

# A Good Man is Hard to Find: A Good Man Protects

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*A Good Man is Hard to Find*

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**Preached on:** Sunday, July 11, 2021

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Please turn with me in your Bibles to the first chapter of Joshua. We are continuing a series, a topical series we began a few weeks ago. Lord willing, we'll be returning to our exposition of Nehemiah next week in chapter 9. But this morning I want to continue that message that we began, actually Father's Day kind of propelled us into this discussion but the last three Sundays, June 27 and July 4 and today, we have the title of the message is "A Good Man is Hard to Find." I borrow that title from the book or the short story by Flannery O'Connor. I'm not recommending the story but the title is good and accurate and profoundly so in these days. A good man is hard to find. That's been the title of the last three weeks and we have this morning the focus, "A Good Man is Hard to Find: A Good Man Protects." Two weeks ago we said a good man leads, last week, a good man provides, and today a good man protects. We're looking at the question what is a good man? What makes a man good? We've been looking at the subject, really, of what is masculinity? What has God created us to be as men? And essentially what makes a man good is to be what God has designed him to be.

The problem today is the culture is committed to rejecting God's design. It is repudiating his blueprint. We see around us an all-out assault on God's created order, created structure. It's as if people are rushing headlong into this rebellion, into this repudiation of everything good. And this headlong rush is not going to result in anything except more disillusionment, more dissatisfaction and more despair because you reject God's design to your own hurt. God has made us. He has made us. He knows how he made us. He knows how we are to operate and life and joy are found in submitting to his design. I mean, we sing because we're happy, we sing because we're free, in a sense, that can be what we can do as men and women who embrace God's design. We sing because we are happy in living according to his blueprint. We're free, free from the bondage that comes from rebelling against him. Free from the misery that comes from rebelling against him. And we see the world rushing into rebellion and rejecting God and so we need to recover, and this is what we've been trying to do is recover a biblical view of masculinity. In a culture that rejects masculinity, we need to restore it in our lives, in our families by delighting in his design.

This is really a paradigm shift that has to happen in our mind. We're so profoundly affected by our culture and I want to read you a quotation from Douglas Wilson, his book, "Federal Husband." He has a way of saying things very bluntly and effectively and

I want you to hear what he says and feel the force of this. He's talking at this particular section of his book about women in combat, which is going to relate a little bit to what we talked about a moment ago. But he's talking about the biblical viewpoint and he says this. Listen to what he says. "The beginning of any honest treatment of the subject," he's talking about for Christians, "The beginning of any honest treatment of the subject must be a frank admission that when measured by our contemporary standards," now think about that, "when measured by our contemporary," worldly, "standards, the Bible is a sexist book." Now just let that sink in for a moment. When measured by worldly standards there's no other conclusion but, yes, the Bible is a sexist book. It helped me to read that sentence when I first read it. It like shakes you up a little bit. We want to immediately, "Wait a minute."

He goes on to say this, "This would be a bad thing if sexism were truly a sin, but in the world God made that is not the case. When weighed in the balances of modernity, the Bible is certainly," Wilson writes, "When weighed in the balances of modernity," when modernity, he's looking at the Bible through its lens and its standard, "the bible is a 'sinful book.'" Modernity thinks the Bible is a sinful book.

He goes on to say, "The only distressing thing, though, for us as Christians is that so many believers are embarrassed by the Bible." The problem is not with the Bible, the problem is with the world and with us imbibing worldly ideas and views. That is the problem. What we need is to be restored to seeing things biblically, unapologetically, accepting and submitting to the word of God.

So the Bible, it does present a picture that the world would say is sexist but we understand that the world completely misunderstands what God has designed and what God is saying, that when we understand the Bible correctly, we see that man, male and female, are both in the image of God, created for the glory of God, equal in dignity and value, yet different and distinct in role and function. That is not a bad thing. The world says it is but who cares what the world says? What do you expect the world to say? Do you expect them to get it right? We do too much, don't we? And I just think that's a really helpful reminder, kind of jarring. We need to stop being embarrassed by the Bible. We need to repent for being embarrassed by the Bible. We need to be, it should be, we should be embarrassed by the world. We should be embarrassed by the worldliness that has infiltrated our thinking when we come in the presence of a holy God who does all things exceedingly well. His design is right and good and when we live in submission to his design, we find that that is where life and joy and peace and happiness are.

So we're called to live that out. That's what we're trying to do in recovering a biblical view of masculinity is not to define things as the world says but let's really look at the Bible and let's recalibrate the way we see this and let reset our compass based on the true north of Scripture, not on some misguided blending of the Bible with worldly thinking.

So I want us to begin this morning in Joshua 1:1-9. This is a starting point today. We're not going to be expositing this. It's such a tremendous passage but I'm going to resist the temptation to do that. We're just going to start here and we'll come back to it a little later

in the message, but I choose this passage because Joshua is called to lead God's people. He's called to lead God's people in the conquest of the land after the death of Moses, after the death of, you know, one of the greatest men to ever live outside of Christ, Moses, the meekest man alive God describes him as. A great leader, he dies, now it falls on Joshua to lead the people into the land of Canaan. He's leading them in conquest, that is, to lead them in time of war. And so God speaks to him and tells him what he needs to know and to be to lead the people and I think it's a great picture of what God has created man, male, to be. We are to be those who are leaders and, in a sense, warriors and to lead our families in that. And we particularly are called to that role and we're going to see the exhortation, "Be strong and courageous." God's going to say this to Joshua three times. Anything said three times is to raise it to the superlative of importance. And this is what we need to be as men. Each of us needs to heed these words, be strong and courageous in this day, in this world because we live at war. That's the reality. We live in a spiritual war. Our struggle is not with flesh and blood but principalities and powers. It is a struggle, nevertheless, and we need to be strong and courageous.

So let's read Joshua 1:1-9. A good man protects.

1 Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying, 2 "Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. 3 Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. 4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory. 5 No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. 6 Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. 7 Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. 8 This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Our Father, as we come to Your word, we come aware of our great need, Lord, ready to see through the proclamation of Your word what You have to say that we might measure ourselves against it and that we might repent where we need to repent and trust and believe where we need to trust and believe. Make us people who look more and more like*

*Jesus. Fill us with joy and confidence in the perfection of Your word and the perfection of Your design and make us joyful in Your presence, not for our joy merely but for Your glory, that people will see the radiance of the glory of Christ increasingly in His church. And we pray this in His name. Amen.*

"A Good Man is Hard to Find: A Good Man Protects." We've been looking at the first chapters of the Bible and I think it's really instructive that the first three chapters of Scripture, Genesis 1, 2 and 3, we've been going there each week as a part of the message to look at, I mean, God lays down the creation of mankind engendered. Man is created male and female from the beginning. And we've seen that there's a great emphasis on that in the passage. Genesis 1:27, after God says he's going to make man in his image, it says in verse 27, "in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." We've seen how that's highlighted even above the other animals. This gender is brought out. Where no other gender is mentioned in Genesis 1, not the other animals and certainly they're all male and female, we find that out, of course, when we look at creation and we see it, but we see it when Noah is told to bring animals on the ark, he brings them male and female, but only in Genesis 1 is man, male and female, discussed. And then Genesis 2 highlighted the fact and underscored, emphasized, circled, just drew attention to the fact that God intended to make man male and distinctly male and female. Remember how he delays in the creation. He makes man himself, deals with him for a while, gives him instruction, and commands, brings the animals and says name the animals, and then only after all of that he creates female to complete man. You see, God is highlighting. He's like saying, Genesis 1, Genesis 2, Genesis 3, "Man is male and female. Do you get that?" This is set down. It's foundational. The rest of Scripture is built on this foundation.

This is so important for us to be what God has created us to be. For us to image him in the world, we have to embrace his design and so what it means to be a man, what it means to be a good man is to be what God has called us to be. So this morning, we're going to look at that aspect of protection and as we look back at Genesis 2 again this morning, turn with me there back to the first pages of Scripture, and we're going to note again that this call to protect is actually there. It's seen when we look at Genesis 2:16 and 17. This is, again, before Eve has been created. Genesis 2:15, "the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. The LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.'" Those words when you've been reading through Genesis 1:1 to this point, those words seem so out of place. We've heard over and over and over again God is creating life, the world is teeming with life and light and beauty and goodness. It is good. It is good. God saw. This is the formula: God said, it happens, and it was so, God saw all that he made and it was good. Each day of creation, that's the refrain. It's all good. It's all good. It's all good.

But here this note, this discordant note is sounded, this alien concept. Death is possible. It is, in reality, a clear and present danger and so God is telling Adam, "Take precautions. Walk in My word lest you die." He would have lived forever had he heeded this command but, by extension, woman is not yet created, we saw last week this means that

the man is to provide instruction. He was implicitly supposed to disciple his wife in the word. But it also says that the man was entrusted with the responsibility to protect her, to protect her life. He had to take precautions not just for himself but for her. The whole world, in a sense, was riding on Adam because when one man sinned, Romans 5 tells us, when sin entered the world, death through sin. Everything fell when Adam fell. It's all on him and so he's to take precautions to obey the commandments and he's to protect his wife from this. He's to let her know, "Honey, everything's wonderful, everything's beautiful, everything's good except one thing, you must beware to eat from that tree."

So he was called to protect her and we can see that in reality the death that he's to protect her from, as we read on in Genesis, is actually twofold and so there are two types of death and there are two types of protection. There's physical death and spiritual death. When God said, "On the day you eat from it, you will surely die," Adam and Eve in the day they ate from it surely died. But they did not die physically that day, did they? They died spiritually. In the day they ate it, they died spiritually. They were separated from God. They were disconnected from God. They stopped knowing and loving God. They started distrusting God. Remember where they are? They're hiding from God when God shows up. So spiritual death happened in that moment but physical death began to happen and so physical death and spiritual death were both a consequence of eating from the tree and man was entrusted with protecting his wife from that fate.

Now what I want us to think about, so the idea of protection is clearly there, we're going to spend the rest of our time on three points to help us organize our thoughts. The first is a good man protects those around him from physical danger. A good man protects those around him from physical danger. That's our first point. God has designed men to protect others. This is why he took the man, the male, and he gave him this command. He didn't give it to the woman, he gave it to him so that he could use the word to protect those around him. But it was also about physical protection. The man had to protect her physical life as well as her spiritual life.

And men are to protect. This is something we see throughout the Scripture. I mentioned that Wilson was talking about women in combat in his book, "Federal Husband," when he mentions, made that statement that we read earlier, the Bible is a sexist book. When you look at Numbers 1, in fact, turn over there for a moment. We're trying to adjust our thinking to God's thinking. What we see in Numbers is that God intended the men to fight. He didn't intend the women to fight. How do we know that? Well, look at Numbers 1:2. This is after the exodus, after they'd been at Mount Sinai. They've received the law and now they're getting ready to move on the first attempt to take the Promised Land and God tells Moses, chapter 1, verse 2, "Take a census of all the congregation of the sons of Israel, by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, every male, head by head from twenty years old and upward, whoever is able to go out to war in Israel, you and Aaron shall number them by their armies." Every male. The armies are made up of males.

You see this even further, you read down to verse 20, "Now the sons of Reuben, Israel's firstborn, their genealogical registration by their families, by their fathers' households,

according to the number of names, head by head, every male from twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war, their numbered men of the tribe of Reuben were 46,500. Of the sons of Simeon," you were going to go through each of the 12 tribes this way, "Of the sons of Simeon, their genealogical registration by their families, by their fathers' households, their numbered men, according to the number of names, head by head, every male from twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war, their numbered men of the tribe of Simeon were 59,300."

So men are designed to protect. This is God's design. It doesn't mean that women can't and certainly can protect and must protect when the man is not there. I mean, the old joke, or not joke, it's almost proverbial, you know, you don't mess with a mother bear and that's used to speak of women protecting their children, right? We actually had a break-in when Jonathan was just a baby. I was gone to work. Patti was at home with him. He was like three months old. And she heard a noise at the back door and it was a banging noise and she came, there was like a mudroom and so she came around the kitchen to see what the noise was and she sees this teenager, young looking man, 17, 18, 19 years, something like that, kicking the door. Well, you know, she's panicked. The first thing she did was ran and got Jonathan, she hears the door break in, comes in. He doesn't know anybody's there. There's no car there. We only had one car at the time and I had that at work. And so he comes in and he begins looking, he's looking for cash quickly. He picks up a big jar of money and she's got Jonathan, she's kind of panicking, she comes face-to-face with the intruder with a three month old little boy. Thankfully, he turned and ran and she chased him out of the house. You know, that's just instinct, right? "What are you doing coming after my baby!" I'm so glad he didn't turn around and stop and come back. But God was there, wasn't he?

But that doesn't mean that women don't protect, women don't...sure, they have to fight in certain circumstances but God is saying that men are supposed to take the lead in this. Men are supposed to be the ones if there's a sound in the middle of the night, the man gets up and goes and checks on it. It's ungodly and unmasculine to say to your wife, "Honey, you go check on it. Let me know if there's any problem." We're called to physically protect.

This is also seen in Nehemiah 4 actually. We read this a while back when we were in Nehemiah 4, when basically Nehemiah calls the people and he says in Nehemiah 4:14, "When I saw their fear," this is when the people are, they're supposed to be, the enemies are going to come at any point, remember? They're trying to rebuild the walls but the enemies are trying to stop the work and he says this, "When I saw their fear, I rose and spoke to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people: 'Do not be afraid of them,'" listen to gender here, "Do not be afraid of them; remember the Lord who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses." It didn't say "your husbands." It said, "your wives."

Later on in verses 21 and following it says, "So we carried on the work with half of them holding spears from dawn until the stars appeared. At that time I also said to the people, 'Let each man with his servant spend the night within Jerusalem so that they may be a

guard for us by night and a laborer by day.' So neither I, my brothers, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us removed our clothes, each took his weapon even to the water." Now there were probably some women that had weapons too but the emphasis is on men.

We're to fight. We're to protect. This means it's our responsibility to see the physical protection of our families. This means it's our responsibility to see that the doors are all locked appropriately, or that they work, that we have the alarm system. It's your call ultimately as a husband. You should be concerned about that. I don't say you have to have one, I'm just saying it's your call. If you choose not to, that's your decision and it's on you. If you choose to have one, it's your decision, it's on you. It's on me. Even down to things like whether you have a weapon in the home. I don't think it's ungodly or unbiblical to have a weapon in the home. I don't think you'd find that in Scripture. It's not ungodly or unbiblical to carry a weapon. Now you need to do it according to the laws of the land and you also need to make sure that the weapon is kept safe so the children aren't able. That's on us as men to make sure of that. Our wives can help but we should be the ones taking the initiative in these areas. We're the ones that should make sure the car is safe when our teenagers begin to drive, and we should show them how to be safe. You see, it's physical protection is our responsibility primarily. Not exclusively but primarily.

Now there have been a lot of times where women will take, you know, there will be like a project that needs to be done. "Honey, we need to call the alarm system or we need to deal with this." Or you know, whatever. Well, the man just needs to be engaged, completely engaged in providing direction to that situation. So a good man provides physical protection for those around him. He protects those around him from physical danger but, secondly, a good man protects those around him from spiritual danger. This is clear also in Genesis 2:17 where it says, "in that day you will die." He's talking about spiritual death primarily.

And we see this, I'll mention a couple other places. Well, let's turn to one, 1 Timothy 2:11-15. We looked at this briefly before another Sunday. 1 Timothy 2:11, "A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression." You can see how people read that and say the Bible is a sexist book and it is. Now reading it carefully and putting all Scripture together, we see that the Bible also says that women are to teach women, and that women have great input into the gospel, and certainly to their husbands. I mean, though they're not to teach or exercise authority, your best counselor is your wife. She is your helper suitable. You should listen to her. You should be thankful that you have her and really value her opinion above every other opinion. It doesn't mean that it always wins out. You test everything by the word. In fact, if you always do what your wife tells you to do, you're not leading, you're following. So listening is not following but you listen and then you own the responsibility for whatever decision is made.

So we're to protect spiritually. So he says a woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. If God has ordered it so that men are to lead out in the spiritual oversight of the church, here he's talking about the church, but it's also true of the family, and part of the reason he says is because it's the creation order. Adam was made first and he was given those commands. Eve wasn't. And Eve was deceived, not Adam. He's saying there's something about masculinity that is better at recognizing deception. Now it doesn't mean all the time. So many wonderful ladies in Christ who have great discernment and what a blessing that is, but nevertheless it says that men must be leading and women, wives, you as you follow Christ, you need to be listening carefully to your husband. You need to be listening to what he has to say. You need to be valuing what he has to say even more than he values what you have to say. Did you hear that? That's just what the Bible says because he is the head.

Now that said, it puts great weight and responsibility on us. This, men, we are responsible for the spiritual well-being of those entrusted to us. I'll mention another passage and you can look at it on your own. 1 Corinthians 14:29-35. We looked at this, again, briefly. It's where they're testing the prophets and it says in that time that many, the idea was that before the Scriptures, the New Testament Scriptures are given, God would feed his people. Now remember they had no New Testament now. It's going to take a while for all the New Testament books to be gathered together because each of the New Testament books are inspired by the Holy Spirit through particular men, to particular settings, at particular times, and so it takes a while to gather all of that together and in the meantime God orders his church to be fed through prophesying. It was a temporary gift until the canon of Scripture was given, at least this form of prophesy. And in 1 Corinthians 14, he says, "Listen, what'll happen when you get together is you're going to need to let different prophets speak. There will be people who have a word and you listen to them and you do it in an orderly fashion, and when a prophet speaks, he says, 'I have a word from God,' and he speaks, then you are to then make sure that you test what he's saying by the word of God."

So that's the command then, and he says in that context, let women keep silent in the churches. He's saying that it's not for a woman to be the one critiquing and evaluating the prophet publicly. She's to, instead, learn at home with her husband. She's to talk to her husband about it after the fact.

So it says that men are responsible for the spiritual protection of the family. Now what does that look like? What does it mean to spiritually protect your family? I want to think about three subpoints under this second point. The second point we're looking at is a good man protects those around him from spiritual danger and I want to focus on three ways we can do that. And the first is, and I'm going to apply this as husbands and fathers, though this applies, the same principles apply to all men. Even if you're not a husband or a father, you are charged with being sensitive to the spiritual protection of people around you. Spiritual protection of people around you, for unbelievers that you work with is to want to give them the gospel to protect them from the wrath of God and from judgment. From other believers, you want to protect them from deception. We're supposed to be about this, all men, but in the family particularly we're going to focus now.



A good man protects those around him from spiritual danger. How do we do that? Three ways I want us to focus on. First is discipline your children. Discipline your children. Ephesians 6:4 says, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the discipline and admonition of the Lord." It says "fathers." It doesn't say "parents" generically. Now it does imply that certainly wives are supposed to do the same thing but it's saying, "Fathers, you are the primary bearer of responsibility for the discipline of your children." Now that is spiritual protection because you're defending their souls from a profound danger.

I've been reading Proverbs. We read it earlier today and one of the great dangers that Proverbs is trying to warn the young man against that's referred to again and again, "My son, my son, seek wisdom, acquire wisdom," like we read today. The great danger is the danger of foolishness. Foolishness will lead to death. Foolishness unchecked, left unchecked is like a cancer, a malignancy in the soul that will destroy the person. It will destroy your child.

I want you to look with me at a few verses. Turn to Proverbs for a moment and let's look at this. You protect your family by, first of all, disciplining your children. Proverbs 22:15. This idea of protection is something we need to think about. It's not just, you see, too often what we do is we discipline our children because they're bothering us. Think about that. How often have you disciplined your child because they're bothering you? That's a self-centered motivation. You discipline your child out of love for God and out of desire for their well-being, their spiritual well-being.

Proverbs 22:15, listen to this, "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him." Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child. The child comes into the world with foolishness in his heart. This is total depravity. One of the effects of sin is that every child comes pre-wired with foolishness in the heart. That is reality. Accept that. Ignore it to your own peril and to the destruction of your own family. It's bound in the heart but he says the rod of discipline will remove it far from him. God is saying that spanking will help remove foolishness from your children's heart.

Now you have to balance that with some wisdom based on, you know, current laws and things like that and certainly the Bible doesn't picture abuse where someone is in anger and wrath. It's discipline is a loving act and love should always be a part of true godly discipline. Men, good men, discipline not because they're mad and angry that they're being bothered. Good men discipline to save the soul of their child. That's the motivation. If foolishness is left unchecked, it is a cancer that will grow.

Turn back over to Proverbs 13:24. You find verses like this throughout the book of Proverbs. I'm just hitting a few of them. Remember we saw the rod of discipline removes foolishness from the heart. Look what he says in Proverbs 13:24, "He who withholds his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him diligently." Now there's a place where the world doesn't understand, right? Now the problem is, you see, the world, all they have is complete self-centeredness. They can't possibly discipline in a godly way

and if they stumble on it with some approximation, you will find some unbelievers who have some wisdom and will apply this fairly well, sometimes better than many Christians, a lot of times better than many Christians but that's still an exception, not the rule.

To discipline in a godly way, you need the Spirit of God. You need the word of God. You need a new heart. But this is showing us that the motivation is so important. "He who withholds his rod hates his son," because if you withhold your rod, you're letting foolishness continue to grow. It's like a doctor that sees a malignancy and doesn't warn the patient and doesn't call the patient to treatment or to surgery but just says, "It's okay. I don't want to bring up anything uncomfortable. I don't want you, I want all of my patients to leave happy, I want them to like me. Hey, everything looks great." There's a malignancy that needs to be treated, doctor. That's malpractice. And he's saying that for a parent not to discipline is like that. You're hating your child.

Turn over to Proverbs 19:18, "Discipline your son while there is hope, And do not desire his death." This is real clear, isn't it? If you don't discipline your child, you're desiring his death. It doesn't feel like that but it doesn't matter what it feels like, this is truth. Foolishness is something that grows in the heart and it's deadly and it must be removed so part of protecting your family spiritually is a determination to protect your children from foolishness and sin. There's an evil cancer that is in the heart of every child. It needs to be eradicated and God has given us the opportunity while we have time. We cannot save our children. No, that's in the hand of God. But we can be faithful to discipline our children so that if they do not follow Christ, it will be on them, not on us.

So the first thing we do. A good man protects those around him from spiritual danger, he disciplines his children. Secondly, you protect those around you from spiritual danger by teaching your family. Teaching your family. You see this in a number of ways. We teach our wives, Ephesians 5:25-26, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her by the washing of water with the word." He's saying, "Husbands, love your wives the way Jesus did. Jesus gave Himself up, He sacrificially loved the church and He washes her by water with the word. So also, husbands, you're to love your wife that same way. You're to wash them by water with the word." You're to teach your wife and you're to bring your children up, Ephesians 6:4, in the discipline and instruction, admonition is instruction of the Lord. You're to teach them.

A good man protects those around him by regularly teaching his family and we should teach them as if their lives depended on it because they do. It's such an urgent area when the world is especially inculcating, it's like one of the things that's happened in the last, particularly the last 14 years, I think 2007 marks a real watershed. That was the invention of the iPhone and I think historians if the Lord tarries, will look back at that as a moment of mixed blessing and curse. The iPhone was a time where now suddenly you hold a personal computer, everyone has a personal computer, they have access to the information highway all the time. And so that as parents, think about the difference. You know, think about as parents even when we were raising our kids which thankfully they

were both born before that time. I'm grateful for that. We didn't have to navigate this quite as much. But, you know, we had rules about what programs could be watched on tv, you know? Everybody kind of relate to that? You're like, "No, you can't watch that cartoon. You can't watch this. No, you cannot watch that channel. You can only watch this for this amount of time." And our kids know that and we remember and think back and sometimes we were kind of wrong, I think, on some of the things we said no to, probably wrong on some things we said yes to. Looking back, like, "I don't know if that was a good decision to let them watch that, especially at that age." You know, some movie that might have been a little too intense or something.

Anyway, we were putting fences around our kids and so the things, the books that they could see, the people they could hang out with. You don't just let your kids hang out with anybody, do you? Just walking down the street, some stranger is walking, "Hey, can we play with your kids for a while?" Sure. Just bring them back in an hour. You have no idea of the morality of these people. You have no idea what they want to do or teach to your children or what they might do to your children. You have no idea. The smartphone is that in reality now. Your children are at, when you give them a smartphone they basically, it's like handing that off. How old are they when you give that to them?

So there's so much we don't even realize that's coming into their minds and into their hearts so we must be teaching them the truth. We must be diligently teaching them the truth. We must be shepherding their souls. And I really think a good metaphor to think about as a husband and a dad is, I think this is biblical, that is the idea of being a shepherd. We said a good man leads, a good man provides, a good man protects. What does that sound like? A shepherd. A shepherd leads, he leads to green pastures, beside still waters. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." You hear the protection there.

Acts 20, speaking about elders, there's a good picture of why we need or how we need to protect. Paul is talking to the Ephesian elders, the elders that shepherd the church in Ephesus and he's telling them about a danger that they don't yet fully realize and there's an earnestness in these words. Look what he says in verse 28, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." Be on guard. Actually this is the third subpoint here. You discipline your children, you teach your family, you guard your family. Discipline, teach, guard. Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock.

Verse 29, "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears." Two imperatives in those four verses. First, verse 28, be on guard. It ends in verse 31, be on the alert. Be on guard means focus, give your full attention to the flock. Be on the alert is a word which means to stay awake, don't sleep, don't allow yourself to rest, be on heightened awareness. There's no time for sleep. He's telling the Ephesian elders the

danger is too real. You must be on guard. You must be alert. Why? Because there are wolves that want to come in. There are wolves that are ready to come into the flock. Think about it, there are wolves, if you really think about, if you have a flock of sheep and you know that wolves are coming around, that's not a time to lie down and take a nap.

Now the Ephesian elders don't recognize this and Paul, though, filled with the Holy Spirit speaking this exhortation to them is aware and can see even in some sense, he seems to even see into the future, as it were. I don't want to make too much out of this but look at the earnestness of what he says. Verse 29, "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them." There is a grave danger that you must be aware of, that you must be ready for. Vigilance is required because wolves are coming.

Now the wolves are coming, how do the wolves eat sheep? He gives us a window into that in verse 30, "from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them." Wolves kill by lying to the sheep. Wolves kill by misleading the sheep. Wolves kill by twisting the word of God and distorting the truth of God and that's what he says is going to happen, even from among the church, even from among you, the elders. I know that some of you will turn away from the truth and you will speak perverse things. You won't just depart from the church, you'll try to take people with you. You will mislead. You will deceive. And therefore all of you must be on guard. This is a matter of the greatest urgency. The eternal life and well-being of all of these sheep is at stake.

That's the kind of mindset that is called for from every husband and every father. We are surrounded by wolves. We live in a world where wolves are everywhere and, as I said, the smartphone has made it so that the wolves are even closer. Vigilance is required. This is on us as men most of all. It doesn't mean that our wives can't help, and they're probably the ones that are most burdened and most sensitive to this reality because God's made them to be protective and to care, but we must take the lead.

Some reading recently, we've been working on this. Dalton is working on this area and we're working together to try to prepare some things to help our families, and particularly help our men to navigate what it means to shepherd your family in the digital age. You read some things that are just so distressing. You know, I mentioned 2007 is when the smartphone was invented, by 2015, 92% of teenagers and young adults had a smartphone. Eight years. In that time, depression, self-harm and suicide, the rates of self-harm, depression and suicide skyrocketed and continue to elevate. And what you find with survey after survey, they will talk about the people that are struggling with depression, isolation, self-harm, thoughts of suicide, what you will find is a correlation. The more time they spend on social media, the more depressed they are because they experience all kinds of things that naturally make you depressed. One of the things that's interesting is young people are more sleep-deprived than ever before because they take their phones to bed and they check their phones in the middle of the night, they get notifications and they

look at them, and so they don't get into deep sleep. And even the blue light of the phone scientists say can affect how deep your sleep is. So the answer is get your phone out of your bedroom. Don't check it. Who cares if somebody wants to contact you in the middle of the night. That can't be good. It just can't be. I'm serious. No way it could be good. If you get a call in the middle of the night, sometimes it's a call you must take and so somebody in the home, I guess, has to have one close enough to hear because we were talking with someone recently who said when you get a call in the middle of the night, you know it's a bad thing when it's someone you know and they're calling you in the middle of the night. And that's true, but the children don't need to be the ones that are alerted for that kind of reality. Teenagers don't need to be experiencing that.

Scientists are seeing that teenagers are becoming addicted and adults too. This is true, adults too, and one of the things that we have to face is, men, we have to be good examples of this ourselves in the way we handle media and our smartphone. They're saying that it's becoming an addiction, that there's something about getting a notification or a text that a certain amount of dopamine is released in the brain so that you have a sense of excitement and euphoria just getting a text. Somebody is reaching out to me. But in reality this is a false illusory kind of connection. It's not a real connection that's happening through Facebook or Instagram or TikTok or whatever the new thing is. It's not real face-to-face human contact. We were made for face-to-face, touching other people, kind of handshaking, smile, sharing, face-to-face contact. You and I were made for that. We need to see people and it only feels like it's real. There's a measure, I'm not saying that all of it is evil. No, certainly there are certain things that can be used but it must be restrained. It must be really wrestled to its right place. Online bullying. Unrealistic views of beauty because girls are looking at the way people make up their own pictures and make them look even better than they are. Then you add in the reality of pornography, the ages at which people are now exposed to porn have gone way down. How devastating.

We must get serious about this and we're working on this. We're looking forward in the next month or two to be bringing out some training on this and, men, I want you to come and be a part of it, and if you can't come and be a part of it, we'll record it and make sure you take advantage of it because you will stand before God one day and answer for whether you protected your family, and I will too. We have to learn. I mean, the thing is we think that we're doing okay because we can look at our kids' accounts but they have secret accounts I've read about. They let you see their Facebook or their Instagram account but they don't let you see the Instagram account that they have with their friends that they're doing stuff they don't need to do. Some of the people in this church, that's happening. Some of your teenagers, that's happening. They're hiding things from you and what needs to happen is frank conversations that say, "Are you telling me everything?" And you have to love your child enough to be bold and do that. We have to do that.

A good man protects those around him from spiritual danger, and the third point, a good man protects those around him by being like Jesus. A pattern for what a man is and a protective loving man is found in Jesus. And it's not just a pattern that we emulate, it's his power that we must lay hold of. He empowers you to do this. It's union with Christ.

It's the gospel. It's that Jesus not only calls you and tells you what to do, he will enable you to do it as you look to him in faith.

But he is bold and a good man protects those around him by being like Jesus and Jesus is bold, and listen, this is something that we just miss too much of. I was reading an article by a young man, Greg Morse, on Desiring God's website and he starts this article out with such a startling statement. Listen to this, "I can still remember being startled by the thought," here's Greg Morse writing this, "I can still remember being startled by the thought," here's the thought, "Jesus doesn't seem very nice." Jesus doesn't seem very nice. "Unquestionably the compassionate, gracious and patient Jesus also said and did things that as I read through the gospel of Mark surprised me, the kind of things that today would get him trolled on Twitter and flagged on Facebook. It was then that I began to think that if Jesus was not nice, if he, the one to whom all Christian women should look, and yet all men look as the epitome of what a godly man is, if Jesus did not fit with my vision for manhood, then my vision for manhood needed to change."

He basically, this article is about niceness is not godliness. Kindness is godliness. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, niceness? No, kindness. The difference between kindness and niceness. Niceness and I say this as a person who, you know, in the South you kind of grow up learning how to be nice, right? But there's a big difference between niceness and kindness and here it is, the idea of kindness biblically is rooted in the idea of usefulness and meeting a need in someone else. It's a disposition of the heart that is alert to needs around them and meets them graciously. Do you hear that? It's a disposition of the heart that is alert to needs around you and meets them graciously. That's not niceness. That's kindness. Niceness is more rooted in selfishness. Niceness is I want to present myself as a pleasant person so that you might like me, so that we can have a happy experience. I don't want to hear anything or notice anything that's uncomfortable. I don't want to bring up any subject that might be uncomfortable. I want to be nice.

Jesus isn't nice in that definition at all because he's kind. He recognizes the needs of other people and he graciously meets those needs. And so like being nice would be, you know, you're speaking to someone just at the grocery store and, you know, we should always have a kind expression, right, a friendly expression on our face and be warm to people. But if that person is distressed and their face is downcast and you say, "Have a nice day!" That's being nice. Kindness would say, "Is something wrong? Can I help you?" Do you see the difference? Niceness is self-centered, kindness is other-centered.

Now we must be like Jesus and Jesus bookends his ministry, think about this, this is basically homework because we're running out of time, he bookends his ministry with two acts of bold decisiveness. He begins his ministry after he turns the water into wine, he goes to Jerusalem for Passover. John 2 tells us that the first thing he did when he got to Jerusalem is he went to the temple, he made a cord, an ox-cord and he drove out the moneychangers from the temple. I mean, think about that. That's not being nice. He got a whip and he overturned the tables and he said, "Get out of My Father's house! You've made it a place of business. This is a place of worship." Years later when he comes back

to Jerusalem on his way to the cross because he dies at Passover, he comes back on Palm Sunday, he enters Jerusalem, the first thing he does after he enters Jerusalem you read in Matthew 21, he goes into the temple, he drives out the moneychangers again, turns over their tables and says, "What are you doing? You're making My Father's house, it's supposed to be a house of prayer." That's not nice. When he tells the Pharisees, "Woe to you Pharisees, you are whited sepulchres," that's not nice but it is kind. He's telling the Pharisees, "You must repent and be saved. The greatest need in your life is to be knocked out of your stupor. You think you know God and you don't."

So love impels him. That's what a man does. A man is kind. A man guards those around him. A man looks like Jesus. And so we have to do that for our families. We have to be the person who's willing to not be nice to our wives, not be nice to our children. Now that sounds crazy. You take that out of context, that looks terrible. Be kind. Yes. Be kind because kindness is other-centered. Kindness is concerned with need in other people. It recognizes the need of the moment and it seeks graciously to meet that need by the power of Christ and you do that by looking to Jesus. And how do you know when to be like Jesus and be bold and authoritative? Well, you've got to be praying and reading your Bible and growing in your understanding so that you see the urgency of the moment. When you see that people are, you know, there's somebody who seems really nice and your son is hanging out with them but they are a Jehovah's Witness, you know it's time not to be nice. Kind, yes. Do you understand what I'm saying? I'm not saying be rude, intentionally rude. We don't need to overturn tables, generally that's not going to be a problem for us. After all, Jesus is the Son of God. We don't go that far but we can say, "Listen, I need to talk to you about your faith. Listen, my son's not going to be hanging out with you and talking about this theology other than if you're going to try to convert him, he's going to try to convert you." Because this is a matter of eternal life and death and we're going to graciously witness to that person, and if there is a friendship, we're galvanizing our children to be ready for that. We're helping them to understand, "Listen, this is what's wrong about it. You can be friends with him but this is what you're going to say when he brings this up. This is the verse you go to when he brings that up." "Dad, I don't want to hear that." This is not the time to be nice, I'm being kind. I am the shepherd. I see what you don't see. The sheep don't tell the shepherd what to do. The shepherd is listening to his master.

So that's why we need to be strong and courageous, listen, because the reality is you and I as men have failed in so many ways that we feel inadequate and the reality is we are. We've not done what we ought to have done. We've not loved our family like we ought to have loved them. We have failed in so many ways but the reality is God says to you today, "Be strong and courageous. I put you in this place for this time. Be strong and very courageous." It's interesting that chapter ends, Joshua is told three times, "Be strong and courageous." At the end of the chapter he's talking to the people and they say back to him, it's so cool, read the rest of it later. They say back to him, "Listen, we're going to do what you say and if somebody doesn't do what you say, they're going to be punished." And they say this, "Only you be strong and courageous." They didn't hear what God said to Joshua. God told Joshua three times, "Be strong and courageous." He goes after that, talks to the people, and the people say, "Only be strong and courageous. We need a leader

who is strong and courageous." The church needs men who are strong and courageous. Your family needs a man who is strong and courageous and only Jesus can make you and me strong and courageous. We need Christ. We need the Holy Spirit.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Our Father, we thank You for Your goodness and Your kindness, Your mercy in Christ Jesus. Help us to be like Jesus. Thank You for His willingness to leave heaven to save sinners by offering Himself at Calvary, and His willingness to confront sin, His willingness to challenge us to faith, repentance. Lord, be glorified in our lives. Help us, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*