

# What is a Man? The Marks of Biblical Manhood, Part 2

Ephesians 5:25–33 and Selected Scriptures

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## Introduction

This morning, we are continuing in our series which I've entitled, *Confronting the Culture*, in which I've been aiming to equip you, as the people of God, to be salt and light in the midst of the decay and darkness of this dying culture. And we are picking up where we left off two weeks ago, where we began considering the marks of biblical manhood. And that flows out from our having learned (1) that man is a **creature**, (2) that he is an **image-bearer**, and (3) that he is **gendered**. Genesis 1:27: "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." The creature, made in the image of God, reflects God's image by being either male or female.

And having brought that truth to bear on the wickedness of the transgender movement, we discovered, among other things, that men and women are different. They are alike in their humanity—unified as equal image-bearers of God; and yet they are distinct in their gender—complementing one another as a harmony of praise to the God who created them. And a consequence of that truth is that men glorify God when they look and speak and behave like men. And women glorify God when they look and speak and behave like women.

But then we asked: what does that mean? Aside from the obvious biological differences, what does it mean to be a biblical man and not a woman? What does it mean to be a biblical woman and not a man (Piper, *WTD*, 17)? If God created men and women to be a harmony of praise to His glory in our distinctiveness, then, just like each member of a choir must learn to sing his own part—singing notes that are distinct from the other parts but which harmonize to produce a beautiful sound—so also, men and women must learn to sing their own part, so to speak—to conduct themselves in a manner distinct from one another, but which behaviors, when brought together, harmonize to bring glory and honor to the beauty of God's design.

And certainly: the alternative has not succeeded. Yes, there have been abuses that have been perpetrated in the name of male and female complementarity. But the answer to those abuses is not to so stress the truth of men's and women's equality that our distinctiveness is minimized, or even lost. The chaos of our times only underscores that deprecating the distinctiveness of masculinity and femininity does not result in blessing, because it is rebellion against God's good

design. God has designed that men flourish most when women act like women. And God has designed that women flourish most when men act like men.

And so, we began two weeks ago with the nature of biblical manhood. Who does the Bible say a man is? And I mentioned that I've gleaned no fewer than **nine marks of biblical manhood**. We got through two of them last time, and so I'll spend a few moments reviewing where we've been.

### **Review I: A Leader**

That **first mark** was, number one, that a biblical man is a **leader**. And we established that from several passages. Ephesians 5:23 says "the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church." First Corinthians 11:3 says that "Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman." The man's headship speaks of his **leadership**.

But in addition to these clear passages, we found that the opening chapters of Genesis also testify to the truth of male headship. We saw that God created the man first. He gave His command not to eat from the tree to Adam, even before Eve was created—which meant that Adam was to be Eve's teacher of the Word of God. God created the woman *from* the man's body, and *for* the man's help. Adam names the woman. And the man is the one responsible to initiate the new household by leaving his father and mother and being joined to his wife. All these truths communicate male headship. And they're especially significant, because, being drawn from Genesis chapters 1 and 2, the principle of the complementary roles of male headship and female submission do not have their origin in the fall. They are not the result of sin's corruption of our relationships. No, they are rooted in God's very-good creation of man and woman. And so, fundamental to the identity of man—from the very beginning of his existence, before his corruption and fall into sin—is that **the biblical man is a leader**.

But we mentioned that the heart of that leadership is not license. It's responsibility. Biblical leadership isn't so much the *right* to govern as you see fit as much as it is a *stewardship* to lead in a way that (1) honors God and (2) benefits those you lead. And we see that in how God holds Adam accountable for sin's entrance into the world, even though Eve was the one who sinned first. As the **leader**, the man bears the burden of primary accountability for the spiritual and moral health of the family.

And so we concluded that masculine **leadership** means taking responsibility. It means being willing to be held accountable—even when you personally may not be at fault. It means that there is nothing that is less manly, than passively abdicating your leadership role, and shirking responsibility. It means being imaginative and reflective, thinking creatively and strategically about what needs doing for the family to thrive! It means taking initiative, so that the burden of primary responsibility to make the household run doesn't fall upon your wife, while you

passively respond to her initiative. It means making decisions with clarity and conviction. It means confronting conflict with boldness and grace. It means bearing the burden of having the final say in the household, knowing that God will hold you accountable if you fail to lead according to righteousness and wisdom. A biblical man is a **leader**.

## **Review II: A Lover**

The **second mark** of biblical manhood that we explored last time is, number two: a biblical man is a **lover**. He is one who loves. He exercises his leadership lovingly.

We saw how in 1 Corinthians 16:13–14, just after telling the Corinthians to “act like *men*” and “be strong,” Paul’s next words are: “Let all that you do be done in **love**.” There is an unmistakable connection between acting like a man and loving. Titus 2:2 and 1 Timothy 1:5 make a similar point. And we spent quite a bit of time in Ephesians chapter 5, where in verses 25 to 33, Paul says three times that husbands are to love their wives, just as Christ also loved the church. Christ Himself is the model. The greatest Man who ever lived was love incarnate. And His love for His bride becomes the pattern for every husband’s love for his bride.

And we spoke about how Christ’s love for the church is characterized above all by **sacrifice**. “Husbands, *love* your wives, just as Christ also loved the church, and *gave Himself up for her*.” His was a sacrificial love. The Lord Jesus Christ subordinated His own interests, convenience, and well-being to the benefit of His bride, when He assumed her nature, in order to pay her penalty. From this we learned that leadership is loving—that headship is humble. Even as Jesus Himself said in Luke 22:27: the one who reclines at the table and is waited on is greater than the one who serves him. “But I am among you as the one who serves.” The Lord of heaven and earth, the Head over all things, is among us as the one who serves. Unspeakable grace.

And how did He serve them? By ordering every aspect of His life to result in the benefit of the ones He loved! It was nothing but pure, holy, manly strength that enabled Him to say no to the temptations of Satan, of the world that lay in Satan’s power, and of any preference of His own comfort or ease over and above the benefit of the church. Biblical, **loving** leadership, men, means laying down your life in the day-by-day, moment-by-moment decisions of life together. It means sacrificing the fleshly comforts of idleness, ease, and recreation for the sake of benefiting those you love and are responsible to lead. We mentioned that you don’t go home *from* work. You go home *to* work—to the good and noble work of giving yourself up in engaged, initiative-taking headship in service to your family; because Jesus looked at His disciples and said, “I am among you as the one who serves.” The Gospel turns selfish boys into selfless men.

Mature, masculine, biblical **love** consists in sacrificially laying down your life in the service of others. The biblical man doesn’t make excuses for his sins or his failures! He doesn’t shift the

blame onto others! Biblical men are eager to take responsibility—to lovingly sacrifice themselves for the benefit and protection of those they love, even being willing to shoulder the blame or the consequences for something they didn't do if it means protection from danger and deliverance unto blessing for their loved ones.

### III. A Provider

The biblical man is a leader. And the biblical man is a lover. That brings us to a **third mark of biblical manhood**. And that is, number three, that the biblical man is a **provider**. And of course, the relationship between these marks isn't that they are totally distinct from one another. Leadership is loving. That love is marked by sacrifice. It's also the case that loving leadership is marked by **providing** for those you lead.

And we see that the biblical man is a **provider** in a number of ways. We see it perhaps most clearly back in Ephesians chapter 5, where, again, Christ's love for the church becomes the pattern for the husband's love for his wife. In addition to verse 25, which sets forth the general principle, you have verses 28 and 29, which say, "So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but *nourishes* and *cherishes* it, just as Christ also does the church." Christ, as the great bridegroom of the church, nourishes and cherishes the church, because she is "his own flesh"—the body of Christ—His bride. In the same way, a man's loving headship over his wife ought to be marked by nourishing and cherishing her. Both of these words give insight into what it means for a man to be a provider.

In the first place, Christ—and biblical husbands—nourish their wives. This translates the Greek word *ektrephō*. In the New Testament, it's used only here in Ephesians 5:29, and then again in Ephesians 6:4, where it speaks of fathers bringing their children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. But in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, it's used many times—always in the context of either raising children or providing for the needs of others.

In Genesis chapter 45, Joseph is consoling his brothers about their having sold him into slavery in Egypt. He tells them that he doesn't hold it against them, that he recognizes God's sovereign hand in sending him there to preserve life through the famine, and he tells them to send word to their father Jacob that they should all leave their land and settle in Goshen. And he says, in verse 11: "There I will also *provide* for you, for there are still five years of famine to come, lest you and your household and all that you have be impoverished." Do you see? "There's a famine coming, but I will provide for you. I will arrange that your needs are taken care of, so that you won't starve." This, the Apostle Paul says, is the responsibility of the husband toward the wife. The man must see to it that the physical needs of his wife and family are met—that they won't starve, that there is food on the table and clothes on their backs.

And then there is the word *cherish*. *Thalpō*. Literally, the term means “to make warm” (BDAG), but in the sense of “to care for.” Similar to the previous word, in the New Testament, *thalpō* is used only here in Ephesians 5 and in one other place: 1 Thessalonians 2:7, where Paul says, “But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother *tenderly cares for* her own children.” That’s the sense: “tenderly cares for.” My caring for my children, in this sense of “making them warm,” means that I make sure they are clothed and sheltered—that they are not so destitute that they are “left out in the cold.” A husband cherishes his wife, in this sense, then, when he tenderly cares for her physical needs, not unlike the way a loving mother does whatever is necessary to care for her child. The emphasis isn’t on the husband parenting the wife, but on so totally giving himself to providing for the needs of his wife.

#### A. Providing for Physical Needs

And these needs that a man is to **provide** for, are both physical and spiritual. In the first place, a man is to provide for his family physically. That is the most natural sense of “nourish” and “cherish” from Ephesians 5, as we’ve seen. But that’s also confirmed by the teaching of the opening chapters of Genesis, which have proven so foundational for us in our study of mankind’s identity. In Genesis chapter 2, after the text describes the creation of man from the dust, and then some of the beautiful features of the lush Garden of Eden, Genesis 2:15 says, “Then Yahweh God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to *cultivate* it and *keep* it.” Literally, to work it, and to watch over it. And we’ll get to that second word, but we’re concerned with that first word first. God put man into the garden to work! From the beginning of man’s existence, before his fall into sin, man was created to be a **worker**. Brothers, work is not a product of the curse. Man did not *become* a worker after the fall. His work got more difficult, but work itself is not a product of sin. Work is a man’s natural element. It is his original environment. And what was that original environment? It was Paradise! I know it may seem hard to believe—especially in our culture, which idolizes idleness, and leisure, and recreation, and retirement—but work is a part of the original paradise.

Man is a worker! We were created to be employed with something: to be ruling and subduing the earth according to God’s mandate—to be partnering with the God who completed His work of creation on the sixth day and rested from His work on the seventh (Gen 2:2); to be partnering with the God of whom Jesus said in John 5:17, “My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working”; to be working along with Him in such a way that through your labors the rest of the earth would reflect the order, beauty, and glory of the Garden of Eden. Men, one of our chief temptations in this life is the temptation to laziness, to procrastination, to indolence, to an undisciplined life; to view work as a necessary evil, rather than a blessing from heaven. The Bible tells us that when we get lazy, when we run from our responsibility to work, we’re acting against something native to our God-given constitution as men. Biblical men are not lazy. They

are workers—hard workers. And so you need to fight the temptation to slothfulness by considering that work is part of your identity, part of who God created you to be.

And the Lord your God has created you to work hard, precisely so that you can earn enough money to **provide** for the physical needs of those whom God entrusts to you to nourish and to cherish—especially your wife. And we see this even in the way the curse comes upon man and woman in Genesis 3. In response to their sin, God curses the man and the woman in different ways, according to the distinct spheres of responsibility that He has given to them and the roles He’s given them to fill. He curses the woman with respect to her domestic relationships—first with respect to childbearing, and then in her relationship to husband. Verse 16: “To the woman He said, ‘I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, in pain you will bring forth children.’” Then God says, “Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.” Her desire will be for her husband in the same way that sin’s desire was for Cain, in chapter 4 verse 7—namely, to rule over him. The woman is not cursed with the role of submission; that pre-dated the fall. No, she’s cursed with discontent with her role of submission, such that she desires to occupy her husband’s role and to rule over him, in a way that will breed conflict.

And then, God curses the man with respect to his vocation as a worker of the ground. Look at verses 17 to 19: “Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground.” Once again, God doesn’t curse Adam with work, the same way He doesn’t curse Eve with childbearing or submission to her husband. He curses them within their natural domain—within the roles He has already created them to occupy. And what would have been a delight and brought blessing now is difficult, and painful, and toilsome. But the key point to take away from this narrative is that God curses the woman with respect to her natural, pre-fall domain—which was to be a help to her husband and to bear and rear children. She is to be, as Titus 2:5 puts it, a worker at home. But then He curses the man with respect to his natural, pre-fall domain—which is to engage in breadwinning labor in order to **provide** for his wife and family.

All of this underscores the truth that the primary burden for putting food on the table and a roof over the heads of the family falls to the husband. Now, that does not mean that women cannot work. We’ll see when we look at the nature of biblical womanhood that woman is a worker. It doesn’t even mean that there aren’t seasons in life when a wife cannot work outside of the home (Piper, *TMM*, 87). But it does mean that a husband ought never to willingly put his wife in a position to feel the pressure of having to earn money so that the family can survive. She has other responsibilities that she must tend to to ensure that the family survives. She ought not to feel the burden of this one as well. *He* is the one who lays down his life in diligent, sacrificial labor to **provide** for his family’s needs. John Piper puts it this way: “...when there is no bread on the table it is the man who should feel the main pressure to do something to get it there. ... A

man will feel his [manhood] compromised if he, through sloth or folly or lack of discipline, becomes dependent over the long haul (not just during graduate school!) on his wife's income" (WTD, 39).

You say, "Mike, what if I'm not married? How can I discharge my duty of physical provision without a wife?" Well, you can still work hard at whatever it is the Lord has given you to do. Ecclesiastes 9:10: "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might." You can develop a strong work ethic—habits that will put you in a position to secure a job that will provide for a family one day. You can study diligently, as you pursue a vocation that will allow you to be depended on as the one who bears primary responsibility for physical provision. Men, your attitude cannot be, "Well, I don't have a wife or kids to provide for, so I can work part-time and take it easy." No! For one thing, you're never *going* to have a wife and kids if that's your attitude toward work! But further still: you weren't *made* to take it easy! You were made to work hard for six days and rest on one! And so, you can apply this teaching, even as a single man, by the way you prepare for being a provider.

But more than that: I think men can apply this principle in several ways, even in contexts with women who are not their wives. I think that this truth means that it's right for a man to pay for dinner on a date. Or, if you were out with a group of friends, and a friend forgot her wallet, it's fitting for one of the guys to pay for her meal. It's right for men to make themselves useful enough to help other friends with fixing things around the house—especially those tasks that a husband or a father would usually take care of. Just the other day, an older single lady came to the leadership for help with her living situation, where she needed someone to advocate for her in the midst of a dispute—the way a husband might do if he were in the picture. One of the young men was able to go with her and help her in that cause. That was a way of providing for her physical needs—not because she was part of the same household, but because she was part of the household of faith. And so, there many ways that single men can be a provider.

## B. Providing for Spiritual Needs

But not only must a man provide for physical needs. Scripture also calls men to provide for spiritual needs as well. Men are not only to be physical providers; they are to be spiritual providers as well. In the same way, brothers, that you are responsible to put food on the table so that the family is well-nourished, you are also responsible to put *spiritual* food on the table, so that the family may be sustained by the blessings of the Word of God and the means of grace.

And we see that in the some of the same passages we've been to. Back in Ephesians 5, husbands are called to love their wives after the pattern of Christ's love for the church—who "gave Himself up for her, *so that* He might *sanctify* her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or

wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.” Christ’s purpose in giving Himself up in sacrificial love for His bride was to purify her, to sanctify her. His aim was her moral excellence. Now, husbands, you are not able to sanctify your wives in the same way Christ does the church. But you *are* to be a sanctifying influence upon your wife. You are to order your life in the service of your wife’s spiritual growth. It falls to you to be strategic in plotting out ways to see your wife grow in appropriating the means of grace, to see her pursue deeper communion with Christ, to put off patterns and habits of sin and to put on patterns and habits of righteousness. You are to **provide** for her, spiritually.

We see this also in the early chapters of Genesis. I mentioned this already, but Genesis 2:15–17 describes God giving Adam the command not to eat from the tree, and then woman is created in the next paragraph. And so, God entrusted Adam with the responsibility to be Eve’s teacher of the Word of God (RST, 2:212). He was to instruct her concerning the command the Lord had given him, and to see to it that she apply it in the way God intended. Now, he fails miserably at that, of course. But we do see that the original design was for the man to instruct his wife in the ways of Yahweh. And we see the Apostle Paul reaffirm that in 1 Corinthians 14:35, where he speaks about women remaining silent in the churches, and then says, “If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home.” Husbands are to be competent enough in the Scriptures that they are able to answer their wives’ questions about spiritual matters.

And it’s not only their wives. In Ephesians 6, Paul commands children to obey their parents, and he uses that generic term *goneús* to speak of both mother and father. But then in verse 4, he specifically charges *fathers* to bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Now, of course mothers are to teach their children a whole host of things—including about the Lord and His Word. But this text teaches us that a special responsibility falls on fathers to **provide** for the spiritual growth and maturity of their children.

This means that a biblical man is a man of God. Brothers, you need to be a man of the Word—a man who knows the Word and studies the Word and loves the Word and practices the Word, so that you might know your God, and make your God known to those you have spiritual charge over. You are to be a man of prayer—of private prayer; a man like Jacob, who wrestles with the Lord on your knees, who refuses to let go of Him until you are blessed with the light of the Lord’s countenance upon you, so that you may go forth from the secret place transformed by that glory, with the light of that glory reflecting off of you, to be a sanctifying influence on those you’re entrusted to lead; a man who wages war against his own flesh and puts off sin and puts on righteousness. You are to be an exemplary man, as Paul exhorts the young men in Titus 2:7 to “in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds.” You are to be the spiritual pace car of the family. You set the spiritual pace for the others. You set a pattern that can be reliably followed. You can say with Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.” You’re to be a man who not only practices *what* you preach, but a man who practices



*before* you preach—because you recognize that the power of example often far outweighs the power of precept.

Being a spiritual **provider** means taking the lead in family worship. You are to be the initiative-taker in gathering the family for Bible-reading, prayer, and singing to the Lord. Structure your home around the study of the Word of God and prayer together. You are to be consistently praying for the sanctification of your wife and children, offering specific petitions for their growth in specific areas. That means you have your finger on the pulse of their spiritual needs, and you take those needs to the throne of grace and plead with Christ to reign in their lives. You are to lead your family to regular, vital participation in the local church. That means you will make it unthinkable for someone in your house to wake up on Sunday morning and ask, “Are we going to church today?” *Of course we are!* It’s the Lord’s Day! We get to gather with the people of God! We get to hear the skilled preaching of the Word! We get to have fellowship with our brothers and sisters!

Being a spiritual **provider** means making the spiritual atmosphere of your home one of discipleship. In Deuteronomy 6:7, Moses charges the people of God to teach His Word diligently to their children—to talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. It means driving the topics of conversation back to spiritual things, discussing moral and ethical issues, teaching your children how to assess the goings-on of the day through a biblical worldview.

And it also means taking the initiative in discipline. In Hebrews 12, as the author urges us to receive the Lord’s discipline as from a loving father, he assumes that fathers are the ones who lead in administering discipline to the children. Hebrews 12:7: “For what son is there whom his *father* does not discipline?” Verse 9: “We had earthly *fathers* to discipline us.” That doesn’t mean that mothers don’t administer discipline; it simply means that fathers lead in taking the initiative to bring correction and instruction to the children when necessary. It should never be that a husband sits passively by while an openly misbehaving child is dealt with by his mother because the father is too lazy to deal with him.

#### **IV. A Protector**

Well, so many rich applications of the truth that the biblical man is a provider. But we must hurry on to a **fourth mark of biblical manhood**, and that is, number four, that the biblical man is a **protector**.

Back in Genesis 2:15, where we learn that God put Adam in the garden “to cultivate it and *keep* it.” And that word translated “keep” is the Hebrew term *shāmar*, and it carries the connotation not only of maintaining the garden but watching over it. The same word is used in Genesis 3:24

when it speaks of the flaming sword that Yahweh stationed at the entrance to the Garden of Eden, it says, “*to guard* the way to the tree of life.” It’s used several times in the book of Job to speak of God “watching over” Job (29:2; cf. 13:27; 33:11). So, Adam was to guard the Garden. He was to watch over it. He was to be a **protector** from the very beginning of his existence.

And we also see this principle from Ephesians chapter 5. When we read that “Christ...loved the church and *gave Himself up for her*,” we need to remember what that “giving up” entailed. It meant the innocent Lord Jesus stepping in between His guilty bride and omnipotent Justice. The wrath of God burned hot against us, and threatened to break over our heads in the infinite horrors of eternal hell. We were in the gravest danger that anyone could conceive of. And what did Christ our Bridegroom do? He stood in front of us, and bore our condemnation in our place. “He was pierced through for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities” (Isa 53:4). “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse *for us*” (Gal 3:13). Romans 5:9 says that Christ died for us so that we would be “saved from the wrath of God through Him.” There has been no greater demonstration of **protection** in the history of the world than the way Christ protected His bride from the wrath of God that she so richly deserved! And so when Paul calls husbands to love our wives like Christ loved the church, he calls us, at the very least, to protect them at all costs (Piper, *TMM*, 86).

#### A. Protecting against Physical Danger

And in the same way that a biblical man provides both physically and spiritually, he also **protects** both physically and spiritually. In the first place, biblical men are to provide physical protection for women and children—and especially his own family. If there is a physical threat of any kind, “mature masculinity senses a natural, God-given responsibility to step forward and put himself between” that threat and the one he’s protecting (Piper, *WTD*, 41).

There are so many applications for this it’s hard to know how to illustrate it well, but I’ve always appreciated this one. If you and your wife are in bed at night, and you hear a noise, and it sounds like someone may be breaking into the house, you don’t turn to your wife and say, “Honey, we’re equal image-bearers of God. In Christ there is neither male nor female. I wouldn’t demean your self-worth by insisting that I go check on that noise! I went last time, and this is an egalitarian marriage, so—let me know how it goes.” It doesn’t matter if you’re 5’3 and 120 pounds and your wife is a black belt in jiu-jitsu. It’s hardwired onto your soul that, as the man, you go and protect your wife (Piper, *TMM*, 91).

But it doesn’t have to just be in the marriage relationship. If another man is physically threatening a woman—whether she’s related to you or not—the manly thing to do is to divert the threat from her to yourself. It can mean offering to walk a classmate or a co-worker to her car when it’s dark outside. It means standing on the street-side of the sidewalk. And it has nothing to

do with capacity or competency. John Piper put that helpfully. He said, “Women and children are put into the lifeboats first, not because the men are necessarily better swimmers, but because of a deep sense of honorable fitness. It belongs to masculinity to accept danger to protect women” (Piper, *WTD*, 42).

In July of 2020, a six-year-old boy from Wyoming named Bridger Walker saw that a German Shepherd was charging at his four-year-old sister, and he instinctively jumped between her and the dog. The German Shepherd bit him numerous times in the face and on the head. The boy survived, but he wound up needing 90 stitches in his face, and he’ll always have the scars. When his family asked why he put himself in harm’s way to protect his sister, he said, “If someone had to die, I thought it should be me” ([source](#)). And though he was only six years old, that boy behaved more like a man than many of the adult males that are heralded as heroes and role models in our day. “It belongs to masculinity to accept danger to protect women.” It doesn’t matter how physically strong you are. It doesn’t matter what size you are. It matters that God has made men to be **protectors**. And just like was true for our *Savior*, we ought to reason that, if someone has to die, it ought to be *us*, men, and not our wives, or sisters, or mothers, or daughters.

## B. Protecting against Spiritual Danger

But not only are men to provide **physical protection**, they are also to provide **spiritual protection**. Back in 1 Corinthians 16:13, where we get that classic exhortation to “act like men” and “be strong,” the first command in that series is: “Be on the alert.” Men are commanded to be spiritually watchful. You are to have an alertness, a sobriety, a readiness about you, so that you can spy out the spiritual dangers that threaten those you’re charged to lead, and issue warnings and perhaps even intervene, so that no spiritual harm comes to your loved ones.

And the spiritual dangers that threaten the Christian family are ever-present. Not only from the wicked, demonic thinking of the secular culture that assaults your family’s minds through the various media—movies, TV, Internet, the news. But also from the spiritual dangers of the false teaching of professing Christian preachers and teachers that threatens to corrupt one’s understanding of sound doctrine. This means that you will need to do what Paul says in Titus 1:9: to “hold fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that [you] will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.”

Men, you must know theology! You must know what the Bible teaches about God, and about Christ, and about the Holy Spirit, and about the Scriptures themselves; and about man, and sin, and salvation; and about the church, and spiritual gifts, and men’s and women’s roles, and about the last things. Why? So that you will be able to teach your family the truth and **protect** your family from error—error that, if embraced, leads to the shipwreck of faith and the destruction of

the soul. Paul says it to Titus in the next chapter as well. He tells “older men,” Titus 2:2 that they must be “sound in faith”—which is to say, to be sound in *the* faith: in that body of doctrine that was once-for-all delivered to the saints (cf. Jude 1:3). And then he tells the “young men” in Titus 2:7 that they must have “purity in doctrine.” Brothers, you are to be the resident theologian in your home, so that when Satan, who prowls about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, takes a run at your family—whether through temptation to corrupt doctrine or corrupt practice—you’re able to resist him, and **protect** them.

And that protection will often come in the form of bringing words of correction. If your wife or your children are being taken in by some false teaching or tempted to some pattern of unrighteous behavior, you need to correct them. You need to do it graciously; you don’t just run them over like a bulldozer: “This is wrong! Fix it!” No. You need to exercise the loving wisdom that Paul speaks about in Galatians 6:1, where he says, “If anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.” In humility, mindful of your own faults, you go to seek the benefit of your wife or your children, knowing that if they persist in courses that are dishonoring to God, they will forfeit His blessing. Unchecked, unrepentant sin brings spiritual misery. And you don’t want that for them. And so you protect them by offering loving correction.

Being a spiritual protector also means that you are laboring in prayer for your wife and children—praying that the Lord would not lead them into temptation but deliver them from evil; praying that He would lift up the light of His countenance upon them and give them peace; praying that He would satisfy them in the morning with His lovingkindness, that they would live in single-minded devotion to Him.

Being a spiritual protector will also mean setting standards for what TV shows, movies, and music will be allowed in the home. It will mean setting standards for what clothing will and will not be worn, explaining principles of modesty, ensuring that everything appropriate is done so that your wife and your daughters are protected from becoming the objects of the lustful glances of unprincipled men—“telling them when the way they dress means what they don’t think [or don’t realize] it means” (Piper, *TMM*, 90).

Being a spiritual protector means taking initiative in seeking reconciliation. If you know that there has been relational breakdown somewhere, you can’t let that strife fester, or it will turn into bitterness. That means, as I said last time, taking the lead in resolving conflict—racing to be the first one to say “I’m sorry. Will you please forgive me?” and not sitting back with your arms folded and pouting childishly about how “She needs to apologize because it was *her* fault!” And it means cultivating an entreatable, sweet spirit that is eager to grant forgiveness as soon as its asked of you—so that the sun doesn’t go down on anyone’s anger, and the devil is given no opportunity (Eph 4:26–27).

## Conclusion

The biblical man is a leader, a lover, a provider, and a protector. And the provision and protection that he furnishes to his wife and family is both physical and spiritual. This is what we must be, men. This is the standard that God's Word sets out for us—to fulfill our calling as *men* made in the image of God. This is how God has designed us. And though we fall woefully short of that design in practice because of the corruption of sin, remember brothers: in Christ we have redemption from those very transgressions, so that their penalty is paid and their power is broken. And we look forward to the day when even the presence of such sins are eradicated entirely—from ourselves and from the entire creation—so that Christ will finally have what He is worthy of from us.

But until then, we do walk in the strength of blood-bought forgiveness, of imputed righteousness, to engage in the Spirit-empowered, grace-filled fight for holiness. We have been raised with Christ to walk in newness of life. And so where we see our deficiencies, and our failures, and our sins unmortified, we can go before the Lord in prayer and do battle with our flesh, nailing that remaining sin to the cross, and putting it away from ourselves, unto the honor of our King; so that we might be the men that He has created us—and *re-created* us—to be. Oh, may it be that the men of Grace Community Church would be *men*.