

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE A MAN?



PRIMARY SCRIPTURES

Exodus 4:14,
Ephesians 5:25-31,
1 Timothy 5:8

OBJECTIVES

- Define the biblical perspective of masculinity.
- Take the first steps in being the men God has called us to be.

OVERVIEW

Pick up a men's magazine and you'll find tips on how to get that six pack, the perfect shave, the coolest new gadget, and how to get a woman to sleep with you. And as appealing as these things are, none of them point to what it truly means to be a man. In fact, these magazines actually lead you away from true manhood because they paint a picture of a man who is weak, self-centered and fake.

The Bible shows us qualities of being masculine that our culture doesn't appreciate. It tells us that men are risk takers, adventurers, concerned with purity, passionate, strong, and gentle. It tells us that we are more than just animals who move from one lust-filled moment to the next. We are to be leaders and providers of wellness and growth in our own lives, our families and community.

LEADER'S STUDY

Some people believe their gender is a mistake. Some want everyone to believe there aren't any significant differences among the genders. And because we are exposed to so much pop-psychology through books, magazines, infomercials, and television and radio talk shows, we can begin to develop an assortment of distorted views on true manhood and womanhood.

So how does God define what it takes to be a man? This lesson will reveal three iconic figures from the Bible that we can develop in our lives.

1. The Warrior

The warrior is driven, adventurous and a risk taker, three traits most guys naturally desire. But nothing reveals the warrior in a man better than when he is called to be a protector. Ask any father what he would do to protect his children or wife, and you will see a fire in his eyes that's inspiring. When men protect, they model God:

Exodus 4:14 says: *The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.*

Psalm 116:6 says: *GOD takes the side of the helpless, when I was at the end of my rope, he saved me (MSG).*

Guys instinctively desire to protect—whether it's protecting their family, their reputation, their country, or themselves.

2. The Shepherd

The shepherd is gentle, caring and supportive. Guys live this out through their strong desire to provide for their families and communities. This is the motivation that gets a man out of bed early in the morning for work while still getting home in time to videotape his child's soccer game that evening.

Jesus said: *“Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life” (Matthew 6:26-27).*

1 Timothy 5:8: *If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever (NIV).*

3. The Lover

The lover is passionate, faithful and selfless. This element of manhood allows for his sexuality, but keep in mind it is within the context of being faithful and selfless to one woman in marriage. This is also the part of a man that is vulnerable and therefore the most attacked and skewed by the world, culture and media. It is also the role that God's selfless and unconditional love for humanity is most frequently revealed in the Bible. Look at the following verses that describe Christ's sacrificial love for us that challenges men to love their wives in the same way:

Ephesians 5:25-31: *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their*



wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (OPTIONAL)

Magazine Survey – Go to a local bookstore and purchase some magazines for men. Go through and remove any photos, headlines, or articles that may be stumbling blocks for your guys. Once you’ve “cleaned” the magazines up, hand out one or more magazines to each guy in the group. Ask each group to flip through the magazines and find pictures, articles, headlines, or ads that attempt to define what it means to be a man, whether appropriately or inappropriately. Have each group share what they found and to comment on their selections.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Open Up

- What do you think it takes to be a man?
- Who is someone you consider to be the perfect man? Explain.

TIP:

Talk about a recent or memorable adventure.

- What stands out to you from the following quote:

“Adventure, with all its requisite danger and wildness, is a deeply spiritual longing written into the soul of a man. The masculine heart needs a place where nothing is prefabricated, modular, nonfat, zip lock, franchised, on-line, microwavable. Where there are no deadlines, cell phones, or committee meetings. Where there is room for the soul.” – John Eldredge, *Wild at Heart*

Dig In

Transition into your study by describing how easy it is to allow other people, culture and the media to determine what it means to be a man. The problem with those sources is that they are skewed and twisted; so we need to look to the Bible to see what the One who created us says on the subject. Understanding the biblical standard on manhood is challenging, however, because our culture offers a more convenient and self-centered view. God’s plan is more defined but also more beneficial and productive.



TIP:

Each guy may feel a stronger draw to one of the figures, and that's OK. It's a good reminder of diversity in God's design.

Read and discuss the Warrior, the Shepherd and the Lover.

- If someone were attacking a person you care for, your mother or a girlfriend for example, what would you do?
- Describe a time when you experienced the desire to step in and protect someone?
- What opportunities exist today that give teenage guys the opportunity to provide for others? (pay for meals on a date, provide encouragement to a teammate, help a neighbor, etc.)
- What would a typical guy say his priorities were in a relationship with a girlfriend?
- Do those priorities match up with the way Christ says we are to love that person in our lives? Why or why not?

CLOSE OUT

- What changes would most Christian guys need to make to start becoming the man God has called them to be?
- Looking at the three icons—Warrior, Shepherd, Lover—which do you want to further develop in your life? Why?
- How does the Bible's view on what it means to be a man challenge you?
- What is something you can do this week to start becoming the man God wants you to be?

