Raising a Modern-Day Knight

Discussion Guide

Introduction

Have you begun to see “the man” in your son? If so, how?

When do you believe a boy becomes a man? Why? When did it happen to you?

How would you answer the questions in the poem that begins, “What is a man?”?

Which of the following do you feel the most need for? Why?

- a process that calls your son to be a godly man
- ceremonies to celebrate your son’s passage to manhood
- ideas and images that empower your son with masculine energy
- a legacy of healthy, family-strengthening masculinity

Chapter 1: Manhood: Don’t Let Your Son Leave Home without It

If you’d been Sam Rayburn’s father, what would you have said and done differently?

How is medieval knighthood a good model for the passage to manhood today?
What have you done so far to make sure your son doesn’t leave home without a clear vision of manhood? If you haven’t made much progress in this area, what do you think might be holding you back?

How would you explain 1 Corinthians 13:11 to your son?

Chapter 2: The Invisible Dad

How does the photo of the author with his brothers and father reflect their relationship? What kind of photo would best symbolize your relationship with your dad? Why?

Does the story of how the author’s father finally found his Savior encourage you about God’s ability to improve your relationship with your father or son? Why or why not?

Would your son describe you as an Invisible Dad? Why or why not?

The author writes, “I intend to use my hurt for [my sons’] gain.” How might you use flaws in your upbringing to help you better relate to your son?

Chapter 3: The Drift of Sons

What kind of “drift” in your son would you most regret? How can you prevent that from happening?
Why did Dan yearn to hear his father say, “I love you”? Do you identify with Dan? If so, how?

What are three “good things” you’ve given your son? What are three “best things” you’d like to give him?

**Chapter 4: A Vision for Manhood**

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements from the author? Why?

- “Psychologically, men are far more fragile than women.”
- “The push for gender neutrality has gutted authentic manhood.”
- “Our day of confusion cries out for a rock-solid definition of manhood.”

How are Adam and Christ different in each of the following areas?

- rejecting passivity
- accepting responsibility
- leading courageously
- expecting the greater reward

In what way is real manhood “primarily a call to life”? 

Which of the following rewards of biblical manhood would mean the most to you? Why?

- an honorable name
- a wife who looks at you with respect and admiration
- well-adjusted, responsible children
• the respect of other men
• God’s blessings
• a growing satisfaction about your life

Chapter 5: A Code of Conduct

Why does every son need “a will to obey”? Whose will does your son tend to obey?

Why does every son need “a work to do”? What have you learned so far about your son’s unique design that might apply to his future work?

Why does every son need “a woman to love”? How does this apply to single men?

Which of the following training methods appeals most to you? How could you use that method in the coming week?

• setting a godly example
• conveying spiritual truth through devotions or teachable moments
• sharing stories
• affirmation, attention, and discipline

Chapter 6: A Transcendent Cause

How is the “conventional vision of manhood” incomplete?
What transcendent cause would be worth giving your life for? Why? In what way is it truly heroic, timeless, and supremely meaningful?

In the story about Bill and Jim, which man do you most identify with? Why?

The author writes, “Only Jesus Christ satisfies the threefold criteria of a transcendent cause.” Do you agree? Why or why not?

When you imagine your son nearing the end of his life, does he have “a satisfying sense of dignity, significance, and well-being”? What can you do to help make that a reality?

Chapter 7: The Power of Ceremony

What ceremony in which you’ve been involved has meant the most to you? Why?

How is a ceremony like spiking the ball in a volleyball game? What’s one truth you’d like to drive home to your son by using a ceremony?

The author writes that memorable ceremonies are costly, ascribe value, employ symbols, and empower a life with vision. Using those qualities as standards, how would you rate each of the following coming-of-age events?

- getting a driver’s license
- voting
- graduating from high school
If you designed a ceremony marking your son’s transition to manhood, what three elements would you want to include? Why?

Chapter 8: Four Key Manhood Ceremonies

What would your family crest look like? What four elements would you want to include, and what would they stand for?

If you had one hundred dollars to spend on a ceremony to mark each of the following milestones, what would the event include? How might you change the plan if you had ten thousand dollars to spend?

- puberty
- high school graduation
- college graduation
- marriage

What dads, other friends, or family members would you want to be part of your son’s manhood ceremonies? Why?

How are manhood ceremonies a way to “notice” your son? Why is that important?

Chapter 9: Other Manhood Ceremonies to Consider

If you wrote a tribute called “Here’s to My Imperfect Family,” what would you do with it? Why?
Which of the manhood ceremonies described in this chapter appeal most to you? Which do you think would appeal most to your son? Why?

Let’s say your son is turning sixteen. How would you take a typical birthday party and change it to meet the following goals?

- Employ the element of surprise.
- Make the ceremony intensely spiritual.
- Incorporate symbols to mark the moment.
- Include a blessing from Dad.
- Involve other men.

Chapter 10: Commemorating a Transcendent Cause

Do you agree with the author that Jesus needed to be encouraged and affirmed by His Father? Why or why not? How did the baptism of Jesus accomplish this?

If you’ve been baptized, did that event commemorate a transcendent cause for you? Why or why not?

Does your church’s approach to baptism make it an effective way to commemorate a transcendent cause? If not, how might it be improved?

If your son hasn’t been baptized yet but would like to be, how could you make the event as meaningful as possible?
Chapter 11: Knighthood and the Community of Men

What does the author mean when he suggests that you “clean out your own closet”? Is he saying that fathers must be perfect before they can leave a spiritual legacy to their sons? How do you know?

Do you agree that most men are “shut up in the solitude of their own hearts”? When do you feel most disconnected from the community of men? When do you feel most connected?

How do you think your son would respond to the involvement of other men in his manhood ceremonies? How will this affect the way you plan such events?

Chapter 12: The Decree

How do you feel when you hear that “only the son of a knight (a real man) can become a knight (a real man)”? How do you feel when you hear that there are exceptions to the Decree?

The author writes that every dad begins fatherhood with “the unstinting admiration of his son.” Are you and your son still in that stage? How do you know?

What’s one way in which your son has imitated you? How do you feel about that? What’s one way in which you’ve positively influenced him as a role model?

How would you answer the author’s question when he asks, “What does your son do when you pass by?”
Chapter 13: Where the Boys Are

Does knowing what’s happened to the sons of the author and his friends make you more likely or less likely to follow the book’s advice? Why?

When your son grows up, how will you know whether he’s “turned out okay”?

What three qualities would you most like to see in your son when he’s thirty years old? What three habits would you like to see him practice? What three things would you like him to have accomplished?

What part of your son’s future is it hardest to trust God for? If your son doesn’t turn out quite as you’d hoped, will you be able to keep loving him anyway?

Chapter 14: A Word to Dads Who Think They Blew It

What part of Buddy’s story affects you most? Why?

In what sense might your son be “waiting” for you?

What three questions would you want to include when interviewing your son? What would you want to confess?
In blessing your son, what would you like to tell him in the following areas?

- how much he means to you
- how special he is to you
- how much you love him
- how unique and treasured his attributes are