

# Leading by Example

By Chris Hamilton

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Don Green: It is a signature token of the Lord's blessing on Truth Community Church, of his hand upon our ministry that we have our speaker here this morning. I have known Chris Hamilton for about 10 years now, and I told him, I said, "It's gonna take me 30 minutes to introduce you so you get about 15 minutes to speak." So he said, "Okay, I'll shorten my notes," and Chris will not like the fact that I'm going to say all the things that I'm going to say.

I first met Chris in October or November of 2009. It wasn't the first time we met, it was the first time we had any lengthy conversation, we had a meal at a place called the Egg Plantation in Santa Clarita, CA and we were talking about the ministry at Grace Community Church. Chris had just become the chairman of the elder board at Grace Community Church and we were talking about things related to that. It was a little difficult period in my life at that point. Chris and I had a great conversation and about 10 or 15 minutes into the conversation I realized I was talking to perhaps the smartest man that I've ever met in my entire life. Chris has a background, his professional expertise is in the financial realm in accounting and tax and litigation matters, Chris's professional expertise is testifying as an expert witness in litigated matters involving extremely complex financial matters. To just give you an illustration of the kind of things that he does at one aspect of his professional history, is that he was asked to determine the value of an ownership interest in the Oakland Raiders NFL franchise. I just say that to give you a sense of that. He's in demand nationally as a speaker in the areas of his professional expertise, but that's not why he's here today, of course, I just want to give you a sense that, you know, Chris is speaking from that kind of lay perspective; he's not a professional man in ministry in that way.

As a personal matter, I would tell you that Chris is just such a trusted friend and confidant. Without going into all that informs that statement, when I was approached to consider coming to Cincinnati, Chris was my very closest confidant on the whole situation and Chris's opinion meant so much to me that if he had said, "Don't do this," I would not have done it. When he said, "Don, I think you're going to Cincinnati," I remember that conversation distinctly, that was, you know, that was very affirming, but my confidence and my trust and my affection for Chris is so deep that if Chris had asked me as a personal favor not to go to Cincinnati, I would have had a very difficult choice to

make. That's how much I love this man and how much his opinion means to me and how much I defer to him in all matters of life.

Our friendship isn't why he's here today. Chris is the chairman of the elder board at Grace Community Church where John MacArthur is the pastor. He's held that position for 10 years. He is universally respected as a man of highest integrity; a man of profound wisdom. The 44-45 elders that serve on the board all look to Chris with respect and with a sense of deference and he leads that elder board with stunning ability and character. The reason why he's here, Chris has great insight into church leadership. He's a man of God and we're very delighted to have him, have you, Chris. Please welcome Chris Hamilton as he comes today.

Chris Hamilton: Thank you, Don, and good morning. I said to one of you already this morning, there is a Don Green shaped hole still at Grace Community Church. He is deeply loved. We still talk about Don and we're not talking about him in a bad way, it's all in a good way. We miss him and the partnership in ministry, what the rest of that story is, is I was chairman, Don was vice-chairman for a number of years, and it was just such a sweet partnership and when you're involved in leadership, you know, when you're in the foxhole, it's nice to know who's in the foxhole with you and that he's got your back and not only got your back from a protection, but is in front of you also and willing to say, "You're not thinking about things right."

And Don, I do appreciate you cutting down that introduction from 30 minutes. I could spend about 30 minutes telling you about Don and he's a man's man and in some sense that's what we're here to talk about today. Everything I talk about today, Don is an example of it. He's an illustration and I don't say that just because I'm in Don's church but you'll see here in a minute that that's the biblical process of manhood is being an example to other men.

So I want to talk about that this morning and I want to thank you for the opportunity to be here. I visited this church, I think it was three years ago? Five, was it five years ago? Okay. And I had told Don I want to come back but I want to come back so I can hear Don preach, and I want you to know I listen to Don preach almost every week. It's technology. I get to be at the podcast, follow what you're learning from him, and it's such a blessing.

So, you know, back in high school I used to play football. One of the things I thought I was gonna do with my life at one point was play football. I played football in high school with one guy in particular who went on to have a very famous career, and because of his success we all got big looks from the colleges and we all got recruited, and I thought I was going big time and God removed that my senior year through a significant illness, and so when I came out of high school, I decided to do the next best thing which was coach football.

So for about 4-5 years I coached football in a Christian high school setting. We used to bring in speakers before the games. Now I played high school football in a secular environment and they'd bring speakers in too, and how many of you have played

football? Okay, a couple of you. You know what that's like, somebody is supposed to come in and get you all riled up to go take someone's head off, right? Maybe not. That's what it was when I played back in the Dark Ages, and so when we bring somebody in to speak before the game, at the Christian school you call it a devotional, most of the guys would come in and they'd quote 1 Corinthians 16:13. You're probably familiar with the verse, "Be on the alert. Stand firm in the faith. Act like men. Be strong." You can imagine why that would be the motivational speech before a football game, right? It's act like men, and because of that phrase there, that allowed that person to define that any way they want and they could define manhood in such a way that would motivate all those young guys to go out on the field and take the opponent's head off, which is what, you know, as a coach you really wanted. The problem is, that's a complete reversal of what that verse is saying. When it says act like men, be strong, one of the things you have to think about is that verse wasn't written to men. Was 1 Corinthians written to men? No, it was written to the church at Corinth and the letter was written to men, women, boys and girls, and when it says act like men, what Paul was instructing the church was look at the men in your church and act like them. Pretty amazing. And the "be strong" is in the context of acting like men.

So what I want to think about today is that you and I are to be the living, walking, talking illustration of the weekly sermon, of all the good teaching that you get. I know you walk out sometimes having questions, don't you? Well, the rest of the church does too and the ideal is from Scripture, Paul's instructions to the church at Corinth is, "When you have questions, just act like the men. Look at the men. Follow their example." And imitation is a biblical concept. It's all over the Bible. And when you think about when it says "act like men," some of you might say, "But I'm not a spiritual leader. I'm going to point people, don't act like me, act like the pastor, act like the elders." Well, if you're a man and you claim to be a believer, you qualify, okay? 1 Corinthians 16:13 didn't say go act like the elders, it didn't say go act like the pastor, it said act like men. I think you all qualify. If you're a dad, you have children, your children are instructed in Scripture to act like their dad. If you're a big brother, you have siblings, if you're a husband, you have a wife, if you're a grandfather, you're specifically called out in Deuteronomy 6 that you are to be teaching your grandchildren to fear and love the Lord by how you act. If you're a servant in the church whether you're an elder, a deacon, a teacher, you lead music, you set up chairs, you're a man in the church and the church is instructed to act like you. And perhaps you're none of these, today is preparation for what's coming for you in your future. If you are a man and you claim to be a believer, the church is instructed to act like you. You see, church leadership doesn't require or leadership in the church, spiritual leadership doesn't require a seminary degree, it doesn't require a title like pastor or elder, it requires you to live a life that is an illustration of what the church is learning.

1 Corinthians 4:16 says, "Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me." 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul repeats it, "Imitate me, as I am also of Christ." Philippians 3:17, Paul says, "Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us." Philippians 4:9, "The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me," imitate me, "practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you." And I could go on and on and on. Imitation. Imitation. Imitation. Imitation is

something that the world puts down. It is the model from Scripture of how we learn how to live our Christianity and my point here this morning, gentleman, is at some point we all have to realize, yes, we are always to imitate others but we are to be very cognizant of the fact that others should be able to imitate me and you.

Spiritual leadership as we're gonna define it today is walking the walk and talking the talk on display for the benefit of others whether it's your children, it's your wife, others at church, your church should hear the command to act like the men in the church and then they think of you, and you can be intimidated by that and that's probably a little bit healthy, but you shouldn't be intimidated out of understanding and happily complying with that role in the church.

So what does it look like? What does that look like? And there's a passage in Scripture, if you'll turn to Hebrews 13, I want to show you the areas and we're going to go through this very quickly, areas that you should be concerned about, areas that you should be exemplary in, and I am going to skip the rocks across the water. We could spend a lot of time on any of these but we all like checklists, don't we? God knows that and Hebrews 13 gives us a checklist. He gives us six areas here for self-examination this morning, six specific identifiable measures of spiritual authority and sanctification, six areas where the church should be able to look to you for an example. And we're going to start in Hebrews 13:7. I'm an accountant, you already heard that. I'm going to start with the bottom line, okay? Have you ever heard that saying? Accountants love that. Any accountants in the room, by the way? Bottom line, you know what I'm talking about. All right.

Hebrews 13:7, "Remember those who led you." Okay, remember those who led you. Stop and ponder. Think. Who were the leaders in your life: pastors, teachers, dad, grandpa, uncle, somebody in the church, friends, a brother. What did they do? What defined how they led you?

Verse 7 goes on to say they "spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith." There is that concept again. That's how we're to be remembered, men, we are to be remembered as men in the church who spoke the word of God and had exemplary conduct; that people could consider the result of our conduct and imitate it, imitate our faith.

Real quickly, speaking the word of God, we're not going to spend a lot of time on that. We could. You hear this a lot so I'm just going to say it very quickly: your response to questions, issues and concerns, conflict and error, should be what? The word of God. That's how you should be known. That's how you lead others. That's what defines your life. That's what defines your decision-making, your priorities, your manhood, is what does the word of God say. Spiritual leadership is not a platform to teach your wisdom, your philosophy, your preferences, your politics, it's to speak the word of God, and this is why your pastor in this church is so committed to the consistent and faithful preaching and teaching of not philosophy and politics and management theories, but the word of God so that you are equipped to do that yourself. That's leadership and that's not just

leadership for elders, that's leadership as a big brother, that's leadership as a husband, that's leadership as a grandfather, as someone who works in the church.

So speak the word of God, but let's focus in on the exemplary conduct and context matters. I took you to the bottom line, Hebrews 13:7, but the previous six verses describe Christian life. It's maybe one of the most comprehensive descriptions of what sanctified Christian living looks like. It's been called the description of Christian ethics all boiled down into six verses. It is loaded and it can also be very intimidating. Let me read it for you.

1 Let love of the brethren continue. 2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it. 3 Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body. 4 Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge. 5 Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you," 6 so that we confidently say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?"

Do you see the breadth of that passage? That's an extraordinary range of behavior and after you read that, it's a bit overwhelming, the writer of Hebrews goes right into verse 7 and says in a sense, "I know that's overwhelming. Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you," verses 1 through 6, "they taught you this, and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith." Do you want to know what verses 1 through 6 look like? Act like men, the men that others can say, "I don't know what it means to let the love of the brethren continue, I'm going to watch the men in the church." That's what we're talking about today.

It's an amazing passage. Hebrews 13 is the expected Christian ethic for all believers. There are six areas, I'm just going to give these to you real quick so you know where we're going. The first, the six areas he talks about love. You saw that, love for the brethren, those inside the church, love for those outside the church. Number 2 is compassion. The third area he addresses is marriage and moral purity, and then your contentment, and then your courage. So the writer of Hebrews in six verses lays out the Christian ethic in the areas of love, compassion, marriage, moral purity, contentment and courage. If you want to boil it down to three, he addresses your affections, your purity and your trust in the providence of God. And we could boil it down but because of the comprehensive nature of what he addresses in those six verses, you could call it a lot of things but let's work through these.

Let's talk about love for the brethren. "Let the love of the brethren continue." Here's the point: Christians love Christians. It's not difficult. All believers are called to love the people of the church. 1 John 5:1 says, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him." There's a priority in a

believer's life of loving those who are in the church, and what does that look like? 1 John 3:16-18. By the way, I'm going to throw a law of Bible at you because after reading Hebrews 13:7, I sure don't want to do anything other than speak the word of God, do I? 1 John 3:16-18 says, "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for," who? "The brethren. But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children," this is a devastating verse, "Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth." What does love for the brethren look like? It's not talking about it, it's doing it. That's the devastating part of that verse. Don't love in word and tongue, in other words, love is an action, talk is cheap. Love people in the church, those are people inside the church.

Then there is the love of strangers. He goes on to say, he says, "Let the love of the brethren continue," verse 2, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it." We tend to look at hospitality as a feminine character quality. Some of us did really well or we think we did really well marrying somebody who is very hospitable. It makes me look very good in that area. This passage is a reminder that we are to be hospitable. We are to be examples of hospitality and to those who are outside the church. This isn't just being hospitable to people inside the church and to family, this is opening up your home, this is demonstrating a hospitality with what are called strangers.

So that's love. I told you I'm going to go through these fast. Let's talk about compassion. The second area that he addresses is our compassion. Verse 3, "Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body." "Remember" reflects our nature, that out of sight tends to be out of mind. You know, and just preparing for this this week, I was deeply convicted in my own life of a man, frankly, I helped put in prison. He came to me and confessed sin, horrible, terrible sin and I literally physically walked with him to the police station and he is now serving 35 years. He's a believer. And by the way, at his sentencing the DA came up to me and said, "We've all wanted to meet you. We have never seen anything like you before." And of course, I know better than that, I didn't understand what the DA was saying. The DA said, "We have never ever ever seen a case where someone goes to a pastor in their church and the pastor walks him to the jail and makes sure that they confess and repent." And I said, "You're not looking at me. I'm not the extraordinary one here. The extraordinary one is this man who committed terrible terrible crimes who is in the process of repenting. This is what repentance looks like." But that's a rabbit trail.

I was convicted preparing for this time this morning that I had not remembered him and I wrote him a letter, you know, and tried to encourage him through the written letter. That's the power of the word of God but that's the point here. Remember the prisoner and remember those who are ill-treated, you know, those people who are being falsely accused or publicly scorned or criticized, or they are in a position where they can't defend themselves. What is the natural human reaction to that? Stay away from it. The exemplary man runs to it. It's very convicting for me and perhaps for you.

Colossians 3 is a passage that describes this. "So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness," by the way, he goes on to define what does that compassion look like he says, "kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you." That's what that compassion looks like. It's a reminder but for the grace of God, whatever is going on in front of me, that could be me, and in kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, long-suffering and forgiveness, we are to remember those who are in prison and those who are ill-treated.

Third area, marriage. Marriage. Very simply, the Bible says here in Hebrews 13:4, "Marriage is to be held in honor," and we truly could spend six weeks on this, and I know you probably have. I'm 32 years into this, learning how to honor marriage. This is a behavioral standard for all behaviors. This isn't just a call to be married, by the way. This isn't a call to marry the right person. This is written to the church so that in every facet of life we are to view marriage the way God views marriage and God designed marriage, he called it good, he called it very good and we are to view it that way in a culture that does not view it that way.

You and I are to be exemplary and God created marriage as a blessing and a joy not just for Christians, marriage was designed in the Bible, Genesis 2, before the garden, before sin entered into the world. I always say this: marriage is not part of the curse, it's part of the perfect creation for all of God's creation. It is a blessing of life not just for a couple who love the Lord but for two people who are unsaved who are married that they experience the common grace, the blessing of God's perfect design in marriage.

If you're single, this isn't about finding the right woman to marry, this is all about you and I doing the right thing within the design of marriage whether you're married or not, in other words, honor marriage whether you're married or you're single. Honor marriage.

Be an example in that area and how do you do that? Real quick, how do you honor marriage? If you're married, men, one way you honor marriage is enjoy your marriage. Proverbs 5:18 says that we are to "rejoice in the wife of our youth." Proverbs 18:22 says, "He who finds a wife finds a good thing And obtains favor from the LORD." Don't ever forget that. Don't ever stop saying that, especially men with children. Your children should know from your mouth that truth, and maybe more importantly, they should know from your life. They should see that joy.

Marriage is a gift, it's a blessing to all of us. Young people in your church, men, should be excited about being married someday because of what they see in your marriage. Your children and your grandchildren should be excited about marriage because of how you hold it in high regard. They are not going to get that high regard from watching TV or movies or reading the news. Your own children should not view your relationship with your wife as sad, embarrassing, a joke, hypocritical. It's a hard thing to think about but most of us learned about marriage not by reading about it but by what? Watching it. As you grow up, men, to be just like us. That's a heavy responsibility and this is probably an

area that's the most difficult task but that's what Hebrews 13:7 is saying. Marriage is to be held in honor, that's all it says. What does that mean? What does that look like? Act like men. That's the burden.

So enjoy your marriage. Another way to honor marriage is to love your wife. Ephesians 5, starting in verse 25 talks about the obedient husband and how he loves his wife. I know you're familiar with the passage. I hope you've been devastated by that passage. If you haven't, you haven't considered it. We are to love our wife as Christ loves the church. Christ gave himself up for the church, he sanctified her, cleansed her by the washing of the water of the word, presenting her in all her glory, no spot, no wrinkle or any such thing. Holy and blameless. Devastating. Amazing. There is the life plan of a man who honors marriage, he loves his wife.

You should honor your wife. Honor marriage by honoring your wife. 1 Peter 3:7 says, "You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered." Just a loaded voice. There is gentleness, tenderness, respect, and then there is the hindered prayer life if we fail in that regard.

We are to honor our wife publicly. Did you know that? You should talk about your wife. Proverbs 31:28-29 says, "Her children rise up and bless her; Her husband also, and he praises her, saying: Many daughters have done nobly, But you excel them all." Do you talk to your wife like that? Do you talk about your wife like that? And that's not a call to brag or flatter, that's sin, but you should take the opportunity to praise, acknowledge and support. Why? Because there are eyes watching you. That's the point. Don't forget the point of this. The church is called to act like you.

We are to honor our wife privately. Proverbs 31:10-11, you know this, you've heard this, "An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her." That is honoring your wife and by honoring your wife, you are honoring marriage. And men, we should be training our children to honor our wife. We should teach them what it looks like to honor their mother. Your children are going to follow your words far more or they are going to follow your life far more than they follow your words. And young men in the room, develop the habit now of noticing and praising the attributes and the blessing of a godly woman whether it's your mom or some other servant in the church, a godly sacrificing servant. We should be teaching our sons in particular, but also our daughters, to notice that. There may be no greater testimony of the power of the Gospel than in the public manifestation of Christian marriage, and in no time has that ever been said where it's a clearer distinction than in today's culture.

So we are to be exemplary in our love, our compassion, marriage, next, moral purity. He goes on in verse 4, "the marriage bed is to be undefiled." This speaks of your conduct before marriage and during marriage. Marital relations are to be confined to what? Marriage. Very simple. This is not a difficult concept to understand. The Bible is so clear. Proverbs 5 and Proverbs 7 is a father's teaching to his sons about the problems and the

consequences of sex outside of marriage. 1 Corinthians 6 is so blunt, it is so clear, and it draws the line so dramatically. 1 Thessalonians 4:3 through 7, you know this passage. "This is the will of God, your," what? "Sanctification." What does that mean? "That is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things."

May I repeat, the Lord is the avenger in these things which goes right along with what is said in Hebrews 13:4, "Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled." Why? "For fornicators and adulterers God will judge." How many times do young couples come in for counseling and they are very concerned about what mom and dad know about what's going on on those dates or what the pastor knows or about what their friends know? Take them to Hebrews 13 and show them it doesn't matter what those people know or what they think, God's on that date with you. He knows and that perspective is where you and I are to be exemplary. Not just not crossing the line but so far from the line of anything that could be viewed as immorality that we are an example.

Galatians 6:7 says, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap." Luke 8:17, "For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not be known and come to light." I read those to you just to remind you that whether you aspire to be an elder or a deacon or a pastor or not, you are a man in the church. The church is called to act like you. You are to live a life that is exemplary so that the church can see what a moral life looks like, and I promise you that if you're a believer and you claim to be a believer and you're a man, you're a leader and a leader who messes around in this particular area, you will be exposed.

So we are to be exemplary in our love, our compassion, our marriage, our moral purity, next, our contentment. Our contentment. I know I'm going fast but I'm going through all of this, I really want to plant the seed and I'm hoping you're going to come back to this later and really examine this passage. It says in verse 5, "Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have." Contentment is the blend of humility and faith and 1 Timothy 6:6 says that godliness is the means of great gain when accompanied by what? Anybody know? Contentment. And it goes on to talk about your perspective of money but basically the point is this: your character must be free from the love of money. Christ is your love, not money. Your dependence is on Christ, not on money. So and we are to be exemplary in that area and there's one area that's really difficult to get people to talk about and that's their money, and I understand that but the Bible says that we are to be in a place where people can consider the result of our conduct and imitate our faith.

Lastly, courage, and I love this, and I love how this comes around to the issue of our courage and it is so encouraging. We are to be content, to be free from the love of money, verse 5, because "He Himself has said, 'I,' God, "'will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,' so that we confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?'" It's an amazing collection of words and if you have a Bible

that has all caps, it's because he is quoting Old Testament and there are five negatives used and I'm not going to jump too far into this, but this one passage, "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?" There are five negatives used in this whole sequence and he's quoting from Deuteronomy 31 and Joshua 1 and 1 Chronicles 28. I would encourage you go read Deuteronomy 31 and go read Joshua 1 and realize that those passages are being written to a man who is a war hero. Joshua was known in his day and to this day as a military genius. I am told, I've never been to the Military Academy, I have a son-in-law who has, they still teach military strategy based on the story of Joshua and yet he is told over and over and over, "Don't be afraid. Be strong and courageous."

And why is he being told not to be afraid? Because, men, it is manly to be afraid. That's a fact of life. You meet a man who says I've never been afraid, I'm going to point at that man and say he's not telling you everything. The point is we are commanded not to be afraid, I just read it to you, and yet we are commanded that why? Because we get afraid, don't we? And it's this perspective if you know the Lord is your helper and that he will never desert you and you know that he'll never forsake you, the natural result of that perspective is courage. Repeatedly in the Old Testament it is stated, "Be strong and courageous." I cannot commend highly enough for you to do a word study as soon as you can, go through your Bible and find everywhere where it says be strong and courageous. It's fascinating reading. It's always in the context of obeying God and it's always in the context of God saying to someone in the Old Testament, "This is what I'm going to do." He's telling them what the score of the game is going to be. "There's a 1 in the win column coming. Don't be afraid." Does that make any sense to you? Of course it does because we all live in this world. Strength and courage is based on what God will do, not on man's physical ability, intellectual ability. This isn't a call to weightlifting or fearlessness, in other words. This strength and courage recognizes there are lots of reasons to fear and that's why the command was given. It's a call to confidence in the Lord.

And I want to show you and close with an illustration out of Scripture of what exactly this looks like. If you can, turn to 2 Samuel 10. 2 Samuel 10. I love this story. As you're turning there, I have a son-in-law who is in Special Forces. He also works for LAPD and on occasion he gets pulled away. He was a sniper with Marine recon. He's done four or five tours of duty now. This is a guy who is the closest thing to Joshua I'm ever going to know. I mean, just going to work in the 77<sup>th</sup> division in Los Angeles every night probably qualifies him for that. It's a combat zone down there. This is a guy who tells stories, I've seen video of his exploits, and as the father of his wife and the grandfather of his children, I want to implore him, "Would you just stop?" But he has this perspective that, "Do you know what? The Lord has appointed the time and the hour of my demise. I could be sitting in front on the couch watching a football game or I could be in the backwoods of some far-flung country with a gun leveled at me." And that's how he lives his life. But you don't know him so I can't use him as an illustration.

I want to show you from 2 Samuel 10:9-14, what does it look like, men, as the church looks to us and says what does it look like to live in light of the fact that the Lord is our

helper, he will never leave us or forsake us. And starting in verse 9, there's a lot more story to this. I'm going to start in verse 9. I think you'll see really quickly what the situation is here, "when Joab saw that the battle was set against him in front and in the rear," in layman's terms, this is war and what is the strategic situation? They are surrounded. They are dead. When you are surrounded, it's over, right?

Well, "he selected from all the choice men of Israel, and arrayed them against the Arameans. But the remainder of the people he placed in the hand of Abishai his brother, and he arrayed them against the sons of Ammon. He said, 'If the Arameans are too strong for me, then you shall help me, but if the sons of Ammon are too strong for you, then I will come to help you.'" What is he doing? He's lining the troops up back-to-back. "You face this way. You face this way. Yes, we're surrounded but we're gonna take them on." Do you see the strategic situation here?

Then comes verse 12, "Be strong, and let us show ourselves courageous." Why? Here it is again, "for the sake of the people." Do you see that? What's the word for that? Imitation. We want to be able to go down with them saying, "Act like men," and they're going to look at us and they're going to see what that looks like.

"For the sake of the people," and don't neglect this, "for the cities of our God." In other words, we want to honor God. We want to act like men the way God designed men to act so we want to honor God but we also want to do it for the sake of the people.

And the rest of this verse is so important. This verse is so important. It just ties it all together, "and may the LORD do what is good in His sight." Is there any guarantee of victory? No, in fact, there's probably a greater guarantee of failure but what manhood looks like in light of Hebrews 13:5 is you do what's right. You go down swinging doing what's right for the sake of the people and for the cities of our God and we let God take care of the results. The results aren't what matter, it's what you do in the circumstances.

"So Joab and the people who were with him drew near to the battle against the Arameans, and they fled before him. When the sons of Ammon saw that the Arameans fled, they also fled before Abishai and entered the city. Then Joab returned from fighting against the sons of Ammon and came to Jerusalem." What a story. They did what was right and the Lord chose to spare them. If the Lord had chosen that they were slaughtered, they still would have been doing the right thing. A man does the right thing sometimes only for the purpose of being an example and a provider for others. It's for the sake of the people.

So my challenge to you this morning is to examine yourself and your life in light of Hebrews 13. Your affections, your love for those in the church, for outside of the church, for those less fortunate than you, for those who are under attack, in prison, your marriage, your wife, all of your affections, are they exemplary? Examine your purity. Examine your trust in the providence of God, your contentment and your courage as demonstrated by your view of money. Your impact may be more than you will ever know. You may not ever have a title, you may not ever be on a pedestal, but I will tell you this, there are eyes watching you. Men, be strong so that the rest of the church can act like men and by so

doing they are following Christ. The strength of your family, the strength of your church rises and falls with you in this room because you are men. And that shouldn't frighten you, it shouldn't intimidate you too much. It's a fantastic challenge. Be strong and courageous. Don't run from it. Do the right thing for the sake of the people and for the reputation of God. Lead on in the strength and through the grace of God and you will fail, men. Some of us can tell stories of lots of times we have failed. You will wish you had some do-overs, but the trajectory of your example should and can point to Christ and by God's grace you will see your family respond to that, you'll see the church around you respond to that, and some day when you look back and you see the strength of your church, there will be some sense that the men stepped up and they did what God called them to do.

Let me pray.

*Lord, thank You for the clarity of Your word. Thank You for the men that I look at in my life, the history of my life, who I can look at and talk about as men who as I saw the results of their conduct, I imitated their faith. Lord, I know that's true for men in this room. Lord, help us have the perspective and remind us of the perspective that we're not just looking at other men but there are others looking at us. Lord, may we do that, may we have that perspective not to feed our pride but with a sense of responsibility and joy in fulfilling the role You've given us as men that our families and our churches would be strengthened to Your praise and glory and to the advancement of Your kingdom. In Christ's name, amen.*

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