Bob: Author, Stephen Mansfield, believes most men want to live noble, meaningful, purposeful lives. They’re just not sure how to do it.

Stephen: Most men grow up, dreaming superhero dreams. Then, they end up in the cubicle with a mortgage and the kids. Now, how do you live out noble values? Now, how are you a superhero? We either have the extreme thing—someone is going to jump off a cliff to save somebody—in a movie; or we’ve got the boring thing which gets most men in trouble. So, how do you live in that excluded middle? I think that’s the key for today.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Wednesday, January 29th. Our host is the President of FamilyLife®, Dennis Rainey, and I’m Bob Lepine. What is at the heart of godly masculinity? We’re going to explore that subject today. Stay tuned.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us on the Wednesday edition. I got up this morning; and I thought, “What will Dennis wear?” I thought: “I don’t have any camo. I don’t have camo to come to the studio.” I figured you’d be—

Dennis: We’re not talking about hunting.

Bob: No, not hunting. Then, I thought, “Maybe, if I put on a jersey—some kind of a pro football jersey—because, you know—

Dennis: You’ve got a flannel shirt on.

Bob: That was the best I could come up with. It was either this or my Spurs t-shirt. I thought, “No, it’s too cold out for the Spurs t-shirt.” So, I wore a little flannel because I thought: “We’re going to talk about manhood. We’re going to talk about this Saturday and the big Super Saturday event that’s coming up at churches as men are getting together for the Stepping Up™ one-day event.”

Dennis: —all over the country. We’ve got a guest here to help us do that—whose book has a foreword by a true man’s man—

Bob: That’s right.
**Dennis:** —General William Boykin. No doubt about it. Stephen Mansfield joins us on *FamilyLife Today*. Stephen, welcome to the broadcast.

**Stephen:** It’s great to be with you. Thank you.

**Dennis:** Stephen is a speaker. He’s a commentator. He’s written a couple of other books—some New York Times® best sellers—some contrasts here, I would say—*Lincoln’s Battle with God—The Search for God and Guinness*—and *The Faith of Barack Obama*. And this most recent book called *The Book of Manly Men*.

**Bob:** Mansfield’s *Book of Manly Men*.

**Dennis:** Excuse me.

**Bob:** We’ve got as much man in that as we could.

**Stephen:** Okay; first, you put your coffee cup on my book; and then, you misquote the title. [Laughter] Man!

**Dennis:** Well, I’m excited about what you’ve written here because we are bullish on men. This Super Saturday—hundreds of groups, across the country, are going to be meeting together on Super Saturday to encourage men—young men, and some boys—13-14-year-olds, who are still in that boyhood phase—

**Bob:** Right.

**Dennis:** —to call them out, and call them up, and call them to step up. That’s really what this book is about, really.

**Stephen:** Absolutely. Yes, you know, I spent a lot of time with young guys on college campuses. They are a little different than us older guys. They’re not as therapeutic. They’re not as, “Heal the wounds.” They just scream at me: “Tell me what to do! You’re telling me to be a man. Just tell me what to do!” So, this is the book to answer that.

**Dennis:** Well, to that point, let’s say your son—your son is, now, how old?

**Stephen:** My son’s 27.

**Dennis:** Twenty-seven years old. Let’s back up a few years. Let’s say he came to you when he was in college; and he said: “Dad, what does it mean to be a man? What’s the essence of manhood today?”

**Stephen:** I would say to him that being a man is something God-given. It’s not just your body. It’s a set of duties, responsibilities, and behaviors that you learn. As you execute
them—as you do them, walk through them, observe them, are dutiful to them—God meets you and empowers you. It’s one of the ways that God knows a man.

**Bob:** You talk, in the book, about what you call the night you became a man.

**Stephen:** It’s a crazy story. I’ll tell it very, very quickly. I was in the Middle East for some work. My visas got messed up. I ended up stuck in Damascus. I’ve done a lot of work in the Middle East. Believe it or not—sounds strange, in retrospect, now, given what’s going on in Syria—but one of my friends was a member of the Syrian Parliament. He found out that I was stuck. He threw a party in my honor. So, I’m sitting on the roof with a bunch of guys—who’ve got the traditional dress on. Some of them have got body guards, carrying Uzis. There’s food. It’s a beautiful Damascus night.

But we can’t communicate very well. It’s a little bit stilted. I don’t speak Arabic. They don’t speak good English. Finally, one of the older men said [Using an accent], “Do you have a son?” I said, “Yes, I have a son.” He said, “What is his name?” I said, “Jonathan.” He said, “Well, then, you have a new name.” He said, “It’s Abu John.” Well, through a bunch of interpretation, and restatements, and everything, I found out that, in the Arab culture, that, when a man has a son, it’s such an honorable thing that they really give him an honorific name. They take *Abu*, which means “father” in Arabic, and a shortened version of the son’s name.

So, the father is addressed by the son’s name and “father” for the rest of his life. So, *Abu John* became my name. Well, now, what happened, at that moment, is that they all thought, “This is it.” They stood up. They ordered more food. They started to dance. They cranked the music up. They decided, if they couldn’t speak to me, they were going to celebrate the fact that—Arab style—I had just become a father. In their minds, even though my son was 13 and back in the States, I was a father.

The next morning, I got up; and something was different. Now, at that time, I was, maybe, in my forties. I can’t remember my exact age. I had a son, a daughter. I had been a father for more than a decade. I had been a pastor. I’d graduated college—so many things. *Never* had anyone welcomed me to any version of manhood. *Never* had anyone said, “You’re now a man among us.” *Never* had anyone said, “Welcome to fatherhood.”

They welcomed me to fatherhood, and it just changed me. I came back to the States, and just—aware of two things. First of all, the change that happened in me is they gave me what little, broken, English honor statements they could give me and celebrate it. But then, also, I looked around at all the men I knew; and I thought, “They’ve not been welcomed—initiated either.” None of them have ever had sort of marking experiences as they make the progression in the journey of manhood.

**Dennis:**—and had older men, who have blessed them, and said, “You’re an honorable man”—
Stephen: Absolutely.

Dennis: —in a culture that seems to be dishonoring men.

Stephen: That’s right.

Dennis: Why do you think the culture has taken on men as it has?

Stephen: Two reasons: One, I think men have, certainly, set them up for this. You sit there—around the pole in the strip joint—and that’s your big culture. You talk about it all the time. Well, people, listening to you, go, “Well, that’s what your version of manhood is.” I think it is reflected on television. Then, of course, there’s just the wanting to stop on the grave of traditional manhood. In a sense, that’s what our culture is somewhat about.

Part of it is spite for manhood. Part of it is that no one in society seems to know what genuine, righteous manhood ought to be. We either have an extreme kind of Braveheart thing or we have the kind of bad manhood that’s out there today. But very few—and I certainly would include you gentlemen—who are actually saying, “Let me sound a trumpet call here for what righteous manhood ought to be.”

Bob: See, I remember growing up—and the movies would portray one thing. They’d portray Sylvester Stallone or Schwarzenegger—and it’s the action hero. So, you think, “Okay, I guess I’m supposed to be that.” Then, you’d see the really sensitive, kind of almost passive guy—and the women really like him. I just remember confusion about: “What is it I’m supposed to be, as a man?” If you take your cues from popular culture, you’ll wind up in the ditch pretty quickly.

Stephen: Exactly. And most men grow up dreaming superhero dreams. Then, they end up in the cubicle with a mortgage and the kids. Now, how do you live out noble values? Now, how are you a superhero? So, we either have the extreme thing—someone’s got to jump off a cliff to save somebody—in a movie, or we’ve got the boring thing—which gets most men in trouble. So, how do you live in that excluded middle? I think that’s the key for today.

Dennis: Well, I’m not going to blow this. You have four Mansfield’s Manly Maxims in your book for manly men. Go through those four because I think these kind of provide some rails that we’re talking about for men to kind of ride on toward the horizon and to realize what real manhood is all about.

Stephen: Well, I tell a lot of stories in the book; but I wanted to get these four just absolutely pierced into our brains. The first one is: “Manly men do manly things.” I do not want to make manhood all a matter of just duties, and obligations, and boring things; but I think we need to get the focus back on what manhood really is. It is the acceptance
of a set of behaviors—things that you do first—and I think many—oftentimes, a man is called to do before he really feels anything or before it seems right—the reverse of what society teaches us. So, I go around emphasizing that manhood is *doing* certain things.

**Bob:** So, does that mean men hunt—men fish? I mean, I’m just—let me tell you a story. My son came to me one time. He said, “When I was in junior high, I was on the youth retreat.” And he said, “The pastor said: ‘Now, men, boys and girls are different. Guys like sports, and girls like to read books.’”

**Stephen:** Oh, boy.

**Bob:** And my son thought: “I like to read books. In fact, I like to read books more than I like sports. Does that mean I’m feminine?” So, this—“Men do manly things,”—what are the manly things you are talking about?

**Stephen:** Yes; I’m not talking about hunting and fishing—all those things that come naturally to us. I’m talking about taking responsibility. I’m talking about tending people. I’m talking about observing the things a man is meant to observe.

I’ll give you a quick example—when I was, maybe, four or five years old, my father, who was a military officer, for the first time, turned to me and said, “Son, get the car door for your mother.” Now, my mother was more capable of taking care of that car door than I was. She was bigger than I was, of course, at five years old. So, I did it. In time, I began to understand: “This is what a man does. A man—the men—the two men in the family, my father and myself—we care for the women. We tend them. We don’t treat them as less. We get the car door. We take responsibilities. We answer the door. We don’t let strangers come to the house and just engage the women.”

We’re supposed to be—it was really a powerful lesson. The most powerful disciplining I ever got was when I mistreated my sister because “a man takes care of the women in his life.” There’s just one, for example. And you could go on and on; but it’s a matter of *duty* rather than feeling or, primarily, therapy. You understand how I mean that—we all want to see our souls restored—but sometimes, the duties come first.

**Bob:** In the *Stepping Up* video series for guys, Mark Driscoll tells the story about his young son. A neighbor boy came into the room and said, “Your son hit me,” and he was crying. The parents were there. They looked at Mark like: “What’s going to go on? What did your son do?”

So, Mark went back in; and he talked to his son. He said, “What happened?” He said, “Well, that boy was going to hurt my sister. I told him, ‘If you hurt my sister, I will punch you.’ And so, he hurt my sister. So, I punched him.”

**Dennis:** Yes.
**Bob:** So, Mark walks back into the room and explains to the parents what happened. The parents said, “Well, what are you going to do?” He said, “Well, I’m going to buy my son ice cream.” He said: “That’s what I want my son to do. I want him to take care of his little sister and to be a protector.” When you talk about manly men do manly things, that’s the kind of stuff you are talking about.

**Stephen:** Exactly. And it’s communicated in very practical ways. I remember, again, my father who was not—certainly had his flaws, as a father—but I remember we walked in the house once. There was a light bulb out. And my experience was that Mom took care of the house. You know how that is—especially, with a military officer father.

My father looked at me and said, “Which one of us is going to replace that light bulb?” And the idea was: “Whatever is going on in this house, we’re responsible. I’m responsible, as the father/the husband; and I’ve enlisted you.” So, those lessons of duty, of protection, of making sure things are enhanced / grown in the best shape they can be in—that the kids are tended. It’s not just a matter of providing a bedroom. It’s making sure their soul—that you are responsible and that you have those duties that honor those that you are responsible for and what have you. It’s a whole set of things—more than we could talk about at any one moment—but the main thing is to get men focused on the fact that it’s the doing that is their primary obligation, as men.

**Dennis:** And that really leads us to your second maxim because, if you’re going to be responsible, you have to be responsible for something—a piece of turf.

**Stephen:** Yes.

**Dennis:** You call it a field.

**Stephen:** Manly men tend their field. I take it really from where Paul said to the Corinthians, “I’m not going to boast beyond the field assigned to me.” And that field, in Greek, means an actual measured space. He was saying, “I’m not going to boast beyond what God’s given me to do, at this point.”

Well, all men have a field. I don’t mean, personally, own a green grass field; but all men have a field. What is it? It’s my house. It’s my wife. It’s the businesses. It’s the stuff in the house. It’s insurance—life insurance. It’s everything that God has assigned me for this season of my life.

**Dennis:** It’s your responsibility—

**Stephen:** Right.

**Dennis:** —to tend that field.

**Stephen:** Exactly. I am responsible. I can’t yield that over to anybody else.
Dennis: And you learned this by being a defensive end? Is that right? Playing football—

Stephen: Yes.

Dennis: —in high school? Or was that college?

Stephen: I wish it had been college, but it never got that—it was high school. I was tall, and fast, and strong for my age; but I was not very smart. I had a former pro coach. He was very frustrated with me because I could do some things very well, and I just couldn’t keep guys coming around my end.

Finally, he said two things. One was—he grabbed me by the face mask once—drug me out to the side of the line. He said: “Look, this is your field. Nothing comes through here. Nobody does anything through here without your permission. Own it. Control it. Repel all enemies.” Okay—put it in *Star Trek* language. I understand it. But then, I still blew it in a game.

So, he had me meet him at that practice field—on a Monday morning in October, in Iowa, freezing. He handed me a pair of scissors: “This is your field. Tend it.” So, I had to spend an hour, in the morning, in the cold, snipping the grass of that part of the practice field that I was always required to defend. When practice came, I began to be more protective of that part of the field. I became a better player. That’s really what we’re asking men to do: Define your field—define, as God defines it, as best you can figure that out—and tend it well.

Dennis: And sometimes, it takes an older man, stepping into our lives, and kind of giving us a pair of scissors, and saying, “Young man, this is what you are responsible for:”—

Stephen: Yes.

Dennis: —“You’ve got a wife. You’ve got some kids that’ve not been given to anybody else. You’ve got a home. You’ve got to protect it. You’ve got to provide for it. You have to figure out where it’s going and what the vision for it is.” Here is the thing—I think men, in their chests, long for that kind of instruction from older men.

Stephen: They absolutely do. I think every man wants somebody to come along and say: “Look, let me help you think this through. Let me show you how I see it and how it’s worked for me.”

Bob: In fact, that’s maxim number three; isn’t it?

Stephen: It is. It is. Manly men make manly men. I’m 100 percent convinced of that. I’m thankful for seminars, videos, books—all of it. Obviously, I’m invested in all of that; but
I'm telling you that what, actually, we need to do for this principle number three—and, I think, in the country, as a whole—is build a culture of manhood—

**Bob:** Right.

**Stephen:** —wherever we can—on the job, five guys fishing, in the church, wherever it might be. Build a culture of manhood. A culture of manhood can simply be one guy who’s devoted to being manly. It just becomes a magnetic force for other men.

**Bob:** You saw how manly men build manly men—

**Stephen:** Yes.

**Bob:** —when you lived out in West Texas; didn’t you?

**Stephen:** I sure did. I’ll tell you what—West Texas was a bit of a stretch for me because I was raised in Europe, as the son of an Army officer. When I got to West Texas, these guys would talk about what a man would do. It was really—I mean—you’ve heard that kind of thing [Using Texan accent]: “Well, I don’t believe a man would do that,” and, “I don’t know why a man would…? What kind of man would do that?”—that kind of thing, all the time.

Well, I wasn’t fully-baked, as a man, even though I was on the other side of college. It helped me. You know, “A real man would never talk to his wife that way.” You know—a guy would get up and leave breakfast. People would be ticked at him. They’d go, “Well, if he was a real man….” or, “If he was any kind of man, at all…,” you know, that kind of thing. I loved it! I loved it because, without even knowing it, they were mentoring me in what a man did.

**Dennis:** And I think that that is the assignment a lot of men miss. Even at a younger age, he has an assignment to mentor younger men and help them determine what their field is—determine what manhood looks like—and to call them to step up. But a lot of guys don’t realize that that mantle of being a mentor is a God-given responsibility we have the older we get.

**Stephen:** Yes. And I’ll tell you, “It is part of that field that you are called to tend.” Any young, impressionable man, within your reach, is part of your responsibility—not full-time—but, at least, for that moment.

If the three of us started, right now, telling stories about the time that one comment from one guy, we never met again, made a decisive difference in our lives—it would be astonishing; wouldn’t it?

**Bob:** Yes.
Stephen: I mean—just walking by a guy—even a conversation I wasn’t part of. Somebody would say something; and I’d go: “Wow! That must be what that’s about.” And when that happens, man, it’s transformative.

Bob: You remember a guy who came and knocked on your door and said, “C’mon, you’re going with me.” He took you out to—was it visit the elderly? Is that what it was?

Stephen: Well, I was living in Iowa. I was attending a church—not fully-Christian yet, by any stretch. It was a heavy, heavy snow. And this man, I think, just knew I was bigger than the average guy my age. So, he showed up at the front door. He said, “Let’s go.” That’s all he said: “Let’s go.”

So, I got dressed and went with him. What had happened was we had a lot of elderly in that church. They were all snowed-in and afraid—didn’t have food. Without him hardly saying a word to me, we picked up food—took it. We shoveled snow. We shoveled coal. We did—we stoked firewood—whatever we had to do—worked for 18 hours. He hardly ever spoke to me. When it was done, though—what that I have in my soul: Manly men tend the older ones—tend the generation before us—that kind of thing. And I’ll tell you what: It wordlessly—and that’s why we don’t—I mean, I’m all for—obviously, I’m a talker, and I’m speaker, and do media. I believe in words, but I also believe in the powerful, powerful lesson of example that can only happen when you’re in community together.

Dennis: And you also believe in what Genesis, Chapter 1, talks about how man was made in the image of God. That’s your fourth maxim.

Stephen: Yes, my fourth maxim is: “Manly men live to the glory of God.” And the reason is—I don’t think, first of all, that we are ever going to have enough applause or approval in this life for the things we’re called to do. A lot of men are sitting around, waiting for somebody to applaud every time they do something. I’m living for the applause of heaven.

Second of all, I need the supernatural grace and empowerment to tend my wife/my children, to have the wisdom for the business affairs, take care of my family. I need God’s involvement.

And I think the third thing is that, when men do what they’re made to do, God gets involved. That’s how they meet God. That’s how they kind of know Him. I mean, there are other ways in prayer and worship and so on; but when you do what you are made to do, that’s where the Lord intersects with your life. So, live to the glory of God.

Dennis: And a lot of men miss it because they think—football, or some sport, or achievement in a career, or accumulation, or possessions—that somehow that’s the defining part of being a man.
Bob: Well, you remember Voddie Baucham in the Stepping Up video series. He says: “Men tend to define manhood around the three B’s. It’s the boardroom, the bedroom, and the ball field.” I think he’s kind of narrowed it down. I’d add the billfold in that because I think some guys—“How fats your billfold?”—

Stephen: Yes.

Bob: —the billfold is: “How manly are you?” But we really do have to recalibrate.

Dennis: A man who doesn’t evaluate his life, really, under the authority of God—the fear of God, the love of God, the grace of God—because it takes all of them—

Stephen: Yes.

Dennis: —is really missing life as God intended it for him, as a man.

Stephen: That’s right. He’s missing the fact that God wants to partner with him as he takes these responsibilities—tends his field—does the things he’s called to do. At the same time, he’s setting himself up because the cancer for most men is boredom. So, when we define manhood as you just have, in terms of those B’s, well, that’s all exceptional stuff.

Well, you’re not going to live your whole life on a baseball diamond. You’re not going to live your whole life on the big hunting trip or whatever. Those are exceptions. But day to day, guys are living in offices. They’ve got to take care of the boring stuff at home; but I think that stuff gets transformed when it becomes the field assigned to you and when you realize God wants to meet you there.

Dennis: We can sum up what we’ve talked about here by looking at a passage where Paul kind of summed it up, too, in First Corinthians, Chapter 16, verse 13 and 14. He said: “Be watchful. Stand firm in the faith. Act like men. Be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.” I love that passage because there is [Pounding noise] the chest thump—

Stephen: Yes.

Dennis: —of “Act like a man”; but there’s also the responsibility—and there’s also the tender side / the relational instruction—“Let all that you do be done in love.” It never takes advantage of people—it’s always realizing that part of the field we have are the human beings and the people that we’ve been given the responsibility to care for.

Bob: And the truth is—whether we are 14, or 40, whatever age—we’re all in process—learning, growing, developing, understanding more and more what God is calling us to, as men. And Stephen, in the book that you’ve written, you help guys get their arms around the core character issues that define noble, godly masculinity.
We’ve got copies of Mansfield’s Book of Manly Men in our FamilyLife Today Resource Center. You can go, online, at FamilyLifeToday.com for more information about how to get a copy of the book. Again, go to FamilyLifeToday.com; or you can call 1-800-FL-TODAY to order a copy of the book. We’ll make arrangements to get it sent out to you.

If you go to the website, FamilyLifeToday.com, there’s more information there about Super Saturday—this Saturday—thousands of guys getting together, all across the country, in different locations, for a one-day Super Saturday Stepping Up event. Guys rallying to talk about what we’ve been talking about here—“What defines biblical, godly masculinity?” If you’d like to find out where there’s an event happening in your community, go to FamilyLifeToday.com.

If you would like to take part in this event—at home with your sons or with just a group of guys in your living room—we have the Stepping Up @ Home edition. Again, go to FamilyLifeToday.com for more information about how you can take part in the Stepping Up Super Saturday event, either in your community or in your living room. Again, go to FamilyLifeToday.com for more information. Just click on the link you see there for Stepping Up.

Now, I want to take just a minute and make sure I say, “Thank you,” Dennis, to the folks who make FamilyLife Today possible—folks who are praying and cheering us on—and those of you who help support this ministry. FamilyLife Today is listener-supported. In fact, more than 60 percent of the funding that we need to operate this ministry comes from folks, like you, who make donations—either on a regular basis or from time to time—just to say that you are standing with us and that you believe in what we’re doing. We’re grateful for that financial support.

This month, if you can help with a donation, we’d like to send you, as a thank-you gift, a copy of Dennis and Barbara Rainey’s book, Rekindling the Romance, designed to help husbands and wives recapture the delight of marital love. All you have to do is go to FamilyLifeToday.com. Click the button that says, “I CARE”; make an online donation. We’ll get a copy of that book sent to you. Or call 1-800-FL-TODAY. Make your donation over the phone, and ask for a copy of the book, Rekindling the Romance. When you do, we are happy to send it out to you. Or you can mail a check to us at FamilyLife Today. Our mailing address is P O Box 7111, Little Rock, AR. Our zip code is 72223. And we’re always glad to hear from you. Make sure you ask for a copy of the book, Rekindling the Romance, when you mail your donation to us.

And we hope you can join us back again tomorrow. Stephen Mansfield’s going to be here. We’re going to continue talking about godly manhood. What does real masculinity look like? I hope you can tune in for that.

I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, and our entire broadcast production team. On behalf of our host, Dennis Rainey, I'm Bob Lepine. We will see you back tomorrow for another edition of FamilyLife Today.
FamilyLife Today is a production of FamilyLife of Little Rock, Arkansas. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.

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