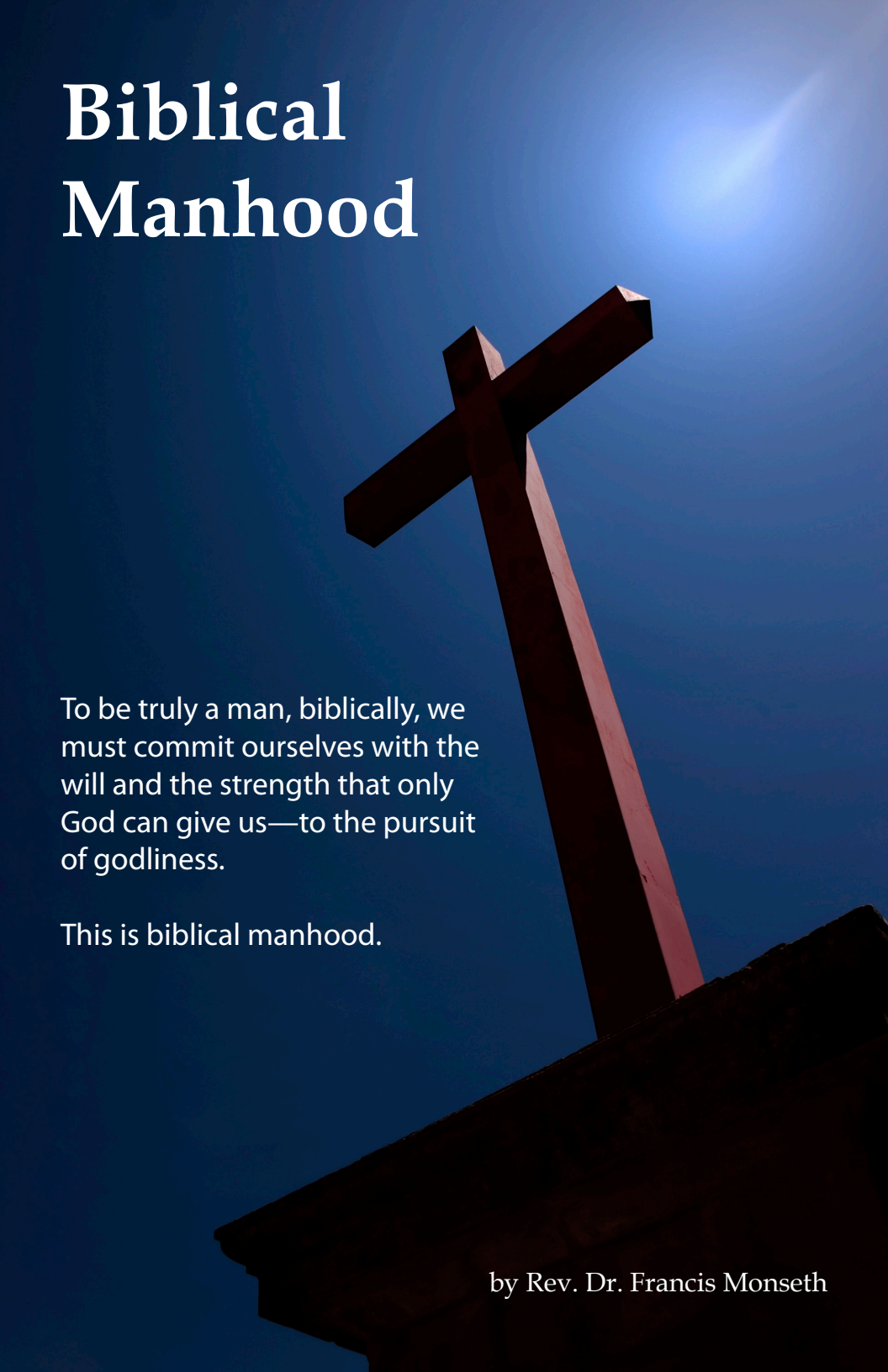
Biblical Manhood



To be truly a man, biblically, we must commit ourselves with the will and the strength that only God can give us—to the pursuit of godliness.

This is biblical manhood.

by Rev. Dr. Francis Monseth

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Before his passing in 2013, **Rev. Dr. Francis W. Monseth** was Dean of the Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary in Plymouth, Minnesota. He joined the faculty in 1971, serving as professor of Systematic Theology. He was elected Dean in 1981. He also taught in the Biblical Theology Department of the Association Free Lutheran Bible School located on the same campus.

Along with serving as pastor of congregations in Washington and Minnesota, Dr. Monseth served in several official capacities as an evangelical Lutheran minister. He was an officer of the Evangelical Pastors Association in Everett, Washington. He was been a member of the board of Lutheran Colportage, Inc., the home council of the World Mission Prayer League, the board of Good News for Israel, and the board of Lutheran-Estonian American Friends (LEAF). He served three terms as vice president of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations and for many years was a member of the editorial board of its church organ, The Lutheran Ambassador.

He also served as vice president of the Georg Sverdrup Society and as a member of the boards of Heritage Christian Academy and the Ambassador Institute, a distance education ministry. In addition, he worked closely with East European Missions Network.

Dr. Monseth was the author of many published articles and sermons. Together with his wife, Ellen, he wrote a study on the life of Christ for the Ambassador Sunday School curriculum. He also wrote two booklets: *Principles and Practices of Lutheran Evangelism* and *Georg Sverdrup: Champion of the Free Congregation*.

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"A reformation of Christian manhood is necessary for North America to experience true spiritual revival," says Patrick Morley, director of Man in the Mirror Ministries. Morley continues: "Can you imagine any way of getting society right without getting the Church right? Can you imagine any way of getting the Church right without getting the family right? Can you imagine getting the family right without getting marriage right? Can marriages be right without men being right?

"What happens when a man's relationship with Jesus is not right?" asks Morley. "For every ten men in U.S. churches, nine will have children leave the church, eight will not find their jobs satisfying, seven will look at pornography, six will pay only the monthly minimum balance on their credit cards, four will get divorced, and all ten will struggle to balance work and family. Only one of the ten will have a biblical world view. It really is about the men. Unless we address the issues of Christian manhood, the other systemic problems in the Church will not go away," Morley said.[1]

Confusion about the Meaning of Manhood

How can a twenty-first century American male know what manhood really is? On the academic scene, there is a tremendous amount of literature dealing with women's studies. For example, at four of the University of California's nine campuses, a person can earn a BA with a major in women's studies. Yet none of the campuses offer a degree in men's studies. The university's inter-campus library computer has almost 15,000 listings under the heading of "women" but only about 800 listings under the heading of "men" (1,800 percent more information about women than men!).

Weldon M. Hardenbrook poses the situation for the average American male with clarity. "It's extremely difficult for men to act like men when so much confusion exists about the definition of manhood."[2]

Issues regarding "manhood" today—issues that relate to the confusion that so many men have about the meaning of manhood—include:

Traditional Gender Roles?

Who is to exercise leadership in the family and what kind of leadership is needed? Who is normally assigned the chief role in providing for the family? The consensus of much of society today that husbands and wives occupy equal roles in the guidance and maintenance of the home has affected the family life of many church members. Many are confused and

often frustrated by either the husband's or wife's neglect or failure in this regard. Does the Bible speak to this matter and are its principles relevant for today?

The Meaning of Masculinity?

The blurring of gender distinctions continues under the influence of social scientists who appear to believe that "utopia" will be reached when society fully accepts and owns their thesis that terms like "male" and "female" should be scrapped in favor of "unisex" recognition. Are there differences other than physical features between men and women? How important is it to discover and affirm the uniqueness of masculinity in family life, in the Church, and in society? How does the Bible describe the nature and characteristics of manhood in light of Creation and the "Fall"?

"Father-wounds?"

Prasso Ministries, a national counseling and teaching ministry, reports that 75 percent or more Christians admit to deeply negative feelings about their fathers. Participants in ministry activities reported that, "He was the person I could never please." "He was the one who told me I would never amount to anything." "He was the one who never told me he loved me." "He was the person who abandoned us."

This has created a crisis of faith for many within the Church. When children can't trust their earthly fathers, almost automatically they mistrust their heavenly Father too. When a daughter has been hurt or abused by her father, she finds it very difficult to trust her husband. When a father is absent from his wife or children, either physically by leaving or by emotional detachment, we find an environment conducive for a son to turn to other males for a relationship—so often, becoming a homosexual relationship.

God as "Father" or "Mother"?

There is a great deal of recent theological study that deals with the question of using feminine language for God. The late Fuller Seminary theologian Paul K. Jewett made this a central point in his magnum opus, *God, Creation, and Revelation.*[3] Jewett sometimes uses "she" for God and goes to great lengths to defend feminist arguments for referring to

God in feminine terms.

In Elizabeth Johnson's book *She Who Is* [4], which purports to be a treatise on the doctrine of God, Johnson's main purpose is to try to make a case for the use of feminine language more or less exclusively, at least for the time being, in reference to God.

Ordination of Women into the Pastoral Ministry?
Many denominations have changed their positions on this matter, including some in our beloved Lutheran family. As many women are enrolling in some of our Lutheran seminaries as are men. More and more congregations in most of the historic Protestant denominations are being led by women pastors. The Bible's strictures in this regard are considered simply to be reflecting the culture of the day and not to be considered as abiding principles for the structure and governance of the Church.

Legitimizing homosexuality?
In most places across America, school districts now include homosexuality and bisexuality as officially recognized and protected lifestyles. Though all kinds of lifestyles are now "protected," we should note it appears that in most public school classrooms, it is no longer possible to affirm normative heterosexual morality. Schools have become a social power tool for a new definition of morals and social "justice."

Yes, and in many mainline denominations, there are theologians who declare feminism and homosexuality to be at the very heart of the Gospel. They profess to find no evidence in Scripture that would prohibit what is termed a "committed" homosexual relationship. A growing number of pastors and church members believe that those who are living in a "committed" homosexual relationship are unworthy of censure; indeed, they are accepted as regular members of the congregation.

Same-sex Marriage?
This issue is touching many churches. Some pastors are not only blessing homosexual unions but performing homosexual "marriages" as well, often in defiance of church law. An

> increasing number of congregations across America are adopting a stance toward homosexuals which these churches call "open and affirming." This affirmation consists of accepting and admitting to their membership couples of the same gender who are living in a homosexual union.

The presence and prevalence of these societal issues highlights the fact that our culture is struggling with the meaning of masculinity. Just as our culture in general struggles to grasp the meaning of manhood, Christian men are struggling with questions such as these: What does it mean to be a Christian man in our culture today? How do the Bible and my Christian faith shape what it means for me to be a man? How do I live out my masculinity in a God-pleasing manner?

In their book, *The Silence of Adam*[5], Larry Crabb, Don Hudson, and Al Andrews point to the interconnectedness between godliness and masculinity. They write:

> The only way to be manly is first to be godly. In our day, men are looking for their manhood more than they are seeking God. Too many men make the mistake of studying masculinity and trying to practice what they learn without paying attention to their relationship with God.

Understanding the unique way in which he was created doesn't make a person fully a man. Neither does simply getting married and having a family make someone a man. Success in one's business, achieving great wealth and power, receiving honor and praise by one's peers—these are not the measure of real masculinity, biblical manhood. To be truly a man, masculine biblically, we must commit ourselves with the will and the strength that only God can give us—to the pursuit of godliness. This is biblical manhood.

This study endeavors to deal with the following aspects of manhood according to the Word of God:

The *Recovery* of Biblical Manhood

The *Roles* of Biblical Manhood

The *Resources* for Biblical Manhood

Part 1: The Recovery of Biblical Manhood

Peter Jones declares: "There is a famine in the land of the knowledge of biblical manhood and womanhood, and behind that, of the knowledge of the loving and redeeming God who created us male and female." He writes, "The Church must understand that the biblical injunctions concerning heterosexual distinctions are not arbitrary commands or optional extras but have to do with the very nature of God in His works of creation and redemption."[6]

Jones is correct in his diagnosis and prescription. Approaching "biblical manhood" with its foundations in creation, redemption, and sanctification through the lens of the historic Apostles' Creed and its explanatory articles in *Luther's Small Catechism* provides us with a faithful, biblical witness of what God intended in creating and then graciously providing redemption through His Son. Our purpose is to review the three parts of the Creed and then to analyze the explanations as they relate to the meaning of biblical manhood. The Apostles' Creed reads as follows:

> **I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.**
>
> **And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.**
>
> **I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

What are the intimations about biblical manhood in the Apostles' Creed? What are the implications for the identity of man? What is indicated as to the attitudes and purposes that can and should characterize a man who is not only a human being created by God but also as one to whom redemption in Christ has been provided and applied? What is the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the progressive actualization of God's holy will for man?

In the First Article of the Apostles' Creed and its explanation dealing with creation, we are confronted with the meaning of biblical manhood in terms of the vital and liberating recognition that Almighty God is indeed our Creator, our Preserver, our Sustainer, our Provider, and our Protector. The amazing reason for His beneficence on our behalf is also observed with profound and humble gratitude.

The First Article: The Article of Creation
I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

What has God done for me?

God is my CREATOR (Genesis 1-2) –
not only me but also everything that exists!
God is my PRESERVER (Psalm 121) –
not only my body but also my soul!
God is my PROVIDER (Philippians 4:19) –
not only for me but also for my family!
God is my PROTECTOR (Psalm 91) –
not only from danger but also from every evil!

Why has God done so much for me?

His fatherly and divine "goodness and mercy" (Psalm 23)

How I should respond to God?

An attitude of gratitude (Psalm 100)

A spirit of praise and worship (John 4:24)

A desire to be of service (Philippians 1:21)

A commitment to obey His will (Acts 5:29)

In reference to the content of the First Article of the Creed and its explanation, what are some of the possible applications in regard to the meaning of biblical manhood in terms of its manifestations? The following are offered as "starters" for discussion:

- A profound and growing recognition of one's deep dependence upon a caring, all-wise, and all-powerful God for every need, in contrast to society's frequent attempts to portray manhood in terms of a self-made, independent "macho man" (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)
- An acute awareness that all of creation is the handiwork of God, leading one to live in joyful thanksgiving and praise to Him, to set an example before one's family of good stewardship of the abundant provision of earth's resources, and to live in appreciation, protection, and preservation of all forms of human life, including

life in the womb and earliest infancy, life with disabilities, and life in old age (Psalm 8)

- A sense of calm assurance as the God-ordained provider and protector in the family, that in spite of potential and present adversity, God is in control and that what He allows into one's life is designed to "work together for good" for His people (Romans 8:28)
- A grateful acknowledgment that honest labor is a gracious provision of God, responding by doing one's work in providing for one's family conscientiously and efficiently for His glory (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12)
- A consistent response as spiritual leader in the home of daily surrender to God's purposes in humble obedience to His Word arising from a growing acknowledgment of the sheer grace and mercy of God as the basis of His fatherly care (Romans 12:1-2)
- A deep sense of gratitude to God for life, health, and "every good and perfect gift" that is reflected in one's relationships in the home and family as husband and father, in the Christian congregation, in the workplace, and in the community (James 1:17)

The Second Article: The Article of Redemption

In the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed on redemption and its explanation, we find further insight regarding biblical manhood in terms of the resulting convictions, attitudes, desires, realizations, and purposes of those who have been redeemed. The deity of Christ, His gracious atonement for sin on Calvary's cross, His triumphant resurrection from the dead, His present ministry on behalf of His Church, as well as the assurance of His return for judgment, dramatically transform all of life for those who are brought to faith in Him.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. From thence He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Who I believe Jesus Christ is (John 1:1-3):

He is the true and only Son of God

He is true man, born of the Virgin Mary

He is the judge of all mankind

He is my Lord

What I believe Jesus Christ has done for me (1 Corinthians 15:3-4):

He has saved me and redeemed me

He has freed me from sin, death, and the power of the devil with His precious blood and with His suffering and death

He has risen from the dead and reigns on my behalf

Why I believe Jesus Christ has done all this for me (1 Corinthians 6:19-20):

That I may be His own

That I may live under Him

That I may serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness

What are some of the ways this Second Article on redemption can be applied in relation to biblical manhood? How should redemption affect the life of a man in Christ? The following are suggested:

- A joyful assurance of salvation in Christ reflected to a man's family and friends in attitude, actions, and conversation, indicating that the forgiveness of sins is the greatest "treasure" of his life (Psalm 32:1-2)
- An earnest endeavor to share the "good news" of salvation in Christ with others and to set before his family a practical example of prayerful concern for the salvation of those who are not Christians (Acts 4:20)
- A growing acknowledgment of the Lordship of Christ, as one who has been redeemed (purchased), over every area of his life in the home, workplace, neighborhood, and congregation (1 Corinthians 6:20)
- A deepening realization and appropriation by faith that Christ has

set him free from bondage to Satan, the world, and his own fleshly nature, which is evidenced in a godly concern for his family that seeks to provide wholesome and uplifting influences in the home and seeks to protect his family against immoral activities and relationships (Galatians 5:1)

- A sincere purpose to follow Christ in a life of holiness and purity with faithfulness to his wife in thought, word, and deed as a constant priority (1 Peter 2:21-25)
- A fervent longing to serve Christ with his talents and resources in and through the Christian congregation, encouraging and providing opportunities for his family to develop their respective gifts and abilities in dependence upon the Lord and for the purpose of edifying the Church and bringing glory to Him (Matthew 5:16)

The Third Article: The Article of Sanctification

The explanation to the Third Article on sanctification deals with implications for biblical manhood in terms of one's dependence upon the Spirit and the Word in salvation, sanctification, and service. What does the explanation indicate is the place of the congregation in one's life? What gracious realities affect one's attitude toward the future?

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

What I believe the Holy Spirit does for me (Ephesians 4:1-8):

He calls me through the Gospel

He enlightens me with His gifts

He sanctifies and keeps me in the true faith

What I believe the Holy Spirit does in the Christian church (John 16:12-15):

He keeps the whole Christian church on earth united with Jesus Christ

In the Christian church He fully forgives the sins of all believers

What I believe the Holy Spirit will do for believers in the future (Romans 8:9-17):

He will raise me and all the dead

He will give me and all believers in Christ eternal life

How does the Third Article and its meaning apply to biblical manhood? What is the Third Article's witness to the scriptural truths that are applicable for the spiritual life of the Christian man? The following points are offered as instructive in this regard:

- A firm conviction exemplified and applied in his own life and conveyed to his family that apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit through the Word, people will not and cannot come to Christ (John 6:44)
- A corresponding and consistent dependence upon the Word and Spirit in his witness, worship, and service for Christ (Romans 10:14-17)
- An increasing realization that it is only by the Word and Spirit that he and his family are sustained spiritually, affirming and applying this reality in personal and family devotional life as well as in faithful participation in the ministry of the local congregation (John 17:17; 1 Peter 2:2)
- A joyful willingness to use his spiritual gift(s) for the edification of his family and fellow believers and to appreciate and benefit from the spiritual gifts resident in his family and in the members of the congregation (1 Corinthians 14:12)
- A growing love for the "one holy Christian Church" with a resultant commitment of himself and his family to its local manifestation in the congregation (Hebrews 10:25)
- An ever-deepening need for the Word and Sacrament as administered in the congregation and evidenced in his faithful attendance and participation in regular worship services, Bible classes, and communion services (Acts 2:42)
- An eager anticipation of the future in light of the gift of eternal life in Heaven, exemplified and communicated to his family and all who know him by the priorities of his life and his positive outlook even in difficult circumstances (Philippians 1:21-25)

This is most certainly true!

Recognizable Marks of Biblical M-A-N-H-O-O-D

For to me to live is Christ (Philippians 1:21a).

Question: What exactly does it mean for a man to live for Christ?

M – Meditation and study of God's Word

It may seem to be obvious, but biblical manhood means being a man who is devoted to taking time in his life to "read, mark, and inwardly digest" the Word of God. Many men today may feel they are too busy to take time to read God's Word on a regular basis. A godly man will recognize, as Luther did, the more busy our day may be, the more we have a need to take time for reading God's Word. We need the power and strength in the Lord's Word to help us cope with all the responsibilities and challenges we face. We need the promise and reassurance of God's Word to lift us up when we fall. We need the wisdom and insight in God's Word to guide us in living for the Lord in our homes, our jobs, and our communities. Therefore, men of God will meditate on and study God's Word.

> Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).
>
> How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word … I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you (Psalm 119:9, 11).
>
> Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation (1 Peter 2:2).
>
> Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day (Psalm 119:97).

A – Approaching God's "throne of grace" through prayer and petition

Being a man of God means acknowledging that God is in charge of our lives, and we need His strength to live out our biblical manhood. The godly man will make prayer a priority, for in prayer we turn to the Lord for His guidance and strength. Jesus, the Son of God, regularly took time to step away to pray. Men of God must do the same. When we pray, we admit that our families are in God's hand, and we need His hand to guide us. When we pray, we acknowledge, "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain" (Psalm 127:1a). The man of God will be earnest in approaching the Lord in prayer, coming to God with the full assurance, "If any of you lacks

wisdom, let him ask God … and it will be given to him" (James 1:5).

> Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you (Matthew 7:7).
>
> And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart (Luke 18:1).
>
> [D]o not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God (Philippians 4:6).
>
> Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

N – Nurtured through the ministry of the congregation

The godly man realizes he needs the nurturance and encouragement of his fellow believers to support him in his God-given roles of husband and father. By gathering with other Christians, the man of God has opportunities to acquire wisdom from those who may have gone through issues like those he is facing in his own life. By gathering with fellow Christians, the man of God can benefit from the "mutual consolation" of the brothers. While women often draw to one another for support naturally, men may need to do so more intentionally. Beyond the wisdom and encouragement his fellow believers can offer, the man of God especially needs the power God provides through His Word and Sacraments. Thus, the man of God needs a regular life of worship participation to sustain him in his God-given vocation as husband and father. Biblical manhood means being connected to the nurturance God gives us in our local congregations.

> [T]hey devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers (Acts 2:42).
>
> And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near (Hebrews 10:24-25).
>
> Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working (James 5:16).

> And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-12).

H – Holiness of life through the Word and Spirit

Being a man of God means living one's life for the Lord. On our own, this is impossible. We are far from holy men, for we sin again and again. Through Christ, however, we have been forgiven for our unholiness and granted Christ's holiness. As men of God, we continually turn to the Lord, for it is His Spirit alone Who will enable us to live our lives for Jesus. Being a man of God is not a matter of fulfilling some "to do" list, as if we could work on and check off a series of items and then make ourselves into godly men. Being a man of God is about admitting we are nothing without God, and we are unable to live our lives in a godly way without the Spirit giving us His power each and every day. The godly man realizes it is God who is at work within him "to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose" (Philippians 2:13 NIV). Although the godly man will strive with his whole heart to see each part of his life conform to the will of Christ, he will likewise recognize that this comes about not through the efforts he exerts but through the Holy Spirit's work in sanctification. Biblical manhood means seeking the holiness of life that comes through the Lord's Word and His Holy Spirit's power.

> Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14).
>
> Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:23).
>
> For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor (1 Thessalonians 4:3-4).
>
> But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh (Galatians 5:16).

O – Obedience to God in stewardship of finances toward God and family

It has been said that Jesus spoke more about stewardship than any other subject. Christ shows us how important it is to God that we use His gifts in a God-pleasing manner. The man of God will recognize that he is

a steward of God's resources, acknowledging that all he has comes from and belongs to the Lord. Thus, the man of God will earnestly seek to serve the Lord in the manner in which he spends the money God has entrusted to him. The man of God will do this with the realization that as the divinely appointed leader in his house, how he uses or misuses money will set an example for his wife and children. The man of God will seek to use material resources in a manner which cares for the needs of his family and which supports the Lord's work, thereby obeying and glorifying God in his stewardship of financial resources.

> Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How have we robbed you?' In your tithes and contributions (Malachi 3:8).
>
> But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever (1Timothy 5:8).
>
> But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you (Matthew 6:33).
>
> Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).

O – Offering oneself in loving and sacrificial ministry to God and man

In Ephesians 5, God, through Paul, tells us what biblical manhood is all about: A husband laying down his life for his wife, just as Christ did for His bride, the Church. Thus, biblical manhood means being a man who is willing to place others above oneself and who is willing to sacrifice for the sake of others. Many men are seldom home, abandoning caring for their wife and children to pursue their own hobbies or time with "the boys." This is not biblical manhood. Hobbies and time with other men are meaningful and important, but the man of God recognizes he has been given a foremost role by God which is both a responsibility and a joyful opportunity: to care for his wife and children. The man of God will seek the best interest of his wife and children, placing their interests above his own. As he serves his family in this way, the man of God will recognize that he is ultimately serving the Lord, Who has given him this unique role. As he serves God by serving his family and placing them above himself, the man of God will be setting an example for his family members, showing them that the Christian life is about serving and giving. The man of God will lead his family in being prepared to serve others around them, as doors of service open to do so. Just as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, so too will the man of God live a life of service,

willingly and lovingly offering his sacrificial actions for the sake of God and others.

> And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' Then I said, 'Here am I! Send me" (Isaiah 6:8).
>
> I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship (Romans 12:1).
>
> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10).
>
> Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2).

D – Dedication to one's country as a responsible and righteous Christian citizen

The man of God knows that he owes ultimate allegiance to the Lord. He also knows that the Lord calls on him to "be subject to the governing authorities" (Romans 13:1 NIV). Thus, the man of God, in obedience to God, will be dedicated to his country. Being a man of God means being dedicated to living as a citizen of our country in a manner which brings glory to God. "Obey the king's command, I say, because you took an oath before God" (Ecclesiastes 8:2 NIV). Men today sometimes display a cynical attitude toward our nation or her leaders. A godly man's loyalty to his country—exemplified in his positive patriotic disposition and his responsible actions as a citizen—can be a wonderful example to others. For example, in his dedication to our nation, a father can offer his children a living example of obedience and respect. A godly man certainly will pray for his country, as God calls him to offer prayers for "all those in authority" (1 Timothy 2:2 NIV). In his explanation to the Fourth Commandment, Luther urges us to honor all whom God has placed in authority over us. Through his dedication to his country and his actions as a responsible Christian citizen, the man of God does this.

> First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God … For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed (Romans 13:1, 6-7).

Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good … Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor (1 Peter 2:13-14, 17).

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8).

Part 2: The Roles of Biblical Manhood

Dr. Paul Popenoe, the respected founder and past president of the American Institute of Family Relations, says that, "the survival of the civilization depends on its being family minded." No wonder Satan is an enemy of the home and family. No wonder there is such a large-scale attack on the traditional family as presented and prescribed in the Word of God. Various movements in our society have gone to ridiculous excesses in attempting to redefine and restructure the family. Even in Christian homes today, one of the biggest pitfalls to happy family living is the distortion of biblical roles for family members.

The work of Appel and Goldberg in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania shows that the issue of role breakdown is a significant reason for so many family problems. These academicians say that every member of the family is to a certain extent, "uncertain and/or unhappy with his role." Many wives are not really sure they want to be wives and mothers. Many husbands are not sure they want to be husbands and fathers. Many children are not given an opportunity to experience true child life.

What does the Word of God teach regarding the respective roles of husbands and wives? Discovering and rediscovering what the Bible says about these relationships is highly significant in seeking to have a happy Christian home. Affirming the God-given roles and fulfilling them in the strength and wisdom He supplies is the best way of being a help to each other as husbands and wives, fathers and mothers.

Consider Ephesians 5:25-33 in regard to this matter:

> 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. 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. 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

What do we observe in regard to the God-given roles of a husband and father in this passage?

A Biblical Husband/Father is a LOVER

How many times do we find the exhortation to love in these verses? It is found three times (verses 25, 28, 33). What do you think is the reason for the repetition? It is because love is such an important ingredient of marital and family harmony! What kind of love is referred to in these verses? AGAPE love, God's love, which is impossible for someone who is not a Christian to emulate. If Christ and His Spirit do not indwell one's life, there will not be a desire or ability to fulfill this admonition. Through Christ and His Spirit, we have both the desire and the ability to love.

Spiritual Love

There are at least three dimensions to the God-given love a husband/father should have for his wife and for his children. The first is a spiritual love.

> Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her (5:25).

How was Christ's love for the Church shown in His death?

Realistically

> God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Christ's love for us is no mere sentimental

love! Husbands/fathers are to love their wives and, yes, their children in spite of faults and failures—those unlovely and disagreeable elements.

Sacrificially

"… died for her …" "… gave Himself up for her" (verse 25b). How costly Christ's love is for us! The absolute proof of God's love for us is the cross where His own Son, Jesus Christ, died for us, unworthy and sinful though we be!

"By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers" (1 John 3:16).

Perhaps you have heard about the young man who wrote to his girlfriend—perhaps an email or a text message:

I'd swim the deepest oceans.
I'd brave the strongest storms.
I'd fight the fiercest animals – to be at your side!

P.S. I'll be over tonight at 8 o'clock if it doesn't rain!

Purposefully

Why did Christ give Himself up for us? Our text indicates it was to present us to Himself in holiness and blamelessness! (Ephesians 5:27)

In the Christian home, the husband is called to seek an ever-deepening unity with his wife in every part of their lives together. He is intent on seeking her good—her happiness—her fulfillment—her development—her spiritual growth!

Willingly

Our Lord's love for us was not merely an emotion but rather a love that was based in His will and expressed in His sacrificial action. "Not my will, but yours, be done," He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane to His Father in heaven (Luke 22:42). His commitment to that divine will is so clearly expressed in John 4:34, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work."

Absolutely

"… love their wives as their own bodies …" (v 28)
"… love his wife as himself …" (v 33)
You have a need for recreation—so does your wife!
You have need for time alone—so does your wife!
You have need for friendships with your own gender—so does your wife!

Emotional Love

The God-given love a husband/father will have for his wife and for his children begins with the spiritual dimension. After all, "We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). However, in addition to the spiritual dimension of love, the godly man will also show emotional love. Our perverted society has confused masculinity with cruelty and harshness (the macho-man!). An international survey conducted by a family organization in Brussels, Belgium, asked wives to describe the most common failings of their husbands. The following seven emerged as those most frequently chosen.

- Lack of tenderness
- Lack of politeness
- Lack of sociability
- Failure to understand the wife's temperament and peculiarities
- Unfairness in financial matters
- Frequency of snide remarks and sneers at the wife in the presence of others, including one's children
- Lack of plain honesty and truthfulness

Christ-like love, allowed to rule in the husband's life, would alleviate these problems described by the wives. Men, it takes Christ to give us this kind of love! We don't have it! We're all selfish by nature and by choice! We need salvation! We need forgiveness! We need the gift of the Holy Spirit Who will produce the fruit of love increasingly in our lives.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls (Matthew 11:29).

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you (Ephesians 4:32).

Through the power of Jesus Christ, the Christian man will love his wife and children in a way which displays appropriate emotion and affection. Kindness, tenderness, compassion, and forgiveness all flow to us from Christ. Through Christ, these same gifts flow from the godly man to his wife and children. The man of God will treat his wife in a manner which builds a bond of positive emotional connection, drawn from the love of Christ. The man of God will care for his children in a manner which builds a positive emotional bond with them, drawn from the love of Christ.

Physical Love

In addition to the spiritual and emotional dimensions that are present in the God-given love a husband has for his wife, there is a third dimension to this love, the physical dimension. This physical dimension of love was designed by God to be shared as a special bond between husband and wife. As God proclaimed, "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24 NIV).

> The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control (1 Corinthians 7:3-5).

Here is a clear call to husbands—and to wives—to give to each other their "conjugal rights"—indeed, to affirm the honorableness and undefiled nature of the sexual relationship in marriage (Hebrews 13:4). The intimacy of the marital bed should be seen as a gracious gift from God and as a privilege to enjoy in loving and sensitive consideration for each other's needs. Men, one of the best things we can do for our children is to show love to their mother on the physical dimension. Children feel very content and secure when they see Dad's arms around their mother (though they may sometimes feign embarrassment). Likewise, one of the best things we can do for our wife is to show her that she is the love of our life. Hugs, back rubs, gentle pats on the arm, holding hands, and other kind touches throughout the day are a clear way to say, "I love you." This God-given physical dimension of love includes all the bonds we build as we touch our wives to express our love to them.

A Biblical Husband/Father is a PROVIDER & PROTECTOR

> But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever (1 Timothy 5:8).

It is taken for granted in all of Scripture that in normal circumstances, the husband's responsibility and privilege is to "bring home the bacon." He is to be the primary "breadwinner." The feminists who insist on equalization of this responsibility are "flying in the face" of the biblical injunction that a husband/father is entrusted with this role. His awesome privilege and responsibility is to lovingly and sacrificially care for his precious wife and family and to protect them not only from physical danger but also from anything and everything that would threaten the ideals of the Christian home.

A Biblical Husband/Father is a TEACHER

That the husband/father role as teacher is at least a shared role is traceable back to the earliest parts of the Old Testament. The Word of God through Moses is unmistakable in its clarity and specificity in this regard and is echoed elsewhere in Scripture:

> And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).
>
> Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6).
>
> Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).

In too many Christian homes today, family devotions and prayer are accomplished only if Mom takes the leadership role! We men who are negligent in this regard are departing from our calling from God to share in the teaching of His Word in our homes.

The number one complaint of wives against husbands, according to a nationally known Christian leader (Bill Gothard), is lack of spiritual leadership. Our wives crave spiritual leadership. When they are bringing up what may sometimes seem to us to be trivial problems and questions, this is often a signal that they are lacking spiritual leadership from us.

A Biblical Husband/Father is a LEADER

There is a story of a man who died and went to heaven. He immediately saw two signs above two different lines. One sign said: "ALL THOSE MEN WHO HAVE BEEN DOMINATED BY THEIR WIVES STAND HERE." That line of men seemed to stretch off through the clouds into infinity. The second sign read: "ALL THOSE WHO HAVE NEVER BEEN DOMINATED BY THEIR WIVES, STAND HERE." One man stood underneath that sign. He went over to the man, grabbed his arm, and said, "What's the secret, how did you do it? That other line has millions of men and you are the only one standing in this line." The man looked around with a puzzled expression and said, "Why, I am not sure I know. My wife just told me to stand here."

We may chuckle at stories like this, but leadership in the home is no laughing matter. During the last several decades, our culture has redefined the meaning and responsibilities of men and women in the home. Many men are confused and insecure. Many men do not know how to act in the home. When they were growing up, many men often lacked a good model for fatherly leadership at home and have, therefore, no mental picture of what it means to lead a family. Consequently, they do not lead effectively or they do not even try. Increasingly, many men are becoming passive in the home. They've decided that the easiest thing to do is nothing. The simplest thing—with the smallest risk—is to stay on the fence with both feet firmly planted in midair and let the wife do it. When a man is married to a strong wife who will take over, he often lets her do just that. Where can men look for guidance in regard to leading their families? The Bible gives us the help we need by presenting the divine model for men in terms of leadership in the home. That model is best described as a "servant-leader." What is a servant-leader? The following statement by the Apostle Paul is instructive in this regard.

> But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God (1 Corinthians 11:3).

The concept of being the "head" of a wife does not mean male dominance where a man lords it over a woman and demands her total obedience to his every wish and command. God never viewed women as second-class citizens. The Bible is very clear in stating that "there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). The teaching of the New Testament clearly shows that women are to be respected, revered, and treated as equals with men. Unfortunately, many husbands have not gotten this message. They degrade their wives by neglect or with insensitive and abusive treatment. One cause of the feminist movement may have been that men abandoned God's

design. When God presented Eve to Adam in the Garden, Adam received her as a gift of great value to God and to himself. When husbands, particularly Christian husbands, do not treat their wives as a precious gift and helpmate from God, they can cause their wives to search for another way to find significance and value as persons, often outside God's will.

The Apostle Paul and the Apostle Peter both speak of the kind of leadership a husband is to exercise in the home. It is significant to observe that the submission that is the posture of the wife toward her husband is to be parallel to the submission that she has for her Lord. Likewise, the loving leadership that the husband is to give to his wife is to emulate the sacrificial love of Christ for His Church.

> Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her … (Ephesians 5:22-25).
>
> Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct … For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening. Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered (1 Peter 3:1-2, 5-7).

The above passages speak of the character and the influence of a wife's godly subjection to her husband, even though he may be an unbeliever. The wife's "respectful and pure conduct" is powerful in its impact upon him and may result in his conversion.

It is clear the "servant-leadership" that is to be a husband's role in the home is a thoughtful, considerate, and loving leadership. God has given husbands the responsibility of leadership in the home and with it, sobering accountability. This leadership role does not mean that husbands act like little dictators, but it does mean that ultimately they are responsible for the decisions that affect the family. In dependent prayer to God for wisdom and in seeking and valuing the counsel of one's wife, the husband is to exercise this role.

A Biblical Husband/Father is a PRIEST

As a "priest" in the home, a husband/father is responsible for conducting the home's affairs in accordance with the Word of God. This calls him to be a growing "man of the Word"—a serious student of Scripture. As noted above, this role designates him to be a faithful teacher of the Word of God in his home.

As a priest, he is also an intercessor for every member of his family. One of the biggest areas of spiritual neglect in regard to one's wife and children is to have a weak prayer life. Samuel, the prophet, termed the neglect of prayer "sin." He said, "Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you" (1 Samuel 12:23a). When my father died some years ago, one of the greatest realizations of loss was that I did not have him any longer as a faithful prayer supporter. He prayed for me all of his life. Eternity alone will reveal the impact of those prayers upon my life and the lives of my family members. The Scripture gives us great encouragement in regard to the importance and effectiveness of prayer. For example, consider the statement of the Apostle James:

> The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working (James 5:16b).

We may not see the visible results of our prayers for awhile—or perhaps ever! But God's promise stands; prayer has "great power." But prayers are not the only important part of our priesthood in the home. Another important aspect of a man's priesthood is his modeling of godly character in the home, "fruits of the Spirit" that demonstrate what God can do in changing attitudes and responses that transform difficulties into opportunities for spiritual growth. This brings glory to God and motivates the family to seek continuing spiritual growth and to serve God inside and outside of the home.

Part 3: The Resources for Biblical Manhood

We cannot leave our subject without at least a brief reminder regarding our God-given resources for living as Christian men—biblical men. God doesn't reveal His will to us without reassuring us of His promise to empower us and enable us to fulfill it. When He mercifully saved us by His grace, He did not leave us to "our own devices" in terms of living the Christian life—indeed, the life of biblical manhood. The reality is that if that were the case, we would never be able to continue in faith, let alone bear fruit for His glory. Our faith could not be sustained, and we would quickly die spiritually. How we thank God for the abundant provisions He has made so that we can walk "in newness

of life," more and more as "little Christs," to borrow Luther's expression! These God-given resources are entrusted to us to empower us and to embolden us to "act like men" (1 Corinthians 16:13), biblical men, all for His glory and for the extension of His Kingdom.

As we have observed in our review of the Apostles' Creed, our primary "resources" are the Father Who created us and all that exists, the Son Who redeemed us at infinite cost, and the Holy Spirit Who sanctifies and preserves us in the "one true Christian faith."

The Ministry of the Triune God

God the Father is the SOURCE of our life as men in Christ—biblical men.

> For this is the will of God, your sanctification …
> (1 Thessalonians 4:3a).

We know we are praying according to God's Word when we pray that God will enable us to live for Him as godly men. It is His gracious will! It is His purpose and plan that we walk in conformity to His Word, all for His glory! It is God's will that we grow in godliness. At the same time as He calls us to holiness, he pledges to enable us to walk in "newness of life." He is the source of our walk with Him.

> Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24).

After the lengthy series of exhortations to godly, sanctified living in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22, the staggering burden to perform is lifted from us. It is not our own reason or strength that can fulfill all that God calls us to be and to do. It is God Himself who sanctifies us, and He is faithful in doing so. "He will surely do it." The writer to the Hebrews speaks in the same comforting way.

> For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers …
> (Hebrews 2:11).

Here again, the source of our walk as Christian men is plainly stated as God the Father. We are utterly dependent upon Him for everything pertaining to our spiritual existence as well as to our growth as believers. At the same time as you are called to "work out your own salvation," to work out what God has worked in a life of sanctified living, the Apostle Paul encourages you that it is God Who is at work in your life.

> Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure (Philippians 2:12-13).

If we stopped with the twelfth verse in this passage, we could conclude that living as godly men is solely dependent upon us. Our response would be, "Alright, He saved me by His grace; now I need to somehow muster the motivation and strength to work on living a Christian life." However, verse 13 lifts the burden of performance from our shoulders and encourages us that it is God Who not only gives us the desire and the will to live for Him, but also Who gives us the strength and the power to fulfill His plans for us.

> Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen (Jude 24-25).

This wonderful expression of praise assures us of God's "keeping power" in the midst of whatever temptations and trials that may face us now or in the future (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 13:5-6; Psalm 46:1). He is able to keep us from stumbling! He is able to bring us "home to glory" to stand in the presence of God forever with great joy!

God the Son is the MEANS and GOAL of our life as godly men—biblical men.

The MEANS of our walk:

> And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified
> (Hebrews 10:10, 14).

Here the word "sanctified" is being used in a broader sense that includes not only our Christian life but also our entrance into that life because of our Lord's atoning death on Calvary's cross for all our sins. This was a "once for all" transaction at the cross. But the thrust of this passage for our present discussion is that it is because of the cross we are saved and can then begin to live for Christ. Jesus Christ is the means of entrance into this blessed walk as He has provided cleansing for all our sins and a standing of perfect righteousness (justification). This gracious position or standing is followed closely by the Christian life as the product.

> So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God (Hebrews 13:12-16).

This passage is very similar to the passage in Hebrews 10. Our Lord Jesus, as the supreme "Means of Grace," suffered for our sins, shedding His precious blood, that we might be forgiven all our sins and enter the new life in Him. This new life is described as a life of suffering as well as of joy—lived in the prospect of the "city" which is to come. We thus offer Him the "sacrifice of praise" continually no matter what the circumstances—the good times and the tough times – knowing that everything that the Lord allows to occur in our lives as His children is for our good (cf., Romans 8:28).

> [Christ Jesus] who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works (Titus 2:14).

Again we see that it is Jesus Christ Who, by His redeeming act on the cross, purified us, cleansed us, sanctified us (wider sense), purchased us (we are not our own anymore!), and gave us a zeal for expressing our love and thankfulness to Him by a life of good works. And so, our testimony in view of what Jesus has done for us echoes the words of Jim Elliot, "After all that Christ has done for me, how can I do less than give my all for Him!" (Elliot was martyred by the Auca Indians in Ecuador in the 1950s along with his four missionary partners.)

Jesus is the GOAL of our walk.

But not only is Jesus our MEANS of entrance into the Christian life, He is the GOAL or focus of our walk as men of God. He is the One we are called to follow. The call is in essence no different than when Jesus invited those fishermen on the shores of Galilee to follow Him.

The basic meaning of what it is to *live* as a Christian man, a biblical man, is simply to follow Christ. The Christian classic, *True Christianity*, written by Johan Arndt in the sixteenth century, repeats that theme over and over again in its exposition of what it means to *live* the Christian life.

> For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps (1 Peter 2:21).

In light of this call upon our lives, the earnest questions that occupy our minds and hearts as believing men, saved by grace, are these:

- How does following Christ influence my daily life?
- In what ways do I dishonor Him by my disobedience?
- How can I live my life as a witness for Christ and His saving and transforming grace?
- How can I bring glory and honor to my Lord and Savior Who has saved me by His grace?

These are questions that may help in the quest for manifesting the character of biblical manhood. It is in keeping with the prayer of the psalmist that our personal inventory and inquiry proceeds.

> Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting! (Psalm 139:23-24)

- What do I need to avoid in terms of questionable activities?
- How do I react when offended by someone?
- How do I use my time?
- How do I use the material things of this world?
- What kind of books do I read?
- What kind of TV programs, movies, Internet sites, music, etc., do I take time for?

- How do I relax?
- How do I drive a car?
- How do I take care of my home?
- How do I approach work as an employee or an employer?
- What is my attitude toward my superiors?
- How do I conduct myself toward the opposite sex?
- How do I see a person I've never met before?
- How do I respond to someone who asked a favor?

Where do we find the answers to questions like these? We find them in the all-sufficient Word of God. Does the Bible speak specifically to each of the issues we have given as examples? No, but the principles that affect every question needing to be answered and related to living for Christ are given in the written Word of God. Through the Scripture, we have all that we need for life and salvation. We are "fully equipped" to live as men of God.

> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The Holy Spirit is the AGENT of our life in Christ as men of God.

As we were reminded in our review of the explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed, the Holy Spirit is the One who applies the great and gracious salvation provided for us at the cross. He is also described in the Creed as the One who sanctifies and keeps us in the true faith. The Creed is bearing witness to a plethora of Scripture passages that speak of the Spirit's work in this regard. Among them are the following:

> [T]o be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:16).

> [A]ccording to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you (1 Peter 1:2).

> For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God (Romans 8:13-14).
>
> [H]e saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5).
>
> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law (Galatians 5:22-23).

Each of the passages above describes the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives as believers and the utter dependence we must have upon Him if we are to live for Christ as men of God, indeed, as "children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world" (Philippians 2:15).

The Means of Grace

Since God uses means to create and sustain our physical lives (parents, food, water, air, shelter, etc.), it is not strange that He uses means to create and sustain our spiritual lives. The divinely appointed means by which the Spirit of God ministers to us are the Word and the Sacraments. It is through these means that the Holy Spirit graciously offers to us salvation and through which He creates, confirms, strengthens, and preserves in us a living faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior. The primary means of grace without which the Sacraments would have neither validity nor efficacy is the Gospel Word. However, because of the vital connection between the Word and the Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper are powerful means to confer and preserve God's gracious gifts.

The Gospel Word

What is the Gospel by which we are brought into the family of God and through which we are sustained and what is its effect?

- It reveals to us the meaning and achievements of the life and death of Christ (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; Hebrews 9:12).
- It offers and conveys God's grace in Christ. As we hear the Gospel, we are hearing God's promise to forgive us our sins (Acts 13:38; Matthew 9:2; Psalm 34:18).

- It produces saving faith by which a person accepts the Gospel promises and is saved (Romans 10:17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:23).

How does the Gospel empower and strengthen us to live as godly men in a "dark and sinful world"?

- It points us to the finished work of Christ on the cross where He suffered the guilt and punishment of our sin (Isaiah 53; 2 Corinthians 5:19).
- It declares to us the unconditional promise of forgiveness of all our sins, strengthening our faith and trust in Christ (John 15:3; Romans 10:17; 1 John 1:9).
- It reminds us of the significance of our baptism in bringing us to salvation (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:1-3).
- It nourishes and strengthens our new nature in Christ, enabling us to "put to death" the deeds of the flesh (Psalm 119:11; John 17:17; 1 Peter 2:2).
- It assures us of the gift of everlasting life in Heaven with Christ and all believers (John 3:16; John 14:1-3).

Baptism

What is Baptism and how does it relate to the Gospel Word?

Baptism is a gracious institution of Christ and is to be administered in the evangelistic and missionary outreach of His Church (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16).

How does Baptism relate to our need for salvation?

- It is a means of forgiveness and cleansing from sin and a means of receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38, 22:16; 1 Corinthians 12:13).
- It is a means of bringing a person into an intimate union with Christ Himself (Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:26-27).
- It is a means of being born again (regenerated) and entering into the Kingdom of God (John 3:5; Titus 3:4-7).
- It is a means of salvation (1 Peter 3:21).

Why is Baptism so important if we would grow more and more into mature men of God?

- It was the means through which we received the gift of the indwelling and infilling Holy Spirit who enables us through the Word to bear increasingly the fruits of godly character and to give bold and loving witness to His saving grace (Galatians 5:22-23; Acts 1:8).
- It provides continual assurance of our salvation because of the Gospel promises inseparably connected with it (Ephesians 5:25-26).
- It gives incentive and power to live in daily surrender to Christ and His purposes for our lives in grateful recognition of our union with Him which took place in our Baptism (Romans 6:1-4).

Martin Luther understood that the grace of Baptism is powerful in our lives in constantly creating repentance and faith. In his reflections on Romans 6, note the importance of Baptism for the Christian life in his statements to this effect:

> The holy sacrament of baptism helps you, because in it God allies Himself with you, and becomes one with you in a gracious covenant of comfort. First of all, you give yourself up to the sacrament of baptism and what it signified, i.e., you desire to die, together with your sins, and to be made new at the Last Day, as the sacrament declares… This God accepts at your hands, and grants you baptism, and from that hour begins to make you a new man, pours into you His grace and Holy Spirit, Who begins to slay nature and sin, and to prepare you for death and the resurrection at the Last Day.
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> Again, you pledge yourself to continue in this, and more and more to slay your sin as long as you live, even until your death. This, too, God accepts, and trains and tries you all your life long, with many good works and manifold sufferings; whereby He effects what you in baptism have desired, viz., that you may become free from sin, may die and rise again at the Last Day, and so fulfill your baptism.[7]

The Lord's Supper.

This precious Means of Grace was instituted by our Lord to strengthen us in our relationship with Him. The Lord's Supper has an important place in our walk as men of God. When it is administered "rightly," that is, according to Scripture, the Lord's Supper is a most blessed privilege and means of strengthening our faith.

What is the Lord's Supper?

In light of the New Testament institution passages (Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22, and 1 Corinthians 11), we find this answer in Luther's Small Catechism:

> The Sacrament of the Altar (the Lord's Supper) is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ Himself for us Christians to eat and to drink.

What are the rich provisions of the Lord's Supper that strengthen us in our walk with God?

> The primary provision is the assurance of God's forgiveness of our sins for Jesus' sake.
>
> [F]or this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:28).

Our Lord in His Supper graciously gives us His very body and His very blood as a visible pledge and assurance that because of His death on Calvary's cross, our sins are truly forgiven. The Enemy of our soul constantly seeks to rob us of assurance and peace with God. He is described as an "accuser of our brothers" (Revelation 12:10). While the Word itself certainly conveys to us this assurance of forgiveness, the Lord's Supper is another wonderful way our gracious Lord tells and assures us of His grace and mercy. He sees how much we need the assurance and strength offered in this sacrament. Certainly, as those who would grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ, we should take every opportunity to receive this blessed sacrament in our congregations.

Among the secondary benefits and blessings of the Lord's Supper are the following:

It provides an opportunity for intimate fellowship with Christ.

We affirm the literal reality of our Lord's words as He instituted this sacrament, "This is my body…. This is my blood" (Matthew 26:26-28). Fellowship with the "Real Presence" of Christ is clearly indicated in the Apostle Paul's catechetical statements in 1 Corinthians 10:16: "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?"

In the Lord's Supper, our blessed Lord, Who gave Himself for us on the cross, gives Himself to us. Here more than anywhere else, He comes to us, sups with us, and we with Him. Here is where the "mystical union" that we have with our Lord is most fully recognized.

Celebrating the Lord's Supper is our most precious comfort and our deepest joy. It is a true "mountaintop" experience with Jesus! From the altar we can go out with renewed strength and fresh encouragement to meet the challenges of the world around us. For what really matters amidst life's varying circumstances if only we are assured that our sins are forgiven?

In order to receive these blessings, there must be a "worthy" reception. There is need for preparation—examining ourselves in the light of God's Word (1 Corinthians 11). Our worthiness is only in Christ. We rest in His grace alone, assured of His promises of forgiveness, strengthening, and help.

It is an occasion for experiencing a deep bond of unity with God's people.

> Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread (1 Corinthians 10:17).

Because of the nature of this close fellowship with one another in the Lord's Supper, it is very important that there is nothing that stands between us and another person that we have not dealt with in confession and forgiveness as well as efforts to reconcile, at least on our part. Our Lord speaks of the priority of right relations with fellow believers in the Sermon on the Mount: "So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23-24).

The Lord's Supper is a beautiful and rich experience of "Body life" in the congregation. Here believers are fellowshipping together as one with our Lord

and Savior in a most intimate and blessed way. Truly this is a foretaste of the great "Marriage Supper of the Lamb" spoken of in Scripture when we shall at last sit down with the saints of all the ages in fullness of love and harmony with our Lord as our glorious and gracious Host.

Conclusion

In this age of widespread confusion regarding manhood, we are faced with a task that is vitally important. That task is rooted and grounded in the Word of God. In dependence upon God, ours is a call not only to exemplify biblical manhood to His glory, but also to teach faithfully and clearly to our families and congregations what the Bible says about this subject which is so crucial to the moral and spiritual survival of the human race.

The consequences of neglecting this truth are all too evident in the homes and communities across the world. Recovery of the biblical model of manhood is foundational in dealing with so many aberrant beliefs and lifestyles that are contributing to the moral decay and potential demise of our society. The resources for addressing these critical issues effectively are not lacking! God has provided all that is needed in the recovery and renewal of biblical manhood. His inspired and inerrant Word is mighty to challenge and change lives.

The Holy Spirit and His inseparable ministry through the Word—Law and Gospel—are able to convict and convince of sin unto repentance of sin as well as to create and nourish faith in Christ, the gracious Forgiver of sin. As the indwelling and infilling gift of Christ to every believer, the Holy Spirit enables the believer to walk in "newness of life" as the Word and Sacrament are received unto the nourishment of that maturing life in Christ.

The Christian congregation with its manifold spiritual gifts and ministries is God's additional and much-needed provision for spiritual growth and service. Through the congregation and its administration of the Means of Grace, mature biblical manhood more and more emerges through the spiritual strength and assurance that are afforded through these blessed means. It is through all that God has provided for one's salvation and subsequent life that a Christian man —a biblical man—has the assurance that, "he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

I hope this little booklet will serve to motivate all of us to renewed Bible study and prayerful application of its truths as we seek to grow more and more into mature men of God. Even from the brief survey of some of the issues contributing to the prevailing confusion regarding manhood offered at the outset of this study, it is apparent, as Patrick Morley put it, that we will not be able to deal with the "systemic problems" in the church and society without the recovery and renewal of biblical manhood in the strength that the Lord supplies (Philippians 4:13, 19). Even as our Lord calls us to action as men of God, He makes this abiding pledge:

> "He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

(Endnotes)

1 Baptist Press News, 2/9/04
2 "Missing from Action," Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987, p. 13
3 Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991
4 New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1996
5 Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998
6 www.cbmw.org/resources/
7 Luther's "Treatise on Baptism," Holman Edition, Volume 1, p. 52



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