

# The Noble Man: Recovering the Wonder of Manhood

## Bill Kinney

*For as he [a man] thinks in his heart, so is he. Proverbs 23:7 (NKJV)*

### 7: How will I get there?

Actor, Jack Palance, has made a career out of playing the tough guy in over 125 movie and television roles. One of his most memorable was in the 1991 motion picture, *City Slickers*, mentioned in the introduction to this series, where he played Curly Washburn, a weathered old cowboy and trail boss.

As the film moves along, Curly and the city slicker, Mitch, played by Billy Crystal, have become friendlier than in their first encounters. Eventually, we find them riding side-by-side behind a group of stray cattle, with Mitch questioning Curly by posing a series of moral dilemmas.

Finally, exasperated, Curly pulls up, turns to Mitch and asks, “Do you know what the secret of life is?” as though ready to reveal some deep secret about himself, about life and the world. Because that is exactly what he has been looking for, Mitch responds in a surprised tone that he does not, but curious, wants to know. To this, Curly holds a single finger aloft to say that the secret is, “one thing.” Mitch shrugs, looking up at Curly who sits much taller in his saddle, and asks, “That’s great, but, what’s the one thing?” In a professorial manner, with a smirking half-smile, Curly points his gloved index finger at Mitch and says, “That’s what you’ve gotta figure out.”<sup>1</sup>

You may have heard it said that the secret to a fulfilling life is to find out what you can be passionate about, and then do that. I’ll be bold here and say that, for the Christian man, the call of Jesus to “follow me,” as he did with Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John at the Sea of Galilee, carries the secret to a passionate life.<sup>2</sup> They responded immediately. The question is what holds a man back from doing the same? Could it be fear? In the last article I said:

When a man finds a journey that  
Engages his imagination,  
Fills him with wonder,  
Demands his loyalty and valor,  
Invokes his passion, and  
Promises him romantic fulfillment,  
It can become a consuming fire.

Guys, God-inspired passion overcome fear and send you on a pathway, a journey on which you cannot know the destination. It is the call of Jesus to you, to join Him in the grand quest. You cannot stay neutral. You cannot retreat. You must advance toward the life that He has designed for you.

In the strength of the Holy Spirit, you must commit to the unknown; to authenticity, simplicity, fellowship, resilience, and valor. These are some of the qualities of the Noble Man, the life you desire for yourself and for your sons, and we will be discussing them over the last few articles in this series. Your legacy to your sons is bound up in being intentional about bringing them into this kind of noble manhood.<sup>3</sup> This is not an invitation to join a secret society like the Knights Templar of which we have heard so much in recent times – although we can and will learn much from the knighthood metaphor.

You cannot bestow upon, or bequeath to, your sons something that you do not possess yourself. They must be brought to noble manhood by you and that is only possible when you come to noble manhood yourself. Our society conspires against this idea, and derides the suggestion that boys need their Dads, or another strong male figure, in their lives in order to become men. I will say another bold and plain thing. Outside of the sovereign acts of God, boys cannot become men through the nurturing of their mothers alone, because Mom cannot bestow or bequeath that which she, also, does not possess.<sup>4</sup>

So far, this series has asked three questions: Who am I? Where am I going? How will I get there? Our answers have been: You are a man after God's own noble heart. You are called by Jesus Himself to a grand quest. You will get there by responding "yes" to the call, and by committing yourself to the life of the Noble Man – in His strength, to His honor, and for His glory alone.

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<sup>1</sup> *City Slickers*. 1991. Produced by Irby Smith and Billy Crystal and directed by Ron Underwood. 112 min. Castle Rock Entertainment. DVD.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 4:18-22.

<sup>3</sup> Your legacy will influence your daughters as well, as you become an exemplar of all that it means to be a noble man, in Christ.

<sup>4</sup> The influence of a Mom on her son's passage to manhood is of incalculable importance. Boys want and need both their Moms and their Dads in their lives.