

In the thirty-two years I was a college coach I witnessed firsthand how young men were coming to college with the lack of a spiritual foundation that would prepare them for life's next set of challenges. You could tell that Godly parenting skills were sorely missing. Dr. Eric Mason in his book, *Manhood Restored* helps men regain their leadership role in the family. I would recommend this book to any father or husband who desires to step up to the challenge presented by Dr. Mason.

—Tommy Bowden, ESPN analyst and
veteran college football coach

I have been a friend and fan of Dr. Eric Mason for over a decade. I could not be more excited about his voice speaking into what I believe is the most critical issue of our day, the state of our men. *Manhood Restored* is a powerful resource that will help men of all ages understand the problems men create and how they can get on the solution side. The ideas and truths in this book are not just detached ideals written from an ivory tower . . . I have watched Eric work out his own masculinity in a powerful way as a husband, father, church planter, church leader, movement leader, and good friend.

—Dr. John W. Bryson, cofounder,
Pastor Fellowship Memphis and
lead writer, Co-Presenter 33 the Series

Eric Mason has written a practical, biblical, and gospel-centered vision of true manhood. Saturated in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, our perfect model of true manhood, Mason carefully addresses an essential key to changing our churches and communities—the discipleship of men. Read this book, brother, and watch the Lord change your life. Share it and watch the Lord change the brothers in your sphere of influence.

—H. B. Charles Jr., pastor/teacher at the Shiloh
Metropolitan Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Florida

Sin is social. Even the most private and individual of sins—wallowing in porn, for example—are never merely individual. Devouring porn may be an individual offense, but it is also an insult to God—and because it works out in perverted or abusive or manipulative relationships, it is also social. That is why the gospel, in all its massive power, does not only reconcile us to God, but so transforms us that healthy relationships begin to bud all around us: the shattered social fabric begins to be healed. Perhaps no human relationships are more broken today than those within the family, within what used to be the family. And most frightening of all are the sad realities bound up with absent or abusive or selfish fathers. I gratefully applaud the ministry of Eric Mason as he seeks to apply the whole counsel of God to form Christian men, Christian husbands, Christian fathers, who in gospel grace and joy take up the reins of responsibility and faithful service to stamp new generations with a passion for strong, self-sacrificing love and holiness.

—D. A. Carson, research professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Seminary in Deerfield, Illinois

Pastor Eric Mason is a man I have known and respected for many years. He has planted and is leading a fast growing Bible teaching city reaching church in a rough Philly neighborhood. I'm excited to see this book released as it blends his rare skill set as a first rate formally trained theologian who is literally on the front lines of urban ministry.

—Mark Driscoll, founding pastor of Mars Hill Church, Founder of The Resurgence, cofounder of Acts 29, *New York Times* #1 best-selling author

In this age of increasing confusion about manhood, marriage and God's Word, Eric Mason has emerged as a refreshing, clear and prophetic voice. This book not only speaks to today's urban youth, it also powerfully speaks to all who have concerns about the general direction of our society. For anyone cares about applying God's truth to contemporary challenges, *Manhood Restored* is a must read.

—Dr. Carl Ellis Jr., Assistant Professor of Practical Theology Redeemer Seminary

Manhood has fallen on hard times. So many men have been beaten-up by the past, mired in the consequences of bad choices, and confused and disoriented by a culture committed to redefining manhood so that we can cover the fractures and disguise the torment. That's why I am thrilled for the gift of *Manhood Restored*. What a clear, compelling portrait of the power of the gospel to transform broken males into whole, godly men. You have pointed us to the Savior who makes all things new. This is our hope and our courage.

—Dr. Crawford W. Loritts Jr., author, speaker, radio host,
and senior pastor of Fellowship Bible Church
in Roswell, Georgia

Few issues fire me up like the topic of men acting like men. My friend and ministry partner Eric Mason offers hope to, incites healing for, and wreaks havoc on men. Every man who follows Jesus needs to read this book and apply the biblical truth in it to his life. The men in our churches, the marriages in our churches, and our churches will be better for it.

—James MacDonald, Senior Pastor of
Harvest Bible Chapel and author of *Vertical Church*

There is no greater need in our day than to answer two questions: What is a man? and What is a godly man? In this helpful and biblical book, Eric Mason answers these questions. If you are a man, read and heed this great work.

—Dr. Darrin Patrick, lead pastor of The Journey,
St. Louis, Missouri, and author of *For the City,*
Church Planter: The Man, The Message, The Mission,
and *A Dude's Guide to Manhood: Finding True Manliness
in a World Of Counterfeits*

As parents of three boys, we are praying that each will live God honoring lives, realize their God-given potential and reach their God-given destiny. This will only happen if a clear course—a map of manhood—is drawn out for them to follow. *Manhood Restored* is a tool that will not only help grown men live well but also serve as a compass for the next generation. Our friend Eric Mason writes from experience. We've admired him as a faithful husband and father, disciplined student of God's Word and

dedicated servant of the Lord. His integrity and wisdom shine through on every page. Men of all ages should read this book and treasure its truths deeply in their souls.

—Jerry and Priscilla Shirer, Bible teacher and author

From the moment God formed man, we were charged with reflecting God's essence and reflecting His character. Throughout history, this intended role of a man has gradually shifted to a view that's now become common—the notion that a man's merit is predicated on his worldly success, by all means. We have become consumed with being THE man instead of A man.

True "Manhood" has lost the real prerequisite, an intimate relationship with God! A team captain cannot effectively lead without being a reflection of the coach. When men re-establish our connection with our creator, we see the fruit—healthier families, stronger communities, a society with substance, and world leaders who are equipped with integrity and purpose.

—Allan Houston, New York Knicks

MAN

HOOD

RESTORED



MAN

HOOD

RESTORED



**HOW THE GOSPEL
MAKES MEN WHOLE**

ERIC MASON



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Epiphany Fellowship: I love you guys more than you'll ever know. As God's undershepherd to you, I have written this work with you in mind. Let's take Philly by storm.

To LifeWay: You guys know what you are doing and I am grateful for you. Thank you for believing in me, and what God has placed in me, and drawing it out. Ed Stetzer, thank you for putting me on LifeWay's radar. Jedidiah Coppenger, Brian Daniel, Phillip Nation, and the rest of the staff, thanks for being easy to work with. Your encouragement has been a blessing.

1ST FOREWORD
BY DR. TONY EVANS

Those who know me are acutely aware of my passion for men's ministry. Whether it is speaking at a Promise Keepers meeting, a men's retreat, or a men's breakfast, you can regularly find me heavily engaged in ministry to men. This is because most of the devolution of our contemporary culture can be traced directly to the brokenness of men today. Whether the issue is faithfulness, crime, poverty, or a myriad of other social ills; at the core is the failure of men to become what God has created them to be.

While there are many reasons for this failure, the pain left behind of broken hearts, dreams, families, and communities is obvious to all. Unless there is a restoration of biblical manhood we can ill expect there to be restoration of an ordered society. Unless the church begins to take lead in seriously prioritizing men's ministry and discipling this and the next generation of men, then we are doomed to see the further decay of our society. If the saga of a nation is the saga of its families written large, then the saga of a family is the saga of its men written large. Just as God found it difficult to find a man to save the

culture from destruction in Ezekiel's day, so now He is still finding it the exception to find man as He defines them today.

That is why this fine work by one of my sons in the ministry is so timely. *Manhood Restored* may best be defined as a "theology of manhood." Eric Mason does a masterful job of unearthing the biblical teaching of the Creator's intent in creating men. He allows the Scriptures to define, instruct, guide, and clarify the true meaning of manhood.

In a day when the definition of manhood is up for grabs by a culture that has exited from the Creator's intent, *Manhood Restored* gives anyone who is seriously desirous of knowing what real manhood is supposed to look like a solid place to go.

Because Eric is a pastor, he does not write this book in abstract esoteric terms so that the reader is left in a theological jog wondering where to go and what to do next. *Manhood Restored* will inspire, challenge, encourage, and educate you on God's gift of manhood. Eric recognizes all too well the challenges men face today, the pain so many men hide, the emptiness so many men endure, the vices so many men escape too, and the anger so many men display. Therefore this work is designed to make men better, not simply analyzing and criticizing their failures.

Manhood Restored will enable all who read it to begin the process of becoming what their divine birthright has destined them to be while equipping them to help other men as well.

Dr. Tony Evans

Senior Pastor, Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship

President, The Urban Alternative

2ND FOREWORD

BY MATT CHANDLER

My dad has a great heart. Although he is a large, burly man whom some find “scary,” he loves to laugh, cries easily, and loves my children with zeal. When I watch him at family gatherings and talk with him in other settings, I always come away in awe of the power of the gospel.

My father grew up in an abusive home where neglect was the preference to the physical violence he routinely received. It was an awful upbringing and one he swore to himself he wouldn't unleash on his own family one day. This environment created cavernous holes in his heart and his development as a man; he feared rejection, hated himself, and could easily feel disrespected and fly into a rage. He filled those holes with alcohol and promiscuity and quickly developed an addiction to both of those along with his anger. As a father of three, I have to believe that when my dad first held me he promised himself he would be a better dad to his son than his dad and stepdads were to him. He gave it a good go, but in the end his hate for himself was too strong and our home started to, in many ways, mirror the environment he grew up in. When I was a kid, my

dad could be a lot of fun in one moment and could turn violent in the next. With the temperature of our house constantly and rapidly changing, I felt as though it was my fault and set out to try and please and help my dad love me. The wounds he had were creating wounds in me. The insecurity he felt began to be imprinted on me, his rage was becoming my rage, his lusts his lusts until Jesus decided this was over.

I heard and received the gospel of Jesus Christ a few days before my eighteenth birthday. It was like warm water on my soul. To be approved and loved by God despite me was an overwhelming truth to a young man that longed for approval and love. I learned quickly that despite my love for Jesus I was banged up, bruised, and continued in some of my boyish ways instead of becoming all that God would have me be as a man. As I continued to marinate in the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Father's approval of me in Jesus, slowly I began to change. I was set free to serve, risk, be vulnerable, and take on responsibility without fear of failure, which led me to work harder but not to be approved but because I was approved. My father came to know Jesus several years ago now, and I am watching this same gospel work, heal, and transform him.

Eric Mason has served us well with this book. To give us pragmatic steps alone would be insufficient and in the end unhelpful. Our souls are broken. To put gas in a car that doesn't run is an exercise in futility. Eric starts where we all must start, the power of the gospel to heal us and transform us into what we were created for. He doesn't stop there and ends the book powerfully on what the gospel empowers us to do. Read this slowly and prayerfully. Its bold, fearless, Scripture

saturated, truth-telling pages might just be used by the Spirit of God to take you into a new season of fulfillment and maturity in your understanding what it means to be a man.

Christ is All,

Matt Chandler

Lead Pastor, The Village Church

President of Acts 29 Church Planting Network

PREFACE

I have written this book because men need to know that only through the gospel of Jesus Christ can they be what God intends. My prayer is that this book and the accompanying curriculum would help scores of men, old and young, to see God's great purpose for them in Jesus. My prayer is that churches will find this book to be a catalyst and a primer for the intentional development of men. I pray it would find its way into Sunday schools, small groups, and bedside tables, so that from the corner office to the street corner men find all they need in Jesus. May disciples of men be made and lives saved.

Introduction



Another book on manhood? I can only imagine that's what you thought as you read the title. There is a pantheon of books on the topic, so why another one? Legitimate question. I know other books on the subject I've read have made phenomenal contributions to my own soul and shaped my understanding of God's purpose for manhood. My hope is that this work will add something to these other contributions that is inseparable from seeing God's true purpose in manhood—the undeniable thread of the gospel.

I would, in fact, say that we don't have enough material written on manhood. I base that on the fact that our gender continues to be steeped in a crisis of identity—genocide, self-preservation, spiritual anemia, role disillusionment, absence, perpetual adolescence, and emotional immaturity. We are deeply deficient in understanding and practicing how to relate to God and others in a healthy way.

We need the gospel. We need it more than books. More than studies. More than groups. We need the life-giving, identity-establishing, purpose-defining gospel of Jesus Christ.

Men can have covenants, documents, strategies, and pragmatic principles, but without the gospel there is no authentic empowerment to execute what is laid out in them. The goal of this book is not to motivate men with guilt of their failures but to facilitate an undeniable encounter with the ultimate God-man. The hero of manhood for this work will be the incarnate Jesus Christ. The eternal contribution of Jesus has changed the course of manhood forever.

We will peruse the beginning, seeing God's original intent for manhood as displayed in the differences between men and women. We will see the divine nature of God displayed in those differences. Although there are aspects of unanimity, we will seek to see how God created men and women as different masterpieces in the landscape of His creation. Understanding God's design in creation will help us further explore the unique portrait of each man as an equal, yet different and distinct image bearer of the glory of God on Earth.

But as we'll see, something went terribly wrong. The fall broke us all, and the systemic issues in our culture are a degeneration of that fall. Being that all creation has been cursed (Rom. 8:22), man lives in a state of death in the midst of this cursed creation. Whereas we were created to represent God's reign in creation, we continue to invent ways to deepen our separation from God by rejecting Him in every area of our lives.

We sense this separation—the void between what we are and what we know, somewhere inside of us, we could and should be. Men have tried to bridge the gap by constructing our own ideas of what it means to “really be a man.” Whether the businessman, the thug, the rapper, the athlete, the playboy,

or the bishop, these cultural caricatures fall drastically short of God's intent for a man.

But the biggest, and scariest, challenge that has emanated from the fall involves fatherhood. My close friend Blake Wilson describes this plague as "Daddy Deprivation." The crisis in fatherhood crosses cultural and socioeconomic grounds; it's a crisis prevalent in all areas of society, for the absence of a father leaves a lasting void in a man's identity and development.

Because of the deprivation of fathers, we see human efforts as unredeemed replacements. Unredeemed determination, womanizing, being a better father than their father, bitterness, and all the rest can't fill the gap of a father. All replacements are illegitimate means for a legitimate need (Jer. 1:11–13). We need fathers, and we're only going to be fathers to our children when we see that true fatherhood is rooted and defined in God the Father.

That examination will bring us to the beginnings of the redemption of manhood. Jesus—the second, new, and better Adam—is lifted before us as the ultimate portrait of what it means to be a man. Manhood is core and fundamental to the identity of Jesus, before and after He walked on the earth. Throughout the Old Testament, we see glimpses of the perfect Man establishing Himself as the hope for all generations. Understanding this sets the stage for what we see from Jesus throughout the gospel—that His manhood was rooted in His understanding of His existence as connected to God as Father and His call to courageously sacrifice His life for us. It was the gospel that drove Jesus' manhood in His incarnation, and that manhood pleased the Father greatly.

Even today His example of what it means to be a man is powerful to show men today how to care for the people God has given to us. Although no man is Jesus, men must have lives in Christ that purposefully ruin people for the glory of God. Real men follow Jesus and fulfill their purpose in their generation (Acts 13:36). After the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, Christians are part of a “newmanity” unlike the humanity destroyed by the fall.

As Paul articulated in Ephesians 2:15, Christ has created one new man in Himself, and this newmanity is made up of men and women of different ethnicities and time periods. Within this, the males within the newmanity have been restored to God’s new eternal intentions in Jesus Christ. As a part of God’s new community, men play a vital role in leading in the home and in the church. We will look at a vast array of characteristics of what the gospel has produced in this new community.

Our exploration will take us into key practical areas where manhood is vitally needed, places where men have failed over the centuries: Sexuality, the home, the church, and other societal institutions are crying out for real men of the newmanity to rise up and lead.

From beginning to end, God has a purpose for men. It’s a purpose that’s been lost but, in and through Jesus Christ, one that might yet be recovered. It’s time for manhood to be restored.

CHAPTER 1

The Life and Death of Manhood



In an interview with Bryan “Baby” Williams, leader of the Young Money Cash Money Billionaires, a question was raised about the term *bling, bling*.

This term is a colloquialism used first in hip-hop culture to speak about the mass accumulation of material wealth. In this culture, every time there is an accomplishment that leads to gaining more wealth, “bling, bling” is announced to self and others as a way of saying that more has been brought into one’s possession. In regard to the term, Baby stated, “I wish we would have trademarked that phrase cause we originated it. People would have to pay us every time they used the term and it would trace them back to us” [paraphrase].

That’s how trademarking works. It’s a claim on something original, something unique, that establishes ownership. Many might use, build on, or add something to the original, but the trademark establishes the absolute first origin of something. It’s important in business; it’s more important in creation.

God holds the trademark on creation. More specifically, God holds the trademark on manhood. All of God's creation was brought into being with a sense of care and love, but when He created man He didn't speak him into existence as He did the stars, water, land, and animals. Instead God innovated a new technique in creation. God *formed* man. This term is rich in depth and meaning—God handmade man by sculpting Him from what He had already created.

Formed means “fashioned, shaped, or forged, usually by plan or design.”¹ The term implies an intentionality; forming isn't haphazard. To *form* is to devise, prepare, i.e., think about future actions with a particular plan of action as an extension of forming an object by artistic, careful design.² God is not a mad scientist, unknowingly experimenting with creation to see what He would come up with. He is a thoughtful, careful, loving, artist who knows exactly what He's after in the process of creation. That means God did not haphazardly create man but was fully aware of His expectations and desires of His creation even before He began.

Genesis 1:26–28 is considered a summary statement of the creation of both men and women. In that summary, though, we find a statement of purpose along with mere description. The key is in the word *image*. Those five letters are jam-packed with fundamental theological truth that gives us insight not only into God's original intent in human creation, but also His ongoing purpose for us in the world. The NET Bible note on the terms *likeness* and *image* is helpful to aid our understanding:

The word *dému* (“likeness”) is an abstract noun; its verbal root means “to be like; to resemble.” In the Book of Genesis the two terms describe human beings who in some way reflect the form and the function of the creator. The form is more likely stressing the spiritual rather than the physical. The “image of God” would be the God-given mental and spiritual capacities that enable people to **relate to God** and to **serve him by ruling** over the created order as his earthly vice-regents.

In our image, after our likeness. Similar language is used in the instructions for building the tabernacle. Moses was told to make it “according to the pattern” he was shown on the mount (Exod. 25:9–10). Was he shown a form, a replica, of the spiritual sanctuary in the heavenly places? In any case, what was produced on earth functioned as the heavenly sanctuary does, but with limitations.³

Man was meant to function like a mirror—something to reflect the image of God into creation. Humanity, made in the image of God, was created to be an earthly representation of who God is. In man’s God-given dominion and rule over creation, he was to display the ultimate rule of God in his limited dominion.

Man as an Image Bearer

Representation and Responsibility

As an image bearer, man was to reflect God’s heavenly reign on earth. In other words, man represents God by virtue

of being in His image. In representing God, man was to glorify the God who created him.

This is an incredible responsibility. Both Genesis 1:28 and 2:15 describe this responsibility as the act of subduing and caring for creation. The general meaning of the verb in those passages appears to be “to bring under one’s control for one’s advantage.” In subduing creation, man is given the ability to use it for his personal benefit on God’s terms. In that light, the command in Genesis 1:28 might be paraphrased like this: “Harness its potential and use its resources for your benefit.”⁴ Since God would later create the woman to come along side the man in this task, it’s understood that they together would understand and embrace their role and pass this understanding onto their children.

The word *care* in Genesis 2:15 (NIV) carries a similar sense. The man is called “to work it and keep” (ESV) the garden. In essence, this responsibility was a job. Grudem states,

Immediately upon creating man in Genesis 2, God puts *man* to work, stewarding and ruling in the world that is *God’s* own creation. Man is given responsibility to cultivate the garden, and man is called upon to name the animals. So, while the garden in which man dwells is God’s, God gives to man the responsibility to steward it. And, importantly, while the animals are God’s, God gives to man the right and responsibility to name them (note especially the statement in Genesis 2:19 that whatever the *man* called the living creature, “that was its name”).⁵

Whenever we talk about this at Epiphany Fellowship, the women go crazy. They love hearing that the man got a job before he had a woman! Work was good in those days; more than good, in fact. Then and now, in a redeemed sense, work is a key part of who we are as men.

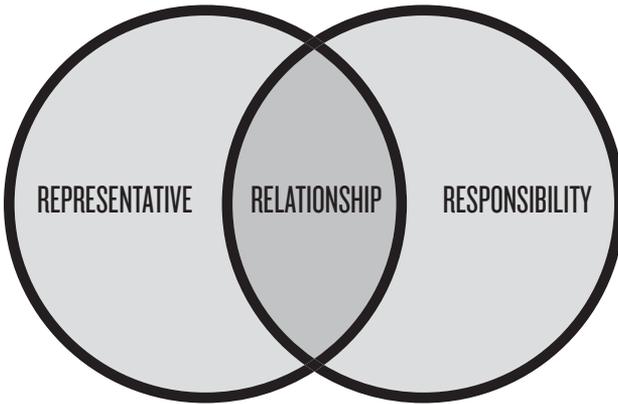
Man was called to subdue. And he was called to care. But he was also called to rule. In ruling they would serve as God's vice-regents⁶ on Earth. This rule was not to be done with an iron fist. If humans were really going to reflect the image of God's rule on their own, they would accept the responsibility of seeing to the welfare of that which is put under them and the privilege of using it for their benefit.⁷ Man would have led the effort in that he was the first created and the first to receive these instructions from the Lord (1 Tim. 2:13).

Relationship

We need to be careful here that we don't miss one of the chief components of being God's image bearer. As an image bearer, man is to subdue. He is to care and work. And he is to rule. All these components are key, but what is missing up to this point is the *relationship*. Having a relationship with Yahweh was what made image bearing more than just some sort of political appointment. God designed humans with a unique capacity for relationship because it was His intent that this centerpiece of His creation, man and woman, would be relationally connected to Him for eternity. Without relationship none of the other aspects of being an image bearer would matter. Think about it like this: If a father relates to his children only based on the chores they are supposed to do, that

child would grow up with a warped sense of love, accomplishment, and self-worth. Similarly, our relationship with God was intended to be much more than a stale deistic relationship where He creates and leaves things on Earth to us.

Emulsifier chart:



As the chart above points out our identity as God's representatives, our activity of the responsibilities He has given us, and our connectivity to Him in relationship are all aspects of being created in the image of God. However, identity and activity flow from connectivity:



Relationship with God is so central to what it means to be an image bearer that Jeremiah states it is the only thing man can boast about in relation to himself:

Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.” (Jer. 9:23–24 ESV)

The word *know* is a term of intimacy. It’s the same word used of God’s intimate knowledge of the prophet in Jeremiah 1:5. When God restored man through Jesus Christ, the first thing highlighted isn’t ruling or responsibility, but relationship (John 17:3). The point is that relationship is the most compelling factor driving what it means to be made in the image of God.

God gave the first woman to the first man to be a suitable helper to him and to accompany him as a co-image bearer to live out representation, responsibility, and relationship not only in how they related to God but also how they related to each other. The man’s form and nature are matched by the woman’s as she reflects him and complements him as an equal, yet distinct partner. They correspond to each other. In other words, the woman has everything (in essence and value) that God invested in the man.⁸ Therefore, both have an equal relationship with God, but each is distinct in how he or she represents Him and lives out their responsibility toward Him.

What Killed Manhood?

There was much more wrapped up in that piece of fruit in the garden than just a bad decision. With sin, there always is. We talk ourselves into thinking that sin is just a bad choice; it's not. It's much deeper than that for us, just as it was for Adam. When Adam chose willful rebellion against the law of God, he was choosing to forfeit his birthright by rejecting his calling to represent, be responsible, and enjoy his relationship with God, his wife, and the rest of creation. This single act placed in motion the initial and progressive fall of creation and its order, one whose effects still ravage every facet of the world today. We could speak at length on all things that were lost—peace, harmony, joy, order—these were put aside for temporary pleasure.

Did Adam know the full implications of his choice? Probably not. But sin is like that. It blinds us to the consequences of our actions. We get so nearsighted when we see something we want to experience that everything else fades away. Adam chose to set aside his representation of God, responsibility for God, and relationship with God, and these things were lost because of the price of his sin. Although men and women are equal, their function in the fall was different. As the man, Adam is held responsible for it (Rom. 5:12). Sin entered through Adam and spread to men and women alike. When Adam sinned, all of God's intentions for man fell with man. Peace and enjoyment of God and His creation was lost. The spread of God's reign across the earth was lost. Dominion over the world was lost. The development of the undeveloped earth for the Lord was lost. Gone.

Adam made this choice in the most perfect of environments. It would only get worse from there. As more people were born, after the fall in Genesis 3, they would be born without Adam's responsibility, representation, and relationship, at least in the sense that God meant in the beginning. The definition of being an image bearer of God would be marred at the core of man's being for millennia. Man would struggle and replace what was meant to be reflected as a sign of his relationship with Yahweh with himself and creation. Without a relationship with God to navigate and give value to responsibility and relationship, humankind would spiral out of control.

Consequently, manhood was lost along with the rest of God's original design for creation. Instead of responsibility, representation, and relationship, things like chauvinism, violence, passivity, insecurity, and addiction would characterize generation after generation of men in a continually increasing way.

Things Got Worse

Genesis 2:17 records the solemn warning God gave to Adam: he would "surely die," or literally "dying you shall die," if he ate from the tree. The death described ominously here encompasses both a spiritual and physical sense. Physical death is pointing to termination of physical life; worse still, spiritual death means the termination of relationship with God. Once separated from God, men would continue in a downward spiral over the ages as that separation became more and more fully fleshed out.

One of the saddest statements about the state of man is found in Genesis 6:5–6.

“The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.” (ESV)

Chilling. Man, the centerpiece of God’s creative activity, His very representative meant to be the apex of the projection of His glory, was so grievous to God’s heart that God was sorry He had ever made man.⁹ Since Genesis 3, man continued to devolve until, in Genesis 6, God took an inventory of the state of mankind. All that man intended to be and do was being used for evil intent. Responsibility and representation had fallen to selfish motives of personal gain. Man was using the power that God gave him to rule as a way to dominate and corrupt what God once called good.

Sin Experts

Fast-forward to now, and not much has changed. Things are getting worse, not better. In our cities men are becoming more and more inventive in their acts of crime and violence. If Hollywood is a cultural barometer, which it often is, we can see example after example of our capacity for evil. In the movie *Seven*, two police officers seek to stop a serial killer who justifies his murders by positioning himself as a vigilante creating a murderous masterpiece against those who personified the seven deadly sins: envy, greed, lust, anger, sloth, gluttony,

and pride. Each murder is a gory—and creative—depiction of the particular sin of the guilty. The guilty are punished with an even more perverse form of their sin of choice. As you watch the movie, you get a visceral sense at how innovative all of us are at sinning.

The longer creation exists in a state of separation from God, the effects of that separation become more and more clear. First Timothy 3, written thousands of years after the events recorded in Genesis 6, predicts this. And in our world today, two thousand years after Paul penned his letter, the depth of our depravity has come even starker into view. Our separation from God is so embedded that our dysfunction has become the new normal. From music videos to the multibillion-dollar porn industry, you see anywhere and everywhere the effects of the disastrous fall. As Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 8:11, “Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the children of man is fully set to do evil” (ESV).

Even so, things are not as bad as they could be. God by His grace continues to restrain how comprehensively expressive man’s sin is fleshed out in the world. If the Lord gave all of mankind over to the full extent of our sinfulness, we would totally destroy ourselves. In Romans 1:24–28 Paul speaks of God giving already sinful people over to a deeper level of sinfulness. Inferentially, it seems that the Lord somehow restrains this from being a norm in the lives of all fallen humanity. Second Thessalonians 2:7 infers that the Lord in some way holds back the immensity of how destructive evil becomes on the earth. Accordingly, it is only due to the goodness and patience of the living God that any of us are still

here, as He has throughout history acted to place a cap on our wickedness.

Throughout the events recorded in the Bible, we see the Lord revealing Himself, disciplining, judging, preaching, performing miracles, and ultimately sending Jesus to keep the clutches of sin from taking full grip on creation. These intervening acts only serve to highlight the full destructive nature of sin:

As a result of the fall, sin has become universal; except for Jesus Christ no person who ever lived on this earth has been free from sin. This sad fact is acknowledged even by those who are neither adherents of Christianity nor believers of the Bible.¹⁰

Because the scope of the fall is so great, the solution to the fall must be equally great or greater. Solutions like self-help, community programming, and training groups all have their place, but it's not at the foundation. These can only help to treat the symptoms, to prolong the inevitable. We need something deeper. We need to be born again. Being born again reverses the polarity of creation (John 3). Because sin was the cause, sin must be eradicated for an end to come to the pervasive depravity in the world. And because sin has not only destroyed humanity but creation as well, all of redeemable creation must be re-created—born again in its own way—for things to finally be as they should.

Unfortunately, not all beings in the universe long for this to happen.

Attempts to Assassinate Godly Manhood

From Genesis 3 to the birth of Jesus, Satan has made it his business to destroy any attempts for manhood to be restored. We see his efforts played out in the birth of Adam and Eve's children. Abel was the righteous seed of the woman. His brother, Cain, killed him—the unrighteous seeking to destroy the righteous. The pattern continued in Exodus when Pharaoh commanded that the Hebrew boys be killed in order to lower the number of threats of rebellion, since there were more Hebrews than Egyptians.

Even during the times of captivity of the people of God in the Old Testament, it is believed that Jews who served near the kings were eunuchs. Eunuchs during that time might have held power but weren't considered to be a threat since their peculiar impairment usually rendered them among the most scorned and stigmatized members of society. In a patriarchal culture where honor was tied to male domination, the effeminate, impotent eunuch was viewed with shame and as a threatening social deviant.¹¹

Nehemiah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah are thought to have been eunuchs. Even with all of the exaltation that they were experiencing in foreign lands, the enemy wanted to make sure that their power was met with shame and limitation of vision. However, even in these times, God gave glimpses of restoration. Each of these men stand the test of time as exemplary, uncompromising men even in the midst of their possible emasculation.

Male genocide and castrating manhood have consistently been the enemy's way to tarnish hope with fear. Keep reading

into the New Testament, and you'll see how the knowledge of Jesus' birth drove Herod to strive after the threat to his throne (Matt. 2). All of these physical attempts to bring the end of righteous men only mirror the greater spiritual battle. As men, we must not become lethargic in our vigilance against things that would attempt to destroy manhood.

Literal genocide is no longer politically correct today, but the enemy's threats continue in a more covert form. Homosexuality is of great debate in the world and surprisingly in the church. The redefinition of the family calls for a redefinition of God's intention for the genders. Manhood has to be refined for this ideology to work. This political ideology is a similar tactic to the brutal methods of those biblical rulers. Manhood is under attack. Again. Still. The sooner we realize it's happening, the sooner we can begin to fight back.