

Why the Church Must Reclaim Biblical Manhood

An international space exploration research team conducted a study on the possible colonization of Mars. When the findings were presented to NASA, the study suggested that “all-female astronaut crews could reproduce in space without the help of accompanying men.” The study concluded that frozen sperm samples exposed to simulations of weightlessness in space maintained the same characteristics as sperm on the ground with gravity. This raised “hopes that a sperm bank could one day be set up in space to help populate new worlds.” It also meant that future missions to Mars could consist of female-only space crews.

This study was met with great fanfare, especially among feminist and anti-masculinity groups. In response to the female-only astronaut crews, one individual wrote, “But who’s going to kill the spiders on the ship?” My wife, Julie, would have said, “It sure won’t be Tim!”

Obviously someone was trying to add some humor to the dialogue, but there’s an element of the statement that rings true in our cores. Men are good at killing bugs, along with doing a lot of other meaningful tasks. God created men for a reason—not just for their sperm.

Specific Roles

The world was built on the backs of strong men. When statements such as “Men built this society” are made, one almost feels the need to apologize. Surely someone is going to be offended, yet it is not meant to be sexist or misogynistic. We are not saying that women can’t kill spiders and do all sorts of things that men can do. They certainly can, and they do. Men are not better than women. They are certainly not

smarter! This is not meant to minimize women in any way. We need strong, godly women in the fight too. Men can't survive without them and what they bring to the table. But it's unreasonable to say men and women are the same. They are equal, but they are not the same. To not recognize this is to throw common sense out the window. Women are strong emotionally, physically and spiritually, just in a different way than men. If men had to go through labor pains, society would have died off years ago! No, women are very strong—in some ways stronger than men. But this is about men and why men matter. Men, it's OK to embrace how God made you.

Both men and women are equally unique, each reflecting the image of God in their own way. "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27, NIV). God purposefully designed men and women the way they are, and that is a good thing. He said so Himself. "Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good" (Gen. 1:31, NKJV).

The most obvious purpose for our differences is the procreation of the human species. Without our biological distinctions the species would die off. However, our distinctiveness goes much further than that, into our God-given instincts, ways of thinking, gifts and roles. Man was made to complement woman, and woman was made to complement man. All of it may seem extremely elementary. And it is extremely elementary, except that the forces against us are set on blurring these commonsense natural lines of creation. In California, for example, the legislature passed the Gender Recognition Act, allowing for a third, nonbinary gender category on driver's licenses and other state-issued identification. Other states have followed suit. State Sen. Hannah-Beth Jackson said, "We are now a state recognizing the nonbinary designation as a gender." In other words, and I'm paraphrasing, "We don't accept the natural two-gender order, male and female, the way God created them. There are more

genders, and we must not offend them.”

Please understand. This is not intended as an attack on individuals who struggle with their sexual identity. Rather, it is about the way God-defined masculinity is being undermined and what we can do about it. Those who want to deny or confuse the inherent biological order and biblical roles do so in an effort to normalize an unnatural worldview. In fact, since the Garden of Eden, one of Satan’s goals has been to pervert or blur what God called good. The great evangelist Billy Sunday said, “No one can read the Bible in a thoughtful way without being impressed with the fact that it makes much of manhood, and holds it up as something that should be sought after with diligence and perseverance. In fact, the Bible exalts and emphasizes manhood in a remarkable way, and shows that real manhood is a great thing in the world.”

Our culture, however, is being indoctrinated to believe that our God-given roles are narrow and restrictive, bigoted or hateful. On the contrary, to embrace God’s order is a good thing, bringing about ultimate freedom for both men and women. Thank God for all the women heroes who have displayed unshakable courage. The world desperately needs the gifts and insights that only women can bring. They are critical to the equation, and godly women need to rise up too and fully embrace their womanhood.

Nonetheless the fact remains that men are difference makers. Without masculine men, everything falls into disorder, leaving gaping holes for the enemy to occupy.

Flip the Script

On Jan. 1, 1929, the California Golden Bears played the Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets in the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California. Early in the second quarter, before more than 66,000 screaming fans, California’s Roy Riegels scooped up a Georgia Tech fumble and began running like an Olympic sprinter

toward the goal line. There was only one problem: Riegels ran 69 yards in the wrong direction! Finally he was taken down by one of his own teammates at the one-yard line. Riegels was so upset and humiliated by his mistake that he felt there was no way he could show his face before the crowd, much less play another down. On the bench all he could do was hang his head in shame.

During halftime in the locker room, it was announced that everyone who started the first half would be starting the second half, but when the rest of his team headed back out on the field, Riegels remained where he was. He said, "Coach, I can't do it. I've ruined you. I've ruined my school. I've ruined myself. I couldn't face the crowd in that stadium to save my life."

"Roy, get up and go back," his coach ordered. "The game is only half over!"

Ashamed and distraught yet urged on by his coach and teammates, Riegels somehow willed himself back in the game. Not only did he play again, but he turned in an all-star performance, even blocking a Georgia Tech punt. Unfortunately it wasn't enough. Georgia Tech wound up winning 8 to 7. Riegels' blunder had cost the game, and he was tagged "Wrong Way" Riegels for life. The great news in this story is that Riegels did not let that negative label define him. In fact, he flipped the script and turned it into a positive that made him a better man.

Just as with Roy Riegels, there are many unflattering labels on men that cause us to hang our heads in shame. Men have been running in the wrong direction for too long.

While it is hard to get accurate figures for the number of married men who have cheated on their wives, a 2010-2016 survey reported that 20% of husbands have affairs, with higher percentages among older married men.

A survey reported that 74% of all married men said they would have an affair if they would never get caught.

A 2016 Barna study reported that 64% of Christian men view pornography at least once a month, and 21% say they are addicted. One in 5 youth pastors and 1 in 7 senior pastors use pornography regularly.

According to a 2009 study by the Josephson Institute of Ethics, 51% of teenagers 17 and under believe that lying and cheating are necessary to succeed. This shift in attitude has been particularly strong among young men, rendering them less likely (and able) to live up to God's call to honesty and integrity.

According to an article in Psychology Today, "Men are overwhelmingly represented in several diagnostic categories, sometimes called 'impulse control disorders'—predilections that lead to alcohol and drug abuse, sexual misbehaviors of various kinds, violent outbursts, delinquency, problems holding down a job and an overrepresentation in almost all categories of criminal activity (with consequent overrepresentation in arrest records and prison terms). They're also more likely to steal, cheat and engage in various criminal activities for money (from small-time drug dealers to big-time Wall Street swindlers)." I could go on and on and on. But I want to make this point crystal clear. These aren't merely stats and disorders. Much of it is also sin.

Men are in deep trouble with sin. And sin doesn't just destroy our own souls. It destroys our relationships, our families and the souls of the ones we love most. When we don't step up and turn away from ungodliness, sin rules us, and the consequences are frightening.

As men, we have to do better. Let's face it. Women are not the problem. We are. James Dobson summed it up well when he wrote, "Nations that are populated largely by immature, immoral,

weak-willed, cowardly and self-indulgent men cannot and will not long endure. These types of men include those who sire and abandon their children; who cheat on the ones they love; who lie, steal and covet; who hate their countrymen; and who serve no god but money. That is the direction culture is taking today's boys." Jesus couldn't have been any plainer when He stated, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man" (Mark 7:21-23).

Men, we need to get the smelling salts out and wake up from our comas! We need to let go of the shame because of our screwups, get back in the game and play our hearts out!

Toxic Behavior Versus Toxic Masculinity

No doubt, a man's behavior can be toxic, or sinful, if you want to put it another way. Society's answer to this dilemma, therefore, has been to label masculinity as toxic and to emasculate and feminize us. Justin Trudeau, the prime minister of Canada, said that he is raising his children, including his two sons, as feminists "to change our culture of sexism." This solution does not work. Instead it's destroying men. While the behavior of some (not all) men is toxic, their masculinity is not. The negative stats don't paint the whole picture. Men can change—and are changing—by the power of God. And that starts by dealing with our sin problem.

The good news is, men, you have a choice. You do not have to be ruled by toxic behavior, which is sin. Your masculinity is not sinful; it is good. Embrace it. The strength that can be used to mistreat women is the same strength and power that can be used to protect them, stand up for them and cherish them. Harness your masculinity for good. Strength under control is a strength that can be used for good. Just as Roy Riegels didn't let his wrong-way run ultimately define him, negative labels

and statistics do not have to define what a man is or what a man can become—even if he has messed up or has exhibited toxic behavior.

Not Toxic, Not Better, but Godly

As stated above, the world's remedy to toxic behavior is the emasculation and feminization of men. Michael Ian Black, in an op-ed for The New York Times, wrote, "There has to be a way to expand what it means to be a man without losing our masculinity." Black is right. There is a way. Allie Stuckey of PragerU almost got it right when she said, "The answer to toxic masculinity isn't less masculinity; it's better masculinity." We say the answer isn't better masculinity or, honestly, even traditional masculinity but godly masculinity.

After God created both male and female and deemed them good, sin entered the world, corrupting our natures. All of us are bent toward sin. Men, even traditional men, can't be better on their own. Only by living through the power of the Holy Spirit can a man fulfill the purpose for which he was designed. Without the Spirit of God working in us, we are going to exhibit toxic behavior because we live in a fallen, sinful world, and we have a sin nature. The apostle Paul wrote in Romans 7:18a (ESV), "For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh." Though his spirit man was perfect and born again, Paul still had his flesh to deal with. So does every man.

The good news is the Christian man has the Holy Spirit within him. God's answer to toxic masculinity is men filled with His Spirit. The Scripture says that Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. When we abide in the vine (Jesus), we will bear much fruit, and apart from Him, we can do nothing. Abide in Jesus, and we bear much fruit. Do not abide, and our flesh rules. Galatians 5:22-23 says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no

law.” The fruit of the Spirit is the exact opposite of the toxic behavior many men exhibit and, I dare to say, encompasses the qualities most women want from men and what society needs from men. The way it happens, however, is not through emasculation but through the Holy Spirit’s control. This type of manhood is the key to turning this thing around—godly men fulfilling their masculine roles by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, coming alive in them and bearing fruit.

Men, we have a choice. We can give in to sin and toxic behavior, or we can embrace righteousness. We can stay on the bench after our screwups with our heads hung in shame, or we can rise up, get back in the game and let God flip the script of our lives. {eoa}

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