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Becoming Christlike Men

Week 2 | Looking Back with Honesty

Teaching Notes | The Manhood Journey

Foundational Passage: Genesis 50:15–21

Big Idea

Christlike Men look back with honesty, trust God's providence, deal with unfinished business, and move forward in grace.

Joseph does not deny the evil that was done to him. He does not minimize the pain. He does not excuse the sin of his brothers. But he also does not allow their sin to define the rest of his life.

He says, "you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good" (Genesis 50:20, ESV).

That is biblical honesty.

Not denial: "It didn't hurt me."

Not victimhood: "Because it happened to me, I'm not responsible."

Not revenge: "I will make them pay."

Not bitterness: "I will carry this forever."

But faith: "This was evil, and God was still at work."

This session is an invitation to look back with honesty so we can move forward with wisdom, healing, and freedom.

Introduction: Why Men Need to Look Back

Many men live with an unexamined story.

They know what happened to them, but they have never prayerfully considered how it shaped them.

They know where they grew up, but not how that place formed them.

They know who their father was, but not how that relationship affected them.

They know what their mother did, but not how it shaped their relationship with women.

They know what happened in middle school, high school, college, marriage, or work, but they do not know how those experiences shaped their fears, habits, desires, anger, shame, or view of God.

But the past has a way of showing up in the present.

Unprocessed pain shows up in marriage.

Unresolved anger shows up in parenting.

Hidden shame shows up in isolation.

Unhealed wounds show up in addiction.

Unexamined beliefs show up in leadership.

Unfinished business shows up in the way we relate to God and others.

Christlike Men do not live in the past, but they do learn from the past.

We look back with honesty, not so we can blame everyone else, but so we can understand what has shaped us and respond with faith.

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I. The Manhood Journey

In this study, we are going to work through three major movements.

Part 1: Looking Back with Clarity

Men must:

A. Deal with unfinished business in their past.

Every man in this room has a story. Your story has shaped you.

The problem is that many of us do not know our story very well. We live with an unexamined life.

Psalm 139:23-24

“Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!” (ESV)

Many men do not stop long enough to ask:

- What shaped me?
- Who wounded me?
- What did I learn about manhood?
- What did I learn about women?
- What did I learn about God?
- What did I learn about myself?
- What patterns am I still repeating?

Unfinished business may include:

- unreconciled relationships,
- unconfessed sin,
- unresolved anger,
- foolish decisions,
- wrong ideas,
- hidden shame,
- broken promises,
- bitterness,
- trauma,
- things we started and never finished,
- things we buried and never brought into the light.

Men must deal with unfinished business in their past.

B. Heal the wounds that impact their lives today.

We all have wounds from our past.

Some wounds are others-inflicted. People sinned against us. They abandoned, neglected, abused, rejected, ignored, mocked, betrayed, or harmed us.

Some wounds are self-inflicted. We sinned. We made foolish decisions. We hurt others. We chose rebellion. We carry guilt and shame.

Both kinds of wounds matter.

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Colossians 3:13

“as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.” (ESV)

2 Corinthians 5:17

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (ESV)

Real men do not ignore the wounds of their lives. They deal with them.

They bring them into the light.

They seek healing.

They forgive where forgiveness is needed.

They confess where confession is needed.

They repent where repentance is needed.

They seek help where help is needed.

They learn and grow and move forward in a healthy way.

Christlike Men remember the past, but they do not live in the past.

Part 2: Defining Manhood with Conviction

Men must:

A. See masculinity from God’s perspective.

We need to know how masculinity was originally designed.

Our culture is deeply confused about manhood. Some men define manhood through money, strength, sex, success, sports, career, control, toughness, or independence.

But we need more than cultural definitions. We need divine revelation.

We need to hear from God.

In the weeks ahead, we will look at Genesis, the life of Jesus, and other key passages of Scripture to rebuild a biblical definition of manhood.

B. Root their identity in Scripture.

A man needs an identity deeper than performance.

If a man does not root his identity in God’s Word, he will search for identity in all the wrong places:

- career accomplishments,
- money,
- physical strength,
- sexual attention,
- reputation,
- respect,
- family success,
- ministry success,
- the approval of other people.

But those things are good gifts and terrible gods.

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Galatians 2:20

"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." (ESV)

A Christlike Man roots his identity in Christ.

Before I am a husband, father, worker, leader, pastor, athlete, student, provider, or friend, I am a redeemed son of God.

Part 3: Looking Ahead with Confidence

Men must:

A. Develop a Manhood Plan.

Foolish men simply react to life as it comes.

They react to their past.

They react to their emotions.

They react to temptation.

They react to their wife.

They react to their kids.

They react to work.

They react to pressure.

They react to whatever is loudest in the moment.

Christlike Men live with purpose.

They think about who God has called them to become. They think about the kind of legacy they want to leave. They think about their obedience, marriage, parenting, friendships, sexuality, work, mission, and future.

We all know the truth: we usually do not do what we do not plan to do.

B. Find accountability.

Men need other men who know their story, know their plan, and can help them follow through.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

"Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing." (ESV)

Biblical accountability is not shame-based control. It is grace-based encouragement to do what is right.

Who knows your story?

Who knows your struggles?

Who knows your plan?

Who is asking if you are following through?

A Christlike Man does not walk alone.

II. Learning from Joseph: Looking Back with Honesty

Genesis 50 gives us a powerful picture of a man looking back with honesty.

Joseph had been betrayed by his brothers, sold into slavery, falsely accused, forgotten in prison, and separated from his father for years. His story included real evil, real injustice, real trauma, and real pain.

But by Genesis 50, Joseph is not controlled by bitterness.

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When his brothers fear revenge, Joseph responds with honesty, humility, faith, and grace.

1. Joseph names the evil honestly.

“you meant evil against me” (Genesis 50:20, ESV)

Joseph does not pretend what happened was okay.

He does not say, “It wasn’t a big deal.”

He does not say, “You did your best.”

He does not say, “It didn’t hurt me.”

He does not minimize their sin.

Looking back with honesty means telling the truth about what happened.

Some men cannot heal because they will not be honest.

They deny.

They minimize.

They excuse.

They change the subject.

They spiritualize too quickly.

They say, “I’m fine,” when they are not fine.

But healing starts with truth.

2. Joseph trusts God’s providence.

“God meant it for good” (Genesis 50:20, ESV)

Joseph does not say the evil was good. He says God was sovereign over the evil.

That distinction matters.

The evil was evil.

The betrayal was evil.

The injustice was evil.

The pain was real.

But God was not absent.

Christlike Men learn to ask: Where was God in my story?

Not because everything that happened was good, but because God is good. Not because people did not sin, but because human sin does not have the final word over the lives of God’s people.

3. Joseph refuses revenge.

“am I in the place of God?” (Genesis 50:19, ESV)

Joseph understands that judgment belongs to God.

He does not use his power to punish his brothers. He does not make them pay for the years they took from him. He does not build his future around revenge.

This is a major issue for men.

Some men get wounded and spend the rest of their lives trying to make others pay.

They make their wives pay.

They make their children pay.

They make their coworkers pay.

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They make their church pay.

They make themselves pay.

But Joseph refuses to sit in God's seat.

Christlike Men do not deny justice, but they do entrust ultimate judgment to God.

4. Joseph moves toward mercy.

"So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." (Genesis 50:21, ESV)

Joseph does not only refuse revenge. He actively moves toward mercy.

He comforts his brothers. He speaks kindly to them. He provides for them and their children.

That does not mean every situation will include full reconciliation. Some relationships are unsafe.

Some people are unrepentant. Some boundaries are necessary. Some crimes must be reported.

Some wounds require wise pastoral care and professional counseling.

But Joseph shows us the direction of a heart transformed by grace.

He does not allow what happened to him to turn him into a bitter, cruel, vengeful man.

III. Understanding and Sharing Your Story

Now how do you understand and share your story?

The Key Components

1. The People

Who has impacted you? In what ways?

Think about:

- your father,
- your mother,
- grandparents,
- siblings,
- friends,
- teachers,
- coaches,
- pastors,
- mentors,
- romantic relationships,
- authors,
- speakers,
- bosses,
- people who encouraged you,
- people who wounded you.

2. The Places

Where have you lived?

What was that place like?

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How did it shape you?

What did that environment teach you?

What did it reward?

What did it punish?

What did it normalize?

3. The Experiences

What experiences shaped you?

What victories stand out?

What defeats stand out?

What moments changed you?

What do you most often talk about?

What do you never talk about?

What do you most regret?

What still hurts?

What are you grateful for?

The Key Ingredients

1. Your Honesty

Honesty is telling the truth.

We have to face reality, not a distorted version of reality.

Looking honestly at our past can be painful, and some men will avoid it. But we have to tell the truth in order to move forward.

2. Your Transparency

Transparency is telling the whole truth.

A man can be honest and still not be transparent.

He can tell true things while leaving out the most important things. He can talk about the first 90 percent of the story and hide the last 10 percent. Or maybe the last 1 percent.

This plagues men.

We share part of the story. We hide the painful part, the shameful part, the embarrassing part, the sinful part, the part that still feels unresolved.

Satan wants men to live hidden in shame. God calls us to walk in the light.

3. God's Grace

God's grace is crucial to looking back honestly.

Without grace, looking back will crush us. With grace, looking back can heal us.

God's grace helps us forgive others.

God's grace helps us confess our own sin.

God's grace helps us receive forgiveness.

God's grace helps us release shame.

God's grace helps us see that our past has shaped us, but it does not define us.



In Christ, the old has passed away, and the new has come.

IV. The Danger of Unprocessed Pain

What we refuse to process, we often repeat.

What we bury in secrecy, we often carry into marriage, parenting, friendship, sexuality, work, and leadership.

Unprocessed pain does not usually stay in the past. It leaks into the present.

It can show up as:

- anger,
- anxiety,
- emotional numbness,
- withdrawal,
- control,
- addiction,
- sexual brokenness,
- distrust,
- passivity,
- overwork,
- shame,
- explosive reactions,
- difficulty receiving love,
- inability to be vulnerable,
- fear of being exposed.

Many men think they are “over it” because they do not talk about it.

But silence is not the same as healing.

Avoidance is not the same as strength.

Numbness is not the same as peace.

A man may say, “That was years ago,” while his wife, children, friends, coworkers, and church are still living with the consequences of what he has never processed.

Christlike Men bring their pain into the light.

This does not mean every man needs to share every detail with every person. Wisdom matters.

Safety matters. Timing matters. But every man needs someone who knows the truth.

Some men will need more than a small group conversation. Some wounds are deep. Some trauma is complex. Some abuse has done serious damage. In those situations, seeking pastoral care or professional counseling is not weakness. It is wisdom.



V. Discussion Questions

1. What word would you use to describe your story? Why?
2. What person, place, or experience has most shaped your view of manhood?
3. What part of your past have you been most tempted to deny, minimize, or avoid?
4. Where do you see unprocessed pain showing up in your current life?
5. What is one step you need to take toward looking back with honesty?
6. How can the group pray for you this week?

VI. Homework

1. Memorize this Bible verse: Genesis 50:20

“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.” (ESV)

2. Action Item

Begin writing the “Looking Back” section of your Manhood Plan.

Use these categories:

People

Who shaped me?

Places

Where was I formed?

Experiences

What happened to me?

Wounds

What pain have I not fully processed?

Sin

Where have I responded wrongly?

Grace

Where do I see God’s hand in my story?

Next Step

What is one piece of unfinished business I need to deal with?

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