# “Man Cave Lessons”

## *Genesis 19:30; 1st Kings 19:10-13; Psalm 57:1-3, 9-11*

##  *(New Living Translation)*

 ***You’ve probably heard the jokes about what women say versus what they really mean. For example, “Go ahead” does not mean she is giving you permission. It’s a dare, so don’t do it. Or if she says “It’s nothing” then that means it’s* something *and you need to be worried.***

 ***Well, ladies, men do the same thing. We say one thing but really mean another. For example:***

* ***If a man says* “It would take too long to explain,” *what he really means is “I have no idea how this thing works.”***
* ***If he says* “That’s interesting, dear,” *he really means “Are you still talking?”***
* ***If he says* “You know how bad my memory is” *what he really means is “I can remember the theme song to “Hogan’s Heroes,” the phone number of the first girl I ever kissed, and the vehicle identification numbers of every car I’ve ever owned, but I forgot your birthday.”***
* ***If he says* “We’re not lost. I know exactly where we are,” *what he really means is “No one will ever see us alive again.”***
* ***If he says* “Yes, dear” *or* “Sure, honey,” *what he really means is absolutely nothing. It’s just a conditioned response.***
* ***And finally, if he says* “I’m going in the other room,” *what he really means is “My man cave is nice and quiet and the game is on.”***

***In my last appointment, our parsonage had a partially completed basement. It didn’t take me long to transform it into my “man cave.” The walls were lined with movies, books and posters. There were couches and chairs, and of course a large television for watching movies and NFL games.***

***A man cave is a place where guys can go and be alone, or be with other guys who share similar interests. The man cave may be in the basement, attic or another room in the house. It might be in the work shed outside or in the garage. We decorate them with college team paraphernalia, hunting trophies, family mementos, and just about anything else that strikes our fancy.***

 ***Man caves also have rules. You can buy signs and posters that list some of the different rules, such as “The remote is always mine,” “No chick flicks ever,” “If it itches, it will be scratched,” and “Discussions about exercise or nutrition are forbidden.”***

 But man caves aren’t really anything new. Some dudes in the Bible had man caves before they were cool. And we’re going to look at a couple of them to see what they teach us about being men and followers of Jesus.

 Our first Scripture reading is Genesis 19:30 so let’s go ahead and turn to that. It’s part of the story of Lot. Good ole Lot and his family had escaped the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, but his wife disobeyed God’s command and looked back. She turned into a pillar of salt—a symbol of the ruined condition of the two cities and the earth they stood upon.

 God told Lot to go to the mountains but the old fellow was reluctant to do that, so God allowed him and his daughters to stay in a small village nearby. Then in Genesis 19:30 we read *30Afterward Lot left Zoar because he was afraid of the people there, and he went to live in a cave in the mountains with his two daughters.*

 Lot had a man cave, and **the first lesson we learn from the man cave is that our families are important to us and to the Lord.** Lot had already lost his wife and all he had left were his two daughters. Naturally, he wanted to protect them. He thought he could keep them safe in the village of Zoar, but it turned out the people there didn’t make very good neighbors. We don’t know what the problems were. The Scripture says simply that Lot…*was afraid of the people there.* Perhaps they were becoming as rude, crude and socially unacceptable as the people of Sodom and Gomorrah had been? Maybe Lot was scared for the safety of daughters, or that they—like their mother—might disobey God and suffer the consequences? Whatever his reasons, Lot and the girls ended up in a cave.

 Most of our man caves have some pictures of our family, children and pets. We may have examples of our children’s artwork on display. We love our families and do everything in our power to ensure they are cared for and provided for. We take out life insurance policies. We worry and stress over the health and well-being of our families, even if our children are grown and gone. Every man of God and follower of Jesus Christ seeks the best for his family.

***When our family moved here, we wanted to be in a place where Matthew could get established and finish high school. We didn’t want to move when he was a junior and have him start a new school for his senior year. United Methodist pastors get moved all over the place. I’m grateful that my wife is a nurse because she has never had trouble finding a job, no matter where we have been appointed. Other pastoral spouses aren’t so lucky. They have to work with districts and the conference in order to find an appointment that works for the pastor, spouse, children and church.***

 Men, as followers of Jesus Christ we bring honor to God by how we treat our families. Our witness as Christians is clearly revealed by how we honor, respect and provide for our families. The family is a critical building block of society, and strong families make for strong communities.

 Now let’s turn to our next Scripture reading, 1st Kings 19:10-13. This is the story of Elijah after the defeat of the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel. You’ll remember that Elijah was depressed and suicidal after receiving a death threat from Queen Jezebel. So he tried to put as much distance between him and her as possible, and ran off into the desert. God asked him what he was doing.

*10Elijah replied, “I have zealously served the Lord God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too.”*

*11“Go out and stand before me on the mountain,” the Lord told him. And as Elijah stood there, the Lord passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. 12And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper. 13When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.*

 Elijah had a man cave, **and the second lesson we learn from the man cave is that we must continue to listen to, and obey, the voice of God.**

 Elijah was in a sorry state. He was beaten up and beaten down. He was ready to throw in the towel and wash his hands of everything. And he ended up in a cave on the side of a mountain. It was there that God revealed himself to Elijah. He understood how wounded and weary Elijah was, so he instructed him to go back and anoint a young man named Elisha, who would be his right-hand man and eventual replacement.

 Elijah had plenty of opportunities to walk away from God. He could’ve stopped listening and stopped obeying at any point. But he didn’t. And we learn from Elijah’s man cave that no matter where we are—no matter what we’re doing—no matter what’s involved—we’re to listen to the Spirit’s voice. We’re to act upon what we hear.

 It’s rarely easy to be obedient to God’s voice. Like anything else, the more we do it, the easier it becomes. Faith breeds more faith. But listening for God to speak—and responding appropriately when he does—takes a lot of courage. No matter where we are in life—no matter how old we are or what obstacles stand in our way—we never outgrow the need to listen and obey. If we want younger generations to love and serve the Lord the way we do, then we must model that behavior for them. Men, those around us must see us listening to and obeying God’s voice in all things.

 Now turn with me to Psalm 57. This song was written by David. In fact, you’ll notice at the top of the psalm it says “For the choir director: A psalm of David, regarding the time he fled from Saul and went into the cave.”

 Even though David had been anointed as the next king of Israel, King Saul was still on the throne. And Saul was a bipolar dude if ever there was one! One moment he would be praising David, blessing him and treating him like a son; the next moment he’d be chucking spears at the kid! The more David’s popularity grew the more paranoid and angry Saul became. And on several occasions Saul sent his army after David, driving the confused young man into the desert wilderness.

During one of those times David wrote Psalm 57: *1Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy! I look to you for protection. I will hide beneath the shadow of your wings until the danger passes by. 2I cry out to God Most High, to God who will fulfill his purpose for me. 3He will send help from heaven to rescue me, disgracing those who hound me. …*

*9I will thank you, Lord, among all the people. I will sing your praises among the nations. 10For your unfailing love is as high as the heavens. Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds. 11Be exalted, O God, above the highest heavens. May your glory shine over all the earth.*

 David had a man cave, and **the final lesson we learn from the man cave is that we must never give up on prayer and worship.**

 Like Elijah before him, David had plenty of opportunities to cash in his chips and look for another line of work. The promise of becoming king took a long time to fully materialize, and in the meantime David flip-flopped from favored son to fugitive. I wouldn’t be surprised to know that David probably got a bit ticked off with God during all that running and hiding.

 ***“Seriously, God? You anoint me king but don’t give me the throne. You say I’m going to follow Saul, but all I see is Saul following me! What good is being declared king if all I get to do is stay in caves and play hide-and-seek in the desert?”***

 But David didn’t give up. Yes, he got riled at God from time to time (just read some of his other psalms). But David *always* returned to God in prayer and worship. Even after his greatest moral failures—having Uriah killed and sleeping with his wife, Bathsheba—David fell on his face before the Lord and asked forgiveness. Even when he was so close to Saul that he could’ve killed him with one stroke, David knew it was wrong and sought strength from God.

 David is a great example to us as men. He was thoroughly human and thoroughly in love with God. He screwed up, failed and suffered. He did some incredibly stupid things. He missed chances to raise his children better. But he never forgot to return to God.

 Men of God, we cannot walk away from prayer and worship. Sometimes we can take a sabbatical if the Lord leads us that way. And sometimes our prayers and worship feel dull and fall flat. David experienced that as well. But we persevere. We keep pursuing God with all that we have and all that we are. Sometimes—like David—we’ll get it right. Sometimes—like David—we’ll get it wrong. But we see in the young-shepherd-who-would-become-king the example we are to follow.

 It’s never too late to apply the lessons from the man caves. If, for whatever reason, we have neglected our families, we can begin to rectify that. We can make amends or spend more time with our families. And families: if these men do their best—if they do right by you—tell them so. Honor them by telling them how much their faith, leadership, protection and love means to you.

 It’s never too late to listen to and obey the voice of God. Even if we’ve walked away from God for some reason, he is always ready to receive us back. If we’ve become numb or apathetic to his voice, he can change that. If you know you have not listened like you should—or if you’ve not obeyed—you can start afresh today.

 It’s never too late to renew our prayer and worship. We might not have really prayed in a long time. Maybe we’ve gotten too wrapped up in other things, have set prayer aside for too long, or have been in worship without really participating in worship? Whatever the reason, we can begin again right now. We can give prayer and worship the place of priority they need in our lives.

 Men, on this Father’s Day, which man cave lesson speaks the strongest to you? Which one will you apply as you leave here today?

 Let us pray:

 *God, you took the strength of a mountain, the majesty of a tree, the warmth of a summer sun, the calm of a quiet sea, the generous soul of nature, the comforting arm of night, the wisdom of the ages, the faith of a mustard seed—and then you combined these qualities**. When there was nothing more to add, you knew your masterpiece was complete, and so you called it…Dad.*

 *Thank you for the dads in our lives—those who have given and provided and are now gone; those who still work and make provision; those who await the prospect of fatherhood; those for whom family is no more; those who have taught and coached and led—thank you for each and every one. As we prepare to depart this place, let us take the best qualities of our own fathers, and the divine qualities of our heavenly Father, and put them on display for all to see. For there are some for whom the term ‘father’ is laced with pain, rejection, abuse or neglect. Let us show them a different kind of father—a true father, a loving and generous father, an accepting father. As we have received, so let us pass on to others this week. Amen.*