

THE ROOTED WAY • EPISODE 11

WHEN MEN REFUSE TO BE MEN

Passivity, Domination & Counterfeit Masculinity

“The opposite of a passive man is not a controlling man. The opposite of passivity is faithful responsibility.”

EPISODE STUDY & SHOW NOTES

Designed for listening, personal study, small-group discussion, and use inside Rooted Word.

Episode Overview

KEY QUESTION	What happens when men reject God's design for masculine responsibility?
BIG IDEA	Masculinity is corrupted in two opposite directions: passivity and domination. Biblical manhood is strength submitted to Christ and spent for the good of others.
PRIMARY PASSAGES	Genesis 3:6-13; Mark 10:42-45; 1 Corinthians 6:12; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5
SUPPORTING PASSAGES	John 5:2-9; Ephesians 5:25; Luke 14:33; Proverbs 25:28

Why This Matters

Men can fail to carry responsibility by disappearing from it or by abusing it. Passivity says, "Someone else will handle it." Domination says, "Everyone else will do it my way." Neither reflects Christ. The goal is faithful responsibility - initiative, self-government, service, sacrifice, and repentance under the lordship of Jesus.

KEY DISTINCTION

The opposite of a passive man is not a controlling man. The opposite of passivity is faithful responsibility.

1. Return to Eden: Responsibility Becomes Blame

READ

Genesis 3:6-13

UNDERSTAND

Adam is present, participates in sin, and then responds with blame. He points toward his wife and ultimately toward God: "the woman You gave me." The pattern is painfully familiar - when responsibility costs something, fallen people look for somewhere else to put it.

- He blames his wife.
- He blames God.
- He avoids ownership.

Modern blame-shifting sounds like: "My boss." "My parents." "My wife." "My church." "My circumstances." The details change; the instinct does not.

ASK

1. Where are you most tempted to explain away your own choices by pointing to someone else?
2. Why is blame-shifting easier than repentance?

3. What responsibility would you have to own if your favorite excuse disappeared?

2. Passivity: Refusing to Carry What Is Yours

Being quiet is not sinful. Being easy-going is not sinful. Passivity is knowing that responsibility belongs to you and repeatedly refusing to carry it.

- leaving spiritual formation entirely to your wife
- having no idea what your children believe
- never initiating prayer
- avoiding difficult conversations or destructive behavior
- letting your wife carry every emotional burden
- avoiding commitment or service
- spending hours on entertainment while claiming there is no time for Scripture
- expecting everyone else to organize your life

KEY LINE

Delegating a task is not the same thing as delegating responsibility.

A wife may be better at budgeting, planning, Bible knowledge, scheduling, or emotional conversations. Marriage is partnership, and wise couples use each other's strengths. But a husband does not get to become spiritually absent simply because his wife is competent.

SPIRITUAL PASSIVITY

Providing a paycheck matters, but your children need more from their father than his direct deposit.

EXAMINE

- Who initiates church attendance?
- Who prays with the children?
- Who knows what they are learning?
- Who talks about Scripture at home?
- Who initiates conversations about sin?
- Who models repentance?

3. The Other Ditch: Domination

Some men hear criticism of passivity and overcorrect: "Fine. I'll be in charge." That is not the biblical answer. Domination weaponizes authority rather than carrying responsibility.

- "Because I said so."
- weaponizing Ephesians 5
- demanding submission

- controlling money
- isolating a wife
- intimidating family
- refusing correction
- treating disagreement as rebellion
- equating leadership with always getting the final say

READ**Mark 10:42-45**

“But it is not this way among you; rather, whoever wants to become prominent among you shall be your servant; and whoever wants to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”

KEY DISTINCTION

Worldly authority asks, “What can these people do for me?” Christlike leadership asks, “What has God entrusted me to do for them?”

Christlike headship means the man is not first in line to be served. He is first in line to sacrifice.

4. Counterfeit Masculinity

Counterfeit masculinity can look strong while remaining deeply self-centered. The macho version prizes intimidation, rage, fighting, sexual conquest, and physical dominance. Some modern manosphere or “red-pill” conversations rightly identify problems such as passivity, lack of discipline, poor health, and family instability - but a correct diagnosis does not guarantee a biblical cure.

- contempt for women
- sexual double standards
- transactional relationships
- dominance
- resentment
- self-worship

KEY LINE

The opposite of a weak man is not a man who controls everybody. It is a man whose strength is under the control of Christ.

Christianity does not teach men to view women as adversaries, trophies, or assets in a sexual marketplace. Biblical masculinity is not becoming powerful enough to get what you want from people. It is becoming mature enough to use whatever strength God gives you to serve them.

5. Pornography, Appetite, and Self-Government

Pornography is one of the clearest examples of counterfeit masculinity because it trains a man to consume rather than serve. It separates sexuality from covenant and responsibility, promises gratification without vulnerability or commitment, turns bodies into products, and detaches pleasure from holiness.

BIG IDEA

My desires do not get to rule me. Christ does.

Sexual desire itself is not the enemy. The problem is when desire becomes master instead of servant. Biblical self-control is not pretending you have no appetites; it is refusing to let your appetites tell you what to do.

Porn offers pleasure without covenant. Christian sexuality places pleasure inside covenant, fidelity, love, and self-giving.

SELF-GOVERNMENT

A man who wants to talk about leading a household while secretly being led around by his browser history has a self-government problem.

The same principle reaches beyond pornography. A man can be ruled by lust, food, alcohol, spending, sports, gaming, social media, work, anger, comfort, approval, or sex. Different appetites; same question: Who is in charge?

READ

1 Corinthians 6:12; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5

Paul's principle in 1 Corinthians 6 is that he will not be mastered by anything. In 1 Thessalonians 4, holiness is tied directly to sexual self-control. Christian freedom is not "I can do whatever I want." Freedom means your appetites no longer own you.

KEY LINE

It does not take much strength to obey every desire you have. Strength is being able to look at a desire and say, "No. You are not my master. Jesus is Lord over my life."

Jesus experienced hunger, exhaustion, pain, grief, and temptation, yet He was never governed by appetite. Biblical manhood is not the absence of desire. It is desire submitted to obedience.

ASK

1. Which appetite most often tells you what to do?
2. Where have you confused "freedom" with the ability to indulge yourself?
3. What practical safeguard would help you fight pornography or another enslaving appetite without confusing the safeguard itself with heart change?

4. Who knows enough about your life to challenge you when secrecy begins to grow?

6. Boys Who Never Become Men

Adulthood is not defined by marriage. An unmarried man can be deeply mature, and a married man can remain stuck in prolonged adolescence. The issue is not living at home, playing games, or being single. The issue is refusing to carry appropriate God-given responsibility.

- avoiding responsibility
- avoiding commitment
- refusing financial maturity
- expecting parents or a wife to rescue you
- letting entertainment dominate life
- fearing inconvenience

KEY LINE

A boy follows his appetites. A mature man learns to govern them under Christ.

7. Repentance Is Masculine

One of the strongest things a man can say is, “I was wrong.” Real repentance does not hide behind “I’m sorry you felt that way.” It names your own sin, takes responsibility for your actions, and seeks forgiveness.

KEY LINE

Pride says strength means never admitting weakness. Christianity says strength begins by telling the truth about your weakness.

REFLECT

1. When was the last time you gave an apology without an excuse attached?
2. Which relationship would be strengthened by specific repentance rather than defensiveness?
3. Why can admitting wrong require more courage than winning an argument?

8. “Do You Want to Get Well?” - Leaving the Poolside

READ

John 5:2-9

The episode uses the man at the Pool of Bethesda as a mirror for spiritual passivity. Jesus asks a man who had been ill for thirty-eight years, “Do you want to get well?” The text does not spell out every motive behind the man’s answer, but the question still presses us to examine whether familiar brokenness, excuses, or passivity have become easier than costly obedience.

When Jesus commands him to get up, pick up his pallet, and walk, the man must trust Christ enough to act on a command that had been impossible in his own strength. The application for men is not self-salvation; it is refusing to use wounds, circumstances, or lack of perfect conditions as permanent excuses for disobedience.

REFLECTION

Do I actually want Christ to change the parts of my life that have become comfortable excuses?

Following Jesus disrupts routines, exposes secret sins, reshapes relationships, and costs us the right to define life on our own terms. Luke 14:33 presses the same reality: discipleship is costly.

CLOSING MOVEMENT

Stop waiting for perfect conditions. Hear the command of Christ, reject the victim posture, take responsibility for the next act of obedience, and walk.

Apply

1. Name one area where you have been passive. What is one concrete act of responsibility you can take this week?
2. Name one area where your leadership has drifted toward control or intimidation. What would Christlike service look like instead?
3. Identify one appetite that has too much influence over your decisions and put one practical boundary in place.
4. Make one specific apology without blame-shifting, minimizing, or explaining away your behavior.
5. Ask a trusted Christian man to hold you accountable for one area you normally keep hidden.

Reflection

CLOSING TAKEAWAY

Biblical masculinity is not passivity, and it is not domination. It is strength submitted to Christ and spent for the good of others.

Pray

Lord Jesus, expose the places where I hide behind excuses, avoid responsibility, control others, or allow my appetites to master me. Give me strength that is submitted to You, courage to repent quickly, self-control in secret, and a willingness to serve the people You have entrusted to me. Teach me to walk in costly obedience rather than comfortable passivity. Amen.

Further Scripture

- Genesis 3:6-13
- Mark 10:42-45
- 1 Corinthians 6:12-20
- 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8
- Proverbs 25:28
- Ephesians 5:25-33
- John 5:2-9
- Luke 14:25-33

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Podcast: The Rooted Way - When Men Refuse to Be Men: Passivity, Domination & Counterfeit Masculinity

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Study collection: Biblical Manhood

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