

MBC MEN'S STUDY

INTRODUCTORY CALL TO ALL MEN

CLASS 4: THE MASCULINE MANDATE CHAPTERS 12 & 13

- 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.

CHAPTER 12: THE MASCULINE MANDATE IN THE CHURCH

- What do we see here? Once again, God's Genesis 2:15 pattern is crystal clear: Nehemiah's men worked, laboring to build the walls, and they kept, standing guard to protect both the workers and the work already accomplished. In demonstrating the use of the Masculine Mandate among God's people collectively, Nehemiah set a precedent that holds even today. Within the church, men are called to work and keep in service to God.¹
- In other words, while not in the OT, the church can take its cues and directions from some of the examples and narratives in the OT.
- Within the context of Nehemiah, the author points out that the same men were tasked with two different but related tasks.
 - They were to work on the construction of the wall and on protecting the work that was being done and the people doing the work.
- Thinking of Nehemiah as an example of leadership in the church there are some practical lessons which can be learned.²⁻³
- **Starts with a Foundation of Prayer and Dependence on God:** Nehemiah's first response upon hearing the news of Jerusalem's broken walls was to weep, mourn, fast, and pray (Nehemiah 1:4-11). He prayed before he acted, continuously sought God's guidance throughout the project, and gave God the glory for the success.
 - This is a pattern for church leaders to anchor all ministry plans in fervent prayer and a deep relationship with God, recognizing Him as the ultimate source of strength and wisdom.
- **Possesses a Clear, God-Given Vision:** Nehemiah had a clear, compelling vision to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and remove the people's disgrace. He articulated this vision effectively to inspire others, ensuring everyone understood the goal and their part in it.
 - Modern church leaders should likewise seek a clear, God-inspired vision for their ministry and communicate it consistently and honestly to galvanize the congregation toward a shared purpose.

¹ Richard D. Phillips. *The Masculine Mandate: God's Calling to Men*, 175

² <https://jacl.andrews.edu/what-made-nehemiah-an-effective-leader/#:~:text=Generosity%20was%20not%20the%20only,into%20guards%20and%20construction%20workers>.

³ <https://www.christiantechjobs.io/blog/leadership-lessons-from-nehemiah>

- **Combines Diligent Planning with Decisive Action:** While Nehemiah was deeply spiritual, he was also a meticulous planner and a man of action. He assessed the situation, leveraged his position to secure necessary resources from King Artaxerxes, and organized the people into teams with specific responsibilities.
 - This teaches leaders to balance faith with practical wisdom, using the skills and resources God has provided to develop thorough, strategic plans rather than waiting passively for divine intervention alone.
- **Leads with Integrity and Self-Sacrifice:** Nehemiah led by example, refusing to use his position as governor for personal gain and even participating in the physical labor. When internal exploitation and injustice occurred among the people, he confronted the issues promptly and fairly, modeling integrity and a servant-heart mindset.
 - Church leaders can emulate this by maintaining high ethical standards, demonstrating transparency, and prioritizing the needs of the congregation over personal comfort or ambition.
- **Perseveres Through Opposition and Conflict:** Nehemiah faced relentless opposition from external adversaries and internal discouragement. He did not allow threats, mockery, or slander to distract him from the work. Instead, he strategically planned defenses, encouraged his team, and remained focused on the mission until it was completed in just 52 days.
 - This quality of resolute focus and courage in the face of adversity is crucial for church leaders navigating challenges and spiritual warfare
- These are just some of the leadership traits and aspects of leadership that men must possess if they desire to lead in the church and to lead their families well.
 - These are all talked about in some way throughout this chapter from Phillips.
- Not every man is going to lead in the church, but every man must be aware of what is taking place in the church; especially if he has a family that attends as well.
- Not only is he responsible for making sure that the church is well taken care of, but he must also ensure that his family is being fed and protected by the church and its leadership.
- As Phillips will go on to talk about in this chapter, men are responsible for being equipped, being ready to fend off wolves and false teaching, and also ready to equip others so that they too can participate in the body life of the church.
- Men are to be an example to the church and to their family of what a God fearer looks like.

The Normal Quiet Christian Life

- While there seems to be a lot of talk today about living a radical life for Christ and forsaking all for the gospel, the Bible *actually* has much to say about leading a quiet and disciplined “normal” Christ-centered life.
 - Indeed, God has called and gifted some men to be that radical pathfinder who blazes inroads that will forever be remembered; leaving their indelible mark on the church.
 - But for the other 99% of us...we should strive for the normal, quiet Christian life.
- “While a few people may have personalities that are relentlessly intense about everything, most of us mortals will settle into a life of predictable routines. That word *settle* can be bad if it means passivity, but it can also be a good word if the opposite is constantly being unsettled. Even if you leave everything behind, become a missionary, and live among an unreached people, your life, on most days, will be predictable. After a while, it will likely feel quite ordinary.”⁴
- Notice the main point that DeYoung is making, *the ordinary Christian life*...even that of the man of the house and leader in the church...is going to be ordinary.
- As men, if we are constantly looking to do the radical or extreme, we are going to miss out on the normal blessings that God has for us.
- When we think about leadership, it may be something as simple as your home or over a ministry here at church.
- It may be a discipleship relationship that you have chosen to take on so that you can lead someone through the Bible.
- We must not throw away the ordinary in this life and treat it as less than holy or less than godly. If we do, we are in danger of not only missing out on what God has for us, but we will also never be satisfied with what has been provided for us.
- “If God isn’t happy with ‘normal’ life, he’s not going to be happy with most of us, because normal is what most of our days are like.”⁵
- **1 Thessalonians 4:11** “...and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you...”

⁴ Kevin DeYoung, *Impossible Christianity*, 117-118.

⁵ Ibid., 118.

- **1 Timothy 2:1-2** “First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.”
- **James 3:13** “Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.”
- **Why is this important in general for Christians and specifically for men?**
 - “Our godly behavior directly affects our testimony and our ability to witness and effectively lead people to Christ.”⁶
 - “Paul’s desire for a quiet life does not mean that he simply seeks personal tranquillity [sic] for Christians. His goal and all-consuming passion is that the gospel might freely penetrate society, which will be forwarded most effectively in a peaceful context. But it is not only so that the messengers of the gospel may be unhindered; it is that their ‘peaceful and quiet lives’ will be carried out in the manner Paul repeatedly prescribes for Timothy: ‘in all godliness and holiness.’⁷
 - Notice the commonality in these two definitions...the goal is for the gospel to effectively go out into society.
 - The hope is that those who you and I interact with will see our *normal Christian lives* and then desire to have the same peace which we enjoy.
- This peace from a quiet Christian life alludes many of us.
- There can be a tendency to look at our own lives and think that we must *be* something more than we can do. We can start to think that there must be more time we can spend doing something that has more meaning than just a simple, quiet life.
- While that may be the Lord stirring your heart for something like that, we must ask and look at ourselves to see if we are doing ‘the ordinary’ right now.⁸
- If we are not content doing ‘the ordinary’ then when the extraordinary becomes the ordinary, we are going to, once again, lose our contentment.

⁶ <https://www.gotquestions.org/lead-a-quiet-life.html>

⁷ Walter L. Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 85–86.

⁸ We must not confuse the Lord’s leading to something new with being discontent. The Lord will stir the hearts of His people so that they do what He desires. This is how missionaries are sent out, churches are planted, and the work of the ministry goes on and on throughout history and into the future. The point is not that Christians should never do anything “extreme” for the Lord, the point is that we should not be chasing after those things from our own desires.

- We should always strive for holiness, killing sin, being watchful, and all the other ways we grow more and more into the image of Christ.
- But we should also stop and look around and see what the Lord has for us right here and right now.
- Leading an ordinary life means that we are active in our life. It means that we look around for ways that we are able to serve those whom God has placed around us.
 - As Phillips states later on in the book, “My advice to new believers, or to men who have not previously sought to serve in the church, is neither novel nor difficult to follow. It is simply this: keep alert for any need that comes up and that you have some ability and desire to take on, and offer to meet it.”⁹
 - If our ambition is to lead a quiet and ordinary life, then we are more apt to look for and take care of the opportunities that the Lord places before us.
- **This also means that there must be some intentionality and patience.**
- If we are always chasing the next thing, then we are never going to be all-in, in the current thing.
- This is one characteristic of Jesus that we should seek to emulate while doing ministry. As one author puts it, “...I’m struck by how fiercely present Jesus was, how he just would not let anything or anyone, even a medical emergency or a hurting father, rush him into the next moment.”
- In other words, *is your schedule and/or daily routines aligned with what you value the most?*¹⁰ If someone looked at your schedule, followed you around for the day, would they see this type of intentionality to lead a quiet life and be present in the lives of those people around you?
- Instead of looking for the next best thing, pay attention to what is happening right around you right now.
- As Phillips puts it, “But there is something else we must notice about the biblical phrases I listed above. As we look at the 1 Timothy 3 biblical qualifications for church office, we see a handbook for the kind of godliness to which all Christian men should aspire. Set out for us there is an excellent agenda for any Christian man to follow: personal godliness, self-control, knowledge of truth, and a good reputation within and outside the church. What a blessing it is to lead such a life-and how uncommon it is today!”¹¹

⁹ Phillips, 181.

¹⁰ This idea came from Stephen Covey’s *7 Habits of Fame*

¹¹ Phillips, 179.

- When men are aspiring and focusing on becoming more like Christ, those people who God has placed around them are going to see it and desire the same things.

Male – Only Leadership

- Phillips starts with the overall leadership of the local church.
- If this is not right, then the rest of the church is not going to function right either.
- Speaking of the church, Paul writes in **Ephesians 2:20** “...having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone...”
- We must start with the Bible as our one and only foundation for the church. There are other helpful documents and church traditions out there, but if the Bible is not *the* foundation, then the church (at least in Paul’s description) is not a church.
- Phillips also writes, “But the positions of authority-the roles of teaching and ruling-are restricted to men. To become convinced of the truth and authority of Scripture, and then to read the plain words of the New Testament, is to come to this conclusion easily and naturally.”¹²
- Once we agree that the Bible is the foundation, then we must search out what it says about leadership in the church.
- Phillips puts it like this, “This principle of male leadership is also specifically applied to the exercise of governing authority and teaching in the church. Paul writes to Timothy, ‘I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet’ (1 Tim. 2:12). Again, Paul grounds this teaching on the design of God in creation and also on the effects of the fall (1 Tim. 2:13-14). Moreover, the fact that Jesus appointed only men to the apostolate, and that the early church elected only men to the first diaconate, sets a precedent that we have no reason to set aside.”¹³
- Men, this is not to degrade women and put men over them in a superstructure, it is to show God’s design and to tell you men that you have responsibilities which the Lord expects you to fulfill.
- Regarding 1 Timothy 2:12, we must have an unwavering conviction that Paul is grounding these words, not from a male-dominated culture, but in the creation account from Genesis.
- As a man, you will need to be able to defend the Scriptures and teach what they say to those who desire to bring false teachings into the church.

¹² Phillips, 176.

¹³ Ibid., 177.

- Let's take a moment and look at the disputed meanings of 1 Timothy 2:12:¹⁴

Word / Phrase in 1 Timothy 2:12	Disputed Meaning
"I"	Is Paul merely stating his personal opinion or preference?
"Do not permit"	Is Paul only currently opposed but may change his mind later?
"A woman"	Does Paul's prohibition merely pertain to wives?
"To teach"	Is only <i>false</i> teaching in view, not teaching in general?
"Or"	Is Paul's concern that women not teach in a domineering way?
"To have/exercise authority"	Does Paul not want women to usurp men's authority?
"Over a man"	Do Paul's words relate only to husbands?

- "Paul isn't grounding his prohibition of women teaching or having authority over men in the church in their inability to obtain equal access to education but in the creation order and the scenario at the fall."¹⁵
- This will, most likely, be one of the greatest areas that the church will continue to receive pushback and be condemned for in our modern culture.
- When someone is told they are not able to do something because of their gender, there are identity issues which come out of the heart.
- The purpose is not that one gender is greater than the other, the purpose is to have the order and specified roles in the church that the Lord desires.

¹⁴ List and explanations from Andreas and Margaret Kostenberger, *God's Design for Man and Woman: A Biblical-Theological Survey*, 210-211.

¹⁵ Ibid.

A Brief Word to the Men About the Women in the Church

- “In other New Testament passages, women are encouraged in their teaching of children and of other women. But the foundational message about teaching and the exercise of spiritual authority within the church as a whole is clear: these roles are reserved for Christian men. To the degree that men fail to assume these roles gladly and exercise them diligently, we end up with feminized churches that can quickly become fruitless and unsound because they are not being led as God intended.”¹⁶
- There are two pitfalls that churches seem to make regarding women in the church.
- The first one is very obvious and is counter to what we just read. They allow women to have positions of authority by teaching and leading where the Bible prohibits.
 - This has detrimental effects upon the church and especially upon the men in the church.
 - When women lead, men usually do not follow. Since God placed this order in the church and in the home, when the order is disordered and women are leading, men will usually become lazy and indulge in self-interest.
- With a mixture of guilt over the past ways women have been mistreated and of apathy, men have given the reigns of the church to women.
- Here is a brief list:¹⁷
 - United Church of Christ (the first in USA, 1853)
 - Antoinette Brown Blackwell. At her ordination, the Rev. Luther Lee preached from Galatians 3:28 “there is neither male nor female...for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”
 - He went on to say, “I cannot see how the text can be explained so as to exclude females from any right, office, work, privilege, or immunity which males enjoy, hold or perform.”
 - Disciples of Christ (1888)
 - Assemblies of God (1914)
 - The Methodist Church (1956)
 - Although women had been serving in pastoral roles since the 18th century, this marked the first time they had the same official standing as ordained men.
 - Presbyterian Church in the USA (1956)

¹⁶ Phillips, 177.

¹⁷ <https://www.christianpost.com/news/7-christian-denominations-that-allow-women-to-be-ordained.html?page=2>

- Lutheran Church in American (1970)
 - The first female bishop, Rev. Elizabeth Eaton said, “In the face of sometimes vehement opposition, I questioned it. My ordination was not a feminist statement but a response to an irresistible call from God to serve.”
- The Episcopal Church (1976)
 - The vote was influenced in part by the July 1974 decision of the Church of the Advocate in North Philadelphia to ordain 11 women as Episcopal priests in defiance of Church rules.
- There are others well, but the point is simple, *when one abandons the Word of God in favor of personal interpretation, there is no place that one can stop.*
- In other words, to abandon God’s Word as inspired in one point, the Bible will continue to be questioned to fit anyone else’s narrative.
- Regarding the 7 churches which accepted women as pastors:
 - **United Church of Christ:** Ordained its first openly gay clergy in 1972 and has a core value of "Extravagant Welcome," which includes LGBTQ+ inclusion.
 - **Presbyterian Church (USA):** Supports the ordination of women, same-sex marriages, and welcomes LGBTQ+ people in leadership roles.
 - **Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA):** Allows for the ordination of LGBTQ+ clergy and the marriage of same-sex couples. LGBTQ+ individuals are welcome in all aspects of congregational life.
 - **United Methodist Church:** Voted in May 2024 to allow LGBTQ+ clergy to serve, reversing a previous ban.
 - **Christian Church (Disciples of Christ):** Supports the full inclusion of LGBTQ+ people in all aspects of church life, including leadership roles, though decisions on ordination can vary by region and congregation.
 - **Episcopal Church:** Allows for the ordination of LGBTQ+ clergy.
 - *Assemblies of God...the only church on the list that still holds to a biblical understanding of homosexuality and the LGBTQ lifestyle.
- Once again, this is a broad brush and look at the “Christian” church as a whole. But, statistics show that it is now the majority.

- The denominations that generally allow women pastors and support homosexuality are largely classified as mainline Protestant churches. In the United States, these groups combined make up approximately **11% of the U.S. adult population**, which is a significant portion of the total Christian population (around 62% of U.S. adults).¹⁸
- If the church allows women in the pastorate or other major church leadership roles, not only is there a blatant disregard for God’s Word but it also starts the landslide towards major compromise.
- **The first pitfall was to appoint women in roles that the Bible has given exclusively to men.**
- **The second pitfall is to subjugate women all together and view them as inferior simply because they are women.**
- The Bible never gives different value to men and women, only calls them to different roles.
- The Bible does not permit a woman to teach men (1 Tim 2:12), but women play a vital role in teaching.
- “With regard to gender, women ought not to be treated as second-class church members or as inferior in value to men.”¹⁹
 - Knowing that God has given men and women different roles in the church should not cause the church to look down upon one another. The fact that men and women have the same standing before God, but different roles, should motivate everyone to do their part.
- When the church recognizes that the Bible gives clear guidelines that the pastor/elder position is for men only, the rest of the church’s ministries will fall into place.
- Köstenberger rightly asserts, “...**that men take the initiative and women respond to men’s leadership.** While there may be exceptions, in principle this is not merely a matter of traditional role division but an implication of the fact – attested by Scripture – **that God put men in charge of both the home and the church and assigned to them the ultimate responsibility and authority for these institutions.**”²⁰
- As men lead in the way that God has designed, women are then able to fulfill their God-given roles. It is a helpful reminder that “...a complementarian understanding of gender roles is borne out, not just by a few isolated problem passages but by biblical theology as a whole.”²¹

¹⁸ <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2025/02/26/religious-landscape-study-executive-summary/#:~:text=35%25%20of%20U.S.%20adults%20have,down%20from%205%25%20in%202007.>

¹⁹ Köstenberger, *God’s Design for Man and Woman*, 168.

²⁰ Ibid., 147.

²¹ Köstenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 270.

- When taken as a whole book, the Bible speaks to the relevance and importance of male leadership in both the house and the church.
- When the Bible speaks of submission, it is between a man and his wife. Not every woman is called to submit to every man.
- All people, both men and women, are called to submit to their church leadership equally.
 - This is only when the church leadership is acting in accordance with biblical commands and adhering to the Bible as their standard of faith.
- When churches do not see the value of women in the body or what beauty women in the church bring, they are going to effectively snuff out God ordained ministry and real life happening.
- As husbands and fathers, a key role is encouraging growth in the life of your wives and daughters.
- They are not subpar people nor are they unqualified for spiritual gifts.
- A man must encourage those ladies that he is around to be an active participant in the life of the church so that the church may be blessed overall.
- **Titus 2:3-5** “Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.”
- Women not only have a key role in the church but also in the home. If husbands are not leading their wives in this area, once again, they are not helping their wives in the ministry God’s called them to.
- **1 Timothy 2:15** “But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.”
- There have been 7 major interpretations of this vital text throughout the years.
- I think that Köstenberger puts it the best, “On the whole, the dynamic of the passage seems to be that Paul is trying to end up on a positive note after having issued a prohibition in verse 12 against women teaching or exercising authority over men in the church. In verse 15 he instead focuses on the positive function of childbearing and women’s continuation in faith, love, and holiness. Rather than introducing new teaching, the apostle is extending God’s original design for men and women to the life of the church, redirecting the aspirations of women from teaching and exercising authority over men in the church to the domestic, familial realm.”²²

²² Köstenberger, *God’s Design for Man and Woman*, 213.

- Overall, when men lead well, women respond well. When men take on the roles that God has given them, women are going to find contentment where God has placed them.

Equipped for Service and All are Soldiers, Athletes, Farmers (177-180)

- “What does this say to Christian men in the church? For one thing, it says that men should be serious about their faith so as to equip themselves to serve in church leadership. Not all men can or should serve as elders or deacons. But the church has and always will have a profound need for qualified, godly men to serve and lead. Therefore, a faithful Christian man should prepare himself to serve in such a capacity.” (177-178)
- Each man has a responsibility to make sure that he is equipped for the service that the Lord may call him into.
- Statistics show that men are less religious than women.
 - “Women remain more religious than men in the United States by a variety of measures, such as prayer frequency and belief in God or a universal spirit. But the gender gap in religiousness is less pronounced among the youngest adults than among older people, and it’s slightly smaller today than in 2007. Still, women in every age group are at least as religious as men.”²³
- Men, we need to step up and get going in our walk with the Lord. There is no coasting, only drifting backwards. How serious we take our faith will be seen by the work that we put into growing daily.
- Yes, the church needs qualified elders and deacons. But the same qualifications that are for elders and deacons are also set forth for the normal Christian life.
- Whether or not you desire an office of leadership in the church, the charge is the same.
- Pursue holiness, seek the Lord in all areas of your life, keep you mind focused on the Lord and feed yourself the Word of the God.
- “Indeed, Paul calls each Christian man to be ‘a good soldier of Christ Jesus’ (2 Tim. 2:3), and the first battle we face as believers is with our own sinful habits and spiritual immaturity.” (180)
- We all are not as mature as we hope to be...we all have sinful habits that creep in unnoticed and show themselves at the worst times.

²³ <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2025/02/26/religious-landscape-study-executive-summary/#:~:text=35%25%20of%20U.S.%20adults%20have,down%20from%205%25%20in%202007.>

- The point isn't that we have them, it is what are we going to it. To kill sin, we must cultivate a love for Christ. We sin when we love something more than Christ.
- To break habits and mature, we must know more about Christ and what He's done for us. This is only done through the study of the Word, open and honest fellowship with others, prayer, and the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- "We all have much to do in our own hearts and lives, and the requirement for well-qualified men to serve as leaders in the church is always urgent and vital." (180)
- You nor I will ever get to a place where we are going to stop working in our hearts and lives.
- As you mature as a believer, the work becomes more intimate and detailed. While sin outside the body still exists, the Holy Spirit is bringing things to mind that we desire more than holiness and communion with the Lord.
- The work that the Holy Spirit does is only through His Word and those around us that speak truth into our lives.

Workers and Builders in the Church (180-182)

- "The calling of Christian men to work in the church includes the ideas of building and strengthening the body of believers. This is the first aspect of the Masculine Mandate, the calling to work. This raises a question that Christian men should seek to answer: *What particular kinds of work is Christ calling me to do in the church, for which He has given me particular spiritual gifting?*"²⁴
- Each man should know the gift(s) that God has given to him. We are responsible to use these gifts, not just for our own good, but also for the glory of God and the edification of the church.
- **1 Corinthians 12:7** "But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."
- **1 Peter 4:10** "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."
- To be a worker and builder in the church, men must not be self-focused but seeking how best to serve those whom the Lord has placed around him.
- As Phillips points out on page 181-182, "My experiences are hardly unique; God often calls and directs us in such ways. Most often, spiritual gifts are revealed not through a diagnostic test but

²⁴ Phillips, 180.

through the experience of serving the Lord. The sooner we begin serving where there is a need, the sooner we will begin to learn where the Lord is leading us in our service to Him.”

- This is the importance of simply starting to serve in the church.
- **Proverbs 16:9** “The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.”
 - This is not a prohibition from making plans, but rather the wisdom behind what we do.
 - We should be making plans, but we should also know that it is the Lord who directs us where we are to go.

The Centrality of Teaching (182-184)

- Since the time of the Protestant Reformation, the centrality and priority of teaching God’s Word in the local church assembly on Sunday mornings has been the focus of the preacher.²⁵
- While the primary means of teaching on Sunday morning will be upon the lead / teaching pastor, as he is teaching, he is also equipping.
- The Sunday morning teaching is not just for a time to know more about the Bible. It is not a time for the preacher to showcase his wonderful talents and study skills.
- It is, as **Ephesians 4:12** states, “...for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ...”
- There are two main purposes here in **verse 12**:
 - The pastors preach *for the purpose* of building the saints.
 - The saints listen *for the purpose of* being built up **AND** *for the purpose* of serving the body of believers (their local church).
- The church elders / pastors and the local congregation must work together for the mission of the church to function in a biblical way.
- If pastors / teachers are not teaching the Word of God rightly, then the people are not going to be growing rightly.
- How can you tell if what is being taught from the pulpit is effective in the body of the church?
- Phillips says on 182, “Building up the body of Christ also includes our ministry to one another.”
- If the Word of God is being rightly taught *and* those who are listening are there to be built up with the purpose of serving one another, it will be evident in the body life ministry of the church.

²⁵ It was John Calvin who brought the pulpit back to the center and front of the church building. He also removed the altar as the central focus of worship in the church (as was the practice of the RCC).

- Each level of the church must have a central focus on the Word of God for the people of God.
- As Phillips further points out on 183, “Just as we are all called to play our part in building the church corporately, we are all called to build up one another in the faith. Here is where the kind of manly friendship we discussed in Chapter 11 plays such an important role in the church. Christian men need friends who can strengthen their hand in God, and they need to be such a friend to others.”
- It is easy to spot a church where the Word of God is not the central focus.
- As Paul ends in Ephesians, there is going to be a maturity among the people of God, a unity that is centered not on a person in the church but on faith in Christ.
 - While never perfect, when men take the lead and the Word of God is central in the church, there is going to be a noticeable stability.

Know the Word (184-185)

- Phillips writes with astute accuracy on page 184, “So it is the Word of God-by the grace of God taught, heard, understood, and applied-that accomplishes **all progress within a church**. From this, one conclusion is abundantly clear: any Christian man who wants to serve the Lord, in any role and at any level, must begin by devoting himself to God's Word. A man who is weak in the Word of God will be of little use for service, for we cannot truly serve God effectively in our own knowledge and strength. But God's Word stirs up in us the faith and spiritual strength needed to serve Him.”
- Men must not only take in the Word of God in the corporate setting (Sunday, small groups, AFG, mid-week studies, etc.) but also in their own daily walk with the Lord.
- In order for men to be strong in the Word, it must be something that is second nature. For if the church is going to be strong in the Word, men must not only be familiar with the sacred text, but they must also know how to wield it.
- It is from the equipping of the Word that the Lord will begin to open doors of service that He is then able to use us for His glory and the good of the church.

Keepers – Protectors in the Church (185-187)

- Phillips says on 185, “Christian men are called to safeguard the church even as we are laboring to build it up.”
- This is what Nehemiah called his men to do as well. Men, we are not only trying to build something, but with the same intensity we must also seek to protect it.

- Remember what Paul told the elders from Ephesus in **Acts 20:28-31a** “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert...”
- While Paul certainly was talking to the church leaders, this is no less true for each man who is in the church today.
- The only way that protecting against the world is going to happen with any consistency is if the men of the church are men of Word and live with a high view of the church and for the good of others.
- The two areas which need to be protected according to Phillips are **church practice** and **church doctrine**.
- Regarding church practice, the men are to “safeguard the godliness of the church.”
- Phillips says on 186, “The practice of the church involves not merely its formal activities, such as worship services, but also the church's spirituality. Men in the church are to stand up to ensure that people are treated as they should be and to look out for those who are left out or cast down.”
- Of course, this “starts with the elders” of the church but it does not end with them.
- All men need to ensure that the church upholds the holiness and righteousness of God at every level.
- Regarding church doctrine, this also starts with the elders but it certainly is not limited to them.
- Proper church doctrine should be taught in the Sunday morning service all the way to the private conversations between two church members.
- At each level, it is the responsibility of the men to make sure the teachings of the Bible are upheld and taught.
- Phillips ends this section on 187 with a wonderful summary of the importance of strong men in the church, “The order God intends for the local church includes rich and valuable roles for women, as well. In healthy churches overseen by vigilant men, women can devote themselves to spreading the spiritual beauty for which they are designed and to nurturing the loving community and relationships in which they are intended to specialize. A strong, masculine church will also be a strong church for the display and fruitfulness of godly femininity. A church that is rightly run by godly men who know and apply the wholesome truths of God's Word is a safe church where women may blossom in the grace of the Lord.”

CHAPTER 13: SERVANTS OF THE LORD

- Phillips say on 194, “Many people, I realize, live and work with their eyes on retirement. Everything is thus measured by its contribution to the IRA or another retirement fund. But I believe a Christian man should live, work, and play with an eye on the coming glory of Jesus Christ. His return in glory is not a fable, a fantasy, or science fiction. It is certain future history-it is going to happen, and relatively soon. How should we then live? How should we measure things happening in our lives? The answer is that we should live now in the light of the future that is certain to come.”
- What a wonderful and countercultural statement to make!
- While there is nothing inherently evil with retirement, his point is where our focus is when living this life.
- Our rewards in heaven are what really counts, not our bank accounts here on earth.
- We can save and save and plan for our retirement, only to face death before we can enjoy any fruits of our worldly labors.
- That is why the Bible has a constant reminder that our focus must be on heavenly rewards, heavenly riches, and our ultimate heavenly home.
- Solomon reminds us in **Ecclesiastes 12:1** “Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, ‘I have no delight in them.’”
- He also writes in **Ecclesiastes 6:1-2** “There is an evil which I have seen under the sun and it is prevalent among men-- a man to whom God has given riches and wealth and honor so that his soul lacks nothing of all that he desires; yet God has not empowered him to eat from them, for a foreigner enjoys them. This is vanity and a severe affliction.”
- Again, in **Ecclesiastes 5:13-14** “There is a grievous evil which I have seen under the sun: riches being hoarded by their owner to his hurt. When those riches were lost through a bad investment and he had fathered a son, then there was nothing to support him.”
- All of that to say, retirement and saving for things is not evil. In fact, I would say that saving money is a good thing. It is not the act of saving money but the heart and intent behind it that we must be careful of in our life.
- As Phillis points out on 195, “What matters is that I be found faithful and hear those words from Jesus Christ, my Savior and Master, the Lord who is coming again to reign forever. To be a

Christian means not merely that I am saved from my sins, but also that I am saved to be His disciple.”

- All other things aside, are you eagerly awaiting the return of Christ and are you ready to face Him as your Lord and Master?
- As men, this should be our chief concern.
 - This should be the mentality which drives how we interact with our family, our work, our church, our friends, and any other thing that we do.
 - We will, one day, meet our Savior face to face and enter into His joy.
- On 196, regarding discipleship, Phillips point out, “To understand what it means to be a personal disciple and servant of the Lord Jesus is to rejoice and exult in that present privilege. Central to this service is making time to sit at His feet, learn from His Word, and speak with Him in prayer. Jesus said, ‘If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples’ (John 8:31). This means our discipleship is mere talk unless we are dwelling in God's Word and communing with the Lord in regular prayer.”
- Do you consider your current state a privilege from the Lord? Or do you look at being a disciple, spending time in His Word and prayer as a burden?
 - It is important to note time spent on various things throughout the day. While we will spend much time on other things, our priority must be to seek communion and fellowship with Jesus.

Living as a Servant-Disciple (197-206)

- In this final section of the final chapter, Phillips uses John the Baptist as an example of what living as a servant disciple of Jesus looks like in real life.
- After some of John’s disciples were questioning what was happening with Jesus and what He was doing, John answered in **John 3:27-30** “A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven. You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent ahead of Him.’ He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made full. ‘He must increase, but I must decrease.’”
- Phillips then says on 198, “Here we have John's model of service to Christ. That model includes a key principle, a joyful attitude, and a humble resolution. Together, these elements can enable us as men to be faithful to our calling to carry out the Masculine Mandate in service to Christ.”

Calling as a Gift: A Key Principle

- When John was interacting with his disciples, he was quick to point out the sovereign rule that Jesus had over his life.
- Phillips says on 198, “John’s point was that men must content themselves with the place and provision the sovereign God gives them, seeking only to be faithful to one’s particular calling.”
- God has granted to each of us a particular calling. When we find contentment with that calling, we are not just serving others well but we are glorifying God.
- If we are constantly looking at others and hoping that we’ll one day be like them, not only are we not serving the Lord where He has us but we are also displaying a discontent heart.
- Whatever God has called you to, it is a gift. There are no lesser places in the kingdom, only faithful servants who do the will of their Master.
- When we look at *anything* from the Lord as a gift, we are more apt to see our service to Him as the great privilege that it is.
- When we don’t view what the Lord gives us as a gift, then we start to think that we are entitled to something from Him. As if the Lord owes us something because of our great service.
- We should strive hard to serve the Lord in whatever area He has placed us.
- It would also do us good to know that season of life we are in so that we are able to fulfill what the Lord has for us in the here and now.
 - As Phillips points out on 201, “This is one reason why understanding the Bible’s mandate for men is so important. John said that he only wanted to fulfill what the Lord had decided for him to do... We are to work and keep in whatever corner of the kingdom God has placed us. Understanding and embracing this essential aspect of our calling is a key to living fruitfully as a servant-disciple of Christ.”

Joy: A Key Attitude

- On 203, Phillips connects the dots of joy and serving when he writes, “What is the greatest reward for service to Jesus? **It is simply the joy of serving Jesus.** This joy makes us faithful and useful as servants of Christ. It enables us to rejoice not merely when our efforts are blessed with success, not merely when others praise and approve us, but whenever we have the **privilege** of serving Jesus, simply because of our love for Him and our awareness of how great He is.”

- While fruit from our labor is always a welcomed sight, it is not where we should look for our long standing and deep-rooted joy.
- When we know who we were before Christ, and when we come to know Jesus and what He did for us when we were in our helpless and God-hating state, it should only be joy in our hearts when we have the opportunity to serve our loving King.
- When an entitlement attitude or self-focused mind begins to creep into our gaze, we are going to lose our joy and settle for something much less than what we have access to in Christ.
- You and I were not just saved so that we escape hell, we were saved so that we could bring honor and glory to the One who saved us...Jesus Christ our Lord. That is not only undeserved, but also a great privilege that the unsaved will never have.

Humility: A Key Resolution

- Phillips points out on 204, “Christians who are useful and make a difference in this world are resolved to make little of themselves so that Christ will be exalted, believed, and followed.”
- Humility is not easy because it goes against every fabric of our being and every ideology that our culture holds in high regards.
- Phillips quotes A.W. Pink on 205, “Humility is not the product of direct cultivation, rather it is a by-product. The more I try to be humble, the less shall I attain unto humility. But if I am truly occupied with that One who was ‘meek and lowly in heart,’ if I am constantly beholding His glory in the mirror of God's Word, then shall I be ‘changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord’ (2 Cor. 3:18).”
- This is the only cure for a prideful and self-centered heart.
- As men, we don’t look for our fulfillment from anything other than our relationship to and desire to be like Jesus Himself.
- On 208, Phillips ends with, “God calls us to love our wives, to disciple and discipline our children, to be faithful in friendship, and to be zealous in the work of His kingdom. The great calling of our lives is to answer: Behold, I am your servant, Lord. Help me by your grace to be faithful to your call.”