

# **Men Helping Sons Embrace Biblical Manhood**

**A Five-Week Study for High School Guys  
Designed for Dads or Youth Leaders to Lead**

*Today's guys face two opposite but equally destructive hurricane-force winds slamming against their pursuit of godly manhood. On the one hand are forces that label him "sexist" for even believing there are significant differences between men and women. On the other hand, his internal sense of what it means to be a man can push him toward an ill-defined masculinity that is more toxic than biblical.*

*The void in our culture's understanding of masculinity provides an unprecedented opportunity for the rising generation of Christian men to model strong manhood as God designed it to be through the redemptive power of Jesus.*

***Be strong, act like a man, and observe what the Lord your God requires. 1 Kings 2:2-3.***

**Dr. Gary Yagel**

*Developed in consultation with Josh Yagel, Varsity Football Coach, Health and PE teacher, and adult leader of Fellowship of Christian Athletes at Centreville High School in Clifton, VA.*

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## **Don't let your son build his marriage and family on a foundation of sand—the culture's view of gender roles**

**Strategic dads** realize that gender differences are so important to God's design of us that He spelled them out in the first two chapters of Genesis. That design is the structure upon which marriage, sexuality, and the family, are built. Christians who follow the culture instead of this design build their lives and families on sand.

**Strategic youth leaders** realize that today's guys are confused about masculinity, how to treat girls, and how to resist porn. As they leave home, most are unprepared to withstand the culture's view that saving sex for marriage is out of date. This study addresses these issues safely, builds confidence in the biblical worldview, and eases guys into expressing their own ideas, essential in ministry to Gen Z.

**Strategic men's ministries** know it is their job to protect their sons from destructive gender ideology and guide them into biblical truth instead. By inviting the high school guys to join them in a study of this booklet, the men's ministry can achieve one of its most important goals—getting older guys mentoring younger ones. Godly manhood is better *caught* than *taught*.

Here are some tips for using this tool most effectively:

- It does not require preparation ahead of time but is designed to read together alternating paragraphs.
- It can be used for dad and son to go through together over breakfast but can be used by dads in other ways.
- It is designed for youth leaders to go through with high school guys one-on-one or in small groups.
- The questions sprinkled throughout identify who begins the discussion by answering the question, *leader*, *son*, or *both*. Their goal is to generate back and forth dialogue. When a question is marked *both*, it is best for the son to answer first.
- This study is safe. It will not ask either leader or son to answer a question that is too personal, and the leader is assigned the reading in the section entitled, *The Bible's High View of Sex*.

# **Men Helping Sons Embrace Biblical Manhood**

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***But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:13-14).***

# Chapter One: Why Understanding Masculinity and Femininity Matters

## The Male-Female Puzzle

Discuss: Son answers. What would your friends say about the idea that men and women are designed differently?

- a) It is obvious.
- b) It is not politically correct to mention.
- c) It is something worth thinking about.
- d) It explains why guys are so confused about what girls want.

Discuss: Both. Of the 1189 chapters of the Bible, God devotes part of the first and almost all the second to explaining how Adam and Eve are fully equal, created to be different, and are to relate to one another. Why do you think revealing these creation truths to us is such a high priority to God?

Walter Trobisch, in his book, *I Loved a Girl*, recounts a legend from India about the creation of woman:

The Creator created woman and gave her to the man.

After one week, the man came back and said, "Lord, the creature that you have given me makes my life unhappy. She talks without ceasing and torments me intolerably, so that I have no rest. She insists that I pay attention to her all the time and so my hours are wasted. She cries about every little thing and leads an idle life. I have come to give her back to you, because I can't live with her."

The Creator said, "All right," and he took her back.

After a week passed, the man came back to the Creator and said, "Lord, my life is so empty since I gave the creature back to you. I always think of her—how she danced and sang, how she looked at me out at the corner of her eye, how she chatted with me and snuggled with me. She was so beautiful to look at and so soft to touch. I liked her laugh so much! Please give her back to me."

The Creator said, "All right." And gave her back.

But three days later, the man came back again and said, "What shall I do? I can't live with her, and I can't live without her!"<sup>1</sup>

Discuss: Both answer. How much do you think this legend does or does not have a ring of truth to it? What makes you say that?

The legend observes that males are BOTH *frustrated* by females and *attracted* to them. The reason is that they are so different from us. We *can't live with them* easily, because their way of operating is so opposite to ours. But *we can't live without them*, because we are powerfully attracted to them as **negatively** charged electrons in a battery race through the circuit, towards the opposite, **positive** pole.

Both the differences that *frustrate* us and those that generate *male-female magnetism* result from God's deliberate design of males and females differently. He intentionally created Adam with weaknesses that only a woman could fill and Eve with weaknesses that only a man could fill. By design, each gender provides what the other lacks. Eve completes Adam by supplying what he lacks, and Adam completes what is missing in Eve. God calls this unit "man"

Notice that "man" is both singular and plural, just as God is both. *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them"*<sup>2</sup>.

Here, God reveals that he created humans for the purpose of bearing his image. Since he exists as the loving union of the three distinct Persons of the Trinity, God designed the unit called “man” to be the loving union of two distinct persons, man and woman to complete one another in love. This union of two separate beings is exhibited in the way their bodies fit together in the sexual union of marriage.

**God’s design for humans is that each gender delight in what the other gender brings into the relationship to complete it.** For this reason. God emphasizes the equality of Adam and Eve in the first chapter of Genes; both bear his image and exercise dominion over their kingdom, earth. But God puts even more emphasis on each gender valuing the other by devoting four times as much space to emphasizing how different male and female are designed to be. God wrote different creation scripts for men than he did for women. Those scripts are fundamental to living out what we have been created *for*. But as Owen Strachan & Gavin Peacock observe:

Today, the sexes have lost the script for their lives, and so many of us don’t know what role to play in life. Try asking a male friend at a coffee shop, ‘What is your manhood *for*? What is the purpose of being a man?’ Or try querying a young woman at the local university, ‘What meaning does womanhood have? Does it matter at all?’...Outside of affirming feminism, transgender identity, and shape-shifting sexual orientation, it’s taboo today to speak of manhood and womanhood in any fixed way. This is true in secular circles and it’s increasingly true even in Christian circles.<sup>3</sup>

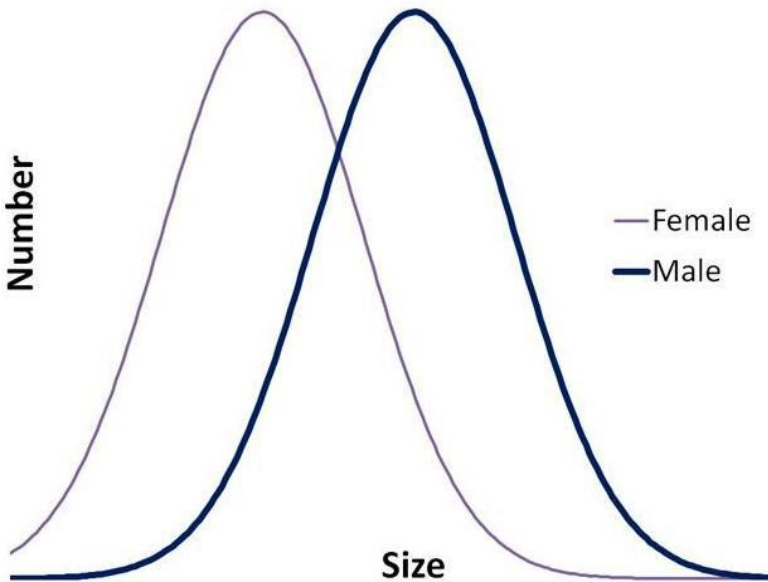
Discuss: Both. Have you ever thought about masculinity and femininity having “fixed scripts?” How countercultural does this biblical principle seem? What do you think might be the cost of losing the script God wrote for manhood and womanhood?

## **The Danger of Stereotyping**

The pursuit of God’s vision of masculinity and femininity contains a risk that we must confront right out of the box—the danger of unfair stereotyping. One of my twin daughters likes frilly things. Her sister dresses in a more professional style. Is frilly more feminine? Is an artistic son less masculine than one who plays linebacker?

### **What the Solution to Unjust Stereotyping is NOT**

The way to stop unfair stereotyping is NOT the elimination of generalizations, as is often claimed. Inductive reasoning begins with the particulars and reasons from those particulars to formulate a *generalization*. For example, a child sees a furry creature with a long tail say “meow” and learns that it is called a “cat.” The next day he sees the same looking creature saying “meow” also called a cat. The child makes a generalization that such creatures are called “cats,” as he learns to speak. *Generalizing* is the fundamental component of human learning. Abandoning our God-given reasoning process can’t be the solution to unfair stereotyping!



**Bell Curves of Male Size Overlaps Bell Curve of Female Size**

## What the Solution to Unjust Stereotyping IS

### 1. We must recognize God's glorious creativity.

- God creates humans with a vast array of characteristics. When scientists plot the distribution of these characteristics across all humans, it often fits a bell-shaped curve.
- Since God purposely designed males and females differently, we would expect male/female bell curves to be different. **This objective difference** in some male and female bell curves leads to *accurate* GENERALIZATIONS.
- Yet, in many categories, male and female are so similar that the bell curves overlap (see size curve). This overlap means we must be very careful about gender generalizations.
- Is the *generalization* true that adult men are usually bigger than adult women? Yes. Does that mean being big makes a woman masculine? No.
- Is it fair to say that estrogen causes most women to be more emotional than men? Yes. But I cry more at sad movies than my wife does. Does that make me feminine? No. The bell curves **OVERLAP**. God made me to be a pastor; so, I am at the emotional end of the masculine spectrum. God planned to give my wife and me five kids; so, he made her part drill sergeant, on the less emotional end of the female spectrum.

**2. The problem with stereotyping is not generalizing, but *how the generalization is used*.** *Unfair* stereotyping uses generalizations **to harm**. It demeans subsets of the population, denying their rights. *Wise* stereotyping, on the other hand, uses generalizations **to love**. The generalization equips us to understand another's God-designed shape, especially the design of those different from us, **to better enable us to meet his or her needs**.

Discuss: Both. How would you answer a critic who argues, "As soon as you say men and women are different you open the door to the oppression of women?"

## Why Recover God's Manhood Script?

### **A. Healthy males want to develop their masculine identity.**

Author David Murrow makes this point in summarizing what psychology tells us about men. He writes,

Boys grow up in a feminine world. A boy spends his first nine months inside a woman's body, and after he is born, a multitude of women—his mom, babysitters, nursery and daycare workers, and schoolteachers—care for him. At some point, however, a boy must break from the feminine and begin to define himself as something different from the mother, from whose body he sprang. Psychologists call this *separation/individuation*. A boy must reject...her feminine ways and take his place in society as a man. A male who fails to separate, psychologically from his mother faces a lifetime of gender confusion, abuse, or dysfunction.<sup>4</sup>

Every one of the thirty trillion cells in a male body has XY chromosomes and in the female body XX. Embryologists now know that at eight weeks, the presence of the XY chromosome in the human embryo causes the male's whole body to develop differently than a female's body, including his brain. One scholar points out:

Sexuality permeates one's being to its very depth; it conditions every facet of one's life. As the self is always aware of itself as an "I," so this "I" is always aware of itself as *himself* or *herself*. Our self-knowledge is indissolubly bound up not simply with our *human* being but with our *sexual* being.<sup>5</sup>

Understanding God's design for manhood matters to males because we are hardwired with an inner compulsion to be masculine.

**B. Godly males want to attract godly females.** God created the magnetism between female and male. So, it stands to reason that the more we become godly men the more a godly female will be drawn

to us. For example, in the dance of man with woman, God has assigned the man the role of taking the initiative, just as Jesus, our Bridegroom, took the initiative to leave heaven to pursue us, drawing us to himself with the cords of love. A woman naturally finds her heart drawn to masculine men who are not passive, or tentative in pursuing them but consistently take the initiative in each new phase, as the relationship grows.

Have you ever noticed how often a beautiful woman marries an average-looking guy? I think I know why. Whereas a man *looks for a woman to love*, a woman *looks for a man who will love her*. Her attraction to him is much less related to his looks than it is to his confident ability to love her consistently, making her feel treasured, cherished, and loved.

This truth has tremendous implications for guys getting ready to date. Smart guys put more energy into learning how to be attentive to a girl's needs and make others feel valuable than into worrying about their looks. The masculine strength to consistently love her is just one part of God's masculine design of manhood. Women can't help but be attracted to the godly masculinity *to which God designed them to be drawn*.

**C. Understanding God's creation design of male and female is essential for making male-female relationships in general work throughout life.** Although marriage is not on the minds of most high school guys, picking up what they can about the feminine creation design is valuable before marriage. *After* marriage may be a bit late; most divorces are filed for by unhappy wives whose husbands did not realize how different their wives' needs were from their own. In fact, not learning about a woman's emotional makeup ahead of marriage has caused a large majority of female divorcees to say that their married years were the loneliest years of their lives.<sup>6</sup>

Not only is understanding femininity essential before marriage; it is invaluable for preventing potential male-female misunderstandings

in general. At one stage in my marriage, I read a Christian counselor's observation that men tend to use words to communicate *decisions* and *ideas*, but women tend to use words more to communicate *feelings*. Thankfully, that realization came to mind in a critical conversation with one of my twin daughters.

Both girls had decided independently to go to Covenant College, but Karen, being less decisive by nature, took a while longer than her sister to decide. Fast forward. As we pulled up the driveway to drop off the girls at Covenant College with my five kids in my van and a u-hall trailer behind, Karen said, "I don't want to be here." Every part of my masculine soul wanted to turn around and say to her, "Don't you think it's a little bit late to say that?" But I actually realized she *wasn't questioning her decision; she was telling me how she felt*. She was afraid—afraid her college roommate might not like her, dreading being eleven hours away from our close-knit family, fearful that she wouldn't fit in with the girls on her floor. I held my tongue but then heard her seven-year-old brother say through tears, "I just don't know why you have to go to college so far away." We all had a big cry and moved on.

God says the wisdom of Scripture *is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*<sup>7</sup> This claim is certainly true in understanding what God has revealed about his glorious design of femininity and masculinity. It leads to pleasant paths of *shalom*, which is the Hebrew word for *flourishing*.

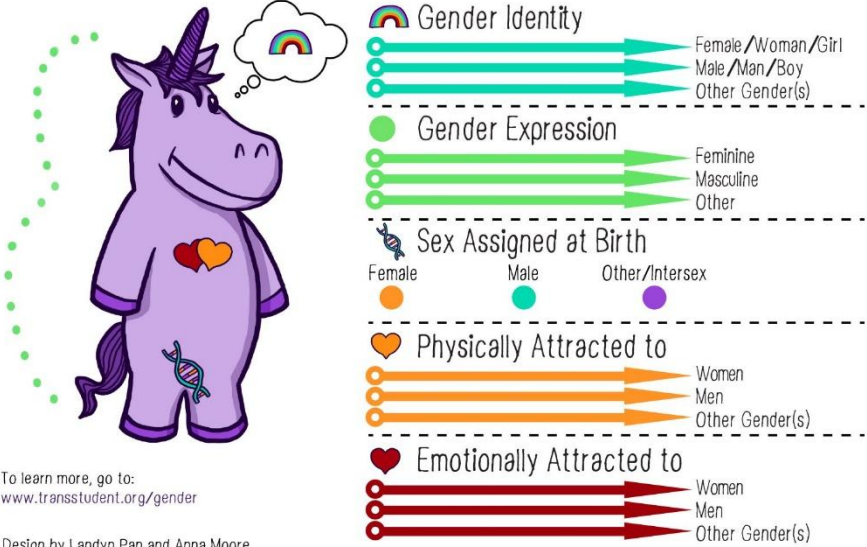
**D. Discipleship is the call to show the power of Christ to restore manhood and womanhood, broken by sin, to the pre-fall, creation design.** The target of male discipleship is restored godly manhood. The target of female discipleship is restored godly womanhood. That is why when both Peter and Paul call Christ-followers to discipleship, their challenges to women and men are different.

Discuss: Both. Consider Peter’s way of motivating Christ-like character in women. *Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart.* How motivating is this appeal to you? Compare such words with Paul’s appeal to male leaders at Corinth. *Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.*

**E. A fractured view of sexual personhood has captured the minds of many teens today, leading them down a destructive path.** The fifth reason for understanding God’s gender design is to be able to thwart a view of sexual personhood harming those we care about. The following graphic, created by Trans Student Education Resources, has been translated into over ten languages and promoted worldwide.

# The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by:  
**TSER**  
Trans Student Educational Resources



To learn more, go to:  
[www.transstudent.org/gender](http://www.transstudent.org/gender)

Design by Landyn Pan and Anna Moore

As you can see, this fractured view of sexual personhood splits apart five aspects of human sexuality, proclaiming that *every human is*

*free to choose and change all five.* He/she then lives a fractured existence. Here is their definition of each fractured part:

- **Gender identity:** deciding for yourself that your identity is male, female, or bisexual regardless of your anatomy.
- **Gender expression (role):** the way you express your gender, adoption of expectations for your gender.
- **Sex assigned at birth:** the designation on your birth certificate as male or female was merely the opinion of parents/doctors.
- **Physical attraction:** sexual orientation, same-sex, heterosexual, or bisexual attraction. This is distinct from emotional attraction. So, a man can be in love with his wife but do his sexual thing on the side with a fellow homosexual.
- **Emotional attraction:** romance. Separating emotional attraction from physical attraction is the basis for prostitution and the sexual abuse of women and children. It is evil.

Discuss: Son. Where have you bumped into this fractured view of sexual personhood? Why do you think teens believe the delusion that *they* decide their gender identity instead of *their anatomy*?

Some Christians argue that love requires us to embrace feminism's attempt to overthrow the Bible's "unjust patriarchy" and our transgender friends' attempts to choose their genders. But Paul said ***love does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth***<sup>8</sup>. As Christ-followers, whose eyes have been opened to the truth of God's Word, we see both the destructive power of the Gender Unicorn view of sexual personhood and the glory of God's design of male and female differently to complete each other. Our conversion causes us to *savor*, not *apologize for* God's gender design. Strachan and Owens observe:

When we trust Christ as our Savior, the beauty of God's design comes into view. Our conversion opens our eyes to the nature and purpose of our God-given sex. We see the body not as a

blunt instrument for our lusts, but as the gift of God for his glorification. We see our relationships with the opposite sex not as a power play, but as an opportunity to serve others in the name of Christ. We see the plan of complementarity, the roles we have the privilege of filling, not as a sentence to misery but as a summons to happiness.<sup>9</sup>

Discuss: Both. How is the Bible's view of sexual personhood superior to the Gender Unicorn's view? How might confidence in God's creation design empower us to love well those in the trans community instead of our insecurity about the Bible's position causing us to be defensive and harsh with those who don't accept the Bible?

Not only does the comparison between the Gender Unicorn view of sexual personhood and God's gender design lead us to embrace God's design *ourselves*. It also urges us to take a stand *in our culture*. Jesus assigned us to be light to the world and salt that retards the decay of sin on earth. Strachan and Owens, again rightly point out:

When it comes to understanding gender, Christians have something far, far better to offer our children and culture. It is not human disintegration—the splitting apart of one's biological sex from one's sexual identity and sexual role, or the separation of physical attraction from emotional attraction. It is an *integrated* view of body and soul that sees God's design of male and female to be glorious. Our culture desperately needs to hear our message.<sup>10</sup>

Discuss: Both. Since the biblical view of sexual personhood makes so much more sense than TSER's view, why are Christians so slow to object to this fractured view's assumptions about sexual identity? How can we lovingly help a trans person see that he is believing a delusion?

Chapter Wrap-up Discussion: Both. Here is a summary of the reasons we examined in this chapter for understanding God’s design of gender. Which of these six reasons seem most important to you?

- Understanding this design is so important to God that he puts it in the first chapters of his revelation to us, the Bible.
- Healthy men separate from femininity and pursue manhood.
- Understanding the design helps males attract the right kind of females.
- Understanding the design helps us be more sensitive to the needs of the females God has placed in our lives (including our mom who needs our praise).
- Discipleship is about putting on display Christ’s power to fix masculinity and femininity broken by sin.
- Today’s teens are being deceived into embracing a destructive view of sexual identity, The Gender Unicorn. Christians are stewards of a view of sexual personhood that is infinitely better because it is wholistic and matches reality.

In the remaining four chapters we will examine God’s gender design through the lens of *creation*—God’s design of manhood, womanhood, and marriage, *the fall*—how sin has corrupted masculinity, femininity and sexuality, and *redemption/restoration*—how to live out our calling to exhibit redeemed masculinity to the world.

So, we begin with CREATION.

## About Gary Yagel

Dr. Gary Yagel loves teens. He led State College Young Life club while a student at Penn State and served four years as a Youth Pastor in the DC Suburbs. He met with each of his 5 kids once a month to guide them through childhood and the turbulent years of adolescence. He understands the challenges teens face as well as the anxiety parents feel over whether their teens will make the right choices.

God's design of masculinity and femininity has been at the heart of Gary's work as the PCA Men's Ministry Consultant for over ten years and was the basis of his doctoral thesis at RTS Orlando, "Discipling the Heart of a Man." He is the Executive Director of *Forging Bonds of Brotherhood* and has served as keynote speaker for *Iron Sharpens Iron* conferences and presenter of Man in the Mirror's *No Man Left Behind* seminar. He has taught his seminary course, "Kingdom Discipleship," at Reformed Theological Seminary, DC.

His books, *Got Your Back*, and *Anchoring Your Child to God's Truth in a Gender-Confused Culture* are available at Amazon. His booklets *Our Daughters and the Transgender Craze*, and *Grace Transformed Sexuality* are available at the PCA bookstore [pcabookstore.com/](http://pcabookstore.com/). additional resources can be found on his website, [forgingbonds.org](http://forgingbonds.org).

He is also the producer of *Mission Focused Men for Christ* weekly podcast, available on any podcast app. Praise God that over 250,000 episodes have been downloaded of this podcast/blog. Gary and his patient wife, Sandy, have been married for 44 years and have the five cutest grandchildren in the world. They reside in Olney, MD.



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<sup>1</sup> Walter Trobisch, *I Loved a Girl: A Private Correspondence Paperback*, (March 1, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 1:26-27.

<sup>3</sup> Owen Strachan and Gavin Peacock, *The Grand Design: Male and Female He Made Them*, (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, Ltd., 2016), 13.

<sup>4</sup> Dave Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 90.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Jewett, *Man as Male and Female*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 75.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker, *Every Woman's Desire*, (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2002) 61.

<sup>7</sup> Proverbs 3: 15, 17.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:6.

<sup>9</sup> Strachan and Peacock, *The Grand Design*, 14-15.

<sup>10</sup> Gary Yagel, *Anchoring Your Child to God's Truth in a Gender-Confused Culture*, (Ft. Lauderdale, FL: D. James Kennedy Ministries, 2018), 22.