

DON'T PASS ON THE MAN CRISIS

20 Reasons it Exists and
What You Can Do To Change It



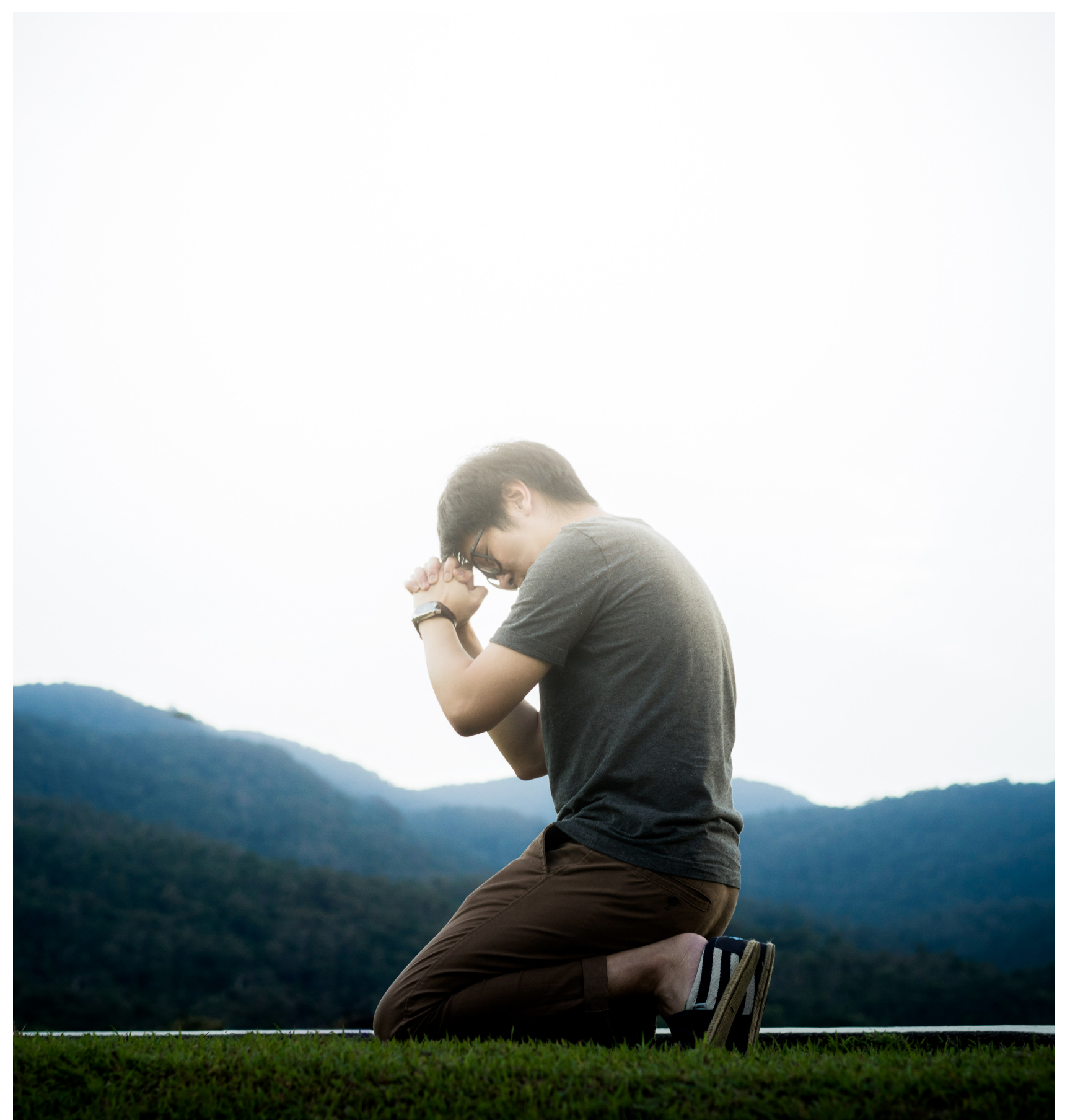
THE HEART OF EVERY MAN

People say that society is very divided today; that we are so different we can hardly communicate. It seems like our goals, interests, and lives are wildly divergent. And maybe it's true in many ways, but there is one thing that unites almost every man: He wants to be a good father. Say what you will about other achievements, hopes, and goals, but to be known as a good dad strikes a chord in a man's heart. And you bachelors – don't run off yet. This applies to you too.

Fatherhood also includes our desire to be good husbands. Our fatherhood is not isolated to children, but is intimately connected to our vocation, the bride we give ourselves over to so intensely that it becomes the fruitfulness of fatherhood.

And the other side of this coin is that men (young and old) also want to be beloved sons. If it's true men want to be good fathers, this is first learned and desired when they are sons. No man in history was ever born without a man's involvement, but not everyone has had a father that communicates to him that he is a beloved son. It's easy to think that this is boyish thinking, but even in old age we have the memory and the sense (or not) that we, as sons, make our father proud and are confident in his love.

Being a good father is an action, a gift given. Being a beloved son is a reception, a gift embraced. In men there is a desire for both of these things because they are like the two lungs of a good life. We want to give what we want to receive – a beloved sonship passed on by the love of a father. This is what it means to be a man.



But that's not all – there's one more deep need in the heart of every man. This need can be a lynchpin for the health and presence of the others. It's almost like the breath in the lungs of sonship and fatherhood. All men long for brotherhood. We were made for it. We need it. "No man is an island" is, of course, the classic formulation, but taken further it tells us that if we do find ourselves "islanded" then we are, in effect, no man – or at least less than we can be. Brotherhood has an uncanny ability to strengthen the bonds of fathers and sons. It is not optional in the life of a man.

Just consider that the first sins of Adam and his sons are the unraveling of these very things. When Adam stops trusting the Father he causes a division between himself and God. Following close on the heels of this mistrust is the disfigurement of the face of brotherhood when Cain kills Abel out of envy and jealousy – after ignoring the pleading of God to master sin and not be mastered by it. Following in Cain’s bloodline we then hear of Lamech, who is murderous toward other men but also abusive in his relationships with women, taking multiple wives to himself. Along with sonship, fatherhood, and brotherhood there is of course the spousal union. But it is men who are secure in their identity first that can fully and truly live their identity later as husbands.

Son. Brother. Father. Barring inevitable qualifications and exceptions, all men want to be these things. Sure, maybe they are more intense or exercised in different states in life (an 8 year-old isn’t thinking much of being a father), but it’s still true that at some point the strength or weakness of these identities has an effect. We get distracted with many pursuits and distractions, but to be a man of true happiness is to be a man that is a beloved son, brother, and father.



THE HEART OF THE MAN CRISIS

Sadly, the importance of these relationships and identities are either ignored in mainstream society, disrupted, or even dismissed as unimportant. And the effects are disastrous. These are basic, natural human needs that must be met. However, it appears that not only are we ignoring and dismissing them, but elements of our society are direct threats to them.

Men must identify these threats and answer them appropriately. The problem is, all the problems aren't "out there." Many of them are deep in the heart. Yes, society is broken – and so are we.

We all know that masculinity can fail spectacularly. Insecurities, disorders, and abuse can make a mess of things. We can also see clearly that the very concept and understanding of masculinity itself is a point of great debate, even in politics. Leaving aside the issues of blame and "toxic" this and that, can we not admit that something has snapped in our general understanding of what being and acting like a man is?



But before looking at the problems accurately – so we can see solutions correctly – we need to see how our life in God is related to this issue. This problem isn't just biological or social – its spiritual.

OUR FAITH CONFIRMS AND AFFIRMS THIS...

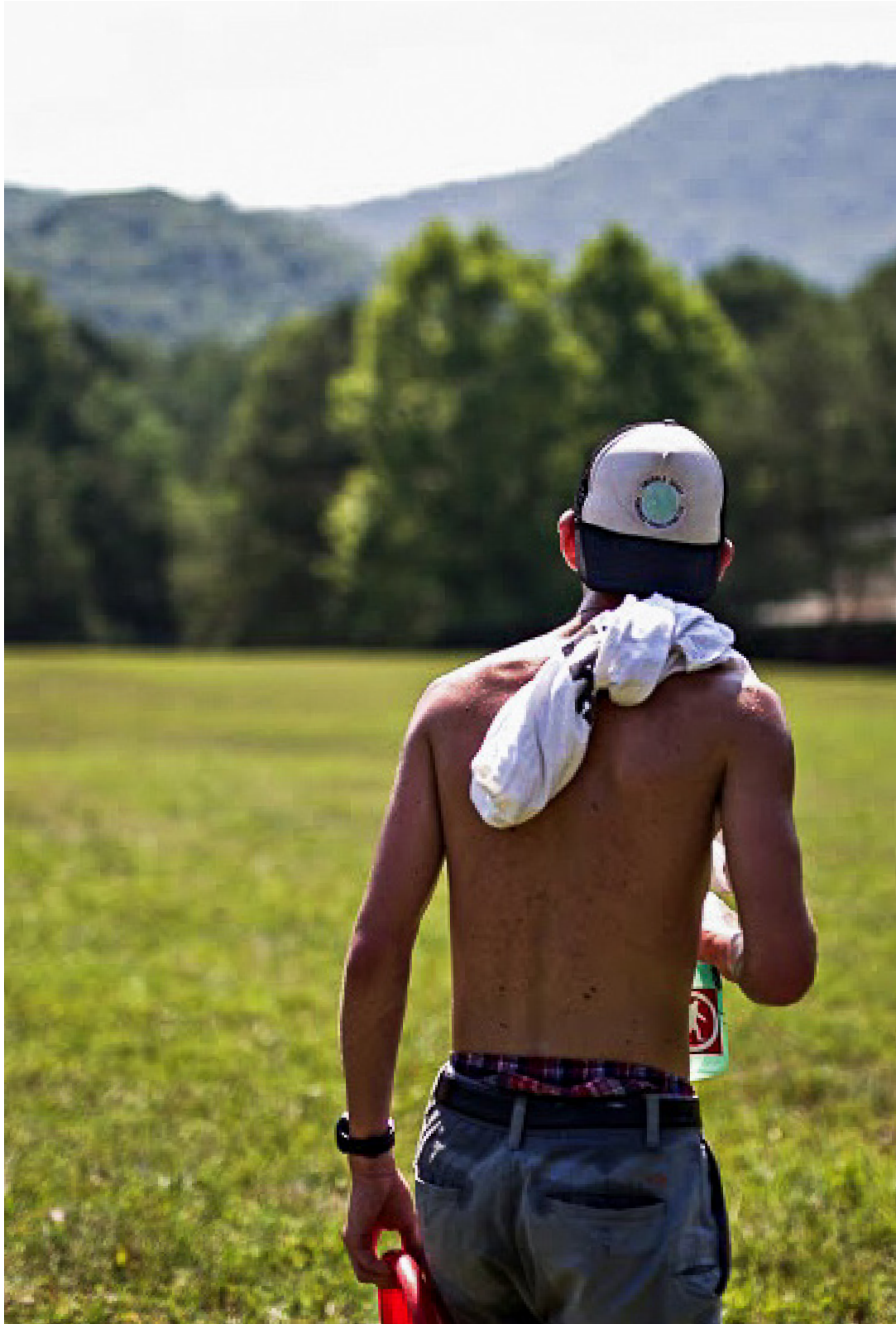
There's a saying in theology that "grace builds on nature." This means that things that are truly natural come from God and are, therefore, good. God said nature was good at creation and He said man was "very good" (Genesis 1:1-31).

It follows that the spiritual life, since it too comes from God, would not oppose the natural life because God does not contradict Himself. He might call us to something higher than the natural life of man, but nothing opposed to it. To grow in grace is to become more human, not less. The spiritual life elevates, perfects, and directs the natural life, it doesn't destroy it.

Many saints and theologians point out that we are actually stunted spiritually if we don't have a healthy experience of nature. St. Thomas Aquinas once said, "Sacred writings are bound into two volumes: that of creation and that of Holy Scripture."

This means that the natural identities mentioned above – son, brother, father – should be confirmed by God's revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ. But that's not quite the case. Jesus did more than confirm those words. Those words and relationships are the keys to understanding God and how we are to live as Christians.





BELOVED SONS

To become a Christian is not just to become a member of a religion, or even a disciple of Jesus. It's even more intimate than that. The deepest identity, that which the Apostle John uses as the center of all of his teaching, is that of a child of God. Baptism is not just the washing away of sin, but a second birth into new life as a son. To be saved is to be adopted by God through His Son (Ephesians 1:5), to be “sons in the Son.” This is the original identity of man, our deepest longing, and the heart that is the restoration through baptism.



BONDED BROTHERS

After baptism, the way we relate to our fellow man, especially our fellow Christians, is as a brother. Jesus is even called our “brother” in Scripture (2:11), and if we all now have a common Father through and with Christ, then our brotherhood is not symbolic. Brotherhood is not an analogy. We are actual brothers. We cannot be a bad brother and good Christian at the same time. To be a Christian is to exude fraternal love (Romans 12:10).



FAITHFUL FATHERS

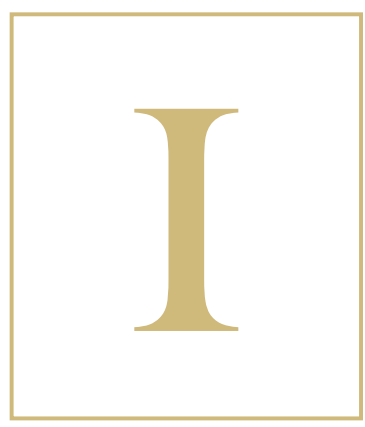
To this day we call our bishops and priests fathers, because if we know ourselves to be saved by becoming sons, and we know that we are called to live as brothers, those that bring this truth to us and guide us become fathers to us. All fatherhood takes its character from God the Father (Ephesians 3:15), so of course spiritual fatherhood will all the more. St. Paul says to the Corinthians “in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel” (Corinthians 4:15). We receive the life of God by becoming sons, we live that life as brothers, and we pass it on as fathers.

TWENTY MODERN AND ANCIENT THREATS TO MASCULINE IDENTITY

This is all well and good, but anyone reading this surely knows that masculinity is in a state of terrible confusion. Without hyperbole we can say masculinity is in a crisis of identity and practice – what is a man and how is he to live that reality? Seeing all the problems – male mass shooters, fatherlessness, isolation, etc. – one can sympathize with those who do think masculinity has become toxic. What we need to see especially are the ways that sin and error effect how we receive and understand our identity as sons, stop or pervert healthy male relationships as brothers, and keep us self-absorbed so that we cannot give ourselves in sacrifice as fathers.

If you are a father, know that the crisis of masculinity is one that compounds by the generation. This means that as a father grows weak, confused, or abusive in who he is as a man, he passes that on to his son. His son receives that confusion and error, adds his own, and passes it on. Someone, at some point, must stop the pattern. Of course, in all of us and at all times there is the potential of sin and redemption, and we are not bound by our own mistakes or those of others. We also know, however, that spreading sicknesses must be stopped. For fathers, it is particularly incumbent that they stop the crisis within themselves and do what they can to build up their sons into men of virtue, rooted in God.

So, let's look at the 20 things disrupting who we are as men. In order to avoid going down the long road each problem can take us, the problem is stated briefly so we can see how multifaceted the challenges are.



THE DIVISION OF WORK AND HOME LIFE.

Historians agree that the industrial revolutions (and now the technological revolution) disrupted the family unit more than any single thing in history. Prior to industrialization the home itself was the center of the economic lives of most families, and the presence of the father was nearly constant as he applied himself to his craft, which would have been connected to the home – like St. Joseph’s workshop.



THE LOSS OF TRADITIONS AND CULTURES.

Because in the West craft and work were the primary means that fathers, sons, and different generations in general interacted, the loss of the home-centric economy also disrupted the cultural means through which masculinity was passed on in an organic way. With men in a community all leaving the home to go to different and disconnected jobs, children are not integrated into the working world of their fathers, which traditionally shaped a culture heavily. Education, in its broadest sense, is the passing on of culture; so to not have a local culture makes it difficult to educate.



THE DIVISION OF GENERATIONS.

As compulsory education grew, followed by the consolidation of schools and districts, education has become compartmentalized away from the home and local economy and culture as it prepares students to compete in a global economy. Practically speaking, this compounds the divide caused by industrialization, because now the daily life of the children is also mostly disconnected from home life. This is not to say that homes were traditionally places of education (like homeschooling is today), but that the life of education did not consume the overwhelming majority of young people’s time and energy away from home life the way it does today.



THE CHANGE OF THE HOUSEHOLD INTO A HOTEL.

With both parents working away from the home and education being detached from home life, homes have gone from households to simply places to rest from the “real world” out there. Many fathers see and converse with their children in very short periods as lives pass quickly in the morning and evening.



THE INVENTION OF ADOLESCENCE AND “YOUTH CULTURE”

After World Wars I and II there arose a new division in society of a “youth culture.” This grew out of the above-mentioned factors and others. Prior to this distinction, “adolescence” was a relatively short period, with children being introduced into mature responsibility and adulthood when their mind and bodies were capable. Today youth are now an isolated segment of the population and economy that enjoy and perpetuate an identity detached and distinguished from children and adults, although in effect it extends childishness more than it imitates adulthood.



THE SATURATION OF THE WORLD OF MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT.

Even prior to the rise of smartphones, mass media filled the void of local culture (music, dance, food, etc.), homogenizing everyone into genres and groups. Obviously, the entertainment industry has not always proposed Christian virtues and self-mastery as the path to true happiness. Mass media now takes on a major role in the intellectual and moral education of the young.



THE RISE OF RELATIVISM.

Growing since the days of the Enlightenment, a general philosophy of relativism has taken hold in society, and shapes education and mass media’s presentation of reality. Relativism denies that there are absolute truths, articulated famously as, “You have your truth; and I have mine.” Instead of proposing that the intellect must learn to recognize truth and then conform the will to that truth, even at the cost of personal comfort and security, relativistic thinking is now based primarily on finding ways of life that bring the most pleasure. It is the autonomy and supremacy of the individual. This makes the passing on of the virtuous life nearly impossible, since virtue presumes that truth is something outside of us that we conform to, not something that we decide based on our own preferences. (Virtue actually comes from the Latin *vir*, which means “man”. Being virtuous is being manly.)



THE FULL ACCEPTANCE OF THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION.

The sexual revolution separates human sexuality from procreation (children and family life). Proposing pleasure as the primary end and purpose of human sexuality has devastated the family unit. Disconnecting family and sex through contraception, abortion, and divorce has damaged the relationships of men and women and children deeply, created space for and acceptance of sexual perversion, and has divided society by dividing the home itself.



IX THE ACCEPTABILITY OF DEBILITATING SINS.

On the heels of relativism and the sexual revolution, many men have found themselves debilitated by sin. Without moral restraints, especially in the area of sexuality, damaging behaviors (sin) have become socially acceptable, but still have the effect of clouding the mind and weakening the will. Thus, many men are literal slaves to vice. Pornography is the most debilitating and widespread of these sins, although there are others like alcohol abuse and excessive media use.

X THE INCREASE OF DIVORCE.

Marriage and family life is hard. Part of the reason brotherly formation and accountability is so important is that it prepares men for the task of leading a family. Sadly, divorce has been almost universally accepted on the sole grounds of personal fulfillment. Having a socially acceptable “out” when times get hard has given men the ability to jump ship, putting the so-called happiness of the individual over the good of the whole (the family).

XI THE PRACTICE OF OVERWORKING.

Despite having more material security than at any other time in history, many men have developed a habit of overworking. This seems to be particularly due to the fact that their identities are wrapped up deeply in their work and professional achievement. Again, since that work is detached from the home, it is another source of divide.

XII THE RISE OF EXTREME ISOLATION AND LONELINESS.

Mass media, overworking, loss of culture, and more have led to a staggering amount of disconnection, especially in men. Lives are connected more than ever through media and devices, but the average man is extremely isolated and lonely.



THE DISMISSAL OR DEGRADATION OF FATHERHOOD.

Cultural Marxism divides society into warring classes and expresses how these classes overpower one another through manipulation and domination. Men – especially in the roles of fathers – have been culturally pitted against society, their own spouses, and homes under the charge of oppressive patriarchy. The other degradation of fatherhood is in the common portrayal of fathers as self-absorbed goofs (especially on television and movies). Both extremes make it hard for a father to exercise his role as Christlike authority in the home.



THE GROWTH OF WIDESPREAD FATHERLESSNESS.

All of these factors are added to the fact of absent fathers. Fatherlessness has been growing steadily for decades. It is often defined as the absence of a father from the home, but this trend can easily be extended to homes where the father technically lives there but is absent in other meaningful ways. Poor and minority communities, for example, have a much higher rate of practical fatherlessness (the father is out of the home), but those higher economically can also have over-working or over-travelling fathers that are functionally absent from the lives of their family (i.e. they may fund the family but they don't lead it).



THE WAR ON BOYHOOD.

Grade school and college campuses are increasingly places where the natural qualities of boyhood are suppressed and penalized. As some have put it, boys are often medicated and punished heavily because they are essentially defective girls. This stunts masculine development just as it begins to show itself in what would have been previously understood as normal and healthy ways.



THE RISE OF THE CATHOLIC MAN CRISIS.

Inside the Catholic Church the crisis of absent masculine presence becomes more alarming. Although it might seem paradoxical due to an all-male priesthood, all available data points to a growing void of males (men and boys), because they are leaving the Church in alarming numbers, and those remaining are, at best, lukewarm and disengaged.

XVII

THE LACK OF FATHER/SON ENGAGEMENT IN THE CHURCH.

As the natural and necessary interactions of fathers and sons has deteriorated in society broadly, it has also occurred in the Church. Almost all programming and groups in the Church are done in a compartmentalized approach – youth here, men here, young adults here – and there are very few opportunities for men to be engaged with their sons as fathers and sons (i.e. with respect to their unique needs as men).

XVIII

THE LOSS OF RITES OF PASSAGE.

All societies throughout time have had cultural means to communicate what it means to belong to that “tribe” as a man. The process that took them from boyhood to manhood within that culture was called a rite of passage, which separated them from their boyhood beginnings and initiated them into the fraternal bonds of the men in their society. In the West this occurred especially through work and religious practice but following the industrial revolution and the rise of “youth culture” our rites of passage were lost and never replaced. In short, boys are not becoming brotherly men because the men do not have the cultural means to initiate them.

XIX

THE CHAOS IN THE CHURCH.

We know from scripture that divisions will come into the world and even into the Church. It’s no secret that much of what we have suffered in the last century (the loss of massive numbers of priests, religious, and laity) is from self-inflicted wounds by those that cause direct harm through abuse or spread false doctrines that lead people away from Christ. Our internal divisions and confusions as Catholics are costing us dearly. Men value clear and steady foundations, and the squishy and darty practices common today do not attract men to the Church.

XX

THE DEMONS.

Let’s not forget that “masculine” problems are not new. We face them in unique ways, but the devil has been after the relationships of fathers, sons, and brothers for a long time. St. John Paul II even described his work in the garden as, in essence, an attack on trusting fatherhood. So, while we have new modes to deal with, this is an old problem.



TOO DARK TO SEE?

All of these problems can make the situation seem particularly dark. Yet this can actually make countering the problems, in a way, easier. Sources of light become more illuminating the darker a place is. We are in a dark time. Therefore, the light of truth will be more penetrating and attractive.

It's critical to note that these problems are not "competing ideologies" with the truth of Catholicism. They are false. They are lies. They are distortions. They are voids and darkness. This keeps us from trying to dress up the truth in worldly garb to just out-attract adherents. That's not what is needed. What is needed is a return to the truth; a living of the truth.

And, again, the truth that counters the above lies and their effects is the truth of who we are as men. We are sons of God. We are brothers. We are fathers. Well, we are at least potentially these things, insofar as we embrace and live them in word and deed. What is essential in combatting these threats is cultivating an environment where growing in the virtues of masculinity becomes easier.





CULTIVATING AN ECOSYSTEM OF AUTHENTIC MASCULINITY

This all brings us to the crux of this book – what we can and must do. It’s important to not jump from “there’s a problem” to “here’s the answer,” because when we’re dealing with matters of identity, we have to understand the relationship of these ideas before we get to the doing. We don’t want to look for magic formulas and programs, but to ways of life that create an environment where masculinity can be healed and formed in the light of truth.

A good analogy is one of farming. When you want crops and livestock to thrive, you don’t think solely in inputs and outputs – “If I do this then that will happen.” You consider how that plant or animal was created by God, and then cultivate the ecosystem around it to benefit it. If we isolate one aspect to an extreme or try to “industrialize” the process, we may lose sight of the nature of what we are trying to grow.

Similarly, when we speak of answering the Catholic man crisis, we begin with the fact that we were created by God. Accepting that truth leads us to think in more sustainable and humble terms: What are the things we need to survive and thrive as men? What is in our nature that we must answer to because it is God’s design for us?

This is the difference between humble cultivation and prideful systematizing. Cultivation first listens and receives the truth and then works with it appropriately, the way Adam was commanded to work the soil in the garden. Systematizing is more like building the Tower of Babel, multiplying efforts and trying to force an outcome that is not in accord with truth and God.

So, let’s place the “what to do” question in the context of “what we need.” Here are the 7 needs of every man from all generations, with emphasis that will help to counter the unique problems of today:

1 MEN NEED GOD.

First and foremost, we cannot live without God. Our bodies may work for a time, but if our soul is dead or dying, we are heading towards eternal death. Men desiring to cultivate an authentic life must make sure they are in a state of grace and continue to grow in that grace. The saints are unanimous – if you’re not growing spiritually, you’re regressing.

Catholic tradition places simple practices before us that we can imitate: regular communion in a state of grace (consider daily masses too), frequent confession (at least monthly), daily prayer (especially the Rosary and Scripture reading), and daily examination of conscience (each evening before bed).

Regular contact with our Father helps us to regain the trusting relationship with our Father that the devil never tires of trying to sever.

2 MEN NEED TO GROW INTELLECTUALLY.

Above we showed how the world is set against us. St. Paul noted that thousands of years ago, along with a simple solution: “And you must not fall in with the manners of this world; there must be an inward change, a remaking of your minds, so that you can satisfy yourselves what is God’s will, the good thing, the desirable thing, the perfect thing” (Romans 12:2).

The intellect is a gift from God. It is supposed to direct our will so that we choose what is right and do it – this is what virtue is! But just consider how many hours the world gets to form our minds. Not only is education today mostly secular, but the sheer volume of advertisements, entertainment, and media is so overpowering that we can know for certain that our intellects are being deceived into believing lies, or merely too distracted to drink in truth deeply. And, if we believe lies, we can easily live those lies.

The “remaking of our minds” that St. Paul speaks of is nothing but realizing that the intellect is like our bodily muscles – it must be exercised and disciplined, or it grows weak and wild, enslaved to whims and fads. Of course there is a huge spectrum in the world of intellectual work, but the simplest fact is that you must be (a) limiting your media intake (because entertainment is not the same as true leisure, when learning can happen) and (b) intentionally reading materials that help you grow. Fraternus publishes a magazine called “Sword & Spade” which is meant to help foster the more reflective practice of reading things on paper (and not a screen).

3 MEN NEED BROTHERHOOD.

The most fruitful renewal movements in the history of the Church are always fraternal. From the Benedictines to the Dominicans to the Jesuits, the story is clear: When small bands of brothers unite, they grow spiritually and change the world. And let's not forget the Church started in just this same way with the small fraternal group called the Apostles.

But fraternity is not just for religious orders. Laymen are human too, and God has made us to unite in brotherhood. When we are isolated, we are weak. Sin always has an isolating effect and holiness always has a uniting effect. That uniting is not just with God, but with the whole Body of Christ. Like monastics, men can unite and open themselves up to the accountability and strength that comes from communion. Because other men share in challenges unique to men, this brotherliness is particularly helpful. As we are growing in prayer and in our intellect, conversation helps us to sharpen our understanding of truth and ideas.



Given the fact that we are isolated, overworking, and not living in shared cultures, this act of cultivation will need intentionality and vulnerability. In other words, brotherhood is natural, but it won't happen today without effort and we have to open ourselves up to it. Men of the world spend much of their time hiding faults and projecting confidence, but Christian men must be honest about their sins and weaknesses in order to open themselves up to the strength that brotherhood offers. Iron sharpens iron, as Scripture says speaking of men in brotherhood, but this means that the iron admits when it's dull.

4 MEN NEED TO HAVE SHARED DISCIPLINES.

Our natural desires, because they were created by God, are good. There are two main natural desires – food and sex. Food keeps the body alive and growing. Human sexuality keeps mankind alive and growing. Animals have the same desires.

Humans, however, also have a rational soul. We think and consider and love. This means we can sin, and in our sin we can bring disorder to good things like food and sex. Discipline says “no” to legitimate and good things (along with bad things) so that we can say “yes” to better and true things. A man who just says “yes” to anything his flesh asks for quickly becomes unable to say “yes” to higher and more noble things. Discipline checks that tendency. There can be no self-gift without self-mastery. The intellect and soul get darkened by indulging the flesh.



But shared discipline has the added effect of uniting those practicing it. This is the wisdom of the Church throughout the ages requiring certain practices of fasting and penance through the liturgical year. The Church also discourages penances of a certain intensity that are decided upon by the individual – unity with mentors and pastors keeps us from excesses and pride. Sadly, in our day many of those shared practices have been lost, but it only takes some simple communication to again unite in those traditional practices of fasting and prayer. By uniting in our disciplines, we are encouraged, held accountable, and brought into deeper unity with the Body of Christ. In fact, having discipline without accountability is very rare.

5 MEN NEED TO HAVE ORDERED HOUSEHOLDS.

The full maturity of masculinity “ends” in the exercise of masculine leadership and sacrifice, which is fatherhood. Even for celibate men – like priests – they still live in a life-giving (fatherly) way. We must remember that self-mastery and order within ourselves is not something we create for ourselves alone, but it makes possible the act of giving, of love itself.

For this reason men cannot regain themselves in prayer and discipline and then go immediately off to save the world and do good. They have to be the hero at home before they can be a hero to the world. Although we know that this can be challenging, it must be stated clearly that a father’s leadership and guidance in the home is not optional. “Bringing order to the home” refers to cultivating an environment where the higher things are placed where they are supposed to be: God is first, family relationships are cherished, and virtue and character are taught in word and deed. In the absence of this fatherly leadership, the busyness and sin of the world can easily come in and sow divisions and error.



6 MEN NEED LEISURE.

A German philosopher named Josef Pieper once translated a famous verse that usually goes like this, “Be still and know that I am God” into, “Be at leisure and know that I am God.” Leisure is not just entertainment or a break from work. It is a deep rest and stillness of spirit that helps to clarify our vision and understanding of life itself. If we are totally occupied with the “business” of life – work, worry, responsibility – our mind and soul can become exhausted in the busyness of it. Even if we aren’t sinning in our constant activity, but are merely busy, it can mean that we fail to sense the deeper sense of life itself. Traditionally, things like feasting, festivals, artwork, poetry, and even liturgy were understood as connected to the deeper experience of life that flows in and out of leisure.

Having leisure with others has the added benefit of growing friendships and communities, which matures into a culture, a way of life, that helps to put things in their right order. This sort of shared leisure keeps life from becoming the drudgery of accomplishment and competition, and helps us to learn (or re-learn) the joy and meaning of life.

7 MEN NEED TO RE-INTEGRATE THE GENERATIONS.

In many circles today solutions are segmented in imitation of the secular world. The youth go over here. Men over there. Women over here. Old folks way over there. Obviously, there's a need to be with those in a similar state in life – that's how friendship often works. There's a greater need, however, to make sure that generations have opportunities to learn from one another, because in the situation we face today it will not happen without intentionality. The young grow prideful without the wisdom of the old. The old can grow cynical without the hopeful zeal of the young. We truly need both.



But in the case of men and boys, this need is absolutely not optional. Very often we speak of “reaching young people” with the truth of faith, but in reality, the greater need (and challenge) is for them to reach us, the adults. Education is shaped by our goals. If our goal for boys is mature manhood, they have to be around mature men. That's just how it works. Virtue is caught more than taught. Mentoring and apprenticeships are not just nice add-ons, but the primary means by which we integrate young men into the fraternal life of older men.

The Father spoke from heaven twice when Jesus, the Son, was on earth, and in both instances He spoke of Jesus as a beloved son that the Father is pleased with (Luke 3:22, Jesus' Baptism) and a son worthy to be listened to (Luke 9:35, at the Transfiguration). What man doesn't want to hear his father and mentors affirm that he is a good man that others can look to as such? Jesus, in His humanity, confirms that the life and identity of man begins in being a beloved son.

This is also the “test” of a way of life amongst men. Are the boys drawn into it or not? Do you have pathways to maturity, belonging, and purpose? The simple fact is, most boys leave the Church because they are not integrated into a world of men within the Church. They see it as a place for women and children.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER.

If you notice, those 7 needs of men build upon one another. When a man recognizes he needs God he turns to prayer. To grow in faith he needs to grow intellectually (faith is an intellectual virtue). In order to grow in the disciplines of prayer and learning he needs accountability and teachers – brotherhood. That accountability revolves around shared disciplines that are understood implicitly and explicitly. Regaining himself, a man can re-enter the domain of the home and bring order and love. Learning to temper the flesh and expand the mind makes us able to enter the shared enjoyment of leisure. Having this shared culture that expresses itself in leisure is attractive and provides ways to grow community naturally and mentor the next generation and form them in the higher things of life – initiating the young.

If you consider the above practices that cultivate a “masculine ecosystem” you can see the wisdom of the “rules” of religious orders. A rule is a united articulation of a common life lived totally and radically for God. Laymen who live in the world have concerns they cannot escape and cannot live totally a religious rule, usually because of the need to support a family. Yet the wisdom is still there: We need to have other men with whom we are united in challenge and accountability that reminds us of who we are.

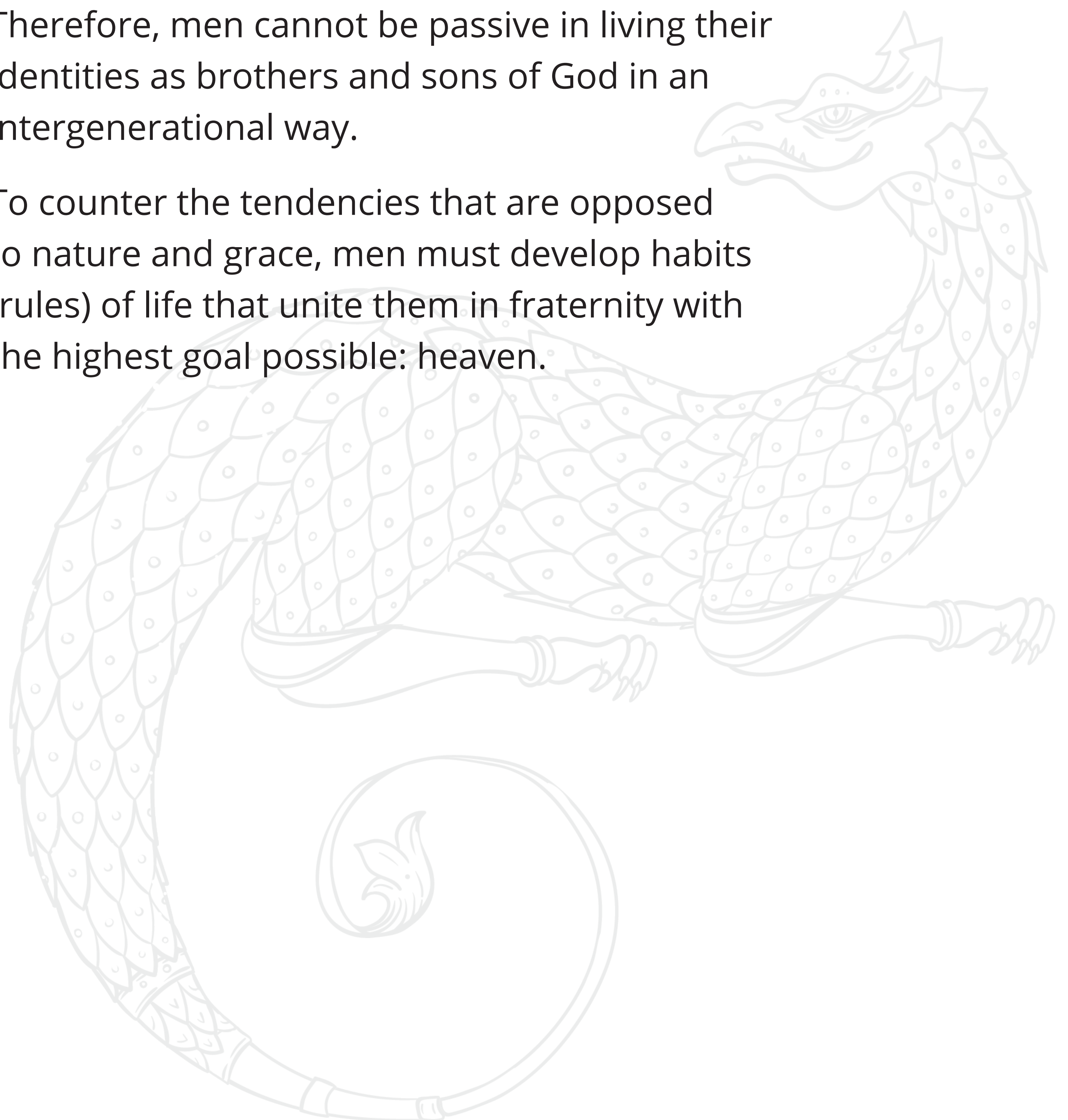
But, again, in the example of fraternal orders of men and women throughout history, the growth and maturity of a small vision and group into a shared culture is somewhat sequential. We all know life is not always neat and tidy, but there are still some steps we can recognize so that we can see how we can answer these needs for a masculine ecosystem:

- 1 Make a plan for personal, daily prayer.
- 2 Find good reading material and holy books that will aid personal prayer and intellectual growth.
- 3 Unite with other men that are committed to a similar way of life that puts vocations in God above the cares and flares of the world.
- 4 Open up those brotherhoods to accountability in the disciplines necessary to a virtuous life.
- 5 Bring order and peace in the home by leading as only a father can.
- 6 As multiple households are being led by fathers that have a fraternal bond, these households then come together in leisure and the enjoyment of life rooted in God.
- 7 Create frameworks, institutions, and experiences where mentoring the next generation occurs.



OK, SO LET'S RECAP THIS LITTLE BOOK:

- 1 Man was made by God to live as a son, brother, and father.
- 2 This is a natural need of man.
- 3 This natural need also has spiritual implications.
- 4 This natural and supernatural need to live as men, however, is disrupted violently by the tendencies and disorders of the world.
- 5 Therefore, men cannot be passive in living their identities as brothers and sons of God in an intergenerational way.
- 6 To counter the tendencies that are opposed to nature and grace, men must develop habits (rules) of life that unite them in fraternity with the highest goal possible: heaven.





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