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From Boy to Man— the Marks of Manhood, Part 2*

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When does a boy become a man? This is not just a hypothetical question, for an incredibly large number of boys and young men are struggling to answer this question, and many are without fathers who are faithful to guide them, or other male role models who offer inspiration and instruction. Furthermore, our society is so confused on these issues that boys are understandably puzzled. Tragically, far too many churches never even address this question, and thus sow the seeds of a greater and even more culpable confusion.

Part one of this series presented six vital marks of manhood, intended to define the transition from boy to man. Now, seven additional marks to complete the picture:

7. Ethical maturity sufficient to make responsible decisions.

To be a man is to make decisions. One of the most fundamental tasks of leadership is decision-making. The indecisiveness of so many contemporary males is evidence of a stunted manhood. Of course, a man does not rush to a decision without thought, consideration, or care, but a man does put himself on the line in making a decision-

-and making it stick. This requires an extension of moral responsibility into mature ethical decision-making that brings glory to God, is faithful to God's word, and is open to moral scrutiny. Parents often leave their sons unprepared for this role by making decisions for them, and by failing to teach boys how to think and reason in responsible terms, how to weigh evidence and think clearly, and how to prioritize values according to a biblical standard. A real man knows how to make a decision and live with its consequences--even if that means that he must later acknowledge that he has learned by making a bad decision, and then by making the appropriate correction.

8. Worldview maturity sufficient to understand what is really important.

An inversion of values marks our postmodern age, and the predicament of modern manhood is made all the more perplexing by the fact that many men lack the capacity of consistent worldview thinking. For the Christian, this is doubly tragic, for our Christian discipleship must be demonstrated in the development of a Christian mind. The Christian man must understand how to interpret and evaluate issues across the spectrum of politics, economics, morality, entertainment, education, and a seemingly endless list of other fields. The absence of consistent biblical worldview thinking is a key mark of spiritual immaturity. A boy must be taught how to translate Christian truth into genuine Christian thinking. He must learn how to defend biblical

truth before his peers and in the public square, and he must acquire the ability to extend Christian thinking, based on biblical principles, to every arena of life.

9. Relational maturity sufficient to understand and respect others.

Psychologists now talk of "emotional intelligence," or EQ, as a major factor in personal development. While the world has given much attention to IQ, EQ is just as important. Individuals who lack the ability to relate to others are destined to fail at some of life's most significant challenges and will not fulfill some of their most important responsibilities and roles. By nature, many boys are inwardly directed. While girls learn how to read emotional signals and connect, many boys lack the capacity to do so, and seemingly fail to understand the absence of these skills. While a man is to demonstrate emotional strength, constancy, and steadfastness, he must be able to relate to his wife, his children, his peers, his colleagues, and a host of others in a way that demonstrates respect, understanding, and appropriate empathy. This will not be learned by playing video games and by entering into the privatized world experienced by many male adolescents. Parents--especially fathers--must draw their sons out of inwardness, and demonstrate what it means to relate to others as a man and as a Christian.

10. Social maturity sufficient to make a contribution to society.

While the arena of the home is an essential and inescapable focus of a man's responsibility, he is also called out of the home into the workplace and the larger world as a witness, and as one who will make a contribution to the common good. God has created human beings as social creatures, and even though our ultimate citizenship is in heaven, we must also fulfill our citizenship on earth. A boy must learn to fulfill a political responsibility as a citizen, and a moral responsibility as a member of a human community. The Christian man bears a civilizational responsibility,

and boys must be taught to see themselves as shapers of the society even as the church is identified by our Lord as both salt and light. Similarly, a Christian man must learn how to relate to unbelievers, both as witness and as fellow citizens of an earthly kingdom.

11. Verbal maturity sufficient to communicate and articulate as a man.

Here's a striking phenomenon of our times--many adolescent boys and young men seem to communicate only through a series of guttural clicks, grunts, and inchoate language that can hardly be described as verbal. A man must be able to speak, to be understood, and to communicate in a way that will honor God and convey God's truth to others. Parents must work with boys, requiring them to speak, to articulate, and to learn respect for language. This respect must extend to an ability to enunciate words so that articulation is clear and communication succeeds. This skill must be learned at the dinner table, in family conversation, and in one-on-one talk, especially between father and son. Beyond the context of conversation, a boy must learn how to speak before larger groups, overcoming the natural intimidation and fear that comes from looking at a crowd, opening one's mouth, and projecting words. Though not all men will become public speakers, every man should have the ability to take his ground, frame his words, and make his case when truth is under fire and when belief and conviction must be translated into argument.

12. Character maturity sufficient to demonstrate courage under fire.

The literature of manhood is replete with stories of courage, bravery, and audacity. At least, that's the way it used to be. Now, with manhood both minimalized and marginalized by cultural elites, ideological subversion, and media confusion, we must recapture a commitment to courage that is translated into the real-life challenges faced by the Christian man. At times, this quality of courage is demonstrated when a

man risks his own life in defense of others, especially his wife and children, but also anyone who is in need of rescue. More often, this courage is demonstrated in taking a stand under hostile fire, refusing to succumb to the temptation of silence and standing as a model and example to others, who will then be encouraged to stand their own ground. In these days, biblical manhood requires great courage. The prevailing ideologies and worldviews of this age are inherently hostile to Christian truth and are corrosive to Christian faithfulness. It takes great courage for a boy to commit himself to sexual purity and for a man to devote himself unreservedly to his wife. It takes great courage to say no to what this culture insists are the rightful pleasures and delights of the flesh. It takes courage to serve as a godly husband and father, to raise children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It takes courage to maintain personal integrity in a world that devalues the truth, disparages God's word, and promises self-fulfillment and happiness only through the assertion of undiluted personal autonomy. A man's true confidence is rooted in the wells of courage, and courage is evidence of character. In the end, a man's character is revealed in the crucible of everyday challenges. For most men, life will also bring moments when extraordinary courage will be required, if he is to remain faithful and true. Parents should give close attention to their sons' character, for if character is corrupt, nothing else will really matter.

13. Biblical maturity sufficient to lead at some level in the church.

A close look at many churches will reveal that a central problem is the lack of biblical maturity among the men of the congregation and a lack of biblical knowledge that leaves men ill equipped and completely unprepared to exercise spiritual leadership. Boys must be taught to know, to treasure, to honor, and to understand the Bible. They must know their way around the biblical text, and feel at home in the study of God's Word. They must be taught how to read with care,

"rightly dividing the word of truth," and they must learn how to apply the eternal truths of God's Word to the challenges of modern manhood. Furthermore, they must stand ready to take their place as leaders in the local church. While God has appointed specific officers for his church--men who are specially gifted and publicly called--every man should fulfill some leadership responsibility within the life of the congregation. For some men, this may mean a less public role of leadership than is the case with others. In any event, a man should be able to teach someone, and to lead in some ministry, translating his personal discipleship into the fulfillment of a godly call. There is a role of leadership for every man in every church, whether that role is public or private, large or small, official or unofficial. A man should know how to pray before others, to present the Gospel, and to stand in the gap where a leadership need is apparent.

When does a boy become a man? I'm glad I was asked this question, and this series represents my attempt to provide an answer that will be both faithful to Scripture and applicable to the real-life challenges faced by men today. More urgently, it was good for me to think through this question and articulate these hallmarks as I seek to show my own son how to grow into biblical manhood. I am absolutely sure that there is more to be thought and more to be said, but this may help us all to see the challenges before us.

Dads, you are absolutely crucial to the process of man-making. No one else can fulfill your responsibility, and no one else can match your opportunity for influence with your son. By word and by example, we are teaching our sons the meaning of manhood. May God make us faithful as we seek to lead our boys to become true Christian men.

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Taken from Albert Mohler's Blog  
<https://albertmohler.com/2005/04/21/from-boy-to-man-the-marks-of-manhood-part-two>

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* Part 1 was last month.

FUNNIES

As a young pastor, I was asked by a funeral director to hold a graveside service for a homeless man with no family or friends. The funeral was to be held at a cemetery way back in the country, and this man would be the first to be laid to rest there.

As I was not familiar with the backwoods area, I became lost and being a typical man did not stop for directions. I finally arrived an hour late. I saw the backhoe and the crew, who was eating lunch, but the hearse was nowhere in sight. I apologized to the workers for my tardiness, and stepped to the side of the open grave, where I saw the vault lid already in place. I assured the workers I would not hold them up for

long, but this was the proper thing to do. The workers gathered around, still eating their lunch. I poured out my heart and soul. As I preached, the workers began to say "Amen" and "Glory!" I preached and preached, like I'd never preached before. I closed the lengthy service with a prayer and walked to my car.

As I was opening the door and taking off my coat, I overheard one of the workers saying to another, "I ain't never seen anything like that before, and I've been putting in septic tanks for 20 years."

The Sunday School teacher asked, "Now, Johnny, tell me, do you say prayers before eating?" "No sir," he replied, "We don't have to. My mom is a good cook!"

The preacher was wired for sound with a lapel mic, and as he preached, he moved briskly about the platform, jerking the mic cord as he went. Then he moved to one side, getting wound up in the cord and nearly tripping before jerking it again. After circles and jerks, a little girl in the third pew leaned toward her mother and whispered, "If he gets loose, will he hurt us?"

A Veterinarian was feeling ill and went to see his doctor. The doctor asked him all the usual questions, about symptoms, how long had they been occurring, etc., when he interrupted him: "Hey look, I'm a vet. I don't need to ask my patients these kind of questions. I can tell what's wrong just by looking." He smugly added, "Why can't you?" The doctor nodded, stood back, looked him up and down, quickly wrote out a prescription, handed it to him and said, "There you are. Of course, if that doesn't work, we'll have to have you put to sleep."

Two Tennessee rednecks are out hunting, and as they are walking along they come upon a huge hole in the ground. They approach it and are amazed by the size of it. The first hunter says, "Wow, that's some hole; I can't even see the bottom. I wonder how deep it is." The second hunter says, "I don't know, let's throw something down and listen and see how long it takes to hit bottom." The first hunter says, "There's this old automobile transmission here, give me a hand and we'll throw it in and see". So they pick it up and carry it over, and count one, and two and three, and throw it in the hole. They are standing there listening and looking over the edge and they hear a rustling in the brush behind them. As they turn around they see a goat come crashing through the brush, run up to the hole and with no hesitation, jump in head first.

While they are standing there looking at each other, looking in the hole and trying to figure out what that was all about, an old farmer walks up. "Say there," says the farmer, "you fellers didn't happen to see my goat around here anywhere, did you?" The first hunter says, " Funny you should ask, but we were just standing here a minute ago and a goat came running out of the bushes doin' about a hunnert miles an hour and jumped head-first into this hole here!" The old farmer said, "That's impossible. I had him chained to a transmission!"