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MANHOOD

God gave us our bodies, our male bodies, and they are good. He gave us our sexuality, our male sexuality, and it is good. There is a third gift He wants man to possess and it ties in very closely with our male bodies and our male sexuality. But it is different from the first two gifts in that it requires our cooperation, often our very strenuous cooperation, to develop its God-given potential. That gift is our manhood.

Manhood. What a glorious concept! We know instinctively that it represents far more than just being an adult male. Manhood, it is a thing of enormous attraction to every (except for the very wounded) man, woman and child:

- It fills the hearts of women, fills them with the desire to dwell in the safety of its strength.
- It swells the heart of every father when he sees its first awakening in his son.
- Every young boy aspires to it, and delights in being in its presence.
- For every little girl, it is the very symbol of order and security.
- Seen in one man, it inspires other men to greatness.
- It is something every man longs to possess, but few feel that their own meets the mark, and sadly, too often their manhood does fall short of what their Father knows they can possess.

Our manhood ties in deeply with our sexuality. This will come up over and over again in this book. The measure of manhood we possess will to a great extent determine the kind of sexual man we are. And how we live out our sexuality, will build up or tear down our manhood.

God uses two means of showing us His plans and purposes for the world and our role in it: revelation and creation. As revelation, He has given us His word, the Holy Scriptures, and He has given us the Word made flesh, His incarnate Son.

In this chapter I will deal primarily with what God has shown us through His creation, specifically in His having made us men. Throughout the book we will be examining His written word as it applies to our sexuality, and of course we will be keeping our eyes on the Word Made Flesh, Jesus, the perfect man.

But before we get into the revelation through creation, there is one Scripture I would like to offer. I believe it shows God's heart and desire for us as men, and it will help the light of His truth shine on all that follows:

Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love (1 Corinthians 16:13-14).

In these two short verses, God reveals to us the essence of manhood.

REVELATION THROUGH HIS CREATION

Creation is all around us, to be observed if we will only look. It is *His* design, and therefore reflects *His* plans and purposes.

Our bodies are part of His creation. For the most part, how they are to function is obvious to us. It is instinctive. However, He created two types of human beings, male and female, and their distinct and different functions have not always been that obvious. Their different roles in the reproductive process remain fairly clear, but beyond that, we live in a time of particular confusion with regards to men's and women's roles and as to how men and women should relate. (If you are already starting to feel uneasy because we are talking about men's and women's "roles" you have clearly been affected by today's culture).

But God's creation can bring clarity as to how we are to live as men (and women) because of the simple truth that, where a rational Designer is involved, function does follow form. He made us the way He made us for a purpose. Men are formed not simply for form's sake, but for function's sake.

Loud and powerful voices in our culture keep declaring that the only real differences between men and women are in their reproductive roles, that all other differences are social constructs, that is to say, they are created by people (usually the argument suggests that this construct was created by men to oppress women). To be sure, men have misused their manhood (including their bodies) as weapons of oppression and abuse, and that is an egregious wrong. But when we understand the glory that God in Christ has bestowed upon our bodies, male and female, and upon our true manhood and womanhood, we will truly celebrate the differences.

WHAT OUR BODIES REVEAL

If form and function go together, if form can tell us something about function, let's look at the form the male body, again distinct from the female body.

Not too long ago, someone wrote a book with an intriguing title, *Why Eve Doesn't Have an Adam's Apple*⁷, a book that goes on for 161 pages, listing the differences between men and women, from A (men have more accidents) to Z (women need less zinc each day). Most of these differences are physiological or things that happen to us because of physiological differences. The great majority of the differences have nothing to do directly with our reproductive roles.

⁷ Carol Ann Rinzler, *Why Eve Doesn't Have an Adam's Apple: A Dictionary of Sex Differences* (New York, Facts on File, 1996)

We can't go deeply into the differences here, but let us mention just a few representative ones, some listed in the book just mentioned, some from other sources. American men are on average about 5 inches taller than women. A man's legs are longer in proportion to his trunk than a woman's. A man has on average two to three times the upper body strength of a woman. Women have 30% less bone mass than men. Proportionately a man has more red blood cells than a woman, enabling him to carry more oxygen to the muscles. The average woman has more acute senses of hearing, smell and taste than men.

Perhaps some of the most significant differences are in the part of the body called the brain. Because of what is called the "testosterone shower" that takes place in the early months of pregnancy, to varying degrees, a boy's brains become "masculinized." The effect of this is to make men's brains, on average, operate with more specialization and less flexibility than women's brains. Women more easily draw on all parts of the brain in their thinking processes, using memories, images, emotions, etc. in their thought process, giving them greater intuition and understanding in human relationships, while men tending to draw more on one part of the brain at a time are given greater analytic skills. Men tend to operate more out of the right side of the brain where visual and spatial abilities reside. Women tend to operate out of both sides of the brain more equally. Men tend to have superior hand-eye coordination. Much more of the average woman's brain is devoted to speech and language abilities than men's.

The outgrowth of all this is that on average—and note we are speaking of averages only—men and women tend to have different skills, or to put it differently, were designed for somewhat different purposes. In the broadest terms, men's bodies (including their brains) make them especially suited to physical and design tasks and to analytical thinking; women's bodies (including their brains) make them especially suited for tasks that require communication, relationship and intuitive thinking. Of course, these relative skills are on a continuum, and there is even an overlap—some women make better mechanics than some men and some men make better nurturers than some women. But because the differences are significant, with the same differences showing up in all periods of history and in all cultures, we have to believe that they reflect some plan of the Designer.

These differences show up in a very fundamental way in our sexuality; men tend to be sexually attracted visually, while women tend to be sexually attracted relationally.

WHAT MEN ARE DESIGNED TO DO

If function does follow form, then our male bodies were designed to equip us to perform certain "manly" functions or roles. God entrusts to a man the body of a man. This is not arbitrary. The gift is given to be utilized in accordance with the man's purpose. By way of comparison, consider a police officer. A police officer is entrusted with a uniform, a badge, a gun, handcuffs and perhaps a police cruiser. These aren't rewards for graduating from the police academy. They're entrusted to him because his charge is to protect others from criminals. Similarly, a man isn't entrusted with a man's body because he made it through puberty and completed high school. A man is entrusted with

a man's body because God has called him to lead a manly life. He hasn't called men to be boys or animals or angels. He hasn't called them to be women. He called men to be men. That's why they have their bodies.

What is this manly life? What are we called to do as men? Chapters could be devoted to this subject, but for our purposes here, I will mention just three areas in which we are called to live out our manhood, ones that I believe are especially important, and which ultimately have an impact on the kind of sexual men we are to become. Three important roles we were designed for and are called to are: being a protector, initiating, and exercising authority.

Men are Protectors. Throughout time and across cultures, men have typically been the ones who protect and defend women and children. This not a stereotype, it is simply true. And this reality is related to man's body, his greater size, strength and stamina. Why did God create man this way? Certainly not to intimidate and overpower women—that's not the heart of God.

Women are vulnerable. They are vulnerable because of their on average smaller, weaker bodies. They are vulnerable when they are carrying new children in their wombs, and when they must be available to nurse and nurture their newborn children. They need a protector. It is the same with vulnerable young children. God has given men the size, strength, speed and stamina to fulfill their role as protectors.

Men initiate. To initiate wisely, not impulsively, a person needs to be able to analyze a situation, and to forecast the future consequences of today's actions. A person is prompted to initiate if he is goal oriented; that is, if he is strongly motivated to see something happen. Again, the male brain, strong in its capacity to focus on one subject at a time (but not so strong on relationships and feelings) tends to be goal oriented and analytical, and thus especially equipped to initiate.

Men exercise authority. Both physical strength and brain differences come to play here. In certain environments, less so in today's western culture than in almost any other time and place in history, a man's greater size and strength equipped him to exercise authority. This was so in the community and in the home. By physical might he could command others to do what he wanted. Even today, on the streets, in the business world, and in the world of youth, size and strength does bring with it a level of authority.

But authority also comes with (and is more positively related to) trust. An army private in combat, may be moved to obey his sergeant because of the sergeant's strength and toughness, but he will do so with far greater confidence and effectiveness if he knows that the sergeant is gifted in developing tactics—has the analytical skills—that will overcome any advantages the enemy has. Authority, like initiation, is exercised effectively if it is based on a careful objective analysis of today's situation and tomorrow's likely outcome.

It is important to mention here that with both initiation and authority, the masculine qualities of analysis and goal orientation, if not balanced by feminine intuition and sensitivity to human relationships, can produce terrible results. An inability to think intuitively, poor communication skills, and an insensitivity to human feelings and relationships can produce foolish initiatives and brutal authority. That is why every wise husband knows that many times his wife's balance is needed in making important decisions.

BEYOND MAN TO MANLINESS

We have been discussing a man's body and what men do, matters that we can look at objectively. But we need to look at man subjectively and with respect to qualities that can mark a man as "very good." An Attila the Hun or an Adolph Hitler can have all of the physiological qualities of a man in abundance, and he may be able to protect (what is his, his tribe or country) and initiate and exercise authority with tremendous power, but he obviously does not represent what God had in mind when He designed man. Nor does he possess the kind of manhood that is almost universally attractive to women, to young boys and even to other men.

True manhood—or manliness—is more than having the body and the innate abilities of an adult male. It has to do with certain qualities or virtues that make a man what the Father surely had in mind when He created him.

As with what men do, chapters could be written on the virtues of manhood (I actually did this in my book *Growth Into Manhood: Resuming the Journey*), but for our purposes here, we will concentrate on just four qualities: being strong, having courage, being resolute, and being honorable. As we will discuss in the next chapter, these four virtues will have an enormous bearing on the kind of sexual man we will become. Let's look at each:

BEING STRONG - You and Charlie and Mike are gathered in the kitchen while your hostess is preparing snacks. She can't get the lid off the salsa jar and so she hands it to Charlie. He strains, throwing his whole body into the task, but the stubborn cap resists. Mike says, "Let me try," and Charlie reluctantly hands him the jar. The cap won't budge for Mike either. Finally, it's your turn. You take the jar from Mike, and trying to look like you are not straining (but you are with all your might), after a few seconds the cap comes loose, a little pop signals that the vacuum is broken, and you triumphantly hand the jar and the lid to the hostess. The other men mutter about their having loosened the cap for you. You say, "Sure, sure," and with your chest puffed up go strutting out of the room.

For you, Charlie and Mike this was a playful thing, but it reflected what I believe God put in the hearts of men, a desire to prevail, a desire to be strong—a desire to affirm your God-given manhood through exercising strength. Could there be pride involved? Certainly, but not necessarily. Suppose you were in the kitchen alone, finding it difficult to get the lid off of the salsa jar. You knew that there was a gadget in the drawer that would make it easy. If you were like most men, resorting to the gadget would be an

admission of weakness, so as long as you have any hope of getting the lid off with your bare hands you keep trying. Somehow, opening the jar barehanded is a test of your manhood. Strength personifies manhood and we continue to want to possess, prove and affirm our manhood.

In all things that we value, there can be symbol and there can be substance. Strength is certainly no exception. Strength is not synonymous with the beautiful body, the type produced at Gold's Gym with its sculptured abs and perfect lats. A well muscled body is attractive because it has come to symbolize strength, but it is just that, a symbol. In times past, the strong man was not necessarily the perfectly proportioned weight lifter. He could just as well have been the wiry farmer or coal miner or the heavy barrel-chested bouncer at the local saloon.

But even physical strength itself is often a symbol. Its desirability, in part at least, might rest on its how it symbolizes something even more valuable, inner strength, strength of character, the man who is master of himself.

Physical strength is good because it enables us to fulfill our roles as men, as protectors, as warriors, as builders. We are given strength by God to put at the service of others. However, strength of character, because it determines how we fulfill our service to others, can be of even more value.

BEING RESOLUTE – When a woman says that her husband is stubborn—and many wives say this—she is often reflecting mixed feelings. The words sound like criticism, but the next time you hear them, listen and see if you don't hear a bit of pride in her voice. Being stubborn is just another way of saying being resolute, another of the important good qualities of manhood. To be resolute is to persevere, is to have a strong desire to prevail, to have passion. It can be the determination to reach a goal regardless of the obstacle that are encountered.

The resolute man is a reliable man. He acts on principle and not on feeling. Hence, his resoluteness is a reflection of his masculine brain, more focused on achieving a goal than on feelings.

HAVING COURAGE – Let me share with you something Josh Glaser wrote about courage. "I don't consider myself a particularly brave man. In fact, one of the major battlefields in my thought life is around the issue of fear. My wife, on the other hand, is one of the most courageous people I know. Still, when we're awakened by an unfamiliar sound in the middle of the night, I'm the one who springs out of bed to check it out. One night not too long ago, my wife and I were talking in our dining room. Off our dining room there is a door leading to a stairway that runs to another door to the outside. This particular night, we both heard what we thought was someone opening that outside door and coming into our house. Without a thought, I literally ran toward the door, yelling angrily at the intruder, ready to fight if need be. When I discovered there was no one there—that we'd been mistaken about the noise we'd heard—I couldn't have been more relieved. The noise had, well, scared me. But instinctively, I ran toward it to protect my

wife and daughters. I pray God I'll respond as protectively if a real intruder ever really does break into our home."

God calls each man to be courageous, and He has given all men a measure of courage (or for many of us, a hidden reservoir of courage), and of a deep motivation to want to protect and defend a woman, her body, her honor, and her children. Unless a man is significantly wounded earlier in life, he will find this within himself—because God put it there for the good of others.

BEING HONORABLE – Being honorable is a broader and grander quality than just being honest, although honesty is a part of it. Being honorable means having integrity. The word "integrity" has the same root as the word one. A man who is honorable—who has integrity—is a man who is *one* in his beliefs, in how he speaks and in how he acts. Remember how in the first chapter I spoke of fallen man having been split into many parts. In the man of integrity, those parts have come back together. What he says is what he believes. What he believes he is willing to say. And what he does reflects what he believes and what he says.

In these brief descriptions of having strength, being resolute, having courage and being honorable, you can see how these manly virtues overlap one another. Having courage ties in closely with being strong and resolute. Being honorable, reflects strength of character, and often involves having the courage to act on principle, rather than doing what seems expedient.

MANHOOD AND SEXUALITY

We were given our bodies. We were given our sexuality. And they are very good. Our manhood is something we have to develop if it is to become very good. To do the things men are designed to do (be protectors, initiate, and exercise authority), and to do them well (with strength, resoluteness, courage and honor) our manhood will have to be well developed. Much of this development took place as we grew from being boys to men, but in this fallen world, most manhood is marred by serious imperfections and inadequacies. Our knowledge of this might be what causes so many of us to try and "prove" our manhood in shallow ways, often presenting the symbol with little substance.

What does this manhood have to do with sexuality and becoming the sexual men God calls us to be? Everything. As we develop our manhood, we will become the sexual men God calls us to be. As we become the sexual men God calls us to be our true manhood will blossom and grow.

That this is true becomes clear when we look at what a Godly sexual man is like. He is a protector of his wife—her body, her heart, her need for security. As an initiator, he woos her and is most often the initiator of sexual intercourse. He is honorable and never betrays her—with his body or with his heart. He has the strength and fortitude to battle and overcome sexual temptations. He has the courage to stand for righteousness and purity when the world around him declares him a fool or worse.

To see the connection even more clearly, consider how the man who sins sexually reveals a diminished manhood. Rather than being a protector of woman, he becomes the opposite, a user of women. Rather than exercising manly strength and fortitude, he grasps at immediate gratification. His lack of character shows in the contrast between what he believes and how he behaves.

As we will discuss in Chapter 15, a man's manly qualities can make him a great lover, because it his manliness that is a key element that draws his wife to him and makes her truly want to surrender herself to him.

Soon we will be getting to "clearing the debris", dealing with the sexual sin that stands between us and our becoming the sexual men God created us to be. When you get into those chapters, notice how often you will be calling on—or developing—the qualities of manhood that will enable you to battle and win over lust.

I have offered some powerful words that define and measure manhood—strength, courage, etc. Now I want to add one more word that I believe goes to the heart of the man who has achieved or is striving for a Godly sexuality. This same word ties in his sexuality with all of the manly virtues. This word could apply to our Lord. This word is *passion*. The passionate man aspires to true manhood; the passionate man hungers to be obedient to God; and the passionate man is a man who loves his wife as God calls him to love her. The world commonly sees passion only as a sexual thing, just as it sees sexuality as something merely physical. In God's plan passion, like sexuality, is a far greater thing than can be seen by those who do not know God. In the redeemed man passion is the energy that brings the scattered parts of broken man together and breathes life into them.

Some men are, by nature, more passionate than others. I believe that the rest of us can grow in passion, and we will do this as we learn to love better. The man who loves deeply is a passionate man. I will have more to say about this in Chapter 15, *Becoming Great Lovers*.