

# Why Are Men in Crisis?

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John Stonestreet/Kasey Leander

“Man Park,” cooed the *Saturday Night Live* narrator, “it’s like a dog park, but for guys ... so they can make friends and have an outlet besides their girlfriends and wives.” The sketch, from about a year ago, points to an unfortunate reality. Men are in crisis, struggling with a loss of purpose, of relationship, and of usefulness.

A January 2021 report from the Institute for Family Studies noted that “Girls are outperforming boys at every level, from elementary school through graduate school.” However, this isn’t primarily because girls are succeeding. It’s because, as Andrew Yang with *The Washington Post* wrote, “Boys and men across all regions and ethnic groups have been failing, both absolutely and relatively, for years.”

Since the 1990s, fatherlessness has soared while median earnings for men have declined. Boys represent 70% of all D’s and F’s given out at school and are twice as likely to be diagnosed with ADHD. They spend time in juvenile detention at over five times the rate of girls. There will be, on average, two women who graduate college for every male, over the next five years.

As NYU marketing professor Scott Galloway mentioned recently on Bill Maher’s show *Real Time*, “The most unstable nations in the world have one thing in common. They have too many lonely, broke [men].” And yet that’s exactly the type of person modern culture is producing.

This corresponds with a dramatic crisis in terms of sociability. As Andrew Yang noted, “Roughly one-third of men are either unemployed or out of the workforce,” and correspondingly, “more U.S. men ages 18 to 34 are now living with their parents than with romantic partners.” Galloway noted an even more surprising statistic: Fewer than 1 in 3 men under the age of 30 have had sex in the last year.

Shocking though it is, that last statistic isn’t primarily about sex. Rather, it points to a deeper problem. Young men aren’t forming social bonds with real, live people, even the kinds of bonds that have historically captured their attention.

The question is, *why?*

Maher nods at digital technology, arguing that it keeps men away from the skills they need to form real relationships. Galloway agrees: Tinder in particular has been a “disaster,” reinforcing the lie that video game addiction and pornography already sell. Happiness, these platforms imply, does not require effort or sacrifice. Just a screen.

Andrew Yang put it this way: “Here’s the simple truth I’ve heard from many men. We need to be needed. We imagine ourselves as builders, soldiers, workers, brothers—part of something bigger than ourselves. We deal with idleness terribly.”

One idea that needs to be unraveled is that the success of young men is a zero-sum game and that helping young men succeed comes at the expense of women’s rights, or that somehow, the success of girls causes boys to fail. Nothing could be further from the truth. Boys raised into confident, selfless masculinity don’t just make the best future husbands and fathers: They help check other men with negative character from becoming disproportionately fatherless young men who lapse into aggression or delinquency.

Another mistake would be to blame women, either for failing to make themselves sexually available or for failing to make insecure men “feel needed.” To this, the data is overwhelmingly clear. First, willing sexual partners for men are not in short supply. Second, the success of young men doesn’t start out in broader society, but in the home. The absence of a girlfriend is not the issue. It’s the lack of the presence of a father.

Christians have an answer for a world that obliterates the helpful aspects of sexual difference, pacifies men with distractions and addictions, and promises limitless sexual freedom while dismantling the family. Half of it is God’s original, good design for men and women, one which neither ignores nor abuses sex differences, but calls each to who they were created to be. The other half is what Christ accomplishes, redeeming what’s been broken by our sin. Not only does His redemptive work include masculinity, but His life exemplifies what it means to dignify women, curb the worst excesses of masculinity, and live and die for something bigger than ourselves. And He invites every person, no matter their background, into the embrace of a Father who will never let them down.

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