

A Good Man is Hard to Find: A Good Man Provides   
*A Good Man is Hard to Find*  
By Ty Blackburn

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Turn with me in your Bibles to the first book of Kings, 1 Kings 2. We're going to start there, the point of departure for us. We're not going to exposit that passage, we're still working through a topical message. The title is "A Good Man is Hard to Find," again looking at this last week. A good man is hard to find. Today the theme will be, "A Good Man Provides." A good man provides. That's the theme of today's message. Last week we said a good man leads.

We want to take a moment to, as Ted has helped us already this morning, to think about our country and God's providence in allowing us to each live in this country, in this time. As he mentioned, the 245<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, five years away from the 250<sup>th</sup>. That's something to think about. Those words that were this amazingly insightful words for fallen men to lay hold of. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." The promise of freedom that those words have carried with them has been something that has led people from all over the world to these shores to seek in America the freedom and the opportunity to live their lives unshackled by government over-reach.

You know, it's something. I remember when I began my ministry 28 years ago almost, it will be 28 years September 1, 1993, I began with an understanding that one of the dangers confronting the Evangelical church in the '90s was what someone has called American civil religion, that is the idea that America is God's country, as it were, and that's not biblical. That's not at all biblical. God's nation is the church. You, Peter writes in 1 Peter 2 to a group of people across an area, various ethnic groups, various locales, he says, "You are a chosen race, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, a royal priesthood that you might proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. You once were not a people but now you are the people of God." God's nation, Israel, the true Israel is everyone who is of the faith of Abraham. You are descendants of Abraham by faith. That's the true Israel and so it's important and I realize there was a tendency in the '80s and '90s and even the early 2000s for Christians in America to sort of identify themselves as God's country and one of the reasons was, I think one of the reasons that still is a somewhat difficult area is the principles that America is founded upon, many of them are really rooted in a biblical view of man.

It's actually something really quite unique about the American experiment. The American experiment of freedom is different from the French Revolution that just came a few years after it, markedly in one particular area. Americans understood and had been so influenced by biblical thinking coming out of England, the Reformation spreading across Europe and particularly into England, the American Revolution and the French Revolution differed in one fundamental point, America understood total depravity. France did not and so France had a bloody Revolution filled with wickedness and their country failed. America understood that absolute power corrupts absolutely because men are sinful and they got this right. That's why there are three equal branches of government, co-equal branches of government though now we see as time goes on, it's harder and harder to live up to that design. The judicial, the executive, the legislative. Why? Because no branch can have all the power. This was actually just good theology worked out into governing structures but it doesn't make America God's country. Not at all.

We can't confuse that and so I began my ministry with an awareness I had to inculcate in this church the understanding that, no, America is not God's people. The people of God are God's people and America will rise and fall like every other civilization has risen and fallen and it will one day be on the ash heap of history should the Lord tarry. That said, though, today I would hardly have imagined when I began my ministry that today there would be the opposite extreme that we find ourselves immersed in, the idea that America is almost the most evil of nations. It's a statement that is so preposterous on its face, it is absurd, and yet it has begun to carry the day.

And one of the things I think that I would encourage young people to do is talk to people from other countries about the differences and why they're here. The propaganda campaign that has sought to destroy and bring down America in the eyes of our youth is rooted in lies. It's rooted in an improper understanding of history. It takes the weaknesses and flaws of America and it focuses on them so that it no longer sees any of the goodness or beauty.

It's almost like I remember reading a short story when I was in high school, some of you may have read it, "The Birth-Mark," by Nathaniel Hawthorne. He wasn't getting at this point but he makes an interesting... I'm not recommending it, by the way, it's just illustrating one point. This brilliant scientist is married to a very beautiful woman. Everyone regards her as like the most beautiful woman they know but she has a tiny birthmark on her face. It's a tiny red birthmark and most men that would describe her would say it enhances her beauty. The women who know her would say the same thing. And yet her husband became so obsessed with the birthmark that it made her loathsome to him. He looked at the birthmark until he wanted so much to eradicate that, that he could not think of anything else but what was wrong. The story ends tragically when he convinces her to drink a potion that he's worked on that would remove the birthmark and it kills her. And so one of her last things she says to him is, "Don't," you know basically, "Don't blame yourself for not accepting what the best thing the world had to offer."

Something like that. It wasn't quite that but that's the idea, that she was one of the most beautiful women in the world, that wasn't good enough for him.

I think that's actually a pretty accurate assessment of the United States of America honestly and I just think we should live in truth. I think we should understand what's reality. Now certainly the ugliness of America wasn't like the woman's birthmark that was actually enhancing her beauty. The ugliness of America was the inconsistency to live out those words, "All men are created equal," and that was something that had to be dealt with, and it was first of all in the Civil War. The song we just sang as Ted led us was "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," was the key song that the Union army used as a motivational tool as they began to move to liberate men from the evil of slavery. The Civil Rights Movement of the '60s was essential. The horror and wickedness of Jim Crow laws in the '40s-'60s and before that, certainly all of these things are heinous and ugly but it doesn't change the fact that the last 60 years have brought great progress, and to live in America in 2021 is the best place to live in the world probably in all history.

That's just the facts and one of the concerns I have as a shepherd and a pastor is, one of the great problems confronting people today is a fundamental sense of ingratitude to God for all of the good things he's given us. He's providentially put you where you are. He, according to Acts 17, says, Paul says there and he's preaching in Athens, the Lord who reigns over all things has determined your boundaries of your existence, the time and the places that you live. He's fixed it and so what are we to do? We're to give thanks. If we were living in communist China and I were preaching to you today, I would say, "We need to give thanks that God is on the throne even though we live in an oppressive system." But we are not in an oppressive system. Flawed? Yes, all systems are flawed but relatively speaking we're living in the best system that's ever existed. That's just reality. I know you hear the opposite over and over and over again but a lie told a million times is still a lie. The truth is the truth and no one is better off from listening to and believing lies. We need to believe the truth.

Just context, I mean, the history of humanity is a history that is flawed. Sinful men oppressing other sinful men. Dennis Prager, I watched a video of his recently, he said that what's unique about America is not slavery. He says, in fact, every culture, every continent all throughout history there has been slavery. What is different about America is we ended it. That's what's unique. Not that we had it but that we ended it.

And there is so little context today. Voddie Baucham in his excellent book, "Fault Lines," makes this, he's an African-American brother who is writing about social justice and a biblical view of it. In that book, he makes this point and this was astonishing. I had never heard this before. Did you know that between 1700-1850, there were more white slaves taken into Africa from Europe? You get that? White Europeans captured and enslaved and taken into Africa than black slaves taken out of Africa to the United States. Now there was way more black slaves overall but to the United States more white slaves taken from places like Cypress and Greece and other places. In fact, in Cypress there's 100 towers, he mentions this, that are built that are watchtowers to alert people of the Barbary pirates coming from Northern Africa to capture slaves. They sounded the alarm.

So I'm saying the world history is a history of wickedness and evil and we should call it out for what it is, wickedness and evil, and it's a great tragedy that men could pen the document of the Declaration of Independence and still not abolish slavery at the time. That is tragic. That is awful. And what's even worse is that the church at the time wasn't speaking out more clearly and forcefully against the evil of slavery. That's reality. That's exactly the truth. But still to put things in context, we must see things as they really are.

The system in America is not the problem. There are certainly flaws with the system that need to be looked at, of course. There are with every system but it is the freest and fairest ever to exist and Baucham writes in his book, Voddie Baucham, I just mentioned before, he's now ministering in Africa, teaching there. He says American, Blacks in America are the freest and fairest in the world. There is no better place to be than the United States of America. That's true for anybody, white, black, yellow, red, all of us. It's just true. Now that said, we still have problems. Of course we do. We have tremendous problems but the problems that we have are more a reflection of the spiritual vacuum and emptiness that surrounds us than any problem in the system and that's good news because we can fix, we can address the spiritual problems. What America needs is not a new system but America needs revival. America needs the church to become the church. America needs God's people to be salt and light again, to live as he created us to live, to show the glory of what it means to love God, to love Christ, to love others, to serve rather than to be served, to be like Jesus.

So as we've looked at this, this idea we've been looking at the last few weeks, we started on Father's Day looking at masculinity and a biblical view of masculinity, masculinity is in crisis today and has been for a very long time actually. More recently, the culture seeks to abolish all divinely established order. They want to abolish maleness and femaleness but as Jesus said in Matthew 19, "From the beginning God made them male and female." But even before this recent attempt to abolish gender, masculinity has been in crisis and it's been in crisis in the church because we have adopted a very worldly view of masculinity. I say this as someone who is realizing how much I have adopted this view, how unbiblical my thinking is. And I think as we look today, continue to look at this topic, I think we'll all see it's so easy to stray from the truth and we urgently need to come back to the truth.

A good man is hard to find, the title of last week's message. God wants to make us good men. What America needs really more than anything else and we need godly women and godly men, but the vacuum, the greatest vacuum is there for men. America needs good men, men who are like Jesus. A good man is hard to find. A good man provides. The point of departure is actually from David's last words to his son Solomon, 1 Kings 2. I'm going to read verses 1 to 3.

1 As David's time to die drew near, he charged Solomon his son, saying, 2 "I am going the way of all the earth. Be strong, therefore, and show yourself a man. 3 Keep the charge of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His

testimonies, according to what is written in the Law of Moses, that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn,

Let's pray together.

*Our Father, we thank You for Your word and we come today, Lord, thankful that You are a God who takes sinners like us, You redeem, You save and You transform. We pray that today that You would continue Your work of redeeming and saving and transforming us into the image of Christ. We pray particularly for the men that are here. We also pray for the women that are here, that we would all have a more biblical view and understanding of the glory and beauty of Your design for You do all things well. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

A good man provides, that's the theme today. David says to Solomon, "Show yourself a man," literally, "Be a man or become a man. Grow up. Be what a man is supposed to be." He's telling Solomon as he's about to die and he gives him some instructions later on in this chapter, basically he's going to tell him that, "There are going to be some really hard things you've got to deal with. You need to take care of Joab. You need to take care of Shimei. You need to protect some people. You need to deal with some people. But show yourself a man."

That's really one of the themes that we see throughout the Scriptures is the importance of masculinity and so we're going to be looking at that again today and we're going to spend a lot of time, we started there in 1 Kings but we're going to spend a lot of time in Genesis, the early chapters. And turn with me back there because that's where we're going to go next, Genesis 2. So the outline this morning, the theme is, "A Good Man Provides," and the first point is a good man takes responsibility for the physical provision of those around him. A good man takes responsibility for physical, for the physical provision of those around him, to provide physically for people around him. This is part of what it means to be male according to the Scriptures. Maleness means to, part of it means to lead out in providing, to meet needs. Not to be selfish. This is the problem. Toxic masculinity is selfish, it's self-centered, it's focused only on what we want, but masculinity biblically is all about moving out to meet the needs of others.

We see this when we look carefully at even the creation account. Provision is something that is particularly given. The responsibility to provide is particularly given to the man. The woman will come alongside and help with that, that's appropriate and right, she will but it's the man's responsibility. It is his job. Three subpoints here, how a man takes responsibility for the physical provision of those around him.

First is accept the responsibility. Accept responsibility. This is point A, 1A under provision for physical needs. The first subpoint, A: accept responsibility. When we look back at Genesis 1, we see that God calls man male and female and gives them the responsibility to rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air. In chapter 1, verse 28, we read, "God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and

over every living thing that moves on the earth." You're to fill the earth, you're to subdue the earth and you're to rule over the animal kingdom. That's the work that God has given us.

He says in verse 29, "I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, it shall be food for you," but then in chapter 2 we see that when the Lord created man, we looked at this extensively last Sunday, how God stops the process and he just creates, in creating man, humanity, he creates the male first and pauses and waits to create the female, stands out from the rest of creation in a marked way. And in doing that, he established the hierarchy and responsibility and authority structure that puts the weight on man, male, or leading, we saw last week. And also for providing, and you see this when you look at Genesis 2:15. Woman is not yet created and we read in chapter 2, verse 15, "Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it." He takes the man alone and puts him in the garden and says, "This is the work." He creates the woman a little bit later. Implication: she's going to learn what the work is from him and she's going to be a helper suitable. That's what the Scripture says, "I will make a helper suitable." She is help, she is help from God, she's essential, but she is help to him in the task given to him which is the task of cultivating the garden, that is, producing, providing.

This idea of authority is seen over the animals as well. We saw this as well last week. Chapter 2, verse 18, when God says, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make a helper suitable for him," then verses 19 and 20, he brings all of the animals to the man and lets the man name the animals, and the idea is, and remember the work that God gave man, male and female, was to fill the earth, subdue the earth, and rule over the fish of the sea, and the birds of the air. That's the work but what does he do? He gives man the opportunity, man, male, without his wife's help, to name the animals.

I think I mentioned last time, that seems like a bad call to me on the Lord giving the man that responsibility, and I was, of course, that's tongue-in-cheek, of course, it's not a bad call because, at least for me, I'm a lot less creative than my wife but I was reminded this week in thinking about this that man in his pre-fallen state, his mind was way beyond anything we can imagine. And so it was not too hard a task for him and I don't think he was just saying, you know, that's the dog, that's something that looks like a dog, that's something that doesn't look like it. You know, just silly names like that. He was giving them really creative names. But the point is the rule, to name something is to have authority over it and so man, male and female, are to rule but man himself naming the animals, the masculine, the male, Adam alone naming the animals means that man leads out in the work of ruling. He's to lead in that work and woman comes along and helps him in that. Yes, she's a part of the work. Absolutely, they share the work but he takes primary responsibility.

And speaking of that, the idea of authority is even more powerfully laid out when you think about this: who names woman? Who names woman? Man. He's created first. She's created for him and he names her. You can't get around this. God is establishing the principles of authority. It doesn't mean there's any difference in equality, any difference

in value. No, both are made to be the image of God perfectly together, fulfilling all that God wants man to be.

But this implies also that man is primarily responsible for provision and we see this even more clearly when we look at what happens immediately after the fall. Look at chapter 3, verse 17, "Then to Adam," this is after they've sinned, "to Adam He said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, "You shall not eat from it"; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return.'" The curse on man is now in the difficulty of providing. Do you see that?

Now lest we think that that's only his responsibility to provide is only as a result of the fall, which it's clearly not, let's compare the curse on the woman in verse 16. "To the woman He said, 'I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you.'" The woman doesn't start bearing children because sin comes in the world. She was made to be fruitful and multiply but now her role of bearing children is now going to be painful. The man is not given the responsibility of provision now after the fall. No, the role he already had is now going to be painful and toilsome. Do you see that?

So it's the man's responsibility to provide. You are a man. You are to lead. You are to look around you for needs to learn the discipline of moving toward need with an intention to meet needs, to provide. True of whether you're married or not. Every man is created to recognize need and meet those needs. And women, it certainly doesn't mean, we're all to be other-centered but there's something about masculinity that we need to recover. We need to teach our little boys to recognize needs and meet them. One of the best ways you can do that is just looking at needs in your house with the other siblings, particularly, I mean, it can be brother to brother, of course, too but opportunities abound to meet the needs of the ladies in our lives. That's why it's a good thing for men to open doors. I mean, most of us probably hold doors for people when you're walking into a store or something, kind of hold the door open behind you until somebody else gets there if they're coming. It used to be that you always opened the door for the lady and the ladies come and wait for her as she goes in. Of course, now you've taken a great risk. You may get some flack but, there again, we need to do more of that anyway and just be ready to smile kindly, say, "I was trying to be a blessing to you, to show honor to you as another human being."

But just be what a man's called to be. That's what a man is called to be, and so part of it is accepting responsibility. It's our responsibility. This means when you get married, no matter what the skill differences are, no matter what the intelligence differences are, as a man you are responsible for providing. You are responsible. Your wife is not. She is to help you provide. She may do some creative things and we look at Proverbs 31, the Proverbs 31 woman is bringing things to the table. She's been a great help, but we must

not as men abdicate our responsibility. That is the tendency of men, to abdicate, to be passive, and you and I have to help each other, recall each other, especially I'm talking men to men now, we have to call one another to truly being a man. We've got to do what David said to Solomon, become a man to our young brothers. And then to one another, be a man.

Embrace, accept responsibility. Secondly, though, related to this first point, our responsibility to provide physically, physical provision. 1A was accept responsibility. B is work hard. To be a man means to work hard. Now everyone should work hard, male and female, but especially men. And this is the problem, we have forgotten, this is what I've been so convicted about this in the last few months in the reading I've been doing in the Scriptures and even other places. It's so easy to not believe in the nobility of work. The Bible teaches the nobility of all work. I mean, everything that's not just evil. If you're doing something to bring dominion on the earth in some way, that is good and men need to rejoice in it. Take delight in your work. Genesis 2:15, he put Adam in and he said, "Cultivate and keep the garden." We tend to think of work as something that we want to get done with so we can recreate. Recreation is important, recreation is what the word means, right? We need rest but we don't need to rest more than we need to work. In fact, six days you work and the seventh day you rest.

I mean, this work is not easy even before the fall. When you look at the words, when it says in chapter 1:26, "Let them rule over the fish of the sea," and then in verse 28 it says, "Let them fill the earth, subdue it; rule over the fish of the sea." The word "subdue the earth" means "to tread down." This is before the fall. The world is perfect yet the world needs to be brought into order. It needs to be tamed. I don't know what that means exactly. We can't imagine the world pre-fall. It's like Adam was way beyond and Eve are way beyond what we can imagine, their mental capabilities, their physical capabilities, the fact that they were not dying, they were only living. What must it be like to be a pre-fallen human being? We can't know but we will one day know if we know Christ.

But even in that state, God made the world to need man to tread it down and we are to delight in now being the ones he made and fitted to this task. In fact, the idea of ruling is the key idea in image. God wants to extend his rule over the earth through human beings who are subduing his creation. That's a totally, I mean, you talk about unbiblical, I mean, talk about biblically incompatible worldviews. We have a worldview that says the world needs man everywhere to be subduing things, and what is the world out there saying? Man is the problem. The greatest evil is man. If we could just get rid of humanity, everything would be great here. That's essentially what you hear in the world. That's the environmental problem and all of that argument is, "Look, we're destroying the planet." No, God said it wasn't fully good until man, male and female, were there ready to subdue his creation and hard work is a part of it. To rule, to tread down, doesn't picture, Adam didn't go to work and just like flick things and just things happened, just kind of think it, vroom, there it goes. No, he was to go and do the work, physical work.

Our God is a God who works. I love what Jesus says in John 15. In fact, you might want to turn there, the gospel of John. Actually John 5, I mean, not John 15. John 5. Jesus heals

a man at the pool of Bethesda and as is so often the case in the gospels, he does these things on the Sabbath. Chapter 5, verse 15, John's gospel. He's just finished talking to the man. "The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. But He answered them," listen to what he says, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working." What is he saying? He's essentially saying this, he's proclaiming his deity. He's saying, "The reason that I'm working on the Sabbath is because God works on the Sabbath. My Father is always working and I am always working. I am God. I always work." Now think about that. You're in the image of God. You're made to work. You're made to reflect the glory of a God who works. Work is incredibly noble. We need to lift it up from the gutters and put it where it belongs in our mindset. Work is not something to be finished and escape so we can have fun. Work is what we're created to do and we should work hard.

And just look at Jesus. If you turn back over to John 4:34. This is after he talks to the woman at the well. The disciples went to get food. They're talking about food and Jesus says, "My food," in verse 34, "is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work." I would rather work than eat, Jesus says. That's a high statement right there, isn't it? That's what we're made to do, though.

And look at chapter 9. Turn over to John 9:4. He meets a man born blind and he's about to heal him, the disciples don't know this yet, and he says in chapter 9, verse 4, "We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work." Jesus says, "I've got to get to work. We have got to work. Let's get to work." Ecclesiastes 9:10 says, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might."

We've been reading from Proverbs on Sunday mornings. Charles read from chapter 3 earlier. You think about this, Proverbs addressed "my son, my son." We read a verse that said that, "My son," Solomon writing to his son, giving him wisdom. Chapter 6, verses 6 and following talks about this. He basically says in chapter 6, verse 6, "Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways." O sluggard and sluggard is one of the key characters in Proverbs. He's not the good character, though. The sluggard is the lazy person. In chapter 6, the sluggard is to go to the ant and learn from the ant. He says the ant has no captain, there's nobody barking out orders to the ant, and yet look at how that ant works. I mean, isn't it amazing to watch ants? Seriously, they're always like that, they're on a mission. They're not ever just like sitting around, you know, looking around, "This is such a beautiful day." I mean, I guess that we need to do that. I'm not saying we never need to do that but the ant is always on a mission. They're always going somewhere. Whenever I kill one, they're going somewhere. "I respect you," boom. "Trying to learn from you," still boom, "but you're not supposed to be here." That's the problem. I'm actually taking dominion. I'm completely biblically warranted in that action I'm taking. Subduing. Treading down the creation. Hey, man, I hadn't thought about that relationship to extermination. But go to the ant because the ant, nobody is barking orders to it. It's about its work. It's laying up food. It's doing. It's working and working and working. He says that's what we're made to be.

In chapter 26, it talks about the sluggard again. It says as the sluggard looks at the work he needs to do and he says, "There may be a lion in the streets. I can't go out and do my work. There's danger." So the sluggard wants to play it safe and he goes on to say, like turning on his hinges. He's rolling over from one side to the other on his bed. How ungodly that is. The Bible is basically saying, "No excuses. Get to work. Take the risk. Go to work."

The epistles are filled with exhortations to work. I mean, you look at Ephesians 6:5-8, "Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." Not even just to please your masters, just don't do it for eyeservice but do it as the will of God from the heart. Work hard for God. It goes on to instruct masters in how to give up threatening, to be kind.

Colossians 3 the same kind of thing. Turn over past Philippians to Colossians 3:22-24, "Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve." Think about that. No matter what your job is, it is the Lord Christ whom you serve.

That's true if you're a student. It's the Lord Christ whom you serve. So do you want to do just enough work to get the grade that you want to get? It's amazing, you kind of feel things out over time and I know I've done this myself. I know what it's going to take to get this particular grade. I know what I'm going to have to do. What should we be doing? If we were really studying as unto the Lord, we would come to a topic we're studying, a class we're studying and say, "Lord, I want to learn everything I can about this subject so that I can be a more skillful worker for You in this world. I want to master the subject. It doesn't matter what the grade is, I want to please You, Lord." And if I've studied hard, if I've read hard, if I've worked through things and thought through things, this is what I'm created to do, to learn how to do these things. And if I've done that, that is enough for you. And the Lord knows when we're doing it heartily unto him. And we need grace. We need the Spirit of God to help us because we tend toward laziness. We tend toward foolishness.

We're to work hard. This means, ladies, if you're looking for a husband, this is the kind of husband you need to look for, a man who embraces the responsibility for provision and who will work hard. Not that he makes a certain income. No, that's not it. That's up to God. I mean, that's also you have to have some wisdom about getting skills that you need to get certain jobs, but the reality is many of us will not be able to rise to the levels that others will financially. And if we're thinking biblically, that's not what you're looking for. If you're a woman and you're looking for a man of God, you want a man who's going to work hard. If he's a street sweeper, you just want a man who has the cleanest streets in all the city. That's something that God is pleased with. Why would it not please you and me?

We need to accept responsibility, work hard, and C, 1C is acquire skills. The 21<sup>st</sup> century philosopher Napoleon Dynamite was right when he said, "Girls like guys with skills." And we really ought to have a higher view of skills than we do. We ought to be learning skills. I've been so convicted about this. I mean, some of us, like me, are not so good with our hands. It's a lot harder for me to learn certain things than it is some of you. Some of you can watch somebody do it one time and you can do it most of the time. Some of us, we watch it and we can't do it. We try to do it, we still can't do it. We keep trying and eventually we can do it. Man, it was exhausting and a little bit embarrassing but, listen, as a man it doesn't matter. Get past the embarrassment, acquire the skill.

We should be teaching our boys, our sons, certain basic skills. They should know how to check the oil, change the oil, jump the car, change a flat tire. They should know some basic stuff about electrical work, basic stuff about plumbing work, basic stuff about providing anything that needs to be provided for a family, or for anybody around them in need. In fact, I think one of the things we need to work on, guys, help me think about this. Some of you are great at the aforementioned things I mentioned: carpentry, plumbing, auto repair. We need to set up times where we could just help other men and their boys learn how to do these things and put it in the context of God-honoring work. For the glory of God I want to be better. I want to learn more. I want to be more effective.

There's a really helpful section in a book called "A Guide to Biblical Manhood" by Randy Stinson and Dan Dumas. They say we need a pattern of moving toward the action. It's in a section called "Run to the Battle." We need a pattern of moving toward the action. Passivity is one of the main enemies of biblical masculinity. Do you get that? Passivity. It's a pattern of waiting on the sidelines until you're specifically asked to step up. Do you get that? Passivity is waiting on the sidelines until you're specifically asked to step up. Don't wait. That's what they're saying.

Even worse than that, passivity can be a pattern of trying to duck out of responsibilities or to run away from challenges. Men who think conflict should be avoided or who refuse to engage with those who would harm the body of Christ or their family, not only model passivity but fail in their responsibilities as protectors. Running to the battle means routinely taking a step toward the challenge, not away from it. Instead of running and hiding, it means running into the burning building or into the other situation that requires courage and/or strength. It means having a burden of awareness and consistently asking yourself, "Is there any testosterone needed in this situation?" That doesn't mean being a fool who just rushes in but simply being a leader with the instinct to go where the need is.

That's what it is, you go where the need is. You move toward it. You don't wait. That's what we're to do as men. Now the instinct of fallen man is to avoid exposure of our weakness. We don't like to be in situations where we don't know what to do but that's selfishness and that's ungodliness in our hearts.

A good man provides physically. Now the second main point this morning is a good man takes responsibility for the spiritual provision of those around him. In the same way the

good man takes responsibility for the physical provision of those around him, a good man takes responsibility for the spiritual provision of those around him and the points are basically very similar, the subpoints. The first point is accept responsibility. Accept your responsibility for spiritual provision. This is so clear when you look at those first chapters of the Bible. Genesis 2:16-17 when the man is given the work in chapter 2, verse 15, he's given, we just saw he's given the work of physical responsibility providing, but in chapter 2, verse 16, he receives the commandment of God. He receives the law of God. Verse 16 of chapter 2, Genesis, "The LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.'" The woman has not yet been created and God gives the man the commands.

Clearly the man was to disciple his wife. This plays out in the rest of Scripture. Ephesians 5:25, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her," verse 26, "that He might sanctify her by the washing of water with the word." The husband is called to wash his wife with the water of the word.

Now in true spiritual relationships, the husband will be blessed by his wife. There will be times when she washes you with the word. Absolutely, because there's one sense in which the ground is level at the foot of the cross. There is neither male nor female in Christ Jesus. That's also a reality but the other side of this that we cannot lose and that we're missing today so much is that God has ordained authority and responsibility and he's saying to husbands, "You are responsible for the spiritual well-being of your wife. You're responsible to provide for her. You're to know the law of God." How can you provide if you don't know the law of God, you don't know the word of God?

How much of God's word do you know? You're married, how much of God's word do you know? I'm asking married men. If you were to be tested right now, could you tell me the 10 Commandments? Could you, do you know all 10 Commandments? If you couldn't name the 10 Commandments, what are you doing? You are responsible and accountable for your family. You're going to give an answer. You must study to know God's word. That's just one little index. And ladies, if you're thinking about marrying somebody and they don't know the 10 Commandments, you should tell them to go home and get to work and come back and see me when you know not only the 10 Commandments but the books of the Bible and you've got a pretty good outline, a clear understanding of the gospel etc. etc. etc. Because why do you want to get interested and emotionally infatuated with a man who does not love God and his word? That's foolishness.

Now men, if you're not there yet, and like I said earlier, we're all growing, we're not where we need to be, get to work. Study to show yourself approved. God will help you. He will equip you. He will enable you. I mentioned last week, sometimes our wives can be farther ahead of us in areas. That's no excuse. Get to work. You're the one God's going to talk to. What happened when Eve sinned? Eve ate the fruit, then she gave it to Adam. God said, "Adam, where are you?" God said, "Adam, I want to talk to you." Now Adam immediately said, "Hey, it's that woman that You gave me." That's not manning up. Manning up is take responsibility. Adam should have said, "Yes, Lord, I failed. I did not

disciple my wife. I didn't intervene in this situation. I failed." Because that's how God saw it. It's through Adam that sin entered the world and death through sin. Even though Eve ate the apple first, it's on Adam's account.

A good man accepts responsibility not only for his wife but his children. So many verses speak, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger but bring them up in the discipline and admonition of the Lord," Ephesians 6:4. Colossians 3:21, "Fathers, do not exasperate your children." Fathers, as you're teaching, you are the ones to teach so accept responsibility.

If you're going to provide spiritually, first of all, accept responsibility and then, secondly, study hard. This is B. Accept responsibility, A. B, study hard. Study the word. Meditate on the word. This is the life-blood, spiritual life-blood of your family. It's the word which will not return void. Everything that you can do to build the word of God and don't be overwhelmed by how far you have to go. I think that's one of the problems we have. We just need to learn just a little bit today and a little bit tomorrow and a little bit the next day and a little bit the next day and a little bit the next day, and before you know it, you've acquired some mastery. The same thing with the skills that we have to learn. We just need to learn a little bit, to be a little better on this than you were yesterday, and then a little better tomorrow than you were today.

You study hard. You study the word but you're also supposed to study your wife and study your children and study people around you. 1 Peter 3:7 says, "live with your wives in an understanding way," according to knowledge is the idea. Peter is telling believing husbands, "You need to study your wife. You need to understand her needs." When you speak, you want to speak to her need. Interesting, I love Ephesians 4:29, it says this, "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear." Do you see that? You don't speak something that tears down. Rather than do that, assess the situation, what is the need, speak a word that gives grace. And as men, we are most accountable to do that. Every Christian is called to do that.

But to see the need of the moment, you've got to study. In fact, the Bible talks about this with your children. When it says bring them up the discipline and admonition of the Lord, Ephesians 6:4, bring them up means to nourish them. We're called to nourish and cherish our wives, Ephesians 5:28. Nourish means to give them exactly what they need. The word is sometimes used outside of Scripture to speak of a nursing mother nursing her children. A child that is breastfed, one of the things that happens in that when a woman is able to do that, is that there is a sense of prescription nourishment that God has made the body to be able to give when that's possible. He's saying in the same way, "Husbands, nourish your wives. Cherish them. Husbands, bring up your children." The idea is nourish them up, know what they need and give them what they need.

Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go." Really correctly understanding that, the Hebrew there, the idea is train up a child according to his way. There's a sense in which you're discerning the particular needs of the particular person and you're training

them accordingly. It's not a one size fits all in parenting. It's not a one size fits all in fathering. Some children are going to need a certain more firm approach. Some are going to need a more encouraging approach. And it's our responsibility as men to study. It's to have the word of God we're studying in one hand and an understanding humble heart studying those that we are called to serve.

And we need to acquire skills here too. Learning to listen. To ask good questions and to listen. Boy, that's such a hard thing to learn, isn't it? If you're developing skills in asking questions, then we need to help each other with this, not just men to men, women to women, all of us need to help in learning how to do this. But asking questions. One of the most amazing things to me, I still, I can't get over this, that God is always asking questions in Scripture. Just think about that. "Adam, where are you? What is this that you have done? Did you eat of the fruit of the tree I told you not to eat? Eve, what is this you have done?" God knows. He doesn't need the information. Why does he ask questions? Because something about a question opens the heart and so if you want to minister to people, you want to minister the truth to people, you have to open their hearts and in learning the skill of asking questions that help them see what their need is so that now you can show them the answer to their need. When they don't perceive a need and you just shoot truth at them, it's like rain, a hard rain that falls and just runs off into the drainage ditch. You want the ground to be ready to soak up the water. You've got to learn to ask questions. And Jesus is constantly asking questions. The great shepherd of the sheep always asking questions. He doesn't need it. He knows what's in the heart of man, John 2 tells us. Continually asking people questions.

We need to learn the skill of that and then discern the need, and then do our best to meet the need. We're often not going, I mean, probably most of the time we're not going to be fully or feel like we're adequate. Don't you sometimes wish, you have a skill and now that you've learned it, it's like it's never needed again? Have you ever had that experience? I feel like that a lot. You know, we handle a situation and, "I know how to do this one now." It doesn't come back up again. Another more complex one comes up that I still am confused about. That's life. That is life in a fallen world. What does God want me to do? Stop looking for easy stuff. He loves you too much to make it easy because if it were easy, you would not think about him. You would not be studying hard. You would not be working hard. So he keeps bringing hard things to us but what he wants for us is to trust him, to accept how he's made us, to move toward needs, especially as men, to move toward need with confidence not in ourselves but in the God who created me and has put me in this situation with this need. Somehow I'm here at the moment, I must be supposed to do something. I'm going to move toward it trusting in Christ's power, in his Spirit, and in his word. And if I do that, God may just do something that blows everyone away.

Now he may not. A lot of times you go to that and you do it, and it doesn't work out that great, and you think, "I'll never do that again. That's wrong." Learn from it. Get a little better next time and keep moving toward needs. That's what men do. That's what real men do. That's biblical masculinity. Biblical masculinity looks like Jesus. Jesus was not a weak man. In fact, he was a carpenter. I bet he had muscular arms and callused hands and he had the heart of a lion, and he always moved into situations. And in his humanity,

even though he's fully God, he was tempted in every way, he knows what it's like to move into situations where he felt the human, I mean, not sinful weakness, now I'm not saying that, but he had to be like us, he had to feel uncomfortable when he was moving toward things but he always moved toward need. He never failed. And he was mighty in the spirit and he is the eternal Son of God, made perfect through his suffering, and has become the captain of our salvation. And he will be with you and me and every man out there who's feeling as weak and as inadequate as I do so often.

Just getting up and doing it. You know, we had a project, yesterday Jon and I worked on our storage room. We've lived in the house for 18 years and it was nasty. It was one of those projects that I can't, I would love to talk to you for 15 minutes about it but I'm only going to talk to you about 30 more seconds. But you know, one of the things that in studying for this and thinking about this these last few weeks, I was so encouraged just to know it may not work out the way I have in mind right now and I told Jonathan, we stopped before the work and I said, "Look, look how nasty this is. Let's go at it. We're gonna go at it for the glory of God. We're gonna take dominion and do the best we can. We're gonna clean and clean and clean. We're gonna try to bring order to this chaos that is my storage room." The reason it's that way is my wife never sees it. You understand that. If she had seen it, it wouldn't be 18 years. I would have had to deal with it before now.

But it was such a joy to know, just go at the work. Give it everything you've got for as long as you can today. Stop, wrap up. We'll come back at it again when we need to. That's the kind of mindset we need in life and God will bless that and he will make you able to be the man he's called you to be. He will make you able to make a difference in the lives of people in need around you and he will do it all for the glory of his Son.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Our Father, how grateful we are for the calling that You've given us. Thank You that we're not called to do these things in our own strength but that our Savior has come and has lived, as we just talked about, a perfect life. He always did everything You wanted Him to do. He never shrank from anything You called Him to do. He moved ahead fearlessly into every circumstance and, Lord, He never sinned by omission or commission in any way. Perfect righteousness. A perfect record of righteousness. It belongs to the man Christ Jesus. And then He offered Himself. He did not shrink back from the cross. He went to the cross. Even as He was on the cross despising the shame, He was looking to the joy that lay before Him and He gave Himself as an offering and sacrifice for sinners to pay for our wickedness, to pay for our evil, to absorb Your wrath so that we would not have to. He did that fearlessly and boldly. He looked like a lamb that was sent to slaughter. He did not open His mouth and yet in reality Satan had begun to tangle with the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the lamb was a lion and the lion triumphed over him and made a public spectacle of Satan and his kingdom.*

*Lord Jesus, thank You for making salvation available to any who call upon You who will repent and place their faith in Your finished work. Thank You that the resurrection, death*

*could not hold You. On Sunday You got up out of the grave and You walked and You live now. Your heart is beating in heaven today and will forever. You are worthy. Lord, help us looking to You, the Captain of our salvation. Make the men of this church and the men that belong to You in this world, mighty not in ourselves but mighty in Christ. And may we bless our families, may we bless our church families, may we bless unbelievers around us by meeting needs through Your glory and Your power. We pray this in Your name, Lord Jesus. Amen.*