



2022 Weekly Devotions

Week of: June 20th - 26th

Sermon: June 19th



SMYRNA BAPTIST CHURCH
building community ◊ equipping believers ◊ serving Jesus

June 20

Isaiah 5:20

Being a man in our current culture is not an easy task because of the rhetoric that is full of lies and attacks on actual biblical manhood. Men have been told that masculinity, to use the popular word today, is toxic. For more than a decade we have been made to look stupid on thirty-minute sitcoms, weak, spineless, and inferior. Men are portrayed in our society today as unnecessary creatures who don't really have a significant role to play. This has encouraged men to fall into the other ditch which I will call abdication. Let me reiterate a few things that I preached on Sunday.

The path on which we are called to walk is described by Christ as the straight and narrow way (Matthew 7:14). I like to describe the errors or dangers as ditches on either side of the road. Typically, there are dangers on both sides of the truth. It may not be a bullet proof analogy, but I think of the thieves hanging on both sides of Jesus while He was on the cross. The Truth was in the middle while error was left AND right. In the case of being a man, the narrow way is provided in the Word of God and is exemplified in the person of Christ while He was on earth. Jesus was the perfect balance of all things masculine. He was both strong and caring. He was tough and gentle. He was bold and mild. He was serious when He needed to be and so jovial, happy, and friendly that even the children were drawn to Him. the ditches that we must avoid on either side of biblical masculinity are abusiveness and abdication.

In today's culture, the only one that the media gives any attention to is that of abusiveness. When you hear the term "toxic masculinity" you should understand that to mean that men are brash, neanderthal, abusers. What you will seldom ever hear is the ditch on the other side, that I frankly think is more of the problem in our society than abuse, and that is abdication. In many cases, abusers are both to tell you the truth, but for now I want to address the issue of abdication.

Abdication is simply the shirking of one's responsibility. What may not be on your radar, as I am sure it is not on the radar of our society, is that this stems in part from buying into the lie that there are no real differences between men and women. The fact is, and will always be, that God created two sexes and they are different. This idea that a woman can be a man, that we are somehow identical underneath the surface, and that we are even interchangeable is a lie straight from the father of lies – Satan himself (John 6:44). Men and women are created differently, and it is scientifically verifiable, both physically and mentally. The idea that our role as men doesn't matter is fallacious. We are different men, and we are different for good, important reasons. We are different and we are to live and conduct ourselves in accordance with those designs.

It is of the utmost importance that we understand our role to train up our children in the admonition of the Lord. We are to guide and discipline them so as not to demoralize or exasperate them. We are to teach them the ways of the Lord and help them understand the culture and times in which they live, and we are to do this from our design. We can only do this if we are diligently seeking to know and understand these things ourselves. We think differently than women. Our nation needs that. We respond and process differently too, and our nation needs that.

One of the ways that men are abdicating their responsibilities and God-given roles today is by spending too much time on YouTube, Facebook, or playing video games. It is a matter of laziness that keeps a man from pursuing Christ so that he can rightly lead and protect his family. But brothers, this is what we are called to. It is sad to me today that we are so far in the ditch of male abdication that we can't even see it anymore. Somebody needs to shout from the rooftops that it is good to be a man and it is necessary that society to be full of godly men who know how to fulfill the roles God has given them. If it helps, I give you permission to be real men.

June 21

1 Chronicles 12:32

Little is known about the “sons of Issachar” from the Bible. We know that Issachar was born to Leah, Jacob’s wife, as his ninth son. Leah had “secured” a night with Jacob by giving him some mandrakes. The night that she spent with him culminated in her becoming pregnant with another son. He migrated to Egypt with Jacob and the rest of the family during the famine that God used to providentially get His people to Egypt where Joseph was waiting to save them. The passage chosen for today’s point to ponder comes from the book of 1 Chronicles and occurs during the reign of David as King of Israel.

King David was assembling an army from the twelve tribes of Israel for war (1 Chronicles 12:23). Mighty men joined the ranks of David’s army from each tribe. When the men from the tribe of Issachar came, they were described as “men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do.” Is that not a wonderful description of men? Would you agree with me today that we desperately need men who understand the times in which we live and know what the nation should do? My goal today is to challenge and encourage our men to be like these men.

Brothers, your family needs you more than ever to be able to rightly interpret the times in which we live and to provide godly leadership as we navigate through these days of confusion, contempt to the things of God, and the chaos that is our culture. We need men who know how to deal with social justice, economic uncertainty, and anxiety that plagues our wives and children. We need men who are strong and confident in the Lord and who will be the anchor that holds when the wind and waves crash against our homes. We men, need to be sure that we are building our homes upon the solid rock of God’s Truth and not the shifting sands of popular culture.

How does one become a man who understands the times in which he lives and how he should lead his family and himself? Allow me to begin by pointing you to King Solomon. In 1 Kings 3:9 we read Solomon’s prayer request to God, “So give your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?” Brothers, isn’t that a beautiful and humble request? No, we may not be leading a nation, but we are leading or participating in a family. We are part of the family of God and we live in perilous and confusing times. How is the church supposed to respond to the gender confusion, critical race theory, socialism, and rising anxiety in our communities? Who can know what to do in light of these issues?

You can rest assured that God knows what to do and the Holy Spirit has been tasked with the ministry to lead us into all truth (John 16:13). Solomon is revealing his total dependence upon God when He asks Him to give him understanding. May we do the same. Ask God dear brothers that He would give you wisdom (James 1:5) and show you the way. I must remind you that one of the major ways He is going to lead you with by the light of His Word which He describes as a “lamp unto our feet” (Ps. 119:105). Men it is high time that we do the hard work of pursuing His knowledge so that we too may be described as men who know their times and what to do. I want to be seen as a man who can rightly be described this way. It will come to us as we walk with Christ and with other men and wisdom. Don’t be lazy! Go get knowledge men so that you can lead well.

June 22

Ephesians 6:4

Brothers and sisters, I want to spend our time today and tomorrow thinking about what it means for “Fathers, not to provoke your children to anger, but to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” If we are to lead our families, men, in such a way that our children are not provoked to anger we must know what that means and how to do that practically. Before we talk about that though, I want you to see that verse 4 ends with an understanding that Jesus is Lord. So, part of what is to be emphasized in our leading as dads is the admonition to us that we must help them come to the place where they will also understand and profess Jesus as Lord. What does that mean?

To confess that Jesus is Lord means that He has sovereign rule over your life and that He will ultimately triumph over all things. He is not insignificant, impotent, absent, uninvolved, and so on. He is more powerful than any ruler or government in the world and His ability to provide for and protect His children is not dependent upon the economy of the world. It is to know that He is coming back to reign and rule. When He gets here, he will be just as visible and real in our world as in person ever was. When He is done, all the evil and unbelief in the world will be gone, and those who followed him will live, love, work, and play like we were meant to with complete joy and peace. So, dads we are to help our children believe these convictions are true to impact how they live.

What this looks like practically is to bring the children up to hope in the eventual triumph of God. I can only imagine how much anxiety would go away in their hearts and minds if they truly believed that a sovereign king is watching over us and is assuring that we will make it safely home. Bring them up to find their place in the cause of the Lord Jesus. Help them to learn to enjoy serving our triumphant King so that they look forward to His return. Bring them up to see everything in relation to the triumph of God. Bring them up to know that the path of sin and disobedience is a dead-end street no matter how many cool and famous people are on it, because the cause of Christ will triumph in the end. Teach them how wonderful the cross of Christ and the empty tomb is for all who believe.

Teach them dads, and mom too, to enjoy, appreciate, and value the family. Show them how God designed the family as an important part of how the world works properly. I look back with so much joy of the privilege of being a father with the great responsibility of helping our children grow to love Jesus and to serve Him with their lives. I get excited when I think of the family as a breeding ground for children who hope in the triumph of God, and the work that we are doing collectively at Smyrna Baptist to come alongside our young families to help them in this most important work.

I am thankful that we get to model what godly parenting looks like and we can teach what is true and false and good and evil in this world. I enjoy thinking of our work in our homes as a boot camp for growing our young soldiers of Christ for the greatest combat of the world, or when I think of it as a fortress for protection or a hospital for healing or a supply depot for replenishing the troops or a retreat center for restoration, resting, and just chilling out on the couch watching football. I get excited and humbled as I think of the family as a launching pad for sending out our children as “straight and mighty arrows” with passion for Christ aimed at the lost and confused people in our communities who need to know Jesus as Lord too.

June 23

Ephesians 6:4 (PT. 2)

I didn't address this yesterday, but I want to make sure men that you understand in raising your children to know Jesus as Lord, you should do it in a way that does not exasperate them or provoke them to anger. This means that you must not put demands and expectations on them that simply lead them to constant frustration because you exercise a domineering authority over them. Consider their desires and well-being too. The last thing you want is for cause them to resent you and have no greater desire than to get out from under your ungodly, unreasonable demands as soon as they can. So, I want to give you some practical ways that you can contribute to their loving you and Jesus too. Much of what I share with you today comes from an article I read by John Piper years ago.

You should manage your home and lives so that every area of your families' life is God saturated. Don't let it be that He is there on Sunday in a kind of external way or that He is only there in times of crisis and trouble. He just seems to be irrelevant most of the time. Kids of course know this. And they draw from it the obvious conclusion—God is nothing very relevant to my life, and the cause of Christ is nothing great and all-consuming. God is not exciting enough to build your whole life around. He is a kind of necessary evil to be tolerated on Sunday but a dispensable drag on Monday through Friday. You can read this pretty easily from the kids that come from such homes. 1 Corinthians 10:31!

The second thing we must do as parents is pray for our children and teach them to pray. We need to pour our hearts out in secret where none but God knows what we say, pleading for the salvation and holiness and perseverance of our children. Our Father who sees in secret will reward us. We need to pray in the presence of our children so that they can hear our longings and read our hearts and learn themselves to pray. And we need to pray with our children so that they have a chance to pray in a loving environment.

The third thing we must do to raise up children who hope in Christ is make the Bible the most important book in their lives. Most of us are so afraid of a little resistance from our children that we set very small goals. Read to them and get them to memorize Scripture with you. Johanna was so good at this with our kids. We must show our children that this book is the most important book in our lives and that it contains the answers to life's greatest questions and that it is the battle plan for the triumph of God. Brothers, I want to encourage you to be living examples of faith, based on the promises of God. I hope your children will be able to say that they never doubted God's word or their father's faith in God.

Men, be happy in the Lord. Discipline your children as the Lord would have you. Be humble and willing to apologize when you mess up. By doing so, you will show them that the cross can triumph even over a dad's mistakes. Worship together so that the children can see mom and dad praise God and bow in reverence and cherish the preaching of God's Word and get a foretaste of what it looks like to worship our King with gratitude and anticipation. Learn to uphold standards of everyday holiness without which no one will see the Lord. Standards of sexual purity, and financial integrity, and rigorous truthfulness, and self-control, and hard work—what it means in practical everyday terms to be on the side of the justice and grace that will someday triumph over all evil.

Finally, dads learn that in the end everything is in vain without love, that in the world love is the visible expression of faith in the triumph of God. Genuine faith in God produces love in His children. Don't be a fuddy-duddy who doesn't know how to laugh and love. Dad, don't miss the joy of the journey.

June 24

Genesis 1:27-31; 2:15, 24

Gentlemen, I know that we live in a time when manhood is portrayed as an evil of society and as I said earlier in the week, is considered toxic. I beg of you not to buy that lie. You were created by God's design as a human being and specifically as a man. God's design is the only hope that our society has of straightening up. The more we push away from His perfect design, the worse the nation is becoming. Let's take a look today at God's Word to see what He says about your manhood.

First of all, it was His choice to create mankind and it was His plan to create both male and female. We learn from Genesis chapter 1 that humanity alone was created in the image of God Himself. There is so much that can be learned about how we are to live by studying the attributes of God. To the best of our ability, and even beyond that now because of the Holy Spirit, we are to reflect or image to the world what God is like. Dear dads, when you look at your children, please remember that part of your job is to help them image their Creator too. Your duty is to help them.

Not only were you put here as a man to image our Father, but you were also put here to subdue and rule over creation. A better way to say that may be to steward God's creation as His ambassador. The Bible is clear that we are to rule over every aspect of the earth (Genesis 1:26,28). Friend, it is not a sin and nothing to shy away from. It doesn't matter what anyone else says, animals do not have equal standing with humanity. Now, we certainly are to manage them and care for them well, but we are not the same. Fish eggs and a woman's eggs are not equally valuable. God has put you here to oversee as lord (little "I") of His creation.

We are also told, along with females, to be fruitful and multiply on the earth. It is important that you understand that God desires that we fill the earth when image bearers. This is not about having some indiscriminate number of children because you don't believe in birth control. This is about creating in order to fill the earth with the image of God for the glory of God. Here again we get a glimpse of God's mandate for men to raise their children in the admonition of the Lord so that they grow to love and worship Him too. It is for their good AND for His glory.

As we look into Genesis chapter 2, I want you to notice the addition of details to the creation story. We learn in this chapter how God created Eve from Adam because it was God's plan to unite a man with a woman as his wife and to establish another family unit to accomplish His plan for humanity. Adam is told to have Eve as his wife and to establish a union together as one. I want you to see what God tells Adam in Genesis 2:24. There He says, "You shall leave your father and mother (the family unit one's childhood) and be joined to your wife." Do not miss the fact God is expecting a man to be able to leave home and take care of his wife and children. In order to do that, we can assume a level of responsibility, maturity, and ability. We can infer that it is God's will that the man provide for and protect his new bride. We can also assume that he is financially able to do so.

I can only imagine the absolute shock that men of old would feel as they witnessed "men" with headsets on playing video games all evening while neglecting the real responsibilities of adulthood, servanthood, and manhood. By the way, look back in Genesis 2:15 and there you will find God's will for a man to cultivate, to take care of, and to maintain the garden. He is called to work, provide for, protect, and fill the earth with children who know Jesus as Lord. What a great calling. It is honorable and good to be a man!

June 25

Genesis 3:1, 8-9

The pitfalls and temptations are many in this world. It seems like at every turn there are allurements to be avoided, dangers to be skirted, and mine fields to be navigated. Much of this is due to the reality of a real and formidable foe – Satan. As the “father of lies” (John 8:44), he is there wanting nothing less than “to kill, steal, and destroy” you and yours (John 10:10a). Alongside that, the world itself is currently designed to entangle you in all its mess and ungodliness. Add to that the presence of your own propensity to sin because of the “flesh” and you’ve got a quite the challenge – to say the least.

Adam and Eve can relate to the dilemma that all of humanity faces. In the third chapter of Genesis, we find our old adversary up to no good. God had given Adam instructions for life in the garden which included the one commandment not to eat of the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:9). It is safe, I believe, to assume that Adam communicated the rules and expectations for life in the garden to his wife Eve. As chapter 3 opens, the devil slithers up next to Eve and begins to feed her a pack of lies with the intent to deceive her and cause her to sin. He, being the most crafty of all God’s creation (3:1) was successful in the temptation that led to Eve’s sin. Now, let’s talk about Adam.

First, I wonder what he was doing when the serpent was misleading his wife. Where was Adam? Was he standing right there? Was he taking a nap or playing games? Why did he not protect her like he was supposed to? I have to believe that there was some distance between them as the serpent beguiled her. I think the evil one took advantage of her while she was somewhat alone. The point that I want us to ponder today has to do with Adam’s failure to be the man. He was supposed to protect his wife. God had placed him in the garden to lead her, to work the garden, and to take care of his bride. God held him responsible for not protecting her. How do I know that?

If you take a look at Genesis 3:9, you will see that when God approaches Adam and Eve the next morning, he finds that they are hiding because of their guilt and shame (v.8). The first thing God says is, “Adam, where are you?” Folks you know that God knew where he was. That question is the equivalent of a parent looking at the flour dumped all over the floor, the cabinet door open, flour on the 3-year old’s face and saying, “What have you done?” You already know what they’ve done. God is saying to Adam, come out and face up to what **you** have allowed to happen in your family.

Brothers, I simply want to point out for us today that we are commissioned with the privilege and responsibility of protecting our family. This means that we must be wise and able to understand situations and apply godly wisdom and principles to our lives. We must recognize the wicked and deceptive ways of the devil and keep our wives and children from being led astray. We must be attentive and we must be present. If your home is in shambles and relationships all messed up, God is going to ask you to give an account first for the shape that your crew is in. Lead well, brothers, those whom the Lord has entrusted to you. He expects it!

June 26

Proverbs 20:7

I have written a lot this week about our responsibilities as men and I realize that it can feel a bit overwhelming at times and a heavy load to carry. Well, I am glad that you understand that. We must not shy away from the weight and importance of the calling on a man's life. God did put us in a position of headship and servant leadership, but it is a privilege with burden. It was said last night in our homeschool meeting, "A real man should fall into bed tired each night." The idea was that he has worked hard and worn himself out with the call to lead and serve in the workplace AND in his own home. When a man gets home from work, his day is not done. He must then look to serve his wife and children if he has those roles to fill.

Now, brothers and sisters too, I want you to know that the rewards for faithfulness to the wonder of manhood are immense. One of my favorite verses from the Proverbs is 20:7. It says, "A righteous man who walks in his integrity – how blessed are his sons (children) after him." I know the Proverbs are written as wisdom statements that are typically true and that they are not promises or guarantees from God, but they do provide us with wisdom that will, for the most part, produce what it talks about. I am encouraged and motivated when I read that Proverb, because I know that how I live matters. I believe that God will look favorably on the man who does his best to be a man of honor and integrity.

Think about it with me fellas, if I am conducting myself in all realms of life as a man of integrity, my children are going to see that in my home. They are going to witness that in my relationship with their mother, my wife, and they will see it in my dealing with them and with others. They will grow accustomed to what it looks like to love Jesus and truly live in light of Scripture. The blessings will fall upon your home and your family when this is true of you. The children will be blessed because I (you) will be representing the Lord Jesus well in your home. To live in accordance with the Word is to live in a way that demonstrates love to those in your life. A man of integrity is fair, honest, just, loving, kind, faithful, self-controlled, patient, merciful, forgiving, and wise. Who wouldn't be blessed around a person like that?

A man of integrity can live a life of openness and transparency because he has nothing to hide and he's not waiting to be "found out." He is confident in who he is in the Lord and so, can be vulnerable and real with his wife and kids. This my brothers leads to a home of joy, peace, hope, and freedom to be who one is. Children need that so much in our world. Brothers, it is hard to be a man in some ways in our world today. I want to encourage you with the hope that as you live right before the Lord, He will bless your children. I would assume that is a great motivator for you as it has been for me. This Proverbs tells us that one of the best things you can do for your child is be a godly man.

As I hit 55 years old this summer, Johanna and I rejoice in who our children have become. We tried hard to live as parents of integrity before the Lord. Yes of course, we made mistakes and yes, we are sinners too. I can tell you now that as our children are all grown, the joy of realizing they are blessed is beyond measure. There is no turmoil in our lives, no brokenness that keeps us estranged, and no constant chaos that keeps our lives turned upside down. There is great joy, harmony, and absolute blessings from the Lord that makes our relationships so very sweet. We love being together because God has been good to us and shaped our children to be like Him. We are humbled and thankful that God keeps His word. How blessed are the children of parents who are men and women of integrity. Go for it guys; you have everything to gain, and it is well worth the sacrifices you will need to make.