

MBC MEN'S STUDY

INTRODUCTORY CALL TO ALL MEN

CLASS 3: THE MASCULINE MANDATE FOR FATHERS

- August 3rd: Understanding Our Mandate (Chapters 1-2 & 4-5)
- September 14th: The Masculine Mandate for Husbands (Chapters 6-8)
- October 5th: The Masculine Mandate for Fathers (Chapters 9-10)
- November 2nd: The Masculine Mandate for Work/Friendships (Chapters 3 & 11)
- December 7th: The Masculine Mandate in the Church (Chapters 12-13)

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

- Our men's training is going to have two tracks in the Spring semester (Jan – May 2026).
- One of the tracks is designed for men to grow in their leadership with the result being someone who is a small group leader, potential elder or deacon, ministry leader, or any other leadership role in the church.
- The other track has a focus on discipleship in the local church. For those men who do not necessarily believe they are called or gifted for leadership, but desire to disciple others in the body.
- Both of these tracks are undergirded with the current semester's men's training for all men in the church.
- Every man has a responsibility in the home life, their work life, their personal life, and in the church where they are members.
- The *Masculine Mandate* will give a large overview, both theologically and practically, of what a man of God looks like in "real life."
- The overall goal of this first semester is to introduce and fine tune biblical concepts and commands about what true biblical manhood looks like today.
- Regardless of your goal or path forward, every man in the church is called to be growing in Christ and being more and more conformed to His image.

- Whether you desire to disciple others in the church or sharpen your ability to disciple your family at home, we all need to know how to not just lead someone to Christ but then how to teach them all that Christ has commanded them.
- Our hope is that while you will ascertain more and more biblical truth on the topics of biblical manhood, biblical leadership, and biblical discipleship, you will then put these principles into practice.
- Most importantly in your own lives and then teach these things to others.
- A 2010 study is as alarming as it is true:
 - Sadly, we can make this bold diagnosis based on the far-reaching and sobering research: There is a discipleship deficiency in most churches resulting in a lack of transformation... The sad reality is that the daily lives, aspirations, and desires of many people in our churches mirror those who do not claim to know Christ.¹
- Men, after much research and talking with 1000's of churches and their members, there is conclusive research that shows discipleship is not just defined from a worldly perspective, it is rarely, if ever, happening in the normal process of the church.
- Discipleship is the lifeblood of the church. Jesus commanded us to make disciples by teaching them to observe all that He commanded (Matt 28:19-20).
- It's not a responsibility "for someone else..." it's intended for all who seek to follow the Lord.

A LACK OF MALE LEADERSHIP IN THE HOME

- As we speak of the call of a man to discipleship, first and foremost is the man's responsibility to be leading the effort of discipleship in the home, both of his wife and of his children.
- "No duty in my life is more important or more sacred than my role as a husband and father. That is where my true character is most accurately seen, and it is the best single gauge of my overall success and failure as a leader and role model. Everything I do as a pastor, educator, author, or ministry leader would be severely compromised if I failed to lead my own family properly. In fact, This is one of the key tests of whether any man is fit to lead the church, because 'if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?' (1 Timothy 3:5)"²

¹ Quote and survey findings quoted in *Discipleship Today*, Andrew Burggraff, 12 (study found in footnote 25).

² John MacArthur, *Being a Dad Who Leads* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2014), 7.

- Yet, in spite of Scripture’s high calling for men to lead in the home, cultivating these relationships with their wife and children, there is increasing abandonment, negligence, or mishandling of this high calling in the US today.
 - According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 17.6 million children, nearly 1 in 4, live without a biological, step, or adoptive father in the home. That’s enough children to fill New York City twice or Los Angeles four times over.³
 - Even observing the scope of the world, there is an understanding of the negative impact this has on the life of children. (behavioral, relational, social, etc.)
- Outside of father’s who abandon their families, you have those who have completely isolated themselves from the family, focusing on career efforts at the expense of quality/quantity time in the home.
 - “A series of historical events, beginning at the Industrial Revolution, traversing the search for American independence and the Second Great Awakening, and culminating in Victorianism, has had the net result of disestablishing American men from a true role of fatherhood and moral leadership in our land. The American male, at one time the ever-present guide of the close-knit colonial family, left his family for the factory and the materialistic lure that the Industrial Revolution brought...The fathers who labored hard to instill the value of cooperation in their offspring, in time gave their children the example of unlimited individual competition. Men who once taught their children respect and obedience toward godly authority came to act though independence were a national virtue. Men who once had an active hand in the education of their sons relegated this responsibility to a public school system...”⁴
 - Men’s focusing shifted off of family and onto the achievements and pressures of work.
- While men are called to work (we’ll unpack this next time), it has driven a wedge between the man and his family, fed by a culture that lifts up and incentivizes this abdication of responsibility.
- Fathers, then, can be tempted to either create an unhealthy imbalance of responsibility to their wives in raising their children, or relegate the responsibility to teachers, or, in spiritual matters, pastors and youth leaders.

³ <https://www.fatherhood.org/father-absence-statistic>, quoting from the 2024 U.S. Census Bureau.

⁴ Weldon Hardenbrook, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), 378-79.

- This can, unfortunately, lead to the kinds of laments that Phillips describes in the opening of his first chapter on the mandates to fathers:
 - “Pastor, I don’t know how this happened. He has gone to church his whole life. We have taken him to Sunday school and Vacation Bible School, and paid for Christian school tuition. We have monitored his friends to make sure they come from good families, and we spanked him when he was little. I thought those things would keep this from happening!”⁵
- With all of this in view, it is crucial that we understand the mandate for men in the home, both to disciple and discipline their children in accordance with the word of God.

CHAPTER 9: TO WORK: THE DISCIPLING OF CHILDREN

- Again, as with the mandate for marriage, Phillips frames up these chapters using the “work” and “keep” dynamic of Genesis 2:15, viewing the “work” as a father’s call to disciple his children and the “keep” as a father’s call to discipline his children.
- “A man is called to work the hearts of his children that they might become fertile soil for the gospel and devotion to Christ. And a man is called to keep and protect his children from the influences of sin—in the world and in their own hearts—so that all the efforts to draw that young person’s heart to Christ may not be swept away.”⁶
- When we observe the call to fathers in the home, it is not merely developing a “Christian structure”.
- By that, I mean that though, as Phillip’s states, “it is good – and, yes, even necessary – for Christian parents to provide a solid and wholesome spiritual structure for their children”⁷, these things must be viewed as a means, not the end.
- As we would view ministries in the church as trellises that support the “vine work”⁸ of soul care and discipleship, so should things such as youth group, VBS, even rules and expectations of behavior in the home be seen as supports for the overall work of cultivating a child’s heart.
- The Bible does not call fathers to simply cultivate morality in the behaviors of their children, but to cultivate the soil of their children’s hearts, bringing them to the word of God, praying that through those intentional efforts, the Lord would cause spiritual growth and draw those children to Himself.

⁵ Richard Phillips, *Masculine Mandate: God’s Calling to Men* (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2010), 125.

⁶ Ibid, 126.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ This is a reference to the imagery used in *The Trellis and the Vine* by Colin Marshal and Tony Payne.

- We are called to be faithful gardeners, preparing the soil, planting the seeds of the gospel, and trusting in the Lord for the results (cf. 1 Cor 3:6-7).
- This emphasis in all of the being the efforts of reaching the children's heart.

“Give Me Your Heart”

- Proverbs 23:26 - *Give me your heart, my son, And let your eyes delight in my ways.*⁹
- Phillips frames much of the chapters on parenting from the principle shown in this verse, demonstrating that the desire of every father should be for the heart of their child, and that their heart would be given to the Lord.
- As we look at the task of both discipleship and discipline in the home, this needs to be the consistent tenor of and motivation for our parenting efforts.
- It can be easy to slip into a moralistic mindset, seeing obedience, good behavior, and just generally moral behavior as the end goal of parenting. As long as your kid gets good grades, faithfully attends youth group, does their chores, etc., it can feel as though we have accomplished our mission.
- However, the mandate for fathers takes much more time and effort.
 - We who would seek the heart of our children must understand that, as Phillips says, “the heart – even the heart of a child – can only be given freely; it can never really be taken.”¹⁰
 - This means that fathers must do the hard work of continually pursuing and cultivating the hearts of our children.
 - This is done through leading by example – giving them our heart.
- “Such a giving of a father's heart to a child is not a one-time event but a continual demonstration of love, patience, grace, mercy, and dedication over time. Our children must gain from us what they most desire: our affection, our approval, our attention, our involvement, and our time.”¹¹
 - The love that we have for our children, like the love for our wives, must be a love that is willing to sacrifice.
 - Realizing that our jobs (though important in providing for our family) and our recreation cannot dominate our time. We die to self to demonstrate our love for our children and, in turn lead by example.

⁹ All Bible references are in the NASB95, unless otherwise stated.

¹⁰ Phillips, 128.

¹¹ Ibid, 129.

- While there will always be things that seek to dominate our time, some of which are legitimate and may lead to seasons where we must be away more than we would like, it cannot be the standard.
- Even in those seasons, it's important to still emphasize time together as a family, letting them know that when you're home, you're home.
- Also, this mandate is not one that points our children to a love of morality, but rather, to a love of the Lord. These are the principles that we see in the biblical passages pertaining to parenting.
- **Deuteronomy 6:4-9** - *Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*
- This passage highlights the principles of intentional time and directional (heavenward) focus that should characterize our parenting efforts.
 - VV. 4-6: The example of godly parents
 - This reminds us that our relationship and devotion to the Lord is the foundation of our discipleship efforts as fathers.
 - We cannot lead our children to a place we've never been.
 - This also highlights the heart-level instruction from the Lord to believers that should characterize the discipleship of parents to their children.
 - VV. 7-9: The instruction to godly parents
 - These verses are crucial to our understanding of the mandate as fathers, because they highlight not only the **call** to parental responsibility, but also the **extent**.
 - V. 7 – in all locations, at all times
 - V. 8-9 – constant reminders of this command from the parents and in the home
- This is to be done **diligently** (v.7). This highlights the time and effort required to fulfill this command.
- And this command is not given to the church (didn't exist at this time), nor to Israel's spiritual leaders. It was given to the family – to the fathers!
- We cannot abdicate this responsibility or assume that they'll pick it up along the way. This passage says we must “teach them” and “talk of them” in the home (v. 7).

Ways to Reach a Child's Heart

- Phillips continues in this chapter by offering some great practical instruction to help in the mandate to disciple a child's heart, again using an agricultural illustration.
 - A godly father plants good things in the hearts of his children. He plants:
 - The seeds of his own faith in Christ.
 - A longing for truth and goodness.
 - His hopes and dreams for the godly man or woman the child will become.
 - His own confidence that the child has all the gifting and capacity needed to serve God faithfully in whatever way God may genuinely call.
 - A godly father works these things into the soil of his child's heart as he shares his own heart, listens to and molds the child's heart, and waters these tender plants with faith and love.¹²
- **Read**
 - This is perhaps one of the easiest aspects of parenting that can fall away (along with prayer) when schedules begin to fill up.
 - Paired with that, if a family is plugged into a solid church and the students are being taught the word in class or youth group, it can be a temptation to view this as less of a priority.
 - However, as Phillip states, "There simply is no substitute for our children hearing the Word of God read from our lips, with its doctrines explained clearly so they can understand, and the message applied to their hearts."¹³
 - In some way, or some form (devotional, Scripture reading, etc.), a family needs to be taking in the word of God together.
 - We do not have to be elaborate, as if someone from church will be grading us. The family can simply gather for a reading of God's Word or a good devotional book with scriptural teaching, followed by discussion and prayer.¹⁴
 - As much as you're able, this needs to be built into your schedule, not simply tacked on last minute.
 - Why? Because we must recognize that our discipleship efforts are worth nothing without the word of God. It is within the word that the power lies, not us (2 Tim 3:15-17).

¹² Phillips, 133.

¹³ Ibid, 134.

¹⁴ Ibid, 135.

- **Pray**

- Partnered with this, and just as easy to let slip, is the ministry of prayer for and with our children.
- Prayer, like Scripture, is an absolutely nonnegotiable element of faithful parenting, one that communicates our sincere love to our children's hearts and shows them our reliance on the Lord's sovereign provision of grace.¹⁵
 - This highlights something that we need to make sure we understand as parents discipling our children: our unending reliance and dependence upon the grace of the Lord, both in our own lives and the lives of our children.
 - While one ditch we can fall into is negligence in our responsibilities to disciple our children, the other is that we are the ones that save our children.
 - We cannot, regardless of our faithfulness to our mandate, save our children. That is a sovereign choice and work of the Lord in our children's hearts.
 - However, we are called to be instruments that the Lord uses to sow the seeds of the gospel in the hearts of our children. We do this by our example in a love for the Lord and a dependence on the word and prayer AND in what we do with our children regarding time in the word and prayer.
- We must consistently pray *for* them and *with* them, and encouraging them to participate and to be praying for us!

- **Work & Play**

- The following two means of reaching a child's heart focus more on the relationship building between you and your children.
 - Another pitfall we can find in parenting is one of instruction and cold, harsh leadership.
 - Parenting, then, can become cold and legalistic, to the detriment of the loving relationship that a father is to have with his children (1 John 4:16)
- Phillips highlights the ways that we can bring our children into our life, and the ways in which we can be a part of theirs, in the areas of work and play.

¹⁵ Phillips, 135.

- Whether it's schoolwork, projects, sports/extracurricular activities, chores, yard work, home maintenance, etc., we want to view our work and their work as opportunities to come together and spend time together.
- Often, it's not going to be about the work itself, though that can be fun too, it's having the touchpoint to build a relationship and to teach them in practical ways.
- With play, we need to realize it's okay to have fun, light-hearted times with our kids.
 - Get involved in things they like to do.
 - Find shared hobbies.
 - Go out just the two of you (or cycle through kids individually) and do something fun together.
- All of this doesn't replace the need for intentional discipleship and leading in the word and prayer, but it is still tilling and cultivating that relational soil.
- "This is how we become part of their world in a way that draws their hearts to us."¹⁶
- "This all requires time, for time is the currency with which I purchase the right to say, 'My son, my daughter, give me your heart.'"¹⁷
- This is crucial, foundational work to lay out as children grow, going from seasons, as Phillips describes, where we as parents "gradually release our hold and transition from dictating to guiding—from the power of command to the influence of carefully timed and chosen counsel."¹⁸
 - As children grow and begin to take on more responsibility and independence, it can be hard, though certainly not impossible, to lay that relational and spiritual groundwork.
 - It is the reason that the importance of pouring into your children in the younger years, both relationally and spiritually, cannot be underestimated.
- I think of Solomon, in his writings to his son in the book of Proverbs, and the continual call to remember and hold fast to the things he was taught in his youth.
 - **Prov 1:8** - *Hear, my son, your father's instruction...do not forsake your mother's teaching;*
 - **Prov 2:1** - *My son, do not forget my teaching, But let your heart keep my commandments;*
 - **Prov 4:3-4** - *When I was a son to my father...then he taught me and said to me, "Let your heart hold fast my words; Keep my commandments and live;*

¹⁶ Phillips, 138.

¹⁷ Ibid, 139.

¹⁸ Ibid, 140.

- So, then, as our children grow, become increasingly independent, and prepare to leave the safety of our homes, we must remember that:
 - One day, your children will encounter outside the home temptations and spiritual attacks of substantial power. The toxic youth culture they will discover can threaten to overwhelm by sheer force almost any child's desire not to disappoint his or her parents.
 - the greatest, most powerful, and most valuable passion a father can give his children is a passion for the Lord and His gospel of grace. The ultimate reason we desire our children to give us their hearts is so that we can guide their hearts to Jesus.¹⁹

CHAPTER 10: TO KEEP: THE DISCIPLINE OF CHILDREN

- Paired with the mandate to disciple our children is the call to discipline our children in line with biblical principles.
- This is the “keep” aspect of the mandate to be cultivating the soil of our children's hearts as we point them to Christ.
- It is, in essence, our required response to the sinful, fleshly resistance in the work of discipleship.

The Call to Keep a Child's Heart

- Again, as with the call to discipleship in the home, discipline must have a view towards the heart of our children, knowing the sin nature of our children that feeds into their thoughts, speech, and action.
- Often, when we consider discipleship and discipline, we get focused on the fruit of the tree (outward sin) to the neglect of the inner heart issues. We strive to pick the fruit off of the tree, and then we get frustrated when it grows right back.
 - Rather, we should have, as our main focus, the sinful roots that feed that fruit (heart level).
 - “[I]f we address a young person's *internal* sin problem—his heart—we also weaken the power of *external* sin problems.”²⁰
- At the same time, the Bible is clear that we must seek obedience from our children (Eph 6:1).
 - It is not, though, an end in itself. Though obedience is the immediate goal, and discipline must come as a response to disobedience, it must be a means to point them to Christ.

¹⁹ Phillips, 141.

²⁰ Ibid, 146.

- **Genesis 18:19** - *For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice...*
 - **The call:** Command his children and his household
 - **The goal of that call:** to keep the way of the Lord
 - **The example of that call:** by doing righteousness and justice
- So, then, we command the obedience of our children in the home, doing so with a delegated authority and as representatives of God and His word.
- This is what establishes the guardrails in our parenting and prevents us from using our delegated authority in a way that will frustrate our children rather than disciple them.
- **Ephesians 6:4** - *Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*
 - There is a contrast between provoking anger and bringing up our children.
 - This is seen in the means by which we discipline and the end goal of our discipline.
 - **Means:** focused on us OR focused on Christ?
 - **End:** because I said so OR because this is what God's word commands?
- This requires careful self-control in parenting, not allowing anger to drive our discipline, but rather a desire to see our children conformed to the image of Christ.
- "Sinful anger and godly discipline, Paul is saying, are simply incompatible."²¹

The Way to Keep a Child's Heart

- Phillips highlights two key areas here: physical punishment and verbal reproof.

Physical Reproof: Sparing Not the Rod

- This is one area of parenting that is widely debated and, in the case of spanking, is seen as outdated, unhelpful, and even harmful to children.
 - "Any form of physical discipline will always be problematic as it's often done in the heat of the moment as a reaction...Physical discipline doesn't offer children an understanding or teaching about what they have done wrong and it doesn't give parents an insight into why the child has behaved in the way that they have."²²

²¹ Phillips, 148.

²² <https://www.essence.com/lifestyle/gentle-parenting-discipline/>

- This has brought forth the rise of the “gentle parenting” movement.
 - “In this day and age, the most discussed parenting style has been gentle parenting. It’s an approach characterized by the setting of healthy boundaries, not shaming your child for the feelings they display, and working with them to understand feelings and issues in the hopes that they can navigate them in a positive way.”²³
- Now, if physical punishment is given in the manner described above, then I would agree that it is not helpful, because that is not the biblical expectation of physical discipline!
 - **Prov 29:15** - *The rod and reproof give wisdom, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.*
 - Physical discipline is both commanded and informed by Scripture.
 - It is extremely important that parents discipline their children in a controlled and highly intentional manner that will encourage repentance from the sin or other wrong behavior.²⁴
- While “gentle parenting” intends to offer a correction to poorly implemented physical discipline, it is an overcorrection that does not call out sin and seek repentance and has the danger of allowing the feelings and emotions of the child take the reigns in child rearing.
 - **Jeremiah 17:9** - *The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?*
- So, then, what are some practical considerations to think through with physical discipline? Phillips offers five:
 - **Seek Privacy**
 - **Make the Offense Known**
 - **Require That the Offense be Acknowledged**
 - **Embrace, Reassure, and Exhort**
 - **Repeat as Necessary**
- “Our goal is that through the way we administer spankings, and the attitude and demeanor we display, our children will conclude, ‘I shouldn’t do that again,’ without ever thinking, ‘My father is mean and angry.’”²⁵

²³ <https://www.essence.com/lifestyle/gentle-parenting-discipline/>

²⁴ Phillips, 149.

²⁵ Ibid, 151.

Verbal Reproof: Exercising Parental Authority

- “[T]he single most important manifestation of our authority, and the one to which we must pay the closest attention, is our speech. What we say to our children, and how we say it—most specifically how we reprove them verbally—is critical to the proper exercise of our God-given authority.”²⁶
- As with most relationship dynamics taught on in God’s word, a father’s speech in his relationship with his children is absolutely vital.
- Verbal reproof is an essential part of disciplining our children in the Lord.
 - As seen above, it is intricately woven into the steps of physical discipline.
 - It is the means by which, in the moment of correction and discipline, we have the opportunity to direct our children to the word of God. Along with what we model, it is the means by which we are teaching our children (Deut 6:7)
- It is, in essence, a focused application of the command to “speak the truth in love”.
 - We cannot, out of a warped view of love, a desire to be our child’s “buddy”, or a passivity drawn from a desire to avoid conflict, avoid speaking the truth and correcting our children in a firm way that commands obedience (Eph 6:1)
 - We also cannot, out of a desire for our authority to be on display, out of sinful anger, or out of a harsh zeal for the truth, avoid speaking the truth *in love*.
- Remember, we are called to cultivate the *heart* of our children.
 - When we have this in view, our discipline (whether physical or verbal or, most likely, both) is not done out of a place of anger or desiring to see our authority unchallenged, but it is out of a heart of compassion for our children, desiring to see them come to Christ, and having God’s word, our ultimate authority, as our foundation.
 - **2 Timothy 2:24-26** - *The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.*
 - **1 Thessalonians 5:14** - *We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.*

²⁶ Phillips, 153.

- While this is not a parenting verse, it does speak to our disposition and practice of parenting unsaved children. We cannot give way to anger or impatience, but rather, we must remember how our heavenly Father has drawn us and continually, lovingly, patiently disciplines us (Heb 12:5-11)

Practical Application

Be the Bad Cop

- Don't let this all fall on your wife. Though she responsibility to be raising and nurturing children (Prov 1:8, 6:20; 1 Tim 2:15), fathers are called to leadership in the home, which includes discipline.

Be a Team With Your Wife

- While the mandate for fathers is crucial, the mandate for husbands is central to the call of biblical manhood. The husband/wife relationship is the most important earthly relationship a man has.
 - This means, as one flesh (Gen 2:24), you parent together, through the same means, to the same end, with the same heart, united in this call to parenting.
 - Never allow it to be "mom vs. dad". Children should have the understanding that what mom says (assuming it is not sinful), dad will support and visa versa.

Bathe it All in Prayer

- Remember, **YOU CANNOT SAVE YOUR CHILD**, only the Lord can! (1 Cor 3:6-7)
- Parenting is a humbling task, but it is not a task the we do alone. We can go before the throne of grace for wisdom, mercy, help, and peace.
 - **1 Pet 5:6-7** - *Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.*
 - **Phil 4:6-7** - *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

RECOMMENDED READING

- *Shepherding a Child's Heart* by Tedd Tripp
- *The Shepherd Leader at Home* by Timothy Witmer
- *Being a Dad Who Leads* by John MacArthur
- *What the Bible Says About Parenting* by John MacArthur
- *Disciplines of a Godly Family* by Kent and Barbara Hughes