



# RAISING BOYS INTO MEN

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## Introduction

The first four books of the New Testament—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—are biographies on the life of Jesus. Each biography gives a unique perspective on the life of Jesus because they were written for different audiences. One thing they all have in common is they say very little about Jesus growing up. There are big sections on his birth and the majority of content is on the last three years of his life.

There is one small section in the book of Luke, chapter 2. It doesn't tell us what Jesus did during his teens or early 20's, but it does say what happened to him during this time. "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."

## Luke 2:52

The verse says that Jesus not only grew in stature (the outside) but he also grew in wisdom (inside). When it comes to boys in today's world, boys are growing in stature, but not in wisdom. The result is men who look like men on the outside, but on the inside they still think, act, and feel like boys on the inside. This is a rising epidemic in our culture today.

Whenever I speak on what the Bible has to say on this subject I am often asked by parents, who see this issue prevalent in their own lives, how they can reverse the trend in their own children's lives. The goal of this article is to introduce you to three core principles on which to focus. By no means is this everything, and by no means are they the only things. They are the beginning. However, if you begin, you will be able to complete what you have started. The key is to take the first steps and get going.

So here we go.....

How can I raise my boy into a man?

## 1. Teach him how to wait for things.

First, all boys grow into men when they learn to wait for good things. Men have patience, boys are impatient. You have heard all the old social proverbs; "Good things come to those who wait." "Patience is a virtue." "The best things in life come through hard work." "You can do anything if you put your mind to it."

All of these proverbs have at their core a basic principle: Men know how to work towards a goal and wait for the payoff. This is called delaying gratification. One main reason boys will grow up on the outside but not on the inside is because no one ever takes the time to teach them to wait.

If you are a mother or father, you cannot wait until your son is a teenager to teach him how to wait. Patience, like all virtues, must be coached into your son at an early age. Here are some age appropriate suggestions: Eat only 3 times a day with one snack. Beginning at an early age (2 or 3) you should be eating regular meals at regular times with your son. This gives their life a rhythm at an early age. Don't use food to cure boredom as this results in an unhealthy relationship with food.

After 4, give them small jobs where they can earn little things. When our youngest boy was 4 years old, my wife had him do 3 things while she took pictures. He made his bed, got dressed, and picked up his clothes. She took these pictures of him doing things and mounted them on a board. Each morning, when he woke up, she would point to the pictures and say, "Which one do you want to do first?" When he completed them, she would give him a star on a chart in the kitchen. Once he had so many stars, they would get a toy at the store when they went shopping. When he was 4, and strapped into the cart, it was easy to pass by the toys when he did not have enough stars. Once he had enough, they would stop and he could pick one out. This stopped the "tantrum in the store because I can't have a toy" before it ever began. More importantly, it taught him that he doesn't always get what he wants right now, but if he waits, he can get something.

At 8-12, your sons should have chores. Start small and let them grow over time. When you give a chore, follow the "see one, do one, teach one" rule. First have him watch you do the chores. Don't let him sit on the couch and watch cartoons on a Saturday morning when you are doing chores (laundry, yard work, taking out trash, etc.) Have him walk alongside you and do them. After dinner as a family, have your son pick up his plate with you and walk it to the sink. Rinse yours off and have him do the same. After a period of time, have him do it by himself. Don't leave while he does it! Stand there and watch him do it. Encourage him and coach him on little tricks to make it easier. Don't be critical. After he has done them while you watch for a period of time, have him do it and teach someone else. If he doesn't have a younger sibling, have him show mom what he has learned. Now turn him loose. Remember! every boy slacks off on his chores, every boy skips doing it. Don't get mad when he does, expect him to slack off, cut corners, or skip out. Wait for this moment because it is the moment when character is formed. When he does this, simply go back to step one and make him watch you do it. This will drive him crazy, and he will say, "I know already." You then reply, "Your actions don't communicate that you know, because you slacked off. You can't do the big fun things in life until you learn to be faithful in the little things of life."

When a boy learns to wait for things, he becomes a well behaved man. When he dates a girl, he will treat her with respect and wait until marriage to get sexual. He will work hard towards goals knowing that he has done it before so he can do it again. When he makes a commitment, he will be more likely to keep it. If you are a male who was raised by a boy, then these concepts will seem foreign to you. It is not too late to learn these things. It may be tougher to learn them now, but you can. Once you do, you will discover a pride in yourself you never had before.

## 2. Teach him responsibility.

Men are responsible. This does not mean men are perfect, never make mistakes, or always make the right decisions. What this means is that men have a sense that the outcome of whatever situation they are in is directly linked to what they do or don't do. In other words, they believe what they do makes a difference. When a man takes responsibility for his life, he is saying to himself: "I am not in control of all the variables, but my choices and my actions influence the outcome." This is why men love competition and sports. Every time an athlete takes the field,

he or she is saying, "I want to influence the outcome. I want my actions to make a difference."

Taking responsibility for your life is not a form of gambling. Men do not leave the outcome to pure chance or luck. You know the difference between taking responsibility and gambling by the way a guy responds when his actions cause something bad. Boys gamble, so when things don't work out, they don't feel responsible for the result. "It was the card's fault. Lady luck ran out. The odds were against me." Men respond to negative outcomes by owning them. This is what is meant when people say, "Man up." They are simply saying that men admit their mistakes, learn from them, and move on. Boys don't.

Boys are irresponsible. They make commitments and then don't keep them. They don't take care of themselves, their stuff, or the people around them. When something bad happens, it can't possibly be their fault because they don't do anything anyway. In reality, a boy's irresponsibility means that deep down he does not believe what he does makes a difference (which could be one of the most emasculating feelings a male can have). No wonder so many young men are still boys on the inside. They don't believe what they do makes a difference, they are a victim of circumstance, and unless they get lucky, life will be miserable. Irresponsibility is the foundation of low self esteem, insecurity, confusion, depression, and feeling like a failure in life.

One of the biggest mistakes parents make today is they do not teach their sons responsibility. They have a deep love and affection for their children so they think they are loving them when they do not give them responsibility. How can it be an act of love to not teach your child responsibility? Parents also believe they are loving their children when they protect them from the consequences of their irresponsibility. When a parent does not give responsibility, there can be no accountability. Where there is no accountability, there is no character development.

Over the years, I have had a multitude of parents seeking advice on how to help their adult children. Their children are in trouble, the stakes are incredibly high, and they don't know what to do. If they let their adult children suffer the consequences, they are abandoning them to drug addiction, bankruptcy, prison, destroyed families, ruined reputations. Don't wait to let your sons grow up when the stakes are too high.

Your job as a parent is to teach them responsibility when the stakes are low. You do this by coaching your children in responsibility at a young age.

My son is seventeen years old and loves to hunt. He currently is shooting a .300 Win mag. A monster gun with a monster kick. He is very responsible with this gun. He didn't wake up one day and get a gun of this size. The process began when he was seven or eight. His first gun was a nerf gun. It shot those little sponge darts that stick to windows. They were everywhere in the house. We had one rule, never point it at a person. As he got older, he wanted an air gun that shoots bb's. The first time he asked, however, the answer he got was no. When he asked why, I said, "Because you pointed your nerf gun at your sister last week." He thought that was completely unfair because the nerf gun wasn't loaded!

He eventually got a bb gun. Then he went to a hunter safety course and got his safety card. He then shot a little .22. He then began to go shooting with men. After a time when he showed he would listen and learn, he then got a .20 gauge shotgun. When he was 16, he got to shoot the .300 win mag.

Do you want your son to be responsible with a vehicle? With a job? With a relationship? Then begin by giving him a vehicle, a job, a relationship when he is little. Not a real car, but a skateboard, or bicycle. The way you teach him how to care for it will set the stage for how he will care for a car. For instance, there will come a time when he will leave his bike out in the front yard. You will discover this when he is in bed, and it is late. What kind of parent are you? Will you put it away yourself? If you do, then you are taking care of a bike, but not taking care of your son's learning responsibility. The best option is to go wake him up, walk him outside, have him put the bike away, walk him back to bed, tuck him in, and kiss him goodnight.

The second step in teaching your son responsibility is to not shield them from the consequences of their irresponsibility.

When one of my sons was five, my wife went through a candle phase. We had candles burning in the kitchen up on the counter all the time.

My son was enamored with those little flames. He was constantly climbing up on the counter to play with it. I told him numerous times not to touch, it will hurt badly! It didn't matter.

One day he climbed up onto the counter to get close to one of those candles. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw him and thought, "When is he ever going to learn?" So I pretended to ignore him and watched his reflection as he got closer to that candle flame. I thought I am right here, if he gets too close or knocks it over, I can intervene immediately.

He slowly reached out his finger, and just as he was feeling the heat of that little flame, his mother came around the corner and saw him reaching for the flame. She screamed at the top of her lungs! It scared him to death! He jumped like a cat, and his finger brushed that flame. He immediately started screaming! I don't know if it was because he got a little burnt or because his mother's scream scared him half to death. What I do know is that his mother immediately turned her attention to me. "What are you doing? You're supposed to be watching him!"

"I was", I said as I pointed to the reflection off the appliance.

"Then why didn't you stop him?" she asked.

"How many times have we told him not to get close to those candles?"

"At least a 100!"

"I don't think he will get close ever again."

And he didn't.

Parents often don't allow their children to suffer the consequences of their irresponsibility because it is inconvenient. When I was a little boy my mother took my brother and me when she shopped at the local TG&Y store. One day, we found a packet of gum balls opened on the shelf and spilling out. So we took some and started chewing it. On the way home, my mother noticed us chewing gum.

"Where did you get that gum?" she asked.

"At the TG&Y!" we said. "It was already opened for the taking!"

My mother drove back to that TG&Y and asked to see the manager. When he came out, she made us spit the gum out in her hand and tell the manager what we had done. He wasn't concerned at all.

"No worry, boys." He said.

Then he saw my mother behind us giving him the mother eye and he changed his tune real fast.

"Now boys, you know that it is wrong to take things that don't belong to you!"

I still remember that lesson today. Not the one from the manager, but the one from my mother. She took the time, energy, and effort to drive us back there, and then instructed the manager (with a simple gaze) on how to give a good lecture. If I want my son to be responsible, then it is going to take time and energy on my part to coach it into him.

Here are some age appropriate suggestions.

4-7. While your son is young, find something that he loves or wants. Cut out a picture of the item and place it on a board, or the wall in his room. Under the board, lay out 2- 3 things he must do in order to get the item. When you begin start with small things he must do. Over time, pick larger things he wants and increase the amount of steps it takes to be able to get them. In order to teach him responsibility, you cannot give him the item he wants until he has completed all of the tasks. Be willing to help him complete the tasks if he is making the effort. If he doesn't make any effort at all, he is not motivated. Don't get that item and find another one that does motivate him.

8-10. By this age, your son should have chores he has to do. Make sure and think through consequences for not doing the chores. When he doesn't do them, which will happen, let the consequence happen. Make sure you pick reasonable consequences.



12-15. Boys want more freedom during this age of development. The steps you take now should be about trust. Is he where he says he will be? Is he following through on commitments? Is he doing things with friends he shouldn't be doing? Be sure and lay out specific consequences for specific behaviors.

The biggest mistake parents make that cheats their children from learning responsibility: buy them whatever they want. Some parents grew up without love or affection and so they want to give their children what they didn't get by always saying yes and buying them whatever they want. What they don't realize is that they are cheating their children by withholding the greatest gift of all: being responsible for themselves.

### 3. Teach him to respect authority.

All of our children play an organized sport. One of my children had a bad coach. The coach may have understood the game, but he was a boy in a man's body. He treated people harshly, made nonsensical decisions, and demanded that his players see him as a god in practice. He dished out play time based on favoritism and not skill. The team had the worst record in its history. This coach lasted one season.

We quickly discovered this coach was horrible after the first two weeks of the season. We had a decision to make. Should we let our child play for a person like this? How will it affect them? What will happen to their athletic career?

We decided that we would be very involved, keep a close eye on all activities, keep healthy boundaries and as long as nothing inappropriate was going on, our child would keep their commitment to play on this team. The entire season was one episode after another of frustration for our child. Every day, we had an opportunity to talk about how to stick up for yourself, deal with poor leadership, and respect authority. The season was a bust, but the lessons learned were invaluable.

Men have learned how to respect authority. Men understand that everything they do in life has a certain authority. When he drives his car, there are rules of the road. If he wants to

drive, he respects the authority. If he owns a car, he has to pay for gas and insurance. He respects that authority by putting gas and oil in his car. If he lives in a neighborhood, his neighbors have a certain authority in that they can make his life miserable if he departs from the homeowner's association guidelines. If he works for someone, that person has authority over him. Boys think, "I will own my own business! No one can tell me what to do!" This is the biggest myth of all because men who own a business will tell you they have more authorities over them than anyone- the customers! And boy are they fickle! Everything a man does in life has a certain type of authority involved in it. When a man learns to respect authority, he is able to understand all the different aspects of life. If he doesn't respect authority, he will never understand life.

Men learn to respect authority when they disagree with it, not when they agree with it. I place a lot of respect on my sense of direction. I proudly quote Daniel Boone when he said, "I have never been lost. Been mighty confused for a few days, but never lost!" One day, I was driving a rental car in a new city. It had one of those gps gadgets that talk to you. I checked the map, knew where I was going and took off. As I got closer to my destination, the gps started telling me to get off earlier than I expected. I knew the name of the street and it was ahead. I didn't listen to the gps and kept going. I discovered I couldn't exit where I thought and had to drive 30 miles out of the way. When I arrived late, I had to explain that I was outsmarted by a machine. My respect for the gps machines increased that day. Your son is going to have bad teachers, bad coaches, bad bosses, even bad pastors. They will feel like the authority figure doesn't like them, has it in for them, wants to ruin them. What do you do? First of all, you don't yank you son out of the situation. You talk about facing it head on and looking for a solution. Secondly, you get involved. If it's a teacher, volunteer to go to class and tutor. If it's a coach, volunteer to help in practice or keep stats for the game. This shows your son that you don't run from problems but face them head on. It also allows you to see first hand what is going on. And if things are unhealthy, then your son will see how you got involved, looked for solutions first, and then made a decision to make a change.

Boys don't know how to respect authority. We are a teaching church which means we invite college students to come and serve.

Many churches don't like doing this because it creates all sorts of interesting dynamics: mostly having to deal with immaturity. One student got involved and quit within two weeks. Unfortunately, he was very vocal about his discontent and began ripping the pastor who gave him the opportunity with falsehoods. Another leader confronted him and his sinful behavior. It was pointed out to him that he has a problem with authority. His reply was, "I don't have a problem with authority, just that guy's authority." This is true, I am not making this stuff up. This young man truly believes he doesn't have a problem with respecting authority. Yet he does, because he only respects what he likes, what tells him he wants to hear. His reply shows the abysmal job our culture, and some parents, are doing when it comes to respecting authority.

Respecting authority is different from questioning authority. Since boys have not been taught how to respect authority, they are unable to question it. Men know how to respect authority and know there is a proper way to question authority.

My oldest son is in an advanced placement course in his high school. He felt the teacher was very politically slanted and only gave one side of any given issue. One day, he was speaking to one of the other students about the topic being presented. My son told his friend, "I would like to know the other side's position as well. It might help me know how I feel about it."

His friend replied, "I don't need to know the other side, I always rebel against the machine!" My son didn't have the nerve to tell him that in this case, what he was being told was from the "machine". Since boys are not taught how to respect authority, they do not know how to question authority properly.

Here is a practical suggestion on how to handle issues with unpleasant authority:

When you see your son upset over a situation, ask him what he didn't like about it. Be sure to ask lots of questions to try and get a feel for what went on. Give him the opportunity to share how he felt about it and what made him feel a certain way. Brainstorm ways to try and resolve the issue. Always include the following: "You need to talk to your teacher/coach/boss about it"

Get involved. One of the most important people in youth sports is the mom sitting on the bleachers reading a book during practice. Instant accountability for everyone involved. You can see how the son is interpreting situations with the coach, and it will keep the coach honest.

If matters continue to degenerate, go with your son to speak to the authority figure.

If this does not resolve the issue, then you may need to make a change. If you do so, make sure and model respectful behavior in the process. Your son is watching!

## Conclusion

This is a brief article to help you raise a boy into a man. There are all sorts of books, articles, movies, podcasts and seminars you can employ to help you raise a boy into a man. I would leave you with the most important thing of all. Find a church, get involved, and stay there. If your church isn't what it needs to be, then get involved and make it what it needs to be.

Finding a good church and sticking there requires you to take the time to find a good church. A place where you can stay, be involved, and raise your son. Be sure and look beyond the surface. Look deep. How long has the leadership been in place? How many men are involved in the church? Is it a place with good role models for my son? These questions will help you find a good place and stick with it.

**Raising a boy into a man is one of the most important responsibilities you will ever be given by God. The world is in desperate need of strong, courageous, kind men. You are the one God is calling to give the world another one.**