

Father-Son Quest
Introduction to the 6 Marks of Manhood
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I am so glad that you are anticipating the upcoming Father-Son weekend.

Our aim for this weekend is to help you impart a vision of manhood to the next generation of men who are influenced by your life and example. Having a clearly-articulated vision of manhood is utterly crucial for a young man. Without it, he will likely stray like a sheep, meandering his way through life and absorbing the world's vision of what it means to be a man.

Forging a shared vision will cause you to experience unity with your son and avoid the risk of being fragmented in purpose. Conflict and discord comes easily when there is no agreement on what is important and no common focus on what is true. Without vision, our sons will become easy prey for societal trends, the empty wisdom of men, and the next fad or popular thought of the day.

The Father-Son Quest weekend is an intentional effort to map out the biblical view of masculinity with Jesus Christ as our model. We have targeted the 12-14 year-old window as an optimal time for a father or father-figure in a young man's life to intentionally and confidently impart a biblical vision for manhood. Sharing this truth-shaped vision in the context of a community of men who are devoted to Christ can set you up for effective, fruitful, lasting influence in your son's life.

As important as it is to help our 12-14-year-old sons move toward a biblical vision for manhood, it is also important to help them close the door on childhood. In 1 Corinthians 13:11 the Apostle Paul says "*When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.*" One of the challenges we are facing in our culture is that many men hold on to childish ways longer than they should. It is not uncommon for men in their 20's and even 30's to be still thinking and behaving in childish ways. This is having a devastating impact on our society. By the time a young man reaches his teen years, it is important for him to consciously begin putting childish ways behind him and embrace his manhood. This Father-Son Quest weekend is intended to help encourage and facilitate that.

With this in view we have built the weekend experience around six principles of manhood four of which are taken from Robert Lewis' book *Raising a Modern-Day Knight*¹. Reading that book ahead of time would be a helpful way to prepare. In addition to providing this overview of the six marks, we will also take about hour at the beginning of the weekend to unpack each one. There is also a brief summary of each mark in the Father-Son-Quest handbook that you should receive ahead of time. Taking the time to understand these six marks beforehand will help you more effectively impart them to your son throughout the weekend.

1. The first of the six marks is--"**Devoted to God**" This is rooted in our very nature as men, created by God to glorify him and to enjoy him forever. A man who is devoted to God is a man who finds his ultimate fulfillment and joy in knowing, loving, obeying and delighting in God. This is the foundation for manhood which is critical for fathers to understand and embrace, and to teach and model to their sons. Furthermore, it is important to help a young man understand that God, not man, is the "master of his destiny". We are created to be dependent on God.

¹ Lewis, Robert, *Raising A Modern-Day Knight*, (Wheaton, IL:Tyndale House Publishers, 1997)

In his explanation of this mark, Robert Lewis wrote

“Human beings are simply not self-sustaining, and we were never designed to live as if we are.... We were created to be dependent. Dependency is not therefore a sign of weakness. Rather it is a universal indicator of our humanity...It is the legacy of our fallenness to do everything we can to conceptually and functionally repudiate the doctrine of human dependency. “So, all fallen human beings tend to buy into two attractive but dangerous lies...The first lie is the lie of autonomy, which tells me that I am an independent human being with the right to invest my life however I choose. The second lie is the lie of self-sufficiency, which declares that I have everything I need within myself to be what I am supposed to be and do what I am supposed to do. Because we do not want to live for God, but for ourselves, we are easily seduced, at the mundane, everyday level, by these lies.”

2. **A God-glorifying man rejects passivity**--both spiritual and social passivity when, as Lewis writes *“doing nothing is the more comfortable and natural option.”* Passivity has its roots in the sin of unbelief. A passive man tends to live his life like a ship without a rudder that, the Apostle Paul describes in Ephesians 4:14

“ is tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes”. A real man is “steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58) and he presses on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus”(Philippians 3:14).---

3. **A real man accepts responsibility.** Every man has a calling on his life that has been given to him by God. This calling is not a right or burden, but a duty, a privilege and a joy. Lewis emphasizes in his book that authentic manhood revolves around three primary responsibilities and it is a wise father who trains his son to embrace these with enthusiasm—namely

#1 he has a will to obey—the will that God has revealed in the Scriptures.

#2 he has a work to do (not just the work of his job, but also the work of his home, church, and community)

#3 he has a woman to love (his wife)---

4. We want to inspire our sons to become **men who will lead courageously.** Men who *“lead with truth rather than surrendering to their feelings...”* is what Lewis would say *“...separates the men from the boys”.* While leadership at an early age may look differently than it does at the later stages of life, the underlying principles of godly leadership remain the same:---- Godly leadership is servant leadership as we see in Luke 22:26, Ephesians 5:23,25 and Matthew 7:12 *“Godly leadership is not authoritarian or self-aggrandizing It does not assume Christ’s authority (or his parents’ authority) but advocates for it.”* And finally, *“Godly leadership is not patronizing and not condescending. It does not presume superiority but mobilizes the strengths of others.”*
5. A real man who is after God’s heart and following the example of Christ will **protect and provide passionately.** In the act of protecting, men exemplify servant leadership. We serve by being willing to suffer for another’s safety, and this honors the one being protected. Texts that teach this include Deut.10:18; Jeremiah 31:32. It is also implied in Ephesians 5:25 and

is supported by the Old Testament pattern of men going into battle. One of the resources we have made available to you is a very helpful article by Southern Seminary President Albert Mohler, entitled *From Boy to Man: The Marks of Manhood*. In that article Mohler writes:

“A man must be ready to put his physical strength on the line to protect his wife and children and to fulfill his God assigned tasks. A boy must be taught to channel his developing strength and emerging size into a self-consciousness of responsibility, recognizing that adult strength is to be combined with adult responsibility and true maturity”.

A man not only is called to protect but also to provide especially for his wife and children. In 1 Timothy 5:8, Paul uses some of the strongest language in the New Testament to warn those who do not provide: *“But if any man does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever”*

“Whatever a man thinks he is “called” to, this much is clear – he is called to provide for his family. One of the most God-glorifying pictures of the gospel is when a man puts his childhood dreams to the side, steps up to the plate, gets a job, and valiantly cares for his family. This man should be honored, and his work should be appreciated.”

6. **A real man will expect the greater reward.** Hebrews 11 gives us a picture of those real men and women who faithfully walked with God and whose lives and priorities and patience in suffering were shaped by the greater reward that was coming. Moses, for example, *“when he was grown up refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward that was coming”.* (Hebrews 11:24-25)

As the writer continues in chapter 12 he points us to *“the founder and perfecter of our faith”* and our perfect example of true manhood *who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.* (Hebrews 12:2)

Jesus Christ embraced his responsibilities –He has a will to obey, a work to do, and a woman---namely his bride--the Church to love – because He anticipated the “joy that was set before him”. By staying the course set forth in God’s Word by faith, a man will obtain ultimate and everlasting joy and fulfillment, rather than the immediate but fleeting pleasures offered by the world.

As the Father-Son Quest comes to an end and this experience becomes a memory, our hope and prayer is that these six marks of manhood would not be forgotten, but that you will look for opportunities to remind your son and reinforce the vision of manhood so that these principles can sink deeply into his mind and heart and influence the man that he is becoming for the Glory of God and for his everlasting joy in Christ.