

Future Men

Raising Boys to Fight Giants

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This book is dedicated to Heather,
who has blessed us by marrying the man
who was once our future man.

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Introduction

As much as it may distress us, our boys are future men.

I was once leading a seminar for teachers at our Christian school, and in the course of the discussion mentioned that many of the girls in the school would, within a few short years, be adult women and would take their place in our midst. The teachers heard all this with aplomb, but when I went on to say that within a few short years the *boys* they were instructing would be lawyers, airline pilots, pastors, etc., the looks on the faces of the assembled teachers ranged from concern to mild panic. Boys take a lot of faith.

This is good because the presence or absence of faith reveals whether or not we have a biblical doctrine of our future. Unbelief is always anchored to the present, while faith looks at that which is unseen. But even here we only get half the picture. Too often we think that faith only looks at unseen *heavenly* things, but this truncated approach is really the result of an incipient gnosticism. In the Bible, faith includes the ability to see that which is unseen because it is still future. Abraham rejoiced to see the day of Christ, not the day when he, Abraham, would go to heaven. Faith conquers kingdoms, faith stops the mouths of lions, faith turns armies to flight, and faith brings boys up to a mature and godly masculinity.

But another qualification must be added. The faith exhibited by wise parents of boys is the faith of a farmer, or a sculptor, or anyone else engaged in the work of shaping unfolding possibilities. It is not the faith of someone waiting

around for lightening to strike; it is the faith of someone who looks at the present and sees what it will become—through grace and good works.

Countless examples may be multiplied from any given day in the life of a small boy. Say a boy breaks a chair because he was jumping on it from the bunk bed. Unbelief sees the cost of replacing the chair. Faith sees aggressiveness and courage, both of which obviously need to be directed and disciplined. Suppose a boy gets into a fight protecting his sister. Unbelief sees the lack of wisdom that created a situation that could have been easily avoided; faith sees an immature masculinity that is starting to assume the burden of manhood.

Unbelief squashes; faith *teaches* while it directs. Faith takes a boy aside, and tells him that this part of what he did was good, while that other part of what he did got in the way. “And this is how to do it better next time.”

This issue of fighting provides a good example of how necessary such distinctions are. Of course parents do not want to encourage their sons to pick fights with other boys. But this is not the only item on the menu. Neither do they want to encourage abdication and cowardice. There are times when men have to fight. It follows that there will be times when boys have to *learn* how to fight, how to walk away, how to turn the other cheek, when to turn the other cheek, and when to put up their dukes. If boys don’t learn, men won’t know. And boys will not learn unless their fathers teach.

When Theodore Roosevelt was at Harvard, he taught Sunday school for a time at Christ Church, until he was dismissed over an issue related to this. A boy showed up one Sunday with a black eye. He admitted he had been fighting, and on a Sunday too. He told the future president that a bigger boy had been pinching his sister, and so he fought him. TR told him that he had done perfectly right and gave him a dollar. The vestrymen thought this was a bit much, and so they let their exuberant Sunday school teacher go.

Unbelief cannot look past the surface. If there was any sin involved, unbelief sees only the sin. Faith sees what was turned aside to the service of sin and seeks to turn it back again. Sin is parasitic and cannot function without some good attributes that it seeks to corrupt. Consequently, faith must distinguish that which must be preserved and developed and that which must be abandoned because of the sin.

In addition, faith also sees the godliness in what many pietists, on their own authority, have come to *call* sin. At the beginning of his life, a boy does not know what century he was born in, and consequently exhibits to many of his politically correct and aghast elders some of the same traits exhibited by the boyhood chums of Sennacherib and Charlemagne. He doesn't know any better—yet. But in our day, many of these creation-design masculine traits are drilled or drugged out of him by the time he is ten. Faith resists this ungodly process and defines sin by the Scriptures and not by pietistic traditions.

So faith is central in bringing up boys, but it is important to remember that the object of faith is not the *boy*. It is faith in *God*, faith in His promises, faith in His wisdom. Faith *concerns* the boy, and the boy can see that it concerns him. Parents are to believe God *for* their sons, which is a very different thing than believing *in* their sons.

But faith in the wisdom of God cannot be separated from the standard of Scripture. It is easy for us to ask God to give us “faith” to accomplish whatever it is that *we* think is a good idea. But this is not what we are called to do. We are Christians and cannot survive on bread alone. We must live by and on the Word of God.

Because we should want to base the training of our boys on the standards and patterns of Scripture, we may be encouraged to look to the promises of Scripture as well. These promises are not a later “add-on”; they are foundational to the whole process. Faith is not wishful thinking; faith apprehends the promises of God found in Scripture. “The

children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee” (Ps. 102:28). Faith sees a son *as* established, and the work of faith goes on to establish him. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

As we look to the Scriptures for the pattern of masculinity that we are to set before our sons, we will find them manifested perfectly in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the incarnate Word, the One who embodies perfectly all that Scripture teaches in words. As we look at the teaching of Scripture throughout this book on what it means to be a man (and therefore, what it means to be a future man), we will come back again and again to the example of Jesus Christ. He is the one who set for us the ultimate pattern for friendship, for courage, for faithfulness, and integrity.

God is the one who places a specific boy in a particular home. And He does so in order that those parents who believe and obey Him might come to delight in a wise son, a son who is like Jesus Christ. “My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine. Yea, my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things” (Prov. 23:15–16).

With these introductory things said, a few words are necessary about some overlap with material found in some of my other books on the family. The first point is that while repetition may be a headache for editors, it remains a pastoral necessity (Phil. 3:1). We moderns need to internalize many of these truths, and an important part of this is repetition. Secondly, there are times when a point made in an earlier work needs to be expanded or qualified. Sometimes a point made elsewhere is clear to some and murky to others. Third, although there are some hardy devotees of my stuff who will soldier manfully through more than one of my books, this is not the case for everyone. And because of how the books are frequently used (group studies, etc.), the books pretty much need to stand alone. Not everyone reads the earlier books. And last, sometimes I repeat myself because I am getting older and can’t help it.

The Shape of Masculinity

Before taking a road trip, it is a very good idea to have some idea of where you are going. Before rearing a son to be “masculine,” it is equally important to have some notion of what that is. For Christians seeking to be biblical, it is important to have that definition of masculinity grounded in the teaching of Scripture.

So what is masculinity? What are we looking for when we describe manhood according to the Bible? The answer to that question will inform and direct all our efforts in bringing up our sons. Manhood is where boyhood should be aimed.

Douglas Jones has helpfully argued that masculinity can be thought of as “the collection of all those characteristics which flow from delighting in and sacrificing bodily strength for goodness.” Bill Mouser makes this point even stronger by pointing to the five clear aspects of this kind of masculinity throughout the Bible. As with every such categorization, we cannot make these five aspects watertight, separating them completely from one another, but nevertheless, these *are* distinctive features of the masculine constitution.

Men are created to exercise dominion over the earth; they are fitted to be husbandman, tilling the earth; they are equipped to be saviors, delivering from evil; they are expected to grow up into wisdom, becoming sages; and they are designed to reflect the image and glory of God. Some of these following terms may seem somewhat cumbersome to

some, but let's call them *lords, husbandmen, saviors, sages,* and *glory-bearers*.

This chapter will not make a detailed case for these roles but will simply outline and describe the features of each and then show how each one should manifest itself in the life of boys. Of course, when these are neglected, or worse, resisted, the consequences are very harmful to boys.

Lords: Man was created to exercise dominion in the earth. The charge which God gave in this regard is frequently called the cultural mandate.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. . . . Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it. (Gen. 1:26–28)

Some may assume that this cultural mandate is negated by the fall of man into sin, but God repeats the mandate again after the flood (Gen. 9:1). Sin certainly affected our ability to fulfill this command from God, but it did not remove the obligation placed on us by the command. But if it is to be fulfilled now, in a sinful world, then it must be as a result of the goodness and grace of God. And this is what we see. The mandate is given to us yet again in another form in the Great Commission. We are told there to disciple the nations and bring them to true submission to the Lord Jesus Christ (Mt. 28:18–20).

In boys, we might call this the “tree fort” impetus. Boys want to conquer and subdue, and if the terrain before them is the back yard, then that is what they want to conquer and subdue. The point of discipline with boys is to channel and direct their energy into an obedient response to the cultural mandate. It is not to squash that energy, destroying it or making it sullen. Boys therefore should be in training to

become men who exercise dominion; they should be learning to be lords in the earth; they should learn to be *adventurous* and *visionary*.

Husbandmen: Man was created, not only to discover and conquer new worlds, but also to make those worlds flourish. The dominion mandate, taken in isolation, could result in men trying to build a culture based on piracy and freebooting. This second aspect means that men are created to conquer and subdue, and after this, *to settle down*. After man was created, God placed him in the garden to tend and protect it: “the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to *tend* and *keep* it” (Gen. 2:15).

Man does not just build bridges and space stations. He must also tend and oversee the organic things which he plants there—gardens, families, towns. Great lessons can be acquired by small boys in a small garden. A rich farmer was once rebuked for having his sons work in the fields when they didn’t have to. His reply was apropos to this discussion. He wasn’t raising corn, he explained, he was raising boys. Boys therefore should be learning to be *patient*, *careful*, and *hard-working*.

Saviors: Men also have a deep desire to *deliver* or *save*. The great example of a savior is, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ. His deliverance was promised to His people in the early chapters of Genesis: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen. 3:14–15).

The ancient serpent, this dragon, was the tempter who brought the occasion of sin before Adam and Eve. God promised here a curse on the serpent, and in that curse we see the salvation of the world. That salvation cannot be separated from the destruction of the lying worm. As I write this, my two-year-old grandson is learning the story of St. George and the dragon. It absolutely captivates him, and he

can't get enough of it. He is learning something profound here. Men who follow Jesus Christ, the dragon-slayer, must themselves become lesser dragon-slayers. And this is why it is absolutely *essential* for boys to play with wooden swords and plastic guns. Boys have a deep need to have something to defend, something to represent in battle. And to beat the spears into pruning hooks prematurely, before the war is over, will leave you fighting the dragon with a pruning hook.

The Christian faith is in no way pacifistic. The peace that will be ushered in by our great Prince will be a peace purchased with blood. As our Lord sacrificed Himself in this war, so must His followers learn to do.

Boys must learn that they are growing up to fight in a great war, and they must consequently learn, as boys, to be *strong, sacrificial, courageous, and good.*

Sage: The sage is a man who is great in wisdom, and wisdom in Scripture is personified as a great lady. Sons are exhorted constantly to listen to her. As we look to the first part of Proverbs (1–9), we see that wisdom is a *woman* who disciplines boys. When a grimy little boy needs his knuckles rapped, she is the one to do it. If he heeds wisdom in her role as the strict school-mistress, he grows up to a certain measure of wisdom, and the Lady Wisdom becomes his patroness. And when a man has grown up to wisdom, he has become a sage.

We must therefore teach our boys the masculinity of study, of learning, of books, of intellectual discussion. Too often we let boys drift into a situation where they pit one aspect of masculinity against another. When this happens, for example, a boy who naturally loves the outdoors can too readily dismiss software programming as effeminate, or, even worse, come to look down on poetry. Intellectual discipline, or, as Peter put it, girding up the loins of the mind, is an important part of growing to manhood.

In boyhood, study looks suspiciously like digging a hole and then filling it up. The author of Hebrews tells us that no discipline seems pleasant at the time, but rather painful. *Afterwards*, he says, it yields the peaceful fruit of an upright life. Nowhere is this principle more clear than in the relationship of study in the early years to wisdom in the years of old age. And while the point is clear when we make it this way, it is not naturally visible to a boy who has to do a homework assignment when he can hear all the neighborhood kids playing kick the can.

The connections must be made for him. Boys must therefore learn to be *teachable*, *studious*, and *thoughtful*.

Glory-bearers: The last aspect of masculinity is seen in the fact that men are the glory of God. Paul puts the matter very plainly. “For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man” (1 Cor. 11:7). The woman reflects the glory of God by reflecting the glory of man, whose glory she is. However much modern egalitarians do not like it, God did not make the world according to their specifications. The head of every man is Christ, and the head of every woman is man (1 Cor. 11:3). This teaching on headship is repeated by Paul elsewhere. “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing” (Eph. 5:23–24).

These distinctions are not made in the interests of winning a competition. Star differs from star in glory. The sun and the moon differ from one another. When the Bible assigns one kind of glory to man and another kind of glory to woman, our modern egalitarian bigotries prevent us from seeing that they are different kinds and levels of *glory*.

G. K. Chesterton wrote a short poem entitled “Comparisons” that summarizes the problem exactly.

If I set the sun beside the moon,
And if I set the land beside the sea,
And if I set the town beside the country,
And if I set the man beside the woman,
I suppose some fool would talk about one being better.

Because these things are true, boys must be instructed on how to grow up into glory and how to fulfill their responsibility to be *representative*, *responsible*, and *holy*.

Putting all this together, we should have a pretty good sense of where we are going. We should want our boys to be aggressive and adventurous. They are learning to be lords of the earth. We should want them to be patient and hard-working. They are learning husbandry. We should want them to hate evil and to have a deep desire to fight it. They are learning what a weapon feels like in their hands. We should want boys to be eager to learn from the wise. They are learning to become wise themselves. We should want them to stand before God, in the worship of God, with head uncovered. They are the image and glory of God.

Effeminacy and Biblical Masculinity

We live in a feminist and effeminate culture. Because of this, at best, as a people we are uneasy with masculinity, and with increasing regularity, whenever it manages to appear somehow, we call for someone to do something about it.

There are two basic directions a boy can take in departing from biblical masculinity. One is the option of effeminacy, and the other is a macho-like counterfeit masculinity. With the former, he takes as a model a set of virtues which are not supposed to be *his* virtues. With the latter, he adopts a set of pseudo-virtues, practices which are not virtues at all.

When God has assigned a place, a station, to someone, it is disobedience to desert that station. A woman is no coward for refusing to desert her children in order to enlist in the army to go off and fight in a war. But a man who refuses to fight can be charged (depending on the circumstances) with cowardice. This same pattern can be seen in all the little things of life. A man is not supposed to stand around when it is important to exercise leadership. A woman might be called to simply wait for her husband to make a decision. But a man who waits around for *someone* to decide is abdicating his assigned role.

Of course a biblical man is to be kind and gentle, but the model for this is to be (ultimately) the Lord Jesus, and in conjunction with this, the teaching of Scripture. The overarching model for this is not our composite cultural picture of what an accommodating male looks like. When distortions occur,

they can veer left into effeminacy, or right into a counterfeit masculinity.

Feminine Boys

Because of the egalitarian times we live in, we first have to say a few words in defense of stereotyping. Generalizations, *understood to be such*, are not only permissible but necessary. Jesus speaks about the Pharisees as a class, although there were Pharisees who were not the kind of hypocrites He rightfully castigated. In fact, we can define a good Pharisee as one who acknowledged the justice of His generalization—and then came to Him by night to receive instruction about regeneration. The apostle Paul committed the egalitarian *faux pas* of lumping Cretans together into one large, lazy gluttonous mass. But he still knew there were good Cretans, and he made a point of quoting one of them.

This said, boys should not play with dolls, and boys who do play with them have a problem. One of the themes of this book is to reinforce the truism that the boy is father to the man. What you have young you will have more of later, old.

For most boys, the right general response to effeminacy is natural (as in, *yuck*), but instruction and correction is still necessary. This is because the boys do not know how to make the distinction between that which should be mocked in effeminate boys and that which must be honored in the girls. And for those boys who gravitate toward playing house, and dolls, and dress-ups, wise parental control, oversight, and redirection is necessary.

But in order to do this properly, a right understanding of masculinity (on the part of the parents) is necessary. Small boys tend to think that masculinity consists of rolling around in the dirt, and so they are likely to dismiss a quiet studiousness in a boy as simply another form of indoor effeminacy. But we have already seen that a boy should be studying to become wise, studying to be a sage when he

is old. This is not the same thing as wearing a frilly apron. Put another way, the distinction between masculinity and femininity is not one of “outdoors” and “indoors.” Women can consider a field and buy it for a vineyard, they can work in the garden, they can tend the fruit trees, and be a glory to their sex. Men can work inside too, helping and leading with many domestic duties, though their focus will be different. Role relationships are clear to the wise, but for those who want life to conform to wooden simplicities, they are a stumbling block.

And this is where the collective wisdom of many generations can help us out—through stereotypes. Far from being a repository of thoughtless bigotries, our stereotypes help us to appreciate a traditional wisdom. When boys learn the rudiments of cooking, as they should, they should also learn to do it in a masculine way. What way is that? To the stereotypes! Boys should learn to glory in being boys, and they should learn to relate all their activities to this. When parents help their boys broaden their scope (getting beyond rolling around in the dirt), this is not so that the distinction between the boys and their sisters can be blurred, but rather so that it might be reinforced *in many other areas*. This should be seen in the kind of books read, the kind of music listened to, the kind of movies watched, the kind of household tasks assigned, the kind of games played, and so forth. The fact that some of the distinctions seem to us arbitrary—why is taking out the garbage manly and using the garbage disposal womanly?—should cause us joy and satisfaction, not confusion. Profound forces are at work. We should let our great, great grandparents teach us something.

One additional caution. Many times fathers who are domineering (as opposed to fathers who exercise a godly leadership) will browbeat their sons into a pattern of cowering submission which is effeminate. They then wonder why their sons do not follow their example, but the reason is that

the father would not permit it. He was not training his son; he was sitting on him.

Counterfeit Masculinity

The opposite problem to effeminacy is that of embracing, enthusiastically, a truncated view of masculinity, what I call counterfeit masculinity. This problem “glories” in masculinity, but has a view of it that no wise observer should consider glorious at all. There is more to masculinity than grunting and bluster.

Counterfeit masculinity excels at making excuses. Because the “masculinity” is a matter of pride, not humble acceptance of responsibility, then anything which threatens that pride must be rejected. One of the things which always threatens pride is any kind of failure, and the way that insecure males deal with this is through making excuses. True masculinity accepts responsibility, period, while false masculinity will try to accept responsibility only for success. This is a key distinction and is worth pursuing at some length.

Suppose a young son is playing left field, and in the course of the game, he drops an easy pop fly. Suppose further that he says he did so because “the sun was in my eyes,” “a bee was near me,” “the grass was slippery,” “a fan yelled and distracted me,” and so on. This should be taken with the utmost seriousness by the parents—this boy is in grave spiritual danger. This pattern of fending off a threat of wounded pride through excuse-making is typical of males in sin, and yet is *thoroughly* unmasculine. A refusal to make excuses is right at the heart of a scriptural masculinity.

Boys need so much practice at this that they should be taught to accept responsibility even when the sun *was* in their eyes. Unfortunately, many boys are schooled in the techniques of avoiding masculinity by their parents. When a boy does not make excuses it is frequently because he does not need to—mom and dad do it for him. This is particularly the case when there have been consequences for the

failure, whatever it is. Suppose the coach substitutes another player, or the boy is dropped from the team because he is on academic probation, or some other fallout occurs. Parents are often ferocious in “explaining” why this shouldn’t happen. The son is in the background, taking notes. So when they, the parents, confront him about something, he does to them what he has already learned *from* them. What he has learned is the practice of refusing to take responsibility. He has learned how to reject masculinity. This can all be done in a loud voice, and with hairy chest, but it is still shirking a duty assigned by God.

At the same time, we should also distinguish excuse-making from giving an explanation which is called for. If mom asks her son why he was late for dinner, it is all right for him to tell her it was because he was hit by a car, and the emergency room wouldn’t release him in time, and the phone at home was busy. But if mom asks why he was late, and he says that it was because the watch *she* gave him for his birthday is slow, and that it wasn’t *his* fault, we have an example of the problem.

Boys must learn to say, regularly—to God, to others, and to themselves—that they were wrong when they were wrong, and that they were responsible when they were responsible. When they do this, they will discover that authority naturally flows to those who take responsibility. That same authority naturally flees from those who seek to shift the responsibility or the blame. When boys learn to do this, they are learning what it means to be a young man. When young men learn to do this, they are learning what it means to be a grown man.

Consequently, when a father asks his son why a particular chore was not accomplished, a good, normal response should be, “No excuse, sir.” If this is said with the right demeanor, without insolence, without any spin on the word *sir*, then the son is learning what he needs to learn. The buck stops with him. The father should accept this and not bad-

ger him into excuse-making. So in its turn, the acceptance of responsibility should be *accepted*.

Another related problem is the practice of young men gravitating to one or two things they are naturally good at and staying there. Just as an excuse-maker will try to take credit only for the successes, so other young men will spend all their time in areas where excuse-making is not really necessary. The boy who dislikes academics gravitates to sports, and the boy who has trouble with music gives it a wide berth. The result is a very *narrow* competence, and the world outside that realm of competence is simply ignored.

This false masculinity—excuse-making, bluster, braggadocio—is in part the result of resisting and opposing true masculinity. Males will necessarily be dominant in any given culture, and the only question before that culture concerns whether or not that dominance will be constructive or destructive. If boys (and then later, men) are given a responsible, leadership role to play then the dominance will be constructive. But if this kind of responsible dominance is excluded by law, then boys will begin to dominate in a destructive way.

Keeping the Balance

Avoiding the extremes of effeminacy and macho-man reaction is very difficult. Our society is completely out of balance when it comes to understanding the roles of male and female. Trying to correct that imbalance without becoming unbalanced ourselves is a very hard task. But balance in marriage, balance in worship, balance in doctrine, and balance in individual practice are nevertheless required. At the same time, this balance is to be defined according to the Word, and not according to the moderate nervousness the world has about such complicated things.

Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—“Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,” which

all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh. (Col. 2:20–23, NKJV)

Our tendency is to careen from one extreme to the other. We see in this passage that ascetic reactions do not check the indulgence of the flesh because they *are* an indulgence of the flesh. Pagans visit brothels to satisfy the flesh while professing believers *do the same thing* through making up rules not required by Scripture. Self-imposed religion, what the older theologians used to call “will-worship,” is an abomination to God. Everything we do is to be to the glory of God, defined by the revealed will of God. This sounds very spiritual, but it is not that easy.

The first principle of balance is strict obedience. We must never underestimate the importance of doing exactly what God requires. God expressly forbids imitative innovations in worship (Deut. 12:30–32); God struck down Nadab and Abihu for offering strange incense (Lev. 10:1–2); Saul was rejected as king because of his rebellion in taking Samuel’s place (1 Sam. 15:22–23); Uzza was struck down for touching the ark when the oxen stumbled (1 Chr. 13:9–10); King Uzziah tried to burn incense before the Lord contrary to the law and was struck with leprosy (2 Chr. 26:17–18); and Hezekiah destroyed the bronze serpent (2 Kgs. 18:4). Zeal in our religion is commanded (Tit. 2:14); in a very important sense we are never to be moderate Christians. “So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth” (Rev. 3:16).

Another principle of balance, however, is just as important. We are obliged to obey strictly what God has said, not what we *thought* He said, or what we assumed He said, or what we thought he should have said. “He who sends a message by the hand of a fool cuts off his own feet and drinks violence” (Prov. 26:6). Before we obey the Word, we must

know it to be the Word. As soon as we know it to be the Word, our responsibility for submission is immediate and complete.

Our goal is perfection, not perfectionism. The Word of God is absolute. But it is false to assume from this premise that the Bible provides a tidy list of do's and don'ts, all of which must accord with a respectable and middle class common sense. Although the law required priests to have a certain lineage which the usurping priests of Christ's day did not have, the Bible still treats Caiaphas as the genuine high priest (Jn. 11:51); Hezekiah requested that God receive certain defiled Israelites coming to the reinstated Passover (2 Chr. 30:17–19); Namaan received permission to escort his master into the house of Rimmon, and there to help him bow (2 Kgs. 5:17–18); David unlawfully ate the showbread and was praised by Christ (Mt. 12:4); and Christians should have no trouble eating meat that was offered up to an idol (1 Cor. 8:4). Perfectionism has the appearance of wisdom, but it is a work of the flesh. We do not counter perfectionism with imperfectionism; we counter perfectionism with *obedience*.

These are the general principles; when we seek to balance masculinity in our sons with femininity in our daughters, we have to return constantly to what Scripture teaches. What does the Bible show us concerning masculinity? This is why we had to begin with the biblical categories—lord, husbandman, savior, sage, and glory. Taking all of Scripture together, these aspects of masculinity balance one another, and their corresponding complements in women provide still further balance.