

Becoming a Real Man of God

True manhood is not found in comparison to my fellow man, it is found in being a child of God the Father.

If I were to summarize my adolescence into one phrase, it would be: “Hold my beer and watch this!” **Adolescence is a time of discovery but also a time of insecurity.** For me, and many men like me, the easiest way to deal with insecurity is through bravado. **If I can convince others that I am tough and cool, then eventually I’ll believe it too.**

However, bravado and the like are seeking love in all the wrong places. **It is trying to place my identity and worth in the opinions of others.** This can work *here and there*, but eventually my fortress will collapse and fall because of the shifting sand that it’s set upon.

This period of working through insecurities is normal as a young man discovers true masculinity. Unfortunately though, many men never fully leave this stage of maturing and discover what it means to be a real man. **True manhood can only be found in relationship with God, our Creator and Sustainer.**

This scenario is illustrated well in Matthew’s Gospel:

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them, and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” (18:1-3)

Even Jesus’ closest disciples were wrestling with their insecurities by trying to *one-up* each other.

Jesus not only teaches them, He also teaches us about true masculinity. True manhood is not found in comparison to my fellow man, it is found in being a child of God the Father. Jesus rarely alluded to Himself as being the Messiah, but He always spoke of Himself as a son. Our Lord shows us that *real men of God are first sons of God.*

Being sons of God is the answer to all of life's insecurities. It grounds us in our relationship with the Father in Heaven. It dispels any tendency to compare ourselves to anyone else. And it fuels us, like it did Jesus, to carry out our missions in life.

The only opinion that really matters in our life is God's. And His opinion of us is always as beloved sons. We see this again in Jesus' life. At His baptism, the sky opens up and the voice of the Father is heard saying: *You are my beloved son, with you I am well pleased* (Mark 1:11). **This is the identity of Jesus. He is God's beloved son, and He spent His whole life on earth living out of that reality.**

The same truth can be said of all of us who have been baptized. Our baptism incorporates us into the Body of Christ. Now when the Father looks upon you and me, He sees an image of His son, Jesus. Therefore, the same words **He says to Jesus He says to us, "You are my beloved son with whom I am well pleased."**

Christian tradition calls this baptismal reality that we have received *sonship*. **Sonship is the truest identity of the Man Jesus, and it's the truest identity of all baptized men.** It is a relational rock that the rest of my human and personal nature can stand securely on.

Sonship is the antidote to any insecurity. It grounds us in our relationship to God the Father, *who is love* (1 John 4:8). This is what it means to be a child of God. It is from this disposition that we can become real men of God. **But it is not**

enough just to know about our sonship, we have to experience it! An authentic encounter with God the Father moves from the knowledge of His love to the human experience of it in our hearts. From here we begin to relate to Him with our dreams and desires.

This is what children do. They imagine. It is in this faculty of the human person that God takes on flesh in my life. From here, God remains no longer a distant figure; **He becomes a Father who has a vested interest in me, who wants to converse with me about who I want to become.**

This is the nature of a loving Father. Jesus reveals to us that God is the perfect Father. He says:

Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.... If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!
(Matthew 7:7,11)

Sharing our dreams and desires with the Lord is how Men of God remain children of God.

The beauty of speaking to God in this way is that it is personal. **We don't have to put on a show. We don't have to change in order to try and impress someone. All we have to do is be ourselves.**

This often sounds too good to be true, but it's not. God wants us to be fully the men He has created us to be, and the only way to get there is through our sonship. If we live out of this baptismal reality as God's beloved sons, then we are equipped with the guidance of the Holy Spirit to serve Him as men.

Each one of us has a purpose in life, a sacred mission that only we can carry out. This involves our vocation, our occupation, our recreation, and everything in between. But to carry out these

holy responsibilities, we need to be in tune with the Holy Spirit who dwells in our hearts.

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Sonship keeps us rooted in our hearts where God abides. It allows us to continually commune with Him who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is our true identity. Such security allows us to participate in heavenly realities even now!

With such Good News, we can serve God with holy abandon. We don't care about what others think. The only person we want to impress is our Father. This is the secret of the saints, who recklessly fought for the Kingdom of God with love, joy, and peace.

Real men of God are first sons of God. Sonship gets us through the awkward adolescence stages of life and arrives at true manhood. It harnesses the youthful vigor and adventure of our childhood and puts them to use in directing us to serve God with *all our heart, soul, mind, and strength* (Mark 12:30). Jesus shows us what it means to be a son of God. And if we hang with Him, He'll teach us how to be the same.



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Fr. Bryce Lungren was blessed to grow up in a family with deep Wyoming roots. After graduating high school in Worland, WY in 1998, he moved to Montana where he worked in the world and grew in his Catholic faith. In 2008 he entered seminary, earning a Bachelor of Arts in philosophy at Mount

Angel Seminary in St. Benedict, OR, followed by a Master of Divinity and Bachelor of Sacred Theology at St. John Vianney Theological Seminary in Denver, CO. He was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Cheyenne on the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in 2018, and is currently the Associate Pastor of St. Matthew's Catholic Church and surrounding missions in Gillette, WY.