



## Exploring The Multifaceted Dimensions of Manhood in Biblical Narratives Using King David's Life

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**Abstract:** The episode from the life of King David in this article served as a case study as we tried to explore the link between men and violence in contemporary society. In restating the hypothesis, we posit that men in our daily society sometimes reference Christian Biblical characters in their process of understanding their masculinity construction process and masculine traits. If this is the case, we have found that Christian men continue to hide under the shadow of emulating Biblical male characters in their navigation of this transition process and sustaining violent masculinity traits. We took cognizance of how some men move seamlessly between culture and faith as and when the transition process favors them. We used the narrative analysis method to examine this research. This article is premised on other factors, such as David being known in the community as the boy who killed a giant, as this makes it quick for people in the community and the church to remember him. This article explored the question of whether there were no better Biblical models for men to follow that could offer a wholesome insight into the construction of masculinity. While David was a man after God's heart, he exuded violence, and his household continued to use power to abuse those within the household.

**Keywords:** abuse, biblical, Christianity, gender-based violence, masculinity

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### 1. Introduction

The starting point of this article is from the observation of increasing gender-based violence in parts of South Africa. Men in the institute of the Church or men with a Christian upbringing engaged in crime. The involvement of male religious leaders in these incidents made the authors of this article, both clergymen; question the caliber of men in the community.

In the complex tapestry of biblical stories, masculinity unfolds as a multidimensional concept woven into the fabric of stories that shape our cultural and spiritual understanding. As we travel through the pages of the Bible and examine the stories that illuminate the nature of man, the figure of King David emerges as a compelling lens through which to view these complexities. The biography of King

David and embraces the fearless victory of Goliath, reflecting the warrior archetype, to the nuanced dynamics of his family life, revealing the complex threads of fatherhood and relationships, and the deep expressions of his spirituality.

As we delve into David and's triumphs and trials, we invite readers to consider what constitutes a healthy construction of masculinity. The goal is to shape our collective understanding of masculinity in the context of both biblical narratives and contemporary reflections on identity and virtue. For South African men, David serves as a cautionary example rather than an ideal to emulate. This article invites men to reflect on the complexities of masculinity by acknowledging the problematic aspects of King David's life. By deliberately avoiding the replication of certain traits, it aims to facilitate discussions on healthy constructions of masculinity. The goal is to improve the overall quality of men in society and foster the restoration of safe spaces, such as the church. The article emphasizes the need to discern and selectively adopt positive aspects while rejecting harmful constructs of masculinity. We will also offer what can be re-conceptualized to help curb gender-based violence that are identified in parts of South Africa, with the goal of restoring the community and the church as a safe space for women and children.

This article is certainly different from previous studies in terms of objectives, methods used, and research locations. For example, Sara M. Koenig's paper in 2015 examines the dangers of the hegemony of masculinity as shown through the story of David in 2 Samuel 10–12.<sup>1</sup> Another interesting research is that by Kevin M. McGeough in 2018 examines issues of masculinity and sexual morality in King David through the lens of biblical cinema.<sup>2</sup> There is also an article by Solomon O. Ademiluka in 2021, who reinterprets the story of David and Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11:2-4 as a weapon that the church can use to counter and solve the problem of sexual violence in Nigeria.<sup>3</sup>

The study of the constructinyazon of masculinity and the reconceptualization of the aging journey should not be considered separately. Instead, we situate these aspects within the context of the rising incidence of gender-based violence in specific regions of South Africa. To maintain ethical standards and provide clarity to readers, it is imperative to explicitly identify the locations under discussion. In adherence to ethical considerations, the author will include references to the specific regions in question and offer a detailed explanation in a footnote. This approach ensures

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<sup>1</sup> Sara M. Koenig, "Make War Not Love," *biblical interpretation* 23, no. 4–5 (2 November 2015): 489–517, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685152-02345p02>.

<sup>2</sup> Kevin M. McGeough, "The Problem with David: Masculinity and Morality in Biblical Cinema," *Journal of Religion & Film* 22, no. 1 (2018): 1–52, <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/jrf/vol22/iss1/33/>.

<sup>3</sup> Solomon O. Ademiluka, "Interpreting the David–Bathsheba narrative (2 Sm 11:2–4) as a response by the church in Nigeria to masculine abuse of power for sexual assault," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 77, no. 4 (27 Januari 2021): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i4.5802>.

transparency and allows for a more focused examination of the intersection between the biblical narrative, the construction of masculinity, and the pressing issue of gender-based violence in the identified areas. A concern for us as clergywomen scholars is the observation that the church has been a safe space for those who sought refuge from abuse, but currently, the church is infiltrated by those who are abusive, and others are in leadership positions.

## 2. Research Method

This article selected the method of a narrative analysis. In framing narratives, Berlin posits that, *"the Bible is certainly a literary work and as such becomes subject to literary criticism. The purpose of which is to bring to clearer focus the subtleties of language, style and meaning that are the fabric of the text"*.<sup>4</sup> In terms of definitions of narrative analysis, *"By narrative we mean first a literary genre distinct from poetry or dramatic art, from philosophical or theological treatises, prophetic oracles, and wisdom literature. But we also use it to refer to the concrete texts belonging to this literary genre (the narratives)"*.<sup>5</sup> Mark Powell says that narrative criticism focuses on stories in biblical literature and attempts to read these stories with insights drawn from the secular field of modern literary criticism. The goal is to determine the effects of the stories that are expected to have on their audience.<sup>6</sup>

According to Trent C. Butler, narrative analysis involves the study of stories with the aim of understanding and interpreting them, focusing on their unique characteristics. These stories form the basis of the analysis. This analytical approach can be multifaceted, involving thematic investigation or connections to specific concepts or phenomena of interest. Analysis can include entire stories, narrative context of participants, sub-stories within larger stories and specific examples.<sup>7</sup> In this article we will focus on the character of King David.

## 3. Result and Discussion

### The Bible as A Reflective Surface and Source of Learning "New" Contextual Information

According to Samuel Tongue, in *"Scripted bodies: Reading the Spectacle of Jacob Wrestling the Angel"*,

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<sup>4</sup> Adele Berlin, "Characterization in Biblical Narrative: David's Wives," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 7, no. 23 (Juli 1982): 69, <https://doi.org/10.1177/030908928200702304>.

<sup>5</sup> Jean Louis Ska, *"Our Fathers Have Told Us": Introduction to the Analysis of Hebrew Narratives* (Roma, Italia: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> Thomas C. Powell, "Research notes and communications strategic planning as competitive advantage," *Strategic Management Journal* 13, no. 7 (Oktober 1992): 239, <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.4250130707>.

<sup>7</sup> Trent C. Butler, *Word Biblical Commentary 8: Judges*, ed. oleh Bruce M. Metzger et al., ePub (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2017).

If biblical depictions of male patriarchal power had enormous cultural influence across the years in which the Bible has been sourced as an authoritative text (with authoritative interpretations) then it is not simply believers and Bible readers who are bound into an intertextuality of which this Bible is part and who are forced to stretch the limits and ligatures of the influence of these particular texts.<sup>8</sup>

Participating in David's story provides a wealth of progressive and valuable knowledge that readers can apply to their daily lives. These lessons reach beyond the individual reader and positively impact the wider community. On the other hand, if the story consumed is harmful, it can have a detrimental effect on the entire community. As Charlene Van der Walt suggests, how an individual reads, understands, and interprets a particular story can cast a shadow over the community's opinion.

Van der Walt suggests that the Bible could function as a reflective surface in the process of cross-cultural Bible reading. This approach challenges the notion that the biblical text is exclusively dominant or definitive. Instead, it promotes the idea of engaging the biblical text as part of a larger dialogue, standing alongside other voices and perspectives. It is put on an equal level with the socially embedded narratives of the women and men taking part in the Bible reading exercise. Modern readers can be encouraged, within these reading communities, to ask critical questions of the Bible text and to read against the grain to unmask patriarchal ideas and practices.<sup>9</sup>

Gaining positively from the text and Biblical characters has been difficult because, "*Patriarchy is interwoven in the Christian tradition in distinct and pervasive ways. The oppression of women through patriarchal social structures increases in the religious context since the presumed 'maleness' of God and the male identity of Jesus are used to justify women's subordination*".<sup>10</sup> These have a dual meaning in that, men could become violent and be in control over women, and this is sustained by the men placed and compared with Jesus and God. Secondly, women immediately see themselves as inferior and allow domination because of the power held by men (who are like God).

Connell and Messerschmidt argue differently when saying that, "*culture and religion are mutually exclusive when it comes to men constructing perceptions of masculinity but differ across different contexts*".<sup>11</sup> This assertion sets the stage for our exploration into a narrative analysis technique aimed at breaking away from the patriarchal lens and adopting a perspective that foregrounds women's experiences. As we delve into the reading of King David's narrative and the construction of his

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<sup>8</sup> Samuel Tongue, "Scripted Bodies: Reading the Spectacle of Jacob Wrestling the Angel," *Journal of Men, Masculinities and Spirituality* 6, no. 1 (Januari 2012): 9.

<sup>9</sup> Charlene Van der Walt, "But He Refused to Listen to Her... Developing a Safe Communal Space Where Marginal Voices Can Be Heard.," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 159 (2017): 19.

<sup>10</sup> Susan Rakoczy, *In Her Name: Women Doing Theology* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2004), 12.

<sup>11</sup> R. W. Connell dan James W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity," *Gender & Society* 19, no. 6 (Desember 2005): 43, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243205278639>.

masculinity, the subsequent discussions will critically examine how culture and religion intersect and diverge in shaping perceptions of masculinity. This analytical approach challenges traditional narratives and aims to reveal nuanced perspectives that go beyond the conventional patriarchal framework, ultimately contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of masculinity in different contexts.

### **Theoretical Framework and Scholarly Perspectives**

This section delves into the nuanced definitions of masculinity provided by Connell and Miescher, setting the stage for our analysis of King David's aging experiences. The two-fold approach incorporates Connell's emphasis on the lived experiences of men, capturing internal referencing, and Miescher's focus on societal and cultural expectations, delving into issues of performativity and learned conduct. The subsequent discussion introduces the theoretical framework of aging, drawing on Clines' insights to illuminate the social background of 1 Samuel and contemporary realities faced by men in specific South African regions. The chosen focus on local contexts enables a targeted analysis, bridging biblical narratives with the lived experiences of modern men in these specific locales.

The meaning of masculinity in this article will be drawn from the two from Connell's definition below: "*masculinity refers to specific gender identities belonging to individuals who have specific experiences of what it means to feel, think and be a male person.*"<sup>12</sup> Lisa A. Lindsay and Stephan F. Miescher argue that, "*As a gendered identity for men, masculinity therefore refers to a cluster of norms, values and behavioral patterns expressing explicit or implicit expectations of how men act and represent themselves to others.*"<sup>13</sup> The two definitions are essential because Connell focuses on the lived experience of men which for us talks to internal referencing, while Miescher and Lindsay captures societal, cultural expectations and issues of performativity and is primarily learnt conduct.

In the context of our discussion, we introduce a few key terms to clarify their use in the upcoming section. Firstly, we distinguish between round and flat characters. A round character is one who plays a central and continuous role throughout the entire narrative, often indispensable for the story's progression. On the other hand, a flat character is present but may not command constant attention and can sometimes go unnoticed for extended periods.

Shifting our focus to the structure of the narrative, we delve into the concept of the plot. The plot encompasses how a story unfolds, starting from its inception, introducing complications that drive the narrative forward, and ultimately resolving

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<sup>12</sup> Connell dan Messerschmidt, 12.

<sup>13</sup> Lisa A. Lindsay dan Stephan F. Miescher, *Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa (Social History of Africa Series)*, ed. oleh Lisa A. Lindsay dan Stephan F. Miescher (London, United Kingdom: Heinemann, 2003), 8.

these intricacies. The climax, a pivotal point in the story, marks its peak, leaving readers on the edge of their seats with anticipation. This moment is often the culmination of the narrative's build-up, creating suspense and uncertainty about the unfolding events. Following the climax, the story enters the falling action, during which the narrative threads begin to resolve, paving the way for the ultimate resolution.

Drawing a parallel to the author's parsing process in the results and discussion section, a similar structural breakdown aids in understanding the different components of the analysis. Much like round and flat characters, the theoretical framework can be seen as a round character, consistently present and indispensable to the overall analysis. The context section, akin to a flat character, may not always be in the forefront but provides a necessary backdrop. The narrative analysis functions as the plot, unfolding the complexities of the subject matter. The climax corresponds to the critical juncture where key insights are revealed, while the falling action mirrors the resolution process. By delineating these components, readers can navigate the analysis more effectively, discerning the theoretical underpinnings, contextual elements, and the narrative's analytical development.

For this study, we adopt the theoretical framework of the concept of aging. This approach is a means of gaining important insights into David's aging experiences. This framework facilitates a deeper understanding of men's aging journeys in specific cases in South Africa. Diving into the world of masculinity, using it as a methodological and analytical tool, we delve into the scholarly contributions of Clines.<sup>14</sup> John and Settler cited Chitando's article, "*A New Man for a New Era*" supporting the idea that men fulfill their masculinity in response to their need to belong to a community.<sup>15</sup> It makes an important contribution to this search, as they argue that "*dangerous masculinities thrive because of the privileged position patriarchy afford men for the simple reason that they are males.*"<sup>16</sup> We are writing to have men rethink constructions of masculinity and to notice what it takes to 'sustain' masculinities because it is clear to us that if men did put it in the work, we could see a change. This can be seen in an earlier work also by Clines that says,

Masculinity like femininity is a social construction, the product of historical processes. The significant fact is that not all males, in whatever culture, conform to the social norms. The norms may privilege young heterosexual, strong and physical men, and

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<sup>14</sup> David J.A. Clines, "David the man: the construction of masculinity in the Hebrew Bible," in *Interested Parties: The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 212–43.

<sup>15</sup> Sokfa John, Lilian Siwila, dan Federico Settler, "'Men Can, Should and Must Change!' An Analysis of Ezra Chitando's Writings on African Masculinities," *Journal of Gender and Religion in Africa* 19, no. 2 (Januari 2013): 159–81.

<sup>16</sup> John, Siwila, dan Settler, 163.

those who cannot be characterized will be deviants from socially acceptable maleness.<sup>17</sup>

Incorporating Clines' perspective into this study proves crucial as his insights offer a valuable lens through which to examine not only the social background of the text (1 Samuel) but also the contemporary realities faced by men in specific regions of South Africa that are the primary focus of our article. By honing in on these specific regions, we aim to provide a more targeted analysis that delves into the intricacies of local contexts, allowing for a nuanced exploration of the formation of masculinity and the evolution of the aging process. This approach, emphasizing the chosen regions, enables a more in-depth understanding of how cultural and social dynamics shape masculine identities, bridging the gap between biblical narratives and the lived experiences of modern men in these specific locales.

### Gender Based Violence

Gender-based violence is, at times, supported by references to scripture and misguided interpretations of religious texts, fostering a toxic environment under the guise of patriarchal societies. This article highlights three specific cases—Tim Omotoso, Luyanda Botha, and the biblical figure King David—to illustrate the unsafe intersections of church and community. Omotoso, convicted of exploiting women in his congregation, exemplifies how doctrines within religious institutions can perpetuate gender-based violence by encouraging female submission and adhering to traditional family structures. This normalization of power imbalances, stemming from patriarchal culture steeped in Christian teachings, can lead to abusive situations.

The article draws a parallel between contemporary incidents and biblical narratives, particularly King David's exploitation of women like Bathsheba. Describing David as a "*peeping Tom*" highlights the abuse of power, with Bathsheba's vulnerability as a married woman potentially resulting in a form of rape. The comparison extends to David's subsequent act of orchestrating Uriah's death, revealing a disturbing pattern of both rape and murder. Despite being a religious figure, David goes unpunished, prompting a critical reflection on redemptive masculinities.

Pastor Tim Omotoso was convicted of having sex with women in his congregation and inappropriately grooming young girls for sexual purposes. Nadar cited by Chammah J. Kaunda in his analysis of the Omotoso trial, argues that the problem is not the regulation of churches, but rather the doctrines spread in these religious institutions.<sup>18</sup> These teachings encourage girls and women to submit to male

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<sup>17</sup> Clines, "David the man: the construction of masculinity in the Hebrew Bible," 12.

<sup>18</sup> Chammah J. Kaunda, "'The Emptied Authority': African Neo-Pentecostalism, Modernisation of Sacred Authority and Gendered and Sexualised Constructions of Violence," *Acta Theologica* 40, no. 2 (Desember 2020): 216–37, <https://doi.org/10.18820/23099089/actat.v40i2.12>.

dominance and authority and support what the South African Council of Churches (SACC) calls “the family” essentially a conventional, heteronormative “father-mother” family structure. This perspective fails to recognize the harmful ways in which power dynamics operate within families, often leading to harmful consequences.<sup>19</sup> Nadar argues these two points. Firstly, that *“if churches remain environments where men have all the power, then church leaders can use their authority to groom and control women. Patriarchal culture that is steeped in Christian teachings creates conditions that make abuse possible.”*<sup>20</sup> Secondly, she says, the *“biblically sanctioned’ teachings that encourage and teach power differentials between genders is what made the Omotoso case possible”*.<sup>21</sup> It is important to note that these teachings-formal and informal yet normalizing and making some conduct acceptable.

Consider the case of 19-year-old Uyine Mrwetyana, who was tragically raped and murdered at the hands of 42-year-old postal worker Luyanda Botha. Despite Luyanda Botha's Christian upbringing, it is likely that she may have been influenced by certain formal or informal teachings that gave her power and control over Uyine's body because of her gender. In particular, two critical aspects of this case stand out: the description of the judge of Luyanda Botha as heartless and cruel, and his apparent remorse for his actions, despite his upbringing in the Christian faith.

In the case of 19-year-old Uyine Mrwetyana, tragically raped and murdered by Luyanda Botha, the influence of formal or informal teachings is suggested. Despite Botha's Christian upbringing, it is essential to substantiate assumptions regarding the influence of Christianity on her actions. The narrative, while acknowledging the horrifying acts committed, emphasizes the need for evidence-based analysis. This case underscores the urgency to rethink redemptive masculinities for Christian men, acknowledging the role of male models in shaping behaviors consciously or unconsciously. Luyanda Botha's actions, including rapes, murders and even the burning of Uyine's body, speak of his insatiable sexual desires and disturbing propensity for harm. This tragic incident is just one of many in the media focusing on rampant sexual violence and the horrific murders of both women and children. These stories seem unreal until you re-read king David's episodes of exploitation of women such as Bathsheba. The biblical king David used his power and authority when he saw Bathsheba, a married woman bathing; David can be considered a peeping Tom. Since David was a king, Bathsheba may not have had the power to say no and in that sense, she was raped. He then went further to send Uriah to be in the frontline of the battlefield. King David was not just a rapist; he was a murderer too. In thinking of the act of King David as both rapist and murder yet a religious figure and remaining ‘unpunished’ alongside the case of Omotoso and Luyanda Botha which are only a few

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<sup>19</sup> Kaunda, 225.

<sup>20</sup> Kaunda, 226.

<sup>21</sup> Kaunda, 226.



of the stories of happening in parts of South Africa; how can we begin to rethink redemptive masculinities for Christian men who 'need' male models consciously or unconsciously.

The work of Zawadowska & Wilk titled, *"The Character of David in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam"*, posit that, King David is one of the most central figures in all the major monotheistic traditions. He connotes the heroic past of the (more imagined than real) ancient Israelite empire and is associated with messianic hopes for the future. Nevertheless, his richly ambivalent and fascinating literary portrayal in the Hebrew Bible is one of the most complex of all biblical characters.<sup>22</sup> In analyzing the life of King David, the work of Zawadowska & Wilk suggests that his portrayal in the Hebrew Bible is complex and ambivalent. However, it is essential to note that the authors do not explicitly associate it with masculinity. To enhance the discussion, a direct allusion to the masculine attributes associated with King David should be incorporated, providing a more comprehensive understanding of how biblical characters contribute to constructions of masculinity. Moreover, to specify the geographical context, it is crucial to avoid generic terms like "Southern Africa". Instead, the article should focus on the specific locations discussed in the exposed cases, maintaining clarity and precision in the narrative.

### **Selected Scene 1 -David and Bathsheba - Unethical Use of Power**

In 1 Samuel, the narrative of David and Bathsheba provides a poignant example of the inappropriate use of power by King David. The story, found in 2 Samuel 11, begins with David's voyeuristic act as he gazes upon Bathsheba, who is bathing on a rooftop. This act of voyeurism immediately sets the stage for a troubling display of masculinity. David's position as king affords him a level of power that he exploits for his own desires, disregarding the privacy and dignity of Bathsheba.

*"In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel. And they ravaged the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful." (2Sam. 11:1-2, ESV)*

David's abuse of power doesn't end with voyeurism. The narrative takes a darker turn as he orchestrates the death of Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, in an attempt to cover up his transgressions. This manipulation and deceit further underscore a disturbing abuse of authority.

Clines contributes valuable insights into the social construction of masculinity, noting that societal norms often privilege certain traits and actions. David's actions, as depicted in this narrative, align with Clines' analysis, revealing the socially

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<sup>22</sup> Marzena Zawadowska dan Mateusz Wilk, *The Character of David in Judaism, Christianity and Islam: Warrior, Poet, Prophet and King* (Netherlands: Brill, 2021), 16.

unacceptable aspects of maleness. The abuse of power and the manipulation of circumstances for personal gain expose the darker side of masculinity, shedding light on how power dynamics can be wielded unethically.

This narrative serves as a cautionary tale, prompting a critical examination of the intersections between power, masculinity, and ethical conduct. The biblical account of David and Bathsheba invites readers to reflect on the consequences of unchecked power and the potential for abuse within patriarchal structures.

### ***Selected Scene- 1 Samuel 17:40-54 (David and Goliath)***

This passage is important because it represents the introduction of David in his youth and symbolizes his progression from childhood to adulthood. That change occurs when he confronts and defeats Goliath and then wins a wife. In addition, David's actions in this case embody a form of violence that conforms to the social expectations placed on him. This aspect is further explored to gain a deeper understanding of the concept of adulthood and the construction of constructions of masculinity.

In this article, we have used Figure 1: A Visual detailing of the David and Goliath Story. This is our own creation which we felt was important in understanding the David and Goliath story within the frame of a narrative analysis. Every story has five important parts which are the Beginning of the Story and usually important characters (David and Goliath) are introduced by the narrator and a place that will be significant is mentioned which is Israel/Philistine conflict. The second important part is the Rising Action which we see David advocating for his identity as a man and we see him pushed around as it is unclear if he has really come of age or not.

The third part is the climax which is where King Saul allows David to fight Goliath as part of the aim of resolving the Israel/Philistine conflict which we initially learnt about in the first part. The fourth part comes after the climax- most of the narrator's story has happened like the fight of David and Goliath has happened and while the story could end there, the narrator does not end there instead he brings some clarity in the fourth part known as the falling action so that the readers see how the main fight is moving towards being resolved. Here in the David and Goliath's story we see the beheading of Goliath and we see the Philistines Fleeing. The head cutting is a victory for the one party. The fifth part is the resolution whereby David has won, his status has changed from being a boy to being a man, he is given a trophy wife and lead over the army. Please see the sketch at below for an illustration of what is explained above.

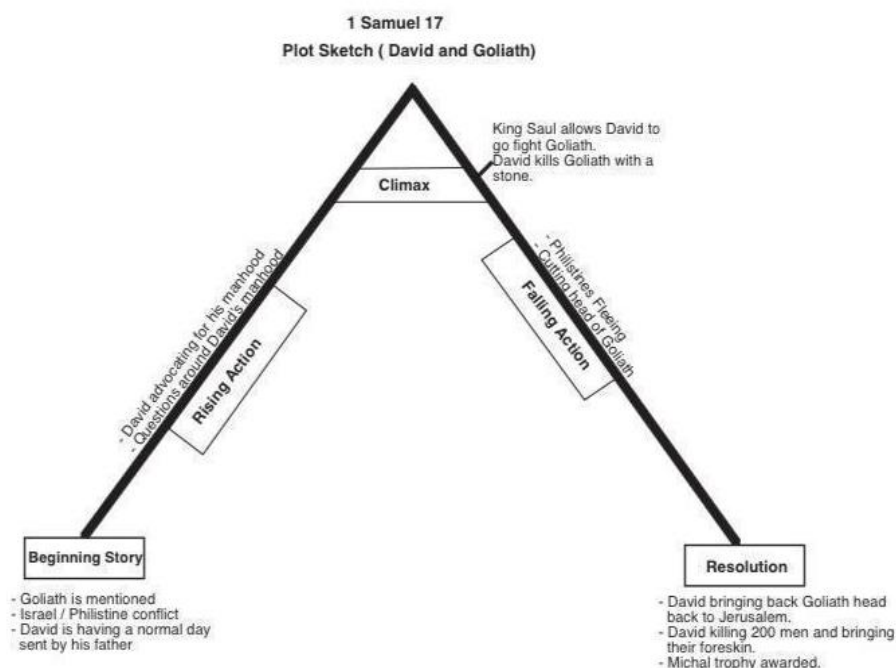


Figure 1: A Visual detailing of the David and Goliath Story

### Character

At the beginning of this scene, David first appears as a flat character tasked with delivering food to his brothers during war. This task, compared to the more visible role of men in battle, relegates David to a seemingly one-dimensional role. However, his characterization quickly turns from flat to round when he steps forward to offer a solution to King Saul's problem and asks permission to face Goliath. This sudden change puts David in the foreground and excites the bravery of a young boy who is ready to face a giant without armor in battle. According to Forster's criteria, David fits the round figure because he defies expectations by defeating a fully prepared, imposing enemy despite his small stature and lack of training.<sup>23</sup> The transformation of David into a round figure is specifically linked to his participation in the war, where he is recognized for his participation in violence, a quality associated with male identity, although damaged by toxicity.

Furthermore, in Jason's analysis, David's brothers assume the role of failed characters, reminiscent of the brothers in fables.<sup>24</sup> It is surprising that his brothers, who could face Goliath, not only refrain from volunteering, but also abandon David's intentions. In addition, as noted by Auld, it is fascinating how David, despite being ordered to watch the battle from afar among the baggage, shows remarkable fearlessness and efficiency in his task, emphasized by a series of nine verbs in two

<sup>23</sup> Edward Morgan Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (Cambridge: Trinity College, 1981), 22.

<sup>24</sup> Heda Jason, "The Story of David and Goliath: A Folk Epic?," *Biblica* 60, no. 1 (November 1979): 11.

stanzas.<sup>25</sup> David rose and left and took and went and came and left and ran and went and greeted. We almost hear how breathless the storyteller is as he tries to utter these two verses, giving clear staccato emphasis to each action David took to reach his brothers at their most dangerous moment of the episode.<sup>26</sup>

Initially, David's role as a shepherd while his companions are at war reinforces his classification as a boy. But after a victorious battle and conquest, he not only receives a wife, a sign of his transition to manhood, but is also promoted to the head of the army. According to Jason, rewarding Saul's daughter requires an additional task for David, marking an important stage in David's story (1Sam. 8:20-28). This event in which David becomes part of the royal court can be seen as a kind of "near end" to a certain phase of his story.<sup>27</sup>

David's encounter with Goliath seems to symbolize his journey from boyhood to manhood. Although David has previously demonstrated his manhood by facing trials such as slaying a bear and a lion, these accomplishments do not seem to carry the same weight until he publicly confronts Goliath. His bold decision to face Goliath without the protection of his armor can perhaps be interpreted as an attempt to establish himself as a man. The story seems to simplify David's achievement of male identity. This ease of identification can be questioned, especially when considering the seemingly improbable act of an uneducated person like David defeating Goliath - a mighty armed giant - with a single stone. It appears strange that a young boy who could not be allowed in the battlefield except to bring food, goes home a husband of the King's daughter and head of the army. We notice and we would like our readers to notice that the boy David who ends as king David receives no 'training' process unless if killing Goliath was looked as a 'manly' and killing as a rite of passage completing his coming-of-age process. We argue that either way, all moves so fast and appears to circle around performance and societal expectation and celebration. The anxiety and pace everything moves at makes David around character and in this story begins as a flat character and end as protagonist who the story cannot continue without himself.

Goliath's role in that scene initially establishes him as a circular character, inseparable from the unfolding events. His inflammatory taunts and insults serve as a catalyst for the confrontation between the Israelites and David. As Bar-Efrat points out, Goliath can be seen as a flat figure defined by a single feature-his imposing stature.<sup>28</sup> Consistent with Bar-Efrat's opinion, the authors of that article agree that Goliath begins with characteristics of a rounded figure, but gradually evolves into a

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<sup>25</sup> A. Graeme Auld dan Craig Y. S. Ho, "The Making of David and Goliath," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 17, no. 56 (Desember 1992): 19, <https://doi.org/10.1177/030908929201705602>.

<sup>26</sup> Auld dan Ho, 19.

<sup>27</sup> Jason, "The Story of David and Goliath: A Folk Epic?," 46.

<sup>28</sup> S. Bar-Efrat, "Some Observations on the Analysis of Structure in Biblical Narrative," *Vetus Testamentum* 30, no. 2 (April 1980): 11, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1517521>.

flattened figure, culminating in his death, a giant felled by a single stone and a young boy who finally cut off his head.

Matthew Michael argues that the story of David and Goliath has narrowly been interpreted as the dramatic victory of an underdog David over a formidable Philistine giant Goliath. This understanding of the story has dominated popular and scholarly interpretations of 1 Samuel 17. However, this typical reading of the story often ignores the intertextual character, the polemic intent, and the rhetorical agenda of the David/Goliath story to the overall reading of the book of 1 Samuel. The true purpose of this story has eluded current research on this passage.<sup>29</sup> Explaining what modern scholars may have missed, Michael suggests that the narrator of 1 Samuel places the story of David and Goliath before the conflicts between David and Saul. This arrangement works as a literary foreshadowing, subtly mirroring the later confrontation between David and Saul, both of whom resemble gigantic statues.<sup>30</sup> Michael offers an opposing perspective to the notion that the story was meant to reinforce David's masculinity. Instead, he argues that the story of David and Goliath is used strategically for subversive purposes, placing Saul primarily in the same category as the antagonist Goliath.<sup>31</sup> Although the story will undoubtedly appeal to a wide audience because it dramatically depicts the victory of the young shepherd over the colossal giant Goliath, Michael acknowledges its popularity.<sup>32</sup>

### **Place**

As for the geographical context, the Philistine troops gathered in Soho in the territory of Judah. Meanwhile, Israel gathered under Saul in the valley of Elah. The battle was fought against the Philistines on one hill and the Israelites on the other, with the valley between them being the battlefield. In his book *"Socoh and Azekah: The Role of the Elah Valley in Biblical History and the Identification of Khirbet Qeiyafa"*, David Adams emphasizes the decisive role of geography in shaping historical events. He compares geography with the invisible skeleton of history, which provides a framework that influences the realization of historical events. While the events themselves may command our attention, it is important to understand how these events are shaped by the interactions between the people involved and the places where they occur. A perceptive observer might take note of this physical framework of history, even when it goes unmentioned, but only occasionally do the texts which

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<sup>29</sup> Matthew Michael, "Is Saul the Second Goliath of 1 Samuel? The Rhetoric & Polemics of the David/Goliath Story in 1 Samuel," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 34, no. 2 (Juli 2020): 221, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09018328.2020.1805206>.

<sup>30</sup> Michael, 223.

<sup>31</sup> Michael, 225.

<sup>32</sup> Michael, 243.

record history remind us of the unseen role of topography in the events that concern us.<sup>33</sup>

Two factors suggest the reason that the Elah, rather than the Sorek, became the site of the famous battle described in 1 Samuel 17. First, as it penetrates inland toward Jerusalem, the Sorek Valley becomes quite narrow and steep, and therefore a more difficult location for military battle maneuvers. The Elah Valley provides easier access for more of the distance and is therefore a more attractive military option. Second, and probably more significant in this case, is the make-up of the invading force. Of the five major Philistine cities, only Ekron is closer to the Sorek Valley than to the Elah Valley. Just as Ekron guards the entrance to the Sorek Valley, Gath holds the entrance to the Elah, and the other major Philistine cities lie to the west and to the south of Gath. This fact, and the association of the invading force in 1 Samuel 17 with Gath, the home of Goliath, make the Elah Valley the closest and easiest path for the Philistine army to follow.<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, the encounter of 1 Samuel 17 is certainly the most famous incident associated with the Elah Valley in the Hebrew Scriptures, but it is not the only reference to events in the valley. Given the nature of the terrain described above and its resulting strategic significance, it should not be surprising that most of the events described as having happened in the valley are military in nature. The valley itself is mentioned by name in the Scriptures only in connection with the military exploits of David. Twice it is named in the account of David and Goliath (1Sam. 17:2; 19:19). The only other direct mention of the valley comes in a conversation between David and the priest Ahimelech, when Ahimelech offers to return to David the sword of Goliath that he had been given for safekeeping (1Sam. 21:9).<sup>35</sup>

From the point of view of place, this also applies to the social roles set for individuals. In this story, the original place of David was defined as a young boy taking care of his father's sheep and obediently following the orders given by his parents, especially his father Jesse. The story draws attention to David's assigned place when his brothers constantly question his presence on the battlefield. Basically, he is there on assignment until he takes an active step to challenge the social constraints placed on him. Another dimension we delve into is the intersection of masculinity and disclosure. This aspect refers to David's private battles with the lion and the bear, which go unnoticed until he publicly confronts Goliath. Only at this point is his male identity recognized, marking his transition from boyhood to manhood and finally to marriage.

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<sup>33</sup> David L. Adams, "Between Socoh and Azekah: The Role of the Elah Valley in Biblical History and the Identification of Khirbet Qeiyafa," in *Khirbet Qeiyafa Vol 1: The 2007-2008 Excavation Seasons*, ed. oleh Yosef Garfinkel dan Saar Ganor (Jerusalem: Printiv, 2009), 47.

<sup>34</sup> Adams, 48.

<sup>35</sup> Adams, 49.

## **Time**

Regarding time, the references in the story emphasize the morning approach of the Philistines (v. 16), while David is sent in the early morning (v. 20). The concept of a forty-day period becomes important in this episode, although its exact meaning remains unclear to readers. However, it can help to classify the books of 1 and 2 Samuel in the Deuteronomistic period of history.

In the pacing of the story, the narrator spends a lot of time on David's brothers, mocking their manliness and fitness to face Goliath. The story also gives David space to defend and justify his candidacy to represent Israel against the Philistines. The aging process and the transition from boyhood to manhood are indirectly highlighted for the indirect audience. Finally, the actual battle between Goliath and David is presented as a brief encounter. This summary presentation by the narrator emphasizes that David was ready for a smooth transition to manhood.

## **Repetition of Keywords**

Serrano argues that the repetitions found in text offer insight on what needs to be emphasized and what we as readers need to pay attention to. Going by noticing the repeated names we can deduce that Goliath and David are key characters in this story.<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, the key concepts repeated are: David was the son of Jesse, as seen in verses 12 and 56-57. It is a question of genealogy. It deals with maintenance and education issues. An individual's genealogy and birth history is helpful, especially listing David, which becomes important because Jesus, the savior of the New Testament, was to be born from David's lineage. This means that the focus is on identity and family tree preservation. Other recurring keywords are:

vs.9 to kill him.  
vs. 25 kill him  
vs.27 kill him  
vs.36 killed both  
vs. 51 killed him

These words emphasize central violence, fighting and harming others. The focus of the story on these expressions emphasizes that these elements characterize an important part of adulthood in the Old Testament text. Killing and fighting are seen as essential masculine qualities and activities that are often expected of boys as they grow into manhood. This expectation is particularly evident in the context of the story of David, where his ability to kill Goliath is used as a benchmark for his arrival to manhood.

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<sup>36</sup> Carlo Serrano, "Charismatic and servant leadership as seen in king Saul and young David: An inner texture analysis of 1 Samuel 17:1-58," *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* 6, no. 1 (2014): 33, <http://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/jbpl/vol6no1/4Serrano.pdf>.

This study centers on the feminist construction of King David within the Judeo-Christian tradition. Tsumura emphasizes the importance of David by highlighting several essential aspects. First, although David is the youngest of Jesse's eight sons, he is chosen as the anointed king of Israel. Also, the Spirit of the Lord leaves Saul and rests on David. Finally, God makes a covenant with David and guarantees his family an eternal dynasty.<sup>37</sup> Together, these three factors set David apart, established him as king of Israel at a young age, and made his genealogy decisive, later intertwining with the lineage of Jesus, the foundation of the Christian faith and the church - the focus of the analysis of this an article.

The significance of David resonates throughout both the Old and New Testaments. Wei Hu's exploration of David's life, particularly as depicted in 1 Samuel, further enhances our understanding. However, for a more coherent flow, it is advisable to introduce a discussion on the construction of King David's masculinity after providing a comprehensive overview of his background. This approach ensures a smoother transition and a more structured presentation of the study's focus. Wei Hu, it is worth noting that "David" is the third most mentioned name in the entire Bible after Moses and Abraham.<sup>38</sup> Hu in further summarizing what David and 1 Samuel is about notes that,

these books give a comprehensive account of the life of David, a man of faith even while a man of weakness, as illustrated from his victories and struggles and his trust and reliance upon God. As the youngest of the eight sons of Jesse, David was born in Bethlehem and served as a shepherd during his childhood. Besides being a great king, David was also well known as a great psalmist as well as a great warrior.<sup>39</sup>

### **Unveiling Dark Facets of David's Masculinity**

The analysis of three pivotal scenes from the life of King David in 1 Samuel reveals unsettling dimensions of his masculinity. In Scene 1, David's unethical use of power in the episode with Bathsheba exposes a disturbing abuse of authority. This portrayal highlights the socially unacceptable aspects of maleness and raises questions about the ethical boundaries of power dynamics.

Moving to Scene 2, David's treatment of Michal underscores another problematic facet of his masculinity—control and manipulation within interpersonal relationships. His actions towards Michal reflect toxic masculinity, leveraging emotional manipulation for personal gain.

In Scene 3, Absalom's rebellion unveils a cycle of violence within David's family, mirroring his own struggles for power. This narrative exposes the destructive legacy of David's masculinity, perpetuating violence and power struggles within the

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<sup>37</sup> David Toshio Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 12.

<sup>38</sup> Wei Hu, "Communities Inferred from the Books of Samuel in the Old Testament of the Bible," *Advances in Historical Studies* 02, no. 02 (2013): 70, <https://doi.org/10.4236/ahs.2013.22011>.

<sup>39</sup> Hu, 70.



familial context. The cumulative analysis prompts reflection on the intricate interplay of power, gender norms, and ethical considerations in shaping David's masculinity. The use of scholarly sources enriches the interpretation, providing a broader context for understanding the complexities of masculinity.

The analysis of David and Goliath points out several important insights about the processes of growing up and the formation of masculinity emerge. The scene highlights the communal nature of masculinity, illustrating that masculinity requires validation and affirmation from existing male members of the community. The successful transition from boyhood to manhood often requires bold and risky actions that demonstrate courage and strength. Observers evaluate these actions to determine if they are masculine.

The search for validation forces men to conform to established gender norms and engage in actions consistent with the notion of "real masculinity", often involving public acts of violence and risk-taking akin to rites of passage. The interplay of religion and culture significantly shapes representations and expectations of masculinity, inadvertently preserving and perpetuating certain masculine identities regardless of their nature. Ultimately, the complex interweaving of religion, culture and social expectations work together to shape and reinforce constructions of masculinity, influencing the recognition and acceptance of boys as men. This next section moves us from the narrative analysis of the selected scene to the work of Clines whom we use as a lens in our conceptualization of construction of masculinities and coming of age and drawing deduction from the context we are responding from as we see gender-based violence and desire it to be eradicated.

### **Transition to Clines' Lens and Contemplation on Femininity**

As the analysis transitions to Clines' work, the author employs Clines' insights as a lens for conceptualizing the construction of masculinities. This move is driven by a desire to respond to the observed gender-based violence, suggesting an exploration of alternative perspectives on masculinity. The comment introduces a crucial question about femininity, challenging the notion of societal expectations for women. The query raises thought-provoking considerations about the parallel expectations for femininity and prompts reflection on the portrayal of female characters in similar narratives.

The concluding questions about God's intentions in giving proclamations to King David add a theological dimension. It invites contemplation on whether masculinity was the primary focus of God's intentions and whether the divine perspective on masculinity aligns with the author's analysis. This opens avenues for deeper theological reflections on the divine understanding of masculinity and femininity. In essence, the conclusion paves the way for a multifaceted exploration, blending narrative analysis, scholarly insights, and theological considerations to

unravel the intricate tapestry of David's masculinity and its implications in a broader societal and divine context.

### **Navigating Masculinity: Unveiling Narratives, Clines' lens, and Realities in South Africa**

In our exploration of masculinity, we've delved into narratives, dissecting the life of King David and connecting these stories to the conceptual framework provided by Clines. The threads of the narratives have woven a tapestry that unveils both commendable and troubling aspects of masculinity. As we traverse the terrain of gender-based violence in South Africa, questions emerge, is this masculinity inherently "bad"? How do we address it?

#### ***Masculinity Unveiled: Narratives and Clines' Concept***

The narrative analysis has offered profound insights into the construction of masculinity, depicting both admirable qualities and dark facets. The connection to Clines' concept of masculinity enriches our understanding, emphasizing the social construction of gender norms. However, a definitive judgment on whether the masculinity portrayed is inherently "bad" is nuanced, dependent on ethical and cultural lenses.

#### ***South African Realities: Gender-Based Violence***

Our journey takes us to the harsh realities of gender-based violence in South Africa. The narratives align with real cases, showcasing the repercussions of toxic masculinity. The correlation between the analyzed narratives, Clines' theory, and the distressing instances in South Africa is evident. Yet, a critical juncture remains—how do we move from analysis to action?

#### ***The Church's Role: Addressing Problematic Masculinities***

As we contemplate the role of the church in South Africa, a pivotal question emerges—what steps should be taken to reshape problematic masculinities? While the analysis has adeptly highlighted the issues, the discussion on solutions remains a crucial frontier awaiting exploration. Some recommendations and solutions can be made in several areas. *First*, educational initiatives. The church can spearhead educational programs that challenge traditional gender norms and promote healthier expressions of masculinity. Workshops, seminars, and discussions can create spaces for reflection and transformation. *Second*, pastoral guidance. Church leaders can integrate discussions on masculinity into pastoral guidance. Providing support for men navigating societal expectations and promoting positive models of masculinity can foster change.

*Third*, community engagement. The church, as a community hub, can actively engage with local communities to address the root causes of gender-based violence. This involves collaborating with other stakeholders and leveraging the church's influence for societal change. *Fourth*, theological reflection. A theological exploration of masculinity within the South African context is imperative. This involves revisiting theological perspectives on gender roles and fostering a narrative that aligns with principles of equality and justice.

In navigating masculinity, our journey extends beyond analysis to actionable steps. The church, positioned at the intersection of faith and community, holds the potential to be a catalyst for change. By embracing a transformative approach to masculinity, grounded in respect, equality, and justice, the church can play a pivotal role in reshaping narratives and fostering a safer, more equitable society.

### **Appropriation**

Clines points to four expectations of what a 'real/ideal' man should do as follows:

(a) a real male should shy away from anything that is done by women, (b) the value of a man is measured in how successful and how independent he becomes, (c) being aggressive, being tough, being fighters and military life become avenues of living and expressing successful manhood, and (d) it is expected that a real man is sexually experienced and is always prepared to perform sexually.<sup>40</sup>

Like in the scene, David is seen as having to live up to expectations that are not necessarily life-giving, yet he does them for his identity, his manhood and to fight for being 'recognised' as a man. To ask David to consider 'the bigger picture' that he cannot even see, seems almost crippling to think about and, could it be what men within our context are caught up in a vicious cycle of a desire to belong, fit in and be accepted by society but to what end?

Zsolnay highlights the dynamic nature of masculinities, describing them as cultural endeavors that evolve in response to factors such as class divisions, sexual orientations, religious principles, racial perspectives, and economic inequalities.<sup>41</sup> The adherence to these ever-changing masculinities and their fluctuations often stems from the human instinct to belong. This implies that individuals strive to comprehend and adjust to cultural norms in their pursuit of community acceptance. From a local writer's perspective, Connell characterizes masculinity as experiential and performativity. In our interpretation, this signifies that some men are willing to fulfill all expected roles, even embracing violence and risk-taking, if it ensures their masculine identity remains unquestioned. In a later work it is argued that,

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<sup>40</sup> Clines, "David the man: the construction of masculinity in the Hebrew Bible," 215.

<sup>41</sup> Ilona Zsolnay, *Being a Man: Negotiating Ancient Constructs of Masculinity*, 1 ed. (London: Routledge, 2016), 3.

Men that display these assumed ideal characteristics are socially attractive to women and women are the custodian of masculinity. Men must embody all these traits, failure to do which they would lose respect and the honour of being called a man. Often when men try to regain honour and respect, they resort to the use of violence against women just to remind them of their dominant position and to prove their manhood.<sup>42</sup>

The concepts discussed earlier seem to shed light on possible explanations for the recent increase in gender-based violence in South Africa. In recent years, there has been an alarming increase in cases where certain men commit murder, physical violence and abuse of women and children. These horrific murders and sexual violence demonstrate the urgent need to change the mental and emotional outlook of men in our country. It is imperative to distance ourselves from toxic masculinity stereotypes and begin to redefine and renegotiate these harmful constructs. This change is necessary to develop a more complete and life-affirming understanding of masculinity.

In the selected scene, we see David acting out of expectation and being rewarded for it. This then leads to the informed assumption that, like David, some men will 'perform' and 'do' everything expected of them. Yet, the work of Haddox, begins by clarifying that it is important to understand biblical masculinity and contextual realities during the formulation of the ancient text because, "*some people take the biblical characters and situations as models for contemporary behavior.*"<sup>43</sup> This would mean that some could look at the things that King David did and view them as models of operation in the process of becoming and this could be how men in my context are using sex to control, abuse, using violence to dominate women like in the selected scene. Haddox emphasizes that modern readers must recognize a significant gap that separates them from the context of the biblical world (the implied reader). He tries to warn modern readers of the Bible to understand that the text does not have one definite definition of masculinity; events and narrators do not inherently crystallize a definitive notion of masculinity or masculinity. Instead, he encourages modern readers who seek to understand biblical masculinity to critically evaluate the factors that contributed to these constructions.

Dialogue with the men who are key players in these debates reveals a complex web of cultural, religious and social influences. Jewke et al. argue that cultural masculinity is produced by heteronormative and heterosexual norms that include characteristics such as toughness, strength, aggressiveness, risk-taking, non-feminine

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<sup>42</sup> S. Mathews, R. Jewkes, dan N. Abrahams, "'I had a Hard Life': Exploring Childhood Adversity in the Shaping of Masculinities among Men Who Killed an Intimate Partner in South Africa," *British Journal of Criminology* 51, no. 6 (November 2011): 8, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azr051>.

<sup>43</sup> Susan E. Haddox, "Masculinity Studies of the Hebrew Bible: The First Two Decades," *Currents in Biblical Research* 14, no. 2 (Februari 2016): 5, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476993X15575496>.

characteristics and dominance.<sup>44</sup> As such, the construction of masculinity is complex and ongoing for all men. When we delve into the complexity of this process, we understand the systemic advantages that accrue to men who embody hegemonic masculinity. Deviating from this norm often leads to ostracism and ridicule, which some men consider a high price to pay. This dynamic means that men are privileged to conform to certain aspects of male roles, including elements of problematic patriarchy, are inherently challenging. It is important to recognize that hegemonic masculinity is fundamentally shaped by patriarchy, which ultimately turns out to be harmful for men as well.

Ratele and Schefer's assertion indeed highlights the nuanced nature of patriarchal systems, acknowledging that patriarchy can be harmful not only to women but also to many boys and men in different ways. They emphasize that men suffer from the expectations and norms imposed by other men within patriarchal structures. The discussion on the potential pitfalls of matriarchal systems is a valid consideration. While dismantling patriarchal power structures is crucial for achieving gender equality, simply reversing the power dynamic may not necessarily lead to justice or equality. The goal should be to move towards a more egalitarian society where neither gender dominates the other.

Matriarchy, as a complete reversal of patriarchy, may pose its own set of challenges and risks. True gender equality involves dismantling oppressive systems and fostering a society where individuals, regardless of gender, can thrive without being confined by rigid expectations. The key lies in promoting egalitarianism, where power and opportunities are distributed based on individual capabilities and not predefined gender roles. It's about creating a balanced and just society where both men and women can participate fully and authentically, free from the constraints of rigid gender norms.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This article looked into the complexities of the relationship between Christianity, patriarchy, violence, the construction of masculinity and coming of age. This was done through a narrative analysis of the boy David who killed a giant and who is later called king David in 1 Samuel. This article recognizes the wrestling that men must work with in their construction of masculine identity in their coming-of-age process. However, the invitation through our article is that men notice how much damage has been done while they continue to consciously and unconsciously wrestle and choose the easier path of maintaining hegemonic masculinities. If we are to see gender-based violence eradicated and if we are to see change instantaneously, we argue it will call

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<sup>44</sup> Rachel Jewkes et al., "Gender Inequitable Masculinity and Sexual Entitlement in Rape Perpetration South Africa: Findings of a Cross-Sectional Study," ed. oleh Beverley J. Shea, *PLoS ONE* 6, no. 12 (Desember 2011): 67, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0029590>.

for men to be active partners and instigators and catalysts of change by removing the privilege and entitlement that they fell over their female counterparts and children. Our greatest hope is capitalizing on marginalized masculine identities because non-conformity shows disregard for societal, cultural, and religious expectations which have been sustaining of some societal ills such as gender-based violence.

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