

Willow Creek Biblical Manhood and Womanhood Transcript February 2025-Cleaned up Version

The year was 2004. Lindsay and I had just gotten married about 21 years ago. Right after we got married, we went on a honeymoon, as many couples do. We went to Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, for our honeymoon. It was kind of the hot spot to go at the time. We had a great honeymoon, a great time together, but it was eventually time for us to come back home and to really begin our lives together.

So, we got on the plane, and we had a connection in Miami before flying back to the Chicago land area. Anybody who's ever traveled internationally knows that when you hit stateside, you have to go through the whole customs and immigration process. The challenge was our flight was running late, so everybody was antsy because most of the people on the plane had a connection, and some had a very short connection. So, with a late flight having to go through immigration, it was quite concerning for many. Lindsay and I, we had a long way over, no problem for us. We were pretty relaxed.

Eventually, the plane got to the gate. People immediately dumped into the aisle because they were trying to get off this plane. Anxiety was at almost a fever pitch. Well, probably five minutes went by. It was pretty obvious to me that they had not yet even opened the front door of the plane. Nobody had gotten off the plane, and everybody's feeling it. Some people are getting a little bit more audible about it. Well, after probably five or seven minutes had passed, finally, the flight attendant comes on the intercom system and said, "Will passenger Shawn Williams come to the front of the plane?"

I thought, "Well, that's strange. I mean, what could that be about?" But the challenge was, Lindsay and I were probably in row 25 of the plane. I mean, there was no way to get through the sea of angry people who had filled the aisles to get to the front of the plane. So, I thought to myself, "It can't be that big of a deal, right? I'll just hang back. Eventually, people will get off. I'll find out what's going on, and we can figure it out."

Well, probably another five minutes goes by. Nobody's gotten off the plane. The flight attendant comes back on the intercom system. She says, "I need passenger Shawn Williams to come to the front of this plane immediately." I thought, "Ah, this sounds a little more serious than I originally thought." So, I start making my way through this sea of people who were so frustrated that I was getting off this plane first. Lindsay's kind of holding on to my coattail going, "Who did I marry? And what did I get myself into?"

I eventually got to the front of the plane. I identified myself as Shawn Williams. The stewardess looked at me with a look that I will never forget. She goes, "You need to get off this plane immediately." I said, "Okay, no problem." And so, we exited the plane. I was about four or five steps onto the jet bridge when I encountered five federal agents with very large assault weapons kind of blocking any kind of escape.

I didn't know what to say. So, what came out of my mouth was, "Hey guys." And they start hammering me with questions: "What's your name? What's your birth date? What's your social security number? Where did you go? What were you

doing?" I mean, it was everything in me to answer their questions and not wet myself. It was the most intimidating experience that I've ever been in.

Eventually, after probably a minute—it felt like an eternity, but probably after about a minute—one of them says, "It's not him." I'm like, "What do you mean it's not me?" And he said, "Sir, you're free to go." Like, "Okay, so, like, we can walk away and, like, nobody shoots me in the back? Like, we're really good?" He goes, "You're free to go." So, Lindsay and I are high-fiving that we just got off this plane first. I'm like, "That's amazing."

And we're walking through the airport when one of those federal agents was walking fairly closely to us, and I said, "Sir, if you don't mind me asking, what in the world was that about?" And he said, "Well, there's somebody with your exact name, Shawn Michael Williams, with your exact birth date, May 17th, 1978, who's wanted on a federal charge. We thought we had him coming back into the country."

I said, "Well, how did you know I wasn't the guy you were looking for?" He said, "Well, the description we had was a 6'5", 250 lb, darker complexion man. You..." I stood about 5'7", 135 lbs soaking wet. He goes, "We were pretty disappointed when you walked off the plane." I've never been more excited to be a scrawny Hobbit than I was in that moment. I mean, it was kind of an amazing moment, but it was kind of one of those moments that for me, it was the first time that there was confusion around my identity. And there's a lot at stake when there's confusion around your identity.

So, this entire series is a series around our identity, and really trying to speak into some things that sometimes give us some confusion. That is certainly true about today's topic. Now, today, we're going to talk about manhood and womanhood as a part of our DNA, our identity, like how God has made us up. Now, let's be clear right out of the gates. In our culture today, this one has some complexity to it, doesn't it? This one may even have some level of controversy to it. Let me do my best just to speak to it with a level of sensitivity.

Our world is somewhat confused around the roles of men and women in today's culture. There are all kinds of questions swarming around gender, and gender identity. Here's the reality: There are people in our culture that wrestle with gender dysphoria, gender confusion, and I just want you to know we have a tremendous amount of compassion for those who are walking that journey. It's not something that they choose. It's a very difficult journey to walk. At the same time, I don't think that the journey of some unwires God's purpose and God's design around what it means to be a man and woman that's created by Him.

There's also been a lot of confusion, and I would say challenge, around specifically manhood. So, I'm going to spend some time talking about manhood. Megan's going to talk a little bit about womanhood, but I would say in our culture, masculinity has been under attack in some senses. I can kind of understand it. There have been some men in positions who've leveraged their influence and authority in really terrible ways. And because of that, our culture has resisted against that. I mean, when men have taken their authority and their influence, their position, and they behaved badly with

it, and they've caused harm to others around us, it's not surprising that our culture's risen up in response to resist it.

But what started as a response to toxic masculinity has almost been a sense that our culture is trying to eliminate masculinity altogether. That almost, in a sense, when it comes to masculine strength, it gets explained away as patriarchy and tries to be dismissed altogether. And I would say that even though there have been men who have abused their roles and their power and their position and authority, it doesn't explain away or undermine God's original purpose, intent, and design of what it looks like to be a man and a Godly Man.

And then, even though our world wants men to simply just be kind of quiet and to themselves and docile and just kind of allowing everything that just happened to play out, it's almost like, "Men, you've had your turn. Now, give somebody else a turn." I think there's something deep down within us that we know there's got to be something more than that. There's something about what God's designed that maybe we're missing that we may need to re-step into.

There are a lot of things we could talk about when it comes to masculinity and what it means to be a godly man. I think that the best way to do is simply point us to Jesus. What's amazing about Jesus is that, at times, He got angry, and He always got angry at the right times. He flipped over tables because He did so in the face of injustice. Sometimes men should get angry. Jesus also knew when to cry. He had this ability to be in touch with His emotions, and He had this ability to be empathetic and compassionate. I think there's something about a godly man who does the same thing. Jesus didn't have fear in the face of opposition. He was able to stay strong in challenges. He lived with integrity everywhere He went. He had this vision for His life and His future, and He called other people to it. There's something about what it means to be a godly man that is fully embodied in the person of Jesus. If you want to be a Godly Man, look at Jesus; He's our example.

Again, there are a lot of things we could talk about regarding what it means to be a Godly Man. For the sake of time today, I want to boil it down to two simple things. You want to be a godly man? Let me talk to the men in the room. Here's the first thing: you've got to live with strength.

Here's one of the things said about man when he was created in Genesis 2. It says, "The Lord took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." There's this call on a man's life to do something, and he was designed to be a leader, an overseer, a protector of the garden. The word there in Hebrew, literally the word *Shamar*, that's what it means. He's the leader, the protector, the overseer. Everything kind of happens underneath his care. He's supposed to manage that which God has entrusted him with, and there's something about that that requires a sense of strength.

Paul kind of calls to the same type of idea in 1 Corinthians chapter 16. Paul's words are simply this: "Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, and be strong." Man, you don't have to apologize for the strength that God has woven into you. You don't have to apologize for the leader, the protector, the overseer that God has called you to, whether that's in your family or in your place of work. There's something intrinsic about how God's

created you that is a good thing, that even if our world tries to dismiss it in some way, we are supposed to step into and to live into our strength.

There's something about the call on the life of a man to be a provider. When I say provider, I don't just mean put food on the table, though it can include that. It doesn't mean that women can't also provide for the household, because they can. But there's something about how God designed a man that there is a sense of responsibility that a man holds to be the provider and the protector of whatever it is that God has entrusted under your care, whether you're a single person, whether you're thinking about the company you work at, or when you think about the family that He's entrusted you with. You are the provider, the protector, the overseer. You can lead with strength in that environment.

Now, when I say strength, I don't mean just physical strength. In my case, that's a really good thing. When it comes to strength, it's not just about how much weight you can deadlift, although I hope you can deadlift a lot of weight. Strength is so much greater than that. Strength is the ability, again, seemingly just like Jesus, who can stand strong in the face of opposition, who can lead with integrity when nobody's looking, who has the strength to protect those who are under your care. You can lead with strength.

There's a sense, particularly those of you who are men who have a family, that you are entrusted to be that provider and protector. Paul has some very strong words for men who don't step into that calling. 1 Timothy 5:8: "Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." Some strong words from Paul, but there's the strength of the words. He says it's part of your makeup to step in, live with strength, and you can do it unapologetically. Step into who God has called you to be.

Now, when I say that, men, you don't have to be perfect. You do have to be present. You don't have to be flawless. You do have to be faithful. So, be strong, stand firm, live with integrity, lead in love. Step into the calling that God has on your life to be a godly man. So, live with strength.

Here's the second piece: lead with love. Because if God's given you this position of overseeing or a position of authority and influence, how we steward that influence will determine whether we're stepping into God's calling or not. Just to have some sense of authority or influence is not godly in itself. We have to steward that in a godly way.

Let me finish the verse that I shared earlier, 1 Corinthians chapter 16. Again, we read this earlier: "Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, and be strong." But then he qualifies what you do in that position of strength. He says, "Let all that you do be done in love." Done in love. It's not enough to just have the position. It's what you do when you're in that position that matters.

I remember years ago, I was in this counseling appointment with this married couple that was really struggling in their marriage. As part of the conversation, at one point, the man said, "Pastor, isn't there some sort of verse in the Bible that says, 'Wives, submit to your husbands'? Can you tell

her about that? She's not doing what I'm telling her to do." So, I had the great privilege to remind him of the number one interpretive principle of the Bible: get your hands off of other people's verses. Don't pluck out a verse and use it as a billy club to hammer somebody else. The Bible is not a billy club; it better serves as a mirror. Actually, look at yourself in your own journey.

So, does the Bible say wives submit to their husbands as to the Lord? Yeah, it does. Ephesians 5:22. Do you know what the verse is that's right before verse 21? Let me read it for you: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." In other words, it's not that God has given man a position and woman is supposed to be just a servant, subservient in some way. No, it actually starts by saying it's mutual submission. The picture is this: if a couple is married, you actually try to out-serve one another. That's the best way to honor God.

I think about my relationship with Lindsay. Every opportunity I have to lift her up, to think about her, to put her needs first, she's doing the same for me. It's actually what cultivates the best marriage. It's not a sense of power and authority and one being subservient to the other. We're actually all equals because of Christ. It really is about taking whatever I'm entrusted with, responsible for, and stewarding it in love for their best interest.

Here's what it says a couple of verses later: "For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior." And then look what it says in verse 25. This is how you live it out as men: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."

The problem our culture has had with "toxic masculinity" is because there have been men who have taken a position of authority, and they've stewarded that in such a way or leveraged that in a certain way for their own sake at the expense of others. That is not godly manhood. It is not godly manhood when you leverage a position or a place of authority for your own sake at the expense of others. Paul says, "No, you actually love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." So, it's the complete opposite. Instead, you leverage your position for the sake of others at your own expense. Do you feel the difference? It's not leveraging your position for the sake of yourself at the expense of others; it's leveraging your position for the sake of others at your own expense.

Practically, men, this is what it looks like for those of you who are married. What it means is, I think about my own journey and my own relationship with Lindsay, and we try to make every possible decision together that we can. We talk through it, we work through it. Again, it's mutual submission. We're trying to find what is actually best for us and for the entire family. Most of the time, we just get on the same page. We make the decision together. That's the best model. ..every now and then, I can probably count them on one hand in 21 years of marriage, that we just came to an impasse. We couldn't agree, and in that moment, Lindsay will default to my role as a husband in the household, allowing me to make the decision. But here's what's important: if you ever find yourself in that situation, the decision I'm entrusted to make is not a decision that's in my best interest. The decision I make in that

moment is the decision that's in her best interest or the interest of others. That's how you steward what God has entrusted you with. And so, you live with strength and you lead with love.

Men, our world, our families, our company or our companies, our church, we need men to step into their strength. We need men to step into their calling, to step in with integrity, to live out who God's called you to be. Again, it isn't about perfection, but it is about your presence. It isn't about being flawless, but it is about being faithful. Be faithful, live with strength, lead with love. It's who God's called you to be.

And men, we're here to help. I love it. After God gives that charge and says, "Men, steward your leadership. You're called to lead and rule," two verses later, Genesis 2:18, the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Ladies, that's us! "It's not good for the man to be alone." And all the ladies said, "Amen!" Ha, Bible joke! Ha!

Let me tell you about that word "helper." The Hebrew word is ezer, "helper." It's actually not a weak word; it's a strong word. You want to know how I know? Because the 21 times it's used in the Old Testament, 16 of those, it's used to describe God Himself. So, that "helper" is not weak. It's what we're choosing to do with our strength. It's to empower leaders, it's to empower others. It's really strong, but a different sense of it. It's used of God as He helps us. Psalm 33:20, "We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our ezer; he is our help and our shield." And as a helper, let me remind you, it doesn't mean you're one that doesn't need help too.

I became a widow four years ago, and the cultural definition of strength compelled me to not want any help. I found a lot of strength in needing no one, and I thought that was what true strength was until—I'll never forget one conversation with one of you all right after this service came up and said, "How are you so strong?" And I remember how I answered. I said—and this is years into the journey, about two years ago—"How are you so strong with the grief you've endured?" And I said, "You know how? Because I finally realized I don't have to be strong anymore by myself." See, those who are helpers also know that their strength comes from knowing who to call for their help.

To which another Psalm is helpful for us, Psalm 121:1 and 2: "I lift my eyes to the mountains—and if you're wondering where does my help come from? For those of you who in the home help a whole lot of people, where does your help come from? My help," the psalmist says, the author says, "my help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth." Women are strong helpers, and I want to take a second and talk a little bit about submissive wives as well.

Ephesians 5:22, we've read it: "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior." Submission is a tough word in our culture because it's most often misunderstood. Biblical submission, again, not weakness or subservient, but choosing to, rather, like I said, in the helper, empower godly leadership. And Jesus was the one who flipped this. He was the one that talked about what true leadership was, and He said that leadership is not about having power. In fact, He modeled a different thing to do with that power.

Matthew 20:26, "Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you, what do you do with that power? Must be your servant." Now, what do you do when you have a difficult husband? Don't nudge him. I sat at a Bible study this week, and a

gal was just talking about the challenges of marriage. And I love—there's a book called *Love and Respect*, and I love that. What God charges us in Ephesians chapter 5 is the thing we tend to want to do least. Like, He charges the men to love, and the women what? To respect. Because you know what? Women naturally will want to love. You know what men will naturally want to do? Respect. Like, it's like He's going, "I'm going to stretch you. I'm going to make you dependent upon Me, and this is how it works best."

So, what do you do though? And I sat across from this gal, and I was just studying this text for this, and I said, "I have a hard word for you, but I'm going to let the word of the Lord speak into this situation and trust that He's going to do a thing." And it was wild to watch this woman really having a hard time with her husband. And here's what I said: 1 Peter chapter 3, "Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands," Peter says it too, "so that, if any of them do not believe the word, huh, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight."

Peter is calling women to something deeper than simply some sort of blind obedience. What he's calling women to is a strength that has the power to transform people. Submission is not enduring abuse, but it is cultivating an inner strength that draws people to the Lord Jesus. Ladies, that's powerful. Women's quiet strength can change the heart of her husband in a way that an argument never will. Did you catch that?

I remember having a hard time with this passage at one point because it talks about having a gentle and quiet spirit, and I'm like, until I looked deeper at the passage and saw where that gentle and quiet spirit lives. Check it out, verse four at the very end of the passage: "Rather, it should be that of your..." Look at this, "inner self." So, women, it means cultivating your inner self so that—let me give a different word—you might be settled there. It will speak magnitudes to your husband. Wow, are you settled internally? Or, let me do—let me do another one, ready ladies? If we only prepare physically for the day, don't be surprised if you run to your physical appearance in order to find loving acceptance. If you only get prepared physically, hear the words from Paul, "Cultivate inwardly." It's powerful. It's powerful.

Submission is not passive, but it's power under control. And He even tells us the power to shape homes and empower leaders. Don't hear this passage as silencing your voice, but rather equipping you and reminding you of your strength to be self-controlled in your inner being. Ladies, let me woo you for a second. We can be more settled inside, and not only will it free us up, it will transform them. That's what the word of the Lord says.

Now, I'm talking about a lot of times when it talks about—and I was studying the passage—like, what does the whole Bible say about women? There were a lot of passages about wives. I'm a widow, so it's interesting studying biblical womanhood, looking at all the passages that seemed like there was always just in connection with a husband, until I stumbled across 1 Corinthians chapter 7, verse 34. So, not only do I want to talk about us being a strong helper, a submissive wife, here's what I want to talk about, all the single ladies. I got you. Hear the word of the Lord. What a gift it is in this season to be able to share this with you, because it's been a gift to me.

In 1 Corinthians, it says, "An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs. Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit." Continuing, "but a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world, how she can please her husband. I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord. Singleness, church, hear this: singleness is not a waiting room for marriage; it's a calling. Here's how I know: because Jesus, the most complete human to have ever lived, was single. If sex and marriage were required for a full life, what would that say about Jesus?

My friend Meredith Knox wrote a beautiful message about singleness, and in it, she said, "God is not trying to pull you into a lesser life; He's trying to shift your loves to something even greater, someone even greater." The ultimate fulfillment in all people, but I'm talking about women, is not in marriage but in intimacy with the Lord Jesus. And one day, we have the promise of the wedding supper of the Lamb. Thanks be to God!

Women, God's wooing you into intimacy with Him. Intimacy—I love that—into me see, into me, to be fully known and fully loved, and only Jesus will do that. And men, I encourage you, as you see things that are unloving, to love us there. We need it. But I also want to tell you something really profound about what Jesus does in the scriptures. In fact, as He's on the cross before going to pay the full weight of all the consequences of our sin for all time, there are seven statements that He says famously from the cross. The final two we have recorded in the Book of John: "I thirst" and "It is finished." And right before that is Jesus's final act on the cross. And in Jesus's final act before dying, He does something profound. He creates a new family from His disciples.

Who do we know was at the cross? We know Jesus's mom was there, and we know the disciple John was there. And listen to one of those seven statements Jesus says from the cross: "When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved"—that's John talking about himself—"how cool is this?" Is it bragging rights, or is it someone who knew how loved he was? "I want to introduce myself like that: 'Nice to meet you; I'm the one He loves.'" But anyway, so He sees His mom, and then He sees John, and He said to her, "Woman, here's your son," and to the disciple, "Here's your mom." From that time on, the disciple took her into his home. How cool is this? The spiritual family of God is deeper than even the biological family of God. The only blood we need to share in order to be family, church, is the blood of Jesus. That makes us siblings.

And as I say thank you because we need each other, as a single woman raising two little boys, I need the church. In fact, I can remember one of the times I knew I needed that the most. So, Randy and I had our second son in 2019, and we talked all year about dedicating him to the church. And we were like, "We'll do it after he turns one." And then COVID hit, so that sucked. And then afterwards, the following year, Randy went to heaven. And I remember having a conversation with my friend and Pastor Brent, and said, "What do I do? Do I still dedicate him?" To be honest with you, I've seen a lot of dedications, and not often is it like a single parent. That feels so vulnerable. And I... I left the conversation. Months later, we picked back up the conversation. He's like, "Do you want to dedicate him?" I'm like, "Of course, I want to dedicate him, but honestly, part of me doesn't want to stand up there vulnerable. I feel like just a person that's just... like... crying. Like, that doesn't sound very fun." And he said, "Well, you trust me?" I said, "Sure." And so, we actually have a picture of that moment. I hated that. I remember what that felt like in that moment because I'm standing there on that stage holding my boy, and the other one was actually on there too. And I remember it feeling so painful

because when most people do it, it looks like a full family. But I was there, a single mom with two little boys, and that reality felt heavy. And I remember Brent was just talking all about, like, the hope we have, that although there's brokenness, we have the hope that one day it won't be like that, that one day I won't stand there alone, and one day we'll be full. We'll be reunited with Jesus. I'll be reunited with Randy. But in the meantime, he said, "This is where the family of God steps in." And at that very moment, men just started popping up from their seats and moving toward me. They got on the stage and stood behind me, not to replace but to support me. It was as if they were saying, "You're not alone; we're here. We stand in the gap." And man, that's what you're called to do.

You're called; we need you. I need you to stand in the gap. There are women, children, and families in this church, in this room, at your campus right now who need you. They need you as spiritual fathers. They need you as spiritual brothers. I need older men pouring into my boys, and I need younger men with the energy to fight them and wrestle them. We need you. And friends, hear me, this message of biblical manhood and womanhood is not just about family structures; it's about the family of God. Because Jesus, our brother, has gone before us, showing us what it means to lead us, protect us, serve us, submit to us under the will of God.

So, I ask you men in the room, who will you stand up for? And I invite you, and I want to stretch you, who do you need to stand up for? Who in your life needs to know that they're not alone, that they belong in your family, married families? What single people need to be invited into your home as part of the family? Spiritual fathers, hear this. Our culture thinks they need influencers; they don't need influencers; they need spiritual fathers. Who are you called to father spiritually? My dad—someone pulled my dad aside and said, "It's time for you to start pouring into young men." It was just the thing that he needed to hear. And I think some of you men need to hear that. Send the text. Who are those guys that kind of just linger and follow you around? And if they don't, ask them to follow you as you follow Christ.

But I want to take a moment for every woman in the room to experience what I got to experience on that day, knowing full well that you are supported because you're here at this church at this time. And so, women from every campus, would you stand to your feet? Men, I want to invite you to look around and to see them. They are your sisters in Christ. Some carry burdens you can't see and are fighting battles you have no idea about. And today, I'm going to invite you men to cover them in prayer, not as strangers but as brothers. So, men, if you would extend a hand in the direction of the women around you, and if you know them and you desire and feel that to stand with them, I encourage you to take that stand. I'm going to take about a minute for us to pray over one another. And ladies, if you just open and extend your hands to receive, let's begin. You could pray right where you are.

Women, as you continue to stand, I just want to share these words: Women of Willow Creek, we believe that you are called, you are chosen, and empowered to reflect the image of God in all that you do. You are not secondary; you are essential to God's kingdom. God has woven strength, wisdom, and compassion into your very being so that you would lead, serve, and bring His light into the world, whether in your home, workplace, or church or community. You are an ambassador of His love and truth. Women, your voice matters, your work has eternal significance, your presence springs life. You are the daughters of our King, co-heirs with Christ, bearers of His justice, mercy, and hope. Let your light shine brightly, not dimmed by fear or doubt. Walk in faith rooted in His promises, cling to His truth, knowing that He has called you for such a time as this. Father, we lift up the women of our church, Your daughters whom You've called to walk in strength and wisdom and love. God, we

just ask that they may know their worth that's rooted not in the world's standards but in Your unshakable truth. God, fill them with boldness to lead wherever You call them, with gentleness to nurture those around them, with faith to trust You in every season. God, I just ask that You would equip them with courage to step into their God-given purpose. Let them be voices of justice, hands of compassion, hearts full of grace. God, protect them from fear and doubt. Remind them daily that they are seen, they are known, they are deeply loved. May they shine as lights in this world, reflecting Your goodness and truth. God, bless each woman, her work, and her ministry. Use her mightily for Your kingdom, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Let me ask the women to sit down. And men, if you could remain standing, or if you're sitting down, men, if you can stand. And again, just as we talked about earlier, we as men, we are given a God-given responsibility: live with strength, lead with love. Our world needs you, our church needs you, your family needs you. You're indispensable.

And so, in a very similar way that we just did for the women, we'd invite you to extend a hand toward a man that's near you. Again, if you want to stand with the man you came with, you're invited to do so. And we just want to ask, women, would you pray for the men of our church? So, we're going to give you a moment to pray for the men of our church, and then Megan will close us in just a moment.

Heavenly Father, I know these men can't father well without being fathered well. And while some don't have the example of a biological dad who fathered well, Lord, I'm so thankful that You, Heavenly Father, have fathered them and brought them here. So, we open ourselves to being fathered.

So, Lord, thank you for loving us and equipping us for every good work You have prepared in advance for us to do. I pray for a flip in their minds, from what they have to do to what they get to do. Lord Jesus, thank you for using each man standing, and thank you for making them men. We love You. Equip them, we pray. And all God's children said in unison, let's worship.