

SESSION 1



MANHOOD AND COURAGE

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01

OUR JOURNEY TOGETHER

A. This is the first of four studies exploring at a _____ level
God's definition of manhood.

B. Why do we need this _____?

- It's hard to become what you can't define.
- Many men today find themselves either _____ at their manhood or _____ the latest version the world offers. Both options lead to problems and pain.

Proverbs 14:12:

"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."

- Without a God-defined vision of masculinity, men are _____ with their manhood today like never before.
 - More U.S. men ages 18 to 34 now live with their parents than with romantic partners.¹
 - About 1/3rd of men are either unemployed or out of the work force.²
 - "Deaths of despair" – those caused by suicide, overdose and alcoholism – have surged to unprecedented levels among men, rising between 56% and 387%, depending on the age cohort, over the past twenty years.³
 - 25% of husbands commit adultery.⁴
 - Close to half of all children of divorce in America have not seen their fathers in the past year.⁵

- Today, women are the sole breadwinners in 4 in 10 households with children.⁶

¹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/02/08/andrew-yang-boys-are-not-all-right/>

² <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/02/08/andrew-yang-boys-are-not-all-right/>

³ <https://www.statnews.com/2021/12/29/deaths-of-despair-unrecognized-tragedy-working-class-immiseration/>

⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/22/well/marriage-cheating-infidelity.html>

⁵ *Sex Matters*, Mona Charen, Crown Forum, New York, 2018, p. 186

⁶ *The Next America*, p. 12

02

GOD DEFINED MANHOOD

In **Genesis 1-2**, God calls Adam, the first man, to step up to four life-giving responsibilities that will not only define his manhood, but the manhood of every man after him.

A. A better man courageously follows God's _____.

- Man was created with a need for personal _____ to succeed.

Genesis 2:16-17:

“The Lord God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.”



B. A better man loves and protects God's _____.

Genesis 2:22:

"The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man."

C. A better man excels at God's _____.

Genesis 2:15:

"Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate and care for it."

D. A better man blesses God's _____ with his children.

Genesis 1:28:

"God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it..."

These four life-giving responsibilities serve as four pillars upon which every man can build for himself a strong, God-glorifying masculinity. In Part 1 of this "Manhood Defined" series, we will examine what it means for a man to courageously follow God's Word. What does that look like? How do you do it?

03

SOME HELPFUL PERSPECTIVES ON COURAGE

A. Courage is not the absence of _____. It is _____ forward in the face of fear.

“ I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear. - NELSON MANDELA

B. Men strongly relate to _____.

“ The fight is here; I need ammunition, not a ride.
- UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY

“ Our lives are not fully lived if we're not willing to die for those we love, for what we believe. - MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

C. Courage is not just a “man thing.” Women are courageous too! But we expect courage from men _____ when danger appears!

- The Birkenhead Drill: _____ and _____ first.
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04

DANGEROUS WORLDS

A. Adam's Garden of Eden

- We think of this garden as an idyllic, beautiful, much-to-be-enjoyed paradise. But this garden was also a _____.

- The garden was inhabited by a dangerous _____. Because of that constant threat, man's only hope of surviving and thriving was in following the clear instruction of God's Word.

Genesis 3:1-6:

"And the serpent said, 'Did God really say, 'You can't eat from any tree in the garden'?' The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden. But about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, 'You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.''" "No! You won't die," the serpent said to the woman. "In fact, God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Then the woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate it."

- In this moment, Adam was called to courageously step forward and follow the instruction God had previously given him. Instead, he is overcome by the serpent's false promises, by his willingness to join Eve, and by his own spiritual "_____" passivity.
- The story of the Garden becomes a tragic story of failed _____. With it, Adam's story becomes one of failed _____.





B. Our World as Men

- Like Adam's garden, our world is good and beautiful, and filled with an abundance of opportunities and enjoyments. But it too is a _____.

- We have the same _____ Adam faced.

1 Peter 5:8:

"Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."

- We too will be confronted by his lies over life's boundaries and sin's consequences ("You won't die!"). He uses these seductions in tempting us with ...
 - Love of money
 - Lust and sexual temptation
 - Sense of entitlement
 - Pride and/or wanting to appear perfect
 - Envy
 - Shortcuts to success
 - Gluttony
 - Alcohol and drugs
 - Spiritual apathy
- And when we sin, we suffer the same _____ as Adam.
 - Guilt and shame
 - Fear
 - Loss of transparency
 - Isolation

- Shunning responsibility and blaming others
- Self pity
- Because our garden is dangerous and our enemy wants to kill us, God gives us his Word which provides _____ and leads to life.

John 10:10:

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”

05

THE CALL TO COURAGEOUSLY FOLLOW GOD’S WORD

A. Courage has been a key ingredient to real manhood since Adam. With it, we press God’s Word into the dangers, challenges, temptations, and uncertainties of life. Courage takes God’s Word into the “war zones” of our lives to do battle!

- Courage is faith in _____.

James 2:26:

“Faith without works is dead.”

B. Spiritual courage is not natural, but _____. It grows as our relationship with God grows.

- Courage to follow springs to life when we daily _____ and _____ our lives to God and His Holy Spirit.

Psalm 27:14:

“Wait for the Lord. Be strong and let your heart take courage. Yes, wait for the Lord.”

C. So practically, how do we _____?

- We must first look to God and _____ He is there to _____ us.

Deuteronomy 31:6 (NIV):

“God goes with you; He will never leave you or forsake you.”

Philippians 4:13:

“I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.”

- We must carry our _____ in God to the fight.

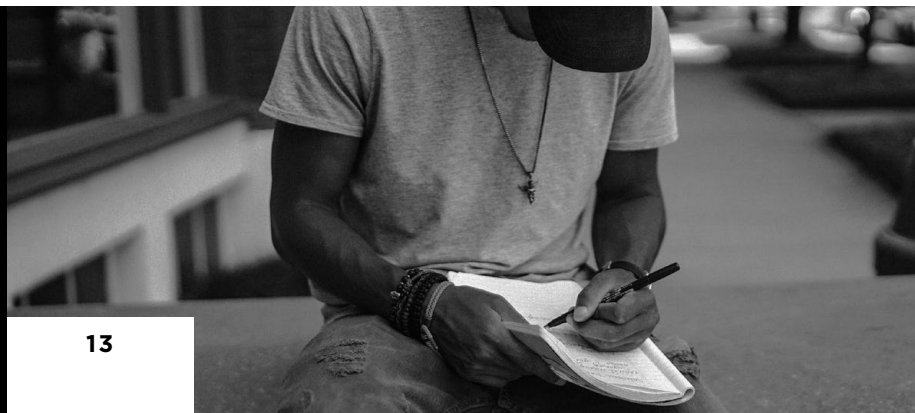
Joshua 1:6:

“Be strong and courageous!” (“Rak Chazak”)

- We must _____ step into the fight.

2 Corinthians 2:14:

“Thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ.”



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What's an example of courage that you find especially inspiring?
Share it and tell why?
2. Today we learned, or were reminded, that we live in a spiritual war zone and have a very real enemy "prowling around" seeking to ruin us. How does that reality make you feel? In what ways have you experienced the devil and his temptations in your life? Explain.
3. What's one area of life that's difficult for you to courageously follow God's Word? Be specific. How could applying what you learned today help you? Explain.

YOUR BETTERMAN QUESTION:

Before our next session, take a moment this week to reflect on your notes, and then answer the following question: What possible action step could I take from this session that could make me a better man? Write your answer in the space below.





MY SPIRITUAL LIFE STORY

AN INVITATION

Before coming back for Session 2, we want to invite you to spend some extended time this week with your table group members sharing with one another your spiritual life stories. So today, your table leaders will help you schedule this time to meet. Here at the beginning of your journey into “Courageously Following God’s Word”, this storytelling meeting is a special opportunity to strengthen your table relationships and add depth and context to your future, weekly BetterMan discussions.

WHEN YOU MEET

- Have your spiritual storytelling meeting in a private, comfortable, undisturbed setting. Provide lite refreshments. A table leader’s home is a great option for this gathering.
- Allow at least two and a half hours for this meeting.
- Your table leaders will lead you through this sharing time.
- This is a time for everyone to have the opportunity to personally tell his spiritual life story. Each person will have up to 15 minutes to share. (Table leaders will keep time and give you a “heads up” when you need to begin wrapping up your story after 14 minutes.)
- To help prepare you for sharing your spiritual story, you will be given 5 minutes at the beginning of the meeting to write down your personal thoughts and answers under the three categories listed on the following page. Even better, you can prepare for sharing your story in advance by writing your answers down before you meet. These written reflections will help to focus and guide you as you share your spiritual story with your table-mates.
- Table leaders will share their spiritual stories first. After everyone has shared his story, take a few minutes for the group to reflect and comment on what they’ve just heard. What stood out in these stories? Did any common themes emerge? What was most impactful?
- Enjoy this special time together!



MY SPIRITUAL LIFE STORY

- Briefly share your spiritual background and the beliefs you were taught growing up. How did this spiritual upbringing, or lack of it, impact you? Was it good, bad, or both?

- What three words or phrases would you use to spiritually describe yourself now? Tell why you chose these words.

- What is your greatest spiritual challenge ... desire ... struggle ... question ... going into the future? Pick one and tell why.
