

A Beautiful Design (Part 5) – Man's Redemption

Matt Chandler – October 5, 2014

How are we? Doing well? Excellent. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab them. We're going to start in Ezekiel 37. If you don't have a Bible with you, there should be a hardback black one under your seat or around you. Go ahead and grab that. It's always of utmost importance that you see the things we say in here aren't really my ideas or something I've come up with but rather something we're reading straight from the Word of God. So if you'll grab that, we'll get going.

As a refresher, if you're a guest with us, if maybe this is your first time here, we're in the middle of our fall series. We've called that series *A Beautiful Design*. What we're looking at is when it comes to humanity, specifically when it comes to manhood and womanhood, how has God, as our Creator, designed us in regard to origin, purpose, and design?

We've covered origin and the purpose of man. We haven't gotten to women yet. We're going to turn the corner in the next couple of weeks and, where the last three weeks we've just focused on manhood, we'll then start to discuss and look at what the Word of God has to say about womanhood.

What we've already laid down is that, yes, in some ways, my biology makes me male, but there is something else that has to be present for me to be a man. Agreed? You have to agree if you have sons. Otherwise, you have to call my 8-year-old boy a man, and I wouldn't do it. I know him. I wouldn't do it. And there are little girls and there are women, so something is taking place that moves males to manhood and females to womanhood. This is what we've been digging into.

We started out talking about God as Creator. If our God is Creator, that means he alone has the authority to determine design and function. It's God the Creator's role to say, "Here's how it works best." He is the designer of the machine, if you'll remember the C.S. Lewis quote. He's the one who designed the machine. He's the one who knows how it works best. When we take matters into our

own hands and say, "No, no, I know how to use the machine best," we're like someone telling the creator how it's actually supposed to be used.

So we covered that, and then we got into the *imago Dei*, what it means to be made in the image of God, that you and I have an elevated position among the rest of the created order. I made the joke for two weeks in a row that if the budget got tight and I had to decide between the horse, the dog, my wife, or my kids, it's kind of a no-brainer on who has to go, right? It's not my wife.

That decision isn't a mathematical decision. I don't look at the budget and go, "Money is tight. Who's costing me the most money? She has to go." That's a no-brainer. No one would argue to make decisions like that. Why? Because my wife, made in the image of God, has an elevated worth over any animal in the world.

In fact, I used sweet Darrin... My boy Darrin here is worth far more than Secretariat. Literally, the most amazing horse that has ever been on the planet earth, just blowing by fools, a "movie made about him" kind of horse, a million-dollar horse, is not even in the same ballpark as my friend Darrin. Not even close. Why? Because Darrin has been made in the image of God. Secretariat hasn't.

God was pleased with the horse, right? I mean, repeatedly in the Bible he's like, "I nailed that. That thing is awesome." In Job he says, "How magnificent is the horse with its snorting? It makes men feel terror." God kind of feels like he nailed it. Yet it's an animal, and it's not in any way any human being's equal.

All humans, male and female, bear the image of the Creator and have an elevated value and worth over the rest of creation and are stewards of creation, which is why, despite the fact of our elevated position, any type of abuse or neglect of the created order is wicked and not in accordance with our design. Where we are acting as image bearers, we will then cause humanity and really the created order to flourish.

So that was being made in the image. That becomes imperative for a thousand reasons. Where the *imago Dei* is understood, almost all that we call wicked starts to vanish. Pornography is an *imago Dei* issue. Prostitution is an *imago Dei* issue. Abortion is an *imago Dei* issue. Genocide is an *imago Dei* issue. Racism is an *imago Dei* issue. Discrimination is an *imago Dei* issue. All of the horrors of humanity can be drawn back to a failure to understand that all mankind has been created in the image of God. In his image he created them, male and female he created them.

Then, from the *imago Dei*, we moved into man and what is the purpose of man, and straight from the Bible we looked at the call on the man to work and keep the created order. I wanted to stay away from the word *leadership* when it comes to men, because women can lead. In fact, I've seen some women lead out in spectacularly amazing ways. So we pulled out this idea that's a faithful idea to the Word of God of male headship.

We defined male headship like this. *Headship* is the unique leadership of the man in the work of establishing order for human flourishing. Here's what I said, and I'll stick by it. No one even tried, because I don't think you can argue with this. Where men refuse to be men, the world breaks down, and where men will step into what God designed them to walk in, mankind flourishes.

Now I'm not speaking simply as a Christian, because if you want to study that economically, go ahead. You'll see it's right. If you want to study it sociologically, go ahead and study it. You'll find out I'm right. When sociologists and economists are saying men need to be present in the home, in the neighborhood, for human flourishing, they're simply tapping into the good design that is revealed in the Scriptures.

As we read the economists and sociologists, I'm going, "Exactly," because that's what God said. Of course it's not working. Of course absentee fathers create a crisis in identity in little boys and little girls. Now single moms, widows, I don't want to say that again without saying *this* again. Where the ideal is lacking, grace abounds. Some of the godliest men I know right now did not grow up in homes where Daddy was overly engaged or grew up in homes where his engagement was dark. Don't lose heart, sisters. The Lord enters into dark spaces and makes things new. Don't lose heart.

But in every domain of study, God has designed the man to have a unique role in human flourishing. He orders things for flourishing, and where men fulfill the role of biblical manhood, women also flourish in their gifts, in their zeal. In fact, the Bible would tell us that a wife married to a good man would flourish like a well-watered vine. So men, that's a good little litmus test to your leadership. Is your wife flourishing?

Now from there, Beau, Angry Beau, came out of nowhere last week... (I'm just kidding. I totally assigned him that topic. I know he outed me in his sermon too.) He comes and starts talking about the hurdles of men, because we can look at the data and say, "Yeah, yeah, men need to play this

role," but we can look at reality and see that they don't and that they've punted on this responsibility and refused to fill this space.

Instead of having biblically-formed, Holy Spirit-strengthened men, we have boys who can shave. We have little boys in grownup bodies. We have 8-year-olds in 50-year-old bodies. We have the abject refusal to enter the difficulty of manhood, because being a boy is easier. In fact, the frequency at which men are giving themselves over to comfort and couches when there is a war waging is staggering.

The frequency at which men refuse to lead spiritually in the home. Men, you know that's on you, right? God has not deemed your wife as spiritual priest of the family. That falls on *your* shoulders, men, to set the spiritual climate. The frequency at which men refuse to emotionally connect to wives and children. We'll talk more about this in the future, because sometimes it's not refusal. Sometimes we just don't know how. But again, this refusal to even pursue being emotionally connected. Poor wives living with robots.

The frequency at which single men refuse to pursue godly single women for deep friendships that might lead to marriage. These are all of those places where men are refusing to step in and deciding to stay in this extended adolescence, despite the fact that their bodies have matured to what would be defined as manhood. The voice has dropped. We have to shave, some of us more than others. Our physical bodies look like men, but our behavior would define us as boys.

Beau began to unpack how this plays itself out, and he correctly defined it in two ways. (By the way, he killed that sermon. If you didn't listen to that, he was unbelievable.) He said that men's errors, men's hurdles, are we're prone to *selfish passivity* or *selfish aggression*. Because sin entered the world and marred the image, because sin has entered into the world and broken the man all the way down to the cellular level, where our iniquities, our bents, take us is toward a type of sinful selfish passivity or toward selfish aggression.

Then he had such a brilliant little caveat, that even the passive man is not actually passive; he's actively choosing not to fulfill the role God gave him. It comes off as passivity. It comes off as, "I'm going to refuse to engage," but what he's actively doing is refusing to engage as the Lord would have him engage, and it looks like passivity. In the end, it's selfish passivity. Where this happens and men are given over to selfish passivity or selfish aggression, the stench of death lingers. It lingers in

homes. It lingers in churches. It lingers in communities. It lingers in countries. Where men refuse to grow up, humanity's chance at flourishing is nearly nonexistent.

Now ladies, let's chat for a second before we dive into Ezekiel 37. If you'll remember, when we started manhood a couple of weeks ago, I said here are the two ways you really need to be engaged in this conversation about manhood and what manhood is. There are really two parts you play as we flesh this out.

The first is expectation. As we walk through what the Word of God says about biblical manhood, your expectations of men should rise. The bar should be raised as you hear, "This is what God says a man is." The bar should raise. Men will rise to the occasion if the bar is high enough. If you set it low, you'll find some moron running in a herd of other morons who steps over that tiny little bar you have.

You're more valuable than that. Remember the *imago Dei*. Put the bar high. "Well, sometimes I feel lonely." Get a cat, because that cat will not cause you the heartbreak that some boy who can shave will. Don't treat yourself so cheaply. Expectation should increase as you hear and learn what biblical manhood is.

Then, as members of the covenant community, your role is to not just expect, but to encourage men in this. Wives, encourage your men. We'll talk more about this later. Speak life into him. Where you see him doing these things, on the way home you should be like, "Baby, thank you for how you're trying to lead in these things. I see you working at this. Thank you so much for how you've filled this space, how you've engaged our children like this, how you've pursued my heart like this, how you manage things so well. Thank you, baby." Encourage.

Then single women, encourage our single men to be these things. In fact, if they're pursuing you and they're a boy who can shave, you have straight-up permission from Pastor Matt to go, "Well, once you grow into your body, we can have this conversation, but for now I'd rather stay at home with my cat than go out with you." All right? Just lay it down. Expect those boys to grow up, and I think you'll be surprised at them going, "Oh dang, I need to grow up."

Here's what I want to do now. This is the stench of death. Men who are actively walking in selfish passivity or selfish aggression, the stench of death in the home, in the church, in the community, in the city, in the country, in the world... Now that Mad Beau is done, I get to come along, and now I

want to give you good news. I want to give you the good news that the history of our God is God stepping into dead spaces, stepping into the darkness, reaching his holy pure hands into the stench of death, and eradicating it and calling back to life.

So brothers, my hope is to encourage you today to be what God has you to be and to lay before you that the Holy Spirit of God will empower you to pursue. Perfection is yours in Jesus Christ, but pursuit has been given to you by the Holy Spirit dwelling inside of you. Now with that said, let's look at Ezekiel 37, starting in verse 1.

"The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry."

I like the detail in which the story goes. The bones that are lying all over the valley floor are very dry. Let's say it this way. They've been there a while. These aren't freshly picked-off bones. These are like "CSI found this body from 70 years ago" kind of bones. Are you tracking with me? These are dry, dry bones.

"And he said to me, 'Son of man, can these bones live?' And I answered, 'O Lord GOD, you know.' Then he said to me, 'Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews [tendons, ligaments] upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the LORD.'

So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them.

Then he said to me, 'Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.' So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and

they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army. Then he said to me, 'Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel.'" "These bones are my people."

"Behold, [my people] say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.' Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD."

Now this story out of Ezekiel is being prophesied by Ezekiel when he is in exile after the nation of Israel has fallen apart and been carried off into exile. Ezekiel is promising this, prophesying about this, in a time in which all the world's powers that were known are at war with one another. The world was on fire. You had superpowers colliding. You had an ancient superpower in Egypt that had gotten involved in the mix.

You had world war, and you had world war without television cameras. You had world war without Twitter and Instagram, which means you had a type of darkness and depravity that's hard to get the mind around. The people of Israel, who had seen their entire country burned to the ground and had been exiled, deported, out of their country and put in another country, felt like all was lost.

Yet the promise from God to dry bones is, "I'll put you back together, an exceedingly great army. I'll enter the chaos, enter the fray, enter the brokenness, and bone by bone, sinew by sinew, muscle by muscle, flesh by flesh, I'll breathe life into you, and where you have been dead and where the stench of death has reigned, you will live, and the stench of death will change to the aroma of my presence."

Now that sounds awesome, but my question is always, "Okay, how?" Right? Because that's kind of an ethereal idea. "Okay, God can enter dark spaces and bring to life, but I want to know how. How does that work? I hear you and I even believe you, but what now? Praise God. So when does this happen? When do I get breathed on? My bones are feeling dry and brittle. When does that happen?" Well, I'm glad you asked that, because that's the rest of my sermon.

One of the things Beau said last week... He tied sin and death together, and this is reality. Where there is sin, its dark partner death is always there. That's part of what God warned Adam before sin had entered into the cosmos. In fact, in Genesis, chapter 2, verse 16, here's what God told Adam: **"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'"**

If sin enters the cosmos, you're going to die, and we know that death is a type of holistic death. You have physical death that's a reality, but you also have spiritual death, which is really the underlying issue that pushes men toward selfish passivity and selfish aggression. Then this will be one of the themes found in the book of Romans. Romans, chapter 5, verse 12, says, **"Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned..."**

This was covered at length last week. Where there is sin, that sin is leading to death, and where there is death, there is the stench of death wherever that sin is playing out. If we go back and look at Beau's beautifully-built-out, on-the-ground examples of selfish passivity and selfish aggression, all of these things are sin leading to death or they are simply the stench of death on men who know better than to operate this way. We'll address both in our time together.

So this is selfish passivity. This is such a great list. The refusal to worship God. The refusal to enjoy, honor, serve, know, obey, and delight in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. That is a sin leading to death that carries with it the stench of death. He also said engaging fantasy instead of reality.

Your fantasies are always going to be a lot better than your reality, correct? Unless your fantasy is things being more difficult for you in the world, in which case come see us. We need to walk with you a bit in some counseling if your fantasy is like, "Man, I had a couple of things that went right today. Let me just sit here and think about what if those went wrong too. There we go. I'm going to drift off to sleep thinking about that." Right? No. Fantasy is always more comfortable and easier.

The Bible is going to say that's sin that leads to death and, therefore, carries with it the stench of death. Do you want me to put this on the ground? Show me a man who spends time in fantasy rather than engaging in reality and I'll show you a home that has the stench of death as Daddy

refuses to engage Mom, engage the children, and engage the spiritual climate of the home. The stench of death.

It goes on from there. Checking out emotionally and spiritually, self-pity, silence in a moment where wise words are needed, like saying something encouraging to your wife or children or friend or confronting sin in your wife or children or friend. Of course, such silence means we are actively avoiding conflict, we are avoiding vulnerability, or we are avoiding work.

Excuse-making or complaining. Those are sins that lead to death and, therefore, carry the stench of death. Disorganization and procrastination. That one stung me. I almost took it off this weekend. Busyness to avoid responsibility; being lethargic in work, service, or ministry; not getting out of bed when the alarm clock goes off; leaving difficult labors to others; refusing to help someone in need; silence in a moment where words are needed.

Gluttony or apathy; lack of ambition about matters truly important to God and others; either not being excited about God, worship, the gospel, and his Word, or not being appalled about false worship, child abuse, abortion, racism, oppression, and sexual immorality, especially in our own lives. These are selfish passivity actions that men give themselves over to that are sins that lead to death that carry with them the stench of death. This is how that plays out.

If we go over now to the selfish aggression side...pornography, domestic abuse (one in three women are abused by their spouses), thoughtless criticism, correction, nitpicking, and vocalized displeasure to get other people to change and do what we want. Withholding affection and attention when someone fails; using money, power, and a host of other devices to control others.

Mocking, belittling, and demeaning others to exalt ourselves; slandering or harming another person's reputation to get ahead; the whole spectrum of retaliation toward others when we don't get our way, from the silent treatment to blatant acts of violence; veiled anger disguised as sarcasm; abandoning your wife; deriving pleasure from watching other people suffer. These are sins that lead to death and, therefore, carry with them the stench of death.

Where they are present, rather than the aroma of the gospel and life and flourishing, you get the stench of death and a stunted beauty. To top that all off, all of this takes place in a very broken world. So not only do we have selfish passivity and selfish aggression that we're wrestling with, but

both of those are being played out on a created order that's broken itself. Genesis 3:17-19 tells us about that.

"Then to Adam He said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, "You shall not eat from it"; cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.'"

So not only do we have sin leading to death that carries with it the stench of death, but all of creation actually is warring against us as we go. Now here's what I've always appreciated about the Bible. It never tries to paint a picture that's inconsistent with reality, because all we just read is what you'll see anytime you log on to CNN.com. This is the world we live in. This is our experience. This is how life actually works.

The created order is broken. We see it in a thousand ways every year, as the earth, according to Romans 8, groans and looks forward to its own reconciliation. We see this often, as men abuse or refuse to engage. We see this. We live this. We wrestle with this. We have to work in the midst of this. Yet it's in this kind of "Mad Max in the Thunderdome" type of picture... (I can't wait until the new one comes out, and then the other half of you will actually get that illustration. Most of you don't remember Mel Gibson when he was like 23, or however old he was when they shot that.)

It's in this kind of apocalyptic, "everything is broken" mess that God begins to call the bones to come back together. In fact, I want you to see this. Ephesians, chapter 2, starting in verse 4, says, **"But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)..."**

So what has God done for us in Jesus Christ? It is in Jesus Christ and his life, death, and resurrection that God says to the bones to come back together, says to the dead to wake up, says to the dead, "You're alive again," grants the breath, puts the bones back together, and gets those tendons and ligaments to connect.

On top of our spiritual resurrection, he seals *this* in us. Romans 6:6. Not only are we not dead men anymore. Listen to this. **"We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin."** Here's where things get really interesting for us, men.

Here's what has just happened. In Christ, we have been raised from the dead. All that whole list, sinful passivity, sinful aggression... Now we've been saved from that. We've been called out of death and into life by Christ. His death absorbs all of God's wrath toward us, his righteousness imputed to us so that God sees us as positionally perfect. On top of that, God gives to us the Holy Spirit to strengthen the inner man to pursue our God-given place as walking in headship.

Now that we have the Holy Spirit inside of us strengthening us, we don't have to say yes to any of this anymore. Before God saved us, before Christ raised us from the dead, before the Holy Spirit was given to us, these things were going to own us. They were going to get us. Now that we have the Holy Ghost, we can say, "No." We can say, "I'm not doing that again," and it's the Spirit's power that strengthens us.

That means, men, you have not been created for comfort or the couch. When I said early on, "The frequency men give themselves over to comfort and couch," I'm trying to help you process and understand that God has created you for war, not comfort. In fact, the more comfort you have, the more you lack genuine biblical masculinity. The more you give yourself over to comfort... And don't go all Braveheart, "paint your face blue," on me.

Sometimes the war men have been called into is that type of war. Most of the time the war is to get up off the couch. The war, more often than not, is me getting up and pursuing my wife's heart when I'm exhausted and don't feel like it. A lot of times, the war for me is to manage our budget in a way that our family can flourish and don't have to worry about those things.

Sometimes the war for me is to go tuck in the kids and pray for them and talk to them about their day and what the best part was and what the worst part was and ask, "How is your heart? What are you wrestling with right now? How are you thinking about God?" There are some times I'm just tired, and I'll be really honest so we can be friends here. Sometimes by that point of the day they're getting on my nerves. There's not a lot of good going to happen if I go in there. (Oh, you guys are so awesome. I'll try to be the type of parent you are one day.)

There are some times I'm just like, "I don't want to go in there. I want to just sit here. I'd like to start getting ready for bed myself. I'd like to finish reading this book I'm in." Right? Sometimes the war is on *that* ground. It's not face painted blue, running into the field to slaughter the Lord's enemies. Sometimes it's just getting up and going and sitting across the table with my wife and asking how she's doing.

"What has the Lord been showing you? What has he been teaching you? What are you struggling with right now? Are you encouraged in the Lord? Are you in a dry space? Where are you, babe?" Sometimes that's where the war is taking place. In fact, most often that's where it's taking place. The temptation that even now I wrestle with is staying on the couch.

Now men, let me help set you free here to pursue this. Look at me. You are not going to be able to do this. This is the Lord's expectation and command, but you will not be able to do it. You will fail. You will fall. You will choose the couch. You will choose to not engage. You will. You're going to fail. But let's make sure we understand what the Bible is teaching here.

Christ has granted to you, because of his death and resurrection, positional perfection and has now freed you up to pursue. If you think the goal is perfection, that every time you will nail this and do it perfectly, you will lose heart and stop trying. You will fall back into the stench of death, especially around self-pity, and you will refuse to engage like you should. But if you understand that perfection has been given to you in Christ and what God has called you to is pursuit, then you can get up and start pursuing again.

In fact, I said this a couple of weeks ago. I just love it. God has so brilliantly designed the pursuit of him that when we choose the couch, when we choose comfort, and we own it and realize we did it, the gospel has an opportunity to take even deeper root in our homes if Dad is honest about where he has failed, if Husband is honest about where he fell short. In fact, let's look at that right now.

Ephesians, chapter 5, verses 13-14, says, "**But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, 'Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'**" Men, this is where we need to camp out. Here's what we're doing here. We are being exposed by light.

Over the course of the last three weeks, as we've unpacked what biblical manhood is and talked about what it means to work it, what it means to keep it, as we looked at what our hurdles are and now we're looking at redemption, here's what should be happening. The Word of God and conversations are bearing weight on you. They're exposing areas where you are falling short.

Now here's the good news. Perfection has been provided. Pursuit is empowered by the Holy Spirit. Let me use the word *strengthened* by the Holy Spirit. I don't want you guys going to Oprah on me. Holy Spirit strengthening the inner man for pursuit, for the war, for the fight, to get into the mix, to keep getting up and going.

There's a reason we love Rocky Balboa. Not parts seven, six, or five, but the early days. Those were awesome. He has no real skill and he's like five-six or something, but he just keeps getting up. He just gets drove in all of those fights. That dude can take a beating. The reason we love that is we're designed for it. Get up. You've been knocked down, yeah. Listen, you're going to get knocked down again. The Holy Spirit will strengthen you time and time and time again to get up.

The light shines on us. We are exposed. Therefore, arise. It's of great irony that pretending to be more of a man than you are actually makes you less of a man than you are. Here's what I mean by this. He says, "Arise. Get up. Wake up, O sleeper." Now we need to walk. Now that we're awake and walking, let's move. Oftentimes, what that means is I don't know how to do what God is asking me to do. I just simply don't know how to do it.

It's no real secret that men are, in many ways, emotionally stunted. Fellows, how often are you asked, "How are you feeling?" and you don't even quite actually know what you're being asked? Let's do it. Let's go. Let's get them up. Don't lie. Your wives are raising your hands for you. This is sinful passivity. We just don't know. Sometimes we don't know. We're emotionally stunted for a lot of different reasons.

So I'm like, "Pursue your wife's heart," and I might as well be speaking in some language you don't know. You're like, "Well, I do. We live in the same house. I'm doing that all the time. Like, Chandler, the other day I put a coaster under my glass because that's what she likes. I pursued her heart. Nailed it." We don't even know what we're talking about here. We don't even know what I mean when I say to pursue our wives' hearts.

A couple of things. Men, biblically speaking, masculinity in this moment is to find a man who *does* know and ask. Not to pretend that you have it all together, but to acknowledge that you don't and you need help. That's hard for men, isn't it? It starts early. Even my boy now was trying to untie his cleats before his game. I was like, "Do you need help?"

"I got it."

"Okay, buddy, I'm here when you need it." Then I was hearing him go, "Uuh!" I was like, "Hey, we talked about this. Give me your shoe. I'll help you out. Why do you get so angry? Let me untie that." It's passion; it's not anger. Right? We start early. So first, men, find men who can help you.

Secondly (this is going to sound crazy to you), have a conversation with your wife. Wives, be gracious. Here's what I mean. I don't want to start preaching to women yet. That's coming in a couple of weeks. But there is a way in which you can help your husband that will bring a lot of life into your home, and there's a way to handle your husband that'll bring the stench of death. We'll talk about that in the weeks to come.

I have a good friend of mine who, whether it be home issues or other things, is really emotionally stunted. You're going to giggle at this, but he has a chart that has emotions and definitions for those emotions listed out on it. When his sweet wife and him talk about how they're doing, she'll let him use the chart. "How are you feeling, John?"

"Um, it's kind of a mix between this one and this one. It's like happy but frustrated. There's not one that actually fits exactly how I..."

"Okay, John, what are you frustrated by? What's making you happy then?" And now they're in a conversation about what's going on in his heart. Praise God for her, because if she wasn't that gracious, this would be conflict all the time, even though he earnestly desired to learn how to do it. Talk to your wives, men. Ask them, "What kind of question should I be asking you that I'm not? Can you help me? Can you ask questions of me? Can you pull on my heart? Because I don't know how to answer what you're trying to get to."

If we'll serve one another like this, we have an opportunity to step into that space that God has called us to step into as men. This might sound crazy, but the same thing is true with your children. Children are hard, because you have to think of ways to ask questions that can't be answered "Yes"

"No" or "Fine." You have to spend a lot of time going, "How do I word this? Then what am I going to do when they (not *if* they, but *when* they) say, 'I don't know'?"

Then the consistency of being there... Men, the reason I tell you to climb into your children's bed at night with them for just a few minutes is because it's in that quietness you can show empathy, you can engage, you can ask questions about their day, you can ask how that made them feel, and you can then engage their feelings in a way that says if those feelings are legitimate or not.

What I mean by that is not that we lie to them. We don't tell our daughters when we're lying in bed with them and they're like, "This girl at school is mean to me and..." We don't go, "Well, one day you're going to be prettier than her and they're all going to be jealous of you. I've seen her mama. Trust me." You don't say that. Here's why: because it might not be true.

Here's what you *do* say, fellows, and here's what's funny. I get made fun of this in my house now. It happened this week at our dinner table. I was cuddled up with Audrey, and these girls had been mean. They had called her a name. I said, "I remember when I was probably a little younger than you and I was out at the playground and these boys called me names. I remember it hurt my heart. I remember what that feels like. I'm so sorry."

She said, "What did they call you?" So I said, "Well, they called Daddy a spaz." So now, anytime one of my kids acts crazy, my wife just looks at me like, "That's you, spaz." Yet that empathy with Audrey made her squeeze into me. Me saying, "Daddy remembers that. I remember what that feels like. That's awful. Daddy knows..." In that moment, she nuzzled in even deeper.

I didn't say, "Well, you're smarter than they are. Well, you know what?" No. Just, "I remember. I've been there. It hurts, but it's not true. I know you. I know you better than they do." Not, "I know you better than those little trollops do out at the playground." No. "I know you. I've seen your heart. It's not true about you."

Men, that's why we climb in bed with the babies. That's why we put them down if at all possible: to engage their hearts. "Arise, wake up, walk, and the glory of Christ will shine on you." This will never be easy, men. If you're hearing me say that following Christ and filling our space as biblical men is going to be easy, I want you to hear me say it is never going to be easy, but it will be worth it.

As your wife flourishes, as your children begin to understand the things of the Lord, you begin to understand that all of this is worth it, and then it just gets reinforced. Even when things go badly, you feel that kind of hardwired call to battle pushing you back toward the front. Don't give in to selfish passivity. Don't give in to selfish aggression. You don't have to. Strengthened by the Holy Spirit, fight. It *will* be one.

For some of us today, here's the reality. For some of us, this isn't even a chance, because we haven't given our lives to Christ. We haven't been resurrected at all. We're still walking in death. As long as you're walking in death, the stench of death will always be there. So for those of you who have not put your faith in Christ... Maybe you've just been hanging out with us for the last six months, and maybe over the last few weeks or last few months something clicked.

You're like, "I think I'm a Christian. I'm not quite sure what to do with that. I think I believe. I think God has done a work in my life. I'm just not sure what to do with that." We need to do something with that today. The Bible says that what's going on is God is transferring you out of the domain of darkness and into the kingdom of his beloved Son. God is giving you a new heart, a new spirit. We need to do something about that.

For many of us in this room, we *are* Christians. We have just refused to get in the fight, and we have allowed the stench of death to float around us, to float around our homes, to float around this church, as we refuse to enter into the space God has called us to because it's hard. For us, the light shines on us, we confess, repent, and start pursuing again.

Husbands, daddies, there are things we might need to own this afternoon. Wives, I would encourage you, on the way home, where you see your husband filling these spaces, thank him. You have such power over the mind and heart of your man. (I don't want to start preaching my message for two weeks from now.) Use that power on the way home to encourage him.

"I see you pursuing in this way. Thank you for this. Thank you for this." Don't go, "Did you hear what he said when he was saying about getting those kids to bed?" That's not helpful. Ladies, look right at me. You are a terrible Holy Spirit. Don't fill that space. You'll actually jack up what the Lord is trying to do in your man's heart. Stop. Encourage where he's doing these things well.

When is the last time you said it to him? When is the last time you encouraged him in that way? Where he has rejected passivity, where he has rejected aggression, where he's pursuing the Lord...

He's not perfect. No man is perfect. You're not married to Christ. Just thank him for how he's pursuing. Single men, we seek to become this. Single women, expect this of them. May we rest in the resurrecting work of Jesus Christ that redeems men from their hurdles. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for these men and women. I pray specifically for my brothers, that we would arise, that we would get up, that we would wake up, that we would let the light of Christ shine on us, and that the glory of Christ would be seen.

For my brothers in here, maybe my sisters in here, who over the course of the last few months or weeks have said, "I think I've become a Christian. I think I've laid my yes down. I think I am one. I just don't know what to do with that," Father, grant them the grace to move today, to grab the hand of a pastor or minister and just say, "I think I'm a Christian. Can we talk about that?"

I pray for the boatload of us men today who although we have been resurrected continue to carry with us the stench of death. Might we be quick to confess? Might we be quick to repent? Might we be quick to get up and start to pursue again, as imperfectly as we always will? Grow us. Help us. It's for your beautiful name, amen.