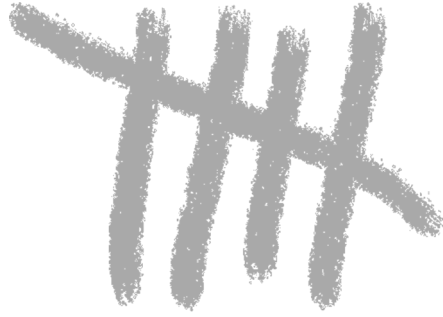




THE FIVE MARKS OF A MAN  
**TACTICAL  
GUIDE**

BRIAN TOME



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# WHAT MAKES A MAN?

# BOYS ARE BORN. MEN ARE MADE.

Something in our world has gone wrong when it comes to making men, and it seems to be a recent development.

Throughout history, men sat around the campfire to relive the day's hunt and bond with each other. Today's isolated male has no such option and no one to turn to. When we do connect, culture cracks jokes that we are on a "man date" and must be having a "bromance"—things that would never be said about women or a couple of five-year-olds in a sandbox.

Throughout history, men pooped in the woods like God intended. Today's sheltered American male doesn't know how to do such a thing without soiling his whitey tighties.

Throughout history, every male slept under the stars without electricity. Today's digitized male is intimidated by the sounds of nightfall.

Throughout history, men had a sense of the Divine. Some men took it even further and dared to walk with God. Today's male can't look away from his devices long enough to experience anything transcendent.

How did we get here? You could point the finger at any number of things, but I'm not interested in blame-shifting. Men don't do that. Instead, they see a problem and they fix it.

# WHAT WE'RE MISSING, WHAT WE NEED, IS INITIATION.

Throughout the bulk of human history, boys were initiated into manhood. A boy couldn't become a man until he passed through this process—no matter how old, successful, or important (he thought) he was.

For some men, initiation meant going to the mountain and being circumcised. For others, it meant completing a difficult task or being apprenticed in the family trade. For my own son, it was a challenging motorcycle trip out West. Once initiated, going back to boyhood was no longer an option.

There were no participation trophies on the path to manhood, and not everyone made it through the gauntlet. But those who did were changed. They left boyhood behind, permanently.

Our Peter-Pan-perpetual-boyhood lifestyle is killing us. In America, men have a life expectancy five years less than females,<sup>1</sup> commit suicide at four times the rate of women,<sup>2</sup> and are two times as likely to have alcohol-related incidents and death.<sup>3</sup>

We don't have to accept the state of things. There is another way, an ancient and primal path, and I intend to walk it with you.

While initiation rites varied widely between cultures, there were a few commonalities:

## A GUIDE

*Boys can't find their way to manhood on their own. They've always been instructed and guided by a man who's walked the path before them.*

---

## A CHALLENGE

*You didn't become a man by pouring a bowl of cereal in the morning. You had to do, or endure, something incredibly challenging.*

---

## A CEREMONY

*The move to manhood was marked by a sacred moment, often with the initiated man being given a new name, identity, and role in society.*

---

What follows in these pages is a tactical and practical guide for taking the path to authentic manhood. This can be your initiation, once and for all.

It doesn't matter how old you are or what boyish mistakes you've made in the past. It's never too late to embrace the ancient path to manhood. Men are defined by the choices they make, and the choice to dig in here can make all the difference.

In a sense, I will be your guide through this initiation. But you shouldn't do this alone. You will get infinitely more from this experience if you engage it with other men, whether it's a group of ten guys, a father-son combo, or anything in between. Bonus points if you invite someone older and wiser, a father figure, to come along with you.



From there, you'll find plenty of challenges in these pages to push you down the primal path of initiation. You will have to endure, push yourself, and get uncomfortable—but that's the point.

And at the end, I've included some ideas for marking this sacred moment in your life by holding your own initiation ceremony.

A guide, a challenge, and a ceremony. You have all the components you need for an initiation.

You were born a boy, but you're here, right now, to be made into a man. It's no accident you picked up this book. You are in the right place, and I believe in you.

**READY FOR THE PATH TO  
MANHOOD?**

**LET'S GET TO IT.**

# ORIENTATION

The object you're holding in your hands has pages, binding, and a spine, but don't you dare think of it as a book. This is a tool—a masculine, tactile, participatory growth instrument.

That's a lot of words to say something simple: this book tool is meant to be used. If you're doing this thing right, it should get beat up. A pristine hammer means you've never driven a nail. We've got enough thinkers in the world. This experience is designed to make doers.

This guide works best as a companion to my book *The Five Marks of a Man*. This won't rehash everything in there. Instead, it will push you to act on it.

## TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS EXPERIENCE

- Read *The Five Marks of a Man* either before or in tandem with this tactical guide.
- Engage every step, even the difficult ones.
- Do this with some other guys. You will learn more along the way.
- You could plow through this material in one sitting, but you shouldn't. Take your time, engage the journey with others, and allow each mark to settle and take root in your life.

# TIME TO MOVE

This isn't your grandma's small group study, because you aren't looking to become a grandma. You're being initiated into manhood, and that's never happened by filling in blanks on a page.

This tool takes each mark, breaking it down into four sections:

## LEARN

A short thought to get us all in the right mind space about that mark. Need more? Read the full-length book.

## MOVE

Challenges designed to work each mark into your everyday life. Some are easy, some are hard. Don't be a wuss—push yourself.

## TALK

Questions to mine for the gold. You can consider them alone, but these are best discussed with other guys.

## PRAY

Close up shop by getting some quality time with your Father. Don't skip this one. Too many of us only pray for the difficulties that we face or for the pains of others who are in the hospital. Those are good and important prayers. But a man needs to learn to pray about other things that lead to a better life. And he needs to do it alongside others.

You're capable of coming up with your own way to move through this journey, but it could look like this:

### ON YOUR OWN

1. Start by reading the **LEARN** section to get up to speed.
2. Read through all the **MOVE** challenges. Complete them before your group meets. How many should you do? As many as it takes to push you into uncomfortable territory. You don't build muscle any other way.

### WITH YOUR GROUP

3. Get the guys together and work through the **TALK** questions. Start with the warm-up questions, letting each person answer just one. Then move to the group talking points, spending most of your time there. Be real, honest, and vulnerable.
4. Close out the mark by finishing the **PRAY** section as a group. Share what you've learned, what's next, and how your group can support you.

That's enough preamble for now. It's time to get on the path to manhood and start moving.

# WELCOME TO YOUR INITIATION. LET'S GO.

**MEN**

**MARK ONE**



**HAVE A**

**VISION**

---

**LEARN**

Boys love phrases like *carpe diem* and *YOLO*. It gives them a culturally acceptable excuse to be shallow and selfish.

Boys wake up and immediately start looking for what is going to make today a great day, with no thought about what that means for tomorrow.

## **MEN, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAVE VISION.**

They can see beyond what's right in front of them to a meaningful finish line well in the distance. With their eyes fixed on "what could be," they take steps toward it today. And tomorrow. And the next day.

Saving for retirement. Beginning a workout routine. Asking a woman out in hopes of finding a life partner. Applying for a promotion. Saving up for a dream vacation. Reinstating a date night with their wife. Raising kids. Vision requires movement now for a payoff later—and that's why boys don't do it.

Men have a vision, and they never age out of needing one to drive them forward.

One of the patriarchs of the Bible is a man named Abraham. Throughout Scripture, he's called "God's friend." Why? He had a vision that compelled him to move.



His story begins when he's seventy-five years old, living a well-established and prosperous life in a place called Haran. Then God shows up and throws a huge wrench into everything.

God actually asks this old man to uproot everything—his family, servants, flocks, and all his possessions—and move to a land he's never laid eyes on before.

How many old men do you know looking to completely upend their life? Crazy still, Abraham does it.

Even as all his friends are moving to Florida and watching *The Price Is Right* on repeat, Abraham has a vision that looks past the discomfort of now in order to focus on the blessings of later.

Be wary of people who poo-poo on getting more. Yes, contentment is a virtue and we all need more of it—but passivity is not. Abraham sets one foot in front of the other on a journey of five-hundred-plus miles because he wants more for his life.

He wants to be blessed by God. He wants a child. He wants to become a great nation and a blessing to the whole world.

Those are the promises God makes to Abraham, if the old man will just follow him. So he packs up his bags and gets to walking.

Vision doesn't bank on immediacy. It's a slow burn of some twenty-five years before Abraham begins to see the promises of God take place. But his vision for what could be keeps him moving. It's the same with you.

Every man has this in common: there's the place where we are right now, and the vision we have for the future. What lies between here and there is difficulty, perseverance, and time. Boys don't have the pain tolerance nor the patience necessary to make that trek. Men do.

What are you working on today that will pay off in twenty-five years? Do you have a slow burn? Are you chasing anything more profound than an easy day today?

**MEN HAVE A VISION. IT'S TIME  
TO GET MOVING ON YOURS.**

# **MOVE**

## **PERSONAL CHALLENGES**

## CHALLENGE ONE: VISION QUEST

You don't have to be a Little Leaguer to know the cardinal rule of baseball: keep your eye on the ball.

Vision means putting your eyes and your body toward the finish line you're trying to cross. It means no matter what distractions come your way, you keep your eyes on the goal.

**Test your vision by choosing one of the options below.** *Remember, this isn't a book. It's a tool.*

- 
- 
- Go outside and throw this guide as far as you can. Yes, right now. Then do it again. Repeat until you get some stains on the cover.*

---

  - Climb to the highest point you can access (A deer stand? A tree house? A mountainside?) and throw this guide from the top. Go get it.*

---

  - Put this guide on top of your car. Drive a few blocks. When you notice it's gone, go back and find it.*

---

  - Find some woods or a field. Throw this book into the undergrowth. Go find it.*

---

  - Take your dog outside and play fetch. Use this guide as your Frisbee.*
- 
-

Lost the guide, then found it again? You've proven you have vision. Dig in more by answering these questions.

**1**

*Sticking with a vision can get messy. Did you have a hard time throwing your book? Was there a part of you that wanted to keep it clean and pristine?*

---

**2**

*What roadblocks did you face when it came to recovering your book? Are there any lessons there that can carry over to chasing more meaningful visions?*

---

### **3**

*“Get the book back” was a simple vision. When it comes to vision, simple is easier to chase and achieve. What things tend to complicate or cloud your vision? What can you do about them?*

---

## CHALLENGE TWO: HYPERFOCUS

The secret ingredient for vision is focus. A long and rambly vision is one you can't follow.

**If you know the vision you want to chase, sharpen it by trimming it down to just six words.**

**List them out below.** If you aren't sure yet, use the examples at the bottom of this page and the questions on the next page to get the wheels turning. Then take a stab at it below.

MY VISION:


EXAMPLES:

FINISH	SCHOOL	WORK	HARD
LAND	JOB	WIN	BIG
SUPPORT	MYSELF	STAY	HUMBLE
NO	DEBT	GOOD	HUSBAND
MEANINGFUL	WORK	GOOD	DAD
BLESS	OTHERS	GOOD	FRIEND

**1**

*If you could be remembered for only one thing,  
what would it be?*

---

**2**

*What is important, but you have trouble making time for it?*

---

**3**

*Twenty-five years from now, what will you wish you'd  
said yes to earlier?*

---



### CHALLENGE THREE: GHOSTS OF VISIONS PAST

**In the space below, glue or duct-tape things that represent visions you once had but have given up on.** When you're finished, consider the questions on the next page.



**1**

*What did it feel like to confront visions you've given up on? Any emotions well up?*

---

**2**

*We're not meant to chase every vision, and sometimes it's okay to give up on them. Which visions of the past are you at peace about leaving behind?*

---

**3**

*Are there visions from the past you should re-engage? How can you do that today?*

---

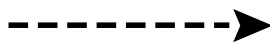
## CHALLENGE FOUR: A GREAT WORK

Every man of consequence is propelled forward by his vision. And every man of consequence will face haters, detractors, and naysayers.

The biblical hero Nehemiah had a vision to rebuild the protective wall around Jerusalem. For decades, it had lain in pieces, devastated by a foreign army. When the haters showed up to heckle and distract him, he yelled back:

*I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you? (Nehemiah 6:3)*

## GO FIND A BRICK. RUB IT ON THE NEXT PAGE.



See the tears it creates? Vision is like that. It can feel rough to those who don't understand it. It tears less important things that get in its way. It has a weight that boys try to avoid. But like a brick, vision stands.

Vision is taking the long view, for the long haul, every day—rain or shine, believers or haters.

**Write down the vision you are chasing on the brick, and set it in a place where you will see it every day. Let it serve as a reminder to not give up on your great work.**

**RUB BRICK ON PAGE UNTIL  
THIS TYPE IS UNREADABLE**

# **TALK**

## **QUESTIONS FOR THE GROUP**

## GROUP WARMUP QUESTIONS

These are questions to unpack your MOVE challenges. Everybody gets to answer one—user's choice. One minute each, max.

---

### VISION QUEST

*Where did you toss your book? Did you learn anything about the effort vision requires?*

---

### HYPERFOCUS

*Did you sharpen your vision down to a fine point? If so, share your six words with the group.*

---

### GHOSTS OF VISIONS PAST

*Are there any visions you've given up on that you need to revive? How will you do that this week?*

---

### A GREAT WORK

*What did you write on your brick, and what tangible steps are you taking toward that vision this week?*

---

## GROUP TALKING POINTS

This is the good stuff. Spend most of your group time here.

---

*Do you have a long-term vision for your life? If so, what is it? If not, what are some ideas on what it could be? Workshop with the guys in this group.*

---

*Is your vision for life big enough—or have you weened out into chasing an easy or safe dream?*

---

*Is the vision you're chasing your own, or have you (knowingly or unknowingly) adopted someone else's vision for your life?*

---

*A strong vision will dictate what you say yes and no to. Are there things you should be saying no to because they don't align with your vision? Are you saying the right yeses?*

---

*Men play the long game. What decisions are you making right now that are difficult but you expect to pay off in the long run?*

---

*Who is the last person you pissed off because of your commitment to your vision? If it hasn't happened recently, your vision probably isn't strong enough.*

---

**PRAY**



## WRITE IT DOWN

While men default to action, it's a good idea to regularly pause, reflect, and record.

**Take a few minutes to answer the questions below individually, then use your answers during the group prayer time to follow.**

### **1**

*What do you think God is saying to you about vision?  
Be specific.*

---

### **2**

*How can you put it into action in the next seven days?*

---

## CUT A COVENANT

GROUP LEADER, READ THIS FOR EVERYONE. EVERYBODY ELSE, FOLLOW ALONG.

---

A covenant is an ancient word for a promise. It's used throughout the Bible, especially in regard to promises made between God and man.

In the book of Job, the title character does something interesting. He makes a covenant with himself.

These five marks are like that. They are an agreement—with yourself, with your community, and with God—that you want to walk in courageous manhood.

In Hebrew, one of the ancient languages of the Bible, the verb meaning “to seal a covenant” literally translates as “to cut.” Covenants weren't sealed with a handshake or a ceremony but with the spilling of an animal's blood. They were literally cut, with the death of the sacrificial animal adding substantial weight and significance to the agreement.

At the end of each mark, we'll pray together. I'll lead, but you'll be prompted to pray out loud as well. If we're going to walk in courageous manhood, we need God's help and the support of each other.

It is vital to pray for things that will make your life better. Think of this as a final act of vision—purpose that directs your steps toward a more meaningful and fulfilling life.

When we're finished, as an act of cutting this covenant with ourselves, we'll add a hash mark on the back cover of this book—using a knife, a fat Sharpie, a piece of duct tape, spray paint, or whatever we can find.

Let's get to it.

# A PRAYER FOR VISION

GROUP LEADER, BEGIN THIS PRAYER EXPERIENCE WITH THE SCRIPT BELOW. WHEN YOU GET TO THE BOX, ALLOW EACH MEMBER TO SHARE THEIR PRAYER WITH THE GROUP USING THE TEMPLATE.

---

*Father—*

*You are a God of vision. You have plans, aspirations, and hopes for your world. That includes every man here.*

*We are inspired by your vision, and we want to be men of vision. Men who are focused on the long game, willing to break through barriers to chase the things that matter.*

*These are the lessons we feel you teaching us, and the things you want us to do around vision:*

EVERYONE IN THE GROUP, PRAY USING THIS TEMPLATE.

*God, I think you are saying \_\_\_\_\_ to me about vision, and that you want me to \_\_\_\_\_.*

GROUP LEADER, FINISH UP BY PRAYING THIS OVER THE GROUP.

*Keep our eyes set forward, and help us push each other in the right direction.*

*We cut this covenant with ourselves, with your help, to be men of vision. Amen.*

---

Now go mark the back of your book. Well done.