

MANHOOD JOURNEY

Understanding A Man's World



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Volume 2

Manhood Journey

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Introduction

Welcome Back!

For most of you, this volume introduces the second round in your efforts to understand your manhood journey. God wants you to be His man, acting as a positive agent for change in the area of the forest He has placed you. To fulfill the purpose He has for us, we must rely on Him for His guidance, forgiveness and empowerment. We must commit ourselves to being all of who God created us to be because we cannot go unprepared into the spiritual war that is required to change our culture.

In Volume 1 (*Manhood Journey: Start Out Right*), we learned about six of the steps which are helpful to males who want to achieve manhood. The term *spandex male* refers to the parts of ourselves that can be described as immature and impulsive. The spandex male denies his need for manhood, God and others, and his focus is solely on himself. Before a spandex male can become a man (knight), he must initiate the following actions: Step 1 – develop a manhood team (campfire); Step 2 – commit to the manhood journey. After taking these initial steps, a man learns how manly responsibility and leadership are defined and actively practices them throughout his daily life; he will also have a better understanding of the various parts of himself and his environment (forest).

We will begin by looking at the five Trail Markers that can guide us on our manhood journey. In these challenging chapters about the pursuit of manhood, we will look at the dynamic process that is

required for a male to achieve manhood. Your understanding of these challenges sets the context for Volume 2 and those that follow. The reasoning is established for why being men of principle within a community setting and choosing to mentor males are such key ingredients to your ability to initiate positive cultural change. Our awareness of how God, despite our sins, pursues us by creating us in His image and sending us Jesus provides strength and guidance as we engage positively with the environment that God placed us in.

In the following chapters, we will explore the different elements within you that make up who you are. Our hope is that you will look at each of these parts of yourself and commit them to God. With His help, you can develop all of the great potential He has given you. When you reach the final step of your manhood journey, you will be able to integrate all of who you are into all of who He is.

In this volume, we will look at several forms of self-protection that are used in this challenging, and often dangerous, life: armor, which has defensive qualities that are necessary but, if overused, can be detrimental; chain mail, which catalogs all of your experiences, helping you try to predict and prepare for life. Your chain mail contains links, which serve as positive reminders of how to live well. Some of these links need to be polished, changing your negative patterns and replacing them with what God desires. Your instincts and your genetic predisposition also impact your manhood journey in multiple ways. Your core, which is made up of your body and its genetics possibilities and instincts, impacts your manhood journey in multiple ways. As men, we must become familiar with the elements that are within our core: our mind, shadow (sin), self, soul and spirit. All of these efforts will help you become more effective as God's leader. Gather your manhood team of warriors to discuss how you can further integrate God into your lives, get ready to be challenged and let another manhood adventure begin!

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Chapter 1

How We Lost Our Way

Step 7

A man's environment is a complex space filled with challenges, choices and responsibility. Because God created every man to lead within his environment, he must put effort into understanding its complexity and his role within it. God has designed us to seek specific guidance, or Trail Markers, to help us understand our environment and the challenges we encounter throughout life. The five Trail Markers have served as an indispensable resource which has directed males toward manhood for centuries.

Trail Marker #1—the tribe (neighborhood or community)—provides a male with opportunities to create beneficial relationships. A tribe consists of people from various backgrounds, experiences and cultures, who provide a male with essential resources, encouragement and viewpoints which reinforce his strength and direct him toward manhood.

Trail Marker #2—elders (older men)—guides a male toward relationships with older, wiser and experienced men. These relationships provide younger males with mentors who encourage and instruct them while exemplifying the success of their own manhood journeys. Elders display positive leadership and guide younger males toward becoming positive leaders themselves.

Trail Marker #3—personal standards (principles)—assists males when they are faced with challenges and difficult decisions. A man

pairs his personal standards with the 15 Principles of Manhood[‡] to prepare successful responses to future life experiences. The 15 Principles of Manhood provide the structure men need to live in spiritually productive ways. These principles serve as a starting point for a man to begin living for God. He must also carefully choose additional standards to follow, which are specific to his needs. He must intentionally choose these standards, commit to them and apply them to his actions, decisions and relationships.

Trail Marker #4—soul’s voice (inner voice)—is a representation of God’s image, which He places within every man. A man’s soul’s voice reflects God’s desire to have a relationship with him and compels him to seek God or an ultimate source of meaning (Romans 1 and 2).

Trail Marker #5—spirituality—leads a man to follow the call of his soul’s voice and establish a relationship with God. Because of man’s initial choice to sin, the natural relationship between God and man was severed. To revive it, a man must reconcile his spirit with God’s Spirit by accepting Jesus Christ’s sacrificial death as payment for his sins. A man must follow the spirituality Trail Marker in its entirety and dedicate himself to ongoing, daily communication with God. As a male understands his spirituality, he discovers his worth, purpose and manhood.

There are several benefits to understanding the Trail Markers:

- 1** The fact that they have disappeared indicates the various ways our culture has regressed to its present negative state.
- 2** They define what a man with a strong Godly identity must utilize to be effective in life.
- 3** They demonstrate life as God designed it to be and the fervency with which He seeks to have a relationship with us.

‡ The “15 Principles of Manhood” are available at knights21.com/store.

- 4 They describe the areas of our culture that the church can intervene in, making a positive difference and communicating God's message of salvation.
- 5 They allow us to assess the various areas of the culture that have decomposed into distorted forms that hurt us.
- 6 When integrated into our spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ, they provide us with a map for how life should be lived.

Although Trail Markers were established by God for our benefit, we often ignore them or use them incorrectly. When the Trail Markers along the paths of life are corrupted or absent from a forest adventure, people often lose their way. Many young males today follow paths of chaos and lack focus (Matthew 7:13-14). Over time, the Trail Markers that were once used by other generations have all but disappeared. When a male fails to recognize his surroundings, loses sight of the foundational landmarks on his map and becomes uncertain about which direction to take, he spins his wheels on what could be described as a cosmic patch of ice. Discouragement abounds, as daily life in the forest confuses him and, at times, does not seem to matter. Because of this constant discouragement, young males often feel bored and dissatisfied. We must follow God's call to reach out to them; the time is now!

A young male must find the right path, which allows him and those he loves to live the best lives possible (Proverbs 3:8-9). He needs to develop a life plan which keeps him focused on Godly manhood, as he chooses a direction for his life that makes sense. He must discover the path that leads to the best fulfillment of his potential which, in turn, serves God. A good plan provides clarity for his choices; his destination motivates him and provides measurably positive outcomes often not seen in other males who wander

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through life. If we look at what has contributed to the loss of the Trail Markers in the forest, we will also discover how so many males have become immature and directionless.

Like Lewis and Clark, we can follow the clues and use them to explore and develop new areas of our lives that will help us become men. This process produces better outcomes than when we simply react to the forest influences. Principle of Manhood #8 (Control) states, “A man shapes the forest more than the forest shapes the man.”¹ Because the forest shapes males in negative ways, as knights, we must fight these negative forces that can hold us hostage, limit the development of our manhood and dishonor God. We can improve the forest by restoring and refurbishing the Trail Markers, tarnished from years of cultural neglect, which can help others find their way through life.

Forgotten Community

One of the lost sources of guidance in a man’s life is Trail Marker #1, his tribe (or sense of community). There are many ways that our awareness of being part of a community has suffered (Colossians 3:15). There are fewer opportunities for people to interact with each other due to the “modernization” of the forest. In the past, if you wanted a candle, you would get it from Joe, the candle maker. If you needed to get your horse shoed, you would go to Pete, the blacksmith. If you wanted an education, you would go to Mary, the schoolteacher. As you interacted with each of these people over time, you began to value them, which increased your ability to understand them, as people. Now, you go to the store and buy shoes made in another country by people you have never met. Wal-Mart, not Joe, is where you obtain life’s necessities. At one time, the only way to talk to someone directly was to visit them, but now we simply call, text or email.

The depersonalization of life is further encouraged by the speed of life, because as life speeds up, other things take precedence over relationships. People are often defined simply by the ways they serve you, while the essence of who they are is ignored (Romans 12:3). In today’s

1 Matthew 5:13-16; Romans 12:1-2; 1 John 5:4-5

world, you start to see yourself as separate from the people around you, because you can always find what you need somewhere else. The ambulance slowing you down is carrying a stranger, not a friend. If you don't like the climate where you live, you can simply choose to move somewhere else to avoid it. Families are split up, as mobility and personal comfort are chosen over interpersonal connection.

Any relational attachment to someone new is viewed as a risk to your lifestyle because it might slow you down. The new people you meet can be quite different from you, and you may distrust their motivation. Eye contact on the "bus of life" is limited; you have socially isolated yourself from others by limiting your relational connections, maintaining relationships only with people who are "safe" and making sure the skin color of your friends or their culture is similar to yours. Being part of a complete community is not naturally valued and is not likely to occur unless a person actively pursues it (1 Corinthians 10:16-17).

Relational distancing is seen as the status quo, as emotional connections are put aside for busy agendas. Possibly even more insidious is that we no longer recognize the importance that our community has in the development of our strengths and the part it plays in helping us through the forest as we become men (Proverbs 18:1). Forest life encourages us to build walls of distrust; we quickly erect them when we interact with others who are different from us. Males tend to avoid conversations which are deep or supportive (Ephesians 4:15-16). This hesitancy diminishes their ability to develop true friendships and prevents new learning; it limits their understanding of the forest and the development of their potential. The encouragement of others gives you the courage to take risks; their guidance, along with God's, is needed to help you achieve your goals; their confrontation is needed to keep you focused (Proverbs 27:17).

How was our sense of community defined in the past? When tribes were smaller, each person's survival was dependent on the other members of the tribe. The world's wide-ranging, rugged physical boundaries made travel beyond certain limits difficult and risky.

These barriers to mobility made it necessary for people to learn to work together and get along. Each person was expected to share their unique talents and gifts with their community (Romans 12:6-8). In turn, they were valued. The tribe gave each person significance by recognizing their contribution to its survival. Because of the interdependency of the tribe's members, the differences between individuals were viewed as a benefit to life, not a threat (1 Corinthians 12:12). Justice was provided by the community, as well as restoration. Paul describes the early church as an example of a positive community (1 Corinthians 12:25-26). Living in this way meant that if one person was hurt, everyone was hurt in some way; if someone did something wrong, everyone was affected, and the combined force of the tribe was required for reconciliation to occur.

Absent Elders

Trail Marker #2, which provides mature elders on whom males can rely, has also dramatically changed and all but disappeared (Titus 1:7-9). It is important to understand the ripple effect that the absence of this Trail Marker creates in the capacity that males have to develop their manhood. Because of the absence of men who demon-

Because of the absence of men who demonstrate manhood, males are denied the opportunity to become men (Psalm 78:1-8).

strate manhood, males are denied the opportunity to become men (Psalm 78:1-8). There are fewer men available to assist the next generation of males, causing life overall to move in nega-

tive directions. Knights of the 21st Century (Knights21), a program created to bring men together to learn how to become heroic leaders, has introduced a number of men's ministry curriculum programs based on the concepts in *Manhood Journey*. This program focuses on teaching males how to develop their manhood, which prepares them to serve as positive elders and role models for the next generation.

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A Manhood Story

Every Tuesday, a group of men meet to learn about manhood through a Knights21 curriculum series, *The Heroic Man's Journey*. After listening to each lesson, these men (Joe, Chris, Bob, Chuck, José, Jim, Paul and George) gather in their campfire discussion group to discuss the lesson and how it can be applied to their lives, explore the parts of themselves they may need to change and talk about life in general. Throughout *A Manhood Story*, we can see their relationships with each other progress and new relationships form, which allows each man to have new experiences, develop his character and ultimately step toward manhood.

* * *

This week, the men discussed the various ways that Trail Markers are undermined in today's culture. The disintegration of these Trail Markers makes it difficult for males to discover the true manhood that God designed for each of them, which has contributed to a male identity crisis in our culture. Our prisons are full; males are bored and aimless. The scarcity of true men makes this problem even worse, as cultural standards have disappeared and males cannot find positive role models to follow.

A male who lacks guidance chooses behaviors and relationships that get him into trouble and don't truly satisfy him; he doesn't listen to his internal desire to learn from a strong man.¹ As the men explored this concept, they started looking at the type of mentors they are to the younger males in their lives.

* * *

1 1 Kings 19:19-21; 2 Kings 2:1-15; 6:8-20; Proverbs 14:12

• Appendix A provides a description of each campfire member in *A Manhood Story*.

Chris began the group discussion by explaining that he feels privileged to have the opportunity to lead his two stepsons in a positive, manly direction. “I’m learning how to be a good stepdad to Teresa’s kids,” he said. “But I’m not sure if I’m doing a good job. I don’t have any experience as a father.”

José assured him that he would get the hang of it in no time. With four children of his own, José enjoys being a dad. “I think having a few good role models in my family helped prepare me for being a good example to my own children,” he explained. “My father and grandfather taught me many positive life lessons, but they never acted like they were perfect. I learned a lot from watching them.”

Chuck told the group that his dad wasn’t involved in much of his life, but he had always wished that someday they would have been able to be closer. He said that losing his dad at age 16 was tough; he didn’t have anyone to talk to about his dad’s death. He said, “I wonder if that’s part of the reason I work so much; it keeps me busy and stops me from thinking about losing my dad.”

Jim, the facilitator of the Knights campfire group asked the men, “How much time do you spend on your relationships?” He went over the concept that relationships may feel “sticky” for men because of the feelings they stir up.

Paul said, “I don’t think I’m very good at dealing with or expressing feelings. Polly handles the feelings for both of us in our relationship.” He told Chuck, “I know a little bit about how you must have felt when you lost your dad—because of the feelings I had after my first wife, Mary, died.”

Most of the men said they don’t really like most of the feelings they have.

Bob said, “I have quite a few feelings that challenge me, but I learned from my sex addiction support group that being aware of my feelings is pretty important if I am going to maintain my sobriety and stay away from pornography.” He continued, “Whenever I felt rejected, I would go back to ‘old faithful’—porn—because it would help me feel better, but not for very long.”

Jim told the group that there are a lot of negative forces that keep males from finding manhood. Men have lost their sense of community; people have become more relationally lazy as travel has become much easier. Jim said, “If you have a problem, all you have to do is move and start over again.” Everyone complained about the ways that emailing and texting have replaced talking face-to-face. Several campfire members talked about their beliefs that healthy standards have disappeared and the ways that everyone does whatever they think they can get away with at the moment.

“Every year we think it can’t get worse, and every year it does,” said Chuck.

Bob, who teaches shop classes at a vo-tech school, expressed his frustration with the parents of his students who are always ready to defend the laziness of their children, rather than expecting them to work hard in school. He said, “How will these young adults ever learn to work all day, when they are always allowed to get away with excuses?”

Paul shared his opinion: “No one wants to wait to get what they think will satisfy them. Everyone wants to ‘have it all’ immediately.”²

José asked the group, “Do you ever have trouble telling yourself no? I have trouble not spending money on sports memorabilia. An old baseball card can make me forget my budget in a second, especially if I let myself think about how rare it is or that I might not have another opportunity to buy one like it.”

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Paul said, “I was actually more shocked that I chose to treat Harry with true respect than by how he responded to me.”

Bob said, “Well, this is what Knights is all about—making changes in ourselves and becoming what God wants us to be, rather than expecting other people to fix things for us.”

Jim wanted to know if anyone else had experienced a difference in the ways they were responding. Joe said, “I’m becoming more open to people. I think I’m listening better to people I don’t know very well.”

Chris said, “I’ve started working on some long-term goals for myself, instead of always just going with the flow.”

José said, “I’m worrying a little less.”

Chuck said, “I know I’m feeling better inside—I just don’t really know how yet.”

Bob shared that his wife told him that he is talking to her differently, and even though he doesn’t know what he is doing differently, his wife said that it is helping her feel closer to him.

The Knights campfire meeting ended.

Bricks

1. Over time, the Trail Markers that were once used by other generations have all but disappeared.
2. A young male must find the right path, which allows him and those he loves to live the best lives possible (Proverbs 3:8-9).

3. Because of the absence of men who demonstrate manhood, males are denied the opportunity to become men (Psalm 78:1-8).
4. The male youth is left feeling deprived of his father's support for his manhood process.
5. Instinctively, a young male knows he needs a man who will be a mentor to him; he needs someone who has the strength of character to be vulnerable and interactive (Acts 13:36).
6. Males who define manhood on their own can be dangerous because they usually define it in simplistic, sexual and violent terms, which often causes them to act out in sexual and violent ways (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).
7. Grief work is the process that allows a male to feel the emotions and pain related to the losses and disappointments of life, share them with others and redefine the meaning they have in his life.
8. When males fail to recognize the importance of their feelings, they do not develop this important part of who they are, which limits their relationship skills (Ephesians 4:2-3).
9. The state of our culture exemplifies the negative impact of males who have allowed the positive elements within themselves to atrophy and die.
10. The development of healthy standards requires clarity of thought, consistency of purpose and the ability to delay immediate gratification, all of which can be enormously inconvenient (2 Corinthians 8:21).
11. The Bible contains many principles of life which were given to us by God for our good.

Campfire Discussion

Share your answers with your group.

1. Briefly talk about your week, sharing the highlights or the concerns you may have. You may also want to give an update on what you shared last week.
2. Share a thought or an idea from this chapter that caught your attention. How does it relate to your life?
3. What do you think about the importance of your emotional nature? Identify an emotion that is easy for you to express. Identify an emotion that you have difficulty expressing.
4. Identify three standards which you have chosen to apply to your life on a daily basis.
5. How do you personally define spirituality? What basic belief regarding the foundation of the world have you decided to have faith in?
6. How do you think the loss of community and elders and the lack of principles affects today's world?
7. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 states, "God has breathed life into all of Scripture. It is useful for teaching us what is true. It is useful for correcting our mistakes. It is useful for making our lives whole again. It is useful for training us to do what is right. By using Scripture, the servant of God can be completely prepared to do every good thing." How do these Bible verses apply to your manhood journey?

‡ Visit knights21.com/store for the complete list of the "15 Principles of Manhood" or to view the images we have associated with each principle.

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Our manhood journey begins by accepting the reality of challenges and facing them with courage. We recognize the necessity of change and the importance of learning. With the encouragement of other Godly men and the strength God gives us, we journey on, further establishing our manhood by discovering God's purpose for our lives and growing in our faith.

Take the next step!

