

THANK YOU FOR SAMPLING THE “HOW TO BE A MAN: STUDENT EDITION”

How To Be A Man: Student Edition is a 40-day devotional that will challenge and equip guys to become the young men God has called them to be by pursuing a Christ-centered masculinity. The authors, Rick Burgess and Andy Blanks, identified eight core characteristics in the life of Jesus. Each week looks at a different characteristic, challenging young men to seek to see these characteristics come alive in their own lives.

If you have any questions about *How To Be A Man: Student Edition*, or *How To Be A Man* for adults, please don't hesitate to call us at 1-888-969-6360.

STUDENT EDITION

HOW BE^{TO} A MAN

PURSUING
CHRIST-CENTERED
MASCULINITY

RICK BURGESS & ANDY BLANKS

HOW TO BE A MAN: PURSUING CHRIST-CENTERED MASCULINITY

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Executive Editor
Andy Blanks

Art Director
Laurel-Dawn Berryhill

Graphic Design
Laurel-Dawn Berryhill
Upper Air Creative

Copy Editor
Paige Townley

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INTRODUCTION

What does it mean to be a man?

It's an interesting question, isn't it? We can define it a lot of ways. It's a definition that has changed over time, and even today looks different in different cultures. But for our purposes, let's consider how we might answer the question in our culture right now.

What does it mean to be a man?

The world sends a lot of mixed messages about this topic. You may be told that the entire idea of being a man is kind of a made-up concept. The world wants you to think that gender, the idea that we're either a male or a female, is something we choose. The world says that other than biology, there's no real difference in men and women anyway. After all, culture says you can't even define what it means to "be a man" in the first place.

Well ... not quite.

You see, if you believe in God, you have to accept that when God made male and female, He made them different. Now, God made male and female 100% equal. That's an important point. But He made them different. Some of this difference is obviously biological. But some of this difference is in who we are as individuals and in the roles God designed for each of us. No matter how hard some people try to deny it, men and women are uniquely and wonderfully different from each other.

Masculinity is a concept worthy of your pursuit.

Does the world around you shape some of this difference between man and woman? Sure it does. Travel around the world and notice how masculinity differs across cultures. When we picture a “real man” in our minds, we might think of a super tough, outdoorsy guy. He probably has a beard. He knows how to operate a chainsaw. He drives a monster truck. And so on. There are a couple of funny things about this stereotype. First, there are plenty of real men who don’t fit this description. Some real men hate the outdoors and would rather spend their free time in front of a computer or video game console. And there’s nothing wrong with that. Second, this stereotype doesn’t hold up in cultures around the world. In other cultures, this isn’t what a “real man” looks like at all.

So we can confidently say that there is such a thing as masculinity and that it’s a goal that as young men, you should be pursuing. But we have a problem.

The big problem is simply that you’re starving for good examples of what a man is. Some of you don’t know exactly where to look for your model. Some of you look around and what you see gives you mixed messages. Is your model the over-the-top, super competitive, hyper-masculine guy who never met a challenge, or a person, he couldn’t conquer? Or is your model the 20-something who has “failed to launch” and spends his days sleeping and his nights playing video games in his parents’ basement? Is your model the workaholic adult in your life? Or is your model the gender-neutral guy who thinks all of this masculinity talk is kind of crazy?

For some of you, examples of what a real man is can be hard to come by.

But for others of you, you can look at the men in your life and see real-life examples of what it means to be a man. Maybe it’s your dad, stepdad, or granddad. Maybe it’s a neighbor or a man at church. Maybe it’s an older brother. Whoever it may be, some of you have men in your life who are godly, honest, hardworking guys. They are committed to their family and church. For you, finding a model of what it means to be a godly man isn’t that hard.





But let's take it a step further. Even the godliest guy you know isn't a perfect example is he? Even the best men in our lives make mistakes. The realest man you know will let you down. So if we're looking for a true example of what it means to be a man, we need more.

How do you know what real masculinity looks like? How do you become the young man God wants you to be? Here's a truth that forms the foundation of this book: you can't seek to become a man unless you look to Jesus as your model for true masculinity.

Here's the deal: Through His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus makes it possible for you to have an identity that is completely found in Himself. If you've come to a saving faith in Christ, you're a new creation, having been freed from the bondage of sin. And what you have been freed to become is the young man God intends for you to be.

You see, the truth of the Gospel—the new life available to you through faith in Jesus—gives you the power to be more like Christ. When you come to faith in Jesus, you're freed from the chains of sin, given new life and purpose in Christ, and empowered by the very Spirit of God Himself. Because of this, you have everything you need to pursue a masculinity grounded in Christ. Not a masculinity grounded in culture. Not a masculinity grounded in tradition. But a masculinity that looks to Jesus as both its power source and its goal.

Do you want to become a man after God's heart? Let us tell you how. Actually, let the Apostle Paul tell you how. Though we may be more fun around a campfire, he's undoubtedly better qualified than we are in this area. In Ephesians 5:1-2, Paul says, "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Becoming the man God wants you to be means living like God wants you to live. Imitating God. Walking as Christ walked. Seeing God, especially in the example of Christ, as the pattern for manhood.

How do you become a man? By living like Jesus.

We knew that we wanted to write a book that would help guys like you pursue a Christ-centered masculinity. We've both been active in ministry for many years. But in the past few years, God has awakened in us a sincere desire to see men - from teenagers like you to granddaddies - own the identity God has set aside for them. This book is our way of guiding men, young and old alike, to understand what they are called to be and challenge them to go after it.

But the question was, how? How do we present Christ in such a way that men could see in Him what they are called to be?

We wanted to present Jesus as an in-depth model of manhood while simplifying the way in which we understand how to pursue Him. To do this, we identified eight core characteristics we saw in the person of Christ, biblically solid characteristics that we can seek to exemplify in our own lives. These characteristics are powerful ways to view Christ, seeing Him and His actions as expressions of the model man. The characteristics are as follows:

- IDENTITY
- INTEGRITY
- PURPOSE
- SURRENDER
- PASSION
- COMMITMENT
- COMPASSION
- INFLUENCE

The young man God has called you to be is a guy who knows that his identity and his purpose are completely found in Christ. The young man God has called you to be is a guy who says what he means and means what he says. His word is always to be counted on. The young man God has called you to be is a guy who sacrifices for the good of others. The young man God has called you to be is a guy who wholeheartedly invests himself in life, giving his all when it's time to work and when it's time to play. The young man God has called you to be is a guy who uses his influence to make the world a



better place, all in the name of God. This is the young man God has called you to be. And trust us, it's the young man we want you to be as well.

This is simple stuff. And yet, we have to be realistic. Is Jesus more complex than these eight characteristics? Absolutely. Is it possible to perfectly master these and therefore be the perfect, godly man? Of course not. But these are qualities Jesus modeled and modeled in abundance. And we promise, with the Holy Spirit's help, if you obediently and passionately pursue Christlikeness by working to see these characteristics lived out in your own life, you will be on the road to becoming the man God has called you to be.

It's our prayer that this 40-day devotional will help challenge you to a more passionate pursuit of Christ-centered manhood. It's designed to give you easy daily devotionals that shouldn't take you more than a few minutes to read, along with questions (what we call "Processing the Pursuit") that will challenge you to apply what you're learning in your life. If this book helps you become more like Jesus, we'd love to hear from you. If we can ever help you in any way, we'd love to hear from you. If you want to talk about football, hunting, or life in general, we'd love to hear from you. We're both pretty easy to find.

More than anything, we want you to hear us say that even though we're older than you, we're men on the same journey you are, striving with humility and effort to grow into Christlikeness every day. We don't always get it right. Neither will you. But we're committed to this journey. And we hope you are too.

Your Brothers in Christ,

Rick Burgess and Andy Blanks



IDENTITY



“Who are you?” It’s an interesting question. In fact, it’s at the heart of what it means to be a guy growing into the man God has called him to be. And yet, there are a few ways you could answer this question.

You could respond with your name: “I’m John Smith.” And that would say something about you, wouldn’t it? That would say to the world that you are John from the family Smith. Depending on your family’s legacy, it may say a lot about your identity. Or it might not really say anything at all.

You could respond to this question with your role. “Who am I? I’m a son. A grandson. A brother.” While this may speak to more of who you are rather than your name alone, it’s still an incomplete way of answering the question.

So maybe you answer the question by listing your hobbies. “Who am I? I’m a runner.” Or you play in the band. Or you play sports. Or you like hunting and fishing. Or you love video games. Again, though, this doesn’t seem complete. It’s not a great idea to define who we are by the things we do.

No. None of these responses are complete. None paint the full picture. Who you are is one of the most important questions you can answer. And as a teenager, it’s a big part of where you find yourself right now. “Who are you” is a super important question in your life.

Before you can begin this journey of becoming the young man God has called you to be, you have to know where the starting line is. You wouldn’t build a house without laying a good foundation. A good understanding of our identity is the foundation for pursuing a Christ-centered masculinity. If you have been saved by faith in Christ, then your identity is wrapped up in who Christ is. This, before anything else, is the key to understanding how to pursue a masculinity that is God-honoring.

Who are you? The key to answering this question is found in discovering who you are in Christ. The next five days of devotions will help you do just that.

IDENTITY DAY I

"THEREFORE, IF ANYONE IS IN CHRIST, HE IS A NEW CREATION. THE OLD HAS PASSED AWAY; BEHOLD, THE NEW HAS COME." - 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

"New" is almost always better than "improved." Given the choice between putting a new transmission in your 2003 SUV or getting a brand new model fresh off the assembly line, what would you choose? A cutting edge laptop is a better choice than an old machine with a new processor. There's usually a pretty big difference between "new" and "improved." This is especially true when it comes to your identity as a young man.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. What the Apostle Paul says here about "new" versus "improved" is really important. And Paul would know as well as anyone. Paul was the number one enemy of the Church. His life's mission was to put Christ-followers in jail. Until Jesus pretty much shut all of that down. As Paul was traveling to Damascus to hunt down more Christians, Jesus appeared to him in a bright light. He asked Paul why he was persecuting Him. This moment was the line in the sand for Paul, the "point of no return."

The moment we come to a saving faith in Christ, there is death and life. You see, from the moment of his encounter with Christ, Paul's identity was transformed. In his words, the old Paul was dead. And in its place was the new Paul. Did you catch that? Not the improved Paul. Not the better Paul. The NEW Paul. Not Paul 1.1. We're talking Paul 2.0.

To be in Christ is to be made new. The old you that lived as a slave to sin is dead. The old you that lived for you and you alone is dead. The old you that didn't have a purpose is dead. The old you that pursued meaningless things is dead. But the best news is that death is only part of the story.

You see, to understand your identity as a Christ-follower and as a young man is to look at the last part of verse 17. "Behold, the new has come." This is the truth God speaks into your life. The same God who spoke and the world was created? This God tells you that you are new. The same God who sent His Son to earth to save His people tells you that you are new. There may be no better promise in Scripture.

Before you can become the young man God wants you to be, you must first understand that the guy you were is no more. You are new in Christ. And this changes everything.

PROCESSING THE PURSUIT

1. Paul says in his letter to the Romans that if we confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead, we will be saved from the death our sinfulness rightfully earns for us (Romans 10:9). If we're not careful, the Gospel is something we think of as just "fire insurance." And yet, the Gospel speaks powerfully to our identity in Christ. In your own words, how does the new life you have in Christ change the way you see yourself?

2. Sometimes as a young man, your identity is still tied to "the old," that part of you that is dead. What is keeping you from embracing your identity as a new creation in Christ? What sin are you holding on to?

3. Look at the scale below. If 1 represents "a life lived completely for myself," and 10 represents "a life lived completely in Christ," how would you rate the way you're currently living your life? What is your motivation? For whom are you truly living?



4. Take some time to pray to God right now. Praise Him that He is a God of new beginnings. Thank Him for making you new in Christ. And ask Him to reveal through His Spirit working in you the places in your life where you need to more fully surrender to Him.

IDENTITY DAY 2

“PUT ON THE NEW SELF, WHICH IS BEING RENEWED IN KNOWLEDGE AFTER THE IMAGE OF ITS CREATOR.” - COLOSSIANS 3:10

Let's cut right to the chase. Today's devotion is going to build on yesterday's discussion of the “dead self” versus the “new creation.” But you're going to really hone in on how to practically apply this as a young man seeking to live more like Jesus.

In Colossians 3:1, Paul sets up his argument with what you might call an “if/then” statement. He says, essentially, IF you're a Christian, THEN your focus in life shouldn't be worldly. You should have a Kingdom focus in all you do. This is a huge reminder! But it's only the beginning. Paul then makes a statement in verse 3 that echoes what we studied in yesterday's devotion: The old you has died, and the new you is alive in Christ. Paul goes on to contrast the life of the “dead self” (verses 5-9) versus the life of the “new creation” (verses 12-14). As you seek to be a young man after God's own heart, this is extremely relevant stuff. It's where you are going to focus most of your attention today.

In verses 5-9, Paul encourages us to kill the desires in our life that are earthly. Paul rightfully says that these are things that once had a place in our lives, but don't any longer. These are a dead man's pursuits. If you've come to Christ, you can no longer let these things have control over you. It's not a part of your identity as a guy who is a new creation.

So what IS a part of your identity? Paul lists a few examples in verses 12-14. What a big difference this list is from the previous one! This is a picture of someone who A) has been made new in Christ, and B) is pursuing Christ with all he is worth.

The world around you sends you a lot of mixed messages about what it means to be a man. Very little of it is in line with who Jesus is. What Paul calls you to here is Christlikeness. Compassion. Kindness. Humility. Patience. Forgiveness. And love. So you must ask, how does this look in my life? What does it mean to be a young man who lives these things out in his life?

The things Paul lists may not look like the world's definition of being a man, but they are part of God's definition. And seeking to see them in your life is part of what it means to pursue a Christ-centered masculinity.

PROCESSING THE PURSUIT

1. Think about the list Paul gave us here. Beside each characteristic below, write down what you think it means:

Compassion
Kindness
Humility
Meekness
Patience
Bearing with one another
Forgiving
Loving

2. Think about your life at school, on your team, and so on. Which one of these is easiest for you to live out in your life? Circle one or two from the list above that come naturally to you.

3. Which one of these characteristics is more difficult for you to live out in your life? Underline it.

4. For the characteristic you underlined, take a moment and think of three practical examples of how you may live this out today.

5. Here's the cool thing: You're not stuck trying to live out these things on your own. You have the Holy Spirit working inside you to make you more like Jesus. But you do have to surrender your will to God. Say a prayer telling God that you want to see Him work in your life to make you more of a young man after His own heart. Trust God to finish the work in you that He has started.

IDENTITY DAY 3

"IN THE SAME WAY, LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE OTHERS, SO THAT THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS AND GIVE GLORY TO YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN." - MATTHEW 5:16

Read Matthew 5:13-16. These verses are probably familiar to you. They come just as Jesus is about to kick off His Sermon on the Mount. This is a "sermon" where Jesus is trying to show His listeners how they are kind of missing it when it comes to how they seek God. Jesus' teaching would have rocked the world of those listening. And it should shake you up, too.

These words in Matthew speak to the heart of your identity as a young man. You were created by God to be a difference-maker in this world. Like salt in a bland meal, you are to liven up the world around you for the sake of Christ. Like light, your life is supposed to drive out the darkness of the sinful world in which you live. Jesus says your life is literally to be lived in such a way that people watch what you do and praise God as a result.

Let that last sentence sink in. When people look at your life, does it lead them to look to God? When your friends hear you talk about other people, do your words glorify God? When you're on a date with a girl, do your words, thoughts, and actions point to God? Jesus expects you to impact your world. It's part of who you are. And yet, so many of us fail to live up to this aspect of our God-given identity.

If you think about it, you have a ton of chances every day to impact others for Christ. A lot of times you're so busy that you miss them. Right? Being aware of these little moments of influence, and the courage to act on them, is the difference between guys who make much of their lives and guys who fail to leave their mark.

As you spend time this week considering your identity in Christ, it's important to realize what God expects of you. God sees your life as a valuable resource, a powerful force of influence capable of impacting the world around you, all for His glory. The question is, do you view your life this way?

PROCESSING THE PURSUIT

1. Think about this: What areas in your life do you have the most influence?

2. Describe how you have used your influence to bring honor and glory to God in these areas. (If you haven't, don't feel too bad. This is the time to do something about it.)

3. The things you say or don't say work as "salt" in your world. Think of a time recently when you said something that made a difference for Christ. Now, think of a time recently when you said (or didn't say) something that was out of character for you. Think about the difference in these two instances. What can you learn from them? How can you be more intentional in how you use your words for God's glory?

4. The identity God has called you to is one of a difference-maker. Spend some time in prayer and reflection today, asking God how He wants to use you as a difference-maker in your world.

IDENTITY DAY 4

"AND HE SAT DOWN AND CALLED THE TWELVE. AND HE SAID TO THEM, 'IF ANYONE WOULD BE FIRST, HE MUST BE LAST OF ALL AND SERVANT OF ALL.'"
- MARK 9:35

Before you finish your look at identity, one of the most important aspects of growing into the young man God wants you to be, you have to spend some time looking at one of Jesus' core teachings. I think it's one that many men, me included, struggle with. I believe teenagers like yourself struggle with it too. It's a teaching that really goes against a lot of what you may think about when you think about what a man really is.

Read Mark 9:33-37. Capernaum was a city where Jesus and the disciples hung out the most. When we read about Jesus and the guys in Matthew 9, they had been on a kind of walking tour of Galilee and the region to the north. Jesus had been teaching, healing, and performing miracles. Here, we can almost see Jesus relaxing in a house (possibly Peter's), teaching the disciples in a quiet moment.

Look at what Jesus says. He's telling them how things are supposed to be in the Kingdom of God. It's as if He's saying, "Listen up guys, because this is pretty different than how the world sees things." And then He tells them: To be great is to be a servant. To be strong means to be weak. To be first is to be last. What a message! This is the opposite of how your world teaches you to think about what it means to be a man.

So often in your world, being a man is all about pursuing power and authority. It's crushing the weak. It's being the guy out front or at the top. And yet, this isn't at all how the Bible describes being a man. Jesus says here and elsewhere that greatness in God's eyes is sacrificing for the good of others. It's looking at our parents, siblings, friends, teachers . . . everyone in our life, and asking, "How can I live in such a way as to always be lifting these people up?"

Servanthood is using your life to make other people's lives better. It's giving all of who you are to empower, equip, and encourage those around you. And it's at the very heart of your identity as a Christ-follower.

PROCESSING THE PURSUIT

1. Why is being a servant so hard to do? More importantly for our discussion, why does it seem like it goes against how we think of “real men”?

2. In Philippians 2:3-4, Paul writes, “[3] Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. [4] Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” In verse 4, Paul seems to give us a strategy toward actually being a servant. What does he say is the key to seeing yourself as a servant?

3. What has to happen in your heart for you to begin to see the needs of others? What has to happen in your heart for you to be aware of what your parents need? What has to happen in your heart to truly see what your friends need?

4. Take some time today to pray to God. Ask Him to give you a heart of understanding for those around you. Ask Him to help you really see what’s going on in their lives, as well as the courage to act on what He shows to you. Thank God for serving you by sending His Son to die so that you may have life.

IDENTITY DAY 5

“SO GOD CREATED MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE, IN THE IMAGE OF GOD HE CREATED HIM; MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM.” - GENESIS 1:27

It's so easy to read these verses in Genesis and breeze right past them without stopping to really think about what they mean for you as a young man. And yet, the statement that God made people in His image should stop you in your tracks. After all, this wasn't said about anything else in God's creation. It was only said about humans. Let's spend some time thinking about what this means for you and for your identity as a young man.

What does it mean that you were made in God's image?

Well, it has nothing to do with how we look. Being made in God's image means something more than our appearance. Being made in God's image means we have rule over creation (v. 26). We've been given "rule" in a way that no other created thing has. There are aspects of our worlds that we are in charge, or in command, of. But here's the deal: Our rule was always intended to mirror God's rule! We are to rule with justness, fairness, compassion, humility, and so on. Being made in God's likeness means, in part, being responsible for anything He has entrusted to you. Your family. His mission. Your very life.

Second, being made in God's image means we have a little spark of God's nature in us. While we'll never express these qualities in a way anywhere near as perfectly as God does, we have it within us to be loving, forgiving, steadfast, just, and so on. Being made in God's image means that we have the potential to be messengers of godliness in our everyday lives. And so, you have to ask yourself, how is the world around you better because of God's nature flowing out of you? How are you reflecting God's character in your home and at school? In what ways are your conversations with others communicating God's goodness to the world.

Being created in God's image isn't some weird, mystical concept. It's a true statement about the nature of your identity as a Christ-follower. And when you understand it, it changes the way you see your identity.

PROCESSING THE PURSUIT

1. What areas in your life do you have some responsibility? Think about that question. Now, here's a crazy thought: anywhere that you have been given responsibility, you have a chance to "rule" as God would. In other words, you can allow God to use your influence to impact the world. That's a wild thought isn't it? What's an example of how you can see this working in your life?

2. If you asked your friends or family to point out where they see God in you, how would they answer? Don't just quickly pass over this question. Think about it for a moment.

3. Spend some time in prayer today asking God to show you a picture of how you have been responsible for the influence, or "rule," He has entrusted you with. Ask Him to show you areas in which you have acted in His image by living like Him. Ask Him to reveal to you areas where you need to rely upon Him for improvement.