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Godly Manhood Going Wild?: Transformations in Conservative Protestant Masculinity

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Abstract

This article assesses shifting ideals of masculinity among conservative Protestants focused on the current best seller, *Wild at heart*, by John

Eldredge (2001). First, we compare Eldredges notion of manhood as essentially “heroic, slightly dangerous, alive and free” with the ideals of responsible manhood central to much Promise Keepers literature. Second, we explore the salience of this shift for men's relationships with each other, their wives and female friends. Analysis of interview data with a sample of married men and women in two churches and one para-church campus ministry highlight the active and selective reading of religious texts across gender and age. Overall, Eldredges “slightly dangerous” masculinity represents a re-articulation of the nineteenth century myth of the “self-made man” and is both a reaction against the rationalized nature of paid employment, as well as the responsible and “feminized” expectations of Promise Keepers' ideal of servant leadership and involved fatherhood.

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