

TRUE MAN: JESUS AS MODEL FOR CHRISTIAN MASCULINITY

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ABSTRACT

What does a real man look like? What does a real man do? These are questions that many modern men are struggling to answer. The world is ready to provide an endless array of proposed answers, but how the Bible talks about manhood is another matter entirely. This thesis seeks to explore the concept of Christian masculinity and discover what lessons can be learned from Christ's own earthly life. This thesis starts by showing a small sampling of the issues in society that are calling traditional masculinity into question. Following that there is a discussion of the various ways popular culture defines what it means to be a real man. Finally, there is a look at how psychology and Scripture demonstrate aspects and characteristics of truly healthy masculinity.

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INTRODUCTION

Why talk about masculinity? Masculinity has been a topic at the forefront of discussion in popular culture for the last several years. A large portion of this conversation has been critical of masculinity as a whole, and especially of the classic images and archetypes associated with masculinity, men, and common masculine ideals. Many of the criticisms aimed in this direction have been targeted at so-called toxic masculinity, but some attacks have been more general, even addressed to men as a whole.¹ Cultural perceptions of what makes someone a “real man” have come into question. There is no longer a single solid image of what a boy ought to aspire to become or what a man should seek to be. Now, with no clear model in sight, men are unsure of where to turn. Discussing masculinity in modern America is not simply worthwhile, but necessary. It is a looming issue directly facing 50% of the population and affecting 100% of it.

Masculinity deserves to be examined, but why do I want to be the one to examine it? It would be reasonable to assume that someone who wants to spend significant time reading and writing about the quest for manhood might be someone who has felt discomfort in their own masculinity. This has not been the case for me. As far as I can recall, I have always been blessed to feel quite comfortable in my own masculinity, despite not being the most stereotypically manly individual. My interest in this topic was not born out of a personal need to find these answers. When I try to be as objective as possible about my own experience, I cannot say that the quest for manhood has ever been a major source of stress or discomfort for me. On the other hand, I

¹ The term toxic masculinity does not have a standardized definition. It is most commonly used to refer to the destructive traits that are frequently associated with stereotypical masculinity. What exactly falls within the scope of toxic masculinity may differ, but it does not mean that all things masculine are themselves toxic.

certainly would not hold myself up as an example of masculinity. I do not propose to have all the answers, as if I were already the prime example of manhood.

Actually, what has drawn my attention to this issue more than anything else is the realization that comfort with masculinity is not always a given for men. I have noticed in the men around me that how “stereotypical masculinity” they are has very little to do with their actual comfort level with their own manhood. To put it more clearly, I have found men who might not seem all that manly and yet are perfectly comfortable with themselves. I have also found men who appear to be the masculine ideal and yet struggle to feel comfortable with themselves and are unsure of how to be a “real man.” I am an outside observer to this struggle plaguing so many of my peers and hope that this paper will give me the opportunity to examine the fight to be masculine.

All of this leads me to ask questions about why something that seems so natural to some men is not coming naturally to others. What is making men feel like they no longer know how to be men? Where are they turning for guidance? Is the guidance they receive actually healthy and beneficial? Should they be looking somewhere else? Psychologists have spent innumerable hours on this and similar topics, so how do they respond to these issues? Most important of all, what does the Bible have to say about finding a role model of masculinity? Who can Christian men use as an example of sanctified masculinity and godly manhood? There is no better example of perfect manhood than the only perfect man to ever live. During his life as true man, Jesus fulfilled many roles and vocations, including the vocation of manhood. What can a Christian man learn by observing the example Jesus set? How does this model compare to what modern psychology would consider healthy or optimal?

This paper will seek to demonstrate that Jesus is the best model for Christian masculinity. It will do so by examining the types of questions posed above. In doing so, I hope to be able to identify the shortcomings of popular culture's common masculine models. This will allow the areas that are lacking in these popular models to be better addressed by a fuller understanding of healthy masculinity. Finally, I hope to show how Christ can be used as this model in a way that is vastly superior to alternatives like historical figures, television characters, or a generic stereotype of manliness.

PART I: STEREOTYPICAL MASCULINITY

Before diving in for a deep look at various views of masculinity to examine where they fall short, it may be beneficial to establish what is healthy and unhealthy in this area. There are certain behaviors and qualities that are important parts of proper and mature masculinity. There are also behaviors and qualities that may indicate a less optimal or developed, stunted or immature masculinity. It is important to understand the difference. It is also important to understand that some behaviors or characteristics that are stereotypically associated with manhood have no necessary relationship to masculinity. This is not to say that these things are unhealthy or that they are actually secretly feminine, but it is important to note that these stereotypical ideas about manhood are usually irrelevant to the actual conversation of masculinity. However, that is not to say that these stereotypes are not worth discussing.

There is no shortage of stereotypes about what it means to be a real man. There are clear pictures that come to mind when imagining someone manly. These pictures usually focus on outward appearances that point toward a rugged and tough character. Perhaps one of the most frequently used manly stereotypes is a lumberjack or mountain man of some kind. However, this

picture is one that very few men in the real world actually live up to. There simply are not that many men who are lumberjacks or work outdoors. It would also be difficult to make the leap that everyone who does work as a lumberjack experiences no problems with their relationship to their own masculinity.

Clearly there is more to being a man than just how a person looks or what they do for a living. There are men who hold all sorts of different jobs that are completely secure in their masculinity and men with all sorts of jobs that are questioning what it means to be a man. The friction here comes from how the word manly is so often used. Very frequently the word manly is used to describe things that relate to the outdoors or rough conditions. This use of the word has helped cement the association of the idea of manliness, as in being a man, with the idea of “manliness,” as in being a frontier woodsman.

A problem begins when the distinction between these two different uses of the word manliness starts to dissolve. Now if manliness is always associated with a particular lifestyle and aesthetic, it can be hard to separate the two meanings of that word. This creates confusion, but this confusion is not limited to the semantics of that one word. There is a general misuse of words like manhood and masculine to refer to a given set of tastes or preferences. This often means that speakers will say that certain styles or interests are masculine as a way to say they are good. It is not that these choices have a strong tie to the male gender or a separation from the female gender. These masculine terms, such as “manly” or “manhood,” become value judgments for products.

Commercial goods are not the only thing that have developed associations with these terms of masculinity. Personal characteristics and behaviors are often talked about in a similar manner. This is also tied to that same close connection between these masculine terms and that

rugged woodsman ideal. What makes this image of a man manly are characteristics like that he is physically strong, he does not show weakness, he keeps a tight leash on his emotions, he is skilled at everything he attempts. When these sorts of portrayals of manhood become common pictures for what men ought to be, there can be a growing resistance to images of manhood that are contrary to this stereotypical picture.

The underlying problem with masculine stereotypes is not that the pictures they create are of people who are not manly. The problem is that there is more to manhood than only these images can represent. When these stereotypes become the new definition of what makes a “real man,” other men are left out of the picture. They are not left out because their behaviors or characteristics fall outside the realm of what is masculine, but because they fail to be the particular type of masculine held up in these stereotypical images.

Results of Stereotypes

This model of manhood leads to a “boy’s club” mentality where some men are included and others are excluded. These exclusions can create a judgmental atmosphere if men evaluate each other based on these standards, or even if they simply worry that others are evaluating them on those standards. In fact, many of these stereotypes and judgmental attitudes play on what has been called the hierarchy of masculinities.² This hierarchy is a structure to frame how society thinks about and treats models of manhood. In general, the classic and stereotypical ideal of white heterosexual traditional masculinity is at the top of this hierarchy. This is largely because white heterosexual traditionally masculine men have been the ones at the top of the social pyramid for a very long time. Their presence there has solidified certain ideals associated with

² Connell, R. W. *Masculinities*. (Berkeley: University of California, 2005) 43.

this type of man as being preferable or superior to other expressions of masculinity, whether that be less traditionally masculine traits or traits that are less common within Caucasian culture as opposed to another culture. Because the cultural concepts surrounding masculinity differ from culture to culture, a stereotypically masculine man in one culture may not fit the model for another culture. How men view one another has a massive effect on how they treat one another. Culture and stereotypes can alter both of these and lead to men making comparisons about themselves and others. This leads to judgments which can move men either toward arrogance and pride or embarrassment and shame.³

These are some of the conflicts and tensions at play between men as they interact with one another, but there is another relationship that men have that can be deeply impacted by stereotypes about manhood. A man's relationship with himself is one the most crucial factors in his ability to have a healthy psychology and healthy masculinity. For a man to have this healthy relationship with himself, he needs the ability to be honest with himself about his emotions.⁴

This may be where the stereotypical idea of masculinity falls furthest from what is actually healthy. In many depictions of admirable and manly men, one of their defining characteristics is that they show no emotion. This is not as simple as refusing to show fear in the face of opposition or maintaining emotional strength through difficult circumstances. Very often popular portrayals of manly men are of men that keep all emotion under the surface. Sadness, nervousness, or pain must all be kept hidden. Even displays of joy and excitement should be managed and kept to a minimum if a man wants to fit the mold of the manliest men. The

³ Moore, Robert. *Facing the Dragon: Confronting Personal and Spiritual Grandiosity*. (Wilmette: Chiron Publications, 2003), 133.

⁴Hemmer, Jeffrey. *Man Up: The Quest for Masculinity*, (St. Louis: Concordia, 2017), 105.

stereotype of a “real man” is usually a gruff and quiet type of man. If this man would show any emotion at all, it would only be in the vein of disapproval or anger, but most likely he would keep everything internalized. This need to rid oneself of emotions turns those emotions into an enemy. Emotions are not an opponent that need to be conquered or eliminated. Emotions are a part of a man. They need to be managed so that they do not become the dominating force in a man’s life, but they cannot be thrown away completely. Even when men do try to eliminate emotion from their lives, it does not work. Their emotions will still be there and may come out in different ways that the man does not expect or intend. This is not really control over emotions but more like a different way to be controlled by them. A man must be able to relate to himself by experiencing and understanding his own feelings so that he can deal with his emotions.⁵

PART II: MASCULINITY IN QUESTION

The world that men face today is not a world that has a clear picture of what a man is or of what a man should be. Long accepted cultural norms are shifting in virtually every area of modern society. One of the new norms observable in recent years is that modern generations are not following the same patterns that have been followed by many generations before them, such as moving out of their parents’ home. As of 2015, 34.1% of adults between the ages 18 and 34 lived under their parents’ roof.⁶ That is up 8.1% from only ten years earlier. The U.S. Census Bureau uses the term “emerging adulthood” to refer to the recent shift of a much later start to many adult activities. There are many possible reasons for this cultural change, but there are also many

⁵Moore, *Facing the Dragon*, 97.

⁶ Jonathan Vespa, “Jobs, Marriage and Kids Come Later in Life,” United States Census Bureau. August 9, 2017. <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2017/08/young-adults.html>

results from the shift. One such change is that men are finding it harder to know when their life as a child comes to an end and their life as an adult begins.

Adulthood is not the only part of a man's life that is being altered or challenged by the recent shifts in culture. The dynamics between the genders have been shifting as well. It seems that the ways men and women interact with one another and treat each other are being questioned over and over again. This has stirred up a great deal of conversation about how the genders ought to relate to each other.

All of this is to say that the modern world is uncertain about what a man really is. It does not know if a man should live with his parents, or how he interacts with a woman. It is no wonder that within a culture that is questioning what manhood means, many individual men are asking the same questions of themselves.

When a Boy Becomes a Man

The desire to discover what it means to be a man is nothing new. Men of all cultures and time periods have sought to answer this question. They have made use of a wide variety of methods to try to accomplish this goal. Of course, no two cultures or time periods are identical, but a common thread in many societies is the presence of some form of initiation rite for young men. Many cultures and groups have formal versions of initiation that can range in level of intensity or difficulty for the participant. Some examples of these types of ritual are a walkabout in Australian Aboriginal society, a Bar Mitzvah in Jewish culture, or even confirmation for many Christian churches. The significance of each of these rites might be the beginning of the transition from childhood to adulthood, the completion of it, or even some intermediate step

along the way. Whatever the precise cultural meaning might be, the psychological importance of these initiations is that a line has been drawn in the mind of the boy or man experiencing them.⁷

Not every society has clearly defined rites of passage like these. Some cultures have a looser concept of when a boy becomes a man. Even in these cultures there are still usually markers that signal the transformation from childhood to adulthood. This could be college graduation, the start of a career, or military service. There is no one correct way to identify that boyhood has come to an end, but when a culture lacks a clear and universal line of delineation between the two, this transition is blurred. It becomes difficult or even impossible for some men to be certain of their own maturity.⁸

When a male is unable to complete the transition into adult manhood, he becomes stuck in boyhood. The man that is not able to see himself as an adult may find it difficult to behave like an adult. His uncertainty about his own maturity becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. This stunted growth can take many forms. There are men who completely fail to transition into mature adult life altogether. Their masculinity does not mature because none of the psyche matures. These types of men may be the most obvious of examples, but they are not the only ones. Many men who live typical adult lives have an aspect or portion of their masculinity that has not fully developed. It is not that these men lack that part of the masculine experience, but that some segment of their psychology has not yet fully developed. They may still be stuck in boyhood, even if only in some small way. This may take the form of the hot tempered man who acts

⁷ Gillette and Moore, *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover: Rediscovering the Archetypes of the Mature Masculine* (New York: Harper Collins, 1990), 6.

⁸ Gillette and Moore, *King, Warrior*, 5.

without thinking and behaves more like a school bully than grown adult.⁹ It can also appear as the cowardly man who is unable to stand up for himself or get help when he needs it.¹⁰

It appears that a part of the masculine identity crisis facing the modern world is not just that men no longer know how to be men, but also that men are not sure if they even are men yet. When men are uncertain of their progress toward manhood, they may become stunted at an immature level of development and not advance any further. Instead of growing into men, they stay boys. Men remain underdeveloped and immature, which results in an absence of personality traits and characteristics that would be present in a mature and well-developed man. Exactly which characteristics are found in healthy or optimal masculinity is another topic altogether and will be addressed later. For the time being, suffice it to say that there is necessary growth that these men are avoiding, consciously or subconsciously, and this is not healthy for them.

Masculinity in a Feminist World

Feminism is a term that immediately calls an idea into the minds of most people, but just like masculinity this picture is not always a consistent one. Part of the reason for this is the constantly changing nature of feminism. When the term was first used it described activist groups in the 19th and 20th centuries focused on acquiring basic legal rights for women, such as the right to vote and own property. However, over time as women gained more fundamental rights, the second wave of feminism began in the 1960s and came to seek more and more equality in other societal and legal areas.¹¹

⁹ Gillette and Moore, *King, Warrior*, 37.

¹⁰ Gillette and Moore, *King, Warrior*, 41.

¹¹ Cobble, Dorothy Sue, Linda Gordon and Astrid Henry. *Feminism Unfinished: A Short, Surprising History of American Women's Movements*. (New York: Liveright, 2015), 58.

These first two waves of feminism fought obvious inequalities. These activists worked to create legal protection for women and eliminate the most blatant instances of sexism. However, this definition of feminism is not what comes to mind for most people when they hear the news talk about feminism in the 21st century. Feminism, like any other ideology or political movement, has never truly been a monolith. That fact is more apparent now than ever. There do tend to be common topics of concern among most feminists like sexual violence, equal pay, and equal opportunity, but the specific views held by each feminist community can vary greatly. Many groups of feminists are vying for different or even contradictory goals. They are not afraid to even fight against each other.¹²

By and large, most feminists continue to struggle toward equality of opportunity for males and females. In general most feminists do not hate men or wish to see all men removed from positions of power and authority. However, this might not be obvious to someone who has formed their opinion of feminism based solely on what they see on the news or social media. Very often the stories that rise to the top of these media platforms are the ones that will stir the pot. Because of this need to draw attention, the calm and moderate middle ground discussions about women's issues are not given much coverage. Instead of interviewing feminist groups that use more measured approaches, news outlets prefer to cover radical feminists with extreme views.

One of these more extreme feminists that has been drawing media attention is Mona Eltahawy. In 2019 Eltahawy released her book titled The Seven Necessary Sins for Women and Girls in which she details the measures she finds justifiable to use in the ongoing struggle of

¹² Michel Martin, "Conflicting Ideas on Modern Feminism," *All Things Considered* (Washington, D.C.), July 21, 2018 <https://www.npr.org/2018/07/01/625187608/conflicting-ideas-on-modern-feminism>

women against men. One of these sins, and the focal point of an entire chapter of the book, is violence.¹³ Eltahawy recently appeared on Australia's federally sponsored national news channel and defended her position saying,

For me as a feminist the most important thing is to destroy patriarchy... How long must we wait for men and boys to stop murdering us, to stop beating us, and to stop raping us? How many rapists must we kill? Not the state, because I disagree with the death penalty... I want women themselves. As a woman I'm asking, how many rapists must we kill until men stop raping us?¹⁴

Eltahawy has given similar interviews with other major outlets around the world like the New York Times and PBS. She wants the public to plainly understand that women should be killing men. Notice whom she accuses as the perpetrators of these crimes. She does not ask how long until women do not have to fear violent men, or criminals, or misogynists. She talks about men and boys without limiting the accusation to a smaller group or narrowing the scope to only accuse a select few. Eltahawy and many other radical feminists see all men in this light. In their eyes all men are rapists and boys are future rapists.

Eltahawy is not a unique voice with these extreme opinions. A quick twitter search of hashtags such as #feminism will yield dozens of examples of women making similar claims. The same search will also return results stating contrary opinions that are just as extreme in the opposite direction. Usually these come in the form of attacks or counter arguments to radical feminists like Eltahawy. Responses often speculate that these feminists are simply seeking attention or are bitter for one reason or another.

¹³ Eltahawy, Mona. *The Seven Necessary Sins for Women and Girls*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2019), 84

¹⁴ Mona Eltahawy, "Q & A," filmed November 4, 2019 on ABC Australia, Sydney, AU, video 10:35, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Amj3QG2s1BI>

There are many people that take a moderate stance on women's issues, including feminist activists. There are also feminist activists who take fairly extreme stances but do so in a polite and well-reasoned manner. However, the competition for views and clicks leads to the measured and unexcited responses being buried and the most provocative ones staying in the spotlight. For this reason, more middle ground discussions of women's rights are only found by actively searching for them and intentionally avoiding the more sensationalized stories. These more approachable feminist views tend to be lost among the more extreme ones.

A young man who has been told repeatedly how evil men are might easily follow an internet rabbit hole of feminists on news programs and TED talks¹⁵ showing what they propose to be incontrovertible proof that men are everything that is wrong with the world. He could have that negative view of men reinforced repeatedly and may start to believe it himself. Another young man who has heard enough jokes made at the expense of "crazy feminists" could follow a very similar rabbit hole to hundreds of videos and articles claiming that all feminists are bitter man haters who have nothing legitimate to say and are only lashing out because they cannot find a man who will love them. He could have that view of feminism reinforced and end up dismissive of all feminists regardless of their individual stances. Ironically, this characterization that all feminists see men as evil misogynists is actually a misogynistic belief.

Either end of this spectrum leads to a deeply warped view of the relationship between men and women. Radical feminists and their detractors both tend to claim the other is the source of all their problems. This blame placement breeds hatred and resentment. Men can end up hating women for being women or hating themselves for being men. Either of these attitudes will

¹⁵ Mona Eltahawy, "I Am Here to Confuse You," filmed 2010 at TEDWomen, Washington D.C., video, 5:40, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Htf7Ku41vDA>

inevitably create emotional distress, cut the man off from a large portion of society, and entrench him further into an immature worldview which will stunt his growth even more. If a man does not already have a strong view of what manhood is, these aggressive and charged conversations about gender may negatively color his opinions about his own gender, the opposite gender, or both.

Sexual Assault and Masculinity

As mentioned in the previous section, sexual assault and misconduct are frequent subjects of conversation and complaint from feminists of all stripes. Not every suggestion that feminists make on how to deal with women's issues is prudent or wise, but many of them are reacting to a very real problem. Feminist activists are not the only ones responding to the very real needs of those who face sexual assault.

There is a seemingly endless number of complaints about classic masculinity and the way that men relate to women. These complaints vary widely in the behaviors they address and in their severity, intensity, and validity. Some groups and movements have sought to expose dark and troubling issues. The #metoo social media campaign has recently become the marquee example of women speaking up about sexual assaults they have experienced in their pasts. The campaign helped to shine a light on a sexual assault pandemic that has often been overlooked or swept under the rug. According to the CDC, more than 1 in 3 women experience sexual violence of some kind.¹⁶ This only includes instances with physical contact, but many more women deal with sexual intimidation, aggressive speech, or other forms of harassment that may not get

¹⁶ "Preventing Sexual Violence," Center for Disease Control, last modified January 17, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/fastfact.html/>

physical. This is one example of a serious problem that has recently moved into the spotlight. It goes without saying that it is a good thing that women are speaking up about such a devastating problem. It is important that they are calling attention to an issue that does not get talked about because it is uncomfortable. It is a sign of progress that they are able to rally together for support, and do what they can to protect themselves and others.

Social media has given everyone a microphone. Many activists are using that power responsibly. Now more people feel empowered to share their stories about legitimate sexual assaults. However, not everyone universally agrees about what does or does not qualify as sexual assault. Abusing God's gift of sex is nothing new. Society has considered consensual casual sex acceptable at many points throughout history, and modern America is no exception. When God's gifts are misused there are often grave consequences associated, but in recent years men have started to fear allegations of sexual misconduct. Because of movements like #metoo and the empowerment of women to speak up against sexual harassment, some potential abusers may have thought twice before assaulting women. However, this fear of allegation is not limited to legitimate allegations, but many men are also worried about false allegations of sexual misconduct. Not everyone who uses the microphone of social media uses it responsibly.

In 2017 actor Aziz Ansari was accused of sexual misconduct by a woman after a date. In an interview with the website *Babe*, she retold the events of the night that ended with a sexual encounter which she did not want or enjoy.¹⁷

Unlike other instances of men in power being accused of misconduct in which the public sided with the accuser, the opinions surrounding the Ansari case were divided. According to the

¹⁷ Katie Way, "I Went on a Date with Aziz Ansari. It Turned into the Worst Night of My Life," *Babe*, Jan. 13, 2018. <https://babe.net/2018/01/13/aziz-ansari-28355>

unnamed woman's own account of the events, her refusal was not one she made with words but with nonverbal cues intended to show subtly that she was not interested in sex and therefore did not consent to what happened. The response from a large portion of the public was that the woman should have clearly spoken up if she was uncomfortable. Although they were sympathetic to women, the majority opinion was that Ansari had not done anything worthy of public humiliation or a sexual misconduct allegation. This may seem like a reasonable approach, but not every opinion shared was as level-headed. Some women called for the complete end of Ansari's entertainment career. They said that his behavior was inconsiderate, unforgivable, and irresponsible. Some even went as far as to say that this is just how all men are.¹⁸

Celebrities are not the only men who have had to think more about what consent means and what could happen to them if they are not careful in how they treat the opposite sex. Colleges have been addressing the rising number of sexual assaults with orientation seminars about what constitutes sexual consent.¹⁹ At first, sexual consent may not seem like a subject that has potential for gray area. However, confusion about this very issue is precisely why the seminars were introduced. These seminars did not start as seminars, but were initially a short talk during orientation about the importance of consent. These short talks frequently became long discussions with significant uncertainty from students who seemed to have endless questions. Part of the reason for these questions was due to an uncertainty about the rules on what was acceptable, and part was a genuine desire from the students to not overstep their bounds or make

¹⁸ Orincy Whyte Designs (@OrincyW), "Some of ya'll should not be going on dates at all. We all know guys are nasty, they will NEVER change. Guys are nasty, period! She put herself in the situation..." Twitter, January 14, 2018, <https://twitter.com/OrincyW/status/952752976749383680>.

¹⁹ Tovia Smith, "A Campus Dilemma: Sure, 'No' Means 'No,' But Exactly What Means 'Yes'?" *All Things Considered*, June 13, 2014. <https://www.npr.org/2014/06/13/321677110/a-campus-dilemma-sure-no-means-no-but-exactly-what-means-yes>

a partner feel uncomfortable. A major factor in the desire, necessity, and lengthiness of these seminars was a fear that many of the male students had. They were afraid that they would do something when they thought the other person consented and then later face a charge of rape or assault.

These seminars are just one possible measure that is being taken by some schools to help avoid potential allegations, warranted or not, of sexual misconduct. It is not only organizations like schools that are taking measures to avoid any hint of sexual misbehavior. Many individuals are going out of their way to make sure that they remain above reproach. This even includes men that are often seen as incredibly powerful and influential. Some go so far as to completely avoid private meetings with women to remain free of any accusations.

Vice President Mike Pence uses another method to keep himself clear of any such allegations. The Vice President is known to avoid one-on-one meetings with women and has received criticism over his refusal to spend time alone with women who are not his wife. The Pence family follows something similar to what has been called the “Billy Graham rule.” Vice President Pence and his wife avoid one-on-one situations with persons of the opposite gender and do not imbibe in alcohol at social functions unless their spouse is also present. When this private family policy became a matter of public knowledge, several news outlets responded quite negatively. The Pences came under fire for being, “At best, misguided. At worst, insulting.”²⁰

Part of the reasoning behind this family policy is a genuine effort to actually avoid temptation. The Pences value their marriage. They prioritize each other and do not want anything to jeopardize their relationship. However, the temptation to engage in a consensual affair is not

²⁰ Harris O’Malley, “Treating Men Like Idiots Is the Wrong Way to Stop Sexual Harassment,” *The Washington Post* Feb. 1, 2018. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2018/02/01/for-men-in-the-metoo-era-the-mike-pence-rule-is-the-easy-way-out/>

the only factor at play in this family policy. Another motivating factor in this policy is that it eliminates the chance for anyone to make a false claim against the vice president, or for him to use his position to take advantage of someone. By not holding private meetings with women, Vice President Pence is able to evade any legitimate or illegitimate claims of sexual misconduct because he has removed any opportunity for sexual misconduct.

This was a major source of the pushback from the media. Some said that the Pence rule was essentially saying that men are inherently predatory. If they are given enough opportunities, they will eventually and inevitably prey on women.²¹ To them, it was as if the vice president was saying he would be unable to control himself if he was ever left alone with a woman. Some critics said that this policy treated men like animals unable to control their impulses, which is to say that men who commit sexual violence are simply acting on instinct. Others said this was essentially an accusation that women should not be trusted to tell the truth, as if it were only a matter of time until a lying woman would likely create false allegations against the Vice President Pence.²²

Emma Green of the Atlantic points out what is perhaps another underlying issue in the Pence family's rule that struck a nerve with some Americans.

This is how he and his wife, together, have chosen to navigate their marriage. That some people are so quick to be angered—and others are totally unsurprised—shows how divided America has become about the fundamental claim embedded in the Pence family rule: that understandings of gender should guide the boundaries around people's everyday interactions, and protecting a marriage should take precedence over all else, even if the way of doing it seems strange to some, and imposes costs on others.²³

²¹ O'Malley, *Treating Men*.

²² Michelle Ruiz, "Actually, Creeps, Shutting Out Women Colleagues Isn't the Answer to Sexual Abuse," *Vogue*, Oct. 11, 2017. <https://www.vogue.com/article/harvey-weinstein-mike-pence-women-in-the-workplace-sexual-harassment>

²³ Emma Green, "How Mike Pence's Marriage Became Fodder for the Culture Wars," *The Atlantic* March 30, 2017. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/03/pence-wife-billy-graham-rule/521298/>

These discussions about sexual misconduct between celebrities, about consent on college campuses, and about the Vice President not wanting to be alone with women other than his wife are all part of a greater conversation. These issues are all underlined by the inherent differences between men and women and the interactions between the two genders. These are a recognition of something that not everybody wants to recognize, so they push back and dissent. In an effort to establish equality between the genders, there is often a willful ignorance of any differences between them at all. There is a desire among many modern Americans to claim that men and women are the same in all things. This is not only to say that they are equal in rights or value as individuals, but that there are no real differences of any kind between men and women.

There are two opposing worldviews that seem to exist simultaneously in modern culture. There is this idea that the differences between the genders are not minimal or should at least be treated as such. At the same time there is a culture in which men, no matter who they are or what they do, have to be extremely careful about how they interact with other people, but especially women. Men should be cautious about how they treat women because of the now very real differences between the genders. Men have to watch how they behave, how their behavior could be understood, and even how they are putting themselves in risky situations that could open them up to suspicion. Some men go so far as to hear the seemingly endless stream of accusations against powerful men as nothing more than hurtful and vindictive lies. They take all of this to mean that women are out to get men and will make up stories to hurt successful actors, businessmen, or politicians. In fact, it is not the accused men who cannot be trusted, but the accusing women.

What has been discussed so far is not close to an exhaustive list. There are many more factors contributing to the questionable state of masculinity in the modern world that are beyond

the scope of this paper. The recent attention given to the LGBTQ+ community adds even more questions about what it means to be masculine. From a secular perspective, how do persons who identify within this community know what masculinity means for them? How has the widespread presence of pornography on the internet and sexual objectification of women in mass media impacted the relationships, romantic and nonromantic, that men form with the women in their lives? All in all, there is general disagreement and confusion about gender and gender dynamics. Today men are constantly told to reevaluate what they think about themselves, their maturity, their relationship to the opposite sex, power differentials, sexuality, and sexual vulnerability. These questions seem to come from every angle and without end. It is no wonder that men are not exactly sure how to be men.

PART III: POPULAR MODELS OF MASCULINITY

Clearly men are facing all sorts of questions about what it means for them to be a man. They receive constant and conflicting messages from the society around them. It can become difficult for someone to maintain their own opinions on masculinity in the midst of so much conflict. For the men who hear the questions from society and the questions that come from within and then choose to look for answers to those questions, what kind of answers do they find? What sort of advice are they hearing? Can they trust the pictures of manly manhood they find on the internet or in popular mass media? What role models are there that these men could follow?

Proposed Masculine Models

Modern men live in a world that is filled with many difficult questions about what it means to be a man in their society. There is no universal way for each of these men to come to a conclusion

for these questions. Most often these answers are not reached by one singular method. Instead men take influences from all around them. At times these influences enter their lives because of intentional decisions. They may have selected a role model to follow or chosen to listen to some advice they have received. These influences can also be unintentional. They may come in the form of a role model who has impacted them on a subconscious level or words of advice which they might not even realize have affected them.

There is not one source for these influences. The ideas and beliefs that people have about the world around them are complex and nuanced. These ideas are a composite of the many experiences and people that surround an individual. Some of these influences may come from people with the best of intentions, but might carry a negative impact and solidify unhealthy or inaccurate concepts about masculinity. Most of them are based around a highly specific set of beliefs about what is and is not masculine, so even though the model of manhood that they establish is not inherently detrimental, it is incomplete. Some of these influences will help shape a concept of masculinity that is on the right track but not without errors or gaps. These narrow borders around masculinity may not be harmful to men who naturally fit neatly inside the lines. The problem is when a man has characteristics or behaviors that are not a part of this narrower view of masculinity, or if he only partially fulfills the stereotypical image of a man. He may be left wondering if his way of being a man is incomplete, incorrect, or if he is even a man at all.

Popular Internet Answers

In today's world, when someone is looking for answers, a common first place to search is often online resources. The internet is filled with information on almost any topic and has the benefit of allowing a user to remain anonymous. If a man is actively seeking answers about

masculinity or what manhood means, the internet can be an ideal place to seek help answering questions that may seem embarrassing to ask in person. There is no shortage of blogs, forums, and websites devoted to answering these questions. Many of the most popular men's lifestyle resources center in on a very specific picture of classical masculinity and do not deviate from it. Each has a unified focus around which the whole blog or website is based. In fact, the image of manhood to which each website clings is nearly indistinguishable from any of the other websites. The result is that if a reader would create a picture of what it means to be a real man only using the most popular men's lifestyle websites, then their image of a true man would end up as a piece of early twentieth century Americana. This ideal man would be someone who is both well-read and good with his hands. He would be popular with the ladies, and able to defeat any challenger in a fist fight. He would be simultaneously well-groomed and able to grow a beard overnight. He would always be stylish and dressed to impress at a cocktail party, but could walk into the woods and survive with only his bare hands for weeks on end. A real man is good at anything he attempts. The ideal man is some foggy combination of Theodore Roosevelt, James Dean, Winston Churchill, and a blue-collar father from the 1950s.

For those that do decide to turn to the internet for help determining what manliness and masculinity really means, they will find plenty of attempts to help them. These sorts of websites and blogs do seem to be genuinely trying to give assistance to anyone who needs it. Most of them seem to make an authentic effort to assist their readers on the journey of self-improvement in at least some capacity. This can come as simple tips for daily life or entire programs dedicated to making a "real man" out of the reader in a matter of days or weeks.²⁴

²⁴Brett McKay, *30 Days to a Better Man*, Art of Manliness, <https://www.artofmanliness.com/FCR/AoM-30-Days.pdf>

There is a problem with these tips and programs. It is not that the advice given by these well-meaning bloggers is hurtful, unhealthy, or even inaccurate. The problem is actually much more subtle. The picture of manhood that these websites paint is one that is incredibly shallow and superficial. At times it is an amazingly narrow idea of what is and is not masculine. Anything that fails to fit neatly in these rugged woodsman daydreams must not be true masculinity. Therefore if a man does not find himself filling out this specific vision of manly living, he must not be a real man. At other times the advice given about being truly masculine is not specific at all. It is not really focused on masculinity, but is much more general. Much of the advice on these sites is simply about mature behavior that has more to do with being an adult than it does with being a man.

One example that displays both of these problems well is the “30 Days to a Better Man” program guide from Art of Manliness.²⁵ The Art of Manliness is one of the most popular of any men’s lifestyle blogs on the internet.²⁶ In this program there are thirty tasks, one for each day of a month, that will guide the reader toward self improvement. In truth, this 30 day program does not have anything about it that is obviously and necessarily harmful. Someone who uses this program may very well improve their life. However, very little of the advice in this program has anything to do with being a man. Some of these tasks are much more general. These seem to imply that the program is not made to help participants become better men, but to help them grow into functioning adults. There are tasks like creating a budget and a debt repayment plan, scheduling a doctor’s appointment, and defining core values. Adults of any kind, male or female, immature or mature, young or old, might consider doing these things if they have not already

²⁵ McKay, *30 Days*.

²⁶ “Site Info - Art of Manliness,” Alexa, <https://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/artofmanliness.com>

done them. By no means are these tasks irrelevant to women, and yet they are set up as a sort of quintessential and exclusive part of manhood, not general adulthood. The tone of the writing often indicates that even a successful and mature man who has not done some of these tasks really should if he wants to be a real man.

In the introduction to the first task, “Define Your Core Values,” the author shows what he really thinks about most of the men in his own generation. “When I look at photos of men from my grandfather’s and even my dad’s generation, I can see a sense of purpose in the eyes of those men. Yet when I look at men today, I often don’t sense that kind of steely focus. Instead, I see dudes who are just sort of drifting along whichever way life pulls them.”²⁷

It is not a bad thing to give strong advice. It is not a bad thing to point out a problem that is visible in the world. However, the way McKay writes throughout his website seems to indicate that he has a rose-colored view of the good old days when men were men. His grandfather really knew how to be a man, unlike any of the boys that call themselves men today. This notion that McKay is working with an idealized image of the past is supported by the art style on his website, his fixation on people and ideas from this time period, and frankly the fact that many of his fitness and fashion tips are no longer current.²⁸ The popularity of the site seems to indicate that McKay is not alone in this vision of the good old days. He has been able to tap into a sense that something has been lost in recent decades. The website rarely deals with this concept directly, but when it does address what is different about then and now, it does so in order to talk about how men used to change their own oil, dress in a certain way, or carry handkerchiefs.

²⁷ McKay, *30 Days*, 9.

²⁸ Brett McKay, “101 Style Tips for Men,” Art of Manliness, <https://www.artofmanliness.com/articles/101-style-tips-men/>

Even if this aesthetic is presented as a way to return to an imagined Golden Age, that could be excused as the author's personal opinion. The true lack of depth in this self-improvement program is much more apparent when McKay addresses even more superficial topics. After defining core values on the first day, the second day is devoted entirely to shining shoes. An interesting point here is that the shoe shining is actually just shoe shining. It is not an object lesson or illustration to teach a deeper truth. Shoe shining is nothing more than shoe shining.

This contrasts with other self-help works like Jordan Peterson's recent popular book *12 Rules for Life*. In his book aimed at people of either gender, Peterson sets up a dozen rules for the reader to follow to have a more focused and defined purpose in life. At times Peterson uses snappy phrases much like McKay. The difference is that Peterson uses them to encapsulate a larger idea. For example, one of Peterson's rules is to stand up straight. Although he does briefly talk about the physical benefits of good posture and the positive impression it makes on others, this rule actually has another goal in mind. The main point Peterson is making with this rule is that in life it is important for someone to be able to accept responsibility for themselves and face whatever is in front of them.²⁹

However, McKay is not making a point along these lines. He does not use shoe shining as an example of preparedness. He does not use this task to argue that it truly matters how a man presents himself to the world, or that men should take the time to care about the details, or even to say that there is value in spending time doing something even if it might go unnoticed. The only real point made in this section is that dress shoes look better when they are shined.³⁰

²⁹ Peterson, Jordan. *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos*. (Ontario: Random House, 2018), 81.

³⁰ McKay, *30 Days*, 15.

All in all, none of the advice given in the thirty-day program would cause real harm to someone if they would follow it. It would even be reasonable to say that someone who is looking to follow a guide on the internet about how to be a better man might not be ready for a truly deep, complex, and nuanced view of masculinity. McKay does an excellent job of presenting something concrete and easily defined. He establishes clear goals for the reader to meet and lays out steps to take that are easy to follow and to understand. He has probably helped a lot of people in one way or another. The point here is not that the Art of Manliness is destroying manhood or hurting men. The biggest problem of the Art of Manliness and most of the other blogs like it is not that the content of the advice is so bad. The real problem is in the way the advice is delivered and the language used to talk about what is and is not masculine.

From a business standpoint, it is in the best interests of these websites to create a clear and established brand. Part of that means they want one image, one focus, a singular goal toward which they can strive. However, when that goal is something as nebulous and personal as masculinity, this narrow view of manhood does not allow for a full representation of this complicated topic. For the sake of the business, these blogs aim for a unified and cohesive voice. They want the articles and advice and art style to all complement each other. They want everything to feel like it fits together. They are not looking to create a model that encompasses the whole of the male experience. However, for the sake of marketing these same businesses and blogs do not want to put limits on who might be interested in their content. They want to cast a wide net to gain as many readers as possible. Therefore it is in their best interest of men's lifestyle blogs to present themselves as if they were the authority on all things masculine. This disconnect in ideas leads to certain problems. Instead of presenting themselves as one particular and concentrated view of masculinity among several possibilities, these websites claim to be for

everyone while only allowing for a limited conception of manhood. This is most notable in the exclusionary language used when defining what is not manly or in the sweeping statements about what every man should be.

McKay says that every man should be strong.³¹ This might seem like opportunity to make use of an argument from the lesser to the greater, but there are no statements about how strength is much more than a physical ability. He only has a few throw-away lines about strength of mind and spirit, but only in as far as they are associated with physical strength. This helps reveal how truly incomplete his focus is. He says nothing about physical strength having anything to do with psychological and emotional health, or spiritual well-being. He never says that a truly strong man is one who can support his family or work through difficult situations in life. He does not even make the point that training the body can be an analogy for training the mind or a test of will power and perseverance. When he talks about being strong he exclusively means lifting heavy weights. To his credit, McKay does state that not every man needs to try to become a bodybuilder, but he does say, “Whatever your other interests, no matter your build... you need to get acquainted with the iron.”³² He believes whatever a man’s current physique might be, he should try to improve it. Nothing is said about developing any other kind of strength.

There is nothing wrong with a men’s lifestyle website talking about fitness or singing the praises of weight training. The problem here is not the advice to exercise. The real problem is the simple fact that this particular exercise routine is talked about in a manner that suggests that it is the unique way to be correctly masculine. McKay concludes the article with precisely this sort of exclusionary speech. “Strength is a defining attribute of masculinity... While our current

³¹ Brett McKay, “Why Every Man Should Be Strong,” Art of Manliness, last modified December 7, 2018, <https://www.artofmanliness.com/articles/why-every-man-should-be-strong/>

³² McKay, “Be Strong.”

environment doesn't require us to be strong, developing our physical strength is still a worthwhile pursuit, for it lays a foundation for developing the Complete Man."³³ As observed earlier, when McKay says that strength is a defining attribute of masculinity he is only talking about the ability to lift heavy objects. His points about physical strength are not a subset of the many ways that men can be strong. Physical strength is set up as the only worthwhile way for a man to be strong. All other forms of strength are irrelevant. A man may have formidable emotional, spiritual, or intellectual strength, but that means very little to McKay unless he also has impressive muscles.

Article after article reveals that there is a particular outline that a real man ought to fill. Sometimes the push on these blogs for men to move toward this predetermined image of classical masculinity is as clear as it is with the views of physical strength. The logic ends up being that a real man is strong and perpetually trying to get stronger. Therefore a male who is weak is not truly manly. Even a man with an average physique who is not actively engaged in getting stronger is not really being the best man he could be. In other places these cues and values about what is and is not manly can be more subtle.

In *How to Grow a Mustache*, one of the many articles about facial hair on the site, McKay briefly concedes that not every man can grow a good looking mustache or that a mustache might not suit every face.³⁴ However, this is effectively undone at the end of the article with links to many more articles about what a beard says about the man who wears it.³⁵ Other

³³ McKay, "Be Strong."

³⁴ Brett McKay, "How to Grow a Mustache," Art of Manliness, last modified August 22, 2019, <https://www.artofmanliness.com/articles/how-to-grow-a-mustache/>

³⁵ Christopher Oldstone-Moore, "The Meaning of Beards," interview by Brett McKay, *Art of Manliness*, June 9, 2017, audio, <https://www.artofmanliness.com/articles/podcast-311-meaning-beards/>

links to the manliest mustaches throughout history show the association between growing impressive facial hair and being a truly impressive man.³⁶ The website is full of examples of articles that support one and only one specific model of masculinity.

The Art of Manliness is by no means the only blog subtly or overtly pressuring readers to think that real men follow some sort of frontier woodsman code with rules like only ever drinking their coffee black.³⁷ There is no specific reason given for why this is so important. It appears to break down to the simple fact that black coffee seems tougher than adding cream and sugar. Manly men must not need sweetener. There is often no explanation given for why these rules exist, why a man should adhere to them, or what benefit they have.

Most of these websites have pages dedicated for new readers. On these introductory pages, the authors explain the purpose of the site, their thoughts on manhood, and the goal of manliness they hope to help readers reach. These are often the clearest examples of just how limited their view of masculinity actually is. On one such page from Order of Man, author Ryan Michler says, “A true man is rugged, resilient, and strong.”³⁸

There are men who look and act exactly how these websites would want. There are many men who meet some of these standards, but nowhere close to all of them. There are many men who are practically the antithesis of what these bloggers would describe as masculine. Despite whatever their outward appearances might be, there are men in each of these groups that have healthy and unhealthy masculinities. This lack of overlap between the outward appearance and

³⁶ Brett McKay, “The 35 Manliest Mustaches of All Time,” Art of Manliness, last modified February 20, 2020, <https://www.artofmanliness.com/articles/the-manliest-mustaches-of-all-time/>

³⁷ Kyle Boureston, “How to Become a Better Man: 57 Insanely Manly Life Tips,” Art of Manliness accessed December 17, 2017, <https://www.mantelligence.com/57-life-tips-that-will-instantly-make-you-a-better-man/>

³⁸ Ryan Michler, “Start Here,” Order of Man, accessed December 13, <https://www.orderofman.com/start-here/>

internal health of a man's masculine identity helps to demonstrate that masculinity is not a dress code, an exercise routine, or a set of hobbies. A more thorough treatment of what is truly involved in a healthy masculine psyche will be examined later, but for now it is enough to say that a healthy male psychology involves how that man thinks about himself, connects to the world around him, and interacts with the people in his life. It has very little to do with his fashion sense or his exercise routine. The measure of a man is certainly not something as trivial as what coat he decides to wear.³⁹ Similar to the points about strength, these points about exercise or clothing are not used as an analogy to reflect internal ideas like confidence, self-image, or self-care. Instead certain pieces of clothing are held forward as the correct options because they seem stylish and fashionable. Usually these sites have affiliate links for the convenient purchase of the suggested high-end clothing.

In all fairness, there are a smaller number of blogs that approach the advice given in their articles with a more open approach to masculinity. These few blogs even present themselves as a helping hand to guide toward good options among many other potential choices. They make recommendations without necessarily disparaging every other possible solution. This avoids the problem of narrow mindedness so common on men's lifestyle websites. If someone comes to a blog for advice, they are looking for expert opinions on topics like fitness, food, or fashion. They want someone who knows more than they know about the subject to tell them what is good and what is bad. However, these websites talk about expertise in these areas as if they were prerequisites to even being a functional man. Masculinity is equated to a certain set of skills, tastes, and knowledge. The reader is not a real man yet until he follows these instructions. Even the other men that the reader knows, like his family and friends and coworkers, must not be men

³⁹ George Hahn, "Real Men Wear Real Winter Coats," George Hahn, last modified March 3, 2018, <https://georgehahn.com/real-men-wear-real-winter-coats/>

either since they have not acquired the special skills and knowledge that this blog can teach. Typically, the skills and knowledge that are so vital for manhood are really a list of several pieces of popular culture and a handful of handyman type expertise. Every man must fix his own leaky sinks.⁴⁰ No man is a real man until he has seen all the right movies.⁴¹ He certainly is not truly masculine if he is not very good at getting dates.⁴²

Being good with women on a romantic and sexual level is a major subject of discussion for men's blogs on the internet. All the lifestyle websites referenced so far contain articles or entire sections dedicated to the topic of women, romance, and sex. At best these are about injecting romance into a marriage or are tips for first date ideas, but often these articles end up being about having as much sex as possible with as many women as possible. These articles focus on giving men information that is not about developing an emotional relationship, but an exclusively sexual relationship. There is no shortage of media portraying men who have a lot of sex as being superior to men who do not. If these forms of media or his own ideas have brought a man to believe that having sex with lots beautiful women is a defining trait for real men, the internet is well-equipped to confirm this notion. Websites like The Modern Man have whole programs about how to get into bed with a woman as fast as possible.⁴³ Blogs like this dishonor God's gifts of marriage and sex by turning sex into a recreational pastime that everyone should

⁴⁰ Sean Tirman, "The 50 Skills Every Man Should Know," HiConsumption, last modied June 23, 2017, <https://hiconsumption.com/skills-every-man-should-know/>

⁴¹ "7 Winter-Themed Movies Every Man Should See," ManMade, last modified November 21, 2019, <https://www.manmadediy.com/3334-7-winter-themed-movies-every-man-should-see>

⁴² McKay, *30 Days*, 59.

⁴³ Dan Bacon, "How to Get Laid," The Modern Man, last accessed December 16, https://www.themodernman.com/get_laid.html

do whenever they want. However, there are plenty of places on the internet that have an even more disturbing view of sex and the relationship between men and women.

The website Reddit is one of the most popular forum hosts on the internet. It is based around thousands of community driven pages on practically any topic. There is a forum on Reddit called The Red Pill. This page has taken its name from the Matrix films in which the protagonist takes a red pill that allows him to see the world for what it truly is. On this forum, taking the red pill means realizing that women are constantly at work to manipulate men. The members of this community believe that since they have seen behind the curtain they can become the new master manipulators and get women to do as they please. At the time of writing, this forum has 419,176 members.⁴⁴ The second highest rated post on this forum is titled “HOW TO GET LAID LIKE A WARLORD: 37 Rules for Approaching Model-Tier Girls.”⁴⁵ In this post, the author makes sweeping statements about what women want, which reduces women to a monolith and denies the complexities of them as individuals. Objectification of women occurs in many other places in the post. Besides simply viewing women as trophies for conquest, even the title equates the worth of a woman to her appearance. When the post does address interaction with women, it says that they will try to manipulate men and a man’s only real hope is to be more skilled at manipulation. The post supports an adversarial relationship between men and women. It says that sex is a prize to be earned by men and which must be given to them by women when it is deserved. This advice has earned the author 4161 upvotes from approving readers.

⁴⁴ The Red Pill, Reddit, last accessed December 3, <https://www.reddit.com/r/TheRedPill/>

⁴⁵ Mike Haines, “HOW TO GET LAID LIKE A WARLORD: 37 Rules of Approaching Model-Tier Girls,” The Red Pill, last modified June 12, 2017, https://www.reddit.com/r/TheRedPill/comments/5fihmu/how_to_get_laid_like_a_warlord_37_rules_of/

The internet is an easy option for men who are actively searching for input on masculinity to turn to for advice. The internet has no trouble supplying a wealth of answers to any questions about manhood. However, it is clear that not all of these answers are created equally. Many of them perpetuate harmful ideas about how men are to relate to women, other men, or themselves. At best these popular internet answers point toward only a very specific idea of masculinity as the one right way to be a man and leave behind other less stereotypical forms of manhood. The internet is not unique for failing to create a broad view of what a man can be. Other forms of media end up doing the same thing.

Masculinity in Mass Media

There have always been stories of heroic men who are able to overcome great odds to do incredible things. They have always been tales of men who use their strength, skill, and wits to defeat some enemy or save someone in need. There is no inherent problem with telling stories about brave knights or noble adventurers. There is not even anything wrong with holding up these characters as potential role models or these classically masculine traits as lofty and admirable goals for men to achieve. As stated before, the problem is when this is done to the exclusion of other forms of manhood. Strong men can be praised, but not if it comes at the cost of insulting gentle ones. Less stereotypically masculine traits are often directly attacked in men.

This can happen anywhere, but especially in mass media when it is played for laughs. One especially popular example of this dynamic of mocking less stereotypically masculine men is the frequent comparison made by the television show *Parks and Recreation* between the hyper-masculine classically manly Ron Swanson and Tom Haverford, a character who has many interests that are stereotypically less manly or even feminine. Throughout the show this

comparison is sometimes used to show immaturities or shortcomings of the less manly character. On rare occasions there may be jokes made at the expense of Ron Swanson, but much more frequently the show lifts up Ron as superior to Tom because he is tougher and more of a man. Ron's male dominance is expressed in almost every way imaginable over Tom, even in such superficial ways as being able to handle spicier food.⁴⁶ The male comparison in this specific situation is further intensified by the fact that in this specific episode, the two of them are competing for the affection of a woman. Unsurprisingly, stereotypical masculinity comes out on top at the end of the episode when Ron's displays of machismo lead to him going home with the woman and Tom finding himself sad and alone. Storylines like this reinforce the idea that outward appearances and surface level traits are what make one man better than another. Ron is the right kind of man and Tom is the wrong kind.

Manly men are not only shown to be superior to unmanly men for the sake of humor. This same ploy can be used to sell products. These advertisements play on the idea that what they offer is for manly men and the alternative is for women, or maybe for exceptionally unmanly man. In a series of commercials for Dr. Squatch Soap, the narrator accuses the viewer of showering with the same soap his mom bought him. Therefore he still smells like "mommy's little man."⁴⁷ The implication is that only a small child would use other brands of hygiene products. The narrator goes on to say that their soap is for "men who are good with their hands, build stuff, open the pickle jar on the first try, catch foul balls with their bare hands without spilling their beer." The ad equates woodworking, athleticism, and strength with being an adult

⁴⁶ *Parks and Recreation*, season 2, episode 14, "Leslie's House," directed by Alex Hardcastle, written Daniel J.Goor, aired January 21, 2010.

⁴⁷ *Dr. Squatch – Natural Soap for Men*, Dr. Squatch Soap Company, last modified May 21, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cjEK7qQKRDY>

man who no longer must hold onto his mother's apron strings. All of this is done in an effort to sell soap scents that are more masculine such as Bay Rum, Pine Tar, and Crisp IPA. These are supposed to appeal to men more than the supposedly less manly scents of other soap brands.

There are nearly endless examples of products that present themselves as the only acceptable option for real men. Dr. Pepper created a line of low-calorie soda alongside their own Diet Dr. Pepper called Dr. Pepper Ten. While Diet Dr. Pepper had zero calories, Dr. Pepper Ten still had ten calories. This might seem like a strange idea for a company. After all, if a consumer is looking for a low-calorie version of Dr. Pepper, they would surely choose the one with ten fewer calories. The difference in the products was the target audience for the product and for the marketing campaign. Most diet soda drinkers are women. Soft drink manufacturers see this as a potential market space to offer a product for men who want a low calorie option besides diet soda.⁴⁸ The reason companies find it worthwhile to invest money in two different products that are so similar is because of a phenomenon called gender contamination.

Gender contamination is the idea that one gender does not want a product that is associated with their gender to start being associated with the other gender. Due to gender contamination, soft drink companies have a strong incentive to not alienate their female customers while they try to reach a male market with their alternative low calorie options. This can be done in a number of ways. One positive example for how a company can address this psychological phenomenon without reinforcing exclusive views of masculinity is the Coke Zero marketing. Coke Zero is aimed at men, but in very subtle ways. Even when observing Coke Zero advertisements, the target audience might not be immediately obvious. The Coke Zero line

⁴⁸ Carmen Nobel, "Gender Contamination: Why Men Prefer Products Untouched by Women," *Forbes* Nov. 3, 2013. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/hbsworkingknowledge/2013/11/13/gender-contamination-why-men-prefer-products-untouched-by-women/#418300f8f0b7>

emphasizes the similarity to the original Coca-Cola, avoids words with feminine association like 'diet,' and uses dark color schemes. Coke Zero manages to target a male audience without devaluing certain types of men.

On the other hand, although Dr. Pepper Ten is a very similar product created for a very same purpose, but with the advertising surrounding the product done in a very different way. There was no attempt made to be subtle about the association between Dr. Pepper Ten and manliness, and by extension the association of other diet soda with femininity. Dr. Pepper Ten's commercials featured a bearded woodsman doing things like fishing with his bare hands or lifting entire trees all while reciting the slogan, "Dr. Pepper Ten: the manliest low calorie soda in the history of mankind."⁴⁹

Companies have spent decades trying to associate their products with traits that they deem admirable or characteristics they believe their customers will find favorable. The problem here is not that advertisers try to create a certain image or mystique around their products. The real problem is that advertisements are often yet another source of social pressure to develop a highly specific view of manhood. Questions about masculinity come from all angles, and so do proposed answers to those questions. Men living in the modern world cannot escape the topic of what makes a real man. Even those who stay away from websites that specifically address the subject will still see ads or television shows that make assumptions about what a man should or should not do. These commercials, intentionally or not, support a narrow and specific picture of masculinity as the best or the only option of how to be a man. Whether or not men are looking for input on what manhood really is, popular culture is providing its opinion. The court of public

⁴⁹ JobyOnSaturn, "All Doctor Pepper Ten Commercials," last modified April 19, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a7Dcoer2oxA>

opinion is making clear and open rulings, but these verdicts are not based on psychology or Scripture. It seems that the decisions about what makes a man are based on nothing more than a gut instinct of what appears tough and manly.

PART IV: PSYCHOLOGY AND SCRIPTURE ON MASCULINITY

There are many problems in the modern world that men have to face. Some of these problems are new and unique to today. Some of these problems are universal issues that have been a part of society for generations. Society addresses the concerns about masculinity both directly and indirectly, intentionally and unintentionally. Popular culture creates questions for men about what it means to be masculine and then holds out answers to these questions that are incomplete, shallow, or often even damaging. Some individuals have tried to come up with their own answers to these questions, but then proclaim their personal image of manhood as the single correct model for what a man ought to be.

These are only some of the voices speaking to these questions. These may be the loudest and most pervasive voices. These may even be voices that reach the ears of most men, but there are those that say something very different. There are sources that treat manhood with the complexity and depth that it deserves. There are voices that speak to men with the acceptance and care that are not found in these other attempts to define masculinity.

Scriptural Principles of Masculinity

It is probably not surprising to hear that much of the psychological community does not believe that masculinity is always viewed in a healthy way by mainstream media. Psychologists support many ideas about masculinity. They believe that it is a delicate and intricate subject,

even though it is often treated with abrupt simplicity. The typical subject matter that the internet and television often call manly are not necessarily connected to healthy or mature masculinity.

It is also probably not surprising to hear that Scripture does not talk about masculinity with the same perspective as the majority of the world. This is made especially clear by segments of popular culture, media, and the internet already evaluated in this paper. This may be especially unsurprising because the sinful world rarely agrees with what the Bible has to say. Although Scripture does not agree with these portions of the world about masculinity, there is a surprising amount of agreement between what the Bible says and what secular psychology says on this subject. The two have similar ideas of what healthy and positive masculinity should look like. Both support a picture of men that do things that would not be considered stereotypically masculine. Both show that manhood has values that extend beyond the superficial fascinations which tend to be the focus of common portrayals of manly men. Both show men who are able to express a wide range of emotions from strong anger to tender love, men who treat women and other men with respect, men who are in touch with themselves and the world around them.

The specific subject of masculinity is not addressed extensively in Scripture. In fact, very little of the Bible talks about what it means to be a man. Much more frequently, when the Bible talks about how people should think and act it speaks about how all people should act regardless of their gender. There are some occasions when Scripture talks about what is to be expected of a man, but this is usually in the context of discussing the relationship between men and women and the different roles for each gender. Although these sections may not directly focus on what it means to be a man, they do give some insights that can help form a framework for a model of Christian masculinity.

One clear example of the dynamics between men and women in Scripture is in the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 2, before God creates Eve he shows Adam how special that relationship will be. He brings Adam to realize that he did not have a suitable helper among any of the other creatures in the world. Even if the gender dynamic is ignored for a moment, this is still a learning opportunity for Adam. He was alone and needed someone in his life. Even a sinless man living in paradise lacked something by not having another person with him. Men today are often told to keep their emotions to themselves and to face the world with quiet stoicism. A real man should be tough enough to handle things himself, but even in perfection God gave Adam a partner.

The partner God makes for Adam is not another man. God creates something new. He gives Adam a woman to be his wife and helper. He does not make her to be a trophy for Adam to show off or a reward for him to win. She is his helper to whom he is permanently joined. The closeness and intimacy of their bond is emphasized by how God chooses to use Adam's own flesh as he creates Eve. He could have simply spoken her into existence, or made her from another pile of dirt like he did with Adam, but instead he takes her out of Adam's own body. That is the way God wants husbands to view their wives, as bone of their bones and flesh of their flesh.

One of the other most overt examples of the Bible speaking directly about how men and women should interact is in Ephesians 5. Paul writes that Christians ought to submit to one another at all times and in all ways motivated by their reverence for Christ. He gives several examples for how this reciprocal submission can take place, one of which is inside a marriage. Paul tells wives that the submission they have to their husbands is very similar to the submission of the Church to Christ. Then Paul explains how husbands are to serve and sacrifice themselves

for the benefit of their wives. The service and sacrifice that Paul asks of husbands is that they sacrifice for their wives by giving themselves up for their wives just like how Christ gave himself up for the Church. A husband sacrifices the service he could direct toward himself and replace it with service for his wife. The role that Paul sets up for men is that they must be ready to sacrifice anything and serve in any way that is needed for the benefit of their wives. Their selfless service and self sacrifice is modeled after those same characteristics seen in the life and death of Christ. He establishes that wives should submit in all things, but this means that husbands are to lead in all things. Their leadership is not for their own glory or benefit, just like Christ did not serve the Church for his own sake. Rather husbands lead for the benefit of their wives, just as Christ served for the benefit of the Church.

In verse 28 when Paul says that a man who loves his wife loves himself, he is not making the same point as the common saying “happy wife, happy life.” This statement of earthy wisdom is trying to get at the idea that if a man can simply keep his wife happy, she will leave him in undisturbed peace and refrain from nagging at him. It actually has a low view of women as grumpy task masters who must be placated so the husband can enjoy some well-deserved peace and quiet. This saying removes any love from attempts to make a wife happy. Instead it becomes nothing more than the means to the end of maintaining the husband’s own happiness. This is drastically different than Paul’s intention. When Paul says that a man who loves his wife loves himself, he elaborates on the point by reminding them that they are united. Paul reminds husbands and wives of that close relationship they now experience because they have been united together in marriage. He tells husbands to love their wives as much as they love themselves and to give their wives the same kind of care and concern that they have for their own well being.

The specifics of the relationship between spouses is a very important topic on its own. It is highly relevant to masculinity, and these sections of Scripture help to develop that picture, but masculinity is more than just how a husband treats his wife. Masculinity is involved in every aspect of a man's life. Possibly the reason why so many of the men's lifestyle blogs that were mentioned like to use real historical men as concrete role models could be that these real life figures are able to provide a more whole view of what masculinity is. Instead of talking about hypothetical traits or characteristics that would be ideal for a man, this view of historical men allows readers to put these concepts into context. Therefore, to further explore Christian masculinity and what it means beyond the marriage relationship, it will be helpful to use a specific real life role model. Instead of using admirable but flawed men from recent history such as Winston Churchill or Theodore Roosevelt, or even great Christian figures like Martin Luther or the Apostle Paul, the best role model for godly masculinity will be the only man who never sinned. Jesus does all things well, which includes fulfilling his role of man.

Using Jesus as a Role Model for Christian Men

Jesus came into the world with a purpose. His goal was to save his people from their sins. He did not come into the world for the sake of demonstrating how Christians ought to live. Although this was not Jesus' chief goal in life, he does give a model that Christians may follow. Jesus perfectly obeyed God's will every day of his life, from his birth through his childhood and adult life until his death. At all times Jesus is acting without sin and with perfect love. Jesus displays this love in how he cares for women, for other men, and for himself.

If a man does decide to use Jesus as his model for masculinity, there may be a few complications because of sin's effects on the man and the world around him. If a man realizes

that his own masculinity is unhealthy or under developed in some way then he will have to address those issues in himself. He will not see Jesus struggle with those sorts of problems. It may be useful for this man to have other role models as well in order to pay specific attention to those needs as he learns from someone about personal development and overcoming personal flaws. When a man looks for a role model for his current life, he cannot change the experiences he has already had, but being honest about his past will help him to assess his present circumstances and make decisions about his future. That is not to say that the same should not also look to Jesus. Jesus will still be a model of perfect masculinity with a great deal to teach anyone.

If a man does decide to use Jesus as a model for his own masculinity, he will be modeling himself after Jesus' adult life. However, there is one thing that a man can learn from the earliest days of Christ's life. Jesus was born with a mission in mind. He came into the world with the purpose of sacrificing himself and serving others. This is precisely what Jesus himself says about his first days during his last days (John 18:37). Jesus is motivated by a strong drive to reach his goals and address the problems he sees in the world. This is part of a healthy version of a masculine Warrior mentality.⁵⁰ The Warrior is another potential archetype of masculinity. The Warrior's job in a mature male psyche is to evaluate situations or difficulties in the man's life as well as the man's own strengths and weakness. This is not only an academic exercise. The Warrior also moves the man into action. This is like a Warrior who bravely goes to war but first seeks to understand his own army's abilities as well as his opponent's. A healthy masculine energy is able to confidently address problems by engaging in life. Jesus consistently confronts what he sees wrong with the world by his miracles and his teaching. When Jesus encounters

⁵⁰ Gillette and Moore, *King, Warrior*, 82-86.

people who are dealing with the pains of this world, he helps them. When he finds people who do not have a clear understanding of Scripture or are teaching falsely, he corrects them (Mark 2:1-12). He is unafraid to take action, but he never seeks to serve himself with these actions. He is not a slave to his pride or his ideas about himself.

In fact, conquering pride may be one of the greatest challenges facing men.⁵¹ Arrogance can be a powerful force in anyone. It warps a healthy concern for oneself into an obsession and can drive a wedge between an individual and everyone else. How someone views themselves has a massive impact on how they interact with the people around them. Dr. Robert Moore is a professor of psychoanalysis at Chicago Theological Seminary. He writes about what happens when men connect their identity too closely with their own self-image and grandiosity. These men allow their pride to grow and their inflated sense of self to damage their relationships with the people around them. “People who identify with [their grandiosity and self-image] tend to use them with arrogance and disrespect. Those who try to deny them tend to idealize others and give away their sovereignty and power, leading to envy and hate.”⁵²

Envy, arrogance, hate, disrespect, and pride are not problems that plague Jesus. His continuous desire to serve everyone around him demonstrates that he did not come into the world to serve his own arrogance or pride. He says himself that his entire purpose for living is to serve and sacrifice for the good of others, and he wants his disciples to learn to do the same (Matthew 20:26-28). Jesus lives a perfect life for the sake of his people, but he also uses his life to teach his people how to live.

⁵¹ Edinger, Edward F. *Ego and Archetype: Individuation and the Religious Function of the Psyche*. (Boulder: Shambhala Publications, 1992), 31-34.

⁵² Moore, *Facing the Dragon*, 201.

In these verses Jesus specifically instructs his disciples to use him as a role model. He wants those that follow him to serve others out of love. Jesus emphasizes this point of selfless service time and time again. He returns to this lesson during his final hours with his disciples before his death when he, the Son of God, washes the feet of the men who follow him (John 13:1-17). He tells them to learn from his humility. Jesus gives an example to his disciples that is entirely contrary to the prideful grandiosity of the world. Instead of using his life to build up his status or reputation, Jesus takes every opportunity to build others up even when it comes at his expense.

It is true that this is a lesson Jesus is giving to all believers, but that does not mean that this should be ignored when thinking about Christ as a model of manhood. The perfect life of Jesus has great value as a model of sanctification for both men and women. The fact that women can learn from Jesus' humility and service does not detract from its ability to teach men, but this particular lesson might be of added significance for men. All people have a sinful nature that tells them to put themselves first, but these demonstrations of humble service to others are especially applicable to the gender that is so known for being competitive. Men often try to prove their worth by asserting dominance over women or other men.⁵³ Jesus never does that. He never engages in entitled one-upmanship to show off his power or authority. Instead the man who most deserved to have others fall at his feet is found kneeling before sinners to serve them.

It is not only with his disciples that Jesus displays a radical way of treating others. Jesus uses the utmost respect when dealing with people that society would reject or demean. When he encounters a Samaritan woman with a checkered past, a woman many people who have shunned

⁵³ Johnson, Allan G. *The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014), 31

completely, he talks to her. He does not avoid her or her sin. As always, he is not afraid to address her sins, but he does so with gentle love and care (John 4:1-26). Jesus spends time ministering to those that the religious leaders of the day have disowned. He eats with sinners and tax collectors, and when questioned about it he makes no excuses but says this is all part of his life of service (Luke 5:29-32). These are even more examples of powerful displays that no man is too good to be around anyone else. Jesus does not need to focus on himself or his own value. He focuses on the value of others.

Healthy masculinity is not about a man valuing himself highly. Truly optimal masculinity is concerned much more with others and doing whatever can be done to serve them. Jesus serves the people around him by preaching to them, whether in great crowds or as individuals. He meets people where they are in order to serve them best because his goal is to be their servant. He accommodates Nicodemus by teaching him in the middle of the night (John 3:1-22). On two separate occasions Jesus provided food for the audiences that gathered to hear him (Matthew 14:13-21; 15:29-39). Jesus did anything and everything in order to lovingly serve the people around him.

This is part of what Gillette and Moore call the role of the King.⁵⁴ Instead of following stereotypes, some psychologists have suggested using archetypes of masculinity. These archetypes of masculinity are not specific individual men. They are representations of a portion of the male experience. These archetypes are a framework to organize thoughts about the traits that a man has and the behaviors he does. One such archetype is that of the King.⁵⁵ The King archetype is the part of the man responsible for “order and blessing.” This is a way to address

⁵⁴ Gillette and Moore, *King, Warrior*, 52-63.

⁵⁵ Gillette and Moore, *King, Warrior*, 49.

two important characteristics in masculinity. The ordering that the King performs is the clarity and structure that a mature man has in his life. The blessing is the confidence the man has to make decisions and act upon those decisions. This is spoken about as being under the King's order and blessing as a way to help a man picture what these things can look like. The clarity a man has is like the order that a King establishes and provides for his kingdom. The confidence he has in his decisions and actions is like the King giving his blessing to the members of his kingdom so that they can be assured in their work and move forward with every confidence. They use the terminology of King differently than the typical sense of Christ's office as king. From this place of centered calmness about his identity, the man is able to achieve his goals. Jesus is certainly confident about who he is. Even when he was put on trial, after his friends had abandoned him and his life hung in the balance, Jesus did not back down or swerve from his lifelong goal (Matthew 26:64).

The other aspect of the king is that Jesus sets things in order. He is in control of himself and makes decisions about what he will do in his life. This is closely connected with the blessing and fertility idea. The confidence and acceptance as king are needed for a man to perform the ordering work of a king. Because Jesus is fully assured of his purpose, he is able to always make decisions that support that work toward his goal. That is why Jesus is even able to come down from the mountain after the transfiguration knowing he will soon suffer for sins he did not commit (Matthew 17:12).

Not only is Jesus comfortable with his mission and with who he is, but he is also comfortable with showing how he feels. When Jesus is upset he shows that he is upset (Luke 13:34). When Jesus encounters wonderful faith, he is filled with joy and celebrates it (Luke 7:44-50).

These two emotions may not be surprising to see from a male role model since these tend to be the emotions that society deems to be most acceptable for men to express. Jesus also shows that there is a wider range of emotions than just these for men to display. This connection with emotion is not something popular culture tends to support in men. Often men feel that the world demands stoicism from them. They must tamp down any feelings or else be considered feminine. If men are going to develop truly healthy masculinity and be able to interact with the world around them in a positive way, an integral first step will be learning to interact with their own emotions and feelings in positive and effective ways.⁵⁶ A man who cannot be honest with himself about his feelings will end up lying to himself and others. His emotions will be bottled up inside and unable to be expressed. This damage is not only in how he relates to himself. A man who cannot allow himself to feel emotions like grief or joy will have difficulty relating to others that do feel these.

Jesus does more than simply express his emotions. He also is motivated by compassion to help the people around him. It would be true to say that Jesus' entire life is full of compassion, but there are numerous moments in his ministry that can be pointed to as unmistakable expressions of tender care. When Jesus encounters a widow in the funeral procession for her only son, Christ's heart is touched. He gives her comfort with his words and then he gives her son back to her from the dead. Perhaps the greatest comfort he gave her, and everyone there that day, was the knowledge that God has not forgotten his people, but cares deeply for each of them (Luke 9:11-17).

At another death, Jesus shows that men are allowed to do something very surprising by modern standards. When Christ's dear friend Lazarus dies, Jesus comes to his grave and weeps

⁵⁶ Hooks, Bell. *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love*. (Washington: Washington Square Press, 2004), 26

(John 11:1-44). Jesus does not hold back his tears in order to seem more manly. He is not afraid that anyone might perceive a weakness in him because of his grief. Certainly it was not the case that Jesus tried to suppress his emotions and fight back the sadness but was unable to control himself. Jesus' emotions did not get the best of him. Instead Jesus allowed himself to grieve. As a man, he made the manly choice to cry. He experienced the sadness that comes with loss. Jesus knew that he was about to raise Lazarus from the dead, and yet the very fact that his friend had died caused Jesus to mourn. Although Jesus was still in control of his emotions, he allowed himself to experience and express the pain of losing a friend.

Jesus could have had cause to mourn every day. Each morning Jesus woke up to see the people that he loved tormented by sin. Even though Jesus did allow himself to express his strong emotional response as Lazarus' grave, he is also not dominated by his emotions. He is still the one in charge. The mark of manhood here is not eliminating emotion and it is not being overwhelmed by emotion. As a mature and healthy masculine individual, Christ feels his emotions, processes them, and then moves on.

Finally, Jesus does one more thing that modern men may often feel uncomfortable doing. Jesus asks for and accepts help. After facing off against the devil in the wilderness, Jesus receives care from angels (Matthew 4:11). He does not turn them away because he does not need their help. He does not resist them in order to demonstrate that he is self-sufficient or capable of handling his own problems. He graciously accepted the love and care of others. He welcomes the comforts that the angels bring him. This acceptance of help is not a weakness on Jesus' part. In return he shows appreciation for the love that they showed him.

Before his death Jesus prayed intensely asking his Father for help (Luke 22:39-44). Jesus felt uneasy because of what was about to happen to him. He asked that the duty set before him

somehow be removed if possible. He wanted to be relieved of the immense burden he was about to bear. When that help did not come and the terrible duty still remained, he accepted what must be done without complaint or anger or resentment.

Men can learn from Jesus' example that many emotions that are not typically seen as manly are perfectly acceptable for a man to experience. There is a wide range of feelings that Jesus experienced throughout his life and Christian men are meant to experience those feelings as well. Christian men can look to Jesus and be reminded of what really matters in a man. His life is centered around loving his Lord and the people around him the way Jesus did. His focus is serving the Lord that already served him.

CONCLUSION

Men in the modern world are surrounded by questions. These are questions that come from outside sources and from within themselves about what it means to be a man. There are many people who want to attack men for no other reason than simply that they are men. There are particular ideas about manhood that are now seen as antiquated by some and admirable by others. There are media outlets that hold up one idea of masculinity as the pinnacle of existence and other outlets that call that very same idea utterly toxic. Opinions about manhood are being called into question as classical values of masculinity are being challenged by a changing world culture. All of this leaves many men searching for answers. No matter where they turn, answers are being proposed. Ideas about what it means to be a real man are everywhere. These influences are direct and indirect, intentional and unintentional. Most frequently the advice being given is mediocre and shallow. It focuses on superficial issues that do not truly matter. Masculinity is often only talked about on a surface level. The deep issues that impact men are left unaddressed.

All too often, the ideas in the media about manhood are damaging to men. They can cause men to be unsure of themselves in their own masculinity or cast judgment on others who they do not see fitting these stereotypical descriptions of manhood. Ultimately, there is only one role model for masculinity that is actually perfect.

If a man decides to use Christ as a role model for how to be a man, he will not find career advice or dating tips. He will receive no trendy pointers for fashion or fitness. Of course, it is not wrong to care about these things, but they are not what makes a man. God is the one who makes men men. What pieces of popular culture that male likes or what hobbies he enjoys in his spare time have nothing to do with how much of a man he actually is. Instead, focus should be put on what God says about men and what he asks of them to do. God has given his men a job to do. Just like Jesus, men have a purpose in their lives. They have been created to live lives of thanks and praise for what their God has done for them. They have been made to sacrifice and to lead, to serve and to love for the good of everyone around them.

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