

MANHOOD JOURNEY

Discovering Your Building Blocks



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Volume 3

Manhood Journey

Discovering Your
Building Blocks

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Introduction

Pressing On

Thank you for joining us for this volume of *Manhood Journey: Discovering Your Building Blocks*. Men like you, who are willing to do their homework and put effort into understanding their God-given design, give us hope. Your God-given leadership role begins with leading yourself. By taking responsibility for understanding and developing the various elements within you, you are giving God access to your life and allowing Him to intervene in it and guide it in deeper ways.

In order to grow as men, we must learn to put words to what we know and experience. Through this learning process, ask God for His help. Because He wants to make us strong, He will respond powerfully. He has a purpose for each of our lives. The world needs Godly men who structure their identity around God's Word and strive to be His representatives. Walking with Jesus daily is the first step toward solving the problems surrounding us.

As you continue your manhood journey, you will learn about the building blocks that make up a man. The first element we will explore is the human body. It is through this foundational element that a male baby first becomes aware of himself, and he carries this self-awareness throughout his life. His body affects his decisions, and his decisions in turn affect what happens to him physically. We will also explore a man's genetics, instincts, thought processes and—one of the most challenging areas of a man's

life—feelings. We will begin to unwrap the inner workings of a man's mind, where his thoughts and decisions are in a continual battle. We will discuss how to evaluate our behavioral patterns, determine whether they are Godly and change them if necessary.

You are a vital part of the Knights of the 21st Century team and the success of our mission. Our goal is to encourage men to follow King Jesus and pursue personal and cultural change together. Without you and your unique talents and skills, our ministry would not exist. You have committed yourself to following God's call—now you must understand what makes you who you are. Open up all of the compartments within yourself and turn over all of the elements that make you who you are to His redeeming work. Put on your hiking boots, prepare yourself for new ideas and challenges, and take your manhood journey to the next level!

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Chapter 1

The Body: The Physical You

Step 12

In Volume 1 of *Manhood Journey*, we learned about the internal aspects of manhood: what it means to be a man, how to begin your journey toward manhood and how to resist your immature male tendencies by following our God-given guidance system (Trail Markers). In Volume 2, we developed a deeper understanding of manhood and how it interacts within the context of the five Trail Markers—tribes, elders, personal standards, soul’s voice (conscience) and spirituality. We discussed the internal parts of a man: his armor (a built-in defense system), his chain mail (a memory/response system) and his core (the definition of who he is). In Volume 3, we will consider several elements that make up a man’s core, starting with the body.

The body of a man is an overarching concept involving the various physical aspects of who he is. It not only determines his physical appearance, but it also includes the two main elements of his brain (his brain that thinks and his brain that feels), which control his ability to set goals and manage his emotions. A man’s physical characteristics go well beyond what is visible to the eye. How we look, however, often affects how the forest (our environment) treats us. One of the ways a man shows that he is worthy of the title of “knight” is when he demonstrates self-discipline through taking care of himself physically. Self-discipline is the act of choosing to inconvenience himself in order to do something beneficial. It is a form of self-leadership that others can easily

see, and it encourages them to have confidence in him. Cleanliness contributes to a physical image that portrays inner strength. When he exercises and stays in shape, eats nutritiously and gets regular medical and dental checkups, he is demonstrating the self-discipline that will establish his credibility with others.¹ A knight maintains his physical strength, which allows him to contribute positively to the lives of others.

Spandex males (those who have not reached manhood status) often choose to deny or ignore the importance of the physical aspect of themselves and their responsibility for taking care of this facet of their manhood. The requirements for taking care of a man's physical body change as he ages and are a constant reminder of the temporary nature of his life. A knight recognizes that his ability to lead himself depends on how aware he is of his body and his physical needs, as well as how he handles those needs. He puts effort into keeping himself physically and mentally active; this increases his readiness for the physical challenges that are part of his daily forest experiences. He takes ownership for his body and accepts the fact that it is an important representation of who he is. He recognizes that his physical condition sets the tone for who he will become and how he experiences life.

A Manly Challenge

Other than the challenges that sin (the shadow) presents, I find the physical upkeep of my body to be one of the most difficult aspects of the manhood journey. Our bodies often visibly show the

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consequences of how we choose to treat them. What we eat and how we act directly affects our bodies. A man's level of self-discipline in this

area is manifested by his willingness to maintain daily routines with ongoing regularity, despite life's many distractions. A man controls the impulses which make him want to resist taking care of

1 1 Corinthians 9:27; 1 Timothy 4:8

his body—he knows God wants him to take care of it.² Competing forces within him clamor for his attention. Because of this, it is often easier to ignore healthy behavioral choices or choose not to give enough energy to them. It is not unusual to put his bodily needs at the end of his priority list. His physical self-care requires his constant attention and ongoing self-discipline to maintain the expectations of manhood.

A man's positive contributions to life often use up the time that he could be spending on exercise and eating a healthy diet. To be self-disciplined in this area, a man must identify and limit the personal barriers that stand in the way of maintaining good physical health. He must consciously choose to follow through on an action plan that is focused on healthy physical self-care habits. His self-discipline in this area can be measured over time. Anyone can work out for a few days; the true nature of a man's self-discipline is demonstrated by his ability to follow a specific, consistent routine. It is easier to develop self-discipline through small, incremental steps, like starting out by walking two miles a day and gradually increasing the distance or speed, rather than choosing to do something more challenging that may not be accomplished. Other needs will always compete for a man's energy; he must overcome the disruption of his commitment and self-discipline and make self-care a top priority in his daily life.

Self-discipline also helps a man develop and maintain his meditative experience (e.g., prayer, reading the Bible, reflection). It is during these solidifying moments that he is able to mobilize his energy and commit to accomplishing his well-planned goals.³ Having self-discipline regarding his time with God provides a defense that keeps him from following his impulses and helps him structure his time well. The practices of reading the Bible, praying and reflecting gives him direction for using his limited resources wisely; it encourages efficiency in his daily life; it allows him to think about what lies ahead; it helps him identify the po-

² 1 Timothy 4:8

³ Psalm 1:1-3; Proverbs 21:5

tential pitfalls in the path ahead. The practice of reflection and meditating on God's Word supports a man's quest for self-discipline by helping him focus his efforts. Even more importantly, during these times the Holy Spirit can speak to him through his thoughts (1 Corinthians 2:10-16). The Bible is a resource that should be used as he prays and looks to God's teachings for guidance. Finding time for self-evaluation depends on his self-disciplined commitment to doing it.⁴ Without self-evaluation and a well-thought-out plan, worthwhile accomplishments are rare. Jesus shows us the importance of this type of reflection time by stopping His healing and preaching to spend time alone with God (Matthew 14:23). Manhood is one of the most significant accomplishments of a male's life. To achieve it, he must set aside time for reflection and meditating on God's Word, and then follow it with strategic action.

Besides the physical atrophy that occurs, the impact of a male's lack of self-discipline can be seen in other significant areas of his daily life. An undisciplined male ignores his need for time to reflect on his life and decisions, as being self-disciplined through regular prayer or meditation is not important to him. The fast pace of forest living, combined with a spandex male's choice to ignore his weaknesses, causes most males to choose to replace reflection time with other less fulfilling and growth-producing activities. He pushes spending time with God to the bottom of his priority list or, more likely, completely off the list.⁵ Because he doesn't take the time to reflect, he misses out on the growth that comes from looking honestly at himself and following God's guidance. He ignores his need for God's input, which is the chief reason that success eludes him.

Because he tells himself he does not have enough time for what is truly important, the male paradoxically wastes time, as his consistent lack of direction causes him to wander aimlessly.⁶

4 Proverbs 25:28; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

5 Philippians 2:3-4

6 Proverbs 6:9-11

Because he has not taken time to reflect on what really matters to him and establish his priorities, he continually ignores what is most important.⁷ Instead of choosing to meditate on God’s Word (Joshua 1:8) and seek God’s guidance daily, his priorities are a confusing mess. If an observer looked down from an airplane on this immature lifestyle, they would see his zigzag pattern of living. He has not established a primary goal for his life; there is not a straight line of behavioral action leading him in any one direction.⁸ When viewed as a whole, this male’s life demonstrates a series of false starts and detours. His follow-through on any carefully devised plan is immediately disrupted by the next distraction that comes along.

A man must be vigilant regarding the conflicting forces that will distract or hinder him from what he is attempting to accomplish.⁹ A male’s lack of self-control and self-discipline diminishes his willingness to seek God’s guidance and undermines the entire manhood process. A man’s ability to develop self-discipline and step toward the challenges of life is crucial to the ongoing state of manhood. There are many excuses *not* to spend time praying and asking God for His guidance, but none of them are valid. A man must proactively develop strategies to protect the time he sets aside for exercise, self-evaluation, maintaining a healthy diet and listening to God speak through studying the Bible and praying.

A man’s ability to develop self-discipline and step toward the challenges of life is crucial to the ongoing state of man-

The Disciplined Knight

A knight puts effort into controlling his thoughts, his negative habits¹⁰ and his impulses. He asks God for His assistance constantly and prays “without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17 KJV). When he is trying to stop a specific negative behavior, he

⁷ Proverbs 4:23

⁸ Proverbs 3:5-6

⁹ Proverbs 4:23; 1 Peter 5:8

¹⁰ Proverbs 4:23; 25:28; Galatians 5:22-23; 2 Timothy 1:7

repeatedly asks himself, *How can I act like Jesus would?* Sometimes, developing a good behavioral pattern is as difficult as stopping a bad behavioral pattern because he needs to choose to disrupt the comfort zones that surround familiar patterns. When his negative patterns are so entrenched that they have become automatic, he must focus on them consciously and seek God's help to develop new, more Christ-like actions. Breaking old habits creates possibilities for establishing new habits. A man invests energy in repeating positive behaviors and responses until they are a permanent part of his life.

A man does what is hard.^{11, †} As he practices self-discipline, his core is further solidified, his mental and emotional toughness increases, his character is strengthened, his integrity is apparent and his goals are attained. As Paul explains in Romans 7, self-discipline is never fully achieved. As men, we must ask God for His assistance regularly.

How does a man develop toughness? He begins by recognizing the negative impact of excuses. Excuses can provide an explanation, but they do not justify anything. Excuses help us ignore the fact that certain actions are wrong and prevent us from acknowledging the consequences of these actions.¹² The consequence of believing our excuses is that a spirit of dishonesty begins to eat away at our integrity. A mentality that supports the use of excuses causes a male to deny responsibility; it weakens his core because he is dependently looking to someone else to fix his problems, rather than fixing them himself with God's help.

By using excuses, a male limits his awareness of reality, hinders the development of a better plan, is relationally dishonest by portraying himself as better than he is, and attempts to lessen the

11 Ecclesiastes 9:10; Hosea 1-3; Matthew 16:24; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 2 Timothy 4:7

† Principle of Manhood #5 – “Courage” – The “15 Principles of Manhood” are available at knights21.com/store.

12 Genesis 3:9-12; 1 Samuel 15

consequences of his choices. The use of excuses and the pursuit of manhood are polar opposites. A man learns to ignore the excuses that are ingrained in him because of his shadow's presence. He does not let them affect his thinking; instead, he allows himself to recognize his failure in healthy ways. A man expects great things from himself. Anything that takes him back to his spandex male ways should at least lead to an "aw shucks" response. Admitting his tendency to use excuses is courageously honest. Learning how to limit the excuses that have become patterns in a man's life will help him develop the self-discipline that is required for a successful manhood journey.

Paying The Price

As a result of growing up as the rebellious son of a minister, and later, spending considerable time as a psychologist treating addicts with criminal backgrounds, my language is quite "colorful" at times. (*Is that an excuse?*) The truth is (*and we can agree to disagree on this*) that although my intent is not to offend, I have a very limited list of negative words that I don't give myself permission to say within any context. These words involve my Savior and my God.¹³ I have, during times of great frustration, used this short list. One time I was in an office and heard, through a group of office personnel talking among themselves, that an insurance company was making decisions that harmed a number of unsuspecting clients. With great self-righteousness, I exploded and, for full impact, went to the short list of words. The line had been crossed.

13 Exodus 20:7; Matthew 15:18-19; Ephesians 4:29

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A Manhood Story

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

* * *

This week's lesson was about the body and the need to understand how it influences what a man does. The body is made up of several elements. The brain that thinks allows a man to set goals, plan ways to achieve the goals, and come up with logical solutions for life's problems. The brain that feels is the emotional part of his brain—it expresses anger, fear, joy, love and excitement. Men often neglect emotional areas of their lives, and as a result, the term *emotional IQ* (EQ) has become a popular term in leadership and management books.

In order to control his body, a man must develop self-discipline.¹ Self-discipline is vital because he needs it to deal with his body's instincts, which are primitive influences that must be guided if they are to be used for the benefit of himself and others. Men have many instincts: the instinct to seek pleasure, avoid pain, desire sex, fight, flee, learn, and bond with others. Instincts are

1 Proverbs 25:28; Galatians 5:23; Titus 1:8; 2:6

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

quite helpful in some life situations, but they can also be harmful in others. A man demonstrates self-control in everyday life by filtering his impulses through Godly principles and committing to doing what is right.

The body's genetic attributes can influence a man toward certain behaviors. Taking time to meditate and seek God's help is essential for a man when he is dealing with his physical nature.

* * *

For the past couple weeks, Chris had not come to the Knights campfire meetings. When Joe called him to find out if anything was wrong, Chris told him that he was very busy and didn't think that Knights was for him. This week, Chris showed up again, and everyone welcomed him enthusiastically. Chris thought that he should speak first, since he felt that he had made a mistake by trying to quit Knights.

He took a deep breath and slowly let it out. "Note to self," he said. "Next time you kick a hornet's nest, make sure the hornets don't all have your phone number." They all laughed, cutting the tension. "I really did want to quit," he continued, "because there are so many things in my life that feel wrong, and all of you seem to have it together. After our lesson on armor, I recognized one of my armor issues, but I didn't want to talk about it. Like every other situation in my life, I ended up feeling like a failure. I decided if I wasn't going to talk about my problem—I might as well quit. So I did.

"I don't know whose idea it was to call me, but I was really surprised when I got the first few phone calls. I didn't think I mattered enough for you guys to call me. When the calls kept coming, I got angry because I knew I would have to make a difficult decision. The last few calls broke my heart because I realized you guys are the kind of team I've wanted my whole life, and if I'm ever

going to deal with my problem and change, you would be the ones to help me through it. No one ever fought for me like you did.”

“I don’t have it all together either,” admitted Chuck, patting Joe on the shoulder. “Sometimes, I drink too much. I say it’s just because I like my beer, but really, I use drinking as a form of armor. I was just too afraid to admit it. So I understand what you mean.”

“Each one of us has done things that we aren’t proud of,” said Jim. “Knights isn’t about being perfect. It’s about having a relationship with God and being the man He designed us to be. Through Jesus Christ’s death, God took care of the perfection part.”

“Do you feel comfortable telling the group what you didn’t want to before?” George asked Chris. “If you’re willing to talk with us about it, there won’t be any reason for you to leave again.”

Chris said, “If I don’t tell you, I would feel like I’m not being real with you, and I probably *would* quit again.”

“I don’t want you to quit, Chris,” said José. “I like you, even though you aren’t perfect. I would be honored if you trusted all of us enough to talk about what’s bothering you.”

“My whole life, I’ve just gotten by,” admitted Chris. “My parents covered for me until they felt I made a mistake by marrying Teresa. The sad thing is, marrying Teresa was probably the best thing I ever did, and it was the only thing I did totally independently from my parents. But she doesn’t know the problem I’ve struggled with my whole life, even though sometimes I wonder if she suspects something.

“When I was young, my parents were hard to live with. I didn’t like them very much. I started smoking cigarettes when I was 11 years old, and switched to weed by the time I was 12. I liked it, and I couldn’t have cared less about what they thought. Whenever

things got tense, I would just smoke some weed and feel better—for a little while.

“I know the negative effects of smoking weed, but it’s been my best friend since I was 12, and I don’t want to say goodbye to it. I know I should give it up, and Knights is teaching me the same thing. But it’s impossible. I’ve quit thousands of times over the years, and the longest I’ve gone without using is eight weeks. Then I heard today’s lesson about having self-control and taking care of your body. I’m addicted, and hearing this message makes me think that someone upstairs doesn’t like me very much.”

“Addiction is hard to deal with,” Bob replied, “and it’s impossible to deal with alone. I needed a counselor and a support group to deal with my pornography addiction. If my dad would’ve had the courage that you do, Chris, I would have a different set of childhood memories. He never got help for his pornography habit. He had a lot of affairs, and my mother had to just keep living with his unfaithfulness.”

“At times, I think I might need to do that for my drinking problem,” Chuck said.

“We all need each other,” said Jim. “Without other people, we would all fail way more than we do now.”

“I agree,” said Paul. “Sometimes, I spend too much time in my head, and I completely avoid my feelings. I wonder if someone can be addicted to not wanting to talk or even think about what’s deep inside them.”

“Whatever it’s called,” said Joe, “we all have ups and downs. Chris, today you took a big step toward trying to change what’s been haunting you for your entire life.”

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Bricks

1. A man honors God's unique messages to him by developing himself physically, which enhances his leadership abilities and allows him to encourage others to develop themselves.
2. Our bodies often visibly show the consequences of how we choose to treat them. What we eat and how we act directly affects our bodies.
3. Self-discipline also helps a man develop and maintain his meditative experience (e.g., prayer, reading the Bible, reflection). It is during these solidifying moments that he is able to mobilize his energy and commit to accomplishing his well-planned goals.
4. A man's ability to develop self-discipline and step toward the challenges of life is crucial to the ongoing state of manhood.
5. A knight knows that his goal will not be accomplished overnight because the forest often puts up barriers which impede his progress.
6. When a man takes care of his body, he sends a significant message to those he leads.
7. Your body is not just for your use; it is also to be used for God in a world filled with needs.

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 talked to the group about 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 like about your physical appearance? If you could change anything about your body, what would it be?
4. How does physical exercise fit into your life? Are your eating habits healthy? Which unhealthy foods are the most difficult for you to resist? How does (or did) the use of alcohol and drugs fit into your life?
5. How is aging affecting your body? What is your attitude about the aging process and its effects on your body?
6. God has defined your body as a holy establishment. Identify one positive action that you are willing to make a commitment to, in order to improve your personal church (your body). How have you served others by using your body well?
7. Galatians 5:19-21 states,

The result of sin's control in our lives is clear. It includes sexual sins, impure acts and wild living. It includes worshiping statues of gods and worshiping evil powers. It also includes hatred and fighting, jealousy and fits of anger. Sinful desire is interested only in getting ahead. It stirs up trouble. It separates people into their own little groups. It wants what others have. It gets drunk and takes part in wild parties. It does many things of that kind. I warn you now as I did before. People who live like this will not receive God's kingdom.

How do these Bible verses apply to your manhood journey?

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A man's core determines who he is and who he can become.
As we learn about the parts of our core, we will develop stronger bonds with our manhood team, continue to follow God's call for our lives and strengthen the essence of who we are, as God's men.

Prepare to discover!

Published by Pennsylvania Counseling Services, Inc.
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