

POWER FLEXING, BEING POLITE, AND OTHER

MANLY

BEHAVIORS

**WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE A REAL MAN?
READ ON IF YOU DARE.**

By David Dickson
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I was channeling my inner super-spy. The problem was, I'd been doing that all week and it hadn't worked out very well so far.

I stood with my friends on a grassy hillside far removed from

civilization. Stretched between this hill and the next was a thick steel cable that ran 40 yards (37 meters). The cable hung 6 feet (2 meters) above the ground, spanned a small valley between the hills, and had a downward slant.

In other words, it was the perfect

cable to slide down in spy-like glory. My friends and I had no idea why the cable was there in the first place. We only knew that a most manly destiny was calling loudly. We were there to heed the call.

And yet, that stubborn cable wasn't cooperating. Turns out we needed more than blindingly awesome courage and determination to accomplish our goal. We needed something to help us slide down. Our

first two attempts that week hadn't resulted in our sliding more than a few feet before friction stopped us cold.

But that didn't discourage us. My friend had an old 10-speed bike that he donated to the cause for our third attempt. His theory was that if we removed the front handlebars, spokes, and wheel from the rest of the frame, we could place the rim (tube and tire removed) on top of the cable. Then, wrench in hand, we could attach the handlebar and front spokes to the wheel by aiming them up around the underside of the cable. It was a giant pulley.

I was to be the guinea pig lucky person to try out our complex mechanism first. So there I stood, channeling my inner spy and poised and ready to earn some manly bragging points. I gripped the handlebars, took a deep breath, and howled in excitement while lifting my feet.

In milliseconds the other hillside started rushing toward me. Wind whipped through my hair as I flew across the gap between hills. I slammed into the far side with enough impact to steal the air from my lungs. I jumped to my feet, dusted myself off, and yelled to my friends, "You guys gotta try this thing!"

TRUE MANLINESS

Only . . . most of my friends didn't want to try the spy cable after seeing how my flight ended. Truth be told, nor did I after that excellent-but-wild ride. As exciting as the trip down had been, the jolting stop at the end was anything but fun.

Boys, young men, and men often like to perform feats of bravery and strength around one another. In popular culture, the measure of one's manliness is often determined by such accomplishments.

But what is *true* manly behavior? What does the Lord expect of boys, young men, and men?





and life beyond. Developing a solid work ethic and a capacity to do hard things will help you now and throughout your life. Has your neighbor's basement recently flooded with mud and debris? Time to man up!

2. LEARNING USEFUL SKILLS

Life takes discipline, hard work, and a willingness to learn useful skills as you grow. Your impressive mini-golf and bowling scores probably won't be much help on your mission or during job interviews.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, "We cannot afford young men who lack self-discipline and live only to be entertained."¹

It's difficult to help friends and family using only your vast collection of memorized movie quotes. Learning to change the oil in a car or build a shelf with woodworking tools, however, can make a big difference in the lives of those you want to serve.

"It is a wonderful aspiration for a boy to become a man—strong and capable; someone who can build and create things, run things; someone who

a chance to put a few more points on my man card."

The prophet Lehi said it this way. After growing increasingly concerned about his rebellious sons Laman and Lemuel—who were technically men in terms of age—he gave the following rebuke: "Arise from the dust, my sons, and be men" (2 Nephi 1:21).

Yes, Laman and Lemuel were old enough to be men. They also complained and moped and groaned every time they were asked to do something hard.

Being willing and able to do hard things is a big part of high school, missionary work, college,

From scriptures and Church leaders, we can find the following five principles on how a son of God can grow into his full potential as a man. (As a heads-up, nowhere will you find the doctrinal directive, "Thou shalt bench-press 200 pounds.")

1. DOING HARD THINGS

The next time your parents ask you to pull weeds or re-stain the deck, try smiling, flexing a muscle or two, and thinking to yourself, "Here's

makes a difference in the world,” Elder Christofferson taught.²

As one more item to consider, after your mission, what do you think would more likely impress a girl you were dating: the ability to conquer a video game in 37.5 minutes or the skills to repair and thereby coax another 40,000 miles out of a car on its last legs?

3. RESPECTING WOMANHOOD

Treating girls, young women, and women with kindness and courtesy is at the heart of true manliness.

Sister Carole M. Stephens, first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, asked the following questions in general conference: “Sons of God, do you know who you are? . . . Do you embrace your roles and responsibilities to strengthen homes as fathers, grandfathers, sons, brothers, and uncles? Do you show respect for women, womanhood,

and motherhood?”³

Church leaders speak regularly about the virtues of women and the way sisters should be treated. “We who bear the holy priesthood have a sacred duty to honor our sisters,” taught Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “We are old enough and wise enough to know that teasing is wrong. We respect sisters—not only in our immediate families but all the wonderful sisters in our lives. As daughters of God, their potential is divine.”⁴

Every time you pay a sincere compliment, smile and say hello, offer encouragement, give a gentlemanlike courtesy, and avoid making fun of girls or mistreating them in any way, you show respect for womanhood.

And that’s manly too.

4. SERVING IN AND STRENGTHENING YOUR PRIESTHOOD QUORUM

You have talents and skills. You possess wisdom, experience, and insights that are uniquely yours from the life you’ve lived.

All of these qualities can be used to strengthen your fellow priesthood quorum members.

“Of the many places you are needed, one of the very most

important is your priesthood quorum,” taught Elder Christofferson. “We need quorums that provide spiritual nourishment to members on Sunday and that also serve.”⁵

Your priesthood quorum is made up of young men who, like you, all need support and encouragement. Imagine how much more your quorum can accomplish in a service project rather than one person working alone. In a spiritual sense, that same strength expands in a group as you teach and encourage one another to live the gospel.

Give your best to make your quorum all it can be. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, said, “One of the adversary’s methods to prevent us from progressing is to confuse us about who we really are and what we really desire.”⁶



So, don't be distracted from your manly identity and destiny. Your quorum needs you.

5. GAINING AN EDUCATION

You know that guy who buckles down in his studies, turns in all his homework on time, and isn't actually sweating bullets the night before a big project is due? Yeah, that guy is demonstrating some serious manly power.

Elder Christofferson taught, "Young men, you need to do well in school and then continue your education beyond high school."⁷

Even if your sights right now are focused more on graduating high school and serving a mission, they should be set still further on a temple marriage. When that day comes, you'll need all the education and training you can get. "In whatever [career] you choose, it is essential that you become proficient so that you can support a family and make a contribution for good in your community and your country,"⁸ said Elder Christofferson.

MANNING UP

There's nothing wrong with finding out who among you and your friends can hurl an oversized

round of firewood the farthest, go the longest without blinking, or eat a double-decker burger the fastest. Ultimately, though, none of those accomplishments adds up to true manhood.

On the other hand, things like following the prophets, magnifying your calling in the priesthood, respecting womanhood, and serving others can build you into the type of man who can help strengthen the Lord's kingdom.

That's as manly as it gets. **NE**



NOTES

1. D. Todd Christofferson, "Brethren, We Have Work to Do," *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 47.
2. D. Todd Christofferson, "Let Us Be Men," *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 46.
3. Carole M. Stephens, "Do We Know What We Have?" *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 14.
4. Russell M. Nelson, "Our Sacred Duty to Honor Women," *Ensign*, May 1999, 39.
5. D. Todd Christofferson, "Brethren, We Have Work to Do," 48.
6. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "You Can Do It Now!" *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 56.
7. D. Todd Christofferson, "Brethren, We Have Work to Do," 48.
8. D. Todd Christofferson, "Brethren, We Have Work to Do," 48.