

# MANHOOD JOURNEY

Stepping Beyond Your Limits



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Volume 5

# **Manhood Journey**

Stepping Beyond Your Limits

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# Introduction

## Fight On!

Congratulations! You have made it to the final book in a series that is designed to help you understand the steps that are necessary to achieve manhood. God has called you to be His warrior in a world of compromise and spiritual apathy. Going into this daily battle without ongoing preparation is foolish—it leads to spiritual defeat. To complete the manhood journey, a man must develop his awareness of his God-given design and the ways it can help him be his best in the forest.

As you integrate the concepts within this book with all that you have learned in the past, you will have a complete picture of manhood. God has great expectations of us because He has given us amazing gifts and potential. The Holy Spirit works within us—to redeem us from a salvation perspective and also to help us develop a strong identity that allows us to make a difference in our daily interactions. As our relationship with God infuses our life, we will develop the strength of character that leads to an honorable lifestyle, positive Christian leadership and healthy, ongoing relationships. Our roles as husbands, fathers, church leaders and friends provide numerous opportunities to show how God influences us. As you take the self-evaluation survey in Appendix B, the growth you have achieved as a result of being open to God's power to change you will be apparent.

In this volume, we will look at the role a man's self plays in his daily decision-making. Living responsibly only happens when you focus on each of the individual steps to spiritual maturity and live them out. Through your understanding of your self, you are tuned in to your internal elements and the motivation, energy, impulse and perspective they provide—all of which impact the choices we make. We will also discuss the final two of the four stages of manhood (childhood/spandex male, knighthood, transparent and transcendent). The transparent stage, which always makes the miraculous a possibility, pushes a man out of his comfort zone to become God's best. The transcendent stage is about the dying process and the meaning a man of God can experience by going through it. As always, we look at how God guides us in practical ways while we make the manly decision of choosing who will be the ultimate authority in our lives.

Thank you for taking your spiritual walk with God seriously. The world needs men like you to add to the good in life. May God bless you as you consider these words and look to Him for guidance and strength.

**"I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race.  
I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).**

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# Chapter 1

## The Self: Your Decision-Maker

### Step 16

Throughout the *Manhood Journey* series, we have discussed the many aspects of who we are as men. Learning about our complexity and increasing our self-awareness helps us manage ourselves, build strength to combat life's challenges and better understand and grow in our relationships—with others and with God. As we wrap up this series, we will explore some of the deepest aspects of manhood and our God-given design, starting with one of our most powerful and defining elements—our “self.”

### **Chief Executive Officer**

A man uses his self to blend the influence of all of his core elements (his body, mind, soul, spirit and shadow); when unified, a man's elements create results that are greater than the sum of all of his parts. The self can be compared to the reaction of two chemicals that, when put together, release more energy through their reaction when combined than as separate chemicals. God, the great Designer, made us this way. A man's self gives him the ability to evaluate multiple options before acting and then take ultimate responsibility for the choices he makes (Deuteronomy 30:19-20). This also means a man is capable of making good decisions at one moment and extremely self-destructive decisions in the next (Jeremiah 6:16).

A man who understands his self well will be fully aware of the interactions between his various elements. For example, he will be in tune with his soul and its interaction with his body when it compels him to participate in meaningful physical expressions of God's love (1 Corinthians 16:19-20), such as helping someone by mowing their lawn, driving them to an appointment or making them dinner. His self also recognizes the interactions between his mind's king and his mind's warrior when he uses his protective instincts through actions like protecting a woman who is being abused (Romans 13:4). It helps him recognize that certain behavioral changes create new brain ruts, like when he makes a commitment to read his Bible daily (Psalm 119:105). His self makes him aware of the relationship between his shadow, an ever-present, negative influence within his core, and his spirit, which limits the power of his shadow through his choice to adopt a Christian faith perspective (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Your self is the expression of who you are, including the interactions of your core elements; a knight learns how to make the best choices amidst their various messages. Your self serves as chief executive officer of your core, making choices regarding the actions you decide to take. Its multiple roles include referee, judge, negotiator and explorer (Matthew 7:13-14).

## **A United Purpose**

A man's insight grows as he uses his self to combine his emotions and thoughts and apply them to life events (Colossians 2:7; Matthew 5:28). Developing a plan to reach your goals requires your body and your self to act in sync. The self is the "I" in "I know best" (2 Timothy 3:2). Although, up until now, you may not have been consciously aware of the interactions between your core elements, you have been talking for some time with your self. Self-talk is a regular, internal dialogue that occurs naturally and often unconsciously (Luke 15:17-18). Your self filters through the various viewpoints of the parts of your core (Jonah 4:8) and

attempts to direct you toward one clear, united purpose (1 Timothy 1:5). To do this, you must harness the energy of the dissenting elements to ensure that the greater good is accomplished. This parallels the same decisive focus that God exemplifies in how He treats us (Isaiah 46:10).

A process similar to a parliamentary procedure takes place as a man's self organizes the messages of his various elements and listens to the dialogue between them before deciding on his next course of action (2 Timothy 4:5). Your self will process messages that conflict with each other and filter out the ones you think and feel more intensely about. It is hard for us to make any decision without experiencing some form of competing message within ourselves that disagrees with, or at least questions, what we are choosing to do. This internal process can explain the ambivalence that many of us experience regularly. The speed of this decision-making process depends on the difficulty of the decision (Philippians 4:6-7).

Let's look at the example of a man deciding whether or not he should go to his friend's wedding. The man's ability to be aware of and process all of the individual messages from his internal elements allows him to make a better, more informed decision. His self makes a decision after allowing each of the core elements to give their input.

In this particular example, the man's sexual instinct may say, "Your wife would appreciate it if you go to the wedding, and when you get home, you could get lucky (sexually)."

At the same time, his genetic element states, "You're an introvert. You're fairly quiet, and big groups of people make you nervous."

Meanwhile, his body says, "You'll probably feel too tired to go to a wedding after a long week of work."

His mind's lover and friend states, "Your friend would appreciate your support on this special day. You want to show him that you care."

His mind's king says, "If your friend cares enough about you to invite you, you should go."

The mind's warrior says, "You might not like weddings, but you can tough it out."

The shadow disagrees, saying, "This wedding is incredibly inconvenient."

"It's a good opportunity to get closer to your wife," says his soul. His soul also recognizes the underlying meaning of the wedding ceremony, which could motivate him.

The man's chain mail argues, "Marriages fail all the time. Your parents split up, and your marriage isn't going that well either."

His armor says, "You don't know the people who are going, and they'll be from a different culture. You're going to feel uncomfortable."

His brain that thinks states, "All the emotionally mushy stuff won't be fun. But, you may see a friend who could give you advice on your latest project."

Finally, his brain that feels says, "You would expect your friend to do this for you—so you should do it for him."

The self's task is to listen to each of these parts of ourselves, weigh the pros and cons of each potential choice and make the ultimate decision regarding our course of action. Generally, in any decision-making process, there are more reasons to support one option over another. When the pros and cons of multiple

behavioral choices seem to be the same, ambivalence occurs. This state of uncertainty limits our passion because a part of us wants to go in each conflicting direction. Our self, in its executive function, hears all of our internal messages, learns to rate their importance, decides what should happen and communicates this course of action to us. This process underscores the importance of learning to listen for the Spirit of God and its guidance—this is how we discover how to follow God’s will and His call for our lives (1 Peter 2:15). Whenever possible, we must be in tune with each internal part of ourselves and align them with what God wants—before taking any action.

Your self is the part of you that assesses each situation and decides which aspects of your core will have the most influence (Romans 12:21). Your mind may enjoy the dialogue, but when your

**Your self is the part of you that assesses each situation and decides which aspects of your core will have the most influence (Romans 12:21).**

body says it needs a restroom *now*, the restroom vote wins. A man’s self becomes accustomed to his tendencies and the types of

messages that go on inside of him; it helps him become aware of his strengths and his weaknesses and which parts of himself he is apt to listen to. The self balances the importance and the necessity of each element to his forest survival. A man with a strong character looks for what is ethically right in the midst of his internal dialogue (Deuteronomy 6:18). He tunes in to these messages with vigilance because he knows that no matter how many times he makes a wise decision, it is always possible for him to follow a negative path. His self evaluates all of the options and uses this process to decide which messages to consciously listen to and when to listen to them. A man achieves a significant manhood accomplishment when he gains the ability to regulate his internal messages well (Galatians 6:7-8).

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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 talk about the lesson and how it can be applied to their lives. They use this time to explore the parts of themselves they may need to change and to discuss life in general. Throughout *A Manhood Story*, we can see how their relationships with each other have progressed and new relationships have formed. These relationships give each man opportunities for new experiences, encouragement to develop his character and the motivation to step toward manhood.

\* \* \*

The Knights lesson this week focused on an important element within a man—the self. A man's self controls how he is known to others. It serves as the executive manager of his core. It makes the final decision on what to do, say and think about in the midst of all of the different internal messages a man experiences. A man uses his self to decide what types of action to take. This process means he often has to say no to one of his elements so he can say yes to another element's contradictory opinion. The actions a man takes often have a series of pros and cons attached to them. Along with deciding which internal elements to listen to, he must also make decisions about the input he gets from his external world.

Multiple sources of influence within the forest can impact a male (and his self), such as status symbols, cultural fads, social relationships, faith, politics, power and money. The stronger he is,

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

the more he is able to recognize when he is being manipulated and work to make choices that are consistent with his belief structure. A man must be aware of the many messages that go on inside of him and focus on what points him toward the best choices.

When a man chooses to follow Christ, he uses his self to listen to what God is telling him. His shadow tries to disrupt his decision-making processes and, in turn, disrupt his success. It continually tries to detour him from forming a relationship with God, often by tempting him to act in ways that send him in self-destructive directions.

At times, a male can feel overwhelmed by his life circumstances. During these times, he must listen to the messages from his self telling him that he needs emotional fuel to continue to persevere through the ups and downs of life. His self issues warning signs that he is overwhelmed and needs to do something to help him relax, have some fun or talk to God.

\* \* \*

Jim asked the group what they thought about the lesson and the internal part of themselves, called the self, that plays an important role in their decision-making processes.

George said, “This lesson connected a lot of dots for me. We’ve been talking about our internal elements every week. Today I learned that my self gets input from each of my internal elements, and then I use it to decide what I’m going to do or say. Knights has taught me not only that I am responsible for how I act, but also how manly responsibility affects my daily life. It begins by recognizing that I’m complex, and because of that, I need to ask God for His help as I try to decide what to do with all of the messages going on inside me.”

Paul said, “I learned a lot today too. I want people to see me as having a strong character, which means I have to live in a balanced way, use the feedback I receive and become more aware of all of the elements that make me who I am. I need to look at the messages I get and figure out which ones are the most valid. When I choose to live in an out-of-balance way and ignore certain internal messages, there’s a good chance I’ll make poor choices.”

Harry said, “I’ve started to realize that I need to do some work on my character. If I want to keep dating Sandy, the woman I met on an online dating site, I’ll need God’s help to face my shadow and my fears. I definitely need to start acting more maturely. I’m learning that life doesn’t just happen—I’m not a victim of my circumstances.<sup>1</sup> I can take action and change the direction I’ve been headed in.”<sup>2</sup>

“My dad had a strong self,” said José, “and I can build on his positive legacy. As a knight, I know I’ve been called to follow King Jesus. I’ve been learning how to demonstrate the Principles of Manhood<sup>†</sup> in my life by making better choices. When I let my worries rule my choices, I won’t reach my God-given potential. Staying calm is a way for me to show manly strength. When I choose not to worry, I’m choosing God over my shadow’s influence.”<sup>3</sup>

Joe said, “My daughter, Jolene, asked me to come to her grad school graduation. The man in me wants to go, but my spandex part is telling me, ‘If you go, you’ll see Kathy and her new husband.’ I don’t think I’ll ever get over her leaving me for him. But now I know that’s my internal messages competing with each other.

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1 Romans 8:31-39; 14:12; Galatians 6:7

2 Proverbs 21:5; 22:29

† To view the “15 Principles of Manhood” and the images we have associated with them, visit [K21.men/principles](http://K21.men/principles).

3 Matthew 6:25-34

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# Bricks

1. A man uses his self to blend the influence of all of his core elements (his body, mind, soul, spirit and shadow); when unified, a man's elements create results that are greater than the sum of all of his parts.
2. The self's task is to listen to each of these parts of ourselves, weigh the pros and cons of each potential choice and make the ultimate decision regarding our course of action.
3. Your self is the part of you that assesses each situation and decides which aspects of your core will have the most influence (Romans 12:21).
4. The self acts as the captain of a man's ship, taking control of all of the internal workings of his ship; this process underscores the importance of self-awareness to the manhood journey.
5. A man must be able to manage himself and his internal elements to achieve the best outcome (Proverbs 21:23).
6. Through the continual strengthening of his core, a man works methodically toward improving every aspect of his life and the forest (1 Peter 5:10).
7. Develop a list of activities and relationships that help you emotionally refuel when you have reached your limit.
8. Often, when a knight stands on the edge of breaking his Code of Honor, his warning lights go off within his self; they are his own individualized signal, reminding him that he needs to get help before it is too late.

# 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. Describe some of your personality traits. What do you like about yourself? What do you dislike about yourself?
4. Would you describe yourself as courageous? What kinds of situations make you fearful? When have you demonstrated courage in your life? Based on this lesson, what do you think you could do to increase your courage?
5. What have you wanted to achieve during your lifetime? Have you already achieved any of your dreams? Identify a dream you still want to reach and the steps you need to take to make it happen.
6. What are your warning lights? How do you know when you're coming to the end of your rope? What kinds of self-care help you refuel? Identify a time when you've noticed your warning lights in time to do something about them. What helped you get through it?
7. Is it easy or difficult for you to ask for help? Who do you usually ask for help, and why?

8. Isaiah 30:19-21 states, “People of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you won’t weep anymore. When you cry out to the LORD for help, he will have mercy on you. As soon as he hears you, he’ll answer you. He might treat you like prisoners. You might eat the bread of trouble. You might drink the water of suffering. But he will be your Teacher. He won’t hide himself anymore. You will see him with your own eyes. You will hear your Teacher’s voice behind you. You will hear it whether you turn to the right or the left. It will say, ‘Here is the path I want you to take. So walk on it.’” How do these Bible verses apply to your manhood journey?

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The manhood journey never ends. God calls each man  
to keep learning, growing and following Him.  
Now it's time to learn about the final manhood stages,  
celebrate how far you've come and keep moving  
toward God's plan for you.

**Fight on!**