

# RECLAIMING MASCULINITY

## DISCUSSION GUIDE



### **Introduction: To Be a Man Means... What, Exactly?**

1. As you start reading this book, how would you complete the sentence “To be a godly man means...”?
2. In what ways have you witnessed (or, perhaps, been guilty of) truly “toxic” masculinity?
3. In what settings do you think stoicism, competitiveness, dominance and aggression (in other words, “traditional” masculinity) are helpful? In what ways can each of these four aspects be unhelpful?
4. What are you hoping to get out of reading this book?

### **Principle #1: Men and Women Really Are Different (But Don’t Exaggerate)**

1. What “exaggerated forms of Christian masculinity” is your cultural/church context most likely to slip into? Have you experienced one (or more) of these exaggerations yourself?
2. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12. What does Paul’s description of himself here tell us about:
  - men (in general)?
  - women (in general)?
  - himself?
3. What did you make of Matt’s position (what he calls Position 2.5): “Differences [between men and women] are real and unchanging, but show themselves culturally and therefore differently” (p32)?
4. How do the “timeless truths” of the differences between men and women reveal themselves in your particular cultural context?
5. “[Paul] wants to fully integrate women and their gifts into the experience of church meetings; and he wants this done in a way which, if they are married, does not undermine their husbands” (p41). How is this done in your church? Does this principle raise any questions for you?

## **Principle #2: Take Responsibility**

1. Read Ephesians 5:22-25. What is both exciting and challenging about the role of a husband in these verses? What is both exciting and challenging about the role of a wife?
2. When it comes to being a husband, “Love does not abdicate; love does not dominate” (p51). If you’re a husband, in what areas do you think you’re getting it right? Are there areas you need to think about, or talk with your wife about?
3. “I now think that husbands sacrificially leading and wives gently submitting can be done in many different healthy ways” (p55). What great examples of differing ways to live this out within marriage have you seen (and you’re allowed to talk about your own marriage!)
4. “It’s manly to nourish your family with the Bible, whether that is your immediate family or the wider church family” (p59). Are there any practical changes you need to make to be a godly man in this way? When will you start?
5. If you’re single, are there ways you could offer to provide spiritual leadership in some setting or another?

## **Principle #3: Be Ambitious for God**

1. Before reading this chapter, what would you have said were your top three ambitions in life? Would the way you spend your time and money have underlined or undermined what you would’ve put in that list?
2. “Ambition + Activity = Achievement” (p70). What are you aiming for, and what are you doing to get there, when it comes to your character?
3. “While some are idle when it comes to work, for others work becomes an idol” (p75). In what ways are these temptations for you? What would godliness look like instead?
4. Read 1 Corinthians 15:58. What does this remind us matters most? Why does it matter most? How should this reshape how you think about and go about your day tomorrow?
5. Would people looking at how you spend your weeks conclude that you’re ambitious to be more like Jesus and serve others like Jesus? What would it take to make them answer “yes”?



#### **Principle #4: Use Your Strength to Protect**

1. Read Isaiah 40:10-11; Ezekiel 34:16, 20-22. What do you particularly appreciate about the “combination of tenderness and fierceness” here (p89)?
2. How did this chapter cause you to be more grateful that Jesus is your good shepherd? How does that shape your own view of being a man who is part of a church?
3. What did you make of the roles of men and women within the church as set out here? Is there anything you’d like to talk more with your church leadership about?
4. “The godly man knows his own temperament and recognises its strengths, but at the same time he knows that sometimes he needs to ignore his default setting and act the other way” (p91). Do you tend to lean towards toughness or tenderness? In what circumstances in your life is it best to “act the other way”?
5. Read Titus 1:5-9. How can you fulfil your calling as a man to be a “guardian” within your church, whether you are in a formal leadership role or not?

#### **Principle #5: Display Thoughtful Chivalry**

1. “Chivalry is using strength to serve ... stepping up to protect those who are more vulnerable” (p103). Can you think of examples of “chivalry” within your own church, family, or friendship group?
2. “Who knows what experiences or fears lie behind an angry retort”? How will remembering this help you to respond graciously if your offer of “chivalry” is declined?
3. Do you view your local church as your family? What difference does (or would) doing so make to your relationships there?
4. Think of some examples where you have benefited spiritually from different “family members” in your church.
5. Are there ways that you can “step up and step in” to protect and serve others? How has this chapter challenged and motivated you to do so?

#### **Principle #6: Invest in Friendships**

1. Matt identifies four reasons we may struggle to make and maintain good, close friendships: time, exhaustion, pride and fear (p124-125). Do you recognise any of those as restricting factors for you?
2. What is the drawback of having lots of acquaintances or casual friends, but no close friends?

3. Read Proverbs 13:20 (ESV); 27:5. How have you seen, or experienced, the truth of these verses?
4. Which of the three aspects of being a good friend on pages 134-137 (invest; be honest; forgive) did you find most helpful to consider, and why?
5. What practical difference will this chapter make to your life and approach to friendships?

### **Principle #7: Raising Healthy “Sons”**

1. What one thing most struck you in this chapter?
2. How have you benefited from older male role models, especially Christian “fathers” (whether your own dad, or a father in the faith)?
3. Read Ephesians 6:4. If you have kids in your home, and bearing in mind that “we are talking about loving discipline, not bullying or harshness”, how does this verse encourage you? How does it challenge you?
4. Is there a younger Christian guy you could be a “father” or “older brother” to? What might that involve? Or: is there an older Christian guy you could ask to be a “father” to you?
5. Think about your kids, or younger guys in your church (or both). What are you most enjoying about your relationship with them at the moment?

### **Conclusion: Progress**

1. Which of the seven principles (on p157-158) has most changed your view of what it means to be a godly man?
2. Are you tempted to “drift into thinking, ‘I knew I was failing as a man, and now I’ve got seven ways to define my failures’” (p159)?
3. Read 1 Timothy 4:15. Can you share a couple of ways you’d like to make progress in being a godly man; and what it will look like practically and prayerfully to be “diligent” in pursuing that progress?
4. Why is the forgiveness of Jesus being freely available key to us growing in godliness?
5. “Be a better man than you were yesterday” (p163). What would you like others to be praying for you?

