



The video we just saw demonstrates that one of the most important things a father can say to his child is “You got this.” Fathers, I know this day is all about celebrating you and letting you do whatever you want. I hope you have a fabulous day. Happy Father’s Day!

We decided to connect the idea of Father’s Day with masculinity in our Trending Now preaching series. So while I’m not going to talk exclusively about being a father today, I am going to show you what God says about being a man.

There’s a lot of confusion and different opinions to the question in our culture today, What is a true man? Are you a true man when you provide financially for your family but rarely see them? Are you a true man when you have a Man Cave with a bar and a 72-inch TV and a poker table? In the inner city manhood is often measured by the number of sexual conquests a man has while remaining uncommitted and free. In Texas, where I grew up, manhood was closely connected to gun ownership. A true man owns a gun and knows how to use it. As researchers and authors ask and answer the question, What is a true man?, they all agree that there’s a kind of crisis about manhood today.

Kay Hymowitz, in her book *Marriage and Caste in America*, connects being a true man to marriage. She reveals some fascinating information. “No culture has ever designed a model of fatherhood without matrimony.” Based upon her research, Kay makes a strong case that a core function of manhood is marriage and procreation.

In the last 10 years other researchers have identified a different and troubling pattern about manhood in our society: it’s called extended adolescence. Although these guys are a man in some ways, they behave like an adolescence boy in many ways, stuck and confused in no man’s land. Here’s his profile:

- Single, between 22 and 35 years old
- Educated and well paid
- Roommates to keep rent low
- Logs lots of time on video games, expensive recreational hobbies and travel
- Hits the bars and clubs to hook up with women
- They don’t take responsibility for much and have no defining purpose

Finally, we see a blurring of the lines between male and female. Christians have always believed that God created two distinct genders—male and female. Both genders are equal in dignity and worth, but distinctly different and complementary. God points to the differentiation of humans into male and female as that which reflects His image. When we confuse male and female in humans, we distort the image of God and the picture of His relationship with us.

The path to manhood seems cloudy and nebulous. Skye Jethani, after looking at the Bible for answers to this question says, “What is biblical masculinity? Because it seems that the men in the Bible, like men today, represent a wide spectrum of gifts, personalities, interests, and callings. Some are warriors, some are artists, some are both. Some lead, others follow. Some are the pinnacle of virility with thousands of wives and concubines, and others are castrated eunuchs affirmed for their faith and courage ... So what is biblical masculinity?”

That is the question I seek to answer today in our Trending Now preaching series. It’s a confusing topic in our country with lots of opinions, and we’re going to look at God’s word this morning to learn: What does God say about being a man?

Turn in your Bibles to 1 Kings 2:1-9. It’s the story of King David, old, weak and near death, passing the baton of leadership of the nation of Israel to his son, Solomon.

“When the time drew near for David to die, he gave a charge to Solomon his son. ‘I am about to go the way of all the earth,’ he said. ‘So be strong, act like a man, and observe what the Lord your God requires’” (verses 1-3a).

Here’s part of the answer to, What does God say about being a man?

- Be strong
- Act like a man
- Observe what the Lord requires

Be Strong

This is not physical strength. It means strength of mind. A man’s got to have strength of mind to focus on the right things and ignore the trivial. Strength of mind is required to control his emotions—anger, fear and his insecurities. Strength of mind is required to quiet the doubts in his own mind and fight the temptations of life.

If life was easy and predictable, a man wouldn't need to be strong. If men weren't expected to lead into the scary unknown of life, we wouldn't need to be strong. But life's not easy and it's filled with a ton of unknowns. That's why Moses told Joshua, *"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you"* (Deut. 31:6).

Imagine hearing this from Moses. He'd gone toe to toe with Pharaoh ten times with the plagues. He'd led one million people out of Egypt on a walking expedition only to find themselves trapped between the Red Sea in front, mountains on both sides, and the angry Egyptian army coming from behind. He saw God rescue them by parting the Red Sea. Moses had faced circumstances that would terrify anyone and probably terrified him. Yet Moses had seen God's almighty power as well. He had experienced the Lord **with** him, never leaving him. All of this is packed in this one instruction to Joshua, "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because the Lord your God goes with you."

Being strong and courageous doesn't mean mustering up your own strength. It means trusting God to have all the strength you need. That's being a godly man.

And it was the same for King David. As he's lying on his death bed, looking at his son Solomon eye to eye, he says, "be strong." David had faced obstacles and temptations. He knew the soaring heights of being strong and the devastating pain of being weak. Sometimes he was inspirational, like when he walked into the valley to face Goliath with a sling and five stones. David wasn't trusting his strength, he was trusting God to have all the strength he needed. David is instructing Solomon to live like that. Telling him that being a godly man means you walk into the valleys of life. You do the hard things that you'd rather not do and you trust that God will be with you as you go. That's being a godly man.

Solomon's strength will be tested immediately with Joab and Shimei. Regarding Joab look at verses 5-6.

"Now you yourself know what Joab son of Zeruiah did to me—what he did to the two commanders of Israel's armies, Abner son of Ner and Amasa son of Jether. He killed them, shedding their blood in peacetime as if in battle, and with that blood he stained the belt around his waist and the sandals on his feet. Deal with him according to your wisdom, but do not let his gray head go down to the grave in peace."

Regarding Shimei look at verses 8-9.

"And remember, you have with you Shimei son of Gera, the Benjamite from Bahurim, who called down bitter curses on me the day I went to Mahanaim. When he came down to meet me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the Lord: 'I will not put you to death by the sword.' But now, do not consider him innocent. You are a man of wisdom;

you will know what to do to him. Bring his gray head down to the grave in blood."

These are two difficult situations where Solomon needs to be strong. If he's weak, which would mean letting these two guys go unpunished, he will not be acting like a godly man. Solomon will be growing into his manhood as he deals with these two men in difficult situations. He shouldn't ignore their rebellious behavior. He shouldn't be passive. He shouldn't let someone else deal with the problems. He needs to step in, deal with the heavy stuff and deal with them according to wisdom. This is the first quality of being a Godly man—be strong. The 2nd quality is to...

Act Like a Man

"Show yourself" to be a man. This was most likely said to Solomon because he was young. How young we don't know, but younger than ideal to become the king of Israel. David would have preferred living longer so he could transition Solomon with more training into the role of king. But that wasn't an option. David knew he was dying and Solomon needed to be prepared, so he told him, "act like a man."

It was like David was telling him, "I know you feel inadequate because you're young, but God has ordained this situation and that means you can do this, with His power. You got this." It's common for men to feel inadequate. Sometimes this causes a man to hesitate and withdraw into passivity. Other times this causes a man to overcompensate by trying to constantly prove himself. Neither are qualities of a Godly man.

David knows that Solomon will feel inadequate so he tells him to "act like a man ... you got this ... don't doubt yourself ... God has appointed you as the man to handle these circumstances." As far as God is concerned, a man doesn't make excuses. That's just giving more power to something powerless. He faces the challenges life brings him, turns to God for strength, works diligently and faithfully and trusts the outcome to God. That's being a godly man. David gives Solomon an example of how he can do this in verse 7.

"But show kindness to the sons of Barzillai of Gilead and let them be among those who eat at your table. They stood by me when I fled from your brother Absalom."

David wants Solomon to extend generosity and provision to the family of Barzillai. This is one way he can start acting like a godly man immediately. A godly man looks to give to others, to provide for others, to meet the needs of others.

In contrast, a boy waits for someone else to provide for them. A boy doesn't offer to pay for dinner. A boy doesn't know how to host a party or see the needs of others with the intention of meeting those needs. But a godly man does. A boy waits for someone else to provide for them because they feel inadequate. But a godly man doesn't hide behind feelings of inadequacy. He

steps out and acts like a man. It's been said that the best way boys learn to act like a man is from the instruction and leadership of other men.

Author Richard Rohr, in his book *The Five Promises of Male Initiation*, tells a story about two young African bull elephants in a national park that lose control. The young males were adolescents who didn't stick with the herd; they'd push over trees, SUV's, trample other animals, even baby elephants if they were in their way. The young males were causing chaos in the park and some wildlife experts came in to find out why. They realized for some reason the area had lost all the mature male elephants through old age or poachers and these two young bulls were the oldest males left in their territory. But they never learned how bull elephants were supposed to act. So they brought in a couple of older bulls and within weeks the chaos ceased! The older males would flap their ears, stomp their feet and growl when the young males started to act up, and the young bulls quickly learned how a mature bull was meant to behave. Only older males could teach them how to do that.

This is the second quality of a godly man. The third quality is to...

Observe What the Lord Requires

Follow God's laws. Basically this is saying, Let your life be governed and directed by God, not opinions of other people, not the ambitions of your heart, not the love of women. Let your life be governed and directed by God. Look how David expands on this instruction to observe what the Lord your God requires in verses 3b-4.

"Walk in obedience to him, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and regulations, as written in the Law of Moses. Do this so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go and that the Lord may keep his promise to me: 'If your descendants watch how they live, and if they walk faithfully before me with all their heart and soul, you will never fail to have a successor on the throne of Israel.'"

One of the things David says to motivate Solomon to obedience is the promise of prosperity. He says, "if you trust in the promises of God, you will prosper in all you do." God is actively involved and blessing his people who observe his Word. He doesn't want Solomon to obey robotically or to obey with a vague hope that things might work out. No. David has seen God's mighty hand and God's miracles. He knows that whenever someone builds their life on the promises of God, God will bring His kind of prosperity.

One of the things I'm learning about myself is that I have unusually high faith in God. In fact, faith is one of my spiritual gifts. This faith combined with the demonstrations of God's power in my life over the years makes me willing to step out in faith to attempt seemingly illogical things if God is leading. I'm trusting

His promises. But it's occurred to me lately that my kids haven't seen many tangible demonstrations of God's power. They need that. And one of the ways they can get it is to come alongside of me as I observe what the Lord requires and take steps of faith.

So men, you want to become more godly? Observe what the Lord your God requires.

Now of course you can say that two of these three apply to women as well, and they do. Women are called to be strong and to obey God's word too. But there's a leadership responsibility men have which is different from women. I know that's not a popular thing to say these days, but it's what the Bible says. And godly male leadership is always subservient to the word of God. So a man needs be in the Word of God, feeding himself from it, letting it judge and correct and guide and encourage his life.

Men, if you're married, you bear the primary responsibility to your family in a way that's consistent with God's word.

- How does your family spend its money?
- How do you spend your time?
- Do you pray together?
- Are you a committed part of our church community?

We did a little research here at CPC and to the best of our knowledge the average family at CPC shows up to church on Sunday about 37% of the time. A little over one-third of the Sundays our families get up and come to church. I'm not trying to make anyone feel guilty here, but I do want, especially our men, to think about that in light of your family's need for the word of God and the encouragement that comes from other believers.

All of this talk of manhood makes me think of Jesus. Do you know Jesus was the ideal man? If anyone can show us what true manhood is, it's Jesus. The Bible says Jesus grew into manhood. He would have gone through all the normal stages of growth and maturity. Remember how when he was 12 he was found in the temple talking with the rabbis? It seems at this crucial turning point in his life Jesus wanted to show his insights into the commandments.

The next great event in Jesus' life was his baptism. That was the ultimate "You got this" moment in his life when his Father said to him, **"You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased"** (Luke 3:22). That's what every son needs to hear from his father: "You are my son. You can do this. You have what it takes. I love you."

After his baptism, Jesus began his public ministry. And as you study him, you see he didn't always fit all the stereotypes of masculinity but showed us what a godly man looked like. Jesus felt things deeply and expressed his feelings. He wept at his friend's grave (John 11:35). Unlike the typical male of his day, he honored and protected women at a time when women were considered

less valuable than a healthy animal. He also loved children. In a day when children were totally powerless and without rights, he said, ***“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these”*** (Mark 10:14).

He was a man who moved toward the action. He took on the devil in the wilderness. He took on the religious leaders, calling them snakes and wolves in sheep's clothing. He confronted his own disciples, calling one of them “Satan” when he tried to deter him from his purpose. He cleared out the moneychangers from the temple with a whip. And then with infinite courage and faith he took on sin and death by offering himself to be crucified. Jesus was a perfect example of a well-rounded godly man.

Men, we have the example of Jesus and other godly men in the Bible. We have the power of the Holy Spirit in us. Why don't you commit to taking a step forward in one of these three areas I've talked about today?

- Be strong
- Act like a man
- Observe what the Lord requires

Our Father and our God, help us to be strong, not in ourselves but in the strength and courage that you provide.

Shape us into men who accept responsibility and reject passivity.

Help us to move toward that which needs correction, or kindness, or our presence.

Help us be brave and wise and bold.

Help us to be men who love your word, who meditate on it both day and night, and who teach it to our sons, daughters and grandchildren.

Keep us from what is a false manhood; one that is driven by selfish pride and hatred and violence.

Mold us to be men like Jesus, who has given us His Spirit.

It's in His name we pray. Amen.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.