

Sample

Boys to Men

A Five Week Father/Son Study Of Godly Manhood For Boys Aged 11-15

"The tendency today is to stress the equality of men and women by minimizing the unique significance of our maleness or femaleness.... Confusion over the meaning of sexual personhood today is epidemic.

The consequence of this confusion is not a free and happy harmony among gender-free persons ...but more divorce, more homosexuality, more sexual abuse, more promiscuity, more social awkwardness, and more emotional distress and suicide that come with the loss of God-given identity." John Piper

Be strong, show yourself a man, and observe what the LORD your God requires. 1 Kings 2:2-3

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About This Tool

It's been said that there are three categories of dads in America:

1. Uninvolved dads: those physically gone or emotionally disconnected.
2. Involved dads: those actively part of their son's life.
3. Strategic dads: those who harness their son's desire to be manly and steer it towards godly masculinity.

This tool is designed for strategic dads. The specific goals of these studies are to help your son grow into his masculine identity by:

1. Helping him form a biblical view of masculinity.
2. Helping him commit to godliness in his male/female relationships.
3. Helping him see Jesus as the model of true manhood.
4. Helping him see that allegiance to Jesus Christ is what his masculine heart was made for.
5. Helping him forge an even deeper, life-long friendship with you.

Here are some tips for using this tool most effectively:

- It is designed to be used with boys aged 11-15.
- It is designed to go through together over breakfast but can be used in other ways.
- It does not require preparation ahead of time.
- It is designed to read through together, rotating the reading, perhaps by paragraph.
- The biblical texts are printed in this booklet.
- There are questions throughout each chapter for discussion: They may be for dad, son, or both.
- It works best to each have a copy of the study and to both record the answers to questions in your booklet.
- This is safe. It will not ask you or your son to answer a question that is too personal.
- Additional copies of Boys to Men can be purchased at our website: www.forgingbonds.org, by phone 301.570.5097 or by email gyagel@forgingbonds.org.
- FYI The study is unrelated to the singing group, Boyz II Men.

Week 1

Am I Masculine?

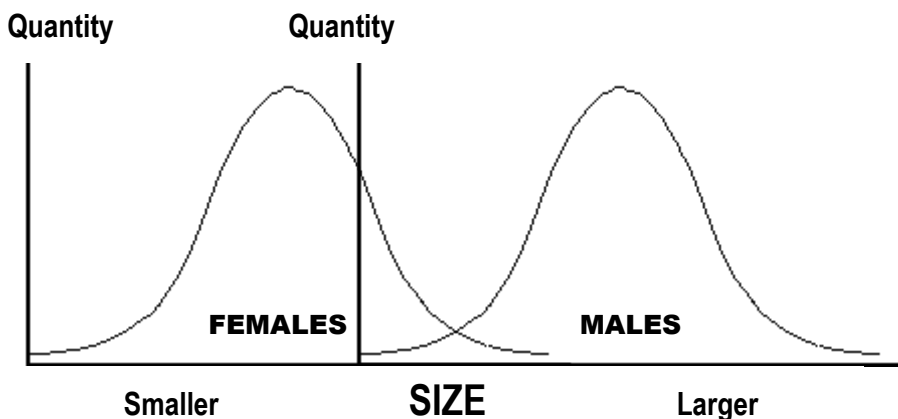
The two of us were sitting alone in front of the Christmas tree after the rest of the family had gone to bed. Out of the blue, my twenty-year old son, Tim, who was home from Covenant College on break, asked, “Dad, do you think I am masculine?”

I’m not certain why he asked me this question, but I can speculate. Tim is the second born of my three sons. His older brother is a buff 190 pounds, a capable mechanical engineer, and someone upon whom others lean. Tim’s younger brother, equally buff, weighs 170, plays inside linebacker, and epitomizes masculine aggression. Tim, on the other hand, weighs 130 pounds soaking wet. He is a tender-hearted lover of people, especially the broken and hurting. He is more of a servant than a leader and he is so creative that he naturally defaults to thinking outside of the box. Only Tim and his date showed up at their high school prom in tuxedo and dress made entirely from duct tape.

My answer to Tim was, “Masculine? Tim you are incredibly masculine. First of all at the core of masculinity is being a warrior, protecting others. You are the greatest warrior in my whole family because you get up early every morning to fight, spiritually, for those you love. (I knew that Tim was an especially faithful prayer warrior.) Furthermore, think about toughness. I don’t think there is any tougher place to seek to demonstrate Christ’s kingdom and live out kingdom values than in the city. Your whole life is about doing that. (Tim’s college major was Community Development with a focus on American cities). Tim, only someone inwardly tough as nails would ever pursue such a calling.”

Tim’s question, “Am I masculine?” haunts nearly every male at some time during his boyhood or teen years. This is especially true for those who are sensitive, artistic, un-athletic, or who find it easier to become friends with girls than with their male peers. In today’s world, boys who connect more easily with female than male friends and who do not demonstrate the stereotypical masculine behavior of aggression, competitiveness, athleticism may begin to think they are gay. They are not.

Because God created us either male or female and because God is glorified by variety, the various characteristics of human beings can be thought of as fitting into two bell-shaped curves, which slightly overlap. Consider the following.



Is it true that some females are bigger than some males? Yes. Is it true that generally women are smaller than men? Yes. Does the fact that most men are bigger than most women mean a smaller man is less masculine? NO. But he often FEELS less masculine.

Discuss: Dad and Son. Do you think the following generalizations are true or false?

Boys generally can run faster than girls.

Boys generally like to wrestle more than girls.

Little boys generally like to play with trucks more than girls.

Little girls generally like to play with dolls more than boys.

Girls generally are more emotional than boys.

Girls generally are smarter than boys.

(I think only five are true!) When my wife and I watch a sad movie I am the one who cries. I am on the more emotional side of the male bell curve; she is on the less emotional side of the female bell curve. My linebacker son one day said to me, "Dad you're not tough enough to be a football coach." He really did not intend that as an insult. I answered, "You are right. I have a tender-hearted side because God designed me to be a pastor." God is glorified by variety and has perfectly designed YOU.

My guess is that every one of us males has some strengths that are usually considered more feminine traits. The bell-shaped curves do overlap some. However, that is no reason to doubt our masculinity. Every human is uniquely created with a variety of strengths and weaknesses. But that human is still either a male or a female.

If we are to think biblically about masculinity and femininity we must resist two extremes.

1) We must oppose the myth that there are no basic differences between male and female, along with its accompanying argument that generalizations about males and females are fundamentally unfair. Bell-shaped curves do exist for male behavior and for female behavior. It is nonsense to pretend that they don't.

2) On the other hand we cannot allow those bell curve tendencies to define true masculinity or femininity. A boy who loves art is not less masculine than one who loves football. A particular culture's male code may be rooted in a creation understanding of true masculinity or it may not. That is why the rest of this study is devoted to examining what Scripture teaches about true masculinity.

We must start, however, by thinking about our current society's views of manhood.

Discuss: Dad and Son. List three things being said about men/masculinity in today's culture.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Read Genesis 1:26-27. ²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; *male and female he created them.*

In contemporary culture, feminists argue for the superiority of a genderless society, where no role distinctions exist. But God has never created an androgynous human. He has only created males and females.

Furthermore, as one Christian scholar writes:

Sexuality permeates one's individual being to its very depth; it conditions every facet of one's life as a person. 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.¹

Gay activists, transsexuals, and bisexuals argue that one's sexual identity (orientation) is not permanently determined at birth by being born a boy or a girl, but that every human should be free to choose a male, female, or androgynous identity.

But true freedom always comes from living as you were designed to live. A fish who decides he wants to live on land is not free. A mountain lion who jumps off a cliff because he wants to fly, does not end up free but dead. A soaring eagle in the sky is a picture of freedom because it is doing what it was designed to do—fly. A man who decides to reject his masculinity and act like a woman is not free but enslaved. True freedom for a male comes in being *all that God designed a male to be*.

We have a great picture of Adam's masculine calling in Genesis 2.

Read Genesis 2:15. ¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to *work it* and *keep it*.

The verb, "work" is the Hebrew word, *avad*, which is translated "work," "serve," "labor," "cultivate." In the context, it means "to make (the garden) fruitful, productive." It means "to change," "build," "shape" the garden.

The root concept of *avad* is to have an impact upon the garden, to change it to make it more fruitful, more productive. Through cultivating the fruitfulness of the garden Adam provides for earth's inhabitants, his family.

Deep in the male heart is a desire to impact his world. He wants his life to matter. He wants to know which hill needs to be taken, what kind of structure needs to be built, which problem needs to be fixed, which task needs to be done. He is goal-oriented with an innate focus on being productive. Adam is designed to be a doer.

Through this labor, men know that they are to be the material providers for their family. This role expectation is not just an unenlightened holdover from the traditionalism of the American fifties; it is rooted in the masculine design. At the very beginning of creation we see a fundamental difference in the orientation of man and woman. Eve is *brought to the man* to be his suitable helper; Adam is *brought to the garden* to work it.

Rick Phillips links *avad* to a man's vocational calling.

We are called to "work" whatever "field" God has given us...Christian men should desire to cultivate something worthwhile for the glory of God and the well-being of their fellow man.²

Discuss: Dad: Share the story of how you got into your current vocational field.

Son: What future vocational fields are of most interest to you?

Dad: In your opinion, what are some of your son's greatest strengths?

What are some jobs or vocations he seems most suited for?

Back in Genesis 2:15, Adam's job in the garden was not only to "work" it but to "keep" it. To "keep" is the Hebrew word, *shamar*, which means to "guard," "protect," "watch-over," "keep safe." The word is used of soldiers, shepherds, priests, custodians, and government officials.

Phillips further explains the meaning of *shamar*:

This calling, to "keep," rounds out the masculine mandate of the Bible. A man is not only to wield the plow, but also to bear the sword. Being God's deputy lord in the garden, Adam was not only to make it fruitful but to keep it safe.³

Men are designed to be warriors and little boys' behavior shows it. John Eldredge observes:

Capes and swords, camouflage, bandannas and six-shooters—these are the uniforms of boyhood. Little boys yearn to know they are powerful, they are dangerous, they are someone to be reckoned with. How many parents have tried in vain to prevent little Timmy from playing with guns? Give it up. If you do not supply a boy with weapons, he will make them with whatever materials are at hand. My boys chew their graham crackers into the shape of hand guns at the breakfast table. Every stick or fallen branch is a spear, or better, a bazooka. Despite what many modern educators would say, this is not a psychological disturbance brought on by violent television or chemical imbalance. Aggression is part of the masculine design; we are hardwired for it.⁴

Discuss: Dad and Son. What is your favorite video game and what do you like most about it?

Dad and Son: What do you think boys' love of video games indicates about the design of the masculine heart?

Read Nehemiah 4:14. ¹⁴ Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.

Discuss: Dad and Son. To what masculine heart motivations does Nehemiah appeal?

Most men would take a bullet to defend their loved ones. That should not surprise us because Genesis 2:15 tells us that at the core of Adam's calling is protecting people and things from harm. But Christ-followers go beyond providing physical protection, recognizing the reality of spiritual battle as well. CS Lewis once wrote, "Enemy occupied territory—that is what the world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us to take part in a great campaign of sabotage."⁵

Read 2 Corinthians 10:4-5. ⁴ For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵ We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Discuss: Dad and Son. What do these verses teach you about your fight, as Jesus' disciple?

Dad. What are the spiritual, emotional, and physical threats to people or things under your care?

What are you doing to keep them safe?

Dad and Son: In what ways can a son, who has no wife and children to protect, fulfill his calling to be and become a godly warrior?

In Summary: In Genesis 2:15, we saw that God placed Adam in the garden with two primary callings: To *provide* what was needed for the garden and its inhabitants to be fruitful, and to *protect* the garden and its inhabitants from harm. In the next two studies, we will examine Adam's third calling, to *pursue* Eve to give her his love, to invite her to his side, and to enjoy her beauty.

There are four additional studies