

Sons of Virtue

INSTILLING GODLY CHARACTER IN BOYS

By Lance Witt

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Lance Witt is Pastor of Discipleship and Small Groups for Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California. He and his wife, Connie, have two children, Jonathan and Meagan and make their home in Rancho Santa Margarita. Lance has been a pastor for more than 20 years. Born in Bury St. Edmond, England, he grew up in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Lance holds a B.S. in Theology and English from Wayland University, a Masters of Divinity from the Criswell Graduate School of Theology and a Doctorate of Ministry from Denver Seminary. He was a Royal Ambassador growing up in Albuquerque.

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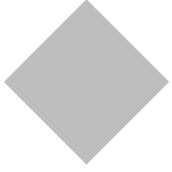
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Introduction

At any given time in history you can look at our world and see two groups of people remembered—the notorious and the noble. Nothing new today. Now, as at any time, the investments made in the next generation will help determine the courses taken and the actions recorded. All cultures need men of character, men with noble hearts; unafraid to take a stand for truth.

Sons of Virtue is intended to help begin shaping that next generation of men who will take their places in leadership in the waning days of our generation. How much is the investment of godly character worth? How much was it worth to you that someone took the time to invest in your life? That worth is perhaps immeasurable in human terms. But before we take ourselves too seriously, there is work to be done today. What challenges exist in your life today because someone did not invest in your life? Boys need men of character to help them find their way.

It is our prayer that you will take up this challenge with us to raise up sons of virtue. Think of it as “basic instructions before leaving earth.” We trust you will find *Sons of Virtue* engaging and easy to use. We also pray the impact will last a lifetime and that you will want to share the experience with others. God bless you as you begin.

A word about “fathers” and “sons.” You will find statements such as: “Ask your son” throughout this book. This book is not exclusively for fathers and sons. It is also for any man who feels compelled to help boys grow in godly character. Rather than constructing long instructions for fathers, sons and those who are working with boys in their church, we erred on the side of being concise. Just know that if you are working with a boy who is not your son, the instructions are for you, too. We recommend that those not working with their sons pair with another father and son in doing *Sons of Virtue*. Our prayers are with you as you take on this awesome responsibility and privilege.



Turning Fathers to Their Children

Scripture says the ministry of John the Baptist was “to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children.” This was to help “make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17, NIV). Why does Luke not say that John the Baptist’s ministry was turning the hearts of fathers to God? Have you ever wondered why turning the hearts of fathers to their children was a marker of spiritual preparation for the coming of Jesus?

Could it be that when the pursuit of a man’s heart is more toward his kids than his career that he is spiritually in tune? One of the indicators of God’s activity in a church is a change of heart among men. Royal Ambassadors is committed to helping you, as a father, “turn your heart to your children.”

If you are like most fathers, you desire for your son to have:

- ✓ An up-close relationship with a man he can admire
- ✓ A foundation of truth that cannot be shaken
- ✓ A deep love and passion for God
- ✓ A character reflective of Jesus Christ
- ✓ A deep desire for others to hear about and know Christ
- ✓ A pathway from boyhood to manhood

Godly men of character also desire the same thing for the boys in church who don’t have a dad at home. What do the boys in your church need most? (The men in your church.)

Yet, in the swirl of everyday life, these priorities get lost. Before you know it, the years fly by and good intentions turn to regret. Royal Ambassadors wants to help turn those good intentions into reality for your son. However, this will happen only by design, not by default. No one ever accidentally reared a godly young man.

From the beginning of time God has put a high premium on the father-son relationship. Even in the Trinity we speak of God the Father and Christ the Son. As Jesus begins His public ministry we find God the Father speaking blessing to His Son. As Jesus comes out of the water at His baptism, the Bible says heaven was opened and God the Father speaks. There are many things that the Father could have spoken in that moment. Yet, He simply, but profoundly, says: “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17, NIV).

Every son longs to hear those words from his father.

It is the responsibility of fathers to point their sons in the right direction. King Solomon said: “Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one’s youth” (Psalm 127:4, NIV).

Your son’s childhood is a time of incredible molding and influence. As Solomon says, children are like arrows sitting in the hand of a father waiting to be pointed in some direction.

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul specifically addressed fathers and their irreplaceable role in the spiritual training of their children.

“Fathers, don’t exasperate your children by coming down hard on them. Take them by the hand and lead them in the way of the Master” (Eph. 6:4, *The Message*).

Again, if you are like most fathers, the task of spiritually training your son seems overwhelming and leaves you feeling inadequate. But, you don’t have to be a spiritual giant to make a giant impact in the life of your son or another boy in your church. And you have the Holy Spirit to rely on and a church ready to support you. Just spending time with your son already makes you a success. The material in this book is easy to use and easily adaptable to your schedule and life-style.

Just give it a test drive. Try it for a few weeks and see what happens. Investing in the life of your son is one of the most challenging and rewarding adventures you will ever take.



Before You Begin

◆ **Pray**

Before you talk to anyone else about beginning this adventure with your son, take some time to pray about it. The Bible says that if we lack wisdom we should ask God for it. So ask God to give you wisdom as you make this decision.

◆ **Talk with your spouse**

If you are married, be sure to discuss this with your wife. The spiritual training of your son is a joint effort. More than likely she will be thrilled that you are willing to invest time in the spiritual growth of your son. Enlist her support and prayers before going any further. If you are not married, seek godly counsel and prayer from someone you trust and respect.

◆ **Share your desire with your pastor or boy's leader**

Your pastor will be a wonderful partner in this journey. Ask for his counsel and prayer support as you begin. Your church may decide to set up a network of dads who are involved in training their sons. It would be great to share ideas and progress and problems with other dads and men facing similar challenges. If your church has a Royal Ambassador Ministry Leader, let him know that you are using this book. He can help you set up, or get plugged into, the network. He can also tell you about events you can take part in with your son.

◆ **Talk it over with your son**

Don't leave your son out of the decision loop on this. Include him in the discussion so he doesn't feel forced or coerced. Talk about the commitment it will require from both of you. Be sensitive to your son's spiritual maturity. This is especially important if you are working with a boy who does not have a father at home. If he is not a Christian, be prepared to share what an authentic relationship with Christ means. Be ready to lead him in a prayer to receive Christ as Savior. You may find that an opportune time to share the gospel comes as you explore the biblical virtues in this book.

◆ **Decide if you will include other boys and other fathers**

It can be a lot of fun to share this journey with another dad and his son, but it is not necessary. Teaming up spreads out the responsibility and gives the boys someone they can partner with in some of the activities and projects.

◆ **Plan a start date**

Once the decision has been made to proceed, select a start date. Summer is usually not a good time to start something new. Wait for a time when you can meet for several weeks in a row. Decide on which day you will meet and approximately how long you plan to meet each week. It is good to have a plan and some structure, but the beauty of this material is that it provides for maximum flexibility.

How to Organize

◆ Meeting format

The home meeting is designed for approximately 45 minutes. But it can be adjusted to fit whatever time you and your son can give. It is also important to emphasize that much of the impact will happen outside the meeting. This is as much about sharing life as it is sharing a lesson.

◆ Be consistent

One thing that leaves scars in the lives of our sons is unfulfilled expectations. So, make your time with your son a priority and be consistent with your meeting each week. Make it fun and something you both look forward to each week.

◆ Customize

You know the unique needs of your son and therefore can adapt and customize the material to fit his needs. Since the meeting is in a home, you don't have to fill the entire 45 minutes and you are not limited to just 45 minutes either.

◆ Mentor

It has been said that Christianity is more caught than taught. *Sons of Virtue* allows sons and perhaps a couple of their friends to watch and learn from you up close and in person. The impact of a dad spending time with two boys is potentially greater than one leader spending an hour with ten boys.

◆ Link up with other fathers or groups

Consider joining other dads and their sons for some of your projects. This teaches teamwork and provides opportunities for friendship and fellowship. This book is something of a "test drive" of Royal Ambassadors (RA), if you will. If your church has an established RA organization, talk with the RA Ministry Leader about occasionally joining RA activities. If you don't have RAs, don't worry; that will not detract from the boy's experience. If you are mentoring a boy who is not your son, it is strongly recommended that you work through *Sons of Virtue* with at least one other father and son team.

Recruiting Other Boys to Participate

If you and your son agree that you would like to invite another boy or two to participate, here are a couple of guidelines.

◆ Use existing relationships

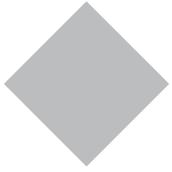
It will be much easier for friendships to bond if the boys already know one another and enjoy being together.

◆ Be sure to ask the boy's parents as well as asking the boy

Some families are already overextended with extracurricular activities. Paint a realistic picture of the time commitment this will take and stress the importance of consistent participation. Also, let them know the benefits.

◆ Focus on the spiritual goals

Make sure the boy and his parents know that this is not an invitation just to come and play. Let them know that you are serious about providing spiritual training.

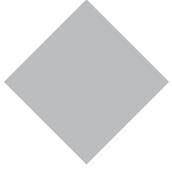


Let's Get Started

Congratulations! You are about to embark on a ten-week adventure with your son. Your son will look back on this time as one of the most meaningful in his life. Progress through the next ten sections (one per week at a time) and place that works best for you and your son. The stories, Bible studies, and activities should take you about 45 minutes. Some will go quicker, some will take longer. In some cases you will want to schedule a little more time to take advantage of teachable moments.

Resist the temptation to do more than one session per week or to stop and take a break half-way through. Keep your commitment to this time. Guard it. It may be the most important appointment you ever keep.

Each week you will explore a different biblical virtue. You can begin to instill these virtues in the lives of boys through the activities in each section. Remember that being loyal is of little value if that loyalty does not reside in Christ. With all these virtues the point is, of course, to point to God and to seek His wisdom in applying them to life. If you want to continue the experience beyond this book, there is a personal growth plan designed for your son and age-graded resources to help you do that. Pray for God to lead you as you help raise up sons of virtue.



Loyalty

Virtue: Loyalty

Goal: To develop loyalty to God and others by doing our best

Directions for Dad:

- ◆ You can do this! You know your son. God has entrusted him to you. Stop right now and ask for God's guidance and help as you get started.
- ◆ This material is simply meant to provide some basic structure for this time with your son. This is your time, so adjust the material to fit his needs.
- ◆ Relax! Enjoy being with your son.
- ◆ If you are working with a boy from your church, make sure he understands that this is a special time for both of you, not something that he has to do.
- ◆ Start by having a brief word of prayer for your time together. Encourage your son to pray a simple prayer as well. One of the greatest gifts you can give your son is praying for and praying with him.

Read this story to your son (or have him read it to you)

One day for his birthday, Tim received a wonderful present from his parents. On the day of his birthday, before Tim was even out of bed, his parents snuck in his room with the special gift. They had tied a red bow around a Golden Retriever puppy and placed it on the bed next to Tim. The dog started licking Tim's face, and as he woke up, Tim was so glad he had a new friend. He had always wanted a dog. After thinking very hard about what he wanted to name his dog, he came up with the name Wishbone.

Wishbone became a very loyal friend. Wishbone followed Tim everywhere he went. They would play together in the backyard, and you could tell they had a lot of fun together. When Tim would get home from school each day, Wishbone would meet him at the door, wagging his tail and barking. One day while the two were playing in the park, some older boys started picking on Tim and began to push him. Wishbone came to Tim's rescue and snarled and showed his teeth as if he might bite the boys. The boys quickly left, and Tim was so glad to have a friend like Wishbone.

From this short story, make a list of five ways that Wishbone was loyal to Tim.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

4.

5.

Dad, take a few minutes and share a story from your life of a loyal friend or pet. Invite your son to share a similar story from his experience.

Did you know that God is loyal to us and wants us to be loyal to Him? Look up the following verses and list several ways in which God is loyal to us.

Matthew 6:26-27 _____

Philippians 4:19 _____

John 3:16 _____

Deuteronomy 31:6 _____

Jeremiah 33:3 _____

One day Jesus was asked what was the greatest or most important commandment. “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind’” (Matt. 22:36-37 NIV).

Jesus said that the most important thing He wants us to do is to love Him and follow Him. So, we show our loyalty to God by loving Him and doing our best for Him.

There is a group of people who show loyalty in a special way. They are called missionaries. Missionaries are people who show their loyalty to God by telling other people about Him. They follow God wherever He leads them.

Make a list of things that can show we are loyal to God.

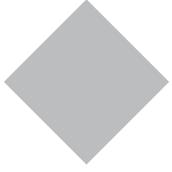
1. Pray—talk to God.
2. Read the Bible.
3. Go to church.
4. Say good things about God to our friends.
5. Love our family.

Activity ideas (choose as many, or as few, as you'd like to do)

- ◆ Do three interviews asking questions about loyalty. Good candidates include grandfathers, pastors, or Sunday School teachers.
- ◆ Memorize Matthew 22:37. Record it on a tape or write it on a card and go over it each night with your son.
- ◆ Dad, write a loyalty pledge to your son.
- ◆ Interview someone in the military about the subject of loyalty.
- ◆ Explore imb.org or namb.net for missionary stories and the value they place on loyalty.

Virtue Application Memorization

I will do my best to become a well-informed, responsible follower of Christ.



Friendship

Virtue: Friendship

Goal: To learn the characteristics and qualities of a healthy friendship

Directions for Dad:

Remember that lessons are more caught than taught. This is like coaching your son's little league baseball team. You don't have to be a professional—you just need to know a little more than the boys you coach. It is likely that your son will not remember the teaching as much as the time you spend together.

This is a critical time in your son's life for choosing good friends. Don't underestimate the importance of this session.

Read this story to your son (or have him read it to you)

Proverbs 18:24b (NIV) says: "There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."

In the Bible there were two very good friends named Jonathan and David. They liked to spend time together and enjoyed being with each other. Even though they were very different, God made them special friends. The Bible says that Jonathan "spoke well" of his friend David. When someone talked bad about David, Jonathan took up for his friend and defended him. Even when it was hard, Jonathan wouldn't turn his back on his good friend, David.

One day David had a problem. He was afraid he was going to have to leave town, but who would help him? He needed a friend he could talk to about his problem, so he went to his friend Jonathan to ask for his help. Jonathan was such a good friend that he was ready to help David and said he would do whatever he could to help. He not only listened, but he was kind to David. And, even though David did have to move away, they promised to stay friends.

- ◆ Go back through this story and circle the words that tell us what good friends do for each other.
- ◆ What makes a good friend? List five things that make someone a good friend.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

- ◆ Ask your son who he would consider to be his best friend. Why is that person his best friend and what does he like about him?

Proverbs 17:17a (NIV) says: “A friend loves at all times.”

Friendships will be important for the rest of your life. You must learn how to choose friends and how to be a good friend.

In 1 Corinthians 15:33 (NIV), Paul writes: “Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character.’” If we choose the wrong friends, they can be a bad influence on us.

When choosing friends, what are qualities you **do not** want in a friend?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

The Bible not only teaches us that it is important to have other boys who are friends but it also teaches us that God is our Friend.

In John 15:14 (NIV), Jesus said: “You are my friends if you do what I command.”

Activity ideas (choose as many, or as few, as you’d like to do)

- ◆ Good friends stick together—Dad, do a fun little exercise with your son to prove this point. Go for a brisk walk and have your son stick as close to you as possible. Go slow, go fast, turn, twist, zig and zag to make this more fun.
- ◆ There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother—friends should be more like Velcro™ than Teflon™. Fix a grilled cheese sandwich together and show your son how things don’t stick to Teflon. Now, take two pieces of Velcro and stick them together. That is how friends should be. Now, tape or glue the “what makes a good friend” list to the Velcro and hang it in your son’s room this week. Remind your son that Jesus wants to be his best friend!

Virtue Application Memorization

I will do my best to have a Christlike concern for all people.



Courage

Virtue: Courage

Goal: To help your son have the courage to stand up for what is right

Directions for Dad:

During these years, your son will face incredible challenges and temptations. Pray for your son every day this week that God will give him courage to stand for what is right.

Be sure to be consistent in meeting with your son each week. It is easy to let busyness crowd out this time with your son, but consider this an appointment every bit as important as any other commitment you have this week.

Read this story to your son (or have him read it to you)

This week I want you to meet a boy named David. He was a teenager and the youngest of eight boys in his family. David's job was to take care of the animals on the family farm. It was hard work, but he was very good at it and liked the animals.

David's three oldest brothers were in the army and had gone away to war. One day, David's father came to him and said: "I want you to go to where they are fighting the war and find out how your brothers are doing." David's dad sent some bread and cheese for him to give to the soldiers.

Just as he arrived, the soldiers were about to go out to battle when, across the valley, a nine-foot giant stepped out. His name was Goliath, and he dared anyone to come out and fight him. Everyone in Israel's army, including David's brothers, was afraid. Then, David offered to go out and fight Goliath.

David didn't have armor or a sword or a spear. He had a slingshot and five smooth stones. And, he knew God was on his side. David said to Goliath: "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel."

As David ran to face Goliath, he took one stone out of his bag and with his slingshot, let the rock fly. The Bible says that it hit Goliath on the forehead and he fell to the ground dead.

- ◆ How do you think you would have felt if you had been David that day?
- ◆ How could David have such courage when he was such a young man? Read 1 Samuel 17:34–37 to find a hint about where David got such courage.

Read the following two accounts from the book of Daniel to see other examples of young men who had courage.

1. Daniel was captured and taken from his home as a teenager. Because Daniel was a very smart young man, the king ordered Daniel to be trained by the king's officials. While he was being trained, Daniel was required to eat food that he was not supposed to eat. His parents were not around and it would have been easy to just go along with the king's command. But,

Daniel was a young man of courage. Read Daniel 1:8–17 to see what Daniel did. How did Daniel stand up for what was right?

2. Daniel had three friends named Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. How would you like to have names like those guys? The king built an idol of himself and demanded that everyone bow down and worship him. Daniel's friends knew that they could only worship the true God, so they refused to bow down. They were arrested and eventually thrown into a fiery furnace. Read Daniel 3:17–18; 26–28 to find out what they did and what happened to them.

Memorize 2 Thessalonians 3:13 (NIV) this week. It says: "Never tire of doing what is right."

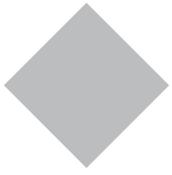
Dad, share a time in your life when you had to have the courage to do the right thing. Tell your son about the courage a missionary needs to meet people of a different culture and share Christ in places where that may be unpopular—or even dangerous.

Activity ideas (choose as many, or as few, as you'd like to do)

1. Scenarios—situations where boys describe the right thing to do:
 - Finding money on the ground
 - Someone is making fun of someone at school
 - Someone wants to cheat off your paper
2. For fun, do a diet of vegetables, soup, and water like Daniel did for three days.
3. Interview a policeman or fireman about courage.
4. Go out and shoot slingshots together and talk about the courage of David.

Virtue Application Memorization

I will do my best to learn how to carry the message of Christ around the world.



Responsibility

Virtue: Responsibility

Goal: To develop responsibility by fulfilling promises and finishing the jobs we are given

Directions for Dad:

- ◆ This would be a good week for a little evaluation. Ask your son how he thinks it is going and what he is enjoying most from your time together. Also, ask him what he would enjoy doing differently.
- ◆ This week you are going to be encouraged to share a time when you failed. It is important that your son not only learn from your successes, but also from your failures. Be honest and transparent. Kids don't expect us to be perfect, but they do expect us to be real.
- ◆ As you do your activity this week, let your son take the lead and be his number one fan.

Dad, start this week's session by describing what it was like when you were growing up. How was it different from today and what were some of the chores for which you were responsible?

Dad, also share a time in your life when you didn't fulfill a promise or where you shirked your responsibility. What were the consequences and how did it impact you?

Read this story to your son (or have him read it to you)

There is an old proverb that says a man is only as good as his word. Our commitment to keeping our promises says a lot about our character. God is a promise-keeping God. Psalm 145:13b (NIV) says: "The Lord is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made."

If we want to be like Jesus, we must learn to be responsible to keep our promises. Jesus said in Matthew 5:37 (NIV): "Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.'" In other words, be a man of your word. If you promise to do something, follow through with your commitment. We also read in the Old Testament: "It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it" (Eccl. 5:5, NIV).

Paul also taught us in 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 (NIV): "Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody." In other words, by taking care of your responsibilities, you will be a good witness for Jesus. As a Christian, people will watch your life to see how you live and how you are different from others. One quality that identifies us as followers of Jesus is responsibility.

Take a minute to discuss the following: Think of someone you know who is a man of his word, who works hard, and who finishes what he starts. Consider sending that man a "thank you" note or an email to tell him how much you appreciate his being a good example.

According to the Bible, you should do every job as if you were serving the Lord. Ephesians 6:7 (NIV) says: "Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men." So, when you do your chores or you take on a job or you have an assignment at school, do it as if Jesus were there with you (because He is). Jesus is interested in every part of your life. He not only wants

you to go to church, but He wants you to show your commitment to Him even when you do your chores.

Complete the following statement.

You can tell a person is responsible because . . .

1. He keeps his promises.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Activity ideas

- ◆ Have your son select a chore for which he normally wouldn't be responsible. Then you select a chore you wouldn't normally be responsible for either. Commit that you will do the chore every day this week without having to be told. Focus on having the right attitude, doing your very best, and doing the chore as if you are doing it for the Lord. Be accountable to your son for some of your responsibilities, too.
- ◆ Tell your son about your responsibilities at work or around the house. Help him understand the value of keeping commitments. Taking care of a vehicle goes beyond filling it up with gas. Let him know that privilege comes with responsibility.
- ◆ Celebrate at the end of the week with some kind of special treat for your son. It could be as simple as an ice cream cone together or going to a ball game.

Virtue Application Memorization

I will do my best to work with others in sharing Christ.



Honesty

Virtue: Honesty

Goal: To understand the importance of telling the truth

Directions for Dad:

Do a brief “check-in” with your son about his responsibility assignment. How did it go? How consistent was he? Be sure to praise and encourage his effort.

Spend a few moments reflecting on your own commitment to honesty. What kind of example are you setting for your son in the area of honesty?

Read this story to your son (or have him read it to you)

What if . . . you and your buddies one day after school were throwing rocks at a tree? One of the guys really throws wildly and misses the tree, but hits the windshield of a parked car. Now there’s a crack in the windshield. No adult saw it happen. All your buddies take off running. What do you do?

What if . . . you have gone into a store to buy a candy bar? In front of you at the cash register is an elderly lady buying some groceries. As she walks out of the store after paying, she puts the money in her purse and some of her cash falls on the ground. You are the only one who sees the money lying on the ground. What do you do?

What if . . . you are supposed to be doing your homework but your favorite TV show is on? Your mom has told you to do your homework first before you watch the show, but you know you have time to do your homework after the show. Your mom hears the television and calls asking if you have already done your homework. What do you do?

Let’s be honest. Being honest is hard. Sometimes it is easy to exaggerate or not tell the whole truth. Sometimes we think we can stay out of trouble if we just bend the truth a little bit.

There are two very important facts you need to learn about the subject of honesty.

1. Real men know that God hears every word they say.

The Bible says that God knows everything and sees everything we do. God loves you very much and He knows that you will be a better person if you learn to tell the truth and always be honest.

The Bible says God hates lying and when we lie we disappoint God. Even if no one else ever finds out, God knows.

But when you tell the truth, God is proud of you. God smiles when He hears you tell the truth. Proverbs 12:22 (NIV) says: “The Lord . . . delights in men who are truthful.”

2. Real men do what is right, not what is easy.

Sometimes being honest is difficult. At times it will mean admitting that you’re wrong or

confessing when you have done something you weren't supposed to do. Even though that can be hard, it feels good when you have been totally honest.

Ask yourself this: If a missionary is not truthful to the people he is trying to reach for Christ, why would those people listen to him about God if they knew he was not honest?

Fill in the missing words from these verses and talk about what you can learn about honesty from each verse.

- ◆ Proverbs 21:3 (NIV) "To do what is _____ is more acceptable to the Lord than _____."
- ◆ Colossians 3:9 (NIV) "Do not _____ to each other, since you have taken off your _____ with its practices."
- ◆ Ephesians 4:25 (NIV) "Therefore each of you must put off _____ and speak truthfully to his _____, for we are all members of one body."

Spend a few moments memorizing the following verse together from Psalm 15:2 (*The Message*): "Walk straight, act right, tell the truth."

Activity ideas

The activity this week is to evaluate some the different messages that we see and hear. Take time to discuss with your son whether these messages are true or dishonest.

1. Consider driving around your town or city and looking at various billboards and advertisements. You could also look through magazines or view television commercials. Talk about what is true and what is false in these messages.
2. Make a poster by cutting out advertisements from magazines that exaggerate or shade the truth. Write at the top of the poster Proverbs 12:22 (NIV): "The Lord delights in men who are truthful."
3. Take a tape measure or ruler and measure a few things—a baseball bat, the height of your son's bike, or one of his toys. Ask him if he thinks the tape measure is giving you an accurate length. In the same way that a ruler gives an "honest" measure, the Bible gives us God's honest Word.

Virtue Application Memorization

I will do my best to keep myself clean and healthy in mind and body.



Faith

Virtue: Faith

Goal: To help increase desire to believe and trust in God

Directions for Dad:

- ◆ Remember, you can do this! You know your son. God has entrusted him to you. Stop right now and ask for God's guidance and help as you continue.
- ◆ This material is simply meant to facilitate this time with your son and provide some basic structure. This is your time with your son, so adjust the material to fit his needs.
- ◆ Relax! And enjoy being with your son.
- ◆ If you have not already told your son how you came to faith in Christ, now is the time to tell him.

Read this story to your son (or have him read it to you)

One time there was a pastor who played a little game with his two-year-old son. The pastor would stand his little boy up in the windowsill of their kitchen and take one step back. Then, the pastor would say: "Jump." The little boy would jump into his dad's arms. They would laugh together and then the dad would put his son on the windowsill again, but this time he would take two steps back. He would once again say jump and the little toddler, without hesitation, jumped and his dad would catch him. The little boy always jumped without hesitation because he knew his dad would always catch him. He had faith in his dad. He trusted his dad because his dad had never dropped him. His dad had always been faithful in the past to catch him and the little boy had full confidence that he would catch him again when he jumped.

That is how faith is when it comes to our heavenly Father. The longer you know Him the more your faith will grow. You will begin to see that He can be trusted and His faithfulness to you in the past will give you confidence to have even greater faith in the future.

Hebrews 11:6 (NIV) says: "And without faith it is impossible to please God."

Becoming a godly young man means that I must develop my belief and trust in God. But faith is one of those words that is a little difficult to define. Read the following verse and see how faith is defined in the Bible. Hebrews 11:1 (NLT) says: "What is faith? It is the confident assurance that what we hope for is going to happen. It is the evidence of things we cannot yet see."

According to this verse, how would our belief in heaven be a good example of faith?

One activity that increases faith is prayer. When you pray, you are trusting God to answer. You are believing that God hears your prayers and will respond to them.

Read the following verses and discuss what you learn about faith and prayer.

Circle the words that show faith.

1. Mark 11:24 (NIV): “Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”
2. Luke 17:5-6 (NIV): “The apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith!’ He replied, ‘If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you.’”
3. Matthew 7:7-11 (NIV): “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!”

Activity ideas

- ◆ Make a list of things in everyday life where we show faith—sitting in chairs, stopping our cars, turning on lights, driving through green lights. Now, discuss what demonstrates our faith in God. What helps our faith in God to increase?
- ◆ Take prayer requests from family members and friends. Make a prayer list and take time each day this week to pray for the requests.
- ◆ Write a paragraph explaining why you think it is important for a missionary to have faith.
- ◆ Set up a “safe” obstacle course. Blindfold your son and talk him through the course. Then reverse the process and let him lead you through. Talk about how you had to trust each other to make it through the course.

Virtue Application Memorization (review)

I will do my best to become a well-informed, responsible follower of Christ.



Compassion

Virtue: Compassion

Goal: To learn to care for others ahead of yourself

Directions for Dad:

- ◆ Remember that lessons are more caught than taught. Again, this is like coaching your son's little league baseball team. You don't have to be a professional—you just need to know a little more than the boys you coach. It is likely that your son will not remember the teaching as much as the time you spend together.
- ◆ The real value of this session will be putting into action what is learned about compassion.
- ◆ Be a good listener. Work at allowing your son to talk. Develop the skill of drawing conversation out of him.

Read this story to your son (or have him read it to you). Read the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25–37.

Compassion and kindness always begins in the eyes. It starts with seeing the need! You can't care until you are aware. It says of all three of these men that they "saw" the guy in need. In some ways, they are ahead of many Christians because sometimes we don't even see the need.

It is hard for us to grasp how much Samaritans and Jewish people hated each other. They were divided by race, religion, and politics. When Jesus made the Samaritan the hero of the story, it must have been an absolute shocker. We must begin to see the people around us as Jesus sees them. That homeless person matters to God. That kid at school who everyone makes fun of matters to God. That brother or sister who is hard to love matters to God. If you want to be a true servant, you must care about what God cares about. He cares about people.

In order to seize the moment to show compassion, you must be willing to be interrupted. Love is often inconvenient and showing compassion takes time. One of the lessons of this story is that you should not wait or delay. Do what you can at the moment you are aware of the need.

Verse 34 shows that this Samaritan man took action! Love is not so much something you feel as it is something you do! He stooped down and got on the man's level.

Dad, consider having your son share this story with the family at dinner. Talk about ways your family can be more compassionate.

Match the following verse to a statement in the right column. Draw a line from the verse on the left to the statement that connects to it on the right.

Verses

1 Corinthians 10:24 (NLT): “Don’t think only of your own good. Think of other Christians and what is best for them.”

Proverbs 3:27–28 (NIV): “Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act. Do not say to your neighbor, ‘Come back later; I’ll give it tomorrow’—when you now have it with you.”

Matthew 9:36 (NIV): “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”

Ephesians 4:32 (NIV): “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

Colossians 3:12 (NIV): “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”

Matching Statements

We should be compassionate because Christ is compassionate to us.

You should wear compassion and kindness like a jacket.

Don’t wait. Meet the need now.

Being compassionate starts with being unselfish.

Helping starts with seeing the need and having compassion in your heart.

Activity ideas

- ◆ Dad, work with your son this week to see the needs of those around you. Spend a few minutes each day talking about what needs you noticed.
- ◆ Decide what you could do together to show compassion to someone in need. It might be working for an elderly lady in your church who needs work done at her house. It could be visiting someone in the hospital or doing something for a homeless person. Invite another boy and his dad to come along and share in the joy of meeting someone’s need.
- ◆ Ask your son to consider taking something that is his and giving it to another boy who is less privileged. He can learn first-hand that it is more blessed to give than to receive. This may be his first mission project.
- ◆ Write a letter to mom thanking her for the compassion she has shown to you. Dad, you could write a letter to your wife.

Virtue Application Memorization (review)

I will do my best to have a Christlike concern for all people.



Perseverance

Virtue: Perseverance

Goal: To develop the ability to endure even through difficulty

Directions for Dad:

- ◆ During these years, your son will face incredible challenges and temptations. Pray for your son every day this week that God will give him the courage to persevere even through difficulty.
- ◆ Remember. Be consistent in meeting with your son each week. It is easy to let busyness crowd out this time with your son, but consider this your most important appointment this week.

Read this story to your son (or have him read it to you)

Imagine that you are entered to race in the Boston Marathon. In case you don't know, a marathon is a race that covers 26.2 miles. Imagine that you are at the starting line with thousands of other people. You have your best shorts and t-shirt on and you have a brand new pair of running shoes. You look over to the crowd on the sidelines, and there is your dad cheering you on.

Suddenly, the gun goes off, and the race begins. You take off running as fast as you can, and, to your surprise, you are keeping up with some of the best runners. You are feeling strong, you are moving fast, your legs are churning, and this is fun. But, at some point in the race you begin to get tired. Your side hurts, your legs feel like lead, and it has stopped being fun. So, do you keep going or do you quit?

You are also in another race called the Christian life, and it is a marathon. The Christian life is not a 100-meter dash. It is a long journey, and learning how to persevere will help you finish well. In the race of life, God is more interested in how well you finish than in how fast you start. In a marathon, no one gets a trophy for starting fast. They only give trophies to those who finish well.

The writer of Hebrews writes about this race. Hebrews 12:1 (NIV): "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."

The "cloud of witnesses" he refers to are men and women listed in chapter 11 of Hebrews who persevered and lived a life of faith. He says that you can draw strength from the examples of others who have stayed true to God.

Take a few minutes and read about a few of God's best marathon runners talked about in Hebrews 11.

How can they help us to persevere and live for God?

Not all the great Christian heroes lived 2,000 years ago. Some are living today and are members of your church. Consider interviewing a person who has been a faithful Christian for a long time. Try to find a man who has been a Christian for 50 years. Ask him how he came to Christ and what has helped him to stay faithful to God through all these years.

Missionaries are another group who need perseverance. It is not always easy to stay faithful on the mission field. There are times of loneliness and frustration. Take time to pray for God to encourage missionaries today. Perhaps you know someone who is a career missionary. Pray for that missionary today to stay on course in the race.

Look up the following verses and fill in the missing words. Discuss what these verses teach us about perseverance.

- ◆ Galatians 6:9 (NIV): “Let us not become _____ in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not _____.”
- ◆ 1 Corinthians 15:58 (NIV): “Therefore, my dear brothers, _____. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves _____ to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”
- ◆ Acts 20:24 (NIV): “However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may _____ and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.”

Activity ideas

Interview someone who has run a marathon or a long-distance race. Ask the following questions.

Why did you decide to run in such a long race?

What kind of training did you go through?

During the race, what kept you going?

What was the hardest part of running the race?

What did it feel like when you crossed the finish line?

How is a marathon like the Christian life?

Do some kind of outdoor activity that will test the endurance of your son. It could be a bike ride, a hike, or a run. Take time to discuss what you can learn about the Christian life from this exercise.

Who do you know who has been a Christian for a long time? Ask that person to tell you how his life with Christ has been like a race.

Virtue Application Memorization (review)

I will do my best to learn how to carry the message of Christ around the world.



Teamwork

Virtue: Teamwork

Goal: To demonstrate the value of working together

Directions for Dad:

- ◆ This would be a good week for a little evaluation. Ask your son again what he is enjoying most from your time together. Also, ask him again if there is anything he would enjoy doing differently.
- ◆ Show up to this session wearing something that speaks of “team.” It could be a baseball cap, a military shirt, a softball shirt, etc.
- ◆ As you do your activity this week, let your son take the lead. Be his number one fan.

Start this week by doing something together that your son couldn’t do by himself.

- ◆ Play catch with a baseball or football.
- ◆ Hit a tennis ball back and forth.
- ◆ Play one-on-one in basketball.
- ◆ Play a board game or card game that requires at least two people.
- ◆ Play follow the leader.

Take a few minutes to discuss the following question and make a list of your answers.

How many different parts of your body have to work together to eat a cheeseburger? List them.

- | | |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 6. |
| 2. | 7. |
| 3. | 8. |
| 4. | 9. |
| 5. | 10. |

When the church is functioning as God intended, it is like a well-run team. The Bible also says the church is like a body that works well. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12–26 and discuss what you learn from these verses about the church functioning as a team. Make a list below of the principles of teamwork you learn from this passage. Try to come up with ten lessons learned. (For fun, you could consider drawing an outline of your son’s body on a piece of butcher paper or on the sidewalk with chalk. Then write on the butcher paper some of the truths you learn about teamwork from this passage).

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Activity ideas

- ◆ Have your son plan a family meal or outing. Let him give each person an assignment. Allow him to take as much leadership as he is capable. Afterward, have a family discussion about the benefits of teamwork.
- ◆ With your son, watch a sporting event, a band concert or some activity that requires people to work together. Look for demonstrations of teamwork and ask your son to tell you how specific goals are accomplished.
- ◆ Explore how mission goals are accomplished at your church or through cooperation. One place to do that is by researching the Cooperative Program at sbc.net. Or discuss how your church supports missions financially through offerings.

Virtue Application Memorization (review)

I will do my best to work with others in sharing Christ.



Self-discipline

Virtue: Self-discipline

Goal: To promote spiritual habits as the means to good character and spiritual growth

Directions for Dad:

- ◆ Make this an exciting week for your son. Consider a simple way to commemorate his commitment to finish this ten-week journey with you. It could be as simple as presenting him a memento to remember your time together.
- ◆ This week you are going to be encouraged to share an area or a time when you have struggled with self-discipline. As with responsibility, it is important that your son not only learn from your successes, but also from your struggles. Remember to be honest and transparent. Kids don't expect you to be perfect, but they do expect you to be real.

Read this section to your son (or have him read it to you)

Just like exercise will make you more physically fit, spiritual exercise will make you more spiritually fit. The apostle Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 4:7 (NIV): "Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly."

The word "train" is the word from which we get our English word "gymnasium." If you want your spiritual muscles to grow, you must go into training.

Paul also says in 1 Corinthians 9:24–27 (NLT): "Remember that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize. You also must run in such a way that you will win. All athletes practice strict self-control. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. So I run straight to the goal with purpose in every step. I am not like a boxer who misses his punches. I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified."

Spend a couple of minutes talking about what kind of training a police officer has to go through before he can be on the force or what training a professional football player goes through before he plays a game.

Training can be hard work, but it is necessary if you want to succeed in any area of life. The key to any training is consistency and practice.

Could you be a professional baseball player by just playing one game in little league? Of course not. It takes years of practice and training.

Read the following three passages and identify a spiritual training habit that will help you grow.

1. Psalm 1:1–2 (NIV): "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night."

What does it mean to meditate?

2. Psalm 119:11 (NIV): “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”

How can you hide God’s Word in your heart? _____

3. Matthew 6:5–6 (NIV): “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

How does praying consistently help you grow? _____

Activity ideas

1. Find an article in a newspaper, magazine, or on the Internet about training. What do you learn that applies to spiritual training?

2. Read a chapter a day from the Bible for five consecutive days. Both of you read the same chapters and talk about what you learn. (For younger boys, read the chapter to them.)

- Day 1: John 11
- Day 2: John 12
- Day 3: John 13
- Day 4: John 14
- Day 5: John 15

Virtue Application Memorization (review)

I will do my best to keep myself clean and healthy in mind and body.

Memorialize

There are numerous ways to help your son commemorate the completion of this book. One way is explained in the next chapter. But you can help him see the importance you place on the experience by writing him a letter or presenting him with a memento to remember your time together. Something simple, like a watch that shows you value your time with your boy, can have a profound impact as you commemorate your commitment to be men of virtue. You may want to consider using an item with the Royal Ambassador emblem.



“Dad, can we do this again?”

We trust you found the experience of the past ten weeks as rewarding as the young man in whom you invested your time and life. If you’d like to continue the experience for a longer time, or even a lifetime, there is an easy way to do just that. Royal Ambassadors (RA) is based on 2 Corinthians 5:20 and the idea of young men living out the Royal Ambassador Pledge. The good news is that your son (or the young man you have worked with) has already memorized the Royal Ambassador Pledge:

As a Royal Ambassador, I will do my best ...

- ◆ **to become a well-informed, responsible follower of Christ,**
- ◆ **to have a Christlike concern for all people,**
- ◆ **to learn how to carry the message of Christ around the world,**
- ◆ **to work with others in sharing Christ, and**
- ◆ **to keep myself clean and healthy in mind and body.**

Each part of the RA Pledge reinforces the virtues you explored in this book. The first part of the pledge relates to loyalty and faith. The next part reinforces friendship and compassion. Courage and perseverance are highlighted in the third part. The fourth part reinforces responsibility and teamwork. The last line of the pledge highlights honesty and self-discipline.

With the RA Pledge memorized, your son can become a Royal Ambassador by reciting the pledge and the RA Motto: “We are ambassadors for Christ” (2 Cor. 5:20). You can reward him with an RA Membership Pin or Patch. Your son can join the RA group at your church, or you can help him begin one by using this book to help recruit other men and boys to begin the journey.

Royal Ambassadors earn bars, pins, patches and stars for successfully exploring different aspects of their virtue commitments. These achievement recognitions can be placed on an RA award vest which has the RA Patch. There are also items such as RA Bibles, hats, jackets and other products you could use to help commemorate your son’s experience.

There is also an age-graded bi-monthly magazine that explores mission skills, missionaries, and other aspects of becoming a Royal Ambassador. *RA World* magazine is for boys in grades 1–6. There is also a leader edition of this magazine (*RA Leader*) to give tips on how to get the most out of the magazine and how to hold weekly meetings for RAs.

As you can see, there is a wealth of resources available to help you continue to lead your “son of virtue” on his journey. There are many other resources to continue the experience in other ways including studies, outreach strategies and leader helps. There are also organizations that will help you continue the experience through deeper commitments. Challengers® is the next step for RAs in their middle and high school years.



How to Lead Your Son to Christ

One promise of the Royal Ambassador Pledge is, “to become a well-informed, responsible follower of Christ.” To accomplish this part of the pledge, you have to first become a follower of Jesus. You must become a Christian.

God loves every person in the world, including you! He loves you so much that He wants to be with you forever. But you have a problem. That problem is called sin. Sin is doing what you want rather than what God wants. Your sin keeps you from being with God forever. But because God loves you, He made a way for your sins to be forgiven.

This way is Jesus. God sent His Son Jesus to earth to live and then die for the sins of the world! The good news is that Jesus died for your sins! But, is Jesus still dead? No! He came back to life and is alive today in heaven. Jesus is now with God. Jesus is the only way we can be with God.

There are three things you must do to be with God forever.

1. **First**, you must ask Him to forgive you of all your sins. Tell God that you know Jesus died for your sins. Once you do that you promise Him that you will try to do what He wants you to do.
2. The **second** thing you must do is believe in Jesus. You must believe that Jesus died for your sins and that He is the only way for you to be with God. Tell God that you believe in Jesus.
3. **Finally**, you ask Jesus to come into your life to be your Lord and Savior. Jesus will come into your life and will help you live for God. You want to know something really great? Jesus promises that He will never leave you. He will be with you forever!

When you do these three things, you become a Christian. A Christian chooses to live for God. He no longer wants to do things his way, but wants to do things God’s way. How do we know what God wants? All we have to do is read the Bible. God tells us how we should live in the Bible.

The important question for you now is, “Would you like to become a Christian?” Here are some Bible verses that will help you.

- ◆ God loves you very much—John 3:16
- ◆ Your problem is sin—Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23
- ◆ Your sin keeps you from being with God forever—Isaiah 59:2
- ◆ Jesus died for your sins—Romans 5:8
- ◆ You can be with God forever—Acts 3:19, Acts 16:31, John 1:12, Romans 10:13
- ◆ Jesus will be with you forever—Matthew 28:20

You can do these things by talking to God in a simple prayer, and you can do that now!