

THE 7 VIRTUES OF • MANHOOD •

A BOY'S GUIDE TO GROWING UP

Howard Graham, editor

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START HERE

What kind of man are you going to be?

Think about a man you admire. He may be famous, or he may only be known by a small group of people. He may have lived a long time ago, or you may see him every day. Why do you admire him? What do you admire about him? What do you think made him the way he is?

The man you admire is probably someone who is using what he has been given in an extraordinary way. God has made you to be extraordinary. The Bible tells us that men and women were made in the image of God and given an extraordinary purpose. The purpose of men and women is to reflect the glory of God. To use the unique way you are made to point people to the Creator and Savior of the world.

For boys and men, this means growing into a man the way God intends. God's own Son, Jesus, grew from a boy into a man. Jesus was born fully God and fully man, but he still grew up—the Bible tells us in Luke 2:52 that he grew in wisdom, stature and favor with God and man.

What kind of man are you going to be? This is the most important question in your life. You are going to grow older either way—but you have a choice to follow God and grow into a man of God or to follow our own hearts and chase after the temporary things of this world.

Here are three things you need to know—truths that will help you understand what to believe and how to live.

1. A MAN OF GOD KNOWS WHO CREATED HIM.

In the beginning, God created man, and he said that his creation was good. He created you too. In Psalm 139, King David writes, “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well” (Psalm 139:13-14). King David is talking to the God who made him—who is also the God who made you! No part of you was an accident—God designed everything about you. And no one knows you better than the God who made you, not even your parents. Listen to how King David starts that same Psalm:

You have searched me, LORD, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely. (Psalm 139:1-4)

God knows every last detail about you, even the hairs on your head (Luke 12:7). And he still loves you more than can be described. How great is it to know that the creator of the universe made you and knows you and loves you better than anyone? Knowing this makes us grateful to God and gives us a destiny and a purpose.

2. A MAN OF GOD KNOWS HIS DESTINY.

God not only made you—he has a plan for your life. In the Bible, God promises that he has good plans for you and that he is using every part of your life as a way to grow you into the man he created you to be. He made you to be his son and enjoy the benefits of being his son. God sent his Son Jesus into the world that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). “Eternal life” means, if you trust and follow Jesus, you will live forever as a prince with God. The God of the universe is so determined to get those he loves to their destiny that he sent his only Son to live and die for you. He knew you and loved you before he created the world. This is mind blowing, and it gives your life so much purpose.

3. A MAN OF GOD KNOWS HIS PURPOSE

Do you ever wonder what you should do when you grow up? Do you wonder why it matters to do your best with what you are given? God made you to give glory back to him in everything you do. In the very first chapter of the Bible, God makes this clear: “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness” (Genesis 1:26). You are here on earth to show what God is like! But God does not stop there. There is even more to his purpose for you—he made men and women to fill, rule over, and care for the earth.

Honestly, you can spend years studying this in the Bible, but in simple words, this is your purpose in life: As a child of God, you give your life back to God because you are grateful that he made you and loves you. When you know you are in his family, you learn the family business is making the world a better place so that everyone will know who God is. This is the reason to live your life with excellence and become the man God wants you to be.

The 7 Virtues of Manhood

The 7 Virtues Of Manhood is designed for this reason: to help you become the man that God intends for you to be. To help you to understand how to live out your purpose as a boy and grow into a man of God.

As you study these seven virtues, one of the first things you realize is that you can't live them perfectly. But the more you know Jesus, the only one who has lived a perfect life on earth, the more you will rely on him to change you into a man like him.

The authors of this book pray you will grow into a man of God. The book was written in the hope that these virtues and this book point you to God and the work of his Son Jesus and that the Holy Spirit will show you the work of Jesus and draw you to follow him.



Why were you created?

Where are you going?

How do you plan to live out your purpose on earth?


How do you hope this book can help you?

QUESTIONS



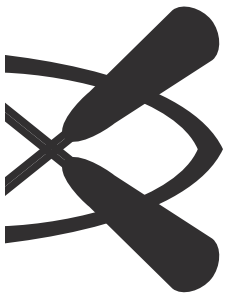
TRUE FRIEND

CHAPTER
1



**“My command is this:
Love each other as I have
loved you.”**

JOHN 15:12



A True Friend Stands By and Stands Up

Think about your best friends. How did you become friends?

Most of the time, friendship comes when we do things together, shoulder to shoulder. Right now, all the boys your age are doing something together: you're all beginning your journey toward manhood. Along the way, you will need other boys' help, and they will need yours. The boys next to you will become some of your closest friends in your whole life.

We all love having friends, but are we good at being friends? This lesson will teach you how to commit wholeheartedly to your friends—to be a friend who sticks “closer than a brother,” as Proverbs 18:24 says.

It is when we are doing things together that friendship springs up—painting, sailing ships, praying, philosophizing, and fighting shoulder to shoulder. Friends look in the same direction.

C.S. LEWIS¹

TRUE FRIENDS STICK TOGETHER

In JRR Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring*, there is a character named Frodo who faces a terrifying journey. To protect his friends, Frodo tries to leave them behind and go alone. But they end up showing Frodo what it looks like to be a True Friend.

You can trust us to stick to you through thick and thin — to the bitter end. And you can trust us to keep any secret of yours — closer than you keep it to yourself. But you cannot trust us to let you face trouble alone, and go off without a word. We are your friends, Frodo. Anyway: there it is... We are horribly afraid — but we are coming with you; or following you like hounds.²

That is commitment. Frodo’s friends decide that they will not let him go on this journey alone. They are wholeheartedly committed to their friendship.

The Bible also tells a story of a great friendship. You’ve probably heard the story of David in the Bible—the shepherd boy who trusted in God, killed Goliath, and became king of Israel. But did you know that he would have been killed long before becoming king if it weren’t for his best friend, Jonathan?

The Bible says that “Jonathan was bound to David in close friendship, and loved him as much as he loved himself” (1 Samuel 18:1 Christian Standard Bible). David and Jonathan promised each other to be steadfast friends. Jonathan gave David his own armor, his weapons, and even his right to the throne. David returned Jonathan’s friendship. After Jonathan was killed in battle, he took care of Jonathan’s son. That’s what it means to be a True Friend.



Who are your closest friends?

How did you become friends?

Can you think of any times when your friends stuck with you through something hard or when you stuck with a friend?

QUESTIONS

WHAT IS FRIENDSHIP MADE OF?

Most friendships among boys are made up of joking, playing, and competing with each other. These are all wonderful things, but the Bible shows that friendship is bigger than just having a good time together.

In John 15:12, Jesus commands us to love one another as he has loved us. Talking about love might feel funny. It might seem like something we only talk about on Valentine’s Day or when our parents make us say we love them. But in Mark 12:29-31, Jesus said that loving him and loving other people are the most important things we can do—so we should probably know what that means.

The apostle Paul helps us understand what it means to love our friends in 1 Corinthians 13.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.
(1 Corinthians 13:4–5)

What does this mean for your friendships? It means a True Friend is patient with his buddies. He doesn’t get angry when they don’t do what he wants. He isn’t mean; he is kind.

What are some ways you can love your friends?



—
QUESTIONS

STAND BY AND STAND UP

Being a True Friend isn't just about being nice. It means telling your friend the truth, even when it's hard. The next verse in 1 Corinthians 13 says, "Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth." Here are two ways that friends can love each other by telling the truth:

FRIENDS ARE HONEST WITH EACH OTHER

Movies and music often tell boys to hide their emotions and not talk about certain things. And for many guys, this means they grow up without anyone to talk with about important issues. That's not how God designed us. God made men to have sincere and honest friendships.

Good friends talk with each other about areas in their life where they are struggling, and they help each other grow. For example, if a boy is feeling down and discouraged, a True Friend will remind his friend about Jesus' love for him. He will ask how his friend is doing and take time to listen. He'll check in with his friend later to see how he's feeling.

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

PROVERBS 27:17

It can feel weird to tell each other what God says or to talk about what we are feeling. But we need to share what's going on with others so that they can help us. We also need others to help us see when we may be making bad decisions. We need close friends to stand by us and keep us from traveling down the wrong path.

FRIENDS KEEP EACH OTHER ON TRACK

If a boy is having a hard time obeying his mom and dad, a True Friend won't tease him about it. He also won't go along with it and pretend nothing's wrong. Instead, he prays for his friend, and he helps his friend figure out what God says about honoring our parents.

At other times a True Friend might need to tell his friend if he thinks he is doing something wrong. Ephesians 4:15 tells us to “speak the truth in love” to each other. This doesn’t give us permission to be mean. It lets us know we need to tell the truth to our friends in a patient and kind way.

An honest answer is a sign of true friendship.

PROVERBS 24:26 (GNT)

FRIENDS COMMIT TO EACH OTHER

Remember Frodo and his friends? It is easy to be friends when things are going well or when everyone is happy and healthy. But True Friends stand firm even in difficult times. When your friend is injured and can’t be on your basketball team for a season, will you ask how he is doing? If your friend moves across the country, will you call or message him to check how he’s doing?

Sometimes it can be hard to be a True Friend. Other things in your life may seem more important than helping a friend through a difficult time. To be a True Friend, we have to decide to put aside our selfish wants so that we can love and encourage our friends. We have to be the friend that we would want in the good times and the bad. Fake friends give up. True Friends stick together in hard times. Martin Luther King Jr. once said,

The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.³

Friendships are not always easy. Sometimes they feel awkward or difficult. That is when we need to love our friends more than ourselves, as Jesus loved us.

JESUS, OUR ULTIMATE FRIEND

We’ve looked at some great examples of friendship, but none of them compares to Jesus. John 15:12-14 says,

The 7 Virtues of Manhood

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command.

Jesus didn't only say he loved his friends—he acted on it. Without Jesus, we would be stuck in the wrong things we've done. We need his rescue.

Jesus gave up his own life to rescue us. He didn't call us his friends because loving us was easy. He allowed himself to be beaten and killed for us. He showed his love for us when he died for us on the cross (Romans 5:8). He laid down his life for his friends. He is our ultimate True Friend.

That is how much Jesus loves us. He loves us so much that he was willing to do what was difficult, what was inconvenient, what was humiliating, even what was painful — for us. There is no greater example of true friendship.

Like a True Friend, Jesus **stood by** us even when we sinned against him. He didn't merely stand up for us, but he **stood in** our place and took our punishment for sin. We stand by our friends because Jesus stood in our place. Jesus sets the pattern for true friendship and true manhood. He committed wholeheartedly to his friends and laid down his life for them. He calls us to do the same.

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.
And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.

1 JOHN 3:16



In your own words, how would you describe the actions of a True Friend?

Can you think of a time when someone acted like a True Friend for you?

How could you be a better True Friend?

QUESTIONS



In your words, what does it mean to be a True Friend?

Memorize and explain the key verse (John 15:12).

What actions will you take to be a True Friend?

What is the hardest thing about being a True Friend?

How is Jesus the Ultimate True Friend?

SHARING WITH OTHERS

