



How many of you remember that moment when you first discovered that you were attracted to someone of the opposite gender? Where that boy went from being a cooties-infested yucky face to being McDreamy? Or where that girl went from being an annoyance to the only thing you could think about as you drifted off to bed? It was a powerful, magical moment, wasn't it?

[WATCH VIDEO: Haven describing her first crush - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LNZwigaQjZg>]

I mean, we see that here in this video where this little girl Haven is describing her crush on her friend's older brother Avery. She's just ... taken in. We all have moments like this. What I find funny about young kids when they experience "first love" is the embarrassment that comes along with it. I mean, Haven did not want to talk to her mom about her crush at the beginning of the video, but as her mom pressed her, she couldn't help but open up. The feelings she had were bubbling up inside of her... she couldn't help it.

You see, attraction is a powerful thing. It means something. It was a part of God's original design, something to draw men and women together so that they can experience something even deeper. Check it out in Genesis in the story of creation:

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." [Genesis 2:18-23]

God designed man and woman to be together, to be drawn together. To, in some ways, kind of need each other. Check out Adam's response when God brings Eve before him. He's like, "WHOA! AT LAST! THIS IS THE ONE! WELL DONE, GOD!" The attraction Adam felt drew him and Eve together so that they could become one flesh. Unified. A team.

We live in a time when people—who deny the reality that God exists—when it comes to things like attraction, they try to tell us that the feelings of attraction that we have, that the love and desire we feel for others, is nothing more than a chemical reaction happening at a biological level, and that this chemical reaction has the sole purpose of causing us to find someone to mate with [their terms!] so we can make sure our species continues.

According to them, that is the sole purpose of attraction. It's about making sure humanity continues. It has nothing to do with love. Nothing to do with commitment and contentment. Nothing to do with feelings. It's all about making sure one thing happens. Now, I'm no scientist, but that just sounds lame. It makes me wonder if any of these people have ever been in love.

Imagine for a moment their vows at their wedding ... "I promise to have chemical reactions at a biological level that will make me want to want to mate with you." SERIOUSLY! Ladies, how many of you would be like, "Yeah! That's MY MAN right there!" No way!

Do they know what it's like? The joy? The wonder of getting to know another person at their deepest level? Of being able to do life with them—through thick and thin? The way I feel about my wife, the way she feels about me, isn't just a chemical reaction. It's the beautiful design of the Creator. God has designed us with relationships in mind. We were created for one another ... to be in love.

Here's the problem, though: most people don't live as if that were the case. We don't think of this beautiful design when we think about our relationships with other people. I mean, think about your schools for a minute. Think about the things people say about relationships. About how people use and abuse one another all for their own gain. Think about what we see and hear in the media. The way the world sees things is NOT the way that God has designed them.

Over the course of the next five weeks, we're going to unpack—at least in part—the design that God has for relationships. We're going to explore a biblical perspective on dating, on marriage, and on how we should view and establish boundaries in those.

But before we get to any of that, we need to first take time to explore ourselves. Before we can understand how to do relationships in a way that reflects the beautiful design, we need to understand how we ourselves operate as men and women who are a part of that system.

Tonight, in Week 1, we are going to answer this question: *What makes a real man?*

Let's pray.

The world is in trouble. All you have to do is look around or flip on the news for a few minutes and you'll see it there: violence, theft, neglect, and abuse. We can't deny it anymore.

Something is seriously wrong.

Out of a desire to make sense of why things are the way they are, we often seek out where the blame should fall: video games, violence in media, racism, and socio-economic status all the usual suspects for the woes of the world. While all of these things are TERRIBLE, I have to be honest in saying that I don't know that they're the root issues of the things we're dealing with.

I think if we were to peel enough layers back and expose the heart of our problem as a society, we would see that all of the things we experience on a day-to-day basis are merely symptoms of what the real issue is: **Men are no longer men the way God intended them to be.**

Our society has warped the definition of manhood and turned it into something that it was never meant to be. If I were to take a random sampling of men and ask them, "What does it mean to be a man?" I bet I would probably get some of the following answers:

- A real man is tough and feels no emotions.
- A real man gets any girl he wants.

- A real man has it all: Ripped. Wealthy. Powerful. Popular.
- A real man can make others submit to him.
- A real man answers to no one.

These are all thoughts and ideas that are reinforced by the images we are bombarded with in the media. Just consider the movies Hollywood makes. Listen to the music that record labels produce. Examine the lives of the celebrities we idolize.

This warped understanding of manhood is all around us.

When we hear these messages as often as we do, they start to shape our hopes, which in turn begin to shape our reality.

We have way too many guys who are chasing after an ideal that was never meant to be. There are real consequences when this happens.

When men refuse to be men, the world falls apart.

Here's what I mean by this statement:

- When men refuse to take responsibility for their lives and for the lives of those they've been entrusted with (such as their wife and children), their families are the ones who pay the price.
- When men refuse to grow up and instead continue to act like little boys, their lives come crashing down around them.

This is a statement that sociologists and researchers would back up. These aren't religious researchers who have an agenda—these are secular researchers. People who have no connection to the church and no ulterior motives. It's what the Bible declares to be true, and the research backs it up.

[Author Note: Replace the following with your own story about how a man in your life seriously let you down.]

This is something I've seen in my life with my own father. He refused to take responsibility for himself, and instead decided to be selfish, and our entire family fell apart. I spent years having to deal with the ramifications of his inability to be a man.

[Author Note: Replace the following with a story about how a twisted view of sexuality and manhood affects your city or area.]

This is something we also see all too well here in our own city. Pueblo is well-known for a lot of things, and sadly most of them aren't good: Gang activity. Drug use. Teen pregnancy. While everyone bears the burden for the decisions they have made as an individual, ultimately the majority of these issues can be traced back to the same thing: dad wasn't being dad.

The way our society views manhood is jacked up.

Being a man is not about conquering other people. It's not about acquiring things. It's not about how many notches you get on your bed post.

Those are the things a boy focuses on.

For all the young guys in this room, know this:

God is not calling you to be a boy. He's calling you to be a man.

You need to know this: you will NEVER be able to find out what a REAL man is by looking to the world. As great as Hollywood movies are, they just don't do masculinity justice. If you take your cues from what you see on TV or on the field with professional athletes, you will only RUIN your life and the lives of those you love.

So, if we can't look to the world to find out what a man is, where can we look? Well, the Bible has an answer ... and you guessed it: Jesus. He was the ultimate man. He was the God-man. The only one worth modeling our lives after.

In Jesus' life, we see everything a man should and could be.

So, what makes a real man?

Three things I want to focus on—three activities—three ways of life that will change you, and those you love, for the better.

[1] A REAL MAN IS SOMEONE WHO LOVES LIKE JESUS LOVED.

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