OCHORUS ORIGINALS

3

Sons of the King

Growing Up: your feelings, your changing body, wise choices, and God's calling

Ochorus

Sons of the King – 30 Days with God for Guys – Book 3

Growing Up: your feelings, your changing body, wise choices, and God's calling

Ochorus Originals

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OCHORUS

About Ochorus

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Matthew 10:8

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About this work

Sons of the King is an original Ochorus devotional series for boys aged 9 to 12. Book 1 taught a boy who he is, and Book 2 how to be faithful. Book 3 walks with him into growing up, and it opens with 1 John 2:14: "I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one."

The first week is about feelings, starting with the anger and sorrow Jesus Himself felt, then anger, feeling down, pressure, talking about what is inside, and grief. The second speaks openly and simply about puberty: growth spurts, the voice changing, body and facial hair, the private parts growing, erections and wet dreams, hygiene, and hormones and strength, all as part of God's good design. It leaves questions about sex and reproduction to parents, and every day sends a boy back to his father or a man he trusts. The third week is about wise choices: crushes, money, the crowd, dares and danger, and a pure heart. The fourth is about calling, with Jeremiah, Bezalel the craftsman and Nehemiah the builder. The fifth is about mentors and finishing well, with Elijah and Elisha, Paul and Timothy, and Caleb at eighty-five.

Every day follows the same short pattern: a Scripture from the Berean Standard Bible, a teaching, a question to think about, one thing to try, and a prayer. Each week ends with a true story from our Brave for God books: John Paton, Eric Liddell, Jim Elliot, George Liele and Simeon Nsibambi. A note for parents recommends reading the growing-up week together.

Introduction: Growing Up

Look at a photo of yourself as a little kid. Tiny shoes. Chubby cheeks. Maybe a missing front tooth. Now stand next to a doorframe and see how tall you are. You've grown a lot. And you're not done yet.

Somewhere between about ages 9 and 14, most guys notice that growing up starts to speed up. Your body begins to change. Your feelings can get bigger and harder to figure out. You start getting more freedom, and more responsibility. You start wondering what you'll do with your life.

That can feel exciting. It can also feel strange, awkward or even a little scary. All of that is normal.

Here's the most important thing to know: **growing up is part of God's good design.** Nothing about it surprises Him. He planned it. And He's with you through every change.

The apostle John wrote a letter to Christians of every age, and he had a special word for the young men:

> *"I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one."*
> *— 1 John 2:14 (BSB)*

Strong. Full of God's Word. Winning against evil. That's what John saw in the young men who followed Jesus. And that's what God wants to grow in you.

In Book 1, you learned who you are: a son of the King, with strength under control. In Book 2, you learned to be faithful. Now, in Book 3, you'll learn what it means to grow up as a son of the King.

What's in this book

- **Week 1 — Feelings.** Anger, sadness, pressure, grief, and why real men talk about what's going on inside.
- **Week 2 — Your Body and Growing Up.** How God designed your body, and the changes that come as you grow.
- **Week 3 — Wise Choices.** Crushes, money, the crowd, dares and danger, and a pure heart.
- **Week 4 — Calling.** Your gifts, the work God gives you, and what He might be calling you to do.
- **Week 5 — Mentors and Finishing Well.** Elijah and Elisha, Paul and Timothy, and a man who was still strong at eighty-five.

At the end of each week, you'll meet another real man from history who trusted God, some of them new, and one you've met before. You can read their whole stories in the *Brave for God* books.

How each day works

Every day takes about five to ten minutes and has five parts: the verse, the teaching, **Think about it**, **Try this** and a prayer. Add your own words to the prayers!

A special note about Week 2

Week 2 talks about how your body changes as you grow up. Some of it might feel a bit awkward to read, and that's okay! It's a great week to read **with your dad, grandpa, an uncle or another man you trust**, or with your mom. Every day that week ends by encouraging you to take your questions to him, because the men who love you went through all of this too, and they want to help.

If you haven't read Books 1 and 2, that's okay! You can start right here.

For parents, grandparents and leaders

Book 3 of *Sons of the King* is about growing up for boys aged 9 to 12, with Scripture from the Berean Standard Bible. As in the earlier books, it builds character through the men of the Bible and does not teach adult roles.

Week 2 speaks openly and age-appropriately about puberty. It covers:

- growth spurts and comparing with other guys
- the voice changing, and body and facial hair
- the growth of the private parts, and erections and wet dreams, briefly and simply, as normal and nothing to be ashamed of (Day 10)
- sweat, body odor and hygiene
- hormones, strength and changing moods

It frames all of this as God's good design, and it deliberately leaves questions about sex and reproduction to parents. Each day of that week sends boys back to a parent or trusted man with their questions, and Day 12 repeats a simple body-safety message. We strongly encourage reading

Week 2 together, especially Day 10. It may open the door to conversations you'll be glad to have.

Day 6 is about grief, and Day 14 is about crushes; both encourage boys to talk openly with their parents.

Day 1 — What Jesus Felt

"Jesus looked around at them with anger and sorrow at their hardness of heart. Then He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' So he stretched it out, and it was restored."
— Mark 3:5 (BSB)

Some guys think that being a man means not having feelings, or at least never showing them. Be tough. Don't cry. Don't let anything get to you. Just say "I'm fine," even when you're not.

But look at Jesus.

One Sabbath day, Jesus went into the synagogue. There was a man there with a shriveled, useless hand. And the religious leaders were watching Jesus closely, hoping He would heal the man so they could accuse Him of breaking the Sabbath rules. They cared more about their rules than about a hurting man.

So what did Jesus feel? Mark tells us: "Jesus looked around at them with **anger and sorrow**." Two strong feelings at once! He was angry that they were so hard-hearted. And He was sad about it too.

Jesus is the strongest, bravest, most perfect man who ever lived. And He had feelings. Big ones.

In the Gospels, Jesus feels compassion for crowds of people. He feels joy. He feels sad enough to cry at His friend's tomb. He feels so troubled in the garden before the cross that He asks His friends to stay and pray with Him. He feels love when He looks at people.

So here's the truth: **feelings are God's idea.** Having them doesn't make you weak. It makes you human, made in the image of a God who feels.

But notice something else about Jesus. His feelings never made Him sin. He was angry, and He did something good with it: He healed the man. His feelings were real, but they didn't take over.

That's what this week is about. Not getting rid of your feelings, but learning what to do with them.

A good place to start is to **name them**. When something's going on inside, try to put a word on it: *I'm frustrated. I'm embarrassed. I'm nervous. I'm disappointed. I'm really happy.* Just naming a feeling helps you understand it, and helps you decide what to do next.

Think about it: Have you ever heard that "real men don't have feelings"? How does Jesus show that's not true?

Try this: Three times today, stop and name what you're feeling. Then tell God about it.

Dear Jesus, thank You that You understand feelings, because You felt them too. Help me not to hide my feelings or let them take over. Help me name them, bring them to You, and do something good with them, like You did. In Your name, Amen.

Day 2 — Blowing Up

"A fool vents all his anger, but a wise man holds it back."
— Proverbs 29:11 (BSB)

You've been working on a LEGO build for hours, and your little brother knocks it over. Your team loses because the ref made a terrible call. Your friend tells everyone something you told him in secret. Your mom says you can't go, and you don't think it's fair.

And you feel it: the heat rising in your chest, your fists clenching, your face getting red. You want to yell, hit something, throw something, or say the meanest thing you can think of.

As guys grow up, many of them notice that their anger seems to get bigger and come faster. (Next week, you'll learn one reason why.) That's normal. But what you *do* with that anger really matters.

Proverbs says: "A fool **vents all his anger**, but a wise man **holds it back**."

To *vent* means to let it all out, like steam blasting from a pot. The fool lets his anger explode on whoever is nearby. He yells, slams, punches or says things he can never take back. And afterward, there's usually a mess to clean up: hurt people, broken things, lost friends and trouble.

The wise man holds it back. That doesn't mean he pretends he isn't angry, or stuffs it down forever. It means he's the boss of his anger, instead of his anger being the boss of him. He waits. He cools down. He thinks. And then he deals with the problem in a good way.

Here's a plan for when you feel yourself about to blow:

1. **Stop.** Don't say or do anything yet.
2. **Step away.** Go to your room, go outside, walk around the block (tell someone where you're going).
3. **Burn it off.** Shoot hoops, run, do push-ups, or hit a pillow, never a person.
4. **Breathe and pray.** *God, I'm really mad right now. Help me.*
5. **Then deal with it.** Talk it out calmly, ask a grown-up for help, forgive, or let it go.

You won't get this right every time. When you do blow up, go back and say sorry. That's what a wise man does too.

Think about it: What makes you angriest? What usually happens when you vent all your anger?

Try this: Pick your "burn it off" move ahead of time, something you'll do next time you're about to blow. Tell a parent your plan.

Dear God, when I get angry, help me be wise instead of foolish. Help me stop, step away and cool down before I say or do something I'll regret. Make me the boss of my anger, and help me say sorry when I get it wrong. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 3 — Elijah Under the Tree

"Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said, 'Get up and eat.'"
— 1 Kings 19:5 (BSB)

Elijah was one of the boldest prophets who ever lived. He had just stood on a mountain against 450 false prophets, and God had sent fire from heaven to prove He was the true God. It was an amazing victory!

But right afterward, a wicked queen named Jezebel threatened to kill him. And Elijah, the fearless prophet, ran for his life.

He ran into the wilderness, sat down under a broom tree, and told God he'd had enough. He felt like giving up. He was exhausted, scared and completely worn out. He felt alone, as if he was the only one left who still followed God.

Maybe you know a little of how that feels. Maybe you've had days when you just feel down, low and heavy. When you don't want to do anything. When everything seems hopeless.

Look at what God did for Elijah. He didn't yell at him. He didn't tell him to toughen up. He let him **sleep**. Then an angel woke him up and said, "**Get up and eat.**" There was fresh bread and a jar of water. Elijah ate, drank and slept some more. Then the angel came back and fed him again.

God knew Elijah was a whole person: body, mind and spirit. Sometimes the first thing a discouraged man needs isn't a lecture. It's rest and a good meal!

Later, God met with Elijah, spoke to him gently, and gave him a friend and helper named Elisha. (You'll learn more about him in Week 5.) He wasn't alone after all.

When you're feeling down:

- **Take care of your body.** Get some sleep, eat something good, drink water, get outside.
- **Tell God how you feel.** Elijah did. God can handle it.
- **Tell someone.** You're not as alone as you feel. Talk to your dad, mom or another grown-up you trust.
- **Remember what God has done before.**

And this is important: if you feel sad or hopeless most of the time, for a long time, or ever feel like you don't want to be alive, **tell a parent or trusted adult right away**. That's not weakness. It's brave. There are people, like doctors and counselors, whose job is to help, and God often uses them to strengthen us, just like He sent the angel to Elijah.

Think about it: Why do you think God gave Elijah food and sleep before He talked to him?

Try this: Next time you feel low, try Elijah's plan: rest, eat something healthy, get outside, and then talk to God and someone you trust.

Dear God, thank You for the way You cared for Elijah when he felt like giving up. When I feel down, help me take care of my body, talk to You, and tell someone I trust. Thank You that I'm never as alone as I feel. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 4 — Under Pressure

"From the ends of the earth I call out to You whenever my heart is faint. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I."
— Psalm 61:2 (BSB)

Big test tomorrow. The championship game this weekend. A piano recital. A new school. Too much homework, and practice every night. Parents who expect a lot. Friends who expect something different.

Growing up can bring a lot of **pressure**. And pressure can make you feel stressed: tight shoulders, a stomachache, trouble sleeping, snapping at people, or wanting to just escape into a game or a screen.

David knew pressure. He wrote many of his psalms while he was being chased, attacked or betrayed. In today's psalm, he says his "heart is faint." That means he felt worn out, weak and overwhelmed.

So he prayed: "**Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.**"

Picture a flood rising around you. The water keeps getting higher. You can't stand against it. What you need is a big rock, higher than the water, higher than you, that you can climb up on and be safe.

God is that rock. When the pressure feels higher than you can handle, you can climb up onto Him. He's bigger than your test, your game, your problems and your worries.

Here are some ways to handle pressure:

- **Pray first.** Tell God exactly what's stressing you out. Ask Him to lead you to the rock.
- **Break it down.** A big job feels smaller when you do it one step at a time.
- **Prepare.** Studying or practicing ahead of time takes away a lot of pressure.
- **Move your body.** Exercise is one of the best ways to get rid of stress.
- **Talk about it.** Tell your parents if you feel like you have too much going on. Sometimes something needs to change.
- **Remember what matters most.** Your worth doesn't depend on your grade or the score. You're a son of the King whether you win or lose.

You don't have to handle every pressure by yourself. That's what the Rock is for.

Think about it: What puts the most pressure on you right now? What would it look like to "climb up on the Rock"?

Try this: Write down the three things stressing you most. Pray over each one, and pick one small step you can take on the biggest one.

Dear God, when my heart feels faint and the pressure is too much, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I. Thank You that You're bigger than anything I'm facing. Help me trust You, take one step at a time, and ask for help when I need it. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 5 — Deep Water

"The intentions of a man's heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out."
— Proverbs 20:5 (BSB)

Imagine an old well, deep in the ground. Way down at the bottom is cool, fresh water. But you can't get it just by looking at it. You need a bucket and a rope to draw it out.

Proverbs says a person's heart is like that: "**deep waters**." There's a lot going on down inside every guy: thoughts, worries, hurts, hopes, questions and dreams. But much of it stays hidden. A lot of guys are really good at keeping it all down there.

Someone asks, "How are you?" and you say, "Fine." Your mom asks, "What's wrong?" and you say, "Nothing." You feel hurt, and you act like you don't care. You're worried, and you crack a joke instead.

Sometimes that's okay. Not every feeling needs to be shared with everyone. But when you keep everything bottled up for a long time, the pressure builds. It can come out as anger, or make you feel alone, or even make you sick.

That's why the verse says: "a man of **understanding draws them out**." A wise man knows how to bring up what's deep inside, in his own heart and in others'.

Here's how to draw out the deep water:

- **Find your person.** Who's someone you can really talk to? Your dad, your mom, a grandparent, a coach, a youth leader?
- **Talk side by side.** Lots of guys find it easier to talk while they're doing something: shooting hoops, driving in the car, fishing, fixing something or going for a walk.
- **Start small.** You don't have to share everything at once. "Can I tell you something that's been bugging me?" is a great start.
- **Write it down.** Journaling helps you figure out what you're actually feeling.
- **Tell God first.** He already knows what's down there, and He invites you to pour it out.

And be a man of understanding for your friends too. When a friend seems off, don't just ignore it. Ask, "Hey, are you okay? Really?" and then listen.

Talking about what's going on inside isn't weak. It takes courage. And it's how deep water turns into something good.

Think about it: Are you someone who keeps things bottled up, or someone who talks about them? Who's your person?

Try this: Invite your dad or another trusted grown-up to do something side by side with you this week, and tell him one thing that's been on your mind.

Dear God, You know everything deep in my heart. Help me not to keep everything bottled up. Give me people I can talk to, and courage to draw out what's inside. And help me be a good listener for my friends. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 6 — The God of All Comfort

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."
— 2 Corinthians 1:3–4 (BSB)

Some of the hardest feelings come when we lose someone or something we love. A grandparent dies. A pet dies. A best friend moves far away. Parents split up. A family has to move and leave everything behind.

That deep sadness is called **grief**. And it can hurt more than almost anything.

Grief can feel different for different people. Some guys cry a lot. Some feel numb, like nothing is real. Some feel angry. Some feel fine one day and terrible the next. Some feel guilty, even though it wasn't their fault. All of that is normal.

Paul wrote today's verse after going through terrible troubles. And he called God "**the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort**."

Compassion means feeling someone's pain with them. *Comfort* means being there to strengthen and help someone who's hurting. God isn't far away when you're grieving. He comes close. He feels your pain with you. And He comforts you.

Jesus Himself wept when His friend Lazarus died, even though He knew He was about to raise him. He didn't tell anyone that grief was silly.

He cried with them.

Here are some things that help when you're grieving:

- **Let yourself be sad.** You don't have to be tough. Crying is okay.
- **Tell God how you feel,** even if you're angry or confused.
- **Talk to your family.** They might be grieving too. You can help each other.
- **Remember the good things.** Look at photos, tell stories, or write down your favorite memories.
- **Hold on to hope.** For people who trust Jesus, death isn't the end. One day He will wipe away every tear.
- **Give it time.** Grief doesn't go away all at once.

If your sadness doesn't get any better after a long time, or it makes everyday things really hard, **tell a parent or trusted adult**. Getting help is the right thing to do.

And look at the end of the verse: God comforts us "**so that we can comfort** those in any trouble." Someday, the comfort you receive will help you comfort someone else who's hurting.

This week, you've learned that Jesus had feelings, and how to handle anger, sadness, pressure, bottled-up feelings and grief. Feelings are part of being a man. Bringing them to God is part of being a son of the King.

A true story: John Paton was a young Scottish missionary who sailed to the faraway island of Tanna in the South Seas with his wife, Mary. But only weeks after they arrived, Mary and their baby son both grew sick and died. John dug their graves with his own hands. He said later that if he hadn't known Jesus was near him, the grief would have been too much to bear. But God comforted him, and John didn't give up. He stayed and kept serving, and years later, on another island called Aniwa, he dug a well and

found fresh water, and a whole island came to follow Jesus. The man who knew deep grief became a man who brought life and hope to others. You can read his whole story in *Brave for God*.

Think about it: Have you ever lost someone or something you loved? What helped you, or what might have helped?

Try this: Think of someone you know who is sad or grieving right now. Do something kind for him or her: send a note, pray, or just sit with them.

Dear God, thank You that You are the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort. When I'm grieving, help me bring my sadness to You. Comfort me, and help me comfort others who are hurting. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 7 — Built by God

"You clothed me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with bones and sinews."
— Job 10:11 (BSB)

This week, we're going to talk about something every guy goes through: the way your body changes as you grow from a boy into a man. It's called **puberty**.

Maybe you've already noticed some changes. Maybe some of your friends have, and you're wondering when it'll happen to you. Maybe you've heard jokes or stories that left you confused. Maybe you'd rather skip this part completely!

But listen to Job. He was talking to God about how his body was made: "You clothed me with **skin and flesh**, and **knit me together** with **bones and sinews**." (*Sinews* are the tough cords that connect your muscles to your bones.)

Job knew his body wasn't an accident. God built it, piece by piece, like a master craftsman. And that's true of you too. God designed every part of your body, including the way it grows and changes.

Puberty is the time when a boy's body slowly begins to change into a man's body. For most boys, it starts somewhere between about **ages 9 and 14**, and it happens gradually over several years. Boys often start a little later than girls. Some guys start early, some start late. **Both are normal.** Your body has its own timing, and God set that clock.

During puberty, lots of changes happen:

- You grow taller, sometimes really fast, and your muscles get stronger.
- Your voice gets deeper.
- Hair grows in new places, including your face.
- Your private parts grow and change.
- You sweat more, and your skin gets oilier.
- Your feelings might go up and down more.

Over the next few days, we'll talk about each of these. It might feel a little awkward, and that's okay! Awkward doesn't mean bad. These changes are good, healthy and normal. They're God's way of building you into a man.

Here's one of the most important things to remember: **nothing about how God designed your body is shameful or gross.** You never need to feel embarrassed to ask questions about it. And don't trust everything you hear from other kids or see online. A lot of it is wrong. Get your answers from your parents.

Think about it: How do you feel about growing up and your body changing? Excited, nervous, confused, or a little of everything?

Try this: Ask your dad (or another man you trust), "What was growing up like for you?" Tell him you'd like to talk about the changes that come with puberty.

Dear God, thank You for building my body so carefully, piece by piece. Help me see the changes of growing up as part of Your good design. Help me not to be embarrassed or afraid, and help me talk to my parents when I have questions. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 8 — Zacchaeus Was Small

"He was trying to see who Jesus was, but could not see over the crowd because he was small in stature."
— Luke 19:3 (BSB)

Zacchaeus was short. The Bible says he was "small in stature." When Jesus came to his town, a huge crowd gathered, and Zacchaeus couldn't see a thing over everybody's heads.

So what did he do? He ran ahead and climbed a tree! And when Jesus came by, He stopped, looked up, and called Zacchaeus by name. Jesus didn't care that he was short. He went to his house that very day.

During puberty, one of the biggest changes is **growth**. Many guys have a **growth spurt**, a time when they shoot up fast, sometimes several inches in a year. Your feet and hands might grow first, so you feel a bit clumsy for a while. Your shoulders get broader, and your muscles get bigger and stronger.

But here's the thing: **every guy grows at a different time.** In your class, some guys might already be tall with deep voices, while others still look like little kids. That's completely normal. The guy who's shortest in sixth grade might be one of the tallest by the end of high school. Or not! Either way is fine.

It's really easy to **compare** yourself with other guys: *He's taller. He's stronger. He's faster. He already has muscles.* And it's easy to feel like you don't measure up.

But remember Zacchaeus. Jesus didn't pick him because he was tall. He picked him because He loved him. Your worth doesn't come from your height, your muscles or how fast your body is changing.

Here's how to help your growing body:

- **Eat good food, and plenty of it.** Growing guys get hungry! That's normal.
- **Sleep.** A lot of your growing actually happens while you sleep.
- **Move.** Play sports, ride your bike, climb things and get outside.
- **Don't take pills, powders or supplements** to get bigger or stronger unless your parents and doctor say it's okay. Your body is already doing what it needs to do.
- **Don't tease other guys** about their size, whether they're big or small.

And if you ever feel really worried about your size, your weight or how you look, or if you're trying hard not to eat, **talk to a parent or trusted grown-up**. Those worries are more common than you'd think, and there's help.

Think about it: Do you ever compare your body with other guys'? What does the story of Zacchaeus say to you about that?

Try this: Ask your dad or another man you trust, "When did you have your growth spurt?" Then thank God for three things your body can do right now.

Dear God, thank You for my growing body. Help me not to compare myself with other guys, but to remember that my worth comes from You. Help me take care of my body with good food, sleep and exercise. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 9 — When I Became a Man

> *"When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I set aside childish ways."*
> *— 1 Corinthians 13:11 (BSB)*

Paul wrote about the difference between being a child and being a man. "When I was a child, I **talked like a child**..." Did you know that growing up actually changes the way you talk? Literally!

Today let's talk about two more changes that happen during puberty.

Your voice changes. As you grow, the part of your throat that makes sound, your voice box, gets bigger. Your voice gets deeper. But it doesn't happen all at once. For a while, your voice might **crack**: jumping high and low in the middle of a sentence, or squeaking at the worst possible moment. It can be embarrassing! But it's completely normal, and it doesn't last forever. You might also notice a bump in the front of your throat. That's called your **Adam's apple**, and it gets bigger as your voice box grows.

Hair grows in new places. During puberty, hair starts growing under your arms and in your private area, the part of your body covered by your underwear. The hair on your arms and legs might get thicker and darker. Some guys grow hair on their chest. And eventually, hair starts growing on your face: first a little fuzz on your upper lip and chin, then more over the years. When the time comes, your dad or another man you trust can teach you how to shave, if you want to.

These changes can feel strange. You might feel self-conscious, or worry that people will notice. But every man you know went through the same things. Your dad did. Your grandpa did. Your coaches and pastors did. It's all part of God's design for turning boys into men.

Now look at the rest of Paul's verse: "When I became a man, **I set aside childish ways**." Growing up isn't just about your body. It's about your heart too. Becoming a man means more than getting a deep voice or a beard. It means learning to be responsible, to control yourself, to care about others and to follow God on your own. You can start growing in those ways right now, whatever your body is doing.

If you have questions about any of these changes, **ask your dad or another man you trust**. There's no such thing as a dumb question about your body.

Think about it: Which is more important to God: growing up in your body or growing up in your heart? Why?

Try this: Write down any questions you have about how your body is changing. Share them with your dad or a trusted man this week.

Dear God, thank You that You're growing me up, in my body and in my heart. When my voice cracks or my body feels strange, help me not to be embarrassed. And help me set aside childish ways and grow into the man You made me to be. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 10 — Nothing to Be Ashamed Of

"Your hands have made me and fashioned me; give me understanding to learn Your commandments."
— Psalm 119:73 (BSB)

Today's reading talks about some changes that a lot of boys wonder about but feel too embarrassed to ask about. That's exactly why we're going to talk about them. It might feel awkward, and that's fine. Remember: God designed every part of you, and "Your hands have made me and fashioned me."

Your private parts grow. During puberty, a boy's private parts, his **penis** and **testicles**, grow bigger and change. This happens slowly over a few years. Every guy's body is a little different, and every guy develops at his own pace. That's normal. There's no need to compare with anyone else.

Erections. Sometimes a boy's penis gets stiff and sticks out for a little while. That's called an **erection**. During puberty, this can start happening more often, sometimes for no reason at all, like when you wake up in the morning, or even in the middle of class. It can feel embarrassing, but it's normal, it's part of how God designed a man's body, and it goes away by itself after a few minutes. Thinking about something else or changing position can help. Nobody is usually noticing as much as you think.

Wet dreams. Some boys wake up and find that a small amount of sticky, whitish fluid has come out of their penis while they were asleep. That's called a **wet dream** (the grown-up word is a *nocturnal emission*). It's

normal and healthy. It's not wetting the bed, it's not a sickness, and it's **not something you did wrong**. It's just your body growing up. If it happens, you can simply wash up and put your pajamas and sheets in the laundry.

Why does God design a man's body this way? It's part of how He made men so that, one day when they're grown, they could become fathers. Your dad or mom can tell you more about that part when you're ready. It's a great conversation to have with them.

Here are some important things to remember:

- **Your private parts are private.** They're special and personal. No one should see or touch them except for things like a doctor checking your health with a parent there.
- **None of this is shameful.** God made your body, and He made it good.
- **Don't get your answers from other kids or the internet.** A lot of what guys say to each other is wrong, and a lot of what's online is harmful. Go to your parents.
- **Ask your questions.** Your dad or another trusted man has been through every one of these changes. He won't laugh at you. He wants to help.

The second half of today's verse is a prayer: "give me understanding to learn Your commandments." The God who made your body also gives you wisdom to know how to honor Him with it.

Think about it: Why do you think God wants you to feel no shame about the way He designed your body?

Try this: Talk with your dad, or another man or parent you trust, about today's reading. Ask him any question you're still wondering about.

Dear God, thank You that Your hands made me and fashioned me. Help me not to feel ashamed of the way You designed my body. Give me courage to ask my parents my questions, and give me understanding to honor You with my body as I grow. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 11 — Clean Clothes

"Let your garments always be white, and never spare the oil for your head."
— Ecclesiastes 9:8 (BSB)

Here's a verse you might not expect to find in the Bible! Solomon was talking about enjoying life, and part of his advice was: "Let your garments always be white, and never spare the oil for your head." In other words: **keep your clothes clean, and take care of yourself.**

That's great advice for a guy going through puberty, because your body is about to need a lot more care than it used to.

Sweat and body odor. During puberty, you start to sweat more, especially under your arms and on your feet. And that sweat can start to **smell**. Sometimes guys don't even notice their own smell, but everyone else does! Here's what to do:

- **Shower every day,** especially after sports or exercise. Use soap, and actually wash your armpits, feet and private area.
- **Use deodorant** every morning. Ask your parents to help you pick one.
- **Wear clean clothes,** including clean socks and underwear every day.
- **Wash your sports gear.** Stinky jerseys, pads and shoes need cleaning too.

Oily skin and pimples. Your skin gets oilier during puberty, and you might start getting **pimples** (also called acne), especially on your face, back and chest. Almost every teenager gets them! Wash your face gently every morning and night, try not to pick or pop pimples, and ask a parent or doctor for help if they really bother you.

Oily hair. Your hair may get greasy faster, so wash it more often.

Teeth and breath. Brush twice a day. Nobody likes dragon breath!

Sleep, food and exercise. Your growing body needs lots of rest, good food, plenty of water and time to move. Taking care of these helps your body, your mood and even your skin.

Taking care of your body isn't about showing off or being vain. It's about being a good steward of the body God gave you. It's also a way of loving the people around you, because no one wants to sit next to the smelly guy!

And here's a bonus: when you feel clean and fresh, you usually feel more confident too.

If you're not sure how to do some of these things, that's okay. Nobody is born knowing. **Ask your dad or another man you trust** to show you.

Think about it: Which of these ways of caring for your body do you already do well? Which do you need to start?

Try this: Make a simple morning and evening routine: shower, deodorant, clean clothes, face washing and teeth. Ask a parent to help you stick to it for a week.

Dear God, thank You for my body. Help me take good care of it as it grows and changes. Help me stay clean and healthy, not to show off, but to honor You and be kind to the people around me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 12 — The Glory of Young Men

"The glory of young men is their strength, and gray hair is the splendor of the old."
— Proverbs 20:29 (BSB)

Proverbs says, "The glory of young men is their **strength**." God designed young men to grow strong: more muscle, more energy, more power. That's a gift!

One reason your body gets stronger during puberty is **hormones**. Hormones are chemical messengers in your body. They're part of how God designed puberty to happen. The main one for guys is called **testosterone**. It tells your body to grow muscles, deepen your voice, grow hair and do all the other changes you've read about this week.

But hormones can also affect your **feelings**. During puberty, many guys notice that:

- They get angry or frustrated faster.
- They feel restless, with energy that needs to go somewhere.
- Their moods go up and down.
- They feel more sensitive about what others think, especially other guys.
- They want to prove themselves or take risks.

If that sounds like you, **you're not a bad person, and you're not going crazy.** Your body is growing, and your feelings are along for the ride.

Here's the key: **strength is a gift to be used well.** Remember Book 1? Real strength is strength under control. A strong young man doesn't use his strength to push people around, hurt others or show off. He uses it to protect, help, work hard and serve.

Here's how to handle your growing energy and changing moods:

- **Burn off energy the right way:** sports, running, biking, building, working.
- **Get enough sleep.** Tired guys have shorter fuses.
- **Remember Week 1:** stop, step away, cool down and pray when you're angry.
- **Be gentle with the people around you,** especially your family, even when you're in a bad mood.
- **Talk to your dad or a trusted man.** He's been there.

One more very important thing. Your body is yours, and it belongs to God. No one, not a stranger and not someone you know, should ever touch your private parts, ask you to touch theirs, show you pictures of private parts, or ask you for pictures of your body. If anyone ever does, or tells you to keep a secret about it, **tell a trusted adult right away**. It's never your fault, and telling is always right. Strong men tell.

This week, you've learned that your body is built by God, and about growth spurts, your voice and body hair, your private parts, taking care of your body, and your hormones and strength. You're growing into a man, and God is with you every step.

A true story: You met Eric Liddell in Book 1: the fastest runner in Scotland, who wouldn't race on Sunday and still won Olympic gold. But

here's the rest of his story. Eric believed God had made him fast, and he loved to use his strong body for God. Later, he went to China as a missionary, and during a great war he was locked in a crowded prison camp. There, he used his strength to serve. He organized games and sports for the bored children in the camp, taught them lessons, helped carry the sick, and gave away his own small share of food. The Olympic champion used his strength not to win medals, but to help everyone around him. You can read his whole story in *Brave for God*.

Think about it: How could you use your growing strength to help and serve others, instead of to show off?

Try this: Have a conversation with your dad or a man you trust about this whole week. Ask him anything you're still wondering about.

Dear God, thank You for making young men strong. Help me use my strength to serve, protect and help, not to hurt or show off. When my feelings go up and down, help me stay steady with You. Keep me safe, and help me always tell a trusted grown-up if anything doesn't feel right. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 13 — Where Wisdom Comes From

"For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding."
— Proverbs 2:6 (BSB)

As you grow up, you get to make more of your own choices. Who to hang out with. What to do with your money. What to do when your friends want to do something you know is wrong. What to do with your free time. What you'll say yes to, and what you'll say no to.

More freedom is great. But it means you need something really important: **wisdom**.

Wisdom isn't the same as being smart. Plenty of smart guys make foolish choices. Wisdom is knowing how to live well: seeing situations the way God sees them, and choosing what's right and good.

So where do you get it? Proverbs says: "**The LORD gives wisdom**; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding."

Wisdom comes from God. He's the source. And He's happy to give it to anyone who asks.

Here's how to grow in wisdom:

- **Ask God.** Before a big choice, pray: *God, what's the wise thing to do here?*
- **Read His Word.** "From His mouth come knowledge and understanding." The Bible is where God speaks. Proverbs is full of

wisdom for young men. It has 31 chapters, one for every day of the month.

- **Listen to wise men.** Your dad, grandpa, pastor, coach or youth leader have lived longer and learned a lot.
- **Think ahead.** Ask, *Where will this choice lead? What will happen next?*
- **Learn from mistakes.** Yours and other people's.

This week, we'll look at wise choices in some areas that matter a lot as you grow up: crushes, money, going along with the crowd, dares and danger, and keeping a pure heart.

Think about it: What's a choice you'll probably face in the next year that will need wisdom?

Try this: Read one chapter of Proverbs today. Try reading the chapter that matches today's date!

Dear God, You are where wisdom comes from. Please give me wisdom for the choices I'm facing. Help me listen to Your Word and to wise people, and help me make choices that honor You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 14 — Not Yet

"O daughters of Jerusalem, I adjure you: Do not arouse or awaken love until the time is right."
— Song of Songs 8:4 (BSB)

Have you ever had a **crush**? That's when you suddenly start thinking a girl is really cute, or you feel nervous around her, or you hope she notices you.

Crushes are really common as guys grow up. If you've had one, that's normal! And if you haven't, or you think the whole thing is gross, that's completely normal too.

There's a book in the Bible called the Song of Songs. It's a love poem about a husband and wife. And three times in the book, a young woman gives this advice to her friends: "**Do not arouse or awaken love until the time is right.**" She's speaking to young women, but her wisdom is for young men too.

In other words: *Don't rush it.* Romantic love is a beautiful gift from God. But it's meant for the right time, and that's when you're much older and ready for it. Trying to wake it up too early can lead to heartbreak, distraction and choices you'll regret.

So what should you do with crushes now?

- **Don't panic.** Having a crush doesn't mean you have to do anything about it.

- **Don't rush into "dating" or "going out."** At your age, it's much better just to be friends with girls. There's plenty of time for romance later.
- **Treat girls with respect.** Remember Book 1? Treat them like sisters. Don't tease them, talk about their bodies, or make crude jokes about them.
- **Don't let the guys pressure you.** Some guys brag about girlfriends or tease each other about girls. You don't have to join in.
- **Be careful online.** Never send pictures or private messages to anyone that you wouldn't want your parents to see.
- **Talk to your mom or dad.** Tell them about your crush! It might feel embarrassing, but they want to help, and they've been there too.

Someday, if God has marriage in your future, you'll be glad you waited and let love wake up at the right time. For now, enjoy being a guy. Build good friendships, grow in your faith and trust God with your heart.

Think about it: Why do you think the Bible says not to awaken love too early?

Try this: Talk with your mom or dad about crushes and dating. Ask them what they think the "right time" is, and why.

Dear God, thank You that love is a good gift from You. Help me not to rush it, but to wait for the right time. Help me treat girls with respect, and keep my heart focused on You. Help me be honest with my parents about my feelings. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 15 — Save Some

"Precious treasures and oil are in the dwelling of the wise, but a foolish man consumes them."
— Proverbs 21:20 (BSB)

You get twenty dollars for your birthday. What happens next?

Some guys spend it the same day. Candy, a game, a new skin, some random thing they don't even want a week later. And then it's gone.

Proverbs describes two kinds of people. In the home of the **wise**, there are "precious treasures and oil," good things stored up and saved. But the **foolish man** "consumes them." He uses up everything he gets, right away, with nothing left over.

As you grow up, you'll have more money: allowance, birthday money, and maybe money from mowing lawns, shoveling snow, pet sitting or other jobs. How you handle a little money now is practice for handling a lot of money later.

Here are some money-wise habits you can start now:

- **Give first.** Everything you have comes from God. Many Christians give part of their money back to Him first, to their church or to help people in need.
- **Save some.** Don't spend it all. Put some away for later. Saving lets you buy something bigger that you really want, and it teaches you patience.

- **Spend wisely.** Before you buy something, ask: *Do I really need this? Will I still want it next week? Is it worth the money?*
- **Watch out for sneaky spending.** In-app purchases, loot boxes and game currency can eat up money fast, without it ever feeling like real money. Always ask a parent first.
- **Work hard.** Earning money by doing a job well is something to be proud of.
- **Be content.** Don't try to keep up with what the other guys have.

Many families use three jars or envelopes: **Give, Save and Spend.** When you get money, you divide it between the three. It's a simple way to build wise habits.

Money isn't good or bad by itself. It's a tool. A wise man uses it well.

Think about it: What do you usually do with money when you get it? Are you more like the wise man or the foolish man in this verse?

Try this: Set up three jars or envelopes: Give, Save and Spend. The next time you get money, divide it between them.

Dear God, everything I have comes from You. Help me be wise with money: to give generously, save some, and spend carefully. Help me be content with what I have. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 16 — Don't Follow the Crowd

"You shall not follow the crowd in wrongdoing."
— Exodus 23:2 (BSB)

A group of guys is making fun of a kid at lunch, and they look at you to join in. Your friends are watching a video you know your parents wouldn't allow. Everybody at the sleepover is sneaking out after midnight. The whole team is swearing, and you're the only one who isn't.

It's hard to be different. Nobody wants to be the odd one out. And as guys grow up, the pull to fit in with the group gets really strong.

God gave His people a clear command: "**You shall not follow the crowd in wrongdoing.**"

Notice, God doesn't say, "Never do what anyone else is doing." Lots of times, the crowd is doing good things, like cheering at a game or helping clean up. The problem is following the crowd **in wrongdoing**, just because everyone else is.

A crowd can make wrong things feel normal. *Everyone's doing it. It's not a big deal. Don't be such a baby.* But wrong is still wrong, no matter how many people are doing it.

Here's how to stand strong when the crowd is going the wrong way:

- **Decide ahead of time.** Make up your mind now about what you will and won't do. It's much harder to decide in the moment.

- **Have an exit line.** "Nah, I'm good." "Not my thing." "My parents would kill me." You don't have to give a speech.
- **Leave.** Sometimes the best move is to walk away.
- **Find one other guy.** It's way easier to stand strong with a friend. Often someone else in the group doesn't like it either.
- **Call home.** Many families have a secret code word or text a kid can send when he needs to be picked up, no questions asked. Ask your parents about one.
- **Remember whose you are.** You're a son of the King, not a follower of the crowd.

Standing apart from the crowd might cost you something, like a laugh at your expense or an awkward moment. But it will make you the kind of man people can trust. And often, you'll find that others were just waiting for someone to be brave first.

Think about it: When have you felt pressure to follow the crowd? What happened?

Try this: Come up with your own "exit line." And ask your parents about setting up a code word you can use if you ever need to get out of a situation.

Dear God, help me not to follow the crowd in doing wrong. Give me courage to stand apart, even when it's hard. Help me remember that I'm Your son. And give me friends who will stand with me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 17 — Dares and Danger

"The prudent see danger and take cover, but the simple keep going and suffer the consequences."
— Proverbs 22:3 (BSB)

"I dare you."

Those three words have gotten a lot of guys into a lot of trouble. Jump off the roof. Ride your bike down that huge hill with no brakes. Eat that. Try this. Film it and post it.

Many guys, especially as they grow up, love adventure and risk. That can be a good thing! God made a lot of guys brave and adventurous. It's part of what helped David fight Goliath and Jonathan climb the cliff.

But there's a big difference between **courage** and **foolishness**.

Proverbs puts it simply: "The **prudent** see danger and take cover, but the **simple** keep going and suffer the consequences."

Prudent means wise and careful. The prudent guy looks ahead. He sees where something is going, and he stops before it's too late. The *simple* guy doesn't think. He just keeps going, and then he gets hurt, gets in trouble, or hurts someone else.

Here are some kinds of danger a prudent young man watches out for:

- **Stupid stunts.** Things that could get you seriously hurt, just to look cool or get views online.

- **Online challenges.** Some viral "challenges" have hurt or even killed kids. If it could hurt you, don't do it.
- **Things that harm your body.** Vaping, smoking, alcohol and drugs. Some kids start trying these at your age. Decide now that you won't.
- **Weapons.** Never touch a gun or weapon without a responsible adult, and tell an adult if you ever find one.
- **Secret plans.** If you'd need to hide it from your parents, that's a warning sign.

Being prudent isn't being scared. It takes more courage to say, "No, that's dumb," than to go along with a dare. The truly brave guy is the one who can think for himself.

There are lots of good adventures to be had: climbing, camping, building things, playing hard, trying new sports, serving on a mission trip. Save your courage for the things that are worth it.

Think about it: Have you ever done something risky because someone dared you? What happened, or what could have happened?

Try this: Make a list of good adventures you'd like to try. Talk with your parents about which ones you could do this year.

Dear God, thank You for making me brave. Help me be prudent too: to see danger and take cover, and to say no to foolish dares. Help me save my courage for the adventures that are worth it. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 18 — Pure, as He Is Pure

"Beloved, we are now children of God, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that when Christ appears, we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as Christ is pure."
— 1 John 3:2–3 (BSB)

The apostle John was an old man when he wrote these words. He had walked with Jesus, eaten with Him and seen Him alive after He rose from the dead. And he wrote about the greatest day still to come: the day Jesus returns. "**We will see Him as He is.**" And when we do, "**we will be like Him**."

Then John says what that hope does to a person right now: "Everyone who has this hope in Him **purifies himself**, just as Christ is pure."

What does it mean to be pure in heart?

Something that's *pure* is clean and unmixed, like pure water with no dirt in it, or pure gold with nothing else melted in. A pure heart is a heart that isn't divided. It loves God with everything, and doesn't let other things muddy it up.

For a guy your age, a pure heart might look like:

- **Guarding what you watch.** Remember Book 1? Turning your eyes away from worthless things.

- **Keeping your words clean.** No crude jokes, cruel comments or bad language.
- **Respecting girls,** and never treating them like objects.
- **Being honest,** even when no one would know.
- **Having real reasons** for what you do: doing good things to please God, not just to look good.
- **Loving God more than anything else:** more than games, sports, money or popularity.

And here's the amazing part: purity isn't about earning your way to God. You're already His son: "we are now children of God." It's about getting ready to see your Father. When your heart is clean, you see God more clearly now. You notice Him in your life. You hear Him in His Word. You know Him better. And one day, you'll see Him face to face.

Nobody has a perfectly pure heart. We all mess up. But Jesus came to make us clean. When we confess our sins, He forgives us and washes our hearts. And His Spirit helps us grow purer day by day.

This week, you've learned where wisdom comes from, and how to make wise choices about crushes, money, the crowd, and dares and danger. And today, you've learned that the greatest treasure of all is seeing God, and that a pure heart is worth more than anything else.

A true story: Jim Elliot was a young American who loved God with his whole heart. When he was a young man, he wrote in his journal words that people still remember: he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose. Jim believed that the things of this world, like money, fame and comfort, can't be kept forever, but knowing God lasts forever. So he gave his life to take the good news of Jesus to a people in the forests of Ecuador who had never heard it. Jim was killed when he was only twenty-eight. But because of his faithfulness, and the brave love of his wife

Elisabeth, many of those very people came to know Jesus. Jim's heart wasn't divided. He knew what was really worth it. You can read his whole story in *Brave for God*.

Think about it: What are some things that try to crowd God out of your heart? What would it look like to love Him more than those things?

Try this: Ask God to show you one thing in your life that muddies your heart. Then choose one step to put Him first again.

Dear God, I want to see You. Give me a pure heart. Forgive me for the ways I've let other things crowd You out, and wash me clean. Help me love You more than anything else, and know what's really worth it. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 19 — Too Young? Not to God

"But the LORD told me: 'Do not say, "I am only a child." For to everyone I send you, you must go, and all that I command you, you must speak.'"
— Jeremiah 1:7 (BSB)

"What do you want to be when you grow up?" Maybe you have an answer: an engineer, a pilot, a pastor, a builder, a doctor, a pro athlete, a game designer, a firefighter. Maybe you have no idea yet. Both are okay!

God called Jeremiah to be a prophet when he was very young, probably a teenager. God told him that He had known him and chosen him before he was even born.

But Jeremiah's first reaction was to protest. He told God he didn't know how to speak, because he was only a child.

Look at God's answer: "**Do not say, 'I am only a child.'** For to everyone I send you, you must go." God wasn't impressed by Jeremiah's excuse. He didn't need Jeremiah to be older, bigger or more experienced. He only needed him to be willing. And then God promised: "Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you."

You might think that God's plans for you only start when you're a grown man. But that's not true. God can use you **right now**.

For every Christian, the biggest part of our calling is the same: to love God, to love people, to become more like Jesus and to tell others about Him. You can do all of those things at your age.

God also gives each of us particular ways to serve Him, through our personalities, gifts, interests and the opportunities He puts in front of us. Some of those will become clear as you grow up. Some guys know early what they want to do; others don't figure it out until much later. And most people have many callings over their lives: son, brother, friend, student, worker, and maybe one day husband and father.

You don't have to figure it all out now. For today, your calling is to love God, grow in Him, and do today's work well.

This week, we'll explore your gifts, the work God gives you, and what He might be calling you to do.

Think about it: Have you ever thought, "I'm too young for God to use me"? What does God's answer to Jeremiah say to you?

Try this: Ask your parents, "What have you noticed about me that might show what God made me for?"

Dear God, I don't want to say, "I'm only a kid." Thank You that You can use me right now. Help me love You, love people, and be willing to go wherever You send me. And show me, step by step, what You made me to do. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 20 — Bezalel the Builder

> *"See, I have called by name Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability, and knowledge in all kinds of craftsmanship."*
> *— Exodus 31:2–3 (BSB)*

Have you ever heard of Bezalel? Most people haven't. He wasn't a king, a prophet or a warrior. He was a **craftsman**, a builder and an artist.

When God told Moses to build the tabernacle, the special tent where God would meet with His people, He needed someone to make it. It had to be beautiful: gold and silver, carved wood, precious stones and woven cloth. So God said: "See, **I have called by name Bezalel**... and I have filled him with the **Spirit of God**, with skill, ability, and knowledge in all kinds of craftsmanship."

Did you catch that? The very first person in the Bible described as being filled with the Spirit of God was a guy who was good with his hands!

That means **God gives all kinds of gifts, and all of them matter.** Some people are gifted at preaching or teaching. But God also gives gifts for building, fixing, designing, drawing, coding, cooking, music, sports, math, science, organizing, leading and caring for people. When you use those gifts for Him, it's holy work.

What are you good at? What do you love to do?

- Do you love taking things apart and figuring out how they work?

- Are you always drawing, building, or making things?
- Are you great at math or science?
- Do people follow your lead?
- Are you good with little kids or animals?
- Do you notice when people are hurting?

Here's how to discover your gifts:

- **Notice what you love** and what makes you feel alive.
- **Notice what you're good at**, and what people often thank you for.
- **Try lots of things.** Take a class, join a team, volunteer, help at church.
- **Ask God** to show you your gifts.
- **Practice.** Bezalel didn't become a master craftsman overnight.

Don't compare your gifts to other guys'. God gave you exactly the gifts He wants you to have, for the work He has for you.

Think about it: What do you think your gifts might be? How could you use them for God?

Try this: Make a list in your journal of things you love to do and things you're good at. Ask a parent or friend to add to it.

Dear God, thank You for Bezalel, and for the way You fill people with skill for Your work. Thank You for the gifts You've given me. Help me discover them, practice them and use them for You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 21 — With All Your Might

"Whatever you find to do with your hands, do it with all your might..."
— Ecclesiastes 9:10 (BSB)

Here's something a lot of people don't realize: **work is good**. It was God's idea from the very beginning. Before sin ever came into the world, God gave Adam work to do in the Garden: caring for it and tending it. God Himself works: creating, providing, caring for His world.

So when you work hard, you're being like your Father.

Solomon gives a simple rule for work: "Whatever you find to do with your hands, **do it with all your might**."

Not halfway. Not the bare minimum. Not complaining the whole time. With **all your might**.

As guys grow up, they get more responsibility. More chores. More homework. Maybe a first job, like mowing lawns, shoveling snow or helping a neighbor. Those are all chances to practice working with all your might.

Here's what that looks like:

- **Do it right the first time.** Don't rush through the job and leave a mess.
- **Do it without being reminded.** That's a huge step toward being a man.

- **Finish what you start.**
- **Work hard even when no one is watching.** Remember, you're really working for God.
- **Do the boring jobs well too.** Cleaning your room matters as much as the fun projects.
- **Don't complain.** A cheerful worker is a great blessing to everyone around him.

Working with all your might now builds something important in you: **character**. The habits you build doing chores and homework at eleven are the same habits you'll bring to your job at twenty-five. Men who work hard, keep their word and finish the job are men people can count on.

And here's a secret: doing hard work well feels good. There's a special kind of joy in finishing a job and knowing you did your best.

Think about it: What job or chore do you usually do halfway? What would it look like to do it with all your might?

Try this: Pick one chore this week and do it with all your might, without being asked, and better than you've ever done it before.

Dear God, thank You that work is Your good idea. Help me do whatever I find to do with all my might: my chores, my schoolwork and every job I'm given. Help me work hard even when no one is watching, because I'm working for You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 22 — Let's Build

"I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me, and what the king had said to me. 'Let us start rebuilding,' they replied, and they set their hands to this good work."
— Nehemiah 2:18 (BSB)

Nehemiah worked for a king, far away from his home city of Jerusalem. One day, he heard some terrible news: Jerusalem's walls had been broken down, its gates had been burned, and God's people were in trouble and disgrace.

Nehemiah didn't just shrug and say, "That's too bad." He sat down and wept. He prayed. He asked the king for permission to go and help. And then he went.

When Nehemiah got to Jerusalem, he went out at night to look over the damage. Then he gathered the people and said, "**Come, let us rebuild the wall**." He told them how God had been helping him. And the people answered: "**Let us start rebuilding**." And "they set their hands to this good work."

Nehemiah saw a problem, and instead of just complaining about it, he did something. He cared enough to act. And he got others to join in.

God often calls people this way. He lets them see something that's broken, and it bothers them. It makes them sad or even angry. And then He puts it in their hearts to help fix it.

What bothers you? What do you see that's broken?

- A kid at school who's always alone?
- A neighbor who can't keep up with yard work?
- A messy park or creek?
- Kids in other countries without clean water, food or Bibles?
- Friends who don't know Jesus?

Maybe that's where God is calling you to build.

You don't have to fix the whole world. Nehemiah fixed one wall, and everyone worked on their own section. Start with the piece in front of you. And invite others to join you. Great things often start with one guy who says, "Let's build."

Think about it: What's something broken in your world that bothers you? What's one small thing you could do about it?

Try this: Choose one small "rebuilding" project: help a neighbor, clean up a spot, include a lonely kid or raise money for a need. Invite a friend to do it with you.

Dear God, like Nehemiah, help me see what's broken around me, and care about it. Show me what You want me to do, and give me courage to say, "Let's build." Help me invite others to join in Your good work. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 23 — Skilled Hands

"Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will be stationed in the presence of kings; he will not stand before obscure men."
— Proverbs 22:29 (BSB)

Think about the guys who are really, really good at what they do: a pro athlete, a master carpenter, a brilliant surgeon, a great musician, an amazing mechanic. How did they get that good?

Some of it is gifts God gave them. But most of it is **practice**. Thousands of hours of practice. Showing up day after day. Doing the boring drills. Learning from mistakes. Getting a little better every time.

Proverbs says: "Do you see a man **skilled in his work**? He will be stationed in the presence of kings."

In Bible times, the most skilled craftsmen, writers and advisors often ended up working for the king. Their skill opened doors. People noticed. And today, it's still true: when you get really good at something, it opens doors, and gives you more chances to serve and make a difference.

Joseph was skilled at managing things, and he ended up running Egypt. Daniel was skilled at learning and wisdom, and he served kings. David was skilled with a harp and a sling, and both of those skills brought him before King Saul.

So what skills could you be building right now?

- **Pick something and practice.** An instrument, a sport, drawing, coding, woodworking, writing, cooking or a language.
- **Stick with it** when it gets hard or boring. That's when you really grow.
- **Find a coach or teacher.** Learn from someone who's better than you.
- **Practice for God.** Your skill is a gift to use for Him, not just for yourself.
- **Be patient.** Skill takes time. A lot of time.

But remember: being skilled isn't about being famous or important. It's about being faithful with what God has given you. God might put you before kings, or He might put you in a small workshop, a classroom or a hospital, serving people nobody else notices. Either way, skilled work done for Him matters.

Think about it: What skill would you most like to get really good at? What would it take?

Try this: Pick one skill and practice it for at least fifteen minutes every day this week.

Dear God, thank You for the abilities You've given me. Help me work hard to build my skills, stick with it when it's hard, and use my skills to serve You and others, wherever You put me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 24 — Serve Your Generation

"For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep. His body was buried with his fathers and saw decay."
— Acts 13:36 (BSB)

Paul was preaching about King David, and he summed up David's whole life in one sentence: "David **served God's purpose in his own generation**."

What a way to be remembered!

David didn't live in every time and place. He lived in one time and one place, with one set of people around him. And in his time and place, he did what God wanted him to do. He served God's purpose in his own generation.

You won't live in every time either. You were born right now, in this generation, in this place, with these people around you. That's not an accident. God put you here, now, on purpose. There are people only you will meet, and things only you can do.

What does it look like to serve God's purpose in your generation?

- **Know God.** You can't serve His purpose if you don't know Him.
- **Use your gifts.** The skills and passions He gave you are tools for His purpose.
- **Love the people around you.** Your family, friends, neighbors and classmates are your mission field.

- **Say yes when God calls.** Like Jeremiah, don't say, "I'm only a kid."
- **Keep going.** David served God for his whole life, through good and bad times.

This week, you've learned that you're not too young for God to use, that He gives all kinds of gifts, that work is good, that God calls us to rebuild what's broken, and that skill is worth building. Now the question is: will you serve God's purpose in your generation?

A true story: George Liele was born a slave in America, long ago. When he heard that Jesus loved him and died to set him free, his whole life changed, and he began preaching to anyone who would listen. His master set him free to preach. Later, George sailed to the island of Jamaica, and he became one of the very first missionaries ever to go out from America, years before William Carey sailed to India. In Jamaica, he preached to enslaved people whom almost no one else cared about. He was thrown into prison and put in chains, but he wouldn't stop, and the churches he planted kept growing. George never became famous. But he served God's purpose in his generation, and showed that no one is too lowly to be sent by God. You can read his whole story in *Brave for God*.

Think about it: Why do you think God put you in this generation, in this place? Who are the people only you can reach?

Try this: Write down the names of five people in your life you could serve or tell about Jesus. Pray for them this week.

Dear God, thank You for putting me in this time and place, on purpose. Help me serve Your purpose in my generation, like David and George Liele did. Use me to reach the people around me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 25 — Elisha Leaves the Plow

"So Elisha turned back from him, took his pair of oxen, and slaughtered them. Using the oxen's equipment for fuel, he cooked the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow and serve Elijah."
— 1 Kings 19:21 (BSB)

Remember Elijah under the broom tree, back in Week 1? After God fed him and let him rest, God gave him a new job: to find a young man named **Elisha**, who would learn from him and one day take his place.

Elijah found Elisha plowing a field with a big team of oxen. Elijah walked up and threw his cloak around Elisha's shoulders. That was a sign: *God has chosen you. Come with me.*

Elisha understood. He asked if he could first say goodbye to his parents. And then he did something amazing. He took his own oxen, killed them, burned his plow to cook the meat, and threw a big feast for the people.

Why would he do that? Because he was making a clean break. He wasn't going back to farming. He was all in. "Then he set out to **follow and serve Elijah**."

For years, Elisha stayed with Elijah. He served him. He watched how Elijah prayed, how he spoke God's Word, how he stood up to wicked kings. He learned by being close to an older man who walked with God.

That's what a **mentor** is: an older, wiser man who helps a younger man grow. He teaches you, shows you, encourages you, corrects you and prays

for you. And you learn from him by spending time with him, watching him and serving alongside him.

Every guy needs mentors. Maybe your dad is one. Maybe a grandpa, an uncle, a coach, a youth leader, a pastor, or an older guy at church.

Here's how to learn from a mentor:

- **Spend time with him.** Help him with a project. Go to breakfast. Ask to tag along.
- **Watch how he lives.** How does he treat his family? How does he handle problems? How does he pray?
- **Ask questions.** "How did you become a Christian?" "What's the hardest thing you've been through?" "What would you do in my situation?"
- **Serve him.** Elisha served Elijah. Offer to help.
- **Listen,** even when his advice isn't what you want to hear.

Think about it: Who is an older man in your life who walks with God? What could you learn from him?

Try this: Ask an older man you respect if you can help him with something this week, or go out for breakfast. Ask him one question about following Jesus.

Dear God, thank You for Elisha, who left everything to follow and serve Elijah. Give me a mentor, a man who walks with You and can help me grow. Help me be humble, watch, listen and learn from him. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 26 — I Will Not Leave You

"And Elijah said to Elisha, 'Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me on to Bethel.' But Elisha replied, 'As surely as the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.' So they went down to Bethel."
— 2 Kings 2:2 (BSB)

Years went by. Elisha kept following and serving Elijah. And then came the day when God was going to take Elijah up to heaven.

Everyone seemed to know it was coming. And three times, Elijah told Elisha, "Stay here. I have to go on." Maybe he was testing him. Maybe he wanted to spare him the goodbye.

But three times, Elisha gave the same answer: "**As surely as the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.**"

Elisha was loyal. He wasn't going to let his mentor walk his last road alone. And he didn't want to miss a single moment of learning from him.

Sometimes, as guys get older, they start to pull away from the older people in their lives. They might think they know it all. They'd rather hang out with friends than with their dad or grandpa. They stop listening to their parents. Some of that is normal as you grow more independent. But don't pull away completely!

The men who love you and walk with God have so much to give you. Stick close to them, like Elisha. Keep asking questions. Keep spending time with them. Keep listening. Because one day, you'll wish you had more time with them.

Here are some ways to stick close:

- **Keep talking to your dad** (or the man who fills that role for you), even when it feels awkward.
- **Spend time with your grandparents** and older relatives. Ask them to tell you stories.
- **Stay connected at church** with men who walk with God.
- **Don't pull away when things get hard.** That's when you need them most.
- **Be loyal.** When they need you, be there for them too.

And one more thing: if you don't have a dad in your life, or if your dad isn't someone who walks with God, that's okay. God is your Father, and He can bring other good men into your life. Ask Him to. Ask your mom, your church or a trusted adult to help you find one.

Think about it: Is there an older man in your life you've been pulling away from? What could you do to stay close?

Try this: Spend some one-on-one time with your dad, grandpa or another older man this week. Ask him to tell you a story from when he was your age.

Dear God, like Elisha, help me stick close to the men who love me and walk with You. Help me not to pull away, but to keep listening and learning. And thank You that You are my Father, always. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 27 — A Double Portion

"After they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, 'Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken away from you?' 'Please, let me inherit a double portion of your spirit,' Elisha replied."
— 2 Kings 2:9 (BSB)

Elijah and Elisha walked on together, all the way to the Jordan River. Elijah rolled up his cloak and struck the water, and it split in two, and they walked across on dry ground!

Then Elijah turned to Elisha and asked a question: "**What can I do for you** before I am taken away?"

If you could ask your mentor for anything, what would you ask for? Money? Fame? His stuff?

Elisha asked for something far better: "Please, let me inherit **a double portion of your spirit**."

In those days, when a father died, his oldest son received a "double portion" of the inheritance: twice as much as the other children. Elisha was saying: *Treat me like your son. I want to carry on your work. I want the same Spirit of God that made you who you are, and even more.*

Elijah said it was a hard request, but if Elisha saw him taken up, it would be his. And suddenly, a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind! Elisha saw it all. He cried out, "My father, my father!"

Then Elisha picked up Elijah's cloak, the same cloak Elijah had thrown over him in the field years before. He walked back to the Jordan, struck the water, and it split for him too. God's Spirit was with Elisha now. And the Bible records even more miracles through Elisha than through Elijah.

Here's what this means for you: the most valuable thing a mentor can pass on to you isn't his stuff. It's his **faith**. His love for God. His character. The way he walks with God.

So when you spend time with godly men, ask for the right things. Don't just want what they have. Want who they are. Ask God to give you the same faith, the same courage and the same love for Him that you see in them, and even more.

One day, the cloak will pass to you. You'll be the one carrying on the faith for your generation.

Think about it: What's something you admire about the faith of an older man in your life? How could you ask God for that same thing?

Try this: Ask an older Christian man, "What's the most important thing you've learned about following God?" Write down his answer and keep it.

Dear God, thank You for the faith of the men who've walked with You before me. Like Elisha, I don't just want what they have. I want to know You like they do. Give me their faith, their courage and their love for You, and even more. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 28 — Pass It On

"And the things that you have heard me say among many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be qualified to teach others as well."
— 2 Timothy 2:2 (BSB)

The apostle Paul had a young helper named **Timothy**. You met him in Book 1. Paul was like a father to him. He taught him, traveled with him, trained him and trusted him with important jobs.

Near the end of Paul's life, he wrote Timothy a letter. And in it, he gave him a very important instruction: "The things that you have heard me say... **entrust these to faithful men who will be qualified to teach others** as well."

Count the generations in that one verse:

1. **Paul** taught Timothy.
2. **Timothy** was to teach faithful men.
3. Those **faithful men** would teach **others**.

That's four generations! Paul was saying: *Don't let the faith stop with you. Pass it on.*

That's how the good news of Jesus has traveled for two thousand years. Someone taught someone, who taught someone, who taught someone, all the way down to the people who taught you.

And now it's your turn.

You might think you're too young to teach anyone anything. But there are younger boys all around you who look up to you: little brothers, cousins, neighbors, kids at church, younger guys on your team. To an eight-year-old, an eleven-year-old seems really grown up!

Here's how you can pass it on:

- **Be a good example.** Younger guys are watching how you talk, play and treat people.
- **Be kind to them.** Don't brush them off. Include them.
- **Teach them what you know,** like how to throw a spiral, build something, or do a math problem.
- **Tell them about Jesus.** Share a Bible story, pray with them, or tell them what God has done in your life.
- **Encourage them.** Cheer them on and tell them what they're good at.

When you help someone younger, you become someone's Elijah, someone's Paul. And you'll find that teaching others makes your own faith stronger too.

Think about it: Who is a younger boy who looks up to you? What could you pass on to him?

Try this: Spend time with a younger boy this week. Teach him something you know, and if you can, tell him something you've learned about God.

Dear God, thank You for the people who passed on the faith to me. Help me pass it on too. Help me be a good example to younger boys, and teach them what I know about You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 29 — Strong at Eighty-Five

"So here I am today, eighty-five years old, still as strong today as I was the day Moses sent me out. As my strength was then, so it is now for war, for going out, and for coming in."
— Joshua 14:10–11 (BSB)

Remember Caleb from Book 1? He was one of the twelve spies Moses sent into the Promised Land. Ten of the spies came back scared: *The people there are giants! We can't beat them!* But Caleb and Joshua trusted God and said, *We can do it, because God is with us!*

Because of the other spies' fear, God's people had to wander in the wilderness for forty years. But God promised Caleb that one day, he would receive a piece of the land for himself.

Forty-five years later, God's people were finally in the Promised Land. And an old man walked up to Joshua. It was Caleb, now eighty-five years old!

And listen to what he said: "Here I am today, **eighty-five years old**, **still as strong today** as I was the day Moses sent me out." Then he asked for the hill country, the very place where the giants lived, the place that had scared the other spies so badly all those years ago. *Give me that mountain!* And he went and took it.

Caleb didn't retire. He didn't coast. He didn't say, "I'm old; let the young guys handle it." At eighty-five, he was still trusting God, still brave, still ready for the next adventure.

That's what it means to **finish well**. Lots of guys start out strong for God. But the men who really make a difference are the ones who keep going, their whole lives, all the way to the end.

How do you become a man like Caleb?

- **Follow God with your whole heart now.** The Bible says Caleb "wholly followed the LORD." That habit started when he was young.
- **Keep trusting God's promises,** even when you have to wait a long time.
- **Stay brave.** Don't let fear make your decisions.
- **Take care of your body.** Caleb was still strong at eighty-five!
- **Never stop growing.** There's always another mountain to climb with God.

Every day you choose to follow Jesus is a step toward finishing well.

Think about it: Do you know an older man who is still following God with his whole heart? What can you learn from him?

Try this: Ask an older Christian man, "What has helped you keep following God for so long?" Write down his answer.

Dear God, thank You for Caleb, who was still strong and brave at eighty-five. Help me follow You with my whole heart my whole life, and never stop trusting You. Help me finish well. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 30 — Finish the Race

"But I consider my life of no value to me, if only I may finish my course and complete the ministry I have received from the Lord Jesus —the ministry of testifying to the good news of God's grace."
— Acts 20:24 (BSB)

Here we are at the last day of this book, and the last day of the *Sons of the King* series!

Paul spoke today's words to a group of church leaders he loved, on a beach near the city of Ephesus. He was heading to Jerusalem, and the Holy Spirit had warned him that chains and hard times were waiting for him there. His friends were crying. They knew they might never see him again.

But Paul wasn't afraid. He had one goal bigger than staying safe or comfortable: "**if only I may finish my course**." A *course* is the track a runner runs on. Paul pictured his whole life as a race that Jesus had marked out for him, and all he wanted was to run it to the finish line, telling people about "the good news of God's grace" the whole way.

That's how a son of the King wants to run his life. Not perfect: Paul had made plenty of mistakes. But faithful to the finish.

That's what these three books have been about.

In **Book 1**, you learned **who you are**: a son of the King, with a new name, worth that doesn't depend on your score, and strength that's under control. You learned to choose good friends, treat girls with respect, stand firm with courage and follow the brave men of the Bible.

In **Book 2**, you learned to be **faithful**: to have integrity when no one's watching, to keep screens in their place, to fight temptation, to win and lose well and to follow Jesus like Andrew, Thomas, John and Peter.

And in **Book 3**, you learned about **growing up**: handling your feelings, understanding your changing body as God's good design, making wise choices, discovering your calling, learning from older men, passing it on to younger boys and finishing well.

Through it all, one truth stays the same: **you are a son of the King.** Your body will change. Your feelings will go up and down. Your friends will come and go. Your plans might change. But your Father never changes, and His love for you never fades.

Now it's your turn to run your course. Run it with Jesus. Run it all the way. And finish well.

A true story: Simeon Nsibambi was a respected man in Uganda, with a good job, fine clothes and a comfortable home. But he was hungry for more of God. One day he met a young English doctor named Joe Church, who felt exactly the same hunger. The two men spent a whole weekend together with nothing but a Bible, reading and praying and asking God to fill them with His Spirit. And God met them. Something caught fire in Simeon's heart that never went out. He gave up his job and walked the roads of Uganda telling everyone about Jesus. Others caught the fire from him, and then others caught it from them, and it spread from village to village and country to country, until hundreds of thousands of lives were changed. It all started with two men seeking God together, and then passing it on. You can read his whole story in *Brave for God*.

Think about it: Looking back over all three books, what's the most important thing you've learned about being a son of the King?

Try this: Write a letter to your future self, maybe to open when you're 18. Tell him who he is in God's eyes, and what kind of man you hope he'll

be.

Dear God, thank You for making me Your son. As I grow up, help me run the course You've marked out for me and finish it well. Help me grow in wisdom, courage and love, and follow You my whole life, all the way home. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Conclusion: A Son Growing Up

You did it! Ninety days, if you've read all three books. That's three whole months of spending time with God, learning who you are and discovering how to live as His son.

Take a moment to think about how much you've grown, not just taller, but on the inside.

This book was about **growing up**. You learned that feelings are part of how God made you, even for guys, and how to handle anger, sadness, pressure and grief. You learned that your changing body is God's good design, and what to expect as you grow into a man. You learned to make wise choices about crushes, money, the crowd and danger, and to keep a pure heart. You discovered that you're not too young for God to use, that He gives all kinds of gifts, and that work is good. And you learned from Elijah and Elisha, Paul and Timothy, and Caleb how to learn from older men, pass it on to younger ones and finish well.

You also met five real men who trusted God: John Paton, Eric Liddell (again!), Jim Elliot, George Liele and Simeon Nsibambi. Not one of them was perfect. But each one ran his race for God.

Growing up isn't always easy. But you don't have to do it alone. God is with you every step. And He's given you men, like your dad, your grandfathers, your pastors and the men at church, to walk beside you.

Please keep talking to them. Keep asking questions. There's no question too dumb or too embarrassing. They want to help you grow into the man

God made you to be.

If you haven't trusted Jesus yet

The most important step in growing up is trusting Jesus. He died on the cross for your sins and rose again, so that you could be forgiven and become a son of the King forever. You can pray something like this:

Dear Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God. I believe You died on the cross for my sins and rose again. I'm sorry for the wrong things I've done. I trust You as my Savior, and I want to follow You as I grow up. Thank You for making me a son of the King. Amen.

If you prayed that, tell someone: your dad or mom, a pastor, a leader or a Christian friend!

What's next

Keep growing! Here are some ideas:

- **Read a book of the Bible,** like the Gospel of Mark (short and full of action) or the book of Proverbs.
- **Read the *Brave for God* books** to learn more about the men (and women!) you've met.
- **Read *Rooted*,** our 180-day series for all young readers, if you haven't yet.
- **Keep a prayer journal.**
- **Find a mentor,** and **pass it on.**

You are a son of the King. Wherever life takes you, remember whose you are.

"May the LORD bless you and keep you; may the LORD cause His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; may the LORD lift up His countenance toward you and give you peace."
— Numbers 6:24–26 (BSB)

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