

Life Lessons: The Starting Blocks of Manhood

It would have been an exciting time for me if I hadn't been so afraid.

My start into manhood came upon graduation from high school. It was the right of passage. It was expected for me to simply go get a job and make a life.

I left home with \$35 and a 1966 Chevy pickup (it was an awesome classic short bed—black and chromed out). I bounced around in a couple of jobs until I landed my dream job in a coal mine. Working in the mine proved the starting blocks of manhood. I worked alone, 12 hours a night, seven nights a week—84 monotonous hours of pumping water out of the strip mine so the operators would have access to continue our mass moving of earth to unveil the coal.

The responsibility, the loneliness, the isolation forged my manhood and my work ethic. I continue to draw upon those few years of experience that shaped my perspective.

Here are five lessons that proved to be the starting blocks of my manhood:

1. Isolation is not intimidating. Getting over being alone for so many hours was one of my greatest hurdles. It has proven invaluable for accomplishing other things in my life. My willingness to stand on my own two feet and face a challenge built a self-assurance that I would need later in life. Isolation taught me that I didn't need someone looking over my shoulder for me to work hard and accomplish a task.

2. Ingenuity comes from necessity. There were things that I had to get done and had to do alone. No excuses. I learned that I could do a lot more by myself than I had imagined.

Running equipment, laying hundreds of feet of hose and maintaining the pumps required that I use my head to work. It taught me to think and reason. It taught me ingenuity.

3. You can dream with your eyes open. I spent seven nights a week for 18 months without missing a single night of work. I was awake while everyone that I knew was asleep. Being alone at night in a secluded field and an open pit allowed me to dream big dreams for my life. It also allowed me to begin an open and vocal dialogue with God. I learned to pray while others sleep.

4. Hunger drives you to work. I didn't have options. I didn't have the luxury of wandering through years of college. I couldn't afford to be lazy. As Solomon said, "The appetite of laborers works for them; their hunger drives them on" (Prov. 16:26, NIV).

5. What you do in secret moves you in public. The hours of my labor showed up the next day when the operators would arrive and start their day. If I didn't do my job, there was no way to hide it. If the water wasn't pumped out, hundreds of men would not be able to do their job. Being self-governing and motivated has helped me be entrepreneurial in my drive and diligent in my work.

What about you? What was the job that established your work ethic? What would you consider the starting block of your manhood?

*FivestarMan was founded in 2008 by **Neil Kennedy**. Kennedy has passionately promoted God's Word for 25-plus years of ministry. He is known for practically applying biblical principles that elevate people to a new level of living. As a business, church, ministry and life consultant, Kennedy has helped others strategize the necessary steps to reach their full potential.*

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