

DEFINING MASCULINITY

by Matt Chandler

I want to tackle what I believe is just a massive topic. And it's not going to be easy to do, but here's what I want to talk about. For the next three weeks, I want to talk about men, and I want to talk about masculinity. And I want to talk about what being a man is, and I want to talk about what God created men for. It's a complex subject, and I know a lot of women are like, "It's not complex, alright. Feed him, hug him, he's fine." I know there are those of you who don't think it's that complex. But did you know that 1 Corinthians 11 says that men are the glory of God? That's a really big, broad, massive thing. So I'm going to try to tackle it. I want to define it tonight, and next week I want to talk about man as husband. The week after that I want to talk about man as father. Now, if you're a woman in here, we have addressed women. In fact, we've addressed it just a month or so ago. And so, we're going to do men now. And here, I don't want to offend you. I'm not trying to offend you in any way, but here's my promise to you: no matter who you are as a woman, you're affected by men. You either have one, you're married to one or you want one or you had one and now don't want one. But all of us are affected. And so, what I want to do is biblically lay out what God has commanded them to be, and if they'll hear that, then everybody's better off. But here's the deal I need you to make with yourself. If you try to play the role of the Holy Spirit in any of this, you will absolutely destroy everything that the Holy Spirit works through the word tonight. If we get in the car tonight and you're like, "Did you hear him?," it's just going to go bad for you. And I know some of you are stronger; you're not going to listen to me here because you can make him listen. I'll accept your apology next week. Let's go.

Genesis chapters 1, 2 and 3 says that God creates the entire universe. He creates it rhythmically, beautifully and everything's functioning where it's supposed to function and everything's working perfectly. And He creates the earth, and on the majority of the earth, He puts this wild, untamed, rugged landscape. And in the middle, the Scriptures say He plants the garden, the garden of Eden. And within Eden, everything is trimmed and it's nice and it works well and it's not untamed, wild and rugged like the rest of the earth. And He plants that there, and then the Scriptures say that He makes man and woman. In His image, he makes them both. Now this is pretty key because the truth is men and women are created equally but distinctively. The argument has never been equality. We are absolutely equal in the same way that Jesus and God are both God and equal, but different. So men and women are equal, but we're absolutely different. And God has made us distinctly the way we are for his purposes. And I don't think you have to be a genius or a sociologist or even a good reader to understand this; I just think you have to have kids. My son receives love from me by wrestling, head butting. He wants deep pressure, deep tickle. He wants to fight, he wants to wrestle, he wants to bite me. This is what my son wants. My son wants hard play and hard touch; that's what he wants. He is aggressive; that's what he is. I was out of town all this week. I flew back in on Thursday. Since I've walked in the door, he is tackling me, throwing stuff at me, shoving down his sister, just daring me for a fight. I mean, he wants me to work him; that's what he wants. He's begging me to rough him up; he's begging me. My daughter, on the other hand, doesn't want any of that. She wants me to dote on her. She changes clothes thirty-two times a day, four less than her mother. I probably will pay for that later. What she wants is, every time she's changed any bit of it, her shoes, her dress, she wants me to stop what I'm doing, she wants me to turn to her and she wants me to tell her how beautiful she is. She wants me to play with her hair. She wants me to tell her stories. She wants to cuddle; this is what my daughter wants. My daughter doesn't want me to body slam her on the bed; that's not what she wants. She wants to talk. My daughter perpetually says, "Do you know what?..." and then she talks. For hours and hours, she talks. Here would be another example. Right before I flew to Seattle, I'm sitting on the couch and "The Last Samurai" is on and a Japanese man is beating the mess out of Tom Cruise with a stick...awesome. And my son, who is not in the TV deal, stares at that television smiling, looking at me, looking back at the TV going, "This is legit? You can beat men with sticks?" And I'm like, "Yes, you can." On the other hand, my daughter is going, "Can you change the channel?" It makes her nervous. She doesn't like it. It's bothering her. She doesn't understand. So you don't have to be a brain surgeon to realize that they're different.

Now, I'm not trying to go overboard with this. My son does things that aren't as aggressive. Like, for whatever reason, he likes playing with my daughter's Barbies. But I don't panic about that; I just have a

talk with him. I'm like, "Look buddy, every man I know wants to play with naked women, but here's the rules. There's a righteous way to do that, and there's an unrighteous way to do that. And right now, you're unrighteous, baby. So put it down." So we have that talk. Was that over the line? Was that bad? You can't do that in church? Alright, I apologize. He also, for whatever reason, likes Lauren's shoes. He loves them. And the more sparkly they are, he loves them. He'll put them on. I mean just a father's nightmare, your son in a diaper and pink pumps walking through the house. So I'm not trying to go overboard; he does those things. He also is a very sensitive little boy. He's very sensitive. And on the other side of things, my daughter likes climbing up trees and jumping out of them. And I'm not trying to make some blanket statement that says your daughter can't be aggressive or have some tomboy in her or that your little boy can't be sensitive and like to paint or dance. Because I don't believe those things to be true, but on a whole, little boys, little girls receive love very differently. And this is God showing us, saying to us, "I've made these things distinct. They're not the same thing. They're different." Now, God creates this giant planet, most of which is very rugged and untamed, puts the man in a garden that is tame and not as rugged, is well kept, well put together. He creates the man, this is pre-woman, sets him in the garden and says, "Make the rest of the earth look like this. It's going to take a long time, and you're going to need a lot of help. Have a lot of babies." And you get Eve, and He says, "Be fruitful and multiply. Subdue the earth." So here's what happens. God creates the man to be a cultivator. And here's what I mean by that. God creates men, all men, to build and create and to continue the growth of whatever we built and created. We've been designed by God to cultivate, to build things, to sustain them, to make them as big and as awesome as possible. It's what men are. You see it everywhere. I'll give you an example. It's a funny thing to me that thirty year old men are still keeping track of what they bench press. Why? Now, I'm not saying don't bench press. Get your bench on. But what I'm saying to you is that why in the world are we, as thirty year olds, on creatine monohydrate, trying to bench press 315lbs? We've got to get bigger, we've got to get better, we've got to get stronger. You can also watch a man discover a new sport, play it twice and then spend \$10 grand on equipment. I mean, you run like a block and a half on the treadmill, and next thing you know, you have a \$400 heart monitor watch. God put us together like that. We want to get better, we want to be the best, we want to build. What's the mantra of every man? Whether it's cars, homes, technology, it's just "Bigger, bigger, better, faster, bigger, bigger..." That's what we want. We will throw away our old phone even though it's perfectly good just to get the new one that's faster or has more little gadgets on it that we'll never use. Because we're cultivators. We were designed for it.

We were designed to cultivate our wives, to love, nurture, encourage and build in them so that they would be a Psalm 128, which says they would be a fruitful vine. We were created by God to cultivate our children, to discipline, to love, to encourage, to rebuke and to make sure of their steady progress. It's what we were created for. We were created to grow things, to cultivate things, to build things, to make them as big and as deep and as wide as possible. Have you ever seen a business man whose business levels off or is in decline? Isn't he just absolutely distressed? Yeah, because we're builders. We want to build. It's in us. We can't shake it, nor do I think we should. Listen, we were meant to build, and that's why we need something to do. We need something to build. Nothing is as dangerous as a bored man. Men get bored, and they get in trouble. And I'll say this, this is a blanket statement: I've never met a lazy, undisciplined man who wasn't in inner turmoil. If you find a lazy, undisciplined man, you'll find a heart, when all is said and done, if you strip away all the bravado, that is scared, fearful, wounded, something's gone wrong. Because we weren't designed for that. And that's why even lazy, undisciplined men have giant fantasy lives. They think about scenes in "Braveheart" with them running beside William Wallace. They play a lot of paintball. What I mean by that is even the lazy, undisciplined ones still feel the call to be part of something bigger than themselves and to build something and to be a part of greatness. It's in all of us. It's why we follow sports the way we do. It's why we have teams despite the fact that we don't play. "That's my team." "Really? When did they draft you? Oh, never. Ha ha ha." So, this is men; this is what we are. And I don't think we should apologize for it. But here's the problem. When men have not submitted their lives to Christ, they're still cultivators but they cultivate bad things.

Want to hear something even harder than that? Even when you're trying to cultivate right things, it's unbelievably difficult. Let me show you why. Go to Genesis 3. Genesis 3 is after the rhythmic that God made fractured and threw everything kind of off. And so, God talks to the serpent and curses it. God talks to the woman and curses her. And then, God talks to the man and curses him, but there's

something really interesting in how God curses the man and I want you to see it. Verse 17, *"And to Adam he said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it', cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.'"* Now, I want to point this out to you. This is going to be heavy stuff. I'm just warning you out of the gate. God, when He curses man because of sin, not only curses man, but He curses what he was supposed to cultivate. So, even when a man tries to cultivate what's right, it wars against him. So when a man tries to build and cultivate and work with even good, positive things, those things that he's trying to cultivate will, at times, instead of producing fruit, produce thorns and thistles. I'll give you an example. If you've really tried to speak life into your children, if you've really tried to talk to them about the glories of Christ, even if you've really just tried to lead them in a way that's good and positive, how difficult is that? I mean, how often are they like, "Mmm naw, I'm alright?" If you've noticed, most of us have these things in our minds where we're like, "Oh, I'm going to do this and all the bills are going to get paid. And I'm going to do that. And that's going to get done. And this is how I'm going to handle this. And this is going to get done..." but it never happens. Like every time you're there, the transmission fails or something. And then what happens in young men is, young men are like, "I'm going to get a woman that ain't that much work and a new house and a new car. And then I'll be set." That's a cool little fantasy world you've developed there in your head. I'll tell you that there's nothing this side of eternity that's not a fixer-upper, nothing. No woman, no car, no house, there's nothing this side of death that doesn't require effort and work. And ladies, I'm just talking to the men tonight. Have you ever tried to love a woman like Christ loves the church, in that He gave His life for her? Have you tried that? A) it's not easy to begin with, and B) sometimes a woman doesn't want to be loved that way. It wars against. This is difficult stuff. God's going, "I want you to nurture, encourage, love, build...it's going to be hard."

Alright, so why? Why would God wire it this way? You would think that God would say, "If you both love Me, I'm going to make marriage a snap for you, so everyone will know how good I am." Doesn't that sound like a better plan? I've brought it to Him twice. I've gone, "Now listen, I've got an idea..." What if you talked to your kids about the glory of Christ and they were just like, "Yes, I don't even question you, father." I mean, how amazing would that be? Why does God say, "I want you to cultivate it, I want you to love your wives like Christ loved the church, I want you to pour into your children, love them, nurture them, discipline them, I want you to work hard at work, I want you to be cultivators of everything you touch, and it's going to be a war every day of your life." "Why though? You're God. How about I love You and You make things easy for me?" And listen, if you like that message, it gets preached everywhere, so just find another church. They'll tell you that it can be that way. The only problem with historically is the Bible, but whatever, we don't have time right now. Why would God wire it this way? Let me tell you why I think He wired it this way. Nothing, no book, no Bible study, no song or conference has taught me the weight of God's love and the glory of the gospel like trying to be a man. Here's what I mean. Trying to love my wife like Christ loves the church and finding that very, very difficult to do and finding it at times not yielding the fruit that I wanted...Here's a better one. My four year old, Audrey, is just my joy. I love having a son, but that daughter owns you. It's a weird deal. For whatever reason, over and over again, Audrey thinks I am an enemy to her joy, when in the end, I want her joy and happiness more than she could ever comprehend, and I see better than she does. And when I say, "Hey, no candy right now," I'm not trying to steal joy from her, I'm trying to increase joy for her. And when I say, "Don't climb on the back of the couch when there's a window right there. You could fall through it," I'm not trying to rob her of the exhilaration of walking on the back of the couch, I'm trying to make sure she doesn't cut herself to ribbons. And so what ends up happening in that moment, when I'm trying to increase joy and increase life and increase happiness and my daughter goes, "I don't want any of that. I'll get it my own way. I'll do it my own way. I want what I want," and she wars against the joy that I so desperately want for her, in one instance, I start to discipline and in another, God's going, "This is playing out like another story I know, the one where I try to lead you like this and you're like, 'No, I want my stuff;' and you are a four year old girl. This is very similar to Me, Chandler. So, while Audrey's in the corner thinking about it, why don't you go to the other corner and think about it over there?" All of a sudden, by trying to nurture and love and point Audrey to Christ and finding it war against me, I start to understand how big and beautiful the gospel is, that despite the fact that I war against the hand of God, He continues to

love, pursue and extend grace. Or in those moments that I lavish upon Lauren affection and romance and all of those things and she doesn't respond the way I want her to respond, all of a sudden I start to understand the gospel, I understand the depth of the love of Christ for me, the depth of His grace, the depth of His forgiveness. Do you know why it's hard? Because when it's hard, the we understand the gospel, when it's hard, we walk in humility and when it's hard, we'll be dependent on God. If it was easy, none of those things would be there; they just wouldn't be there. So listen, even the fact that it's difficult is God's love, mercy and grace. And I know some of you don't think it's difficult because you're single, but have you ever wondered why it's so difficult to pray with your wife but it's not so difficult to pray with somebody else? Do you think maybe there's some principalities at war against us?

So what are we going to do? Because God's like, "I want you to cultivate, I want you to nurture, I want you to love, I want you to sacrifice, I want you to do these things, but it's going to be hard." Okay, so what do we do? 1 Corinthians 16, let's learn how to walk in this, this being cultivators but finding everything we're supposed to cultivate warring against us, whether that be business, whether that be family, whether that be wife, whether that be child, whether that be friendships, whether that be relationships. We've been called to cultivate, it's going to war against us, there are going to be times where it produces thorns and thistles vs. fruit. So how do we walk in this deal that God's created? Look at this. Verse 13, "*Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men,...*" That's always an ego shot. Any time you hear, "Why don't you act like a man?," it's just a little shot to the man. "*Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.*" Okay, so how do we walk in this system where we're called by God to be cultivators, but what we've been called to cultivate will at times war against us? It's in this text. Be watchful. Here's what I think this text means. Everyone of us, as men, knows where we're weak. If you say you don't tonight, I would call you a liar. We know if we've got lust issues, we know if we've got fear issues, we know if we've got pride issues, we know if we've got anger issues. We know where we're weak. We know what keeps us from being the kind of men that God's called us to be. Well the text says be watchful. If you know that's from where it's going to come, if you know that's where you're going to get attacked, if you know that's how you're going to get overwhelmed, if you know that's where you're going to stumble and fall, then be watchful over that area of your life, build defenses over that area of your life. Be watchful. If when you get tired, everything unravels for you, be watchful. Maybe you shouldn't watch the "Daily Show;" maybe you should go to bed. Maybe the second SportsCenter, right after you finished watching the first, isn't a necessity; maybe sleep is. Maybe instead of living off of red meat and coffee; maybe, God forbid, you eat a vegetable, drink some water. I didn't go crazy. I didn't say do pilates; I'm just saying try a green bean once in a while if you getting tired is the thing that starts unraveling. If you watching TV makes you unravel, then be watchful. This isn't a game. Do you think this is a game? Be watchful. You know where you're weak, everybody does. Be watchful. If you know where they're going to attack from, wouldn't it make some sense to build some defenses there?

Then it says stand firm in your faith. And I don't need to spend a lot of time on this. We just spent a month on it. Listen, walk in what you believe. Because if you're giving God and the gospel and all those things lip service but you're not really walking in it, then good luck. I don't even know why you do that. That to me is church as a hobby, and I think church might be one of the lamest hobbies in the history of the world. Get a boat. Seriously, boats are great. Boats are fun, you can wake board or ski behind them or inner tubes are great if you're little. Get a boat. I don't understand. Walk in it, stand firm in our faith. What good is all the power that God has offered us if we're not ever going to tap into it?

"Act like a man," he says, and then he follows it up with, "Be strong." I'll tell you some of the pain and sorrow involved in being a pastor. This thing that we're talking about tonight, men being men, there are casualties in this game, casualties and monumental losses and setbacks. I mean, this isn't for the faint of heart. I've been married for eight years, I've been with Lauren for ten, and I'm dysfunctional and come from a very dysfunctional background. And so our first couple years of marriage were very, very difficult. And it wasn't just my junk; she had some junk too. And when you put two dysfunctional people in a house together, it goes bad. And the Lord was really, really merciful, and the last four years have been just a dream. But what if things go bad again tomorrow? I love the moves. I'm a big movie guy. In fact, I flew in real late to St. Louis on Wednesday night. I mean, the plane

landed at 10:00, and we rushed to watch "The Bourne Ultimatum." And did you know they served liquor in the movie theaters in St. Louis, like beer and wine? They have a bar. Like, you could get a gin and tonic. I don't think it's a good idea, knowing what I know about men, to mix beer and "The Bourne Ultimatum." All of a sudden, you've got guys walk out going, "You want some of me?" I mean, it's just seems like a bad combination to me. I love movies, but let me tell you just one of the biggest lies, especially targeted at our females. There is not a woman on this planet that's going to complete me or heal me. It doesn't matter how much sex I have, it doesn't matter how sweet she is, it doesn't matter if she cleans the house and cooks dinner and does all that. None of those things matter. There's not a woman on this planet that will heal the deep parts of me. And there's not a man alive that will fulfill you. It's just a myth. And we see it all the time. We see girls who are real lonely being single, so they get married and they become uber-lonely, because they think some dude is going to fulfill them but in the end, it can just get even worse. But here's what I think is the call on my life as a believer in Christ, who's submitted to Christ and got married. Now my role in submission to Christ is to cultivate, encourage, love and build up my wife regardless of her response. Whew! That ain't for the faint of heart. What if I'm trying to love, encourage and build up and she just decides that she doesn't want any bit of me anymore? What if she just goes, "No thank you?" What if she doesn't respond? What if she doesn't want to lead me but she just doesn't respond the way I want her to respond? I can tell you what I want to do, but my call is to keep loving, keep walking, keep encouraging every day of my life, no matter how long until the Holy Spirit breaks into her heart. That's why this text says be strong. Be strong! I mean, you just want to talk about self-sacrifice and all the valiant themes that men love so much, this is a big one. "Be strong in submission to Christ, love your wife, love your children, be that cultivator that I've called you to be. Be strong, because it might be in the next life that you finally get all the peace you're looking for." Man, that doesn't preach well, but it's the truth.

And then he ends it like this. Verse 14, "*Let all that you do be done in love.*" This thing that we're talking about, being the cultivators that God's asked us to be...impossible. It's impossible, man. It's absolutely impossible. In fact, it's comical. I mean, if you start talking to other people like this, they're like, "Man, my wife, she just doesn't respond to me well. I mean, I'm just trying and she doesn't let me..." You're like, "Keep loving her." "Why should I keep loving her? She doesn't do anything I want..." "Yeah, yeah, okay. Just keep loving her more. Love her more." "What?" "Buy her flowers." "I can't stand her." "Buy her lots of flowers." "I mean, she's this and she's that." "You want to really get her? Go ahead and clean the whole house. Clean all of it, bathrooms too. Clean it. Serve her, that's what you do." "Huh?" "Yeah. Serve her, romance her, love her, woo her." "Are you serious?" "Absolutely serious." I mean, this is a little bit different message, isn't it? "She spit in my face." "Get her a bottle of water and get a towel." Or we could move off of marriage and talk about children. Equally as difficult. No, we're going to need the transforming power of the Holy Spirit or this ain't happening, man.

I love the promises of God. Like, I'm 33 and I'm expecting to live to at least 36. So I look at the span of my life, and let's say I live to 70. Can you really do that for that long? Can you really live like that for that long? And I look at it like that, and I'm like, "That's impossible." But the Scriptures just go, "I'll give you everything you need to love and lead Lauren, to love and lead Audrey and Reid, to love and lead the Village Church and to pursue Me with your whole heart. I'll give you everything you need for that, today. You just make it to bed tonight. I'll give you all the strength you need. And when you wake up in the morning, I'll give you all the strength you need for that day." That's a phenomenal promise from God.

Alright, so what are my hopes in all of this? Well, I think that my hopes are that there will be a lot of men here. Not males, that's easy. You just got born that way. I hope that there would be a lot of men here. And listen, all of us are failing at some level at this. That's why the cross is such a beautiful thing. I don't think there's anybody in here that's like, "Follow me, boys." I don't think there are. If there are, I sure wouldn't follow them. Proud and arrogant, I wouldn't follow that guy. I'd follow the guy that's like, "I'm trying. Here's how I'm trying." That's the guy I want to get around. And you know, we're all failing to some degree, so here's what I'm saying. If you're not careful, and here's what I know about guys, if guys feel like they're walking in shame or they feel like they're failing, they're just like, "Oh, forget it," and they'll just go the complete opposite way. And I'm hoping that you won't

do that. I'm hoping that where you need to ask for forgiveness as men, you'll do it. Because maybe you do need to ask forgiveness from your wife. Because here's what I know. Some of us, we're cultivating well at certain points. Like we get to work, and we're cultivating well at work and we're building and empire, but "My wife and kids, that's here. Here's some money; cultivate yourself. Here's some cash; get you a skirt. Hey, go to the spa." Or you've got the guy that's cultivating his wife and loves to play with the kids, loves to hang out but is a bum at work, just an absolute bum at work. Or you've got the guy whose house is all falling apart, sitting on the couch at 1:30 on a Saturday afternoon in his underwear still. His wife's all stressed out, everything's all busted up, he's watching a rerun of a college football game from last year. I mean, are you serious? Listen, I think that the more you work and the more you cultivate, the more you'll understand the gospel. And so, although for some of you young guys, it seemed like a really good deal for 17 of you to live in one apartment and split the rent, I think it might be counterproductive. I think it might be costing you an understanding of the gospel. So this is my hope. My hope is that we would grow up and be men. I'm not talking about camping or hunting or all those things. I'm talking about being men, being cultivators, growers, nurturers, builders. And then, here's my hope for our ladies. Women, if you're married, my hope is that you would be a quiet spiritual force in your home. And what I mean by that is, instead of jawing at your husband's failures on the way home tonight, instead that you would quietly pray and hope. And for our single girls, my hope is that God would put in your heart a deep and consistent desire for a man, not a male. So this is my hope. I say this all the time, but it's going to be climbing Everest. But men, you've got a few hours left in the day, an Christ has given us all we need to be what He's asked us to be today. Man, I hope for us. I hope for us. Let's pray. "Father, I have such hope in my heart for our young men in here. I have such hope that we might be watchful and that we might be strong and that we might love and encourage and speak well of our wives, and that we might love and encourage and rebuke and be part of a discipline of our children, and that we might be hard workers at home and at work, and that we would be men who love our Sabbath. We love that day off, but in the other six days, we war. And it's going to take You working powerfully in us, because our broken self is going to make us want to think about us and what we've earned and what we're owed. We've got a thousand other people whispering in our ears things that are contrary to the gospel call in our lives. I praise You that You've given us enough grace and enough strength to be the type of men You've called us to be today. And so, may we tap into that strength to ask for forgiveness where we need to ask for forgiveness. And may we, in the morning, ask for the strength to get through tomorrow. And I thank You that there's really deep joy and really deep life and a lot of vitality and fulfillment in being a man. And as difficult as it is, as exhausting as it can be at times, O the glory that is created in homes and in children and in workplaces when we submit to You. So make us stronger than we are, and make us braver than we are.

It's for Your beautiful name. Amen

PART 2 – MEN AS HUSBAND

By Matt Chandler

If you have your Bibles, let's go to Genesis 2, and then we'll move from there to Ephesians 5. Here's what we're going to do. I don't want to lie to you; I want to come right out of the gate. Male and female alike, we're going to stand in front of the mirror tonight, and I'll tell you how I hope it goes. I can't control how it goes; I'm just going to tell you how I hope it goes. It could go one of three ways. You can stand in front of the mirror and hate what you see and get discouraged and walk away from it and just let yourself go. You can look in the mirror and hate what you see and hate it and start taking steps, even small ones. And for some of you, you might even be able to look in the mirror and go, "I'm getting better." But my hope is one of the latter two, not the first, male and female alike. I won't recap much of last week. If you missed it, grab it off the podcast.

Let's go. Genesis 2, we'll pick it up in verse 18. What's happened up to this point in the story is that God creates the entire world. He creates the majority of that world to be wild, untamed and rugged. And then, right in the middle of this wild, untamed, rugged world, He puts the garden of

Eden, and then He puts the man in the garden of Eden and He tells him to cultivate the rest of the world and make it look like Eden. And so, although male and female we are equal, men and women have different natures. And I said this isn't complex. Just watch children. You don't have to be a sociologist or some kind of brilliant academic; all you have to do is watch. Boys will build stuff and knock it over; girls get two objects and make them friends. They just do. They don't even have to be real objects. That's what they do. Boys build, kick, knock over. And we talked about it last week, how there is sometimes crossover, but on a whole, men have been designed by God to be builders and cultivators and creators. And we talked last week that, because of the fall, everything man is supposed to cultivate will at times war against him, and it will be difficult to be what God said a man is going to be. Now, God creates the garden of Eden, throws Adam in there and tells him to make the rest of the world look like Eden. Now, let's pick up the story. Starting in verse 18, *"Then the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."* This is very interesting that before the fall occurs, before sin enters into the world, God watches the man cultivate. So man is doing what man's been called to do. He's cultivating, building, and God looks at it and goes, "Uh uh, not good for this guy to be alone." And that's not part of the fall. "It's not good for this guy to be alone." So let's look at the answer. Verse 19, *"Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him."* So, God says, "This man, to be the cultivator, to be the builder, to be the creator I need him to be, I want him to be, I designed him to be, he needs help getting there." And so, God creates out of the ground every animal imaginable and brings them to the man. Every one of those animals, he has absolute dominion over, and among everything, there's not a suitable helper. Out of everything, there's nothing that's suitable to help the man to be the full-on cultivator that God created him to be. So let's watch this. Verse 21, *"So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,..."* Do you see how it breaks there in your text? That's because he's singing. He all of a sudden goes poetic. Now catch this. He saw every animal imaginable; he's like, "Cow, dog, giraffe..." God brings a naked woman on the scene, all of a sudden we're singing. Like, he's just been unmoved by it all; a naked woman shows up all of a sudden...singing. *"This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."* "Woman" in Hebrew basically means "mine." I love that part. "Dog, cat, giraffe....oh, that one is mine Mine, that's what that is." Now look, *"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."* Verse 25 is the happiest it's ever been on planet Earth. *"And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed."* And from that moment on, all men are trying to get back to verse 25. They want to be naked somewhere with a woman with fruit and everything going well. And so God says, "This man needs help becoming the cultivator that I've designed him to be. He'll need the woman," and He creates the woman to help the man become all that God created him to be, before the fall. This is very interesting.

Now, I want to say couple words to the single men and women in here. There's some weird things that have happened among Evangelicals, and I blame it mainly on really bad Christian dating books...courting, whatever. Call it what you want. Kiss it goodbye. Do whatever you want to do, but I want to say this. In this moment, God sees that it's not good for man to be alone, creates the woman, and in so doing, He creates marriage. He creates marriage. "It's not good for this man to be alone. For this man to become all that I want him to be, I will give him woman. And woman combined with man will make him the cultivator, the creator that I want him to be." But something's happened in Evangelical circles where, if you're single, you're supposed to not want to get married but be content in a spot, and that's somehow more glorifying than to follow God's wiring of you to want a mate. So in the end, what happens is you walk around like a liar. I mean poor young ladies, almost all of them have been told "As soon as you're content, God will send you a man." So you've got hundreds of thousands of women running around acting content. "I'm content. Where is he?" And you've got other guys going,

nag. "I'll tell you whatever you want to know." Proverbs says loving a woman like this is like trying to grab hold of oil; loving a woman like that is like trying to stop the wind. And normally here, we're real sweet on the wives and we beat up on the husbands, because most of the time, I think it's our failure, but you can't get around the fact that the Bible's very, very clear that there are certain women who destroy certain men's chances at manhood altogether. I mean, they absolutely take it from them and then, what I've found, are very verbal about complaining about their man's lack of ability to be a man as they continually emasculate them. It's a weird, weird, weird process. And listen, if you're really, really upset about what I'm saying right now, I'm just reading the Proverbs to you. So just check your own heart, check your own life. There are some women who hate the idea of submission. I believe it is a much easier task than the one He lays on the shoulders of the man momentarily. It's a much easier task and one I don't know as a man that I even desire. He just put on us. But no more of this.

Women, you think about that, and I'm going to spend the next two hours with the men. Let's go. We'll pick it up in verse 25, "*Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.*" Okay, so here's what He throws on the man. He comes to the woman and says, "In this relationship that I've built out, you're going to submit to Christ-like leadership." And then He goes over to the man and says, "You're going to love your wife like Christ loved the church." And so you start running through it: how does Christ love the church? He rescues her, He saves her, He becomes sin for her, He has His body ripped apart for her, and here's the kicker and here's where I want to spend my time tonight, He does it all, not because the bride asked for it, but He initiates on His own. And that's what I think is so big about this text. The bride doesn't come to Jesus and go, "I need saving. If You get a chance,..." The bride doesn't come to Jesus and say, "I'm going to worship You, I'm going to love You, I'm going to write some great songs an acoustic guitar for you and I'm going to try to do everything You say for the rest of my life." The church, the bride could care less about Christ. She is stuck in her own sins, not worried about that. The messiah she was seeking was a messiah that would free her from Roman occupation, not one that would save her soul. And yet Christ initiates the salvation of His bride. What does this mean? It means that the mantle on men is to initiate, in their marriage, initiate, initiate the fight for wholeness, initiate the fight for healing, initiate, initiate, initiate. Far too many women are the initiators in relationships and homes.

And let me tell you why I think this is such a big deal and why I think it's nearly impossible without the Holy Spirit's power. Let me give you just a quick example of what I'm talking about. The Bible's really clear that one of the worst things you can do as a married couple is let the sun go down on your anger. And the reason that is is because you'll lay in bed, she'll face this way and you'll face that way, and you'll let that root of bitterness just start going down. In fact, you'll help it go down. You'll drill it, you'll go, "Oh, she doesn't respect me, she doesn't think I'm blah blah blah..." And she'll be doing the same, and the root of bitterness will just grow and grow and grow. And so, the Bible says, "Hey, don't let that happen. You need to nip it in the bud. You need to not go to bed angry. You need to, with all your might, try to resolve it before you go to bed at night." So, I think the weight of that falls on the man. And I know some of you are like, "You do not know my wife, Chandler. I've seen your wife; she sings, she's beautiful, she looks so sweet." Listen, two days ago, I saw fire shoot out of my wife's eyes and kill a puppy. Where does that stuff come from? I swear that's nowhere in my notes. The puppy was just howling and screaming, and she was just like "HA HA HA " You don't know who I married. But here's what I would tell you biblically. If your wife, in that moment, 10:30, 11:00, midnight, is facing this way and you're facing that way and she is 99.999% to blame, it falls on you to roll over, tap her on the shoulder and say, "I don't want to go to bed like this. I need to apologize for my 0.001%." Just for the record, I wouldn't use numbers. But I would do this, "Lauren, before we try to go to sleep tonight. I know you're angry, I'm angry. I need to apologize for how I handled what happened earlier. I didn't respond in love. I reacted. I said things I didn't mean. I need to apologize for that." Then it's over. I don't go, "I need to apologize for how I responded earlier. It just wasn't godly. It wasn't who I wanted to be. I reacted rather than responded. I apologize.

Do you have anything to say to me? I was wondering, I just thought you had something to say also. No? Well, I take it back then." That's now how it's done. The initiative is on me to be the peacemaker in my home, to fight for my wife's healing, my wife's wholeness, to fight for it. Even if I'm 99.9999% innocent in the conflict, it falls on me to be the peacemaker, the initiator. We initiate. And we'll get more into this idea as we continue on in the text.

Let's keep reading. Verse 28, *"In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body."* Let me chat about this, because I want to try to explain this idea of loving oneself. I am of the opinion, the older I get, the more I work with men in particular, that most men do not love the woman they're with, they love themselves, and the women they're with are a means to an end. They are with them because they'd be lonely without them or they want to have a lot of sex and they think that's the way to go or they think that "Mature men get married, and I'm mature now, so I need a wife." But they don't love the woman; they love what the woman could bring, what the woman can give. And what this text is saying is that there are men like that, but we are not to be those type of men. We don't love our women because they _____; we love our wives. And then He doesn't leave that as some ambiguous term; He actually starts to define it. So look at it. How do we do that? How do we love our wives like we love our own bodies? Look at it, verse 29, *"For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body."* This word "nourish," whenever it's used in the Scriptures, and it's used a lot, almost always refers to parents providing for children. There are one or two instances where it's not talking about parents and children, but it almost always means provision, to provide for. And so, there are two things going on here: one is physical, and then one is spiritual. So I'll just say this, and then I want to give some clarifying statements because it honestly needs it. What this means, as God calling men to be nourishers, is that men are to be the primary bread winner for the home. We are to provide food, we are to provide shelter, we are to provide clothing. This is what we are, providers. Now, there are definitely seasons of time where this gets out of kilter. There are times where men lose a job or they get laid off, they're actively seeking another job and for whatever reason, it's just not happening and for a season, the wife becomes the primary bread winner. Or there are times where a man is getting his masters, getting his PhD, doing something like that and the woman becomes the bread winner while he's doing those things. But it is unbiblical and outright sinful for you to be mastering "Doom 3" on Xbox while your wife is working. It's wicked. Men are to be the primary bread winners for the home. The Scriptures are absolutely clear that man's fight and war is in the workplace cultivating and a woman's is to domesticate and love and build the home.

And I don't know how in the world that became a small office. With a stay-home wife and two small children, I have no idea how that became some second class occupation. I don't want that job. I don't want it. I've had it. I mean, I've been there, two babies, vacuuming, throwing Cheerios to keep that one alive, making that one put scissors down. I mean, I don't want it. I've come in, I've seen what happens. My wife is this beautiful, gentle, passionate, patient woman, and I've come in and been like, "Hey baby,..." "Take your kids and leave." I've seen what's happened, and I'm like, "For good? Am I leaving for good? No? Okay, just for an hour? Alright, I can do that. Ice cream...No? No ice cream? Okay." I mean, I don't know how that became some kind of second class, weak existence. It may be the hardest thing. I don't know when that happened to us. And then, do you want to know just how sad our country has gotten? All you have to do is talk to young girls about why they're getting their college degree and what they really desire. I've met hundreds of them. They'll say to you, "I want to be a wife and I want to be a mother, but I've got to be prepared in case something happens." Do you know how insane it is that in our society, women are getting ready for their divorce before they even get married? And listen, I'm not anti-education or anti-girls going to college. I'm not saying that; I'm just trying to paint a picture of how weird it's gotten out there.

Men are to be the primary bread winners. We are to nourish, provide for. That's only at the physical level. I also think there's something that needs to occur at the spiritual level in terms of nourishment. The weight of spiritually feeding the family falls on the man. And even godly

men struggle with this one. We need to take the initiative in our homes to pool the family together for prayer, to pool the family to get together in the Word, to pool the family together and talk about who He is and what He's like. And listen, in my home, Lauren and I sit down and we talk about what that would look like, and she sets it up and I just show up. And I don't think you need to walk your family through T.U.L.I.P. or the 5 points of Calvinism. I mean, it can be a three minute long reading of a Psalm, but men need to take the leadership of that. And I can tell you why most of us don't do it. Because you can't feed when you're starving to death yourself. You don't have anything to give them. You're not feeding yourself. You're not disciplined enough to pursue the Lord yourself. So how in the world are you ever supposed to feed your family? But this is God's command. And listen, I know some of you aren't taking me seriously. I even know some of you more modern types might think that I'm backwoods, but I'll tell you this. When I look at how Jesus responds to men who fail to lead their wives, He almost always wants to have a conversation with them that they do not want to have. I mean, Jesus shows up in the garden, starts walking through the garden and is like, "Um Adam, what happened?" He didn't start looking for Eve. He held the man to account. Paul's very clear about this in the New Testament.

Nourish, but that's not the only one. This is the one that I think stings so bad. And some of us are like, "Please don't read it then...If that was light-handed, stop." Verse 29, *"For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it..."* This word "cherish" is used only one other time in the entire Bible, in the New Testament in particular. It's when Paul is talking about his relationship with the church, and he basically says, "I took care of you gently like a mother taking care of her children." And this idea of cherish is to treat gently. You have this same idea occurring in 1 Peter 3 when it calls women the weaker vessel. My wife hates that verse. When she first read it, she was like, "You need to explain this text to me." So I was like, "I will gladly explain this text to you. Weaker vessel is a reference to porcelain, that women are like porcelain. Watch what comes out of your mouth towards them, watch how you touch them, watch how you handle them. They are not to be handled verbally or physically rough. Like porcelain." Again, I think this plays out physically, and I think this plays out spiritually. How do I think this plays out physically? I think we could go on and on and on with examples here, but let me give you just this. Do you know how you cherish your wife? Here's a great, easy way to cherish your wife. Be around. Just be around. Now listen, I know you love golf, but be around. Do you know that God has designed the majority of women to feel and receive love through quality time and physical touch? I'm not talking about sexual touch, just physical touch. I think we call it cuddling. And listen, do you want to know an unbelievably easy way to get in good? Just say no. Just let the phone go off, and go, "Oh yeah, you guys are golfing? No, I'm going to stay home. I'm going to stay home with my girl. You guys have fun." "Who was that?" "Billy and the boys. They were going to go play golf for 6-7 hours. And I like golf, but I like you more." Now, how easy was that? I mean, that's not being creative, that's not buying gifts. That's just not playing a stupid game with most of your dumb friends for six hours on Saturday. I don't think that's very complex. I mean, I think it's really kind of easy. Cherish.

Let me speak to something here. Cherishing, verbally being gentle, verbally being encouraging, verbally and physically being nurturing towards our wives is very difficult for men because it creates intimate environments, and those are weird for most of us. So in the end, what you have is lazy men who refuse to do that to protect themselves. And then what ends up happening is this. The wife goes to bed, the husband stays up, continues to watch SportsCenter again and again, flips through channels, eventually gets bored with that and before you know it, now look at the insanity of this, he ends up on his computer looking at images of other naked women when in reality he's got one in the other room. Now I'm 33, but that doesn't seem like a good trade to me. Naked women on a screen that I can fantasize about vs. real one in the bedroom. "Oh, well my wife won't have anything to do with me." Okay, so maybe we're onto something. Maybe we need to be cherishing some more. So let me tell you what ends up happening, and I'm just telling you this from five years of pastoral experience. What you end up getting is very lonely men who are constantly living in a fantasy world instead of living deeply with a wife of their youth. We've already talked about this. "Whoever finds a wife, he finds what is good, he finds favor with the Lord." So God gave us this wife not just for sex and play but also for intimacy

and a fulfilling of what He created us to walk in, and we neglect that for this chick we saw at the gym that we think is hot. So now we're running these scenarios through our head instead of using that creative, brilliant mind to dote on and love and walk in intimacy with our wives. It's really a broken, sad thing. And I think in the end, it's just laziness. Because intimacy is tough work. No man I've ever met stumbles into intimacy. "I was playing flag football, came home, had a beer and the next thing I know, I was walking deeply with my wife. It just came out of nowhere." I mean, I have never, never met that guy. There are definitely men that are more sensitive than others. There's absolutely no doubt about that, but I've never met the guy that stumbled into intimacy. It has to be thoughtful. It has to be worked at. It literally has to be fought for. You have to fight to get there. He nourishes it, he cherishes it.

I also think this cherishing idea holds true, not only physically but also spiritually. We need to be asking our wives, "What's the Lord doing in your heart? What's He doing in your life?" Then we need to come along side of that and build it up any way we can. Like, I think it's a necessity for men to understand and know the path by which their wife walks with the Lord. So in my house, that's music. Lauren will just get on the piano, and she'll just sing and play. This was my wife here singing tonight. She just wants to sing the songs, she wants to sing. And so, what I want to do is just try to breathe life into that at any step I can, whether that be a journal for her to write songs in, whether that be springing some cash for her piano, whether it's a weekend like this where we have to do some weird things in terms of who's watching our kids so she can do that and I can do this. I want to do that. Why? Because that's cherishing, not my wife's role with me but her walk with the Lord. I'm supposed to cherish that, gently lead and guide that. And you can go back up to the top here, washing her in the water of the Word, which isn't me reading her the Scriptures of how her body belongs to me and she should submit. And I tell guys this all the time: if you're quoting Scripture to your wife, you've probably already lost. If you're like, "Take a look at that," that's probably strike three. You want to live in such a way, walk in such a way, guide in such a way.

Alright, so what are my hopes? This is a really male disease. Right now, because I'm aware of how the Holy Spirit works, I think the Lord's probably stirring in certain men's heart sin here, "This needs to be done... this needs to happen... you need to give your girl an apology on the way home...you need to ask for this...you know what? You need to sit down with your family tonight...you need to take your wife through this...you need to..." And right now, God's throwing those things in your head, but here's what I know. This is such a male disease. "Ah, I need to do that.. Oh, I didn't know the Bills were playing this afternoon!" Then it's gone. And although we know what we should do, we don't. Because it's awkward and weird, and now that I've preached on it, it will feel even more awkward and weird. Because your girl knows you're doing it because I preached on this. But here's what I'm going to beg you to do. Will you take some initiative please? Listen, it doesn't have to be complex. Why don't, once a week, you just get the family together and just read a little Bible passage together and talk? You don't have to be a biblical genius. You don't even have to have any insight; just read the text and go, "What do you think?...Me too. Let's pray..." Just take some initiative. Will you? Will you take some initiative? That's all I'm asking. Just take a step or two. That's all I'm asking.

I want to talk to the women in here to close for about five minutes. Don't demand this of your husband. If you do, you'll destroy any chance he has at becoming this. Let me tell you why. If he takes a little bit of initiative and you critique him, you'll shut him down and you'll become your worst enemy; you will put him in a no win situation where he's trying and you continue to dog him. Just pray. And then I heard this a couple of weeks ago from one of my heroes. He said, "Here's a great idea. When everything's going well and you're getting along well and you've slept well and there's not a lot of pressure, when that day comes, take your husband to lunch, take him to dinner, sit him down and go, "I would love it if you would do this. I would love it if you could do this for our family. I would love it if you would lead out more in this," without demands, without ultimatums, that you would just say, "I would love it if you would do this for our family. I'd absolutely love it."

And then, I'll give you wives another secret. You have an unbelievably powerful voice when it

comes to your man. Like, here's what I'd tell you. If one of you comes up afterwards and corners me and tells me how bad this sermon was and that you'll never come back, I'll probably go, "I like Valley Creek. Valley Creek's a great church. Kevin Edwards is the pastor there. I'll all him and tell him you're coming. See ya!" Now, I'm saying that if you're being out of control. If you've got a legitimate, "Hey, talk to me about this...Why would you say it this way?," then I'm not talking about that, but I'm just talking. I'm a fighter. I've never been afraid of conflict. I don't look for it, but I'm not scared if it shows up. You're not going to say anything that makes me lay in bed at night and go, "Oh, I hate that....Oh, I just..." You're just not going to be able to do it. But my wife can, with one careless word, suck the life out of me. And at the same time, with one encouraging word, she can fill my tank full. Like the times that we've been in the car and she's randomly turned to me and said, "Thank you for this. Thank you for this. You do this well for our family. Thank you." All of a sudden, my tank is full. Will you be your husband's advocate instead of dooming him to death in the desert being a better option to living with you? Will you encourage him? Let me dog him for the next couple of weeks, and you encourage him.

So we've been called by God to be the initiators, to love our wives as Christ loves the church, to nourish and cherish them. Christ help us all. Let's pray, "Father, help us. We'll need it. I pray against discouragement right now. I pray against the man who would feel that he's failed too much. I thank You that there is nothing in this room, no hurt, no betrayal, there's nothing in this room that You cannot heal and reconcile. Will You help us believe it? I pray for men. I know that what we've been called to cultivate will war against us. I know this is more complicated than we've made it and that it's more difficult than I've made it. But I know You ask us to do nothing that You don't provide the power for. Help us.

It's for Your beautiful name. Amen

PART 3: MEN AS FATHERS

By Matt Chandler

In week one of this series, we started out defining what manhood is, defining masculinity. And we said that God created men and women equal and yet very distinct. And if you don't believe me, I think all you need to do is look at small children and you can see that, although they're equal, they're very distinct in how they operate and what they do. Boys will build things and knock them over; girls will take two objects and make them friends. And that's pretty much universal. So we've kind of defined it: What is masculinity? What does it mean to be a man? Do women need to be more masculine? Do men need to be more feminine? We kind of answered those questions. And what we said is that it's clean in Scripture that men are to be cultivators, builders. It's what God created them to be. But because of sin and because of the fall, everything that man has been charged to cultivate will at times war against him. But it's in that difficulty that God teaches the man the gospel. So that was week one. And last week, I preached like an hour and ten minutes on the man as a husband. It is by far the most complex, and it is by far the most difficult, because God comes to the man and says, "You will love you wife like I love the church in that I gave Christ for her." So we talked about our role as husbands to be the initiators in our home across all lines. Because Jesus didn't die for the church in response to the church, but simply because He loved the church. And so, we love our wives, not in response to what they do for us, but because we are the initiators. And we talked about nourishing, and we talked about cherishing and we talked about all those things. And now I want to move on and talk about men as fathers, and it's not complex. Now, it's not easy, but it's not complex.

So let's look at Ephesians 6, we'll pick it up in verse 1. It's really interesting how it plays out here. "*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother*" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "*that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.*" Now, let me point out a couple of things. The Bible over and

over again is going to line out how God created the universe to operate rhythmically, and you've got it happening here, because the progression of what happens with children is they simply start out obeying, and if you grow them and pour into them, it ends in honor. But I'm not looking for honor in my six month old. That's not what I'm looking for. Obedience is what I'm looking for. And then obedience should lead into honor. But I want to point out something really interesting to you. He starts by addressing the children, and he says to them, "Obey your parents," husband and wife. Then he moves on and says, "Honor your father and mother." Once again, he addresses both parents. When he's talking to the children, he addresses the parents as a singular unit. But when he moves on and begins to address the home, what's the first word in verse 4? Fathers. So I'll continue to push like I have this entire series that men do not have the sole responsibility in the home but the leading one. Because how the home's wired here, God says, "fathers" not "parents," not "fathers and mothers" but "fathers." So I'll continue to say that, although my wife, Lauren, has some responsibility in the rearing of our children and the ordering of our home, if Jesus knocks on the door and she answers, He'll go, "Good morning, Lauren. Where's Matt?" And He's not asking where I am because He needs to know.

"Fathers,..." so fathers who are to take the leading role. It's a very interesting, right-out-of-the-gate command *"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger,..."* There's only two commands here to fathers. That's it, two commands. Of all the commands that you can unpack, of all the things you can command a father to do, why is it right out of the gate, "Hey, don't provoke your children to anger." Let me try to explain because I think this is so big. Wherever you have an authority that is intrinsically broken itself, which all of us are, because it's a fallen world. So what I mean by that is every man in here, every father in here, we've got places of insecurity in our soul, we get tired, we could get to that place where we have a short fuse, if we feel disrespected, someone has to die. I mean, "You can steal our car, burn down our house, but don't you disrespect me." Respect is just such a huge thing for men. So you've got a man who's got those frailties, and then you've got a sinful subordinate underneath the sinful authority.

Well, when those two things collide, both of them have sinful tendencies, the illegitimate child that's born out of that is anger. So what's he's saying here is, "Fathers, be careful when you get disrespected, when there's questions, when you've got a smart-mouthed kid, when you've got issues in your house, be careful not to provoke them to more anger. And let me tell you why this is so huge. It's so huge because anger, more than any other emotion, completely trumps and removes your ability to feel or think rationally or sanely about anything. And if you'll think back on your life to some of the dumbest stuff that's ever come out of your mouth, I would guarantee you that it came out when you were angry. Because when anger is owning your soul, you cannot comprehend, you cannot understand grace, you cannot see tomorrow, you cannot think that this will pass. It deadens the soul. And so if I could make this as simple as I can, it's going, "Dad, don't poke your kids with stick. Don't do that." Don't poke them with a stick, because even Superparent, even if you're the greatest parents in the world, if you've got a cape on that has "Dobson" on the back of it, there are going to be moments and run-ins and collisions with your children where their heart's going to be angered towards you. And listen, I'm in no way trying to remove your authority, your call to discipline or your command to preach, teach and work truth out in your home. I'm not saying don't make your kids angry. I'm saying avoid avoidable anger. Because if my kid ever tries to quote this text to me, I am whipping 'em. "You're not supposed to provoke me to anger." "You haven't been provoked. (Spank, spank, spank....) Now, you're provoked!!!" That's what I'm talking about; you can't do that. That's what you can't do. So the text says, "Fathers, as much as you can avoid anger, avoid it. You've got to try to circumvent it, you've got to try to cut it out of their lives because it will destroy them. And if we had time in here, I guarantee you there's some grown men in here who had fathers who would provoke them and provoke them and provoke them to anger, and even now, on darker days, that anger owns you, even now you'll find yourself just raging on a certain day over nothing. You can't even put your finger on it. Anger is unbelievably devastating to the human soul. So it says that fathers have a responsibility to not provoke this in their children. So, what are some ways that we battle this? I'm going to be real careful about giving you, "This is what you should do." What I more want to do is put an umbrella over you and let you work it out with your family, you go sit down your wife and go "How do we do this?" But let me tell

you some things that I just don't think you can argue. I think you've got to be careful of volume. You can't scream at your kids. And listen, I know you're like, "That's the only way they hear." No, I don't think it is. I think the higher the volume, the less chance of sanity. I mean, do you think they listen more when you're screaming at the top of your lungs and they're screaming back at you? I'm guessing that that's not an intelligent, sane conversation, to which most parent's reply, "Who said my kid was intelligent and sane?" Well, I don't know about that. But I'm telling you try to defuse it, try to take ownership of where you're to blame. I think more and more fathers should be going into children's bedrooms at night before they go to bed, after the big explosion and go, "I handled that wrong. Now, what you did was not right and it was not excusable, but I handled it wrong. And I need to ask for your forgiveness. Will you forgive me?" And once again, we can keep going. Some of you are like, "You cannot show weakness in front of them. Nuh-uh. You are going to get someone killed, Chandler." But it's funny. It's in that simple weakness that love is so clearly seen. And I think you can teach more in that than you could ever teach with volume. So if your kid pops off to you, there tends to be this natural response to let the punishment go well beyond the Geneva Convention. In that moment that you feel disrespected, there's just this, "Oh yeah? Well here's your punishment: you can't breathe for three days. You're done. Quit it. Suck it up. You're done." And I think you have to be a little bit prepared that twelve year olds are going to act like twelve year olds and you don't get to respond like another twelve year old. You've got to think through, you've got to be prepared, don't let is surprise you because it shouldn't surprise you. Specifically, I'll give you some examples. Our whole role as fathers to our daughters is to dote on them and tell them how beautiful they are and how amazing they are and how great they are. And so what happens the first ten years of their life is they're like, "I'm the center of the universe." Then they turn 13, and you're like, "You ain't the center of the universe. Why's my daughter so selfish? She's just acting like the whole thing's about her." Well yeah, you've been teaching her that since she was born, and it was right and good and necessary. And now, it's right and good and necessary to teach her that she's not. I told you it's not easy. Don't yell.

And then I'll tell you another thing. If you're married, you'll be able to follow me here. If you're single, I don't know that you will if you're single. It's been too long for me. There are times when Lauren and I have been in a fight where I've felt wounded by her, so I'll jab her soul. Like everybody in here knows the one thing to say to who they're with that will absolutely...like it's not a grenade, it's an atomic bomb. It's like, "If you touch that, if you say that, if you do that..." Like it's kind of been "Don't ever go here. Say whatever else you want, but don't address this." But in that moment where you feel disrespected, you just jab it at that spot. You know what I'm talking about or you're a liar or you're not married, you're a single guy. In that, my fear that we need to watch for is our little creativity and our wit and our sarcasm can never be thrown onto our children. I think we've got to be very, very careful about those little jabs. Be really careful not to jab at your children.

So, this is the big one: "*Father's don't provoke your children to anger.*" Don't do it. In fact, I'll go a step farther, and I think it's the father's role to take some preemptive measures against anger in the hearts of our children. And I honestly think the best way to do that is time, creative time. And I don't think you have to be a genius; I just think you have to let your little boy or girl get their pajamas on and then say, "Hey, instead of going to bed, hop in the car," and take them out, find some donut joint and get them a sugary donut and just talk with them about life. Something as simple as that says, "I care for you, I love you, I value you," and begins to build in them security. It's not complex; it's just very easy. Just don't buy into the group mob thing. I think you have to find individual time for your children. That's a preemptive measure against anger. And so I already have conversations with Audrey that I know she doesn't quite understand, but I'm just looking five years down the road. I'm not worried about today. We talk all the time. Like, "Who wants you to be happier, you or me?" And right now, it's easy. It's me. I want her to be happier than she wants to be. And so I want her to know that. "Who's looking out for your happiness? Who wants you to be happy?" And I want her thinking, "Daddy. Daddy wants me to be happier than I want to be. Daddy wants more for me than I even want for myself." And I want that in her head. I don't even think she comprehends it right now, but when she's eleven, I hope some of it's still there. I know some of you are thinking "Eleven year olds? Rookie. Good

luck with that, buddy." But I'm trying to lay a foundation. Don't provoke your children to anger. Don't do it. It's devastating to the soul.

Let's look at what he says next. What he says next is what we would figure he would say. *"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."* Once again, we'll talk about what this looks like in terms of umbrella statements, but I want to attack something in our culture. It seems in our culture that the woman's role is to raise the children and the man's role is like recreational coordinator or something. And the woman has to discipline and she has to shape, but the man's job is to make shin guards and coach the team. And I want to stress to you that the Scriptures put the weight of discipline on the father and not on the mother. Scriptures say that discipline is handled best and received best by children when it's the father that does the disciplining. That's just what the Scriptures teach, so men need to take an active role in discipline in their homes.

Now, the Bible doesn't leave us hanging here; it's really going to get into some detail about how we discipline and train our children in the instruction of the Lord. And some of it will sting, but let's go over to Psalm 78. We'll pick it up in verse 1, *"Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done."* I love this text because it's about as umbrella as it gets. Here's what it's saying. It falls on the father to make known the grandeur and the goodness and the beauty of God in His home, particularly with their children. So here's the best way I can unpack it for you. It is our job to continually take everything that is good, everything that is right, everything that is enjoyable, everything that is lovely and bring it back for our children to its place of origin, God, the creator God. So an example I've used here historically is when my daughter was two, she had this thing for pink. I mean, everything had to be pink. Bowls, cups, clothes, everything was pink. And so, we has constant conversations about where pink came from. "Who made pink? Well, God made pink. Well why would God make pink?" She's only to so, "I don't know." We had a long talk repeatedly about "how amazing is God that, out of nowhere, He just thought up the color pink in order to communicate Himself to you. So that joy that you're feeling, that beauty you're seeing, that's God teaching you. How much does God love you, how beautiful is God that this is what He does?" And we try to do that with everything. I mean, anything that is good, anything that is right, anything that is spectacular, God's going to get the credit for that. Even difficult times, He's given credit for. "How much does He love us that He would let us grow and learn through this?" So our hope is that as you ask Audrey or Reid, 20-30 years from now, "Tell me about your house. Tell me about your home, growing up," what we want, whether they believe or not, is our kids to say, "God was central. God was what he talked about. God is who he loved. He gave God credit for everything. I mean, I couldn't even eat a piece of chocolate, I couldn't play in the pool without my dad going, 'How amazing is God that He gave us water slides? How good is He in that?'" And let me tell you where we've erred. Let me tell you my problem historically with fundamentalists, and I don't mean that in the fun way. My historical problem is they make God a policeman. Think about what this does to anybody. They go, "God hates liars." Uh oh! Guess who He hates. Everyone. So when the message to your kids is "God doesn't like this and God doesn't like that and God doesn't appreciate that and don't do that because God will do this" and that is the umbrella message to your children, are you teaching them to run towards Him or be absolutely terrified of Him? And early on in the Evangelical community children are taught to hide their struggles, to hide their fears and to hide their shame because we've told them how furious God gets at all of that stuff, instead of, "How much must God love you that He gave you a water slide, that He gave you bubble gum, that He gave you pink, that He gave you mommy and daddy, that He gave us dinner, that God created guacamole and skirt steak and flour tortillas and cheese and that when you combine them all together? How amazing is that? Praise Him!" That's how it should happen. And it's also why the world outside of Christianity keeps thinking that Christianity is a religion. It's not a religion. Religion is outside in. Religion states, across the board, all religion states this, "I will do this to be accepted by God." That is not Christianity. That's not even our message. Nowhere in our sacred literature can you find that.

Our message is that we cannot; Christ paid the bill. But you don't even hear that when the message is "Don't do this...don't do this...don't do this..." What we're to communicate is the wonders of God, the mind of God, the beauty of God, the creativity of God, the size of God. And it's really fun watching your kid kind of struggle and figure it out. Like, Audrey's big question for the last year has just been, anytime we see something big, is "Is God bigger than that?" I'm like, "Please, that is like a pimple on the neck of God. That is nothing. How tiny is that." So, that's job one: make known the wonders of God.

But it's going to keep going. Look at verse 5; it's going to be a reference the Torah or the Old Testament. "*He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them,...*" This is a reference to the Torah or the first five books of the Old Testament. In the New Covenant, where we find ourselves now, this would be a reference to the Scriptures in the home, that the Scriptures should be known, that they should be taught, that they should be embraced in our home as God's self-disclosure of Himself. Now, not only should the Scriptures be known, but the command there is to teach them. I want to be real careful here because I don't think this means that you've got to sit your kid down and go, "Um, this word in Hebrew is *ahava*, the root meaning...." I don't think that's the kind of teaching that needs to occur. I think that the Scriptures must be known and embraced and that you can do things that supplement you not being a teacher that feels like you can engage your children. In fact, what we want to be here at the Village is a supplement to that. Like Anne was saying in the video that F.M. 360 is a big thing we do here. On a Friday night, we want you to bring your children to a worship service designed for you to interact with your children and then to go home with a thing to talk about and an activity to do. And we're trying to help you get here.

But let me speak to two things, both of them I think will probably create seats. Number one: having kids, it just blows my mind what they're born with. And kids at a very early age are born with this hypocrisy meter. And I'm not even speaking religiously. Please don't hear hypocrisy as a religious reference. Like my daughter's already like, "Why do you get to popsicles? I don't get two popsicles. I thought too many popsicles will make you sick. Because I had a red one and you had a purple one, and you have a green one now. Purple's not green, and I thought that it would make you sick." What do you even say to that? You're just like, "Here's another popsicle, alright." Or when we put her to bed at 8:00, "You need your rest. You need your sleep. We don't want you to be cranky tomorrow." And it's "When are you going to bed?" "Well, don't worry about me. I'm the daddy." "But you said..." "I know what I said. We're different. Old people don't need as much sleep." And then you're like, "Is that even true? Did I just lie to my kid unbeknownst to me? Do we need less sleep? Google." So yeah, they pick it up. "Make your bed." "Well, I was just downstairs, and who's making your bed?" So they pick it up.

Now let me tell you something that occurs down here in the Bible Belt. I don't think it occurs in other places. There's just kind of a moral stronghold, verbally, externally in the Bible Belt that doesn't exist in most of the rest of our country. Don't worry about it; it will disappear soon enough. But what ends up happening, specifically here in the Bible Belt, is men have children and they think to themselves, "You know what? I don't want my little girl getting pregnant. I don't want my boy getting on drugs. I want them to be good kids and respectful kids. I want them to do that, so you know what? We've got to find a church. We've got to start going to church. This is a really weird animal, and let me be honest with you. I think you doing that, you making that move might just have an unbelievable damning effect on your family. Do you seriously think that your kid doesn't see the disjoint between what they're learning here and the way you're living? If my daughter can see the inconsistencies in popsicles... So here, you're going, "Go to church" where we're saying the gospel is primary, worship of God is primary. It's the pinnacle of what we're created for. We should be in glad submission to the plans of God, because He is after our joy, and our highest joy will be in obedience to him." They're learning that and you are, with every angle of your life, living opposite. I mean, what you do is make liars out of both of us. What I'm saying is this. This is an impossible task if you're not willing to submit to God yourself. You can put the ten commandments up in your home, you can know

the moral things to say, "Don't do this...don't do that..." but if you're not in glad submission to God yourself, nothing happens. Now, this is one of those points, and I continually say, "Listen, we're not going to be perfect. We are going to blow it. We are going to be hypocrites. We are going to have seasons that are difficult for us. We are, but the grace of God covers those things and we'll continue to press in. So that's number one. I think you've got to be in glad submission yourself or there's no way you can do this.

Here's the second thing: I think you need to relish the role. Here's what I mean by that. I have young children, a four year old and a two year old. On the way home from work, specifically long days, I have to, in my mind, prepare myself for walking in our front door. Because if I'm not careful, I'll go, "Man, I just worked a long day. I just want to lay on the couch, I just want to watch SportsCenter and drink a frothy....Coke. And that's what I want to do tonight. I just want to do that and enjoy that." And then I'm going to walk in the door and I've got two kids, they're going to run up, they're going to want to play, Lauren's going to tell me about her day. And I've had in my mind...is this not true? All frustration is birthed out of unmet expectation. So I've got to come home going, "Job's not done today. I've got three and a half more hours. It's not over...three and a half more hours to love, to shape, to pour into, to speak, go give out of myself, three and a half more hours." And if our mind hasn't shifted like that, then our three and a half hours with our children and our wife are more often that not going to be combative. And so on the way home, I try to go, "When I get home, the kids are going to be hopped up on sugar, Lauren will be duct taped in a closet and the house will be on fire," so that when I get in I'm like, "Nothing's on fire. Awesome," and I free Lauren and we play with the kids for like an hour and a half or two hours. We have to relish our role. We have to say, "Thank You, God. You gave me babies to pour into for such a short period of time, that I might pour into love and joy, communicate, walk with." And that will transcend the Cowboys' '07 season. I promise you. So you've got to attack it like that. You have to walk in the door knowing that. Just embrace it.

This is my role.

And let me speak to this. This is what I think will creates seats. What if you're going, "What about my needs?" Well, what about your needs? If you wanted to be a narcissist, you shouldn't have gotten married or had children. Because the second you signed up for those two, you got to die. Because that's the call on a man's life. Now, I think you can call your wife at 3:00 in the afternoon and go, "This has been a brutal, brutal day. When I get home tonight, can I just lay down on the couch for an hour or so? Can you help me with that?" I think you can make the call and go, "Listen, this game is on, and I want this, baby. Please, just tonight." But here's what I've found. If you'll be who God's asked you to be in your home most of the other time, your wife with glad submission would love for you to do those things, she would want to give you those things. But what normally happens is you just take it all the time and don't fill your role, and then one night, you really want that thing but it's the one night she needs a break too and you have this cataclysmic blow-up where you feel disrespected because you've been a little boy who's married with children and your wife finally called you on it. So I think you have to relish the role, man. I think you have to relish it, be grateful for it. I mean honestly, who gets to be a hero? Daddies do. Daddies get to be heroes. What a great gift. Who gets to be unconditionally loved by beautiful little baby girls? Daddies do. Who gets to be looked up at by young boys who go, "That's what I want to be."? Who gets that? Daddies do. You should relish that. You shouldn't let a day escape. I think we forget that we only get to do this once. You just get today once. Teach these things, but not just with your mouth. You've got to teach them with your life.

And then I want to throw this at you because we've got to address it. There's a disjoint between teaching and knowing. And what I mean by that is you can teach all you want, but the knowing is not under your control and that can be frustrating. Because listen, what I'm after is not regurgitation. If my daughter and son can systematically lay out a belief system in God but they don't have hearts that worship Him, I don't think we've won. But here's the thing. I can't make my son or daughter fall in love with Jesus like their mom and I have. I can't do that for them. I can teach them about Him, I can let the joy of Christ flood my home, I can romance and love my

wife on good days and bad days, I can walk in the door every night and long kiss their and make them go, "Oh my gosh. Get a room," I can do all that over and over and over again, teach them love, teach them some security, teach them the goodness and grandeur of a creator God and the glory of the gospels, I can teach them those things, but God has to awaken it in their hearts. I can't do that. So this makes me desperate. This makes me pray. This makes me plead. This makes me plead very honest prayers for them, over them. Which means I have prayed on more than one occasion, held my little daughter's hand as we go to bed at night and prayed, "Please don't let my sins affect my daughter, and please save her soul." To which she's gone, "Jesus is in my heart." So I go, "I'm so glad. I'm going to keep praying though. When you're 40, if I'm still alive, I'll still be praying this." So I want her to hear those things. I want her to hear "I can't make her love You, God. Help her. Stir her heart towards You. Show her that You don't love some future version of her, but You love her right now." Because that's a beautiful piece of the gospel, that God doesn't love some future version of you but your right now, as jacked up as you are. That's such the good news.

So if we would do it and the Holy Spirit would speak, here's what He says will happen. And this is kind of a little bit horrifying, but we'll just embrace it. Verse 6, "...that the next generation..." So that's your children's children. "...might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children,..." Fathers, that's a horrifying idea, that the way you're fathering right now affects not only your children but your grandchildren and your great-grandchildren. Mm hmm. It's okay. Listen, I've said this since I've gotten here. There's a good kind of fear. There's a kind of fear that will save your life. I think these thoughts and the thought of, "Hey, this goes on for generations" is a good kind of fear. So let's see what happens. "...so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God." Let me chat with you about what He's saying here. Basically He's referencing the people of Israel wandering around in the desert for 40 years until they all died off. So here's what he says, "If we'll do this for our children, if we'll be this for our children, if the Holy Spirit fills it, what will end up happening is they'll put their hope in God, they'll walk in obedience to the commands of Christ, which always increases joy. God is after joy. And they won't spend their life in the desert, in that emotional spiritual wasteland." That's a pretty good promise.

Let me throw a couple of things at you in closing us out today. Let me speak first to single moms. I'm glad you're here, and we love you. Can I tell you something that's true in the Scriptures and true in life? Where what is ideal is lacking, grace abounds. Pray, seek the Lord, and He can powerfully make up for an absentee father. And you know I know this because I'm on this stage and come from a little bit of an abusive home. Michael Bleecker is on this stage, singing from a neglected, abusive home. I mean, I could go on and on and on here. Half our staff...we've even got some people who have spent some time in jail on our staff. That's why I love it. I mean, I don't ever leave my wallet in my office, but I love it. Why are you guys laughing? So listen, where what is idea, what the Lord commands, "This is the way it should be," when it's not that way, it doesn't mean all is lost. The grace of God works powerfully where the ideal is lacking.

Now, I want to speak to our community specifically. I know we've got tons of people who listen to the podcast. I don't know that this will work in your community, but I'll tell you about ours. Be very, very, very, very careful that you don't say with your mouth that the gospel is primary but with your time, energy and efforts as a family teach that something else is. And I'm speaking directly to our unbelievable addiction to athletics. And here's what I see over and over and over again. You've got parents that want to do nothing towards their kids' spiritual development because they're on a select soccer team, and that's a little insane. And if I had to guess, I'd say it probably stems more from your insecurity than their real desire. And listen, even if you were to say, "My kid loves soccer, Chandler." I would say, "Okay, I'm glad he or she does, but my kid loves to go to not go to bed at night and eat chocolate. My job as the father is to lead and guide her into wholeness." And so, what ends up happening, you've got F.M. 360, you've got camp, you've got places where they can forge spiritual relationships, where they can

learn the way to the gospel in a way they can understand, and so many of us are going, "Nope, can't go to that....Uh-uh, they can't go to that...Oop, can't go to that...Cant' be a part of that..." all for a sport. And listen, I'm not anti-athletic. Please don't hear me say that. I love them. In fact, some of you are right now like, "That's right. You've probably got a kid that can't ball." In the end, here's what I'm saying. You've got to be careful about what you're communicating to your children. And I'll quote the great theologian, Jim Brown here. Jim Brown, the former tailback for the Cleveland Browns, who retired early, was asked up on his retirement, "Do you not love the game anymore?" To which Jim Brown responded, "I love the game, but the game don't love no one." And we're telling our kids, "This is what it's all about...You've got to succeed at this...You've got to be the best at this." I mean, that's where you're going to invest all your time, energy and influence? Into a game? I'm just saying be careful. Play, let them play, spend three or four grand on shin guards, do it, but I'm saying you had better be careful that you're not, with your life, making yourself out to be a liar and removing the weight of the gospel. It's just madness. Our role as fathers is to sit above the whole thing and go, "In the long run, how do I shape and mold godliness and depth of life into my child?" That's the role. One last thing. I want to talk to single men, because I got a lot of e-mails and stuff saying, "Hey!" because all the single dudes are getting broken up with right now. They're like, "What in the world! Finish this man series yesterday." So there's been a lot of questions about, "How are we supposed to spiritually lead when we're not married? Because my girl's saying, 'You're not spiritually leading me,' and I don't even know what she's talking about. How am I supposed to do that when we're not married?" Anytime a girl breaks up with you and says that God told her to, that's kind of like double rejection. That's kind of hard. Not only did you get rejected by her but God too. So not only now are you emotionally a wreck, but spiritually you're like, "Am I out of the kingdom?" So let me address just a couple of little things for you. How do you lead a woman that you're not married to? Because it's not a good idea to go, "Hey, come back here and let's pray for an hour." I'll tell you some things that I think you can do. I think that you can have a conversation very early on about what physically your relationship's going to look like. Because the Scripture says that until she's your wife, she's your sister. And so then you say, "Hey, this is what we're going to be, and I don't want to go past this," and then you're man enough to stick to it. And listen, that urge that you have to touch and kiss and to do all those things, that's a good urge. That's a God-given urge. Like God tells Solomon and his wife, "Eat and drink your fill, you lovers." I don't know how God became the anti-sex God. Because I read Genesis, and Genesis goes, "Be fruitful and multiply." And if you don't know how that happens, I don't have time. That urge is not a bad urge, but it definitely has to be tempered under the weight of God's commands for it to be the best it possibly could be. God's not anti-sex; He's unbelievably pro-sex, good, deep, amazing, great sex. So He goes, "This is how it works best." So be a man in that regard.

The second thing I would tell you to do is, as the relationship deepens, I think maybe you call your shot and go, "Hey, why don't we hang out with some married people? Why don't we find some married couples who do marriage well? And why don't we try to learn some things from them?" This is a way you can take spiritual leadership without getting yourself into intimate, way too close for comfort type positions. These are some small things you can do.

So if I had a glass up here and I was going to end with a toast tonight, I'd lift my glass and say, "May God help us be the cultivators He's called us to be. May we love our wives like He loved the church in that He gave Himself for her. May we nourish and cherish the wives of our youth. May we protect our children from anger. May we mold and shape them. May we take the initiative to be all that God has asked us to be. And in the end, may His grace cover our shortcomings."

Let's pray, "I pray that males would want to be men, Father. I pray that single women would want a man over a male. I pray that we would be the initiators that You've called us to be. And I thank You for Your grace and love that covers our shortcomings and failures. We'll need Your help in all this.

It's for You beautiful name I pray. Amen."