

What a Father's Calling in Christ Is All About

Our society is in desperate need of present and loving fathers to lead their families with conviction. Fathers can guide their children toward a lifetime of joy and purpose, but they must rise to the occasion.

How does someone in this day and age become the kind of father they need to be? They must start by returning to authentic, biblical manhood.

According to history, men are the scale tipplers, the spurs that get the horses moving, the rudders that turn ships and the protectors. Without the influence of strong, masculine men, society goes astray.

These are the kind of men we need to father the next generation. God is looking for men after His own heart, who would do His will. I don't know about you, but at the end of my life that's how I want to be remembered. More than being a good man, I want to be a "God" man. That's what real manhood is all about.

Authentic manhood is about the heart—God's heart.

A man can know God's heart. Let that sink in. Take King David, for instance. He was a warrior-king who knew incredible victories as well as heartbreaking defeats. He experienced euphoric spiritual highs, yet he fell to the lowest, deepest pits of sin, despair and self-loathing.

David's life ran the full gamut of ups and downs, joys and sorrows. As a warrior-king he was responsible for much bloodshed. David also fell into adultery with Bathsheba. Then, after discovering she was pregnant, he arranged for her husband, Uriah, to be put into a vulnerable battle position,

which led to Uriah's death. Against God's law, David had multiple wives. Because of his reckless fathering, his family suffered inner conflict and misfortune.

All of the above is true, yet three consistent themes ran throughout David's life. First, David was fully man with feet of clay that were marred and cracked. Second, David loved God. And third, David knew God.

The obvious questions I'm sure many of you are asking are "How could this be? How can a man love God and sin like that, and how can God bless a man with that kind of sin?" I am certainly not excusing David's actions. Neither is God. But David also knew true sorrow and repentance for his sin and failures.

David wrote, "but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love" (Ps. 147:11a, ESV). David knew God when he was disciplined by him, and then he found cleansing and forgiveness. It's possible to know God, love Him deeply and still fail Him miserably. That was David. That is us. Yet he was a man after God's own heart.

David wrote, "As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God" (Ps. 42:1). God is looking for men who thirst and pant for Him, men who will step forward in those God moments, men who will rise up and do His will.

Around 970 B.C., as David's time on earth drew to a close, there was so much he could say, so many truths to convey before passing the baton of leadership to Solomon, his son.

Solomon was waiting by his father's side, listening, grieving and knowing time with him was limited. Father to son, David began with "I go the way of all the earth; be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man" (1 Kings 2:2, NKJV). The giant slayer, the warrior-king and the man after God's own heart, David knew that effective leadership began with the foundation of being a man. Yet the type of manhood he was talking about didn't simply happen as a result of testosterone

and perhaps the ability to wield a sword.

David was talking to his son Solomon about manhood that was to be demonstrated and proven by godly character. In short, proving himself a man meant Solomon was to embrace God's definition of manhood and be strong in the face of adversity. To lead efficiently, he needed to see his source was God, not his own strength.

✖ This is my encouragement to fathers who desire to be men after God's heart—remember that he is your only source of strength.

David related authentic manhood to serving God. The same is true today. For men to impact the culture around them and their circles of influence, starting with their families, they must embrace God's true definition of manhood and masculinity.

Our culture needs fathers who have taken up David's challenge to Solomon to "be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man" and who understand what that means. Yes, God is looking for a man. As Father's Day approaches, I encourage you to ask yourself: Will He find me?

This editorial is adapted from *Take it Back: Reclaiming Biblical Manhood for the Sake of Marriage, Family, and Culture* (Charisma) by Dr. Tim Clinton and Max Davis, available here. {eoa}

Tim Clinton, EdD, LPC, LMFT, is president of the American Association of Christian Counselors, the largest and most diverse Christian counseling association in the world. He serves as the executive director of the Global Center for Mental Health, Addiction and Recovery at Liberty University and he is co-host of "Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk," heard on over 1,400 radio outlets daily. Licensed as a professional counselor and as a marriage and family therapist, Dr. Clinton is recognized as a world leader in mental health and relationship issues and spends much of his time working with

Christian leaders and professional athletes.