

I want to tackle what I believe is just a massive topic. And it's not going to be easy to do, but here's what I want to talk about. For the next three weeks, I want to talk about men, and I want to talk about masculinity. And I want to talk about what being a man is, and I want to talk about what God created men for. It's a complex subject, and I know a lot of women are like, "It's not complex, alright. Feed him, hug him, he's fine." I know there are those of you who don't think it's that complex. But did you know that 1 Corinthians 11 says that men are the glory of God? That's a really big, broad, massive thing. So I'm going to try to tackle it. I want to define it tonight, and next week I want to talk about man as husband. The week after that I want to talk about man as father. Now, if you're a woman in here, we have addressed women. In fact, we've addressed it just a month or so ago. And so, we're going to do men now. And here, I don't want to offend you. I'm not trying to offend you in any way, but here's my promise to you: no matter who you are as a woman, you're affected by men. You either have one, you're married to one or you want one or you had one and now don't want one. But all of us are affected. And so, what I want to do is biblically lay out what God has commanded them to be, and if they'll hear that, then everybody's better off. But here's the deal I need you to make with yourself. If you try to play the role of the Holy Spirit in any of this, you will absolutely destroy everything that the Holy Spirit works through the word tonight. If we get in the car tonight and you're like, "Did you hear him?," it's just going to go bad for you. And I know some of you are stronger; you're not going to listen to me here because you can make him listen. I'll accept your apology next week. Let's go.

Genesis chapters 1, 2 and 3 says that God creates the entire universe. He creates it rhythmically, beautifully and everything's functioning where it's supposed to function and everything's working perfectly. And He creates the earth, and on the majority of the earth, He puts this wild, untamed, rugged landscape. And in the middle, the Scriptures say He plants the garden, the garden of Eden. And within Eden, everything is trimmed and it's nice and it works well and it's not untamed, wild and rugged like the rest of the earth. And He plants that there, and then the Scriptures say that He makes man and woman. In His image, he makes them both. Now this is pretty key because the truth is men and women are created equally but distinctively. The argument has never been equality. We are absolutely equal in the same way that Jesus and God are both God and equal, but different. So men and women are equal, but we're absolutely different. And God has made us distinctly the way we are for his purposes. And I don't think you have to be a genius or a sociologist or even a good reader to understand this; I just think you have to have kids. My son receives love from me by wrestling, head butting. He wants deep pressure, deep tickle. He wants to fight, he wants to wrestle, he wants to bite me. This is what my son wants. My son wants hard play and hard touch; that's what he wants. He is aggressive; that's what he is. I was out of town all this week. I flew back in on Thursday. Since I've walked in the door, he is tackling me, throwing stuff at me, shoving down his sister, just daring me for a fight. I mean, he wants me to work him; that's what he wants. He's begging me to rough him up; he's begging me. My daughter, on the other hand, doesn't want any of that. She wants me to dote on her. She changes clothes thirty-two times a day, four less than her mother. I probably will pay for that later. What she wants is, every time she's changed any bit of it, her shoes, her dress, she wants me to stop what I'm doing, she wants me to turn to her and she wants me to tell her how beautiful she is. She wants me to play with her hair. She wants me to tell her stories. She wants to cuddle; this is what my daughter wants. My daughter doesn't want me to body slam her on the bed; that's not what she wants. She wants to talk. My daughter perpetually says, "Do you know what?..." and then she talks. For hours and hours, she talks. Here would be another example. Right before I flew to Seattle, I'm sitting on the couch and "The Last Samurai" is on and a Japanese man is beating the mess out of Tom Cruise with a stick...awesome. And my son, who is not in the TV deal, stares at that television smiling, looking at me, looking back at the TV going, "This is legit? You can beat men with sticks?" And I'm like, "Yes, you can." On the other hand, my daughter is going, "Can you change the channel?" It makes her nervous. She doesn't like it. It's bothering her. She doesn't understand. So you don't have

to be a brain surgeon to realize that they're different.

Now, I'm not trying to go overboard with this. My son does things that aren't as aggressive. Like, for whatever reason, he likes playing with my daughter's Barbies. But I don't panic about that; I just have a talk with him. I'm like, "Look buddy, every man I know wants to play with naked women, but here's the rules. There's a righteous way to do that, and there's an unrighteous way to do that. And right now, you're unrighteous, baby. So put it down." So we have that talk. Was that over the line? Was that bad? You can't do that in church? Alright, I apologize. He also, for whatever reason, likes Lauren's shoes. He loves them. And the more sparkly they are, he loves them. He'll put them on. I mean just a father's nightmare, your son in a diaper and pink pumps walking through the house. So I'm not trying to go overboard; he does those things. He also is a very sensitive little boy. He's very sensitive. And on the other side of things, my daughter likes climbing up trees and jumping out of them. And I'm not trying to make some blanket statement that says your daughter can't be aggressive or have some tomboy in her or that your little boy can't be sensitive and like to paint or dance. Because I don't believe those things to be true, but on a whole, little boys, little girls receive love very differently.

And this is God showing us, saying to us, "I've made these things distinct. They're not the same thing. They're different." Now, God creates this giant planet, most of which is very rugged and untamed, puts the man in a garden that is tame and not as rugged, is well kept, well put together. He creates the man, this is pre-woman, sets him in the garden and says, "Make the rest of the earth look like this. It's going to take a long time, and you're going to need a lot of help. Have a lot of babies." And you get eve, and He says, "Be fruitful and multiply. Subdue the earth." So here's what happens. God creates the man to be a cultivator. And here's what I mean by that. God creates men, all men, to build and create and to continue the growth of whatever we built and created. We've been designed by God to cultivate, to build things, to sustain them, to make them as big and as awesome as possible. It's what men are. You see it everywhere. I'll give you an example. It's a funny thing to me that thirty year old men are still keeping track of what they bench press. Why? Now, I'm not saying don't bench press. Get your bench on. But what I'm saying to you is that why in the world are we, as thirty year olds, on creatine monohydrate, trying to bench press 315lbs? We've got to get bigger, we've got to get better, we've got to get stronger. You can also watch a man discover a new sport, play it twice and then spend \$10 grand on equipment. I mean, you run like a block and a half on the treadmill, and next thing you know, you have a \$400 heart monitor watch. God put us together like that. We want to get better, we want to be the best, we want to build. What's the mantra of every man? Whether it's cars, homes, technology, it's just "Bigger, bigger, better, faster, bigger, bigger..." That's what we want. We will throw away our old phone even though it's perfectly good just to get the new one that's faster or has more little gadgets on it that we'll never use. Because we're cultivators. We were designed for it.

We were designed to cultivate our wives, to love, nurture, encourage and build in them so that they would be a Psalm 128, which says they would be a fruitful vine. We were created by God to cultivate our children, to discipline, to love, to encourage, to rebuke and to make sure of their steady progress. It's what we were created for. We were created to grow things, to cultivate things, to build things, to make them as big and as deep and as wide as possible. Have you ever seen a business man whose business levels off or is in decline? Isn't he just absolutely distressed? Yeah, because we're builders. We want to build. It's in us. We can't shake it, nor do I think we should. Listen, we were meant to build, and that's why we need something to do. We need something to build. Nothing is as dangerous as bored man. Men get bored, and they get in trouble. And I'll say this, this is a blanket statement: I've never met a lazy, undisciplined man who wasn't in inner turmoil. If you find a lazy, undisciplined man, you'll find a heart, when all is said and done, if you strip away all the bravado, that is scared, fearful, wounded, something's gone wrong. Because we weren't designed for that. And that's why even lazy,

undisciplined men have giant fantasy lives. They think about scenes in “Braveheart” with them running beside William Wallace. They play a lot of paintball. What I mean by that is even the lazy, undisciplined ones still feel the call to be part of something bigger than themselves and to build something and to be a part of greatness. It's in all of us. It's why we follow sports the way we do. It's why we have teams despite the fact that we don't play. “That's my team.” “Really? When did they draft you? Oh, never. Ha ha ha.” So, this is men; this is what we are. And I don't think we should apologize for it. But here's the problem. When men have not submitted their lives to Christ, they're still cultivators but they cultivate bad things.

Want to hear something even harder than that? Even when you're trying to cultivate right things, it's unbelievably difficult. Let me show you why. Go to Genesis 3. Genesis 3 is after the rhythmic that God made fractured and threw everything kind of off. And so, God talks to the serpent and curses it. God talks to the woman and curses her. And then, God talks to the man and curses him, but there's something really interesting in how God curses the man and I want you to see it. Verse 17, *“And to Adam he said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it', cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.’”* Now, I want to point this out to you. This is going to be heavy stuff. I'm just warning you out of the gate. God, when He curses man because of sin, not only curses man, but He curses what he was supposed to cultivate. So, even when a man tries to cultivate what's right, it wars against him. So when a man tries to build and cultivate and work with even good, positive things, those things that he's trying to cultivate will, at times, instead of producing fruit, produce thorns and thistles. I'll give you an example. If you've really tried to speak life into your children, if you've really tried to talk to them about the glories of Christ, even if you've really just tried to lead them in a way that's good and positive, how difficult is that? I mean, how often are they like, “Mmm naw, I'm alright?” If you've noticed, most of us have these things in our minds where we're like, “Oh, I'm going to do this and all the bills are going to get paid. And I'm going to do that. And that's going to get done. And this is how I'm going to handle this. And this is going to get done...” but it never happens. Like every time you're there, the transmission fails or something. And then what happens in young men is, young men are like, “I'm going to get a woman that ain't that much work and a new house and a new car. And then I'll be set.” That's a cool little fantasy world you've developed there in your head. I'll tell you that there's nothing this side of eternity that's not a fixer-upper, nothing. No woman, no car, no house, there's nothing this side of death that doesn't require effort and work. And ladies, I'm just talking to the men tonight. Have you ever tried to love a woman like Christ loves the church, in that He gave His life for her? Have you tried that? A) it's not easy to begin with, and B) sometimes a woman doesn't want to be loved that way. It wars against. This is difficult stuff. God's going, “I want you to nurture, encourage, love, build...it's going to be hard.”

Alright, so why? Why would God wire it this way? You would think that God would say, “If you both love Me, I'm going to make marriage a snap for you, so everyone will know how good I am.” Doesn't that sound like a better plan? I've brought it to Him twice. I've gone, “Now listen, I've got an idea...” What if you talked to your kids about the glory of Christ and they were just like, “Yes, I don't even question you, father.” I mean, how amazing would that be? Why does God say, “I want you to cultivate it, I want you to love your wives like Christ loved the church, I want you to pour into your children, love them, nurture them, discipline them, I want you to work hard at work, I want you to be cultivators of everything you touch, and it's going to be a war every day of your life.” “Why though? You're God. How about I love You and You make things easy for me?” And listen, if you like that message, it gets preached everywhere, so just find another church. They'll tell you that it can be that

way. The only problem with historically is the Bible, but whatever, we don't have time right now. Why would God wire it this way? Let me tell you why I think He wired it this way. Nothing, no book, no Bible study, no song or conference has taught me the weight of God's love and the glory of the gospel like trying to be a man. Here's what I mean. Trying to love my wife like Christ loves the church and finding that very, very difficult to do and finding it at times not yielding the fruit that I wanted...Here's a better one. My four year old, Audrey, is just my joy. I love having a son, but that daughter owns you. It's a weird deal. For whatever reason, over and over again, Audrey thinks I am an enemy to her joy, when in the end, I want her joy and happiness more than she could ever comprehend, and I see better than she does. And when I say, "Hey, no candy right now," I'm not trying to steal joy from her, I'm trying to increase joy for her. And when I say, "Don't climb on the back of the couch when there's a window right there. You could fall through it," I'm not trying to rob her of the exhilaration of walking on the back of the couch, I'm trying to make sure she doesn't cut herself on ribbons. And so what ends up happening in that moment, when I'm trying to increase joy and increase life and increase happiness and my daughter goes, "I don't want any of that. I'll get it my own way. I'll do it my own way. I want what I want," and she wars against the joy that I so desperately want for her, in one instance, I start to discipline and in another, God's going, "This is playing out like another story I know, the one where I try to lead you like this and you're like, 'No, I want my stuff;' and you are a four year old girl. This is very similar to Me, Chandler. So, while Audrey's in the corner thinking about it, why don't you go to the other corner and think about it over there?" All of a sudden, by trying to nurture and love and point Audrey to Christ and finding it war against me, I start to understand how big and beautiful the gospel is, that despite the fact that I war against the hand of God, He continues to love, pursue and extend grace. Or in those moments that I lavish upon Lauren affection and romance and all of those things and she doesn't respond the way I want her to respond, all of a sudden I start to understand the gospel, I understand the depth of the love of Christ for me, the depth of His grace, the depth of His forgiveness. Do you know why it's hard? Because when it's hard, the we understand the gospel, when it's hard, we walk in humility and when it's hard, we'll be dependent on God. If it was easy, none of those things would be there; they just wouldn't be there. So listen, even the fact that it's difficult is God's love, mercy and grace. And I know some of you don't think it's difficult because you're single, but have you ever wondered why it's so difficult to pray with your wife but it's not so difficult to pray with somebody else? Do you think maybe there's some principalities at war against us?

So what are we going to do? Because God's like, "I want you to cultivate, I want you to nurture, I want you to love, I want you to sacrifice, I want you to do these things, but it's going to be hard." Okay, so what do we do? 1 Corinthians 16, let's learn how to walk in this, this being cultivators but finding everything we're supposed to cultivate warring against us, whether that be business, whether that be family, whether that be wife, whether that be child, whether that be friendships, whether that be relationships. We've been called to cultivate, it's going to war against us, there are going to be times where it produces thorns and thistles vs. fruit. So how do we walk in this deal that God's created? Look at this. Verse 13, "*Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men,...*" That's always an ego shot. Any time you hear, "Why don't you act like a man?," it's just a little shot to the man. "*Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.*" Okay, so how do we walk in this system where we're called by God to be cultivators, but what we've been called to cultivate will at times war against us? It's in this text. Be watchful. Here's what I think this text means. Everyone of us, as men, knows where we're weak. If you say you don't tonight, I would call you a liar. We know if we've got lust issues, we know if we've got fear issues, we know if we've got pride issues, we know if we've got anger issues. We know where we're weak. We know what keeps us from being the kind of men that God's called us to be. Well the text says be watchful. If you know that's from where it's going to come, if you know that's where you're going to get attacked, if you know

that's how you're going to get overwhelmed, if you know that's where you're going to stumble and fall, then be watchful over that area of your life, build defenses over that area of your life. Be watchful. If when you get tired, everything unravels for you, be watchful. Maybe you shouldn't watch the "Daily Show;" maybe you should go to bed. Maybe the second SportsCenter, right after you finished watching the first, isn't a necessity; maybe sleep is. Maybe instead of living off of red meat and coffee; maybe, God forbid, you eat a vegetable, drink some water. I didn't go crazy. I didn't say do pilates; I'm just saying try a green bean once in a while if you getting tired is the thing that starts unraveling. If you watching TV makes you unravel, then be watchful. This isn't a game. Do you think this is a game? Be watchful. You know where you're weak, everybody does. Be watchful. If you know where they're going to attack from, wouldn't it make some sense to build some defenses there?

Then it says stand firm in your faith. And I don't need to spend a lot of time on this. We just spent a month on it. Listen, walk in what you believe. Because if you're giving God and the gospel and all those things lip service but you're not really walking in it, then good luck. I don't even know why you do that. That to me is church as a hobby, and I think church might be one of the lamest hobbies in the history of the world. Get a boat. Seriously, boats are great. Boats are fun, you can wake board or ski behind them or inner tubes are great if you're little. Get a boat. I don't understand. Walk in it, stand firm in our faith. What good is all the power that God has offered us if we're not ever going to tap into it?

"Act like a man," he says, and then he follows it up with, "Be strong." I'll tell you some of the pain and sorrow involved in being a pastor. This thing that we're talking about tonight, men being men, there are casualties in this game, casualties and monumental losses and setbacks. I mean, this isn't for the faint of heart. I've been married for eight years, I've been with Lauren for ten, and I'm dysfunctional and come from a very dysfunctional background. And so our first couple years of marriage were very, very difficult. And it wasn't just my junk; she had some junk too. And when you put two dysfunctional people in a house together, it goes bad. And the Lord was really, really merciful, and the last four years have been just a dream. But what if things go bad again tomorrow? I love the movies. I'm a big movie guy. In fact, I flew in real late to St. Louis on Wednesday night. I mean, the plane landed at 10:00, and we rushed to watch "The Bourne Ultimatum." And did you know they served liquor in the movie theaters in St. Louis, like beer and wine? They have a bar. Like, you could get a gin and tonic. I don't think it's a good idea, knowing what I know about men, to mix beer and "The Bourne Ultimatum." All of a sudden, you've got guys walk out going, "You want some of me?" I mean, it's just seems like a bad combination to me. I love movies, but let me tell you just one of the biggest lies, especially targeted at our females. There is not a woman on this planet that's going to complete me or heal me. It doesn't matter how much sex I have, it doesn't matter how sweet she is, it doesn't matter if she cleans the house and cooks dinner and does all that. None of those things matter. There's not a woman on this planet that will heal the deep parts of me. And there's not a man alive that will fulfill you. It's just a myth. And we see it all the time. We see girls who are real lonely being single, so they get married and they become uber-lonely, because they think some dude is going to fulfill them but in the end, it can just get even worse. But here's what I think is the call on my life as a believer in Christ, who's submitted to Christ and got married. Now my role in submission to Christ is to cultivate, encourage, love and build up my wife regardless of her response. Whew! That ain't for the faint of heart. What if I'm trying to love, encourage and build up and she just decides that she doesn't want any bit of me anymore? What if she just goes, "No thank you?" What if she doesn't respond? What if she doesn't want to lead me but she just doesn't respond the way I want her to respond? I can tell you what I want to do, but my call is to keep loving, keep walking, keep encouraging every day of my life, no matter how long until the Holy Spirit breaks into her heart. That's why this text says be strong. Be strong! I mean, you just want to talk about self-sacrifice and all the

valiant themes that men love so much, this is a big one. “Be strong in submission to Christ, love your wife, love your children, be that cultivator that I've called you to be. Be strong, because it might be in the next life that you finally get all the peace you're looking for.” Man, that doesn't preach well, but it's the truth.

And then he ends it like this. Verse 14, “*Let all that you do be done in love.*” This thing that we're talking about, being the cultivators that God's asked us to be...impossible. It's impossible, man. It's absolutely impossible. In fact, it's comical. I mean, if you start talking to other people like this, they're like, “Man, my wife, she just doesn't respond to me well. I mean, I'm just trying and she doesn't let me...” You're like, “Keep loving her.” “Why should I keep loving her? She doesn't do anything I want...” “Yeah, yeah, okay. Just keep loving her more. Love her more.” “What?” “Buy her flowers.” “I can't stand her.” “Buy her lots of flowers.” “I mean, she's this and she's that.” “You want to really get her? Go ahead and clean the whole house. Clean all of it, bathrooms too. Clean it. Serve her, that's what you do.” “Huh?” “Yeah. Serve her, romance her, love her, woo her.” “Are you serious?” “Absolutely serious.” I mean, this is a little bit different message, isn't it? “She spit in my face.” “Get her a bottle of water and get a towel.” Or we could move off of marriage and talk about children. Equally as difficult. No, we're going to need the transforming power of the Holy Spirit or this ain't happening, man.

I love the promises of God. Like, I'm 33 and I'm expecting to live to at least 36. So I look at the span of my life, and let's say I live to 70. Can you really do that for that long? Can you really live like that for that long? And I look at it like that, and I'm like, “That's impossible.” But the Scriptures just go, “I'll give you everything you need to love and lead Lauren, to love and lead Audrey and Reid, to love and lead the Village Church and to pursue Me with your whole heart. I'll give you everything you need for that, today. You just make it to bed tonight. I'll give you all the strength you need. And when you wake up in the morning, I'll give you all the strength you need for that day.” That's a phenomenal promise from God.

Alright, so what are my hopes in all of this? Well, I think that my hopes are that there will be a lot of men here. Not males, that's easy. You just got born that way. I hope that there would be a lot of men here. And listen, all of us are failing at some level at this. That's why the cross is such a beautiful thing. I don't think there's anybody in here that's like, “Follow me, boys.” I don't think there are. If there are, I sure wouldn't follow them. Proud and arrogant, I wouldn't follow that guy. I'd follow the guy that's like, “I'm trying. Here's how I'm trying.” That's the guy I want to get around. And you know, we're all failing to some degree, so here's what I'm saying. If you're not careful, and here's what I know about guys, if guys feel like they're walking in shame or they feel like they're failing, they're just like, “Oh, forget it,” and they'll just go the complete opposite way. And I'm hoping that you won't do that. I'm hoping that where you need to ask for forgiveness as men, you'll do it. Because maybe you do need to ask forgiveness from your wife. Because here's what I know. Some of us, we're cultivating well at certain points. Like we get to work, and we're cultivating well at work and we're building an empire, but “My wife and kids, that's here. Here's some money; cultivate yourself. Here's some cash; get you a skirt. Hey, go to the spa.” Or you've got the guy that's cultivating his wife and loves to play with the kids, loves to hang out but is a bum at work, just an absolute bum at work. Or you've got the guy whose house is all falling apart, sitting on the couch at 1:30 on a Saturday afternoon in his underwear still. His wife's all stressed out, everything's all busted up, he's watching a rerun of a college football game from last year. I mean, are you serious? Listen, I think that the more you work and the more you cultivate, the more you'll understand the gospel. And so, although for some of you young guys, it seemed like a really good deal for 17 of you to live in one apartment and split the rent, I think it might be counterproductive. I think it might be costing you an understanding of the gospel. So

this is my hope. My hope is that we would grow up and be men. I'm not talking about camping or hunting or all those things. I'm talking about being men, being cultivators, growers, nurturers, builders.

And then, here's my hope for our ladies. Women, if you're married, my hope is that you would be a quiet spiritual force in your home. And what I mean by that is, instead of jawing at your husband's failures on the way home tonight, instead that you would quietly pray and hope. And for our single girls, my hope is that God would put in your heart a deep and consistent desire for a man, not a male. So this is my hope. I say this all the time, but it's going to be climbing Everest. But men, you've got a few hours left in the day, an Christ has given us all we need to be what He's asked us to be today. Man, I hope for us. I hope for us. Let's pray. "Father, I have such hope in my heart for our young men in here. I have such hope that we might be watchful and that we might be strong and that we might love and encourage and speak well of our wives, and that we might love and encourage and rebuke and be part of a discipline of our children, and that we might be hard workers at home and at work, and that we would be men who love our Sabbath. We love that day off, but in the other six days, we war. And it's going to take You working powerfully in us, because our broken self is going to make us want to think about us and what we've earned and what we're owed. We've got a thousand other people whispering in our ears things that are contrary to the gospel call in our lives. I praise You that You've given us enough grace and enough strength to be the type of men You've called us to be today. And so, may we tap into that strength to ask for forgiveness where we need to ask for forgiveness. And may we, in the morning, ask for the strength to get through tomorrow. And I thank You that there's really deep joy and really deep life and a lot of vitality and fulfillment in being a man. And as difficult as it is, as exhausting as it can be at times, O the glory that is created in homes and in children and in workplaces when we submit to You. So make us stronger than we are, and make us braver than we are. It's for Your beautiful name. Amen."