

## Introduction

The quest for manhood has been something that I have lived over the last 20 some years. The pursuit for manliness (whatever that is) has occupied my thoughts and actions incessantly. Be it numbering my chest hairs in middle school to the stories behind my scars last year at camp the every changing target of “being a man” is something for which my aim has been taken. I want to challenge you to journey with me as we explore what it looks like to be a man, to walk in the footsteps of David as he follows the heart of God. There have been so many attempts at explaining manhood that have shaped me and challenged me.

### *Literature*

My bookshelves are lined with all types of men’s opinions about manhood and its journey. Some knew they were writing on the subject, books like *Wild at Heart* by John Eldredge and *God’s Gift to Women* by Eric Ludy. Some without knowing it have changed my journey. Books like *I May Be Wrong But...* by Dean Smith and *King of the Cowboys* by Ty Murray. Some of the books I have read have been downright heart breaking, *The Faraway Horses* by Buck Brannaman, and some have been so random, *God, Guns, and Rock and Roll* by Ted Nugent, that I had to take a break to reassemble my thoughts.

There have been no shortage of great thinkers who have devoted ink and paper to the cause. Hemmingway would argue for four steps to manhood (Plant a tree, fight a bull, father a son, and write a book). Old Ernie Bob Hemmingway happened to pick the things he accomplished as a way to test for the “y” chromosome. Rudyard Kipling framed his steps to manhood in a poem communicating wisdom from a father to son. His words of wisdom: keep your head when everyone else is losing theirs, being above lies and unwaivered by disappointment, and unchanged by the actions of others. Emerson believed that men above all are self-reliant. To be a true man, one must be able to forge his own path and be enough in and of himself. Thoreau understood manhood as a journey: “Many men go fishing all of their lives without knowing that it is not the fish they are after.” Great men have pondered the question of what it means to be a man over the centuries only to come back without an answer.

### *Hollywood*

Where literature tried their hand, Hollywood has pushed forward with thousands of versions and theories on manhood that have come to life. During the 50’s and 60’s the show “*Leave it to Beaver*” (1957-63) depicted Ward Cleaver and his wife June raising their boys Wally and “the Beaver”. Ward wore a suit to work, provided for the family, worked on the vehicles, spent time with the boys, and provided the discipline and moral teaching to end every episode. Wally and Beaver knew to whom turn to for advice and sought their father’s opinion. He took care of his family and provided wisdom and direction for his family. He and others such as *Andy Griffith* ([a single dad] 1960-68) and Mike Brady from *The Brady Bunch* (1970-74) gave mainstream media father figures and examples of manhood to anyone who tuned in. Men who led their families, disciplined their children, and loved their family to the point of sacrificing for them.

In the 80’s a door was cracked open by Cliff Huxtable of *the Cosby show* (1984-92). Cliff was the son of a musician, a doctor, and a father of five. His wife, Claire Huxtable, was an attorney and powerful woman. It was clear from the show that Clair was one that really ran the house. Cliff spent much of the show attempting to sneak food past his wife,

attempting to run the house (under the watchful eye of his wife), and teaching his kids through object lessons. Cliff, though he was a doctor, was portrayed as somewhat of a simpleton who could only keep it together as long as his wife was round. When Cosby propped open the door, *Home Improvement* (1991-1999) and Tim “the Tool Man” Taylor kicked it in. He was obsessed with “power” who spent most of the show breaking and tinkering with the things that he was trying to fix. His character was given wisdom by his next door neighbor, Wilson, which he constantly misconstrued and misquoted. Tim had a good heart but when it came to relationships and manhood his intentions couldn’t play out in real life. What the 90’s began, the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century only reinforced what Tim Taylor started. With Ray Romano and Peter Griffin portray men as insensitive and stupid. The men who star on TV like Charlie Harper from *Two and a Half Men*, Quagmire from *Family Guy*, and Barney Stinson from *How I Met Your Mother* portray manhood as nothing more than a search for your next sexual encounter.

So what is manhood? Hollywood seems to be happy pushing the limits and bounds of what they would call manhood. The world, which is starving for any picture and version of manhood for them to dissect and discuss, embraces these “men” and the form of manliness that they are selling. The average teenager watches 4 hours of television today, meaning our version of manhood is shaped much more by the men who adorn our TV screen than we could ever imagine.

### *Peers*

If our ideal of manhood isn’t shaped by Hollywood, we let ourselves be changed by the guys around us. I know about the conversations in the locker room. I remember the pressure I put on myself to be like the other guys in the hallway. When I was growing up, Tyler was my best friend. He had the perfect life. The girl I liked lived next door to him, he had school records in track, made A team basketball, and had a dirt bike. He also had a basketball goal in his driveway with a glass backboard!!! This was a huge deal back in my neighborhood. What Tyler wore, I tried to wear. What Tyler said, I tried to work into my vocabulary. What Tyler mocked, I mocked. It was idol worship at its finest. Instead of idolizing a celebrity or a rockstar, I wanted to be Tyler.

There is probably someone your age (or just a little bit older) who you look up to. They might be popular, or a good football player. Perhaps they have a girlfriend or a dirt bike. I don’t know what makes them different from you, but you have made a list. They have a version of manhood that drives them. It is a view of what man is, what they are supposed to do, or how they should act. These unofficial rules of manhood drive their decisions and their actions. As you look up to them you are adopting their views as your own. So just like Hollywood, your idols have their own versions of manhood that change you.

### *The Reason for this Journey*

Regardless of where you picture of the ultimate man is formed, I do know that we are in desperate need of true manhood to resurface. I eat lunch three times a week at a middle school next to the church. The most frustrating thing about my time spent there is watching the interactions between the boys and the girls. The girls that I spend most of my

time eating with usually tell me how their day is going. Whether it is about the girls being asked to physically show how much they care about the guys in their life, or the stories of abuse at the hands of men, or just the common “my boyfriend the idiot” stories that I hear regularly, a pattern is emerging. The middle school young ladies are being treated horribly by boys in their school. They are objectified and harassed. They are mocked and dishonored. They are taken advantage of and are used to it! The young ladies your age need to see true manhood.

As a former youth pastor, I had spend a majority of my time dealing with siblings. It is sad to see how much hurt is perpetuated by guys to their sisters. Blame it on sibling rivalry or proximity; sisters often get the brunt of the hurt that guys can give. I have a sister who (in my opinion) was given everything. It could be my own selective memory, but I can't think of a time when she wasn't the favorite. She moved to Japan to be a church planter, which has sent my parents into a spin cycle of separation anxiety mixed with idol worship. Our relationship was strained throughout childhood. She deserved better from me. Every time I hear one of the youth group girls talk about the horrible things that her brothers had said or done to her, I think back to my own sister. We ignore them, we insult them, we mock and ridicule them. We tell ourselves that its all in good fun or 'just a brother and sister thing'. The sisters that we have need to see true manhood.

Not all of you have sisters like me, but I will wager even money that you have a mother. More and more students every year are growing up in houses where a mom is the only adult figure that they see daily. With a lot of the single moms that I know, the boys give them the most trouble. As I was growing up, I was belligerent and hard-headed, disobedient and disrespectful. If you were honest with yourself, you have probably seen glimpses of these qualities. If you want to be really proactive, you can ask your Mom. I'm sure she could let you know. Our mothers need to see us journey to true manhood.

Most every guy I know is preoccupied with women at some level. Their goal is to be married at some point in time. Eric Ludy says it best in his book *God's Gift to Women*: “The way a young man trains as a protector of his family is the model of how he will be as a protector of his future wife and daughters.” (195) The marines understand this in their vernacular: “The more you bleed in training, the less you bleed in battle.” Translation: we are training today for the men we will be in marriage and as fathers. Our future girlfriend/fiancée/wife and daughters, need us to journey to true manhood.

What our mothers, sisters, and women of all ages have seen most, is false manhood. The beat your chest, outspoken, look-at-me, protect your image manhood. They have seen abuse and neglect and have been on the wrong end of pain and anger. We as men are guilty of so many things that have hurt the women in our lives. As a newly married man, I am beginning to see all the things that I do that I don't even realize hurt my wife. I seem to do it at a near record pace. My wife needs to see a better man. I need to be a better man. There is so much false manhood and imposters are everywhere...

One such imposter was the first King of Israel: Saul. When people looked at Saul, they saw everything they needed to be a King. The NFL draft is all about finding the perfect guy for the specific job you want him to do. He has to be strong so they see how many times he can bench press 225 lbs. They need him to be fast so they see how fast he can run the 40-yard dash. They need him to be athletic, so they see what his vertical jump is. If Israel was to draft a King in the first round, Saul would have been their first choice.

## *With the First Pick...*

Saul had everything going for him. When you think of great leaders or great men what comes to your mind? Do you picture George Patton waving his crop in front of an American flag? Do you envision Sir Edmond Hillary summiting Everest? Lane Frost conquering Red Rock? Do you envision athletes, explorers, soldiers, cowboys, or adventurers? What separates these men from others. Whoever comes to mind, he probably doesn't have as much going on for him as Saul did.

I always wondered what it would be like to have a famous dad. What would it be like to have a dad like David Beckham, LeBron James or Will Smith? What would it be like to bring one of those guys in for "bring your father to school day"? Can you imagine the scene as they dropped you off at school? Would you charge your friends for autographs? I am sure that there would be some negative aspects to having a dad that is followed by paparazzi. I can certainly think of some of the positives. No one can cut LeBron James' kid from the high school basketball team! You would never put Denzel Washington's kid in an understudy role for the school play. Would you want to live in the shadow of your father?

Saul had a dad who had made a name for himself. Kish was a man with a reputation. It would only be fitting that the first king of Israel be from a man whose fame warranted it. He was so well known, 1 Samuel 9.1 says he was a "man of standing." Almost every other time this idea of a "man of standing" is used in scripture it is of a someone who has made a name for himself in battle. Occasionally it is used of men who were capable of performing a task. Either way, Kish was known as a man who got stuff done. People knew him as a man of action who was capable to accomplish his purposes. This was the man Saul grew up with.

Saul was without equal. (1 Sam. 9.2; 10.24) For one thing Saul stood a head taller than any other Israelite (1 Sam. 9.2; 10.23). It's a shame that height isn't a power symbol today. It certainly wasn't on my jr. high basketball team. As the tallest one on the team, the closest I ever got to power was mixing the Gatorade before practice. For Saul it was a testament to his strength and power. He was an "impressive" man, the word for impressive is a word for attractiveness and sometimes moral goodness. What it must feel like to be attractive? It is a burden, I shall never bear.

Saul had the followers (1 Samuel 10.26). After Saul was anointed by Samuel to take the throne, he was followed home by valiant men. Can you imagine what the entourage for Saul would have been like? A good looking guy, head taller than anyone else, with charisma and power...his followers would have been many and powerful. I won the 7<sup>th</sup> grade spelling bee one time and was followed down the hall by 7 or 8 intimidating geography club members. I was the hero! Saul's following would have been epic. These were not the twitter followers and facebook friends that had met him once and wanted to be on the ground floor for information. These were men who were attaching their name to his. Where his fame led, these men would reap the rewards.

I doubt I will ever get to know the amount of power and clout that Saul had: the son of a well-known father, without equal, with a powerful following. The newly anointed King of Israel, was everything you could look at and say: "that is a man!" Especially in America, these are some of the things that we look at and bestow manhood upon each other. Like stats on the back of baseball cards, we measure one another against each other. It starts on playgrounds: "My dad can beat up your dad!"; "I have more friends than you!"; "Check out

my new hoodie!". We make the claims that Saul had going for him...but they don't stop at playgrounds. We measure the size of each others following by facebook friends and twitter followers. We look to each others looks or height, their bench press or their 40 yard dash time, and envy or mock. Saul had nothing to be jealous of anyone and by all counts he was THE MAN!

### *Mr. Irrelevant*

If Saul was the first pick because of his attributes, David wouldn't even be on the draft board. When you compared Saul and David side-by-side, there was absolutely no contest! David had so many things that on the surface kept him from being mentioned in the same sentence as Saul.

He was from an unassuming family in a small town. David's father was a man named Jesse. We hear nothing else about him in scripture. He was probably a shepherd just like David was. He had 8 sons which would have brought him a certain amount of honor in his culture. But for the most part, Jesse is a fairly normal guy. Jesse would have been the dad that was known in his town (Bethlehem was a small place), but definitely not a real powerful character.

Jesse and his sons made their home in Bethlehem. Nine hundred years from this time it would be a big deal to be from Bethlehem, the birth place of Jesus. But when David was growing up it was not something that you would want people to know. It's kind of like the people from Michigan who have to hold their hand up to point out where on the mitten they are from. The city of Bethlehem was a fairly unremarkable village. There were no billboards citing famous people who were born there, there wasn't any historical landmarks there (other than possibly Rachel's tomb [Gen 35.16-20; 48.7]). The town was a blip on the map that wouldn't warrant a brake check on the Israeli highways.

He was the youngest in his family (1 Samuel 16.11). David was the younger brother that wanted to tag along. He was the extra kid who was tolerated, but definitely not embraced. This tolerance was shown in his interaction with his brothers in chapter 17. As he showed up to the battlefield, his older brother gave him a bashing. "What are you doing here...you are so conceited and wicked...shouldn't you be tending sheep?" (1 Samuel 17.28). Eliab was your prototypical oldest brother. All that was missing from their interaction was a wedgie and a noogie! Not only did his older brothers over look him, his Dad didn't even invite him to his own anointing. When Samuel arrived in Bethlehem and found Jesse and his sons (minus David), he consecrated them and invited them to a sacrifice (1 Samuel 16.5). Samuel has all of the sons of Jesse pass in front of him, but there is no one present that God has chosen. After all of them had passed he asked Jesse, "Are these all of the sons you have?" (1 Samuel 16.11) How can David not be with them? He is out tending sheep, when he was supposed to be being anointed King! He was so overlooked by his family (and frankly everyone else) that he wasn't even invited to come to the sacrifice. David joins the ranks of overlooked youngest siblings of all time!

There was already a king. I want to preface this by saying I have had no feudalistic experience. I have never been crowned or put in charge of anything of real substance. I know little about running a country and I know nothing about being a king. Perhaps the biggest issue with David becoming king is that there is already a king. One king is a good way to run a country. Two kings is a recipe for disaster. When David was anointed, there

was already a man sitting on the throne. The quickest way to get on a king's bad list is to be anointed as his replacement. One week we were having a leg-wrestling tournament at middle school youth group. The winner receives a mock WWE Championship Belt. Our last champion had dominated the tournament and was back defending his title. The smallest boy in our group walked up to him, stood on a chair to get in his face, pointed at his belt and said in his squeaky voice: "You're wearing my belt!" The former champion dismantled him the next round. Moral of the story: Don't tug on Superman's cape! Translation: Don't get anointed King when there already is one!

### *A Comparison of Hearts*

Saul had all the raw materials to model true manhood. He had all the ingredients, as well as the platform to model God's plan of manliness to the world. What would ultimately be his downfall would not be one of physical ability or social shortcomings, but it would be his heart. And next Saul, David seemed to lack all the necessary components to becoming King. If it were a contest, Saul would have won in a rout, without breaking a sweat. Why is it then that David would take the Kingdom to new heights; write incredible psalms that show faith, belief, and despair; and set an example of a relationship with God to every generation after him? Where as Saul would be remembered for his jealousy and his sinful death? In short: their hearts would determine the direction of their rule.

After Saul's anointing, Samuel gave him some instructions. Saul was to meet some men at Rachel's tomb: Check! He was then to head to the great tree of Tabor where he would meet three guys and pick up some bread: Check! Then he will prophesy with some of the prophets at Gibeah: Check! Finally, he was to go to Gilgal where Samuel will meet him for a sacrifice. The biggest thing Saul was to do there was to wait seven days for Samuel to show up to perform the sacrifice (1 Samuel 10.1-8). The story picks up again in 1 Samuel 13.7 where Saul and his men are hanging out at Gilgal. Saul waited for Samuel but he jumped the gun (1 Sam. 13.8). Just as Saul had finished offering the sacrifice that Samuel was supposed to, Samuel enters the scene. Saul is caught with his hand in the cookie jar!

It was pitch black outside. About 5 guys and I snuck across the fairgrounds to where the campers and counselors were sleeping. Jake, who is more accurately called "Big Jake" was sleeping comfortably at 3 am on his air mattress, cowboy hat over his face and boots on just in case. Down the hill at Rodeo Bible Camp was a shallow pond. Some of the guys who were much more onery than I, thought it would be funny to move "Big Jake" and his air mattress on to the water to watch him wake up and sink. Our first effort to lift him proved unsuccessful, as "Big Jake" was no small man. On the second attempt his cowboy hat slid back revealing two rage-filled eyes and a mouth forming words that were too loud to understand at that close of range. We lit out through the bunks as he tried to find his jeans and a calf rope to chase us down with. We had been caught in the act.

Saul was caught in the act! As Samuel questions him, Saul gives the answer to why he has decided to disobey his instructions. Saul said: "When I saw the men were leaving, and you didn't show up, I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering myself." (1 Sam. 13.11-12) The word "compelled" is an interesting word to describe Saul's attitude in this situation. This word means that he wanted to take matters into his own hands. Instead of letting the man whom God had instructed to do the offering do it, Saul decided to take matters into his own hands. Saul would spend much of the rest of his time as King taking

matters into his own hands. Saul wanted what Saul wanted, not what God desired. When the time came for Saul to decide who would be in control of his life, Saul always chose himself! Samuel told Saul that his decision would lead to his replacement being named. God has sought a man after his own heart! (1 Samuel 13.13-14)

David was that man. Unlike Saul, David would be a man the let God be in charge of his reign. Even in his most troubling times as King, David would seek God's forgiveness and guidance. In times of sin and repentance, in times of victory or defeat, as David attempted to lead God's people, it was God who would direct his steps and God who he would let be in charge. In Saul and David we see two different views of manhood. For the rest of their careers David and Saul would be seen as contrasting figures. They would be thrust into the same narratives as case studies in manhood. As we track through this book, it is my hope that we will uncover what it looks like to be God's man as we look at life of David. Starting with his anointing, we see a God who "looks not at the outward appearance, but the heart." (1 Samuel 16.7)

### *Conclusion*

What are the things that we as men must attempt to put in our heart? What type of character and scruples should we store up in our heart so that God can say: "that is a man after my own heart!"? Throughout the rest of this story, David will be put under the microscope. His actions will be dissected and his thoughts will be studied, so that we can learn what it looks like to be men. Authentic manhood is not copied from Hollywood, nor is it decided upon by majority vote, but it is cultivated in a relationship with our heavenly Father. The God that formed David's heart, guided his steps, and worked in his experiences, was the same God that David tried to follow all of his days. David was a man that sought God, and that is where our journey to manhood must begin. As you read and work to become the man God desires you to be, know that I am praying for you and that I have struggled through these things just as you have. Let's get to work!