

CLEAR VISION

Today we are beginning a new **5 Week** series we are calling “**Say It With Your Chest**” where we are going to discover **5 Marks**, or better yet, we could call them **5 Virtues** of Biblical Manhood. If you are not familiar with this phrase it simply means **to say something with boldness or to say it confidently and without fear**. The idea being, you need to say it like a man with courage and conviction. Now, before all of my ladies checkout and go, “**Well I can take the next 5 weeks off because this series isn’t for me.**” Let me just say that the 5 virtues that we are going to talk about over the next 5 weeks are not just exclusive to men, but happen to be 5 virtues that we all should strive to live out in our daily lives as we seek to follow Jesus. However, the reason we are making this the focus for our men’s series is because oftentimes these virtues are found most lacking in our men. This should not surprise us when we consider the call God has on men’s lives to be spiritual leaders of their homes. These are simply virtues that we all should have as followers of Jesus, and as men who are ordained by God as spiritual leaders of our families, we should be modeling these virtues for our wives and our children. Satan doesn’t want our men to fulfill their God given call and so most men have been neutralized in their leadership and either have become spiritually distracted regarding their responsibilities as leaders in their homes or have never been challenged to live in this way.

So over these next **5 Weeks** we want to shine some light on these **5 VIRTUES** and challenge our men to allow God to do a work in us helping us become the spiritual leaders He has called us to be and that our families so desperately need. So I want to encourage our men to make the next 5 weeks a priority because when we are done on the last week of this series we are going to call our men forward and pray over them asking God to help us develop these virtues in our lives. In fact, we have put these 5 virtues on a magnet and given them to all of our men this morning as you came in to help remind you of what they are. So before we begin, let’s **PRAY** and ask God’s presence to fill this place today!

In his book ***The Road to Character***, David Brooks makes a distinction between what he calls RESUME virtues and EULOGY virtues. RESUME virtues are the skills you need in order to make a living. And if we are honest with ourselves these are the ones most celebrated by our culture and in generations passed. We emphasize what a man accomplishes (what he does) over who he is (what he stands for). However, when it comes to making a life, EULOGY virtues are the most important because these are the ones that get talked about at your funeral and these are the ones that have the greatest impact on the lives of others.

So what we want to challenge every man and woman with over these next 5 weeks are considered EULOGY virtues. And no one displayed these virtues better than Jesus himself. In fact, Jesus is the perfect example for us as men to follow when it comes to what it truly means to be a man. But here’s the thing about these virtues, they must be exercised the same way you exercise a muscle. You have to push yourself to your limits. To the point where you are maxed out and are beginning to tremble just like you would after maxing out a weight and the reps you are trying to achieve with that weight.

Philippians 2:12 (NIV) Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

Paul isn't saying that salvation is earned. Salvation can only be received as a free gift. The emphasis here in verse 12 is on what one is supposed to do with what he has received. Once you have received salvation, you have to take it into the gym of life and work it out. And as we talk about these 5 virtues over the next 5 weeks I want to challenge you to first receive Jesus and his salvation if you haven't already. And then I want you to grab hold of each of these virtues and take them to the gym and start working them out in your own life and building up your number of reps with each one. With that in mind here is our first virtue that I want us to focus on today.

Virtue #1 of Biblical Manhood: Have a CLEAR VISION for your LIFE

The one thing Jesus had as he walked on this earth in human flesh was a CLEAR VISION. He knew exactly WHO He was and WHY He was here. In life there are going to be storms, difficulties, and distractions that we will all face. If you do not have a CLEAR VISION of WHO you are and WHY you are here you will STEP BACK instead of STEP UP in adversity. You will feel lost in the moral maze of the culture as it tries to capsize your life and drown you in a sea of apathy and lack of purpose.

This was not the case with Jesus.

Even when it came to his own family's expectations:

Luke 2:41-50 (NIV) **41** Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. **42** When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom. **43** After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. **44** Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. **45** When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. **46** After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. **47** Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. **48** When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you." **49** "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" **50** But they did not understand what he was saying to them. Mary and Joseph had a certain expectation for their son Jesus. They expected Him to be with them in the caravan heading back home. But Jesus knew He needed to be in His heavenly Father's house learning and engaging with the teachers in the temple courts. His life was headed for a different course and He didn't allow His parents expectations to hinder Him from preparation for His mission.

Jesus was not distracted from His mission even when it came to temptations by Satan enticing him to take a shortcut:

Luke 4:1-13 (NIV) **1** Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, **2** where for forty days he was tempted[a] by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. **3** The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." **4** Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'" **5** The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. **6** And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. **7** If you worship me, it will all be yours." **8** Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'" **9** The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. **10** For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; **11** they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" **12** Jesus answered, "It is said: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" **13** When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time. Satan was tempting Him with an easier path but Jesus' resolve was so firm the devil had to leave him alone and wait for another opportunity to try and tempt him. Notice that Christ's VISION for His life was firmly rooted in God's word and His relationship with the FATHER. Btw, our vision should be also! While on earth, Jesus wasn't concerned with fulfilling His own "potential". He was concerned with fulfilling the Father's will, loving people, and doing what was right and faithful.

Jesus was not even distracted when it came to the rejection by his own people:

Luke 4:14-22 (NIV) **14** Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. **15** He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. **16** He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, **17** and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, **19** to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. **21** He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." **22** All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked. The people then became uncomfortable that Jesus (whom they had known all their life as Joseph's and Mary's boy) was now declaring Himself as Messiah. Look at how they responded to Jesus.

Luke 4:28-30 (NIV) 28 All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. **29** They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff. **30** But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

Jesus was a man on a mission! He had a clear vision of what He had to do! He knew who He was and what it was His Father was calling Him to do. And He let nothing get in the way of what He was supposed to be doing. Not his own family. Not Satan with all of his temptations. Not even His own hometown and the people He had grown up with. What about you? Do you have a clear vision that defines who you are and what you are supposed to be doing regardless of what others may think or even want you to be?

You cannot be THE MAN without a CLEAR VISION no more than you can be a piano player without a piano or a football player without a football. A clear VISION is an essential element for which to set the course your life is to take. Otherwise you and I will become distracted by the myriad of temptations and difficulties that will come our way.

Do you have a MISSION statement for your LIFE?

Do you have a VISION statement for your marriage?

Do you have CORE VALUES that you want to teach your children?

See here's the thing, MEN need something to fight for when the storms and difficulties of life come! It is the only way you are going to survive the storms of life. *Without a clear vision for his life, a man will waste his life away and not be prepared when they come.* But with a clear vision he is a force to be reckoned with just as Jesus was when he walked as a man on this earth.

Proverbs 29:18 (ESV) Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law. Vision, especially vision driven by God's word, is a powerful tool in the hand of a man.

At the end of her last will and testament, Elizabeth Jackson (Mother of President and General Andrew Jackson) gave her son a unique challenge. She said to him, **"Sustain your manhood always."**

Over time it's easy for us as men to become emasculated emotionally. Whether it is because we have made so many mistakes that we have stopped forgiving ourselves. Or we get so discouraged with our dream that we give up on it. We quit trying to win the battle with temptation; we quit trying to woo our wives; we quit trying to father our children.

Sometimes we as men are too quick to QUIT or GIVE UP or GIVE IN. I want to challenge our men as Elizabeth Jackson challenged her son, **SUSTAIN YOUR MANHOOD my brothers!** Many of us have a selfish stubborn streak. Some of us received a double portion. Here is the good news! God wants to crucify it and then resurrect it for His holy purposes. What He wants to do is take our selfish stubbornness and transform it into a holy resolve! A resolve that refuses to

cower in the face of challenging circumstances. A resolve that enables you to face your fears and defeat your past demons. A resolve that says I am going to play the hand I have been dealt even though I don't like my cards. A resolve that says, I am going to keep the promise I have made even though things are difficult right now. A resolve that says I will lovingly lead my wife even if she doesn't see what I see. A resolve that says, I will continue to love on and pray for my children even if they may make some poor choices. In fact, in the face of dangers and uncertainty I am determined to be not only a promise keeper but I am resolved to be a promise proclaimer!

1 Corinthians 16:13 (NIV) Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong.

The Greek word which is translated as **"be courageous"** is the word **andrizomai** (an-driz-o-my) which literally means **"to make a man of or make brave to show one's self a man"**

The ESV says it this way **13 Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.**

Paul is encouraging us to GROW and MATURE in our faith by acting like men. Btw, the life of FAITH is not for cowards! The only way to do this is to know WHO you are in Christ and to know WHAT He wants you to do with your life!

Who are you? Well, if you have trusted in Jesus for salvation and forgiveness of sin Peter says this about who you are. **1 Peter 2:9 (NIV) 9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession**, According to this you are a son of the KING! A chosen son! A royal priest! One of God's very own!!

What are you supposed to do? **1 Peter 2:9 (NIV) 9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light**. According to this your life is to proclaim His praises by telling others about the wonderful redemption that is available to all. There is nothing more dangerous for the kingdom of Hell and Satan's mission than a man who knows WHO he is and WHAT he is supposed to be doing with his life! MEN, SUSTAIN YOUR MANHOOD!!

There was a low point in the life of David when he had discovered that the Amalekites had raided Ziklag and had taken all the women and children captive. As a result, David's men talked about stoning him. In his distress David chose to sustain his manhood rather than quit. How? By standing firm in his faith and drawing strength from the God who had given him the vision and mission for his life.

1 Samuel 30:6 (NIV) 6 David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him; each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters. But David found strength in the LORD his God. Are there any men here this morning that feel defeated or beaten down by their circumstances? Will you do what David did and sustain your manhood by turning to God

and renewing your strength in the LORD. If you forget who God is, you will forget who you are! We sustain our manhood by pressing into the Lord and proclaiming His promises over our lives!

The Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard believed boredom was the root of all evil. And the fact is when men get bored they do dumb stuff. Most of our lives are riddled with sin because we are bored with life.

We need a vision that is bigger and better than sin. We need a mission that demands every second of our time, every ounce of our talent and every penny of our treasure. We need a life that will challenge us and captivate our attention. God has given us such a life in Christ and He has called us to join him on MISSION. Are you a part of it? Do you know how God wants to use you to build His kingdom? Have you made it personal to your life? To your family? To your marriage? To how you are raising your children?

Worship Comes Back Up

Invitation:

As we close I want to challenge every person to accomplish 3 tasks over these next few weeks:

- 1) **Establish a MISSION statement for your LIFE?**
- 2) **Develop a VISION statement for your family?**
- 3) **Establish CORE VALUES that you want to teach your children/disciples God will give you over the course of life?**

Where do you start?

- 1) **Begin with Prayer** and with Jesus! Our mission must be tied to His mission in some way if we are following Jesus!
- 2) **Write them out** and post them somewhere so you can reflect on them from time to time.
- 3) **Put them to work** in your life. Work out your faith with fear and trembling (It begins with a reverence for God and then let it stretch you to your faith limits)
- 4) **Let your MISSION be the filter for which everything flows** and for what determines your resolve when distractions and difficulties come because rest assured they will.