

14 Skills for Being a Real Man

With some food, shelter and minimal nurturing, 95 percent of males will grow up to become 18- to 21-year-old adults. Unfortunately, time alone doesn't make a real man.

The real measure of a man is what he does and the decisions he makes every day. Manhood is about skills, not age.

From my personal shortcomings and through my professional education and experience, I have learned that as one walks with God, 14 skills and characteristics help make a real man.

1. Vision: Know your place in the big story. Your story is a small chapter in God's grand narrative. God is the Creator, Author and Authority. You aren't God and aren't as smart or powerful as God. Make Him, not you, your Lord and let His instruction manual be your life's guide.

2. Power in the mind of Christ: In 1 Corinthians, Paul teaches us that we have the mind of Christ, so let's use it. When tempted in the desert or persecuted before His crucifixion, Jesus used His mind to control Himself, submit to and understand His Father's will and fight temptation. You are in a war, and the battlefield is your mind. Absorbing God's Word, engaging with God regularly and exercising your mind by making godly decisions is powerful.

3. Gratitude: When life is going well, we often get proud and arrogant, which leads to mistakes. When we are prideful, we do things on our own and forget God's power and wisdom. When life is going well—and when it's not—be humble and thankful and acknowledge God.

4. Godly character in adversity: Adversity shows your true colors. When adversity strikes, show godly character. Be a

clear thinker and a problem-solver; don't generate more problems with your attitude or instability. Your response to adversity shows whether you are just a hearer of the Word or actually a doer of the Word.

5. Courage: When you see injustice, stand up for what is right. Don't cave to the opinions, power or influence of evil. Regardless of the repercussions, be a clear protector of truth and right—with an attitude of love.

6. Servant's heart: Especially amid differences of opinion, put the other person's needs in front of your own, unless the request is psychologically and spiritually unhealthy for them or for you. Be a servant to the people whom God has put in your life.

7. Relational mind: God wants our relationship more than our obedience. He doesn't make us clean ourselves up before we can be adopted by Him. Obedience without relationship makes a robot. Value relationship above obedience.

8. Leadership: True leadership requires having godly influence, often by serving, never by overpowering or controlling. Be a godly influence to those around you. Doing the right thing with the right attitude in the right relational way will influence others positively and prevent them from influencing you negatively.

9. Being a light: Shine in this dark world and during dark storms. Be positive, thankful and encouraging. Share God's blessings with others.

10. Trustworthiness: Be diligent and focused on the everyday tasks God gives you, as these little tasks prepare you for bigger tasks. As you pass the smaller tests, God gives you bigger opportunities.

11. Being a clear communicator: Just like a good parent communicates instruction and expectations by working within a

child's surroundings, God does the same by orchestrating our daily circumstances. Our communication involves the decisions we make in those circumstances, stating (and living), "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done," not, "My kingdom come, my will be done."

12. Self-reflection: Always evaluate what you do and why you do it. Continue what you are doing well; correct the rest.

13. Teachable humility: Always remember that none of us is perfect and we each have areas to improve. Accept God's guidance, conviction and correction directly or through others, rather than fighting to prove that you're right or better than others.

14. Emotional self control: God gave us negative feelings as a warning system, alerting us when something is wrong or potentially dangerous. Problems arise when we let emotions rather than facts become our decision-making system. Don't give small events super-sized importance and emotion. Enjoy your feelings, but control their amplitude and influence; don't let your emotions control you.

Nobody scores a perfect 100 percent on all of these skills, but score yourself and commit to intentional activities to raise your numbers even higher in the future.

Remember, decisions determine your life, so choose well.

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