

Transcript 175

Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the Got Questions podcast. Joining me today is Owen Strachan. We've had him on before. Owen today is going to be talked to us about his new book titled, *The War On Men, Why Society Hates Them, and Why We Need Them*. So Owen welcome back.

Owen Strachan

Thank you so much, Shea. Thanks for having me, man. I appreciate you.

Shea Houdmann

So let's go to both of your book and also to some of the most frequent ask questions we receive about men and masculinity and what the Bible actually says. But to start off, what led you to write *The War on Men*?

Owen Strachan

Men are in crisis today. Men are struggling everywhere you look. If you look at all the different factors, educational, societal, religious, health and so on you see that there's a litany of woes before men. So and that that's mirrored in the anecdotal for many of us, you look around your city, your town, your surroundings, you look at how young men are doing. If you're in the church, you, you get a sense of the pulse of young men. Are they thriving? There's just a spirit out there, Shea, where if you're paying attention, you see that men are not doing well. And I have no great body of answers to offer in myself, but I love men as those made in God's image, and I want to help them. I just want to do what little I can to try to help. So that's the burden of the book.

Shea Houdmann

What are some, some very practical or tangible ways that you have noticed or understood that men in masculinity are under attack in our society today?

Owen Strachan

Men are toxic. That's what you hear everywhere you turn. Masculinity is toxic. Toxicity as a term is everywhere. It's a therapeutic term. And it's a term that gets at some truths in some cases, you know, men are sinners just like women are sinners. And so men really do sin all over the place. And furthermore, because men have on average 2000% more testosterone than women, when men sin, especially when they're angry and in a destructive mood, things really do get broken and on fire quickly. So the sins of men are not, in my view, bigger than the sins of women, but they can have outsized effects. And so when you look around at how men are responding to their perceived toxicity its not positive. Men are said to be essentially a lesser being, an inferior being to women. And if you feed that to boys, if you start feeding that to young men from an early age, what you're gonna get is a context much like the one that we have, in which men disappear. Men get angry. Men try to become women. There's all sorts of responses that we're seeing around us, Shea that everyone is. And these ones that I have mentioned are not positive. So there's a a need for us to recognize that and and build men to be strong in God instead of what our culture is saying men need to be.

Shea Houdmann

Let's just jump into what does the Bible say about masculinity. You wanna ask that? Often the questions we get at Got Questions will either be something along the lines of all the men in the Bible come from a strongly patriarchal culture therefore that's really not the biblical picture of what a man is supposed to be. Or from the other side, it's like looking at Jesus, looking at David, looking at some strong positive examples and kind of question how exactly do I emulate Jesus as a male, Jesus as a man, as opposed to Jesus as the Incarnate Son of God whom we are all men and women to follow closely and exemplify in our lives. So what does the Bible say about men specifically, and how should men today be emulating that in their lives?

Owen Strachan

You know, that's a great question. In the in the Bible, strong men are the solution. In the culture today, strong men are the problem. That's basically it. And so the Bible and the culture are going two different ways. Men naturally want to be strong. Men are made to be strong. If you think about the Old Testament, if you think about what Moses says to Joshua, be strong and courageous. If you think about what David says to his son Solomon on David's deathbed, First Kings 2:2 be strong and show yourself a man. If you think of First Corinthians 16:13 in the New Testament, it's the same line. Act like men Paul says to the Corinthians. So there's a through line all throughout the Bible that is calling men to strength. Now our culture here is what I just said. And even here's those texts quoted and many people who hear that cultural influence are gonna say, ohh see, there's that patriarchal influence that you just mentioned. Shea. That's really bad. It used to be that we design boys, called boys to be aggressive, risk takers. Get out there and do adventure. But there's all sorts of colonization that happened. There's all sorts of domination of women that happen in oppression of subjugated peoples. And so we what we need to do is we need to take out, we need to reverse inject that testosterone from men and and we need to make men soft and quiet and in a word, more like women.

Owen Strachan

The Bible does not teach that. The Bible does not teach that men need to become women, whether in terms of a transition or or even in terms of their attitude. What the Bible does teach men that they need to do is that they that they need to be strong in God. They need to find their strength in God through the power of the gospel. And that actually means not that men are unleashed to do whatever they want, which sometimes people think we're saying, but instead that men come under the rule of Christ. And if you're under the rule of Christ, then that means that the spirit is bearing fruit all throughout your life, and you are a man for others. You are a man who lives to protect your loved ones, provide for your loved ones, lead your loved ones and and those three main biblical callings get amplified out beyond your own home, into your workplace, the community, even the world itself.

Shea Houdmann

In your book, a lot of what your book and in culture, which I'm sure you've noticed a lot of the problem, is that people have never truly experienced what biblical masculinity looks like. All all they've experienced is either men being domineering with absolute no love and no gentleness. No, no kindness, no love, no respect being shown, just a domination. That's what they think of when they hear the term,

like masculinity. So how do we correct that? How do we communicate, yes, biblical manhood is strength, but it's a godly strength. It is a peaceful strength. It is a loving strength.

Owen Strachan

What we have to recognize is that Jesus is that blend of tough and tender that men are innately looking for and women are innately looking for. Biblical manhood does not in the end reduce to either only toughness or tenderness. Our culture wants men to be tender. And tons of people, as you alluded to, have not seen a tender, gentle, gracious, loving, patient man. Sadly, a good number of folks out there had a father who was impatient, domineering, maybe even abusive, wrathful, these kinds of things. And we need to recognize that the Bible itself and the gospel calls men to be a Christ shaped man. Jesus as a man, you think of like Matthew 19:13-15 was one who drew little children to himself, even when his disciples basically tried to bar them and say, don't bother him. No. Jesus was so loving and compassionate that he wanted little children in his arms. So a godly man is like Jesus, by the power of the cross of Jesus. His shed blood for us. A tender, compassionate, gentle, gracious man. And that's the brand of manhood, Shea, just to be very clear, I am here for. I am not here only for one side of this equation.

Owen Strachan

But the other side is is vital as well. And all throughout Scripture it's witnessed. And that is that is toughness. You have to be unflinching in the face of Satanic attack. You think of Jesus in Matthew 4. You think of how Jesus faces down the attacks of Satan. And Jesus withstands the temptations of Satan. And Jesus doesn't apologize for doing so. Jesus is not shy about making a whip of chords and scourging the temple we understand in John 2. So Jesus is not afraid in any way or apologetic about arming up against the Kingdom of darkness and the broker of darkness himself the devil and his minions. Jesus looks evil in the eye and does not blink. And so godly men are those who, as I said, protect fearlessly, provide unflinchingly and uh, lead convictionally. We've got to be those kind of men. And those kind of men, Shea are in short supply today. But if you are into biblical manhood, not into Internet manhood, and not into secular manhood, not into the manosphere's manhood, you have to combine and not choose between toughness and tenderness.

Shea Houdmann

And Owen, you're exactly right. So many people have never experienced a biblical manhood. Have never seen a godly, loving, caring, strong man like the Bible advocates for manhood. But when we often, even as Christians, when we picture or try to portray what a biblical man would be like, it's really hard to not just picture the like the stereotypical like American strong man. So what? What are some things, biblically speaking, about manhood that transcends culture, that is not just picture of what the stereotypical American man is like, but no, truly some practical examples, tangible of what it means to be a biblically founded man.

Owen Strachan

Yeah, there are going to be instances where in American manhood you've got resonance with biblical manhood. So let that be said. Thankfully, this is a country that's had a ton of biblical influence and Christian influence about as much as any country in history. So that's good. We're thankful for that. But the two are not synonymous. We have to be very clear about that. Biblical manhood stands alone. It is

its own thing. It's not a hybrid of the world and the Bible. It is sweet generis. It is of its own, its own kind. And so when you go to scripture, you recognize that biblical men fundamentally are men for others. They are men who do not live first and foremost for their own selfish interests, and the ends, like Jesus Christ, the true man, the God man, they live for the good of others. They see their lives as not being about being served by others, but serving others through leadership, through strength, through vocation, through whatever God calls them to do. And you have examples of this from one cover of Scripture to another. You think of the young man, David, not tall, not impressive, not the key bench presser in the Israelite army, not even a member of the Israelite army when the Philistines face off against Israel in the the Book of First Samuel. But you recognize that David is the one who will put it all on the line for the honor of God and the good of others. And as David goes out to battle against Goliath, you recognize that God gives us a profound display of just how much he loves that courageous self sacrificial spirit. He gives David the victory.

Owen Strachan

That's the very same spirit that Christ is going to have, but in perfect form. Christ comes to lay down his life for his bride. He comes to make atonement for the sins of all his people. And so you're seeing in Jesus that same self sacrificial spirit. But self sacrifice, we just gotta be clear here with one further word, doesn't mean taking a poll and doing what everybody wants you to do. It means being on mission for God and doing what God wants you to do. It doesn't mean then that everybody is going to agree with you. It doesn't mean that everybody is going to like you. It doesn't mean that you're a harmless man who just waves his hands in the sky and says I'm here to serve. It actually means that you're a dangerous man, but dangerous not against women and children and the innocent, dangerous against the anti Kingdom of Satan. You've come to do destruction like your master and King Jesus Christ to Satan's evil ways. So a godly man is not one thing Shea, a godly man, is many things when you reduce it Biblically.

Shea Houdmann

Yeah, that's exactly right. I love how it's focusing on the different men in the Bible. One of the things in in your book that I so appreciate it is like there's we're not trying to pigeonhole men into, you have to be exactly like this. Even today, there's there's men who struggle, men who are, say, more musical or artistic, or men who are less athletic than others. That's not what we're talking about. It's not that all men have to be you have to love sports or you can't be in the music., or you can't be into other things. It's it's more of a attitude of how you respond to God, how you seek to follow him, how you seek to set an example, how you speak to lead in a loving manner. Those are the universal things we're talking about. We're not talking about your interest or your wiring because there's a wide variety of what men can be like within the biblical idea. David was a musician and a lot of people view men who are into music as somehow being less manly. That's clearly not the case. So is what I'm saying here true and what's some ways that we can communicate to how you can be a biblical man without being what a lot of people picture in their mind as if you're a man that means you are, blank?

Owen Strachan

Men are multidimensional, as I'm saying, and you're saying. I think you're exactly right. Manhood does not mean one set of interests and one set of passions alone. Manhood doesn't mean one vocation alone. Godly men, I would argue, do recognize from First Corinthians 9:27 and other passages that their body is a gift. So they want to be strong in reasonable terms. But they don't think that the physical

dimension of manhood, which is so huge in American manhood, athletic manhood, if you will, is the be all, end all. We recognize that men have been given all sorts of different passions and interests and giftings, and out of that comes all sorts of different callings and vocations and jobs. And provided you know, we're in step with Scripture, and I would say we have an eye towards what is masculine and what is feminine in our culture we have immense freedom as men to flourish and thrive. I myself am a man who I, I love basketball. I I love other sports, but I also love a good poem. I love good music. I love a good film and and the list could go on. And I'm not the emblem of manhood myself.

Owen Strachan

So I think there's a lot more freedom in biblical manhood than we often represent there to be, and that people have sometimes heard. It's good to issue a call to men today to be strong, for example in in multiple forms. But you just have to take great care that you're defining manhood according to scriptures. We're trying to do according to the gospel. And then that you leave freedom let's say for boys to grow up, some boys are gonna want to be a chef. Praise God! Some boys are going to want to be a computer programmer. Praise God! Some boys are going to want to be a podcast host. It's a very lucrative gig, I hear. Some some boys are going to be, you know, football player and and make millions catching touchdowns. Some boys are gonna grow up and paint beautiful paintings. That's wonderful. All those things are wonderful. The real key is that you own those God-given roles we were talking about of leader, protector and provider as God calls you into the home and the family. And from from there, man, it's not a restrictive calling. It's an exhilarating calling. And the church needs to make that clear to people.

Shea Houdmann

That's that's perfect. And I I have many male friends who just looking at the beautiful tapestries so to speak of their interests, their skills, their passions, their wiring, how they're designed, things they're good at things they're not so good at, the same is true with me. And in some senses I am a very stereotypical American man in my interest and my passion. In other areas, not so much. I am not a handyman at all. I'm not a mechanic. I'm truly not good. I can do the basics with the car. I could change the tire, change the oil, maybe a few other things. So they're parts of me that I'm like, I'm so glad I have other friends with those skills or I know how to take it to a mechanic who knows what he's doing. Those sorts of things. But like being a man is not limiting you. You have to only do these things. It's more of a the way you do those things. The way you lead, the way you communicate. That's far more important than specific interests. And some of the problems we're seeing in our society is like if a man thinks I don't fit the stereotypical man image, well, maybe I'm gay. Or maybe I'm transgender because it's been communicated not as clearly as it should that being a man is who you are. It's not what you do.

Owen Strachan

Yeah. And I make this clear in this book, *The War on Men*, that by the innocuous and very hard to understand, title, the war on men, that there are a lot of cultural forces that oppose traditional manhood, strong manhood and biblical manhood. And that's not good. So let me let me just expound briefly on what what you were just talking about being a handyman. I'm not a handyman either. I am very, very good at driving cars to men who can fix them, for example. There therein lies my car expertise. But I do want to recognize that the societal level and even in the church, it's not a good thing for there to be a war on men. It's not a good thing for the soft profession, so to speak, more feminine

professions, traditionally, to be seen as good professions and the trades and manual labor and risk taking professions and adventuresome professions, let's just group that kind of very generally like I just did, those are the bad ones because those are more patriarchal or something. That's not the case you're making or I'm making. That is absolutely a cultural and societal view. So it's not the case that all men are gonna be able to to rebuild their house, demo, and reno. I can't. It is the case, though, that we want to honor the traits of what I would call biblical manhood in some form, but we'll just use traditional manhood here, we don't want to lose those. We don't want to transition to a soft, plastic, formless society that's essentially feminine in its cast. So even those of us who are not traditionally gifted in certain masculine ways need to recognize there's a lot of good in how God has wired us in those forms. And our culture is not going to say that. And and boys have lost a lot of those pathways, by the way, to build out some of those skills and inclinations. They've lost, in many cases the boy scouts, they many of them don't have a dad. Many of them don't have positive role models of the male kind, and that's gonna have a real effect too. So hopefully the church, I guess to land this plane on a positive note, hopefully the church can be a place where men can teach boys some of the traditional trappings of manhood to some degree, but then especially what we're talking about is the core of biblical manhood.

Shea Houdmann

So this is a question that I saw come in the other day, something I've been thinking of before, but I think we're going to turn into an article, so maybe you can help me kind of formulate my thoughts on it. So both men and women are called to follow Christ. And Jesus is not only the example of a perfect man, but it's also the example of the perfect human being. But for the purposes of this conversation here, what does it look like differently for a man to follow Jesus, follow His example, versus a woman to follow Jesus and his example?

Owen Strachan

That's a great question too. Men are fundamentally to be trained to own the God-given roles laid out in Scripture. We've talked about those some, but I want to train my son, who is 12 years old, into being a leader, protector, and a provider. I want to train him from an early age, though I of course cannot know whether he's going to get married. Have kids. What vocation he's going to have, those sorts of things. But I want to train him to be leading himself spiritually, so that, God willing, he goes on to lead himself spiritually by the grace of God through Christian faith. And also if God gives him a family, he can lead that family. He can speak into his wife's life. He can shape his children's spiritual lives, as God will work. I want him to become a worker. I am assigning him tasks on what I assure you is a regular basis. You know where there's pockets of time. For example, though he is only 12, hey buddy, I I want you to go out and do 30 minutes of weeding. You know, I I don't live in a great Tolkienian forest paradise. OK, I live in a subdivision in America, so it's not always easy to find ways for him to cultivate that boyish working spirit. But I'm trying to find whatever I can, man. So I I unleash him to be a worker. And I'm talking to him, hopefully patiently, about developing a working spirit as well, not just doing it, but doing it unto the Lord. I'm training him to try to be a protector, so when I go on a a trip to speak for a church or a conference or something like that. I pull him aside and I say, hey, buddy, you're you're the man of the house. Protect your your mother and your sisters, these two sisters. You know, locked the doors at night, that sort of thing. Hold the door for mom. Look for ways you know, to be strong, for for them. I'm not in any way thinking Shea, you know that Gavin's gonna hold off a horde of Vikings if they storm the front door. But I am trying to just create those instincts and nurture them in them, in him. In some ways,

there's a little overlap with his sisters, but that training I just laid out that's unique to him as a boy. Of course, the girls have to develop a work ethic and this sort of thing. But I'm training him into the roles we have covered in this short time together. I'm trying as best I can, praying for him, praying for his heart and his soul to love those roles by the grace of God above all to love Jesus Christ.

Owen Strachan

So that's a different presentation of the faith, Shea, than you're going to get in a lot of circles and evangelicalism today, where we really start with a ton of gender neutral stuff shared commitments of the faith for men and women, and only at the very end maybe do we slip in and the husband's the head of his wife. The wife submits to her husband and everything, Ephesians 5. Of course not. That's that's sin. So I think we have to go the opposite way. I think we are reverse engineering as God allows in our boys and our girls, we're training them to say it differently into the ideal, asking that God would give them a real palpable sense of joy and delight and be being a man of God or a woman of God by the power of the gospel of God. And and of course, it goes without saying that is a very countercultural way to raise children in 2023. But as I stake out in the war on men, this book and as I stand for my broader ministry, as you do, it's my prayer that we will stand apart not in the sense that we hate unbelievers. We must not. We need to love them. But that our our manhood and womanhood live to the glory of God is so joy filled and so persistent, even in times when joy is hard won, that people will look at our families, or we ourselves, whether married or single, and they'll go what makes him different?

Owen Strachan

And and with young men, if I could just close on this, I know I'm going on here but, if these young men are pulled towards watching Jordan Peterson videos or Andrew Tate videos, Joe Rogan podcasts or Jocko Willing content and and some of those figures can be positive in what they say in different respects, some of them not. But my prayer is that we won't just add on a few biblical ideas to those cultural forms of manhood, but we will instead say, look, this guy may be saying something true here, but we have the genuine article. We have what is from God himself, biblical manhood. The only way to get there is the grace of God. But here's some good news if you are a man and you have crashed and burned, you have lost your wife. You have lost your children. Uh, you have lost your job. You are floundering. You're a young man, you don't have any purpose in life. You're a boy, you don't have a dad. The circumstances could be multiplied from here. We offer you the grace of Jesus Christ. The power to be transformed through his blood and his resurrection. And so we offer not just practical wisdom, we offer the pathway into God, glorifying manhood itself.

Shea Houdmann

Amen. I love the the conversation just to try to focus on remembering men and women are different. God has a unique design for each of us. Some when God said it's not good for man to be alone, I would create a helper suitable, complementary. Men and women are complementary to each other. And how that exactly precisely plays out can be different in one marriage to another. But God has a unique design for men and a unique design for women, that's to be celebrated, not attacked or the lines are not to be blurred. And saying that's not that all men are one way, and all women are another way. There's a lot of work. We talked earlier about being mechanical. One of the Got Questions employees a a woman who's a great friend of mine, is far more mechanical than I am, so this is not about those type of roles. It it's

about celebrating manhood and celebrating womanhood. And I really appreciate that focus in your book.

Shea Houdmann

So again, his has been the Got Questions podcast with Owen Strachan, the author of *The War on Men, Why Society Hates Them and Why We Need Them*. We'll include links to where the book can be purchased in the show notes for this episode at podcast.gotquestions.org. Also in the description on YouTube. So Owen thank you once again, for for joining me, I really appreciate this book. I like your, I appreciate your heart. What you're sharing and how much you strive to present the biblical ideal, not anything thing that's cultural or not, trying to make all men one certain way. But at the same time focusing on here's what the Bible says men are to be like and ultimately pointing to Jesus Christ is that the perfect example of that. So thank you again for the book and for joining me today.

Owen Strachan

Man, it was great to be here and to get these things out. You're dead, right, equality doesn't mean sameness. It doesn't mean that men and women are exactly the same in all respects. We shouldn't be scared of the differences. We're each made in God's image, men and women alike. But God has made us a man for his glory, or a woman for his glory. So we're trying to restore the dignity and even nobility of manhood in this particular conversation. And I'm really thankful that that's your heart as well, thank you.

Shea Houdmann

Got questions? The Bible has answers and we'll help you find them.