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Manliness — The Forgotten (and Forbidden) Virtue

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“Today the word *manliness* seems quaint and obsolete,” writes [Harvey C. Mansfield](#). “We are in the process of making the English language gender-neutral, and manliness, the quality of one gender, or rather, of one sex, seems to describe the essence of the enemy we are attacking, the evil we are eradicating.”

Mansfield’s recent book, *Manliness*, has attracted considerable attention. The book deserves the attention, not least because Mansfield is a professor at [Harvard University](#) — where writing a book like this will get you into trouble with the campus thought police.

In recent years, [Waller R. Newell](#) of [Carleton University](#) in Canada has addressed many of the same issues in two books, *What is a Man?* and *The Code of Man*. The first book is an edited anthology of readings; the second is Newell’s distillation of wisdom on what it takes to be a man.

In *What is Man?*, Newell argues:

There is a huge vacuum in our moral vocabulary about the whole subject of the manly virtues, a feeling that even to raise such a matter is retrograde or at least a faux pas We feel manly passions and impulses, but we don’t know how to articulate them. This is especially noticeable among young men in their teens and twenties, or even older. They have the same strong passions, the same need for love, that youths their age have always experienced. But, much more so than with previous generations, their passions are somewhat baffled and stifling because they lack the means to express them in a refined yet heartfelt way.

Further, Newell argues that recovery must start with the youngest among us. “We must stop trying to reengineer the human soul to prevent boys from being boyish,” he writes, “while encouraging all forms of self-expression in girls.”

In the end, he argues that true manliness does not need to be reinvented. “We only need to will ourselves to wake up from the bad dream of the last few generations and reclaim it,” he argues, “in order to extend and enrich the tradition under the formidable demands of the present.”

Both men make strong and compelling arguments about the necessity of recovering manliness as a virtue. Both argue from essentially secular perspectives, however. The biblical worldview adds the all-important *why* to the fact of a basic difference in the roles of men and women. The sameness is clear — both fully human, both made in God’s image, both born in sin, and both the focus of God’s redeeming work in Christ. The difference is also a display of God’s glory.

What we need now is a recovery and display of true Christian manliness in this generation.

RESOURCE: We discussed this on Friday’s edition of [The Albert Mohler Program](#). Listen [here](#).

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