Ministry is difficult; people are difficult to work with; we are sinners. We will have to do things that are not comfortable, and maybe even things that cause us to fear. Think of the men tasked with taking the gospel to an unreached people group that are not interested in hearing the Word of God. That’s a task that would cause some to fear because of the high possibility of death. There are some countries that are hostile to the gospel, and even meeting together with fellow believers to talk about the bible could cost you your life. This is hard for us to imagine

living here in the comfort of America, but it's a reality for some of our brothers and sisters. I understand that not everyone will be a missionary to a hostile people group, and not everyone will be a martyr, but the principle remains the same. Ministry takes initiative and courage.

It's not enough to just come to church. While it is necessary, we have been called to more. We need to be fed spiritually at church and in our own personal walk with the Lord, and then pour into others in discipleship. Not all men will lead ministries, be elders or deacons, or even be remembered for their faith. That's not the point. The point is to minister to people in whatever arena God has called you to. Don't be spiritually indifferent and just attend church but not invest into with others. Pursue the Lord in your private walk with Him, and then be willing to be used by God in the lives of others. This, men, takes initiative.

Final Thoughts for Young Leaders

If you are thinking that being a man of God is a task too great, then you are in a good place. Being a man of God will always out pace you and just when you think you have caught up, something else will happen. This is okay. This brings us right to the place that God wants us to be, which is in a state of dependence on Him. Depending on God is the life blood of the Christian life. I will find myself, at times, resistant to depending on God, and I know I'm not alone in this. This is a common battle with the flesh: the desire to be independent, to figure it out yourself, to take credit for a job well done, and to pick yourself up from the bootstraps, especially living in America. It takes a godly man to see this fight with the flesh and to admit that we can't do it ourselves, but rather we need to submit to God's will. This, men, is the type of initiative we need: a constant denial of self. This type of initiative leads to life change, not only in yourself, but in those God has put around you and under your care. God is sovereign, but you are responsible. Take to heart what God has called you to do as a man, have courage, be bold, love, and depend on God.

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