

STUDY GUIDE

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NEW VISION

MANHOOD: ADAM OR JESUS?
GENESIS 1-3; 1 CORINTHIANS 15:44B-49
06/19/2017

MAIN POINT

Jesus is the best example of authentic manhood.

INTRODUCE

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What interests, abilities, or characteristics make you feel like a man? Which characteristics make you feel less manly, according to society's standards?

In what ways have you attempted to be respected more? How has that worked out for you?

Different facets of pop culture would have us believe that manliness is equated to certain attitudes or behaviors. In some conversations, manliness might be synonymous with liking sports, cars, or even dirty movies or jokes. We could list numerous distortions about manhood. Some are traditional and historic, such as "the husband is the breadwinner." Some are culturally driven, like "real men don't wear pink." Some are family specific, like "the men in this house play football."

While there are character traits, interests, qualities, and assumptions that can certainly be associated with males, none of them are what turns a boy into a man. Being athletic, liking sports, wearing pants, and making more money don't define manhood. When we allow those attributes to determine what it means to be a man, we settle for something less than what God intended. We accept a lie and live an alternative life to the one God designed. You might say that we are getting our ideas about manhood from Adam when we should be getting them from Jesus. Jesus, not Adam, is the best example of authentic manhood.

READ AND REFLECT

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GENESIS 1:26-28.

In order to discover God's design for manhood and identify the root problems of men today, we must look to the first man God designed: Adam. The Hebrew for Adam means "man." The first man was literally named, Man.

What does it mean to be created in the image of God?

There has been much debate about what it means to be created in the image of God, but Genesis emphasizes three

important things with regard to that image: representation, responsibility, and relationship. By making us in His image, God gave man the responsibility to represent Him well on earth by taking care of His creation and working His garden. Further, by entrusting these crucial tasks to people, God was demonstrating His love for us.

How have representation, responsibility, and relationship been corrupted by the fall? Where do we see examples of the corruption of God's image in Scripture? Where do you see some examples of this in the way our culture views manhood?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GENESIS 2:15-25.

What was Adam's relationship with God like before the fall? What was Adam's relationship like with Eve?

Adam's relationship with his wife Eve was also quite different. The two lived in perfect harmony—they lived without shame and loved and trusted each other without reservation. As part of God's creation, mankind lived in perfect harmony with God and all He had made. Sin was still at bay. Death wasn't yet part of man's vocabulary. Shame didn't exist. Man's gaze wasn't fixed on what he lacked (clothes, knowledge of good and evil, status, importance, etc.). Man's focus was on God and His good plans.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GENESIS 3:7-8 AND 17-19.

What was the immediate effect of Adam's sin on his relationship with God? On his relationship with his wife?

The immediate effect of man's sin was shame. Perfect fellowship was broken. God's creation began to serve an alternative purpose. Plants, which were once declared to be food for man (see Gen. 1:29), became clothing. The result was an end to the perfect union between Adam's form as a man and his function within God's creation.

How did Adam's purpose change as a result of his sin? When do the world's definitions of manhood direct you away from these purposes God has for you? Explain.

The presence of sin in the garden robbed Adam of his purpose and destroyed his manhood, at least the way God had intended it. The presence of sin in this world and in your life robs you of your purpose and destroys your manhood. The irony of all the ways we describe manliness is that many of them involve the very sin that destroys true manhood. That is, we get our ideas from a fallen Adam, when we can truly understand manhood by looking at a risen Jesus.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 CORINTHIANS 15:44B-49.

What observations does Paul state about Adam?

In what ways does Paul differentiate Jesus from Adam? What is the theological reason for these distinctions?

Paul pointed out that the biblical record teaches that all people bear the likeness of the earthly man. The Old Testament not only teaches that human beings are the image of God, but also that they are the images of their human ancestors, including Adam (Gen. 5:3).

But a resurrected Jesus changes everything. Adam received life, but Jesus is a life-giver. Adam came from dust, but Jesus came from heaven and reigns there now. So Paul concluded it must be true that Christians bear the likeness of the man from heaven, not only the man from the earth. To bear the likeness of Christ is to reach the zenith of human existence.

What about Jesus makes Him the ideal man? What character traits of Jesus are the most difficult to take on as a Christ follower?

Has the world promoted an ideal man very different than Jesus? How so?

APPLY

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Which of your cultural assumptions about manhood need to change in light of today's study? What do we stand to lose if we neglect to look to Christ to restore our understanding and practice of manhood?

In what specific areas of manhood do you most need to grow? Spend some time praying as a group, that we would faithfully represent Christ as men, husbands, and fathers.

PRAY

Thank God for giving us the perfect example of what it looks like to be godly men. Pray that He would help you take deliberate steps toward becoming a more Christlike man this week.

COMMENTARY

GENESIS 1:26-28

1:26. God's use of plural pronouns (Us... Our... Our) to refer to Himself has raised many questions. At least five different suggestions have been put forward to explain them: they may be references to (1) the Trinity, (2) God and His angels, (3) God and creation, (4) God's majesty as expressed by a literary device known as the "plural of majesty," or (5) a polytheistic view of God. Since the Bible teaches elsewhere that there is only one God, the fifth option is not tenable.

The two Hebrew words translated as "image" and "likeness" are often understood as having the same meaning. But some interpreters suggest that "image" refers to the ability to reason, with "likeness" referring to the spiritual dimension. What exactly is the "image" of God? Since the Bible teaches that God is Spirit (Jn 4:24), many commentators believe it refers to the non-material aspects of a person—our moral sensibilities, intellectual abilities, will, and emotions. Based on God's commands in Gen 1:28, others have suggested that it consists of the role humans are to play on earth—their rulership over the planet and its resources, and secondarily the physical, mental, and spiritual abilities that enable them to fulfill that role. The NT teaches that Christians will someday bear the image of Christ (1 Co 15:49; 1 Jn 3:2).

1:27. The creation of humanity is the crowning event of chapter 1, as shown by the fact that created is repeated three times. The verb "created" is the same one used in 1:1, referring to a kind of creative activity that only God can do. The term "man" is used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible to refer to humanity in general, not just males; all people, both male and female, are created in the image of God. People are the only beings that are created in the image of God. The Bible never lumps people into the category of animals. Instead, it separates the creation of people from all other beings and attributes the most privileged roles in creation to humans alone.

In Genesis the Creator bestowed special value on humanity. Human beings in the ancient Near-Eastern view were not indispensable to the operation of the world, whereas in Genesis they were essential as its chief caretakers. The Lord blessed humanity, assigning man and woman the responsibility to propagate and to rule over the earth (1:26-28). Ancient myths explained the purpose of humanity as servants who met the servile interests of the gods. The Bible elevates the person and role of humans who were "crowned ... with glory and honor" (Ps 8:5), made in the divine image. God prepared the resplendent Garden of Eden for humanity, giving humanity meaningful work and purpose (Gen 2:8-18). Also, Genesis presents the first humanity as individuals who were the progenitors of the human race.

1:28. In this, the longest of the five blessings found in the account of creation, God gave humanity five different commands. Implicit in the first three commands is God's blessing on the institutions of marriage and the family. The final two commands, to subdue the earth and rule the animal kingdom, express God's blessing on the use of the planet's renewable and nonrenewable natural resources. Of course, only the wise use of these resources permits people to fulfill God's command to fill the earth. A similar command to the survivors of the flood is shorter, having only the first three verbs in it (9:1).

GENESIS 2:15-22

The Hebrew word translated as "placed" literally means, "caused to rest"; this pre-sin state of rest anticipates the "rest" ("relief"; 5:29) that would again come to humanity because of righteous Noah, as well as the rest that God would again give Israel following its episode of calf worship. As a being created in God's image, Adam, like God, was to be a worker. Without the taint of sin, work was an undiluted blessing. The verb translated here as "work" literally means "serve." Adam's second task in the garden was to watch over it. God gave Adam both freedom and limits. The God-given freedoms vastly outnumbered the limitations. After all, Adam was free to eat from any tree of the garden except one.

The only limit God placed on Adam was eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which apparently imparted divine wisdom (3:22). Eating the forbidden fruit represented Adam's rejection of God as the source of divine wisdom and his choice to pursue wisdom apart from God. God's penalty for disobedience was stated especially forcefully in the original language, with a two-verb construction, "dying you shall die" (you will certainly die). Death would certainly come to Adam and all humanity after him; but the death that God warned about would be more than physical (3:19). Besides severing the cord of life, sin would shatter the harmonious relationship that existed between Adam and his environment (3:17-18), his wife (3:16), and God.

The theme of God providing for Adam's needs is picked up again in verse 18, as God declared that Adam's being alone is not good. God created the man with a need to relate to one as his complement, and now God will meet that need. Adam's understanding of the nature of the animals he named only highlighted the differences that existed between him and the rest of God's creatures: no helper was found as his complement.

GENESIS 3:7-8, 17-19

Since the woman did not die when she touched the fruit—in contradiction to what she had thought God said (v. 3)—she ate it. Though Adam was with her at the time, he did nothing to stop her. Perhaps he wanted to eat of it as much as the woman did, but fearing the consequences, used his wife as a "guinea pig" to make sure it would not cause instant death. As the serpent had indicated, the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew, but instead of producing godlike power, the knowledge brought only a sense of human inadequacy, fear, and shame.

God took the initiative in reaching out to sinful humanity. This pattern—humanity sinning, then God seeking out sinners—becomes the primary theme of the rest of the Bible. Its ultimate expression is found in Jesus Christ, who came to seek and to save people alienated from God because of their sin; in Him God once again walked on the earth in search of sinners.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:44B-49

15:44b–49. To make his position perfectly clear, Paul stated that the existence of a natural (ordinary) body necessitates the existence of a spiritual (renewed by the Holy Spirit) body. He supported this belief with five observations about Adam written in the Scriptures. From these five observations Paul drew five conclusions about Christ. Assuming the truthfulness of his earlier comparison between Adam and Christ, he argued from the lesser to the greater that if something were true of Adam, then something greater must be true of Christ.

First, Paul paraphrased Genesis 2:7, which states that Adam became a living being. Then, turning to the last Adam, he asserted that Christ did not merely become a living being. In his resurrection Christ became something much greater than a living being. He became a life-giving spirit. In other words, as much as Adam was a wondrous creature able to transmit life to his offspring, he did not compare to the wonderful Christ, who gives eternal life to all who trust in him.

Second, Paul noted that the order of the biblical account was important. Historically, the natural body for the human race came before the spiritual body given by Christ. This supports Paul's earlier argument that God will provide a body renewed by the Spirit in the resurrection of believers.

Third, Adam was of the dust of the earth, but Christ is from heaven. Adam was an ordinary human being, but Christ

exceeds Adam's glory because Christ came from heaven (John 6:38). Fourth, Paul argued that Scripture indicates that those who are of the earth (i.e., Adam's descendants) are like the earthly man (i.e., Adam). They inherit his natural physical nature. Yet, those who are of heaven (i.e., born from above in regeneration) become like the man from heaven (i.e., Christ). From heaven (epouranios) does not refer to Christ's location of origin, or even to his current location, but to his nature. The regenerate inherit Christ's spiritual nature.

Fifth, Paul pointed out that the biblical record teaches that all people bear the likeness of the earthly man. The Old Testament not only teaches that human beings are the image of God, but also that they are the images of their human ancestors, including Adam (Gen. 5:3). So Paul concluded it must be true that Christians bear the likeness of the man from heaven. Elsewhere, Paul described the ultimate state of salvation as being "conformed to the likeness of [God's] Son" (Rom. 8:29).