

# **WE DON'T KNOW WHAT A MAN IS BUT IT'S PROBABLY BAD**

Today's lecture comes from the series we did in the fall of 2017,  
titled: The Big Con.  
And we looked at the lies our culture tells us.

I began this one by saying:

The Western World in the 21<sup>st</sup> century possesses  
a wealth of information on every topic imaginable.  
The online encyclopedia Wikipedia, for example,  
if translated into print,  
would be well over 1,000,000 pages in length.

Get this.

More data has been created in the past two years  
than in the entire previous history of the human race.  
We now create as much information every two days  
as we did from the dawn of man through 2003.  
And by 2020, about 1.7 megabytes of new information  
(think three web pages of information)  
will be created every second for every human being on the planet.

Clearly, we possess a lot of information.  
We know lots of stuff.

But one thing our culture does not know  
is what it means to be a man.  
About that,  
we are incredibly confused.

One reason for that  
is our culture is befuddled by the very concept of gender.

In the past men were men  
and women were women.  
And we shouted “vive la difference!”

But in case you're not aware,  
things are no longer so simple.

The number keeps changing but the latest I've seen is that Facebook  
allows people to designate their gender using 1 of 71 different options.

71 different gender options.

Here are a few you might be interested in.

#### Slide

Asexual

Gender neutral

Intersex

Intersex man

Intersex woman

Intersex person

Polygender

Two-spirit person

Agender

Bigender

Cisgender Female

Cisgender Woman

Cisgender Male

Cisgender Man

Gender Fluid

Gender Nonconforming

Genderqueer

Non-binary

Pangender

Trans

Trans Female

Trans\*Female

Transexual Female

Trans Male  
Trans\*Male  
Trans Man

And last of all in case your particular snowflake is too unique to be described  
with any of those terms: Other

Most of you have no idea about these things,  
but I do.

I do because I am a United Methodist minister  
and the United Methodist Church is very interested in gender.  
In fact, the UMC in Northern Illinois in a bold statement of diversity  
was very proud recently  
to commission to the ministry  
a person who was born a woman  
and previously identified as a lesbian,  
but now identifies as a "non-binary trans person,"  
who had her breasts removed,  
changed her first name to the letter M,  
so that her name would be neither male nor female, and  
uses the pronoun "they," not "he" or "she"  
to refer to they self.

In case you're not certain what gender you are,  
for most of you the correct term is  
cis male or cisgender male.

That means the gender you were assigned at birth, and your physical body  
and how you see yourself – your gender identity – all match.

You might think that just makes you a man.

If you think that,  
it's only because you are a non-enlightened Neanderthal  
who doesn't understand just how complicated gender is.

Or, it could be that our culture is confused about gender.

Not everyone, though.

For example, atheist, feminist, progressive lesbian, Bernie Sanders supporter  
Camille Paglia isn't a fan of this latest trend.

**Camille Paglia:** The cold biological truth is that sex changes are impossible. Every single cell of the human body remains coded with one's birth gender for life. It is certainly ironic how liberals who posture as defenders of science when it comes to global warming ... flee all reference to biology when it comes to gender.

But hers is a voice crying in the wilderness.

Our culture tells us there are many different genders,  
maybe as many as 71,  
and what you are today may change tomorrow.

Ok, this is just my opinion,  
and I'm just one man.

At least for today,  
I'm one man.

But if we are that confused about gender in general,  
you can be pretty sure that our culture is confused  
about what it means to be a man.

But as confounded as it may be,  
our culture is pretty sure about one thing.  
Manhood is toxic.

We are told that men are the problem.  
Men are the cause of wars and violence and abuse.

You've probably heard the line,  
If women ruled the world, there wouldn't be any more wars.

One comedian responded:  
If women ruled the world, there wouldn't be any more wars.  
There'd just be angry countries that aren't talking to each other anymore.

But the message we're given is that  
men are the cause of most of the world's problems, and  
the planet would be better off without men,  
at least men in the traditional sense.

As a matter of fact if a man decides he doesn't want to be a man any more,  
if, for example, a Bruce wants to become a Caitlyn,  
the culture applauds.

They say "what a bold choice."

And he's given the Arthur Ashe Courage Award –  
the same award that was given  
to Jim Valvano, Pat Tillman, Nelson Mandela,  
and the four men who foiled the high jacking of Flight 93  
as it flew towards Washington DC on 9.11.

The traditional understanding of manhood  
is a straitjacket for men  
and a danger to women.

That's the cutting edge message of our culture  
about men.

We may not know what manhood is anymore;  
but whatever it means, it's probably bad.

I will grant you this.  
The world doesn't need any more men  
who confuse being a man with being a bully.

The world doesn't need any more men  
who use their strength to  
coerce their subordinates at work,  
demean other men they view as weaker than themselves or  
intimidate or dominate women.

But the world does need men.

Real men.

Strong men –

yes, strong physically;  
but more importantly,  
strong when it comes to the strength and character required to do the right thing  
and to stand up to tyranny and oppression  
and all that demeans those made in the image of God.

If you believe in God,

then God;

if not, then nature,

created half of the human race with a healthy dose of testosterone  
which makes men, in general,  
bigger, stronger and more aggressive than women.

Not better, smarter or more capable,

but bigger, stronger and more aggressive.

Somebody (God) or something (evolution) in charge of bringing the human race  
into existence saw the benefit in doing that.

Here's what I'm not going to do with the rest of our time.

I'm not going to tell you what a man is in contrast to what a woman is.

And I'm not here to promote stereotypical gender roles.

How can I?

My wife is better than I am  
at fixing things,  
having a sense of direction,  
parallel parking, and  
figuring out how stuff works.

And she doesn't tear up and cry  
as much as I do.

So, how can I get up here and tell you  
"men are supposed to do these things  
and women are supposed to do those things,"  
when most of the things men are "supposed to do,"  
she does better than I do?

So, we're not going to play "compare and contrast" this morning  
between women and men.

What we are going to do is talk about the difference between boys and men.  
The problem is not that the world has too many men.  
The problem is we have too many men  
who are still sixteen year old boys inside,  
never having grown up emotionally or spiritually.

When Paul writes about becoming a man,  
the contrast he makes is not manhood vs. womanhood,  
but being a man verses being a boy.

**1 Corinthians 13.11:** When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I  
reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.

What's the difference between a boy and a man?

It's how they use their strength.

A boy who uses his strength for purposes that are noble and life-giving  
can be a man at a relatively young age.

A man who uses his strength for purposes that are base and self-serving  
will be a boy as long as he lives.

The problem is not that men are strong and competitive.

The problem is we so often use our strength  
for purposes that are selfish and small.

The problem is not that men are aggressive.

The problem is we often fight battles that are  
unworthy of who we are.

Let's try to break this down.

## **SOME OF THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEN AND BOYS**

### **1. MEN ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR LIVES.**

**Jules Feiffer:** It' is not size or age that separates children from adults. It is  
responsibility.

When do we say "boys will be boys"?

It's when they do something irresponsible.

They track mud into the house,  
they don't pick up after themselves,  
they get to wrestling in the living room,  
and a lamp gets broken.

When they're young and they do things like that,  
we say "boys will be boys."

Later,

a teenager is given a ticket for driving 70 on a residential street or  
he and his buddies get caught drinking underage, or  
he and his friends are discovered looking at porn,  
and the response is,

“Now, dear, you’ve got to understand, boys will be boys.”

Men talk about women in crude and demeaning ways

or they use a bachelor party as an excuse to go to a strip club  
or to hire a private dancer,  
and folks shrug their shoulders and say,  
“boys will be boys.”

That phrase implies that boys,

whether they are 6, 16 or 60,  
are irresponsible and immature  
in their decision making  
and we need to make excuses for them  
because that’s their nature  
and no one can expect them to be any other way.

I’m not arguing right now whether that phrase should ever be used,

but I’m looking at it to help us see the difference between men and boys.

An 8 yr old boy saves up his money

so he can buy his mother a birthday present.

A teenager gets a summer job

without being told he has to.

A college student goes on a mission trip

instead of Cancun for spring break.

When a boy does those things,

nobody says, “Well, boys will be boys.”

They think to themselves,

“My son is becoming a man.”

A 50 yr walks away from temptation  
 so he can be faithful to his wife.  
 A father gives up a golfing weekend  
 so he can be at his daughter's volleyball tournament.  
 A 70 old sits beside the bed of his wife every day  
 as she's dying of dementia,

Nobody says, "Well, boys will be boys."  
 They say, "Now, there's a man."

One difference between boys and men is responsibility.

What does it mean to take responsibility for our lives?  
 Several things.

**A. We make amends for our past behavior.**

If we are responsible for our lives,  
 we are responsible for the things we have done in the past.  
 And we try to make the wrongs we have committed right.

Men don't run from their past;  
 they face it.  
 Making amends means acknowledging to ourselves and to another person  
 what we did.  
 In some cases, it may be as simple as an apology.

It may mean paying a debt.  
 If it's money, we pay back the money.  
 If we damaged someone's reputation,  
 we do all we can to restore it.  
 If our selfishness created emotional damage to another person,  
 we let them know that we were wrong and they were right, and  
 if there's a way to help with their healing ,we offer to do that.

It may mean living a new and different way in the future.

If we were unfaithful,  
we become faithful, attentive and caring.

If we were demeaning,  
we become that person's encourager.

**Matthew 5.32-24:** Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

We all create wreckage in the lives of others.  
The sooner we learn to take responsibility for our actions  
and make things right as quickly as possible,  
the better our lives and the lives of those around us will be.

Men take responsibility for their past actions.

Men also

### **B. We take responsibility for our futures.**

When their lives aren't going anywhere, boys blame  
their past,  
their circumstances, or  
other people for where they are.

Men take responsibility for where they're going.

Many of you were wounded deeply growing up  
and it has marked you and formed you.

It would be foolish for me to talk as if  
we all turn 21 and  
we all begin the manhood race  
standing at the same starting block.

Many of us were given great love and affirmation from our parents.  
We were told that we were valued  
and that we could do anything.  
And our parents dedicated immense amounts of time and finances  
in helping us be prepared for life.

Others of us  
either by words that demeaned us  
or by harsh discipline that scarred us  
or by the emotional or physical absence of parents who abandoned us –  
we received the message like an arrow to the heart  
that we were unwanted, unworthy, unlovable and unlikely to succeed at  
anything.

We cannot act like that does not affect a boy,  
or that it all goes away when we turn 21.  
And I'm certainly not saying you are responsible  
for what was done to you.

But to be a man you must be responsible  
for where you go from here.  
Don't hear this as a condemning word  
because that is the last thing I intend.

But no one else is responsible for your healing.  
No one else is responsible for your wholeness.  
No one else is responsible for your future.  
You have to take responsibility for yourself  
and get the help you need  
so you can create a healthy, productive life for yourself.

Blessed or cursed,  
wounded or whole,  
a man takes responsibility for his future.

He decides this is what I want to do with my life and  
this is the man I want to be.  
Then he makes a plan to get there  
and he uses his God-given male strength to move forward.

One thing we were not given strength for  
was to be passive.  
Not as husbands,  
not as fathers,  
not as followers of Jesus.

We were not created to be up in the stands  
watching our lives go by,  
wishing we could do better and  
hoping things will change.

We were created to  
take responsibility for ourselves,  
act decisively, and  
move forward into the future.

Being responsible for our lives means

### **C. We act to fulfill our commitments.**

If we do not keep our commitments,  
if we are not faithful to our obligations,  
if we fulfill our pleasures rather than our promises,  
we are boys, not men.

Men throughout history  
have been defined by their ability to provide for and to protect those  
for whom they are responsible.

When the main threats to human existence  
 were starvation and marauders,  
 “protector” meant guarding the perimeter, and  
 “provider” meant hunting and bringing home food.  
 And what was valued most was physical strength.

Today what is most required to protect and provide for our families  
 is strength of character.

It’s a strength that protects our children  
 from those who would steal their goodness and their confidence  
 whether it’s another child, a teacher, pornography or social media.  
 It’s the strength to provide for their physical and the emotional safety  
 and to provide them with an example of a strong and godly man,  
 so our sons will know what they are to be like and  
 our daughters will know the kind of man they are worthy of.  
 It’s a commitment to be involved in their spiritual lives  
 so that the greatest of gifts, a relationship with Jesus, can be theirs.

It’s a strength that protects our wives  
 from being disrespected or feeling insecure or unwanted.  
 It’s a commitment to provide her with love and affection  
 and with opportunities and resources for her to use her God-given gifts.  
 It’s a commitment to keep the vow we make  
 to love her for better or for worse;  
 to love, honor and cherish her.

I received an email some time back from one of our table leaders.  
 His wife’s brother was dying three hours away from alcoholism.

He went with her to see her brother,  
 and they gathered up his bedding and laundry  
 to take to a laundromat.

He wrote: I found myself in somewhat of a surreal situation, sitting in an Austin  
 laundromat when I normally would be at work, washing my dying brother-in-  
 law's bedding. I shook my head and shared how strange this felt with my wife.  
 She replied, unsolicited: "You are here supporting me and the family, you are  
 here because you are a Quest man, and that is what the men of Quest do,"  
 She is right you know, that is what we do and that is a big part of who I am and

who I will be until the day I die.

There are other commitments that men make,  
but the ones we make to our wives and our children are most important.

What is a man?

Our culture may not know.  
But you do and I do.  
It's someone who takes responsibility for his life –  
his past, his future and his commitments.

## **2. MEN ARE SELF-SACRIFICING.**

Boys are self-centered.  
Men are self-sacrificing.

We are born self-centered.  
We come out of the womb  
and everything literally revolves around us.  
There is no other perspective but our own.

Our needs are all we know.  
Having them fulfilled is all we care about.  
Others exist for no other reason than to fulfill our desires.

And there is a view of manhood  
that believes that being able to live that way  
for the entirety of your life  
is what makes you a man.

Know what you want,  
get what you want.  
Don't let others stop you  
or even slow you down.

Your plans and your pleasures are what matter  
and the ability to fulfill them is what makes you a man.

A common phrase among teenage and twenty-something boys  
has been YOLO.  
You only live once.

It's used to say,  
"Look, we need to get what we want, do what we want, smoke what we want,  
drink what we want, have sex with who we want.  
So, if it's risky behavior,  
if it's selfish behavior,  
if it's less than honorable behavior,  
do it anyway if it's what you want."

Why?  
Because you only live once,  
and life is about you and your desires."

And it is – for boys.  
It is for infants who never grow up  
and still think the world is all about them.

But men don't think "I only live once  
so I better get what I want."  
Men think "I only live once  
so I better use my life for what matters."

I get one chance to be a young man.  
I get one chance to be this woman's husband.  
I get one chance to be a father.  
I get one chance to make a difference in this world.  
I get one chance with my life to tell a story I can be proud of.

And living well,  
being a man of honor, is  
worth every sacrifice I'll need to make to be that man.

Listen, real men don't admire self-centered me-first boys,  
even if they make lots of money,  
rise to the top of their company, and  
have every toy in the world.

They admire men who are willing to risk, suffer and make sacrifices  
to live by their principles,  
serve others, and  
fulfill a great purpose.

When I first wrote this talk,  
Hugh Hefner had died the week before.  
He was lauded by some as a great businessman  
and as someone who liberated the US  
from its Puritanical roots  
so we could experience the joys of free love.

Ever stop to think that his magazine and his empire  
was called Playboy.  
Not Playman or Real Man.  
But Play-boy.

Why?  
Because after all the foolish accolades fall to the ground,  
Hugh Hefner was about fulfilling his boyish desires  
and encouraging others to do so.

But he empowered women.  
That's what some wrote on his passing.

Right.

By putting them in fishnet stockings  
and a bunny outfit?  
By having them spread their legs in a centerfold  
and airbrushing away their imperfections?

That was done for women?

No, it was done for the pleasure of self-centered play-boys.

Contrast that with the statement I read to you earlier in this series by Pat Tillman who left his professional football career with the Arizona Cardinals to enlist in the United States Army in June, 2002, in the aftermath of 9.11.

He became an Army Ranger  
and served several tours in combat  
before he died in the mountains of Afghanistan.

In his journal he didn't write about  
how much he regretted never having been to the Playboy mansion  
but how hard it was leaving the wife he loved alone at home  
as he answered a call he felt compelled to fulfill.

Here's part of his philosophy of life.

**Pat Tillman:** Sometimes my need to love hurts ... Is there a cure? Of course. But I refuse. Refuse to stop loving, to stop caring. To avoid those tears, that pain... To err on the side of passion is human and right and the only way I'll live.

Why fight for a cause that matters?  
Why risk all you possess?  
Why be willing to sacrifice your life?

Because you – love.  
You love someone or something more than yourself.

Note the difference in the meaning of “passion”  
when it's used by a Hefner and a Tillman.

One makes passion  
about the lust of the flesh.

The other defines passion  
as living for a cause that matters.

Picture

You tell me.  
 Who lived for self  
 and who lived for others?  
 Who lived for his own pleasure  
 and who lived for his principles?

You tell me.  
 Which one is the boy  
 and which one is the man?

Boys are self-centered.  
 Men are self-sacrificing.

### **3. MEN CONTROL THEIR EMOTIONS.**

When I say that men control their emotions,  
 I do not mean that they refuse to express their emotions.  
 Our feelings are a big part of being human.

Listen,  
 we do not become more manly  
 by becoming less human.  
 We do not become men  
 by being unable to express our emotions.

The difference is that:

Boys are ruled by their emotions.  
 Men use their emotions to live a good and passionate life.

Boys because of their testosterone  
 are more impulsive by nature than girls.  
 A boy does something stupid,  
 and we say, "Son, what were you thinking?"

And the truth is –  
not much.  
It just looked like fun –  
jumping off the roof,  
putting bubble gum in my little sister's hair,  
shaving the cat,  
throwing rocks at passing cars.

A boy gets an idea,  
it feels like it would be fun,  
and boom,  
he's in the middle of it before he thinks about it.

As we get older,  
our impulses and our emotions get darker and more dangerous.  
Anger, rage, lust.

And if they control us,  
we are forever boys.  
But once we begin to control them,  
we begin to become men.

Look at the big mistakes of your life  
and they were probably either created by your pride  
or by your emotions.

I love emotion.  
It fuels our commitments  
and it expresses what's in the depths of our hearts.

A man without emotion,  
a man who cannot express his emotion  
is not healthy or whole.

We have been taught that certain emotions are manly  
and others are not –  
in particular, hurt, fear and sadness.

But not being able to admit our fear  
 doesn't make us men.  
 And not being able to express our sadness  
 doesn't make us strong.

Here's a clip from Tony Porter,  
 author and adviser to the NFL and the NBA,  
 talking about his father after the death of his son,  
 Tony's brother.

### Tony Porter, TED Talk, Clip

Controlling our emotions doesn't mean not feeling anything.  
 It means feeling what is appropriate,  
 even if it's fear or sadness,  
 and using our feelings  
 to live a healthy life.

When I'm with men  
 and there's a real problem in their life –  
 their wife is ill or  
 their children are addicted to drugs or  
 they have made a terrible moral mistake  
 they need to recover from.

If they tear up in my office,  
 they always apologize.  
 To me, for crying out loud.

Don't do that.  
 Feel what's in your heart.  
 Express what's in your heart,  
 even if it comes out in tears.  
 That doesn't make you weak,  
 it makes you human.

“Well, I’ve got to be strong for my wife or for my kids.”  
 Being strong is not acting like something doesn’t bother you.

Being strong is

being honest about how much you love someone who’s suffering and  
 admitting how much you’re hurting.

And then stepping up to do what’s necessary  
 to help and support others who are struggling.

Boys are ruled by their emotions,  
 they give into them, and  
 act on them  
 even if it means being untrue to their principles.

Men express their emotions  
 and they use those emotions  
 to find the strength to do the right thing.

A few years ago I conducted the funeral of one of our members,  
 Marty Best.

Marty was 51 when he died of cancer.

He was probably 5 8.

Skinny.

I’m guessing 140 lbs.

But he had a big heart.

When he was 16 he got his pilot’s license  
 which is impressive.

What’s even more impressive  
 is that he pulled it off without telling his parents  
 because he knew they wouldn’t let him.

Went with us to build homes in Juarez twice.

When he was well he provided rides for the elderly  
 in our community through elder ride.

He doted so much on those old ladies  
 that they asked for him by name.

And when he was so sick,  
 he couldn't move,  
 he made sure his friends took supplies to Angel Reach foster care ministry  
 because he had promised to get them there.

One of his best friends said:  
 Marty did not have a linebacker's physique.  
 But he had a linebacker's heart.  
 He faced his challenges,  
 he kept his commitments and  
 he always acted with integrity.

Here's part of his testimony that he had sent to me.  
 Probably the last thing he ever wrote.

**Marty Best:** I want to serve now but I am perfectly happy to serve out of my weakness. I woke up yesterday...I prayed to God...I know I am weak...it is hard for me to even get out of bed right now...but "How may I serve you today...I am here Lord...use me."

I might not be able to lift cinder blocks any more to build houses in Mexico, but ... all He is asking from me is an obedient heart and He will return a heart full of joy for this and a lifetime...no an infinity...of living in the Father's house.

Marty accepted responsibility for his life.

He was self-sacrificing.

Even at his lowest point,  
 his emotions did not control him;  
 he controlled his emotions.

5'8".  
 140.

But he was a man.  
 How he lived.  
 How he handled adversity.

Who he was.  
He was a man.

And by God's grace we can be, too.