

How to Teach Your Son to Become a Godly Man

When I was in my mid-30s, I had a life-changing epiphany. I worked on the road a lot as a financial adviser, but on this day I was in the office on my computer.

When my boss walked in, I buried my face into the computer screen as she spoke with others. I was filled with anxiety and hoped I would go unnoticed. I realized at that moment, that was how I normally responded to my bosses. Then a question reverberated in my brain, *Why are you hiding?* I wanted to find out why I was afraid of the authority figures in my life.

Ultimately, I came to the conclusion that I didn't feel like an adult. Physically, I was in my 30s, but internally, I felt like I was twelve and I was afraid they would find out. That fear kept me from being comfortable with my true self. Instead, I would try to play the part I thought they wanted in order to mask what was going on inside. I would always be in awe of those I felt like had the keys to a kingdom of which I didn't have access.

Sons need their dad to show them how to be a man. My dad was amazing in so many ways. He taught me a lot. I loved him, he loved me, and I wouldn't have wanted anyone else as a father. There were many reasons I felt the way I did that had nothing to do with him. However, somewhere along the way, there were things that were missed in bringing me into manhood. As I have studied what I was missing, I have narrowed down the following things in teaching a son how to become a man.

1. Identity. Unfortunately, the world communicates to our kids that they need to be a certain type or way to be "successful" or perhaps even "acceptable." When they believe it, they

conform and/or perform for approval. In other words, they hide their true self. If they have been rejected by an authority or their peers, they will bury it even more. Our boys need a strong understanding of who they are as individuals. Until our sons are able to authentically be themselves, they will remain in perpetual childhood. Bringing a boy into manhood involves nurturing his real self to the surface. A man is not made; he emerges. We draw him out with unconditional love, listening, encouragement, and gentle coaching.

2. Belonging. Although being independent is often lifted up as a virtue, we were never meant to live that way. We were meant to be connected to one another through love and belonging. It is a major factor in our maturation process. Our sons need to know they are worthy of belonging otherwise they will never feel good enough. They will always feel as though all others are a step ahead. It will inhibit their ability to be vulnerable which leads to stunted emotional growth. A father is one of the most powerful factors in a son feeling worthy. Our boys need our presence and approval. Merely spending attentive time with him verifies his dignity. Affirm his value so that he knows it is not based on his accomplishments, but on who he is.

3. Voice. In Walt Whitman's poem "O Me! O Life!" is the line, "That the powerful play goes on and you may contribute a verse." Our sons are made with gifts and talents. They have wisdom gained through their own experience; a story to tell. They have powerful things to offer the world. A child shrinks into his parent's arms (or computer screen), but a man stands up and contributes his verse. Help him find his gifting by encouraging him to try new things. Give him room to toil and let him know it's OK to fail. Give him space to find his voice. Don't sculpt it for him or be quick to shoot it down. Affirm it instead.

4. Ceremony. I believe this is something our culture has lost when it comes to bringing boys into manhood. There are still

cultures that do it, but they are declining. Have a ceremony that communicates he has gone from a boy to a man. We have weddings and graduations. This is equally important. Here is an example of a blessing ceremony. {eo}

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