

Being Good Men Part 2

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[0 : 00] So we're in a second of a two-part series about thinking about what it means to be good men, as we said before. This isn't actually how we normally teach at Bethel, so if you're a visitor here, it's your first time, then you've had a slightly different experience from what the normal experience would be.

Just a word for the kids who are still in, remember that you've got these. So these are at the, I think, both doors. They will help you sort of track what's being said. So if you want to get up and get one, that would be absolutely fine.

This is not an easy subject, is it? But it is really important. So as we start, let's ask for some help. Let's pray. Holy Spirit, we thank you that you were sent to lead us into all truth.

So we ask you to do just that this morning. Will you please lead us into all truth? Truth that comforts, truth that confronts us where we need to be confronted.

Whether or not, Lord, we want to hear it, we know because you have said it that it is good. So we pray. Please help us. Show us ourselves.

[1 : 17] Show us Christ. Show us the way forward. Through your word we pray. Amen. I just want to start off with a question, guys. What's your favourite car?

What's your favourite car? This isn't one of those ones where you have to stick a hand up and give an answer. Just, you know, in your head. What is your favourite car? Is it the underpowered people carrier that you drive right now? Is that your favourite car?

I hope by the end that you might actually see that that could be the most manly choice. Kind of depends what a man is, doesn't it? Right? So here's a better question then, actually, than what your favourite car is.

What's your favourite engine? What's your favourite engine? Because the smart thing is to choose a good engine and then build the car around that, isn't it? Right?

Here's my favourite car and favourite engine as well. It's the Bluesmobile. I just want to tell you a little bit about the Bluesmobile. Indulge me here. It's a 1974 Dodge Monaco sedan with a 440 Magnum engine.

[2 : 18] And if you know the film, then Jake Blues looks at it. He's just come out of prison. He looks at it and he goes, piece of trash. And it's got cop markings as well.

It's a fuzz car. What could be less cool? But then his brother turns around and says, it's got a cop motor. 440 cubic inch plant. It's got cop tyres.

It's got cop suspension. It's got cop shocks. It's a model made before catalytic converters. So it will run good on regular gears. That's petrol to you and me.

The engine is what matters, isn't it? The outside comes after. So here's the question again. What's your engine?

You heard of Kipling's poem, If? Maybe if you're a bit younger you haven't. Certainly my generation above would have. He wrote a poem all about what it means to be a man. Here's just a little stanza from it.

[3 : 20] If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue. Or walk with kings. Or walk with kings. Nor lose the common touch. If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you.

If all men count with you, but none too much. If you can fill the unforgiving minute with 60 seconds worth of distance run. Yours is the earth.

And everything that's in it. And which is more? You'll be a man, my son. Stirring words. Some good ideas in there.

Something's missing. Where's the engine? Where am I going to get the power to run like that? To change to be more like that?

Last week we were thinking about a crisis in masculinity, weren't we? In how to be men. Here's some more figures. 15%. 15%.

[4 : 20] That is the number of percentage points by which boys' IQs have dropped since the 1980s. Here's another one.

2%. This is the percentage of men aged between 18 and 24 who say, I feel completely masculine. From 2016. That tells a story, doesn't it? What we saw last week is that traditional masculinity, old-fashioned masculinity, has been thrown out as toxic and patriarchal and oppressive. And men are told, don't be toxic. Be nice. Which often translates, be more like women. And it doesn't work.

And it's confusing. And it's pushing men to extremes. And at the very extremes, two things are happening. Men are being pushed into communities, extreme communities, gangs.

[5 : 25] Or, they're being completely isolated from communities. They're turning into loners. And we all know what happens. All you have to do is read the news. They end up killing.

Or, men are driven so far away from community, that they end up in despair, and in darkness, and they kill themselves.

Those are the two extremes. Aren't they? And very loud voices are speaking into that empty space about what it is to be a man. Very loud voices. Have they got what it takes under the hood?

Have they got the right engine? Can they explain what a man is, how we got here, and what we should do next? Andrew Tate, we dealt with last week, didn't we?

Far too much Esau. What about Jordan Peterson? What about someone from our own stable, Mark Driscoll?

[6 : 30] Last week, we went deep. We went deep into the stories of Esau, and Jacob, and Isaac, and thankfully, Jesus. This week, we go wide. We'll think about what God says about men in general in the Bible.

We can't cover it all, but we'll begin to see how we were made, how we were created to be men, what happened to us when sin came into the world, from that bit in Genesis that we read, and how Jesus is redeeming us as men now.

For those of you who think, I'm not going to be with you all the way there, Johan, here is the message on a page. Good men, follow Jesus. Find friends and family.

We sacrifice for our people, and we show up. Let's start at the beginning. Last week, I waved a load of these at you.

Do you remember? A load of different pumpkins. We were talking about pumpkins and pumpkin seeds. Now, seeds contain a blueprint, don't they? A kind of a gene map that when you plant them, it results in one of these.

[7 : 39] It's designed that way. It's hardwired that way. It is a fundamental part of its being that it is like this. It is, if you like big words, ontologically a pumpkin, and it will never be anything else.

If you carved it into the shape of an apple, and you painted it red, and you hung it in a tree with a bunch of apples, what would it still be? A pumpkin. It would still be a pumpkin, and it is the same with men.

Genesis chapter 1, verse 27, says this, God created mankind in his own image. In the image of God, he created them, male and female. He created them.

Men are made by God. That is the simple message. And that means that manhood is biologically bestowed, isn't it?

It's not earned. It's not proved. It's not chosen. And it's not surgically acquired. If you are one, then that is your birthright.

[8 : 50] And you are made in the image of God, just as women are. You are made to be a man. God says so, and he says so in biology, and he says so in the Bible. Can we just advance the slides one?

Thank you. Having said all of that, one of the things that you might remember from last week is that we had a few of these. Didn't we? Can anybody remember what the other ones were like? Is it Sam?

Thank you. One was green. One was green. Same size. Yeah. One was orange. Absolutely. So different varieties. In fact, anybody like to guess how many varieties of pumpkin there are? Not you. Come on. Someone have a guess. 50. A little bit south of that, there are 40 different varieties of pumpkin. We don't want to deal in stereotypes, do we?

There are all different kinds of pumpkin. There are all different kinds of men. Narrow stereotypes is exactly what has pushed people who don't fit into them out into unhelpful beliefs and behaviours. [9 : 51] On the other hand, there are some definite male characteristics. We see them in the Bible. We also see them if we look at the world around us. Here's some from social science.

Men tend to be outward facing versus inward. Tend to initiate rather than respond. They tend to direct or lead instead of looking for cohesion. They tend to focus on truth over mercy. That's an interesting one, isn't it? They tend to be more about doing than being. And there's the source for you. If you think, oh, that's just a scientist, they're totally out of touch with reality. Nobody thinks like that anymore.

Here's an article from MSN. 16 things every woman should know about men follows a list of typically male characteristics. So functionally, we know there are differences and we behave that way.

And God says, that's right. God says, that's right. But, what else are men like?

[10 : 54] Back to my slide from before. Men are made to be heterosexual and faithful. If we look at Genesis chapter 2, verses 22 to 24, what does it say there?

Describes the making of women. And then verse 24, it says, that is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife and they become one flesh.

men are made to be heterosexual and faithful. Note, not married per se, although that is good, but we are made to be heterosexual and faithful.

Faithful to God's way, just like Jesus was, who never married. Men were made to carry representative responsibility. We started thinking about that last week.

Do you remember? how it means being a carrier of God's promise of joy for other people and how it culminates in Jesus representing us all on the cross in order to deliver that promise of joy.

[11 : 56] And we see that in two contexts in the Bible, in the natural family and in the church family. Now remember, this isn't about men having all the power for themselves, but being a custodian of blessing for all.

It doesn't mean that men always get what they want. It means men are accountable to God for their families and they are responsible for making God's will clear to their families as well.

And that is why after the fall, God goes and speaks to Adam. He says, Adam, where are you? Even though it was Eve who took and ate the fruit first.

And both the Old Testament and the New Testament affirm that. So if you go to Ephesians chapter 5, verse 23, you will find this. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body of which he is the saviour.

So this isn't tied to a time or a place or a culture or a context. It is tied to the eternal love of Jesus for the church. and he died for her and we can't chuck this idea without doing damage to that picture.

[13 : 16] Now what God doesn't do is tell us how it looks in practice for each of us. That will vary and with God's wisdom we have to navigate that together, don't we?

we're made to carry representative responsibility. Finally on this section we were made to be protectors, providers and pioneers. Did you notice what we read there?

God placed Adam in the garden to work it and care for it. And literally that means guard, protect it.

Guys, it's our job to patrol the boundaries. To make sure evil isn't getting into the garden and to stop our families crossing the boundaries and ending up in danger.

It's our job to create safe spaces for our people where they can flourish. It's our job to sweat so that they are cared for. Did you notice as well that Adam was left to name the animals?

[14 : 17] It's really interesting how that's described. God brought the animals to Adam to see what he would name them. it's our job to take the lead in breaking new ground and bringing order to chaos.

That's why Jacob, if you followed his story through, ends up sleeping under the stars with a rock for a pillow and building an altar to God in the desert like he's planting a flag on the moon.

That's what's going on there. It's part of our creation mandate to fill the earth and subdue it. It's being ambitious to achieve something that benefits everybody. So protectors, pioneers and providers.

It didn't stay that way as we know because of the fall. What if you know what the effect of the sexual revolution was on the relationship between men and women and for men and women in general?

Given that any thought? All that stuff that happened in the 60s about free love, that kind of thing. Did that result in increased freedom? That was the aim, wasn't it?

[15:28] Actually, what it ended up doing was becoming a license for men to refuse responsibility because with no marriage, men didn't commit and with no marriage, a lot of them became absent fathers as well.

Children grew up with all the problems that come from that and so kicking out God's way for us, beginning all the way back then, has actually made us men less free.

We're now slaves to whatever the thing is that we want to do in the moment and it made women less free as well because they were saddled with the consequences of male choices and their own to some extent. So it actually made both men and women less free than we were before and God explains why that, what seems like an apparent increase in freedom for people actually results in bad outcomes.

It's because of sin and that's what we mean when we talk about the fall and it goes back to the first man, Adam and his refusal of responsibility. Saw it last week with Esau, it goes back further than that.

So remember, responsibility is double-edged. It gives us some influence as men but it also comes with accountability. So when Satan tempted Eve, where was Adam?

[16:52] You've heard me say this before. Why didn't Adam step into the breach, fight off the attack, protect the garden, protect Eve and when God called, why did he hide?

Instead of playing the man. And when God speaks to him, why does he blame shift to Eve? It is refusing responsibility and that has been a pattern for male sin ever since.

And what happens as a result is Adam, the representative man, becomes liable to the kind of dominating and manipulating that we saw worked out in Esau and Jacob last time.

Look at Genesis chapter 3 verse 16, God speaking to the woman, second half of the verse, your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you. That's not a good thing.

That is the beginning of the domination that we talked about. This is why Jesus warns us against lording it over others when we're in positions of leadership. We've had a host of new words for male abuse in the last sort of five to ten years as well, haven't we?

[18:04] Controlling behaviour, gaslighting, mansplaining, those are all non-physical forms of manipulation, aren't they? That's the kind of Jacob type sin.

What does it look like? It's getting angry when we're not obeyed by our kids or we're ignored by other people who we think should listen to us.

Think of King Saul and his rages. It's thinking that having power means that we don't have to abide by the rules. Think King David. It's being so keen to win that we become unhealthily competitive and then we despise the weaker person and the person who beats us.

them we hate until it ends up in violence. Think Cain and Abel. And this is where Mark Driscoll falls down, isn't it? Because he calls men back to responsibility and he says some helpful things but in the end he fell into a domineering pattern of behaviour and refused to be accountable for the people that he was leading.

Too much he saw. self-control. So we refuse responsibility. We're liable to dominate and manipulate. But we also struggle with a lack of self-control.

[19:22] Did you notice how much reference there was in those readings to self-control? We tend to be ruled by our appetites. Remember Esau and Isaac last week? This is why qualifications for church leadership focus so much on character and self-control.

Because it's where we struggle, men. And Jesus wants men to be free. That's what he wants for men. And for freedom we need self-control.

There's no freedom in being a slave to your whims and your appetites and your urges, whatever it is that your eye falls on. There's no freedom in that. There is no freedom in being a slave to the next high.

Whether it's from doom scrolling or porn or drink or sugar and salt or whatever else it is. The power of those things, Jesus says, is sin. And that power is to be broken.

By coming to Jesus spiritually and systematically in the choices that we make. Sin means that we're more like self-centered boys.

[20:31] than good men. And what's the difference? Well, here's a few thoughts. A boy can have children, can have offspring. But a man fathers them intentionally.

And actually then, a man who can't have children can still be a father because he can father spiritual children intentionally. family. When it comes to chores, a boy says he's helping out. A man says he's pulling his weight. Boys will use ugly or explicit or exaggerated words to make their point.

Men will speak gently and firmly and carefully. A boy gets sulky when his wife doesn't want to be intimate on any given day.

A man, if his wife says no five times in a row, will ask what he can do differently. A boy buys flowers to say sorry.

[21 : 35] A man asks, how have I hurt you? I want to learn from this. Men say no when they see something wrong.

Boys say nothing. Boys care about themselves. Men care about others. Are you getting a picture? Now I've painted it fairly bleak and I want to say this is not always true of all men all the time. Because God's created goodness remains in us. Praise the Lord. But these are the ways that all our male hearts have been deformed by sin to some extent.

Where do we go from here? What does a man who has been reshaped by Jesus look like? Here we go. We are guardians of God's goodness.

I'm just going to read from a slightly different version for this first verse. just picks out the phrasing slightly better. Here's 1 Corinthians chapter 16 verse 13.

[22 : 45] If you want a little summary, New Testament summary of what it means to be a good man under God, it's this. Be watchful. Stand firm in the faith. Act like men.

Be strong. Let all that you do be done in love. We're to be guardians of God's goodness. We are to fight for the cause of goodness.

And that means defending the truth when it's under attack, first of all. It means defending our families when evil threatens them, physically, sure, but also praying when spiritual attack threatens our family.

It means taking risks for God. It means defending sound doctrine. What a boring sounding phrase and yet in practice what a vital thing.

That is also, by the way, why in church elders are men or at least one of the reasons. But don't mishear me, this isn't another kind of macho masculinity, right? Because Jesus personifies it.

[23 : 51] And Jesus is bold, isn't he, when he clears the temple. And he's also bold when he says to Peter, put your sword away. And he's brave when he faces up to male authorities who want to condemn a woman caught in adultery.

And he's also brave when he says to those same male authorities, the Pharisees, don't twist God's truth. And most of all, of course, he's brave when he lays down his life for us.

We're to be guardians of God's goodness. Secondly, we're to be sacrificial servant leaders.

Hopefully, some of you found one of these on your chair when you came in.

You're probably wondering, why are they giving money away in church? And if they're going to give money away, why so little? All right. Grab your coin. Two sides to every coin.

And I want you to just look at the head. So these are the two sides to male leadership.

Representative responsibility. There's a head there.

[25 : 07] There's a head there. It would be the man's head on the coin. When does that head, that headship, have value? Only when the coin is spent. That's right, isn't it?

Sure, it's your head on the coin. But it is only valuable when that coin is spent. The head pays the price. Thanks, Hamish.

Does that mean that women can't spend it? No. Of course women can spend it. Does that mean that women can't have any positions of authority? No, because the smart ones amongst you will be pointing out to me right now that it's a woman's head on the coin.

Right? But when it comes to families, ours, God's. The one who is the head is the one who must pay the price.

Jesus is the head. He pays the price. The other side of the coin to representative responsibility is sacrificial service. So take that coin home.

[26 : 13] Put it somewhere. Probably can't spend it. It's not really worth very much, is it? And this is for all of us, isn't it? Because we can be a man and look at this and say, thank you, Lord, that you paid the price for me.

You are my head. Help me to be like you. And if we're a woman, we can look at this coin and we can say, thank you, Lord, that you paid the price for me. You are my head. Help me to help men be like you.

What does that look like in practice? Well, here's a couple of examples at the top. Vladimir Zelensky, he's been in the news a lot this week, hasn't he? One of the things he said was, look, I'm democratically elected and nobody has asked me to step down.

But if stepping down is the price for peace and security, for an end to war and NATO membership, then I'll step down tomorrow. That is having power and authority and leading with it in a sacrificial way.

Isn't it? Laying down your authority for the sake of peace and security. That's what Jesus does. And at the bottom, here's a man called Fred Vautour.

[27 : 20] Fred Vautour didn't have enough money to send his five kids to university. So you know what he did? He worked night shifts cleaning the toilets at that university for 20 years so that his five kids could go to that university for free as children of an employee.

That is sacrificial servant leadership. Did you know that somebody's estimated that over 80% of life is just showing up? Isn't that amazing?

Just showing up. That's the big call in our lives, guys. Show up as sacrificial servant leaders for your families.

Be self-controlled. We're getting there, aren't we? Slowly. Have you guys heard of the Walter Mischel test? It's great. You can find it on YouTube. It's well worth five minutes of your time.

Walter Mischel designed a test to test self-control. What he did was he put kids in a room and he put a marshmallow in front of them on the table. And he said, I'm going out of the room for five minutes, guys.

[28 : 37] If the marshmallow's still there when I come back, you can have another one. How many marshmallows do you think there were left at the end? I don't know, to be honest.

But what I do know is that whether they chose to eat it or not was a very strong predictor of future health, happiness and success. Really incredible. If you were age four or five and you could wait and get your second marshmallow, it meant higher SAT scores in the future, better social and cognitive function in your teenage years, better self-worth and lower BMI in your 20s, better at achieving your goals and dealing with stress and change and by midlife, this is the real kicker, the areas of the brain that control obesity and addiction much healthier in the kids who exercised self-control because they learnt it.

So teach your kids to wait. Teach your kids self-control and while you're at it, teach yourself. We know who to learn from, don't we? Be self-controlled and that was the text in Titus 2.

Dead clear, wasn't it? All the way through, older men, be self-controlled, younger men, be self-controlled and at the very end, lead self-controlled lives. Yes, there were other things there but this is a male thing, isn't it?

There was a recent survey done in the UK and people were asked, how many of you have close friends? Men specifically were asked. Do you want to guess how many? 20% said they had no close friends at all.

[30 : 19] Now we've got a bit of context, haven't we, for Keir Starmer's statement about lone wolf terrorism, about that boy who locked himself in his room and plotted violence in Southport, angry, resentful young men.

We've forgotten something. we've forgotten that men are not supposed to be free radicals. We are molecules. Alright? We're not wandering around on our own doing whatever we like.

We are molecules bound to other people. That is how we were made to be. That is how we ought to be. See, men are redeemed into relationship.

First with their maker, then with their wider church family, with their blood family, with their friends. We are fathers and brothers and husbands and sons. Those are the things that we are.

We are not just an individual, an island floating around. What does God say at the very start? It is not good for man to be, you know it, alone.

[31 : 25] It is not good for man to be alone. We need brothers. Somebody willing to risk your annoyance to make you a better person. That's what a brother is.

Friends like Daniel's friends who will go into the furnace together. That's what we need. And if you think that way, then actually it will mean that you begin to treat women differently as well.

Doesn't it? Sisters, daughters, mothers. Can you imagine the amount of male crime that would be solved if we thought that way?

And that applies also, actually, when we're dating. When we're romantically involved with someone. Until we're married. And I'd love to say, women, to you, if he is not man enough to keep his hands off you until he has promised faithfully to be a sacrificial servant leader to you for the rest of your life or his life, if he is not man enough to keep his hands off you until he has promised that, then he is not yet man enough.

And lastly, men being reshaped by Jesus are transformed by being with Jesus.

[32 : 53] The story enacts Peter and John, this is after the departure of Jesus, they stand up and they address the most impressive court parliament in the land, the Sanhedrin, and they speak with such impressive skill.

What's the reaction? Oh, we need to know what they, the reaction of the enemies is that they took note that these men had been with Jesus. So if we want to be like this, we need to be with Jesus. Just a moment for reflection. Some questions to think about along those lines. who are your brothers, men?

If you have none, what are you going to do about it? What was the last thing you did to provide for those under your care with the grace that God has given, whether that's spiritually or physically? What hobby or habit or appetite in your life is not under control right now and needs replacing with joy in Jesus instead?

What sacrificial leadership choice have you made recently and here's the kicker, are you trying to pay yourself back for it? That's what I catch myself doing a lot of the time. I sacrificed over there but it's fine because I'll get it back over here.

[34 : 15] Just take a moment to reflect on those questions and if you're a woman here today then look at those questions and think where can I help the men in my life with these things?

Thanks. perhaps the most important question of all is the gospel of grace your engine?

Jesus offers men a new start. Spiritual rebirth, redemption, reformation. No one else can do this, guys. It's no good just offering us a new code of conduct and saying be like that.

if you're off the rails which we all are in some place in some way and you're the train you cannot put yourself back on. You need someone to come and put you back on the rails and restart your engine and that is what Jesus does and this is where Jordan Peterson falls down, isn't he?

Sure there are rules for life. Here's another Ten Commandments, guys. That's what he says. But there's no repentance, there's no regeneration to go with the rules.

[35 : 55] There's a pattern of goodness but no power. There is goodness but no grace. And the thing is if there's no gospel there's no grace then there's no engine and there will be only limited or temporary change.

See the two extremes that we had at the beginning. where we end up either killing other people or killing ourselves. That's not the answer is it? We know that. The answer is to recognise there was a man who was killed for us and following him and being willing to lay down our convenience and our comfort and our careers maybe and our way of life and maybe even our life as we follow him.

But we can't do that. We can't be the rescuer until we've been rescued. We can't love like Jesus until we know ourselves to have been loved by Jesus.

We cannot carry any responsibility and hold people to account unless we know ourselves to be accountable to the Lord Jesus.

And so the very beginning of masculinity is repentance. Follow Jesus.

[37 : 30] Find friends and family. Sacrifice for your people and show up guys and do that with Jesus. And that's what it means to believe and belong and grow here at Bethel at least and be a man.

Amen. Let me pray. Lord there is a lot here and we've covered it really fast.

Lord we just pray that what we need in order for our hearts to be shaped more like yours would stick with us. Help us to remember most of all Lord that you came as a man lived and died like this so that we might be with you that we might have forgiveness when we fail.

Acceptance a restored relationship power to be the good men that you want us to be as we walk with you. We pray for those things in Jesus name.

Amen. Amen. Thank you.