



DAILY REFLECTIONS FOR MEN

**AUTH
ENTIC
MAN
HOOD**

Book I

A MAN AND HIS DESIGN

S t e v e S n i d e r



Plano, Texas

**AUTHENTIC MANHOOD:
DAILY REFLECTIONS FOR MEN
BOOK I, A MAN AND HIS DESIGN**

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This book is printed on acid-free, elemental chlorine-free paper.

ISBN Paperback: 9781953495952; E Book 9781953495969

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24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33—10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
MANUFACTURED in the UNITED STATES of AMERICA

INTRODUCTION

Become the Man You Were Created to Be

This is one of six books of daily reflections especially crafted for men. Today more than ever, we men need a sense of identity and direction. We need positive encouragement. We need healthy ways to relieve stress in our lives, to find meaningful spiritual sustenance, and to anchor ourselves in practical wisdom.

The wisdom offered here is drawn foundationally from scripture. It also contains a few nuggets I've learned or unlearned through the years. Some of it is inspired by the related video resource *33 The Series*.

I've written these daily reflections to myself and for myself as much as I have for you. They help me pause, ponder, and reflect on some of the things that matter most in life.

Hopefully, these reflections will be a helpful guide for you as you journey into what I'll call "authentic manhood." That doesn't mean perfect manhood. Quite the opposite. It means honest manhood. For me and many others around the globe, it means a Christ-centered manhood. To pursue authentic manhood means to be on a journey to discover and be your real self . . . a journey to know your self and to know God . . . a journey to be who God made you to be. Mistakes and all. Bad decisions and good. Strengths and weaknesses. If you let Him, God uses it all.

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These reflections will draw you into some of men's deepest struggles, biggest questions, and some of our greatest fears, joys, and needs. Hopefully, you'll find them thought provoking, spiritually encouraging, and heartfelt. Each one will ask probing questions for you to process the daily issues you're facing in your relationships, workplace, and home.

Go beyond just reading the words. Sit in them. Contemplate the meaning of each reflection in your own life. Ask if it helps reveal anything about yourself you need to hear. Maybe you'll see something about yourself you haven't seen before. As you experience any meaningful moments, invite God in. Invite Him in to both the good and the bad. Meet Him in the depths of your soul. For me, that's where real transformation seems to begin.

Why direct these reflections toward men? While men and women have much in common, there are some unique differences beyond just the physical. I've discovered in three decades of working with men that it is deeply meaningful to talk to men about manhood . . . to encourage them in their manhood journey with all of its challenges, opportunities, questions, and uncertainties.

My hope and prayer is that these daily reflections will be helpful as you shape your own unique manhood journey. That they'll help you be more self-aware and Christ-centered. That they may be a guide to you, a solace, an inspiration. And that they'll be a resource to help you ponder life and nourish your soul.

Tips for Getting the Most Out of This Book

GET A JOURNAL Be sure you have a journal that you can write in.

1. **PERSONALIZE YOUR JOURNEY.** Each reflection ends with an Action Step as well as some reflection questions. Be sure to set aside time for these. Your journal is the perfect place to record your responses and personalize your journey.
2. **GET OUT OF YOUR HEAD.** Allow the reflections to take you into your heart. We men already tend to spend a lot of time in our heads. Allow the reflections be like a flashlight shining brightly into the depths of your soul. See what's going on in there . . . maybe see some things you haven't seen in a while.
3. **GO THROUGH IT WITH SOME BUDDIES.** After going through the reflections personally, consider going through them with a group of guys. Enjoy encouraging each other and growing together. Let the reflections be a prompt to go deep with other guys.
4. **SHARE IT WITH THE IMPORTANT WOMEN IN YOUR LIFE.** While the reflections are directed toward men, share them with the women in your life who love you. Invite them into the struggles, questions, fears, joys, and needs of men. It might just stimulate some great conversations!
5. **GO THROUGH THE 33 THE SERIES VIDEO RESOURCE.** Grab a group of guys and go through *33 The Series* together, a six-volume video series that gives men a Christ-centered vision of manhood. It gives you manhood tracks to run on and sets you up to create meaningful community with other men. It would be a great accompaniment to these reflections.

A Man and His Design

An important distinction before we begin: “Conventional Manhood” vs. “Authentic Manhood”

- Men were designed for a unique purpose. The quest for that purpose defines the man you will become. Your quest begins with discovering who you are and who you were created to be.
- Many men lack confidence in their masculinity and aren't sure what it means to be a man in today's culture. How can you cultivate a compelling and authentic vision of what it means to be a man in today's world? This is a primary question that will accompany you on this journey as you shape that vision for yourself. As we shape vision, it's helpful to have a model of **AUTHENTIC MANHOOD**. For me, the model is Jesus. His way is the way that will guide our journey together.
- **CONVENTIONAL MANHOOD**, on the other hand, teaches men to be consumers rather than cultivators. A consumer mentality allows you to believe that the world exists primarily for your pleasure, comfort, and entertainment. But this is a false illusion that will lead you into a place of superficiality and a lack of fulfillment, affecting your work, your relationships, and your legacy.
- Most men are fixers by nature. Learning that we can't fix ourselves by ourselves is an important part of our journey toward **AUTHENTIC MANHOOD**. We need others. We need relationships with other men we can trust. Trusted relationships with God and others can help us heal the deep-seated wounds we carry around in our hearts that keep us chained to a consumer mentality.

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- Your consumer mentality sets you up for traps that will bring you down in all areas of your life. Your search for authenticity will help you recognize those traps and veer away from them toward a more fulfilling and meaningful life.
- Men who are pursuing AUTHENTIC MANHOOD are doing their best to reject passivity, accept responsibility, lead courageously, and invest eternally in the important areas of life. They are desiring to live a life of meaning, passion, and purpose that makes a positive difference in the world and is a blessing to others.

Day One

MASCULINE IDENTITY CRISIS

What does it mean to be a man? Today, that's not an easy answer. Hollywood has given us some popular images of manhood in the movies: the tough, isolated, misunderstood hero, the big, strong, handsome stud, the cool, chill, heartthrob, and the reckless, rebellious, risk-taker. None of these seem to work long term in everyday life.

These images have perpetuated an idea of manhood in which men must push their emotions aside and attempt to appear in command and in control at all times . . . to have it all together. Men who have bought into this kind of definition often feel a deep sense of loneliness and despair, or they default to acting out their stuffed-up feelings in passive-aggressive ways. This can quickly get out of hand.

Current culture describes over-the-top toughness as "toxic masculinity," defined by men who exhibit dominance, control, or anti-feminist behavior to assert power over women and others. Most of us can agree, this is not an image we want to identify with.

We don't want to be wimps, unable to defend our families and lead in our workplaces. But we also don't want to be overbearing, controlling, or dominant. The truth is, many of us don't know

how to act, because we don't know who we are. We have lost sight of our identity.

So, who are we? Is there such a thing as a masculine identity? How can we embrace our masculinity and yet be relational, kind, approachable, and secure in who we are? How can we protect our family, stand up for what is right, and pursue our goals while still remaining connected, open, and tender-hearted?

Imagine your manhood in a way that both strengthens your masculine identity and also allows you to be vulnerable and engageable. A masculinity that allows you to be strong in maybe some new kinds of ways—to be comfortable in your own skin, to reveal your faults with honesty, and to maximize your strengths for the benefit of others with humility and grace.

This kind of authenticity is possible, but it takes introspection, emotional maturity, courage, and work. And it also takes having someone you can follow. Someone who models it for you. Jesus is my model and my inspiration for authentic manhood. The way of authentic manhood is the way of Jesus.

— ACTION STEP —

Write in your journal what you think it means to be a man in today's world. Write down how you would describe your own masculine identity.

What kind of images have informed my vision of manhood? How would those close to me describe me as a man and how I live out my manhood? How do I balance masculinity with relationality in a way that feels authentic and real?

Day Thirty-Five

A WAY TO LIVE

A large crowd of people gathered to hear Jesus speak one day. This is what He had to say:

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness . . .

Blessed are the merciful . . .

Blessed are the pure in heart . . .

Blessed are the peacemakers . . .

You are the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

Jesus' words (Matthew 5) echo the words of the prophet Micah (Micah 6:8) when he tells us what the Lord desires from us:

to do justice . . .

to love kindness . . .

to walk humbly with God.

For the man who desires the way of Jesus, there is a way to live. God allows us to decide if we will live that way. We decide if we want to show *mercy* to others, especially when it's to a person who has caused us difficulties. We decide if we desire a *pure heart* and want to *make peace* even when it means giving up something for ourselves. We decide if we're going to be *salt and light* to a hurting and lonely world. We decide if we're going to *love kindness* and *walk humbly* in an oftentimes mean and unfair world.

These are daily if not hourly decisions. It seems to me that these “ways to live” are born out of what Jesus says is the most important thing of all . . . love.

It’s tempting to be self-righteous and selfish and out to win at all costs. Jesus says that there are blessings to be received when we live His way. Blessed are . . .

— ACTION STEP —

Reflect and meditate on the words of Jesus in this passage. Let them be imprinted in your heart. Let them guide the way you live.

Would others say that this is the way you live?