

Can You Pass the Ultimate 'Man Test'?

Men, the most important meeting you will lead today is not the one at the office. The most important conversation you'll have today is not the one you have been mentally preparing to have. The most important people to give your attention to are not the "rising stars" or the "most valuable team members."

To the contrary, the most important meeting you'll lead today is the one where you sit down with your family and give them the loving leadership they need. The most important conversation you'll have is the one when you look your children in the eyes as you tuck them into bed. The most important people to give your attention to are your sons and daughters and the wife of your youth.

Likewise, pastors: The most important small group, campus, ministry team or committee you guide is not the one on your task list. The most important family in your church is not the one that provided the most financial support last year. The most important ministry area in need of your support is not the one with the greatest (or the least) traction.

To the contrary, the most important group you will lead is your wife and children. The most important family you will serve is your own. The most important ministry you oversee is the ministry to your family.

The ultimate test of your manhood is not what you do on a field or on a court, nor is it what you claim you did "back in the day." The ultimate test of your leadership is not your ability to launch a business, grow a ministry, develop a team or contribute to the bottom line.

The ultimate test of your manhood and your leadership is the leadership you demonstrate toward your family. Can you, by

God's grace and through His power, help them become more like Jesus? Can you lead your home?

This is a humbling reality for us men, but God holds us accountable for the spiritual health of our spouses and our families. We see this truth early in the story of the Bible. God placed Adam and Eve in the perfect and pure Garden of Eden. He instructed them not to eat from one tree, but Satan tempted them, saying, "Did God really say not to eat from this tree?" Eve decided to take some of the fruit from the tree and give some to her husband, who was there with her.

Notice who God confronts and pursues: "Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and they hid themselves from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. So the Lord God called out to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?'" (Gen. 3:8-9, HCSB).

God came looking for the man because God instituted the man to be the leader of the family. And Adam was not being the leader. Instead of insisting they would obey God, Adam remained quiet in the background, silently observing the exchange between Satan and Eve.

Some men need to hear, "Man, where are you? When will you show up and be the leader God is calling you to be? Where are you when it comes to loving your wife as Christ loves you?"

But where does the motivation come from to love and lead our wives and families? How can we continually repent of neglecting our responsibility with our families? How can we be the men God desires us to be?

Not by shaming ourselves into submission. Not by believing we can turn things around.

We can do this by remembering the gracious pursuit of our Savior, who found us in the garden in the midst of our

betrayal. We can do this by reflecting on the mercy and grace of our God, who clothed us while we were in our shame by His great sacrifice.

For example, when the apostle Paul challenged men to lead and love their wives, he based his appeal solely on the grace of Jesus: “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her” (Eph. 5:25).

Your family is the most important human relationship you will enjoy. How you lead reveals the type of man you are. And you will only lead and care for them well if your heart is melted with how the Lord has led and cared for you.

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