

The Great Culture War
*The Incredible Value
of Good Christian Men*
June 16, 2013

- Prelude** **Jesus I Come**
- Worship** **Remind Me Who I Am**
 Great God Who Saves
- Video** **“A Very Special Daddy”**
- Shannon** **Father’s Day Blessing**
- Feature** **“A Good Man”/Receive offering**

He loved a good wife, lived a good life and always helped someone in trouble. He was a good man.

I think the majority of men I know would say that at the end of their life they want their life to have counted for something. They want to be seen as a good man who lived a good life

and is remembered well.

When Rick and I chatted about me speaking this weekend, he encouraged me to think about what I would say to my son or my daughter’s future husband about the importance of being a good Christian man. What would I tell them?

My mind started flooding with all the good Christian men who have influenced my life. Some of them serious and some not so serious. Great guys who have influenced me and my family. Men who have spoken truth and grace, who have challenged me, who have prayed for me, who have taught me, who have encouraged me. Men who God has used to transform my life.

Men who are committed followers of Jesus Christ and who live their life for God.

These men are by no means perfect but at the core of who they are is a conviction to live their life following the example of their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. When I think about who I want my son to become and the kind of man I want my daughter to marry, these men come to mind, starting with my husband.

But then I started thinking about all the negative influences that could pull my son (or my daughter's future husband) away from becoming a man like that. This world is a crazy place for men right now. So many influences and negative messages that are telling my son and other men to live for themselves.

The most concerning to me is the growing rise of what is being called extended adolescence and it is having a huge impact on the male population and our society as a whole. Studies are showing that more and

more young men are not growing up. These young men are not maturing into adult men. They are stuck in a time where they are absorbed by seeking pleasure and adventure through video games, social media and general lazing about. They are not taking their place in the work force, not taking relationships seriously and not honoring their responsibility to provide for and protect children that they have fathered. These men are stuck in a life that is all about them and their personal gratification and they are more than willing to allow others to support them in their pursuit of pleasure.

So while on our vacation two weeks ago (we headed up to Washington DC and were blessed by our hosts with a side trip to Ocean City, Maryland) While we were visiting the beach in Ocean City, we soon found out that it was Senior Week as well as the Baltimore Ravens celebration weekend. The town was

full of graduating high school seniors and drunken Ravens fans and on Saturday night as we made our way to the boardwalk to have treats and ride rides, we experienced being around a large crowd of young men. They were screaming lewd and objectifying remarks at people passing by, pushing young women out of the way so they could sit down on the bus, and generally wreaking havoc. I would be lying if I said I wasn't praying, dear Lord please don't let my son fall into this trap. But as I was praying and watching the night unfold, God challenged me to pray for these young men. He invited me to pray that good and Godly men would be brought into these young men's lives. Men who could give these young guys a grander vision for their life. Something really worth fighting and living for.

As we arrived back in DC, we were surrounded by so many monuments and

memorials. Places built to remember those who had given their life to something bigger. We arrived at Arlington National Cemetery and there among the rows and rows of headstones, Price and I were heavy with the realization that each headstone represented a story (that was someone's father, that was someone's brother, etc.). Each man had lived his life and that when it's all said and done, it's the life you live that is your legacy. And then we came to the final resting place of one of our dear friends. A guy who had had a strong influence on both of us. As I stood at his grave marker, I was reminded once again of how men who are living their life with God at the center are a powerful force in this world.

In that moment, I realized that it all boils down to two options. So to Steven and every other man, I would say, in this world

You can live for yourself or you can live for God.

If you live for yourself that will manifest in one of two ways.

You will either be a childish consumer obsessed with seeking out cheap thrills or you will be a coward and a critic taking pride in what you don't do and spending an inordinate amount of time criticizing others.

I think these are pretty clear and they seem very similar to the story of the prodigal son found in Luke Chapter 15. If you want to hear a great message on this story go on our website and listen to Rick's message from Mother's Day.

In the story of the prodigal son, the younger son is totally set on seeking out all the pleasure he can squeeze out of life. He is the childish consumer who is seeking every kind

of cheap thrill and it leaves him wanting.

The older brother is a coward and a critic. He is bound up in a legalistic check list of all the ways he's better than his younger brother and the rules he's kept, all the bad things he didn't do and it leaves him wanting.

And here's what I know, the world doesn't need more men who are self absorbed, selfish, self-centered, and self-righteous.

It needs more men who are willing to model the life Jesus lived. Our world is dying in so many ways and it longs for men to take their place and lead us on the path that leads to redemption, hope and restoration. My life has been powerfully transformed by men who are living for God (and many of them are right here at NHCC).

So if you are a man who desires to live that

out, who wants to start living for God instead of yourself, how does that happen?

Living God's Way

It has to begin with a decision to accept that on your own you will not be able to live the life God has in mind without His help.

Paul says it best in the book of Romans chapter 7:

I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. (Romans 7:18-19 NIV)

Paul was a guy who lived by all the religious rules of his day and he was persecuting those who were following Jesus. That is until Jesus got a hold of him. After his decision to follow Jesus wholeheartedly and to trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior instead of himself, Paul was totally committed to spreading the word that

being able to live according to God's way is not about keeping a set of rules but about a transformation of the heart.

It begins with a willingness to die to your pride which says you don't need a Savior. It's about admitting you can't do this alone.

In that same chapter of Romans, Paul goes on to say:

*What a wretched man I am!
Who will rescue me ... Thanks
be to God, who delivers me
through Jesus Christ our
Lord! (Romans 7:24-25 NIV)*

Jesus Christ came and lived the life of a perfect man. He then took on the sins of the world and laid his life down for all who would call on his name.

If you have not yet, humbled yourself before God, do it. Don't delay. Admit that you are a sinner, that on your own you can't live a life

for God and accept that Jesus Christ died for you. Jesus says my blood will cover your sins. My righteousness will be your righteousness. All you must do is repent (which means to change your mind) of thinking you can do this life on your own and put your hope and trust in Jesus. Accept the grace, the righteousness, the mercy He is offering you.

And when you have made that decision, realize that you have been forgiven, you have been made right with God. Remember though that you will have to decide again and again to die to your self and choose God's way.

Paul again in Romans tells us:

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. (Romans 12:2)

You will have to choose day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment to live with God at

the center of your life or your own nature will lead you back to living for yourself.

And if you make that decision to live with God at the center and you have chosen to ask for Jesus' righteousness to be your righteousness through his death on the cross then I would encourage you to follow Jesus into the waters of baptism.

On August 18th, we will have our next baptism. And let me tell you, nothing is quite as powerful as seeing a man who is willing to choose God and share that testimony with the world. I get choked up when anyone gets baptized but I weep when I see men humbling themselves before the Lord.

Did you know that when a man makes a decision to follow God 93% of the time the entire family will follow compared to 3.5% when a child or youth makes a decision or

17% when the wife or mother makes a decision?

Make no mistake guys when you choose to put God at the center of your life, you have a powerful effect on those in your circle of influence, this church and our community.

Once you have decided to follow God and make him the core of your life and the way you live you can transform this world by living according to God's design for men.

When God created humanity, He created us male and female. God designed both genders specifically as well as giving each person a unique set of skills, talents and personality.

God designed men to live out their calling in three specific ways:

Servant-Leader
Protector

Provider

Let's break those down a bit but before I do.

Can I just make a quick statement to my fellow ladies? For those of you who are married, please please please do not use anything I have said or am about to say to should on the man in your life. Most men already feel like they aren't measuring up and when we beat them down with a list of things they should do or should be or someone they should be like, we only make the situation worse.

Our husbands do not need us to point out all their shortcomings anymore than we need them to point out how we don't look like the supermodels on TV or in the magazines.

Here's what we can do. Pray for them, praise

them and respect them. If you want more info- you really must read the book Love and Respect. It's awesome.

And for those of you ladies who are not yet married and would like to be, can I just challenge you to not settle for a man who does not have God at the center of his life. It won't get better. It might feel good temporarily to have him in your life with you at the center but it will leave you wanting, kind of like drinking a cold soda on a hot summer day. Look for the man who wants to honor God with his life because marriage is hard enough when both parties wish to love and serve and honor Jesus. Don't make the mistake of thinking you will save him. There is only one Savior and we are not Him. A good book to check into is Fit to Be Tied.

Okay enough about that, let's take a look at the ways God has designed men. He has

designed them to be servant leaders, protectors and providers.

In 1 Corinthians 11:3, we read:

Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. (1 Cor. 11:3 NIV)

Men are called to be the head, to be servant leaders. Servant leader is often misunderstood. Too many folks think this means a man must have a dominant personality, or have the gift of leadership. But this is not about rising up the corporate ladder, being the big shot or demanding that your wife and children obey your every command. This is about following Jesus' example.

In John 13, we see Jesus demonstrating for his disciples what it means to be a servant

leader. He washes the feet of his disciples and demonstrates for them how to be a servant to others. When God is calling men to be the servant leader, he means that they go first in serving others.

So how does this look practically speaking?

Men living as servant leaders put aside their pride and their agenda for the sake of others. They look for ways to initiate serving others.

They open doors for people. They offer to help those in need like an elderly couple struggling to get items in their car or someone stranded on the side of the road.

They see a task that needs to get done and they take responsibility for making it happen. They initiate at work not waiting for the boss to tell him what to do. They serve as a role model for what it means to put the needs of

others before our own.

Men living as a servant leader in the role of husband or father, pursue their wives and children. They put aside their agenda to go on a date with their wife and listen to her heart. They put off for a little while the need to relax or catch up on work to watch hangout with their child.

They lead out by admitting wrong doing or apologize for saying harsh words. They initiate peace when conflict has risen up.

Again, men with God at the center of their life may not respond like this all of the time. I'm pretty sure we established earlier that no one is perfect on their own. These are just the kinds of things men might do as servant leaders.

A personal example is one evening Price and I had been involved in a conflict over unmet

expectations and a generally feeling of not measuring up (on both of our parts). The conflict was getting worse not better and we called it an evening. The next morning the house was extremely quiet and for those of you who know me...that's very unusual. You could feel the tension.

The time came when Price had to leave for work or he would be late. I was sick at the thought of him leaving without us resolving conflict. He left for work and I headed to the bathroom to sob. After about 15 minutes (he rides the bus so that's about the time it takes him to make it to his bus stop and get on the bus), my phone went off and it was a text from him saying, I know this is a tough time and I know we need to work this out but trust that we will work it out. I love you.

I could sense he wasn't just trying to wrap it up so we could just quickly end the argument

but that he was really interested in leading our marriage toward healing.

My heart melted and suddenly the conflict didn't seem near as big and I was able to admit wrongdoing on my part. His willingness to initiate transformed our marriage and made for a quick resolution in the conflict.

When men are living as servant leaders it can transform lives.

The second way God has designed men is to be protectors.

Men living as protectors are willing to stand up for and fight for others. That may mean physically putting themselves in harms way for the sake of others. You may recall flight United 93 from 9/11. Those men stood up and attempted to take back the plane. They

were willing to lay their lives down for the sake of others.

If these men see someone being oppressed, mistreated, abused or receiving malicious treatment they step in and protect those who can not protect themselves.

At NHCC, I've seen so many men step in and protect their sisters in Christ. I've seen them and challenge these gals not to settle for a man who doesn't have God at the center of his life. They have served as the older brother for many women (even those who are older than them) to be a protector lest the woman be led astray by a man whose heart is not set on the Lord.

Men with the role of husband and father take seriously the scripture found in Ephesians 5:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the

church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. (Ephesians 5:27-28 NIV)

These men pray over and protect their wives and children from forces that would seek to destroy them. They are willing to speak truth in love to their family when they are being beaten down with lies from the world or the enemy.

So men are designed to be servant leaders, protectors and finally they are designed to be

providers. Men who have God at the core of their life seek to make sure others are flourishing and have their needs met. It's easy to think we mean just money here but it's not just about money, though that is a part of it

as outlined in 1 Timothy 5:8:

Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. (1 Timothy 5:8 NIV)

These men make sure those in their circle of influence are provided for in tangible and intangible ways. They step in and are able to be God's hand of blessing in the life of others. They may mow someone's lawn when they are in need, help someone with their groceries or fix their computer.

They are willing to live their life outloud as a

role model for children and students who so desperately need the impact, influence and affirmation of positive male role models in their life. They let these kids know that they matter and that have what it takes to accomplish much. They let these children and students know that they are worth so much in the eyes of the Lord. Here at North Heartland we are very blessed to have men who do this directly through our Adventureland and Student Ministry programs as well as indirectly through caring for single moms and their families through serving projects and small groups.

Men who are husbands and fathers make sure that their families are provided for when it comes to the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. They aren't always the bread winner but they are the kind of guys where the buck stops with them. If something needs to change so the family can be provided for,

he initiates it. He is willing to take on additional work or make difficult decisions about the budget.

These men help their family grow spiritually. They lead out by modeling a relationship dependent on God. They encourage and challenge their family through their example of engaging in environments that help them grow spiritually such as attending services regularly, going to a small group, investing in ministry and regular prayer.

Now guys all these examples and ideas I've just shared are not meant to be a checklist for you to beat yourself up with. That certainly won't get you anywhere. Instead, look at your life and let God show you where you are already living this out and then invite Him to show you new areas He would like you to expand your influence in.

Ok so if you are a guy who has chosen to follow Christ and live according to God's design is there anything that can help you do that?

I think so. In fact, at NHCC, we talk about a specific model called SCM which stands for solitude, community and ministry.

Practice solitude with God.

Solitude is simply setting aside time to be alone with God in silence. In that time, spend time in the Bible which is God's word and instruction for those wanting to live His way. If you don't already have a Bible, get one you can understand. There are a variety of translations so seek out a translation that makes God's word clear to you. This is also the time to do what I mentioned earlier, let God show you where He is already at work in your life and where He is inviting you to grow

more into the man He is calling you to be.

Engage in community

With like minded followers of Jesus who can help you grow. Christianity isn't a lone ranger deal. You will need others to help you be reminded that it's not all up to you, that you have the power of the Holy Spirit alive in you which makes all things possible.

You will need brothers who can spur you on when you want to give up, when you want to give in. Men who are committed to learn and challenge each other to become the men God has wired them to be.

This might come in the form of a coach (a man who is on the path to seeking God and becoming an authentic Godly man); or a support group (if you struggling to break an addictive pattern); or a counselor, (sometimes you might need an outside

observer who is skilled at providing input for the ability to move past pain) or a men's group.

This Fall,

we will be offering a new small group curriculum called, 33 The Series. This video curriculum will be offered in men's groups designed to educate and challenge men to become all they are called to be.

Finally invest in ministry

by using your influence, gifts and skills to serve others. When you are serving others not only will they benefit from your strength and courage as a servant leader, protector and provider but you will grow as God uses your gifts, talents and skills. He will grow you as you invest in others. So many men I know have been transformed as a result of serving with others here at NHCC.

So there you have it. Those would be my

words to my son, to my daughter's future husband and to any other man.

You can live for yourself or you can live for God. But I beg you for your sake, for the sake of those around you and our world, please live for God.

When you live for God, you will change the world.

Now I know some of you may be thinking, well Shannon thanks for the advice for the young men but what about me, I've already lived most of my life. My kids are grown, I've done some damage. What about me, is there any hope?

Absolutely, it is never too late. I still remember one particular guy who showed up in my office. He was past 60 and was thinking his chance to live for God was over but not so

much. He turned his life over to Jesus and began transforming the lives of many by his example and influence.

So whether you are 15 or 50 or more it's never too late to start living with God at the center.

God has wired you to be servant leaders, protectors and providers. You have the example of Jesus who lived a perfect life here on earth and exemplified what it meant to be a man living out God's vision. He initiated serving others even to the point of laying down his life for all. He protected those who were oppressed, hurting, beaten down and repentant. He provided for those who had need and ultimately provided righteousness for all the world by pouring out his blood. He is the one true King. He is here to show you the way to become the Man our Father in Heaven created you to be.

He is calling you to this great adventure of being a man. Take your place in this world. Initiate. Protect. Provide. This world is hurting and it so desperately needs Good Christian Men to stand up, to fight, to serve, to lead others to the only hope this world has.

We are going to stand and sing together and then I have asked Ladell to come and speak a special blessing over all our men.

Let's Stand.

One Thing Remains