Becoming a Godly Man — Deep Dive

Frameworks, Practices, and a Training Path for Men Inside and After Release

Companion to Becoming a Godly Man — Scripture Sets (MAN0–MAN13)

Why This Matters

Many men inside grew up without a father who blessed them, trained them, or showed them how to love a woman, raise a child, hold a job, or lead with humility. The streets and the yard filled that gap with a counterfeit manhood: respect through fear, toughness without tenderness, control instead of responsibility. God's answer is not a program. It is a Father who adopts sons, older men who father younger ones, brothers who sharpen each other, and men who become fathers to others.

This deep dive gives the big picture (how God grows a man from grace to love, and what a godly man is, according to Scripture and the whole church), then practical training: practices **alone** and practices **with others**, in a path that grows step by step. It ends with tools for fathering from inside, making things right with the mothers of your children, preparing for release, and mentoring younger men.

Part 1: What Is a Godly Man?

The Engine: From Grace to Love

Godly manhood is not a self-improvement program. It starts with what God has already done, and it ends in love. Four passages show the whole engine (set MAN0):

- **Grace comes first.** “By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life” (2 Peter 1:3, NLT). He has also given us “great and precious promises” (1:4). Peter says we receive all this by coming to know Him.
- **Grace trains us.** “For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people. And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God” (Titus 2:11-12, NLT). The same grace that saves a man teaches him to say no and to say yes.
- **Hope is the root.** Paul thanks God for the Colossians' faith and love, “which come from your confident hope of what God has reserved for you in heaven” (Colossians 1:5, NLT). A man with no future lives for today. A man with hope can wait, work, and sacrifice.
- **Faith responds, with every effort.** “In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence…” and on, step by step, until it ends in “love for everyone” (2 Peter 1:5-7, NLT). Faith takes hold of the promises, and faith shows itself in effort (Philippians 2:12-13; Galatians 5:6).
- **Love is the goal.** “Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love” (1 Corinthians 13:13, NLT). Jesus said all of God's law hangs on loving God and loving your neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40).

> **Grace gives the promises.** *(2 Peter 1:3-4; Titus 2:11)*
> **Hope looks ahead to them.** *(Colossians 1:5; Titus 2:13)*
> **Faith takes hold of them.** *(2 Peter 1:5; Romans 5:1-2)*
> **Virtue practices them, with every effort.** *(2 Peter 1:5-7; Titus 2:12)*
> **Love is where it all leads.** *(1 Corinthians 13:13; 1 Timothy 1:5)*

The four hinges

Christians have long named four “cardinal” virtues, from the Latin *cardo*, a door hinge, because a man's whole life swings on them. The list appears in the Wisdom of Solomon 8:7 (in Catholic and Orthodox Bibles), but all four are taught throughout the Bible every Christian shares. Augustine said each one is simply love in action, love whose

object is God: self-control is love giving itself wholly to God, courage is love bearing all things for God, justice is love serving God alone and so ruling rightly, and wisdom is love telling apart what helps it from what hinders it (*On the Morals of the Catholic Church* 15).

Hinge	In plain words	Key verses	How it serves love
Wisdom (prudence)	Seeing clearly and choosing well	Proverbs 2:1-11; James 3:17	Love that knows what is truly good for God and others (Philippians 1:9-10)
Justice	Giving God and every person what is due	Micah 6:8; Romans 13:7-8	Love that pays its debts and protects the weak (Romans 13:8-10)
Courage (fortitude)	Doing right when it costs, and enduring	Joshua 1:9; 1 Corinthians 16:13	Love that never gives up and endures through every circumstance (1 Corinthians 13:7)
Self-control (temperance)	Ruling appetites, temper, and tongue	Titus 2:12; Galatians 5:23	Love that says no to self so it can serve others (Galatians 5:13)

Grace + effort, not grace or effort. Peter's "make every effort" comes right after "God has given us everything." The whole church agrees: we don't earn God's grace by virtue, and grace doesn't make us passive. Grace powers the effort. In S.W.A.P. terms, we Surrender, Wait, Avoid, and follow the Spirit's Prompting, and the Spirit grows the fruit (Galatians 5:22-25).

Three Lenses on the Same Man

Here is what that kind of man looks like. Three lenses all point to the same man, and each one helps the others.

Lens 1: God's Design in Scripture

God put the man in the garden to work it and keep it (Genesis 2:15). The Hebrew words are *'abad* (to work or serve) and *shamar* (to guard or keep). The same pair describes the priests' service and guarding of God's tabernacle (Numbers 3:7-8). From the beginning, a man is a worker, a guardian, and a worshiper: he serves, protects, and keeps what God has entrusted to him. Adam's first failure was standing silent while the serpent deceived (Genesis 3:6). Jesus, the true man, did the opposite: He served, protected, laid down His life, and resisted every temptation (Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 4:15). Paul sums it up: "Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong. And do everything with love" (1 Corinthians 16:13-14, NLT).

Lens 2: Proverbs, a Father's School

Proverbs is a father talking to his son. More than twenty times he says "my son." He tests manhood in the same places it is tested inside: the crew that offers easy money (1:10-19), sex (chapters 5–7), laziness (6:6-11), anger and words (15:1; 16:32), money (11:1; 22:7), and friends (13:20). The foundation of it all is the fear of the LORD (1:7). For a man who never had a father, Proverbs is God sitting him down.

Lens 3: Authentic Manhood

Robert Lewis's Men's Fraternity, now taught as Authentic Manhood, gave many men a simple definition: **a real man rejects passivity, accepts responsibility, leads courageously, and expects the greater reward.** It is a helpful summary because each part is rooted in Scripture:

A real man…	Scripture	The counterfeit
Rejects passivity	Adam's silence (Genesis 3:6); Eli's failure to restrain his sons (1 Samuel 3:13); David staying home at war time (2 Samuel 11:1)	Checking out, numbing out, blaming others, letting things slide
Accepts responsibility	Work and keep (Genesis 2:15); stand in the gap (Ezekiel 22:30); provide (1 Timothy 5:8)	Excuses, "it's not my fault," leaving others to carry the load

A real man…	Scripture	The counterfeit
Leads courageously	Be strong and courageous (Joshua 1:9); do everything with love (1 Corinthians 16:13-14); fight for your families (Nehemiah 4:14)	Control, domination, or fear disguised as “being chill”
Expects the greater reward	Moses chose God's reward over Egypt's treasure (Hebrews 11:24-26); work for the Lord (Colossians 3:23-24); the crown (2 Timothy 4:7-8)	Living for now: the quick hustle, the quick high, the quick pleasure

Where the Traditions Agree

- **A man reflects God** by serving, protecting, providing, and leading, always in sacrificial love modeled on Christ.
- **Headship means servant leadership**, never domination, abuse, or control (Ephesians 5:25; Mark 10:42-45).
- **Fathers are responsible to pass on the faith at home** (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Ephesians 6:4).
- **Chastity before marriage and faithfulness within it** are part of a man's holiness (1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; Hebrews 13:4).
- **Work is a calling from God**, not just a way to get paid (Genesis 2:15; Colossians 3:23).
- **Virtue grows from grace and aims at love.** God's power and promises come first, our effort responds, and love is the goal (2 Peter 1:3-7; 1 Timothy 1:5). The early church fathers, Thomas Aquinas, the Orthodox teachers of theosis (sharing in God's nature, 2 Peter 1:4), and the Reformers and Puritans all taught this order.
- **Character is formed by practice and by older men** who train younger ones (Titus 2:2-8; 2 Timothy 2:2).
- **The goal is spiritual fatherhood**: becoming a man others can imitate (1 Corinthians 4:15-16; 11:1).

> **VOICES FROM THE WHOLE CHURCH**
>
> **The Hebrew home:** the Shema (Deuteronomy 6) made fathers the first teachers of the faith. Many Jewish fathers still bless their sons on the Sabbath with Jacob's words over his grandsons, “May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh” (Genesis 48:20).
>
> **The early church:** the Didache (around AD 100) told parents not to neglect their children but to teach them the fear of God from their youth.
>
> **St. John Chrysostom** (Orthodox and Catholic, 4th century) urged fathers to make their homes a little church, leading their families in Scripture and prayer.
>
> **Catholic teaching** calls the Christian family a “domestic church” (Catechism §2204) and honors St. Joseph as a model for fathers and workers.
>
> **Orthodox practice** treats the household as a little church, with the father leading family prayer, and values spiritual fathers who guide younger men.
>
> **Martin Luther** wrote his Small Catechism for the head of the household to teach his family. **The Puritans**, through the Westminster Directory for Family Worship (1647) and pastors like Richard Baxter, called fathers to lead daily prayer and Bible reading at home.

Counterfeit Manhood vs. Godly Manhood

The yard and the streets say a man…	God says a man…
Gets respect through fear	Earns respect through character (1 Timothy 3:7)
Never shows weakness	Admits need, confesses, and weeps when it's right (2 Corinthians 12:9-10; John 11:35)

The yard and the streets say a man…	God says a man…
Controls women	Honors, protects, and serves women (1 Peter 3:7; 1 Timothy 5:2)
Proves himself with how many women	Keeps himself for one woman (Proverbs 5:15-20)
Makes fast money any way he can	Works honestly and gives (Ephesians 4:28)
Answers every insult	Overlooks offenses (Proverbs 19:11; 20:3)
Rolls with his crew	Chooses companions who make him wiser (Proverbs 13:20)
Leaves his kids for someone else to raise	Turns his heart toward his children (Malachi 4:6)

Key Words

Word	Meaning	Where
***'abad* / *shamar* (Hebrew)**	To work/serve and to guard/keep: the man's first job, also used for priestly service	Genesis 2:15; Numbers 3:7-8
***gibbor chayil* (Hebrew)**	Mighty man of valor: strength, worth, and character. Boaz is called this, and Ruth is called a woman of *chayil*.	Judges 6:12; Ruth 2:1; 3:11; Proverbs 31:10
***Abba* (Aramaic)**	Father: the close, trusting word a child uses	Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6
***andrizomai* (Greek)**	Act like a man, be courageous; used only here in the New Testament	1 Corinthians 16:13
***ektrephō* (Greek)**	To nourish and bring up; used of fathers raising children and of Christ caring for the church	Ephesians 5:29; 6:4
***paideia* / *nouthesia* (Greek)**	Training/discipline and instruction/correction: what fathers give	Ephesians 6:4
***aretē* (Greek)**	Virtue, moral excellence: the first thing Peter tells us to add to faith	2 Peter 1:3, 5
***sōphrōn* (Greek)**	Self-controlled, sensible, sound-minded: Paul's word for older and younger men. In Titus 2:12 the NLT renders the related adverb "with wisdom."	Titus 2:2, 6, 12
***agapē* (Greek)**	Self-giving love: the goal of faith and every virtue	1 Corinthians 13:13; 2 Peter 1:7
***teknon* (Greek)**	Child: Paul called Timothy his true child in the faith	1 Timothy 1:2; 1 Corinthians 4:17
***presbyteros* (Greek)**	Elder: an older, proven man who shepherds	Titus 1:5; 1 Peter 5:1

Part 2: Healing the Father Wound

Many men carry wounds from fathers who were absent, harsh, addicted, abusive, or just silent. That wound often shapes how a man sees God, women, authority, and himself. God doesn't ask you to pretend it didn't happen. He offers to father you Himself. Use set MAN1 with these steps.

1. **Name it.** Write what your father gave you and what he didn't. Be honest (Psalm 62:8).
2. **Grieve it.** It's right to mourn what you lost (Matthew 5:4). Bring it to God, not to a bottle or a fight.
3. **Forgive.** Forgiveness is releasing the debt to God (Matthew 18:21-35). It doesn't mean what he did was okay, and it doesn't require contact if he's unsafe.
4. **Receive the Father.** Read Romans 8:14-17 and Galatians 4:4-7 out loud. Call God “Father” in prayer, every day.
5. **Let God give you fathers in the faith.** Ask God for an older believer to walk with you (Titus 2:2-8).
6. **Break the pattern.** You are not doomed to become your father (Ezekiel 18:14-20). Name one pattern that stops with you.
7. **Become the father you never had**, to your own children and to younger men.

> **Care note**
> If your father wound includes physical or sexual abuse, you may also need a counselor or chaplain. That isn't weakness. It is wisdom. What was done to you is not your sin to repent of, and God cares about healing it.

Part 3: Practices Alone — The Secret Place

Who a man is when no one is watching is who he really is (Matthew 6:6). Start small, pick two or three, and add more over time.

Practice	How	Scripture
Morning S.W.A.P.	Surrender your day (sign the blank contract), Wait in prayer, Avoid even a hint of sin, follow the Spirit's Prompting.	Romans 12:1; Galatians 5:16
Hinge of the week	Pick one hinge virtue (wisdom, justice, courage, self-control). Memorize its verse, practice it one specific way, and report back to your group.	2 Peter 1:5-8
Proverb of the day	Read the Proverbs chapter that matches today's date. Write one verse to obey.	Proverbs 1:1-7
Scripture memory	Memorize the key verse from each set, one a week.	Psalm 119:9-11
Pray for your family by name	Every child, their mother, your parents, siblings, and the man you mentor.	Job 1:5; Ephesians 3:14-19
Journal Look Back / Up / Forward	What happened, what God is saying, what I will do.	Psalm 77:11-12
Evening “Search Me”	Review the day with God, confess, receive forgiveness, and plan one step.	Psalm 139:23-24; 1 John 1:9
Covenant with your eyes	Decide ahead what you won't watch, read, or dwell on. Turn away fast.	Job 31:1; Matthew 5:28-29
Train your body	Exercise, sleep, eat with discipline. Your body is God's temple.	1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 9:27; 1 Timothy 4:8
Fast	Skip a meal or a commissary item weekly to pray (if medically safe).	Matthew 6:16-18
Silence and solitude	Ten quiet minutes with God, without noise or distraction.	Mark 1:35; Psalm 46:10

Practice	How	Scripture
Learn	Read, study for a GED or trade, and learn basic money skills.	Proverbs 18:15; 22:29
Steward	Budget your commissary money, avoid debt, give something away.	Proverbs 3:9; 22:7
Rest	Keep one day a week for worship and rest.	Exodus 20:8-11; Mark 2:27

Part 4: Practices With Others — A Training Path

Godly men aren't made alone. This path moves from receiving, to belonging, to serving, to leading, to fathering. A man can be in more than one stage at once. Use the matching sets at each stage.

Stage	Sets	Practices with others	Signs of growth
1. Son: be fathered	MAN0, MAN1, MAN2, MAN3, MAN6	Meet weekly with an older believer. Write honor letters to parents. Listen more than you talk.	Teachable; receives correction; honors authority
2. Brother: belong	MAN4, MAN5, MAN7	Join a group of 2–3 men to read, confess, and pray weekly. Be honest about one struggle.	Honest; keeps commitments; sharpens others
3. Worker: serve	MAN8	Do your job with excellence. Help a coworker. Make peace in your unit.	Diligent; trusted with more; known as fair
4. Leader: shepherd a few	MAN2, MAN13	Lead a DBS group (Look Back / Up / Forward). Check on group members during the week.	Others grow; group reproduces
5. Preparing for marriage, or loving your wife	MAN9, MAN10	Write a purity commitment and share it. Seek counsel from married men. If married, write your wife praise and prayer letters.	Pure; patient; honors women
6. Father: turn your heart home	MAN11, MAN12	Bless your children by letter and call. Make things right with their mother. Plan your reentry with a mentor.	Consistent contact; humble repair; kept promises
7. Spiritual father and elder	MAN13	Mentor a younger man weekly. Train him to mentor someone else.	Your “sons” start fathering others

Weekly Check-In Questions for Men

These follow the engine in MAN0: faith, hope, the four hinges, and love. Start with what God has done before asking what you did.

1. **Faith:** How did you meet with God this week? Which promise did you hold on to?
2. **Hope:** What are you looking forward to that God has promised? Where did you lose heart?
3. **Wisdom:** What choice did you make well? What would you do differently?
4. **Justice:** Did you give people what you owe them: honesty, respect, your best work, and contact with your children and family?
5. **Courage:** Where did you do right when it cost you? Where did you check out or go passive?
6. **Self-control:** How did you rule your tongue, temper, eyes, and appetites? How did you treat women, in person, in words, and in your thoughts?
7. **Love:** Who did you serve, bless, or encourage?
8. **Honesty:** Is there anything you're hiding?

Part 5: Fathering from Inside

Paul fathered Timothy and whole churches by letter from prison. You can turn your heart toward your children from where you are (Malachi 4:6). Use set MAN12 with these tools, and always follow facility rules and any court orders.

A simple letter to your child: five parts

Part	What to write	Example
1. Remember	A good memory together	“I remember teaching you to throw a ball in the park.”
2. Notice	Something good you see in them	“You're brave and you make people laugh.”
3. Encourage	Something specific for what they're facing	“I'm proud of you for trying hard in math.”
4. Ask	A question about their life	“What's your favorite thing at school right now?”
5. Bless	A blessing and a prayer	“The LORD bless you and protect you. I pray for you every night.”

- **Little kids:** short notes, drawings, a story. **Teens:** honesty, questions, and listening.
- **Calls and visits:** prepare questions, listen more than you talk, end with a blessing. Don't argue with their mother in front of them or on the call.
- **Read together:** read the same Bible story or book and talk about it. Use any recorded-reading program your facility offers.
- **Own your absence**, in words that fit their age: “I made choices that took me away from you. That's not your fault. I'm sorry. I love you.”
- **Be consistent.** Small promises kept matter more than big promises broken. Only promise what you can do.
- **Never badmouth their mother**, and never use your children as messengers.
- **Provide what you can**, and plan to meet child support and other responsibilities when you're out.
- **If you can't have contact** (because of a court order or for their safety), honor that. Pray for them daily and grow into the father they'll need later.

Making Things Right with the Mother of Your Children

Whatever your relationship is now (married, separated, divorced, or never married), she is made in God's image, and she is probably carrying a heavy load. Scripture tells us to respect everyone and to live at peace as far as it depends on us (1 Peter 2:17; Romans 12:18).

- **Own your part** specifically, without excuses and without demanding anything in return. Write it out with a mentor first.
- **Honor her role.** Thank her for what she does for your children. Support her decisions where you can, and don't undermine her.
- **Respect her boundaries**, including a new relationship, her privacy, and any court orders.
- **If you're married:** work toward reconciliation with wise counsel and love her sacrificially (MAN10).
- **If you're not married:** keep the relationship pure, don't use the children to rekindle things, and pursue peace. If marriage may be God's plan, pursue it His way, with counsel (MAN9).
- **Provide and plan.** Pay what you owe and plan to carry your share when you're released.
- **Pray for her** by name every day.

> **Care note**
> If there was violence or abuse in the relationship, don't make contact unless it is legal, safe, and wanted, and let counselors or the courts guide the process. Making things right sometimes means staying away.

Part 6: Preparing for Release

Start now. Most men who fall back do it in the first weeks out, when old friends, old places, and old pressures return (Proverbs 1:10-19). Build the plan with a mentor.

Area	Inside, now	First 90 days out
Faith	Daily S.W.A.P.; weekly group; mentor	Join a church family and a men's group in the first week; meet your mentor weekly
Old crew and places	Name who and where you must avoid	New number, new routes; tell your group when you're tempted
Work	Build skills; get a GED or certificate; ask for references	Take an honest job, even a small one; show up early; be diligent (MAN8)
Money	Practice a budget; plan for child support and debts	Budget every paycheck; no fast money; give something
Family	Letters, calls, and blessings; a reconnection plan	Go slowly; respect boundaries; keep small promises; rebuild trust over time
Relationships	Write a purity and dating commitment	Wait, seek counsel, and pursue marriage God's way (MAN9)
Supervision	Know your conditions	Follow every condition; be honest with your officer
Accountability	Two or three brothers who know your plan	A weekly check-in with someone who will ask the hard questions

Part 7: Older Men Mentoring Younger Men

Paul told older men to set an example and train younger men (Titus 2:2-8), and to pass on what they'd learned to faithful men who would teach others (2 Timothy 2:2). This is how godly manhood multiplies inside.

Who

The older man: older in faith (not just age), proven in character, and humble. **The younger man:** hungry to grow and willing to be honest.

A weekly meeting (45–60 minutes)

1. **Look Back:** How are you really? Did you do last week's practices? How are your family relationships?
2. **Look Up:** Do a DBS on one passage from the MAN sets.
3. **Look Forward:** One practice alone, one with others, and who you'll share it with.
4. **Life skill:** Spend ten minutes on something practical: writing a letter to your kids, a budget, handling a conflict, preparing for an interview.
5. **Pray** for each other and for each other's families by name.

Commitments and cautions

- Keep confidences, unless someone is in danger.
- Be honest and consistent; show up every week.
- Point to Jesus, not yourself (1 Corinthians 11:1).
- No favoritism, power games, or crews. This is a family, not a gang.
- Follow staff rules, and protect anyone vulnerable.
- **Multiply:** when the younger man is ready, he begins mentoring someone else.

Sources

- Holy Bible, New Living Translation. Quoted verses are from the NLT.
- Robert Lewis, *The Quest for Authentic Manhood* (Men's Fraternity / Authentic Manhood).
- *Wisdom of Solomon* 8:7; Ambrose, *On the Duties of the Clergy*; Augustine, *On the Morals of the Catholic Church* 15; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II q.23 a.8 (love as the form of the virtues).
- *The Didache*, chapter 4.
- St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Ephesians* (Homily 20).
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §§2204–2206.
- Martin Luther, *Small Catechism* (1529).
- *The Westminster Directory for Family Worship* (1647); Richard Baxter, *A Christian Directory*.
- No Place Left Academy, *4 Fields Training Manuals*, Levels 1–3 (S.W.A.P.; Look Back / Look Up / Look Forward).

Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.