

F. LaGard Smith answers the question: What do you think of Toxic Masculinity?

Discussion and study guides / questions / topics for your consideration. As a preface to this discussion, consider that this topic is not a 'classical' biblical topic. Rather this is an invented term, from the creation, about the creation, trying (whether succeeding or failing, you decide) to address a distortion (is that accurate?) of a spiritual and mental component given to the creation by the creator without acknowledging the creator at all.

In these types of discussions, God's people may want to keep Ephesians 6.10-12 within reach and pray for understanding, discernment, and humility when looking into "...powers...world forces...spiritual forces...".

1. The initial discussion offers two possible perspectives to possibly define the term.
 - a. Toxic Masculinity assigns a 'toxic' value to a systemically patriarchal dominated existence in which men are in charge of everything. The home; the church; government; society; business – apparently every component of life and living.
 - b. Or, Toxic Masculinity is characteristically abusive behaviors by men whether is it physical, verbal, spousal, or other bad behaviors.
 - c. What do you think?
2. If either a or b or both are true, what is the 'ironic observation' made in the video?
 - a. Less and less masculinity being displayed by men...at all. What do you think?
 - b. Particularly in what demographic?
 - c. Could there be a connection between less masculinity and lack of "classic male verve"? Which as described in the discussion includes not wanting to work; not accepting responsibility; not being achievers;
 - d. Are men being beaten down in the US today? If yes, what form does that take? If no, then what is occurring, if anything?
3. Discussion questions:
 - a. Is this a relatively recent term in the lexicon?
 - b. Who, or what, coined this term and why?
 - c. Would you agree that without oxygen all life as we know it would end?
 - d. Is there such a thing as oxygen toxicity and that it, too, can impair and end life?
 - e. In Genesis 2.18-25, does God provide us with a perspective of masculinity?

- f. Compare with Ephesians 5.23-33. Discuss.
- g. What are roles of God-centered masculinity in Eph 6.4 and Col 3.17-21?
- h. In Genesis 3.12, what happened to Adam's masculinity?
- i. In Genesis 4.1-14, what happened to Cain's masculinity?
- j. In Genesis 6.1-12, what happened to the creations' masculinity?
- k. Does God describe masculinity in Psalm 1, Ezekiel 18.1-9 and Micah 6.8?

For discussion purposes, here are two discussion topics from Wikipedia regarding the subject term.

From the American Psychological Association in response to the term's political criticism:

APA chief of professional practice Jared Skillings responded to conservative criticism, stating that the report's discussion of traditional masculinity is about "negative traits such as violence or over-competitiveness or being unwilling to admit weakness" and noting that the report also discusses positive traits traditionally associated with masculinity such as "courage, leadership, protectiveness".

Regarding the term's origins:

The term *toxic masculinity* originated in the mythopoetic men's movement of the 1980s and 1990s. It later found wide use in both academic and popular writing.^[3] Popular and media discussions in the 2010s have used the term to refer to traditional and stereotypical norms of masculinity and manhood. According to the sociologist Michael Flood, these include "expectations that boys and men must be active, aggressive, tough, daring, and dominant".^[4]

Some authors associated with the mythopoetic men's movement have referred to the social pressures placed upon men to be violent, competitive, independent, and unfeeling as a "toxic" form of masculinity, in contrast to a "real" or "deep" masculinity that they say men have lost touch within modern society. The academic Shepherd Bliss proposed a return to agrarianism as an alternative to the "potentially toxic masculinity" of the warrior ethic.^[7] Sociologist Michael Kimmel writes that Bliss's notion of toxic masculinity can be seen as part of the mythopoetic movement's response to male feelings of powerlessness at a time when the feminist movement was challenging traditional male authority:

Thus Shepherd Bliss, for example, rails against what he calls 'toxic masculinity'—which he believes is responsible for most of the evil in the world—and proclaims the unheralded goodness of the men who fight the fires and till the soil and nurture their families.

Regarding the "mythopoetic movement".

Mythopoetic = self-help for men.

According to sociologist Michael Messner, mythopoets believe that the rise of the urban industrial society "trapped men into straitjackets of rationality, thus blunting the powerful emotional communion and collective spiritual transcendence that they believe men in tribal societies typically enjoyed". The movement seeks to restore the "deep masculine" to men who have lost it in their more modern lifestyles.

Other causes claimed by advocates for the loss of the "deep masculine" include:

- Men no longer being comrades who celebrated their masculinity together. Rather, they had become competitors within their workplaces.^[8]
- Men spending more time in their houses with women than they did with men (in non-competitive terms outside of work). Excessive interaction with women generally kept men from realizing their internal masculinity.^[8]
- Feminism bringing attention to the 'feminine voice.' Through this, the mythopoetic men felt that their voices had been muted (though Bly and others are careful in not blaming feminism for this).^[8]
- The separation of men from their fathers kept them from being truly initiated into manhood, and was a source of emotional damage.^[9]
- Men were suffering further emotional damage due to feminist accusations about sexism. Men should celebrate their differences from women, rather than feeling guilty about them.^[9]
- Men being discouraged from expressing their emotions. Male inexpressivity is an epidemic and does not correspond to their "deep masculine" natures.